



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V22 N30 August 9, 2020

KING JESUS

“Unforgivable”

Mark 3:20-30

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Holy Spirit

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

“You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.”
Romans 8:9



How can a sin be eternal?

The Gospel of Mark is a sophisticated, literary masterwork. In early church history, a number of leaders dismissed the Gospel of Mark as too short, too abrupt and lacking in theological substance. The other three Gospels were regarded as testimonial giants and Mark was considered their inarticulate cousin. More recent considerations of the Gospel of Mark have highlighted the complex literary artistry and theological significance of this Gospel in concentrate.

A fascinating feature of Mark is the inclusion of literary devices called “intercalations.” These are stories that begin with one narrative that is interrupted by another narrative and then returns back to the original subject or theme. Mark 3:20-35 showcases a perfect example of this type of intercalation. Mark 3:20-21 describes the overwhelming results of Jesus’ amazing ministry throughout Galilee. Jesus’ family hears about what Jesus is doing and sets out to “rescue” him, having concluded that he is mentally unstable. This family story is interrupted by the visit of Pharisees from Jerusalem (Mark 3:22-30). After this inflammatory exchange and charge of blasphemy, Jesus’ family finally shows up, finishing the “*inclusio*” (another term for “intercalation”). Mark 3:31-35 resolves the tension of the original family charge and the intensified accusation of the interrupting Pharisees with Jesus declaring a new family of those who follow God and do his will. The “new family” concept will mean much to the early readers of Mark who were well acquainted with familial and religious persecution.

“We appear to have here the first example of a narrative technique used fre-

quently in Mark: beginning one story and then inserting another before bringing the first to a conclusion. Here, Mark begins telling us about the *family* of Jesus in 3:21, interrupts this story by telling us about Jesus’ conflict with certain critics over his exorcisms in 3:22-30, and returns to the story of Jesus’ family in 3:31-35. (Other examples of this technique are 5:21-42; 6:7-32; 11:12-25.) When Mark ‘sandwiches’ stories in this manner, it seems that he presents the two stories as related in some way; and this is probably the case here. Briefly put, there are three groups in 3:20-35: (1) Jesus’ family, who seem to misunderstand him and try to take him home for forced rest; (2) critics, who accuse Jesus of being a sorcerer in league with Satan (*Beelzebub*); and (3) those who do God’s will and who are treated favorably as Jesus’ true ‘family’ (3:33-35). This third group is not directly named, but the impression given is that it is made up of Jesus’ disciples. Thus, the overall point of 3:20-35 is to contrast these three responses to Jesus’ ministry, highlighting the third as the only correct one” (Larry W. Hurtado, *Mark*, UBCS, 64).

Mark does not randomly cut and paste these three stories together without a purpose. With mastery, Mark subtly introduces the rejection that followers of Jesus will face. Some of this rejection will be based upon confusion or misplaced compassion. Some opposition will be more overt and threatening. Both can be met with faith in Jesus, who can forgive all sins and who invites us into his loving new family. We all need the freshness of forgiveness and the warmth of a welcoming community of faith.

20 Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. 21 When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."

22 And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons."

23 So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: "How can Satan drive out Satan?

24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26 And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. 27 In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man's house.

28 Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, 29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin."

30 He said this because they were saying, "He has an impure spirit."

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle words that indicate speech ("said," "speak," etc.).
- Place a box around each occurrence of "house."
- Underline the reason for "his family's" action in Mark 3:21.
- Place a bracket around the original location of the "teachers of the law" (Mark 3:22).
- Double underline each reference to Satan.
- Number the questions that Jesus asks.
- Draw arrows from the word "parables" to each parable told by Jesus.
- Circle the results of whoever "blasphemes against the Holy Spirit."

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing you do not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Describe the effects of Jesus' popularity (Mark 3:20-21).
2. Who would be included in Jesus' physical family and why did they "want to take charge of him"? (See Mark 3:31-35; 6:1-3.)
3. What is Jesus' assessment of his family? (See Mark 3:31-35.)
4. How is the accusation made by the teachers of the law different from the charge made by Jesus' family?
5. What admission is revealed by the teachers of the law from Jerusalem (Mark 3:22)?
6. Jesus answers the accusation of the teachers of the law with logic. Explain the logical argument Jesus uses in his answer.
7. What is Jesus saying about himself in his logical response to the teachers of the law?
8. People can be forgiven "all their sins." How does this forgiveness happen? (See Mark 2:5-10.)
9. What is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit? What is it not?
10. What is an "eternal sin"? Can someone commit such a sin today?

Commentary On The Text

Family has already been a major organizing unit for the cast of characters encountered thus far in the Gospel of Mark. Friends are also introduced in these opening chapters. A third organizing label used for participants in the early ministry account of Jesus is “disciple.” In Mark 3, Jesus introduces a new category of identity that moves a friend or disciple into the privilege and responsibility of “new family.”

Reaching people for Christ is not just inviting them to believe in a Savior. Mature evangelism also invites participation in a new family. “Brothers and sisters in Christ” must be more than a Sunday morning salutation. “Our post-Christian neighbors need to hear and see and taste and feel authentic Christianity, hospitality spreading from every Christian home that includes neighbors in prayer, food, friendship, childcare, dog walking, and all the daily matters upon which friendships are built.” These are words from a former lesbian atheist who became a follower of Christ through the loving witness of Christians who offered a new way to believe and a new family of faith (Rosaria Butterfield, *The Gospel Comes with a House Key*, 95).

Why is this “new family” so important? Because the stakes are so high! Jesus had religious officials come from the capital of Judaism with a most obscene charge. Their hope was to cancel Jesus’ popularity and legitimacy. The Pharisees admitted that Jesus was successfully casting out demons (3:22) and healing (3:2). They questioned the source of his supernatural powers. They said he was in league with the highest of all demonic forces, *Beelzebul*. They claimed Jesus was performing magic using dark forces. The name *Beelzebul* represented pagan gods who resided in high places. This name in the LXX (Greek OT) equated this god with flies and dung (2Ki 1:2). This scatological insult would be a most offensive slur to a religious teacher. Where charges of law-breaking failed (2:23-3:6), character assassination began.

Jesus did not return insult for insult. Instead, Jesus answered profane charges with simple logic. Clearly, Jesus was disrupting the demonic world with his frequent exorcisms, which the Pharisees tacitly acknowledged. Jesus unpacked the ludicrous logic of a king banishing all his subjects. At some point such a practice would implode a kingdom. First century hearers would be intimately familiar with dynasties devouring themselves. Herod the Great, who killed a number of his own family, was a perfect example.

Rather than use the powers of Satan, Jesus was devastating this enemy left and right. “The name Satan is transliterated into the Greek of the NT thirty-four times. He is also called *diábolos* (‘devil’) thirty-six times in accordance with the practice of the LXX translators, who apparently chose this term because its root meaning is ‘accuse’ (cf. Lk. 16:1, where *diabállō* denotes the accusation brought against

the unjust steward). Other names for Satan in the NT include: “tempter” (Mt. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5), *Beelzebul* (e.g., Mt. 12:24), *Belial* (2 Cor. 6:15), ‘god of this world’ (2 Cor. 4:4; cf. Jn. 12:31), ‘power of darkness’ (Lk. 22:53), ‘prince of the power of the air’ (Eph. 2:2), ‘adversary’ (1 Pet. 5:8), ‘deceiver’ (Rev. 12:9), ‘the ancient serpent’ (e.g., 20:2), ‘father of lies’ (Jn. 8:44)” (D. P. Fuller, “Satan.” *ISBE*, vol. 4, 342).

As exalted as Satan was in spiritual terms, Jesus’ frequent display of dominance was proof that Jesus of Nazareth (1:24) was stronger than Satan. Jesus was binding him and plundering his house, casting out Satan’s minions and releasing their captives from demonic possession. The house of Satan was falling, not because of internal division, but because of a full frontal attack from the anointed Son of God! Demons frequently said as much with great fear (1:24, 5:7).

Jesus concluded his defense with the use of his often used “Truly” statement (see note on v. 27). Jesus contrasted the vile accusation made against him with a return to the subject of forgiveness (Mark 2:1-6). Many often miss the bold pronouncement that Jesus made here that all sins and all slanders can be forgiven. Jesus, as the Son of Man, has the authority to perform forgiveness that only God can do. Even Satan, with all his spiritual bravado, cannot impede this unlimited forgiveness. Jesus’ power eclipses Satan’s because it can forgive.

Jesus highlighted the absurdity and obscenity of the Pharisees’ charge by stating that God would not tolerate the attribution of evil to his holiness. The Holy Spirit is mentioned only a few times in the Gospel of Mark (1:8-12; 12:36; 13:11). Equating the work of Jesus with Satan is the same as accusing God of being evil. Associating Jesus with the “Lord of the Flies” was the equivalent of labeling God himself with such offensive profanity. This type of evil attribution is truly blasphemy and results in “everlasting judgment.” Because this attribution thrives and remains in unbelief, it cannot be forgiven while doing so. Not all Pharisees persisted in unbelief. Many trusted in Christ. Those who did not believe were condemned, their unrelenting unbelief becoming eternal sin, especially after death (Lk 16:19-34).

Someone committing an “unpardonable sin” is not someone who has a momentary lapse of bad judgment or gives in to a temptation. Unbelief, even persistent, can be transformed by the power of God into saving belief. Unbelief that refuses to budge and “doubles down” on its rejection of Christ may be beyond forgiveness. To use crude obscenities about the nature and work of Christ as an expression of prideful unbelief could become unpardonable because of repeated rejection of Christ’s offer of salvation. After death, all unforgiven sin becomes “unpardonable.” There are no second chances for forgiveness beyond this life.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 21 *family*

"This is the first reference to Jesus' family in Mark's gospel. They will be described more fully in 6:3 as consisting of his mother Mary, four brothers (James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon), and at least two sisters (see discussion there). The omission of his father may imply that Joseph was deceased by this time . . . In a Middle Eastern culture where honor and shame were among the highest of values, their purpose would also be to remove Jesus from a situation that could reflect badly on the family" (Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, ZECNT, 167-168).

v. 22 *teachers of the law*

"Their coming from Jerusalem in this instance (also 7:1), the seat of temple authority, plus their frequent mention with the chief priests (8:31; 10:33; 11:18; 11:27; 14:1, 43, 53; 15:1, 31), signifies *official* opposition arrayed against Jesus. Their opposition is bolder and more confrontational in the present narrative. No longer do they pose insinuating questions (2:7). They have formed a virulent judgment: Jesus 'is possessed by Beelzeboul,' and 'by the prince of demons he is driving out demons.' . . . They do not deny Jesus' power to perform miracles, nor do they accuse him of being an imposter. They indeed recognize his power to perform miracles, but they impugn the *source* of his power" (James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*. PNTC, 119).

v. 22 *Beelzebul*

"The prince of demons, which suggests that the Jerusalem scribes understand Beelzebul as another name for Satan . . . In the Old Testament, 2 Kings 1:2-6 mentions as the name of a Philistine god 'Baal-Zebub', which can mean 'Baal the Prince' or 'Baal of the Exalted Dwelling'; in Ugaritic texts the Canaanite god Baal is known as *zbl ba'al* ('Exalted Baal'). The LXX [Septuagint] translates the name as *Baal myjian theon Akkaron*, 'Baal the Fly God of Ekron' (2 Kgs 1:2-3, 6), which is a contemptuous deformation of the Canaanite divine title" (Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Mark*, TNTC, 192-193).

v. 27 *strong man*

"The imagery of the 'strong man's house' in v. 27 is likely a wordplay on 'Beelzeboul' in v. 22, that is, 'the house or dynasty of Baal, the evil god' . . . The mission of Jesus is not fulfilled in compromise or coexistence, but in invading and conquering Beelzeboul, 'the head of the house' (Matt 10:25), 'binding' (NIV, 'ties up') Satan and 'plundering' (NIV, 'carry off') his 'possession.' Following the image of Beelzeboul as the master of the house, the 'possessions' of the strong man must refer to demonic spirits, who, like their master, have met a superior master in Jesus" (Edwards, 121-122). Also see Isaiah 49:24-26.

v. 28 *sins . . . slander*

"Refers more specifically to sinful acts than to sin in general. This expression may have sins against other human beings as its focus, particularly when combined with 'all blasphemies [NIV 'every slander'],' which has God as the primary object. This saying, therefore, speaks forgiveness to all humanity for all sins committed against God and other human beings. One could not imagine a more universal or comprehensive expression of forgiveness" (Guelich, 178-179).

v. 29 *blasphemes*

"Jesus now reveals that it is his accusers who are guilty of blasphemy because of their hardness of heart (3:5), because they have attributed God's work in Jesus' ministry to Satan. This is a deliberate refusal on their part to acknowledge the activity of the Spirit in Jesus' ministry. It is ironic that those so adept in defining what sin is and who debated what sins are unforgivable were themselves guilty of the one unpardonable sin. In rejecting what the Spirit was doing in the ministry of Jesus, the scribes were rejecting God . . . In the present context [unpardonable sin] refers to attributing Jesus' exorcisms to the work of Satan, but what is it about this that caused it to be an unpardonable sin? Perhaps it is because the act of blaspheming the work of the Spirit is to resist his work in the human heart, and without the Spirit's work, repentance and faith are impossible . . . Thus to blaspheme the Spirit's work, which seeks to lead a person to faith, is unforgivable in that it makes faith impossible" (Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, BECNT, 186-187).

v. 29 *Spirit*

"One of the very rare references to the Spirit outside the prologue—indeed, the only one which relates the Spirit to the ministry of Jesus. It is, v. 29 will imply, through the Spirit that Jesus is able to overcome demonic power. The 'binding' of the [strong man] is being achieved not simply by a man, but by a man in whom the Spirit of God is working. The exorcisms thus reveal the essentially spiritual dimension of the ministry of Jesus. That is why it is so serious a matter to pervert their meaning into a Satanic conspiracy" (R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, NIGTC, 174).

v. 29 *eternal sin*

"Jesus as God's Son has been authorized by God's Spirit. Whoever, like the scribes, can look at him and say, 'This is the devil'; or, conversely, whoever can look at the devil and call him God's Son, as does Milton's Satan, who 'felt how awful goodness is' and said, 'Evil, be thou my Good,' that person is hopelessly lost. This is 'an eternal sin' (v. 29) since anyone who, willingly or not, cannot distinguish evil from good and good from evil, darkness from light and light from darkness, is beyond the pale of repentance . . . In addressing the warning of 3:28-30 to the scribes (see v. 22), Mark signifies the unique pitfall that this sin can pose for *religious* people" (Edwards, 123).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Despite what others negatively say about Jesus, he has defeated God's chief enemies and offers forgiveness of all sins to all people, so beware that you don't miss his forgiveness through obnoxious unbelief.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?
2. What does this passage teach me about myself?
3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

When my youngest was a baby, I wanted to attend a Bible study, but unfortunately, they didn't offer children's programming. I ran into a church friend and her teenage daughter in the grocery store parking lot and the good-idea lightbulb popped on. For a year this sweet, young girl came to my home and cared for my son so I could attend Bible study. Not only was I blessed by knowing my son was well cared for, but a beautiful friendship began between the two of us that I still enjoy today. At her high school graduation party, her mom thanked me for "sharing" her daughter. I never thought of it that way, but what an honor. Being part of Jesus' family means so much more than walking alongside fellow believers; it means sharing the ups-and-downs of life together. That might look like a home group raising children together or a community group praying for one another. It could present itself as financial support during a rough patch or food delivery during sickness. Maybe it's a simple letter of encouragement in the mail or a difficult conversation that no one else is willing to have. One of the biggest factors of children feeling part of a church is their involvement in biblical community. Not only is it important your child attend church regularly, but including them in your home group plays a significant factor as well. What are you doing to foster community for your family during these times? How can we help?

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Mark 3:20-30.

1. What did the crowds, Jesus' family, and teachers of the law think about Jesus?
2. What happens when a kingdom is divided against itself?
3. Who did Jesus call his family?

What Do You Think?

Why did Jesus frequently talk in parables?

What Do You Do?

Have your family compete in a three-legged race. How hard/easy is it to work together? Does being family help you want to work as a team, or do you still want your own way? What is the difference between your family in your home and your Biblical family?

CORE COMPETENCY: Worship

I celebrate God for who He is and what He has done for me.

MEMORY VERSE: Psalm 34:1-5

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for 12 years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Central Bible Church in 1998. He and his wife Ruth have one son, Zach.

Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have four children: Elijah, Levi, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

Eric Wright (Th.M. Dallas Theological Seminary) guest author.

The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

© 2020 Central Bible Church.

Material researched, written and supervised by Dr. Tom Bulick. All Scripture referenced from the New International Version unless otherwise noted. This resource is freely distributed and may be copied without permission.



**CENTRAL
BIBLE CHURCH**

8001 Anderson Boulevard
Fort Worth, Texas 76120
817-274-1315
wearecentral.org