

MARK Chapter-3, verses 20-35

MAD, BAD, OR GOD?

Who is Jesus? Why did he come? So what – what has that to do with me?

These are the three questions that my brother Alan reminded us about last week – these are the three questions that the course 'Discipleship-Explored' is based around, and they remain the three most pressing questions all of us have to answer for ourselves. How we answer them has eternal consequences for ourselves and those who are closest to us, whether it's our spouse, children, parents, friends, or work colleagues. And the passage we are going to look at this morning addresses, in one way or another, all three of these questions.

WHO IS JESUS!

Who is Jesus? Who do you say he is? Who do I say he is? It's very rare that you find anyone, atheist or otherwise, who has a bad word to say about Jesus. Many non-Christians, and many liberal Christians, will describe him as a good man, a great teacher (perhaps like Buddha or Confucius). But the evidence we are given, the evidence that is presented before us in scripture, does not give us that option. The astounding claims made by Jesus, throughout scripture, is that he is God incarnate – the great I AM come to earth as fully God, and fully man!! Many of you will be familiar with the work of CS Lewis, and in one of his books he talks about how Jesus did not give us that option. CS Lewis put it starkly in the following terms (mere Christianity)

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. ...

WHO? FAMILY VIEW

In [Mark 3](#) Jesus's mission is under attack. After announcing the coming of God's kingdom ([Mark 1:14-15](#)), he begins to heal the sick, cast out demons, teach with authority, call disciples, and even forgive sins. But not everyone is happy with him.

Well, his family thought he was mad. Pure and simple. He had lost the plot. He had some kind of God delusion. He was cuckoo!! Imagine the scene, and imagine the response of his family. Word about Jesus was now out of the bag, and all over the social media (or equivalent) of 1st Century Palestine. In fact, word about Jesus had gone so viral that we are told in [v20](#) that he had so stirred up interest that where Jesus and his newly called disciples had been invited into a house, the whirl-wind of activity made it impossible for them to eat their take-out, or whatever it was they were having.

So, his family, and we can forgive them for doing what any sane family would do, decided to sort the matter out. His mother and brothers '*heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said "he is out of his mind"*'. Remember the choices that CS Lewis posed? Mad, Bad, or God? Lunatic, Liar, or Lord? They had no doubt at all, Jesus was Mad!! The Greek word used to describe how his family saw him, *ezeiti*, can be variously translated as 'out of his wits', or 'insane', or 'out of his senses'. And

they wanted to get him home, settle things down a bit, because they must have discerned that something bad would come of all this commotion in the end – and from a worldly point of view something bad did happen didn't it? Because this same crowd would ultimately be part of the mob that shouted 'CRUCIFY HIM'.

WHO? PHARISEE VIEW

Who did the pharisees think Jesus was, the experts in the religious law? The religious teachers, the teachers of the law who had come down from Jerusalem to see what was going on would in fact see to it that Jesus was crucified. And they had no doubt as to the category they would put Jesus in. Jesus was bad. "*He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons, he is driving out demons*" **v22**. This is a serious accusation, and we need to take a little bit of time to understand the enormity of what these grammarians, these teachers of the law, were saying. And if they had really understood who Jesus was, would they have said it? They were standing before God incarnate, and saying he had a devil in him. In the High Court of heaven, at judgement day, I cannot think of a worse charge to be brought against an individual. They accused God of having a devil. I shudder at their temerity and the eternal consequences of such a statement.

A little pastoral footnote here. A little bit further on in this passage Jesus answers the Pharisees' accusation in v28 and v29, and he talks about the unforgivable sin. And many people wonder if they have committed it by blaspheming the holy spirit. But you can't commit it by some wild thought popping into our head's, and then thinking 'oh no! I'm eternally done for'. To commit the unforgivable sin, 'blaspheming the Holy Spirit' needs us to fully understand who Jesus is, accept who he is' and then intentionally stand against him – this would put us in league with the devil and his legions. Or, it's a specific, active, and final choice to declare the person and work of Jesus as being demonic in origin. You cannot commit this sin by accident. You need ongoing intentionality in your opposition to Christ.

A final bit of reassurance. this is a message not for the tender conscience or the stumbling believer, but rather for the pseudo-religious who stands over against Jesus in smugness. The Peters and Pauls and millions of other believers through history have failed and fallen and have yet found Jesus' smiling, welcoming face of forgiveness.

WHY DID JESUS COME?

It's a terrible charge to lay before God Incarnate, but how Jesus responds helps us to understand why Jesus came. Jesus shares a parable. **V23-v27** 'No-one can enter a strong man's house without first typing him up, then he can plunder the strong man's house'. This is the good news of why Jesus came, because we need to understand that the strong man is the devil, and he has got a grip on this fallen world.

In the world's fallen state, the multitudes we see every day are marching to the drum-beat of the Devil's regime. Oh, I don't mean that the vast number of people are possessed by demons in the way the pharisees are claiming Jesus is possessed. The devil doesn't need to do that – because in many ways that's more dramatic and our enemy, the devil, is showing his hand very clearly and without any ambiguity. No, that's not his best strategy. As we are told in 2 Corinthians 4:4, '*the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers*'. A good illustration of this is found in CS Lewis book 'The Screwtape Letters, which describes how a senior devil is instructing a junior devil (his nephew) of the best strategy of getting people to hell. And he is warning him against the more dramatic strategies when he says,

“Indeed the safest road to Hell is the gradual one--the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts”.

You see, beloved we cannot save ourselves, we need a stronger man to ‘bind that strong man’ whose aim is to take us on a different road to that offered by Jesus! We need someone who can bind up Satan and plunder his house. We need someone to wake us up to how we are lost and in need of a saviour, and that saviour is Jesus Christ. In binding up the strong man, He is then free to bind up our wounds, and free us to the life in Christ we were designed to have from the beginning of all time. Because, outside of Christ, we are dead in our sins, and we on a gradual, gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sign-posts, to hell!!

SO WHAT?

Well, it’s a no-brainer beloved. Jesus came to save us from hell, and to eternal and glorious life with a loving Father in heaven for all eternity. The greatest glory of God in the greatest happiness of all of us, if only we will turn and accept him as our Lord and Saviour, because in dying for our sins on the cross he binds the strong man and frees us!!!. He defeated the strong man by dying for us on the cross, so that our sins are imputed to him and his righteousness is imputed to us (a divine exchange). And because of that divine exchange, God’s wrath is turned away from us, we are redeemed from the slavery of sin, reconciled to God-the-Father, and justified in His sight.

And what’s more, he gives us a whole new family here on earth, and again for all eternity. Yes, he has blessed us with mothers and fathers and sisters and brothers here on earth in the natural sense. But all those who are freed by the strong man are adopted into a new, supernatural family.

In the final verses, we are told that Jesus is sitting inside the house, and that Jesus’ mother and brothers had arrived – ostensibly to take charge of him and end all this nonsense. And they send someone in to tell him that they had arrived. And Jesus says world changing, life shaking words.

V32-35

‘Who are my mother and my brothers?’ Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother’

CONCLUSION

So then, beloved, who do you say Jesus is. Is he mad (like someone saying he is a poached egg), is he bad (like the demons of hell), or is he who he says he is, the great I AM, God the Son, God incarnate, the second person of the trinity?

If you know him as your saviour today, can I urge you to press into him and make him your priority – Jesus and our relationship with him has eternal consequences, and he is to be our priority in all things.

If you don’t know him as your saviour today, but you can hear his call to your heart, don’t delay. Invite him into your life to deal with the strong man who is taking you on that gentle route, without sign-posts, to hell. Your life will never be the same again.

If you don’t know him today, and you aren’t stirred by these passages of scripture we have been looking at, then can I urge you to WAKE UP!! Because you don’t know the danger that you are in.

Speak to me, or any of the elders afterwards if you have been affected by what you have heard today. God’s blessing on you all!