

Mark 3

Written by K B Napier
Wednesday, 14 July 2010 10:52

It did not take very long before Jesus Christ became the target of hatred, harassed by the legalistic scribes and Pharisees. He had only been preaching a short while, when local religious 'spies' were following Him to gather evidence of his supposed sinfulness.

When Jesus confounded the local scribes and Pharisees, they sent for the 'higher' scribes and Pharisees based in Jerusalem. Jesus confounded these, also. But, when a Christian confounds the enemy, Satan, he will bring all the weapons of spiritual warfare against him that he can muster. So, Jesus was made subject to a murderous conspiracy from the first few months of His ministry.

Let all Christians understand that if they do not make a stand for Christ openly, they become weak, and liable to fall. If they do not stand they will not be attacked – and the Christian who is not attacked is highly suspect! We should never go out of our way to bring on attacks. On the other hand, we should not hide away and be afraid to say anything for fear of the consequences. Christians are the automatic target of Satan and of all who are unsaved! So, when a Christian says he has never known trouble or attacks, it is proof he is hiding his supposed salvation and is not making a stand for Jesus Christ. Standing for truth will ALWAYS bring attacks. Trying to be quiet does not bring trouble, and is proof either of a fake salvation, or of extreme spiritual cowardice.

God will fill the mouths of His children when they are made the subject of scrutiny, scorn and hatred. He will give strength to the faithful. But, those who say and do nothing will be devoid of all godly benefits and rewards. Which are you – godly or fake?

Verse 1-6

1.

And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand.

2.

And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him.

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3.

And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth.

4.

And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.

5.

And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

6.

And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

Still in the area of Capernaum, Jesus again entered the synagogue. He did not go just to sit quietly and accept whatever went on. He knew His time on earth was very short, and this urgency was always in His mind. How many Christians go to a church every week (or more) just to sit quietly and accept whatever comes from the front, even if what is said or done is not consistent with scripture, and if they go home doing nothing?

I still remember when my uncle, an ex-Pentecostal pastor, had to attend other churches after he lost his pastorate. He went into a local Church of Wales church (because there were no other churches in his area) and there was a visiting priest. My uncle endured only a part of the sermon before he stood up and stopped the service by shouting out in protest against the heresy coming from the priest. He told the priest in no uncertain terms that he should not be in the pulpit and that what he said was against God's word. Would YOU do that, in ANY church, including your own? Many heresies and bad teachings are allowed free passage in our churches, by Christians who 'do not like to make waves'. God forbid that any of us should remain silent when God's word is being maltreated and abused, and preachers or teachers speak heresy and worse.

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So, Jesus was there to preach. When He was in the synagogue, he saw a man who had a withered hand, wasted away physically, and useless, because it was shrunken and dried (as the adjective, *xēros* tells us). This would have made him unemployable.

As always, the scribes and Pharisees were present. They followed Him daily, to see if he would, in their eyes, act sinfully or against their own teachings. They now waited to see if Christ would heal a man on the Sabbath, so that they could accuse Him of sin. This was not just a desire to accuse; it had the force of a legal charge. They wanted to take Jesus to court to answer for His supposed heresy. In other words, they watched so they could be actual witnesses at any future court hearing before the Sanhedrin. If Jesus healed on the sabbaton (Sabbath day), it was clear evidence of wicked disregard for the Mosaic laws, or so they thought and hoped: they “watched”; in this text, *paratēreō* is used in a bad sense, meaning to ‘watch insidiously’ and ‘scrupulously’.

In those days even healing was considered to be ‘work’, so was liable to accusation, though to heal meant to restore to health. Their hatred of Jesus took precedence over any good He performed. It is like this today, as evil people watch Christians specifically to accuse them and bring their witness to nothing.

Jesus knew what would happen, but He was not deterred. He commanded the man to come forward. Then, knowing He was talking mainly to his waiting accusers, He asked if it was ‘lawful to do good, or evil, on the sabbaton; to save a life or to kill?’ The answers were obvious and so no-one said a word. The words “held their peace” means more than staying silent; it also means they were struck dumb by Jesus’ statement. The word for ‘to be silent’, *siōpaō*, means their silence was involuntary – they were literally unable to speak, such was the authority of the Spirit upon them. If they had merely remained quiet voluntarily, the word *sigē* would have been used. Such is the power of God when even a true believer speaks from God!

We have shown thus far – and we are only up to chapter three – that Jesus told people He was God several times. He will continue to do so, though modern detractors try to say He never said He was God! Another thing they hate to admit, is that Jesus was ever angry. Yet, in verse 5, we see exactly this: He was angry! This was a righteous anger, an anger *all* Christians should have when faced with the wicked denial of God’s grace and mercy, and when sinful men reject God’s word actively. I have lost count of the many ‘Christians’ who have told me I should just ‘shut up’!

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Jesus glared at the people, and especially at the scribes and Pharisees, because of the “hardness of their hearts”. By anger is meant that Jesus was hotly indignant; it does not, and never means, He lost his temper. Humans tend to lose their tempers when angry, but that is an emotional reaction, not a Christian response. Most Christians think Jesus was only ‘meek and mild’; far from it! Jesus was a tough man, and was not afraid to speak His mind or to act (as in the overturning of the money-changers’ tables).

He was angry because He was grieved, not because of any other reason. He was grieved because, as God’s chosen people, they had hard hearts. The meaning of ‘hardness’ is the opposite of our current word, osteoporosis, which means softness or brittleness of bones. ‘Hardness’ means without mental discernment; a blunted perception, callousness and stubbornness. Are YOU grieved by such reactions in fellow Christians? Does it cause you to be angry, like Jesus? You SHOULD be! It is an anger that should make you speak out against their hardness. This hardness affects everything: thinking, emotions, reactions.

The man stretched out his withered hand and it was immediately healed and made good again. Several facts come out of this remarkable incident: Jesus did not touch the man, nor did He say anything; the man had knowledge given to him that he would be healed; a withered limb is ‘dead and can never be made whole again, but in this case it was instantly healed as he stretched the limb out, and it grew back to full length, with new muscles, etc. This occurred before the very eyes of the scribes and Pharisees!

Though struck dumb, the Pharisees immediately went to find the Herodians, to talk about how to destroy Jesus. The Herodians were strong supporters of Herod, who would do anything to maintain his reign, because it gave them favours and power. To them, someone like Jesus was a troublesome agitator who had to be got rid of. The Herodians could have been either courtiers (whose livelihoods depended on their allegiance to Herod) or soldiers.

On the other hand, it seems more likely they belonged to a political party who supported the Herods. Either way, the Herodians and the Pharisees were natural enemies of good. Whilst the Pharisees hated Rome and those who ruled on its behalf, they acknowledged that keeping the status quo was better for them than upsetting the Romans or Herod. So, getting rid of the ‘upstart’ Jesus was now a priority. They wanted to “destroy him” – to be completely rid of Him – to kill. It did not matter to them if this was done secretly or by a judge, but it had to be done away from the eyes of the presently adoring public.

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Did you realize that, if you are a true Christian, there are people out there who wish you only harm, or who wish you dead? Mostly, they do nothing about it, but they hate active Christians who openly express their faith and opposition to evil! Stand up often and they may indeed end your life or make sure you suffer. Think about that, because it should teach you not to trust unsaved people, even if they appear to be 'nice' to your face.

Verses 7-12

1.

But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judaea,

2.

And from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him.

3.

And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him.

4.

For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues.

5.

And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.

6.

And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.

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Following that synagogue encounter, Jesus and His disciples went to the shores of Galilee. Once again, huge crowds followed, from Galilee and from the rest of Judaea. They came from everywhere, including Jerusalem, Idumaea (beyond southern Palestine), from the east of Jordan, from the coastal regions such as Tyre and Sidon... His fame had spread widely and everyone wanted to see what it was all about. No wonder Jews thought He might at last be the Messiah... though their version of the Messiah was that of a military commander who would destroy the Romans.

Jesus, seeing how large the crowd was, told his disciples to borrow a ship they could use, to avoid being crushed or pushed into the sea. The people were boisterous – they wanted healing, and many with ‘plagues’ were pushing forward just to touch Him, in the hope of healing taking place.

Those possessed with unclean spirits/demons fell down before Jesus, saying “You are the Son of God”. This was another admission that Jesus was indeed God. In my lifetime I have had a similar thing happen, where possessed people fell on their knees before me, not because I was Jesus, but because I was a believer who knew Jesus and who had the Holy Spirit within. Some crawled and slunk their way around the edges of a room, to hide under furniture, pleading with me not to harm them. Others kept away from me. Others shrank from me in fear, wailing to be left alone. Demons are afraid of Jesus! Therefore, they are also afraid of genuine Christians, because they have the authority and power to cast them out.

Who is the “them” Jesus ordered not to make Him known? Was it the demons, or the people in general? We cannot really tell from this text, but it seems He was talking to the demons, because one meaning for “them”, *autos*, is ‘the same’. That is, the same as He was just talking to. This was not confined to demons but to those He healed. What did Jesus mean by not making Him known? He meant that He did not wish to openly discuss His divinity at that time, because He still had work to do; hence He did not wish to be *phaneros* – to be plainly recognized or manifest as God... at least, not yet.

There are times when Christians ought not be so open, but should be quiet or stay in the background. This is something only the Holy Spirit can direct; it is not the same as being afraid. Some think they should always shout out against sinners. This is not what should happen every time! We should only speak out if the Spirit says so.

Verses 13-19

1.

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And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him.

2.

And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,

3.

And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils:

4.

And Simon he surnamed Peter;

5.

And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder:

6.

And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite,

7.

And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into an house.

We may assume from the text, given the huge numbers who followed Him, that Jesus and the disciples sailed to the other shore to escape the crowds. However, it might also mean He simply sailed a little way up the same shore.

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Jesus then walked up a mountain (either west, perhaps towards Chorazin, or east above Bethsaida Julias) with the disciples and “called unto him whom he would”. This implies that He chose some out of many disciples, to be His closest companions or Apostles. The rest remained ‘ordinary’ disciples.

He “ordained twelve” to be His constant companions, who He would then “send... forth to preach.” He needed to have a group of men who He could teach, to enable them to preach the truth. As Jews, they had to be ‘deprogrammed’ so that they could overcome all odds and instruct others. That is why they were to be sent out to preach: they would become ambassadors for Christ, Who, as a man, could not be everywhere at the same time. Did He choose twelve because that number represents the twelve tribes of Israel? This text does not tell us, but it appears to be the case, given the texts in Revelation concerning the foundation stones of the city of God.

Jesus “ordained twelve”. ‘Ordained’ in this text means to make into something (i.e. Apostles); to make them into something else for His use; to appoint to be preachers in His name. Not only did He give them authority and power to preach the Gospel, but He also gave them power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons. In itself, this text does NOT have application to all believers, because it is a very specific ordaining of twelve men. The fact of being gifted by God comes later, especially in texts written by Paul.

We are then given the names of all twelve Apostles:

The first mentioned is **Simon**, who Jesus decided to call **Peter**. The fact that Peter was named first does not in itself give him precedence.

Someone

had to be named first! Then came the brothers,

James

and

John

, sons of Zebedee. Jesus gave them a new surname (i.e. an ‘added name’) – Boanerges. This means ‘sons of thunder’. It is assumed by many that Jesus was referring to the ease with which they arose in temper or (as in the Arabic) tumult, but this is only a guess! It might mean they had fiery temperaments, but it might also mean they had real zeal and power to do spiritual combat, as soldiers. We cannot tell. If anything, it is Peter who was fiery.

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Jesus also named **Andrew** ('manly': brother of Peter); **Philip** ('lover of horses'); **Bartholomew** ('son of Tolmai');

Matthew

('gift of Jehovah': he may, or may not, be the Levi mentioned in chapter 2: it is highly possible);

Thomas

('a twin');

James

('Supplanter', son of Alphaeus. Also known as 'James the Less');

Thaddaeus*

('large hearted; courageous');

Simon

the Canannite ('a rock or stone', thus also 'Peter'; possibly referred to as 'the Canaanite' to distinguish him from Simon Peter); and the infamous

Judas Iscariot

"which also betrayed him". After the naming of the twelve they went into an house... we do not know who it belonged to. Sadly, Judas bore the glorious name meaning 'Judah' ('he shall be praised'); Iscariot means 'men of Kerioth'. He was, of course, the man who betrayed Christ, and paid the price for it.

(* By comparing with Luke and Acts, this person also appears to be known as Judas, or Lebbaeus. He is the author of the Book of Jude).

Verses 20-30

1.

And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.

2.

And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.

3.

And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.

4.

And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan?

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5.

And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

6.

And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

7.

And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end.

8.

No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house.

9.

Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme:

10.

But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation:

11.

Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

After they came down from the mountain, the crowd again began to converge on Jesus. The word "again" implies that the mountain may have been on the west side of the top of Galilee – the crowd being the same one that surrounded Him before. The disciples and Jesus were trying to eat food, but were prevented from doing so by so many people crushing inwards.

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For unknown reasons, Jesus' friends, in the place he stayed at before, heard He was being besieged and somehow feared He was 'beside himself' or distressed. Of course, this was not possible, but that is what they thought, so they went to find Him to try and save Him from fear. They were mistaken, but it was their human emotions coming to the fore, with the best of intentions. However, they had a poor view of Jesus if they thought He could be made afraid or anxious!

How many of us attribute flawed human emotions to Christ? How many of us think of God in our own human, frail terms? To think of Him in anything but terms of divinity is wrong, because if He experienced anxiety, He would not have been God. Jesus certainly experienced physical exhaustion, etc., but not once did He experience frailty of mind or heart, for such frailty is the product of sin.

As if to capitalise on the idea that Jesus was somehow becoming deranged or out of control, the inevitable scribes were there to accuse Jesus of having Satan as His master. They had traveled all the way from Jerusalem to accuse Him. It is likely that the scribes of Capernaum thought they should bring in the 'big guns' against this threat to national security and religion!

These scribes said "He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils." This may be two separate accusations: Beelzebub means 'lord of the house', because Satan can take control of a person. But, it is the Aramaic version of Baal-zebub ('lord of the fly'), a false god worshipped by the Philistines, supposedly having the power to drive away flies. Some think the Jews gave the name to Satan as a sign of contempt. The link between Satan and Beelzebub is not actually proved: the title may just have been the name of a demon or false god. However, the title 'prince of the devils' *does* refer to Satan. That is why I think the scribes accused Jesus of two charges – having a demon Himself and also owing allegiance to Satan.

Jesus, again knowing what they were saying, called them to listen, using parables. Many Christians assume Jesus used parables in order to describe a spiritual truth simply. This is not always true. Parables, or metaphors, were also used by Jesus to confound wicked men, so they could *not* understand. That is, He sometimes used parables as a judgment upon those who hated Him (as in Matthew 13:13).

Jesus put a very straightforward question to the scribes: "How can Satan cast out Satan?" How

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could Satan cast *himself* out of someone? He is not God and cannot be in two places at the same time! He is either in a person, or outside that person, but he cannot be in both places at the same time. Therefore, he could not cast himself out! This appears to imply that the scribes suggested Jesus was 'Satan'.

Satan, Satanas, is the Aramaic for Satan, based on the Hebrew satan (note uncial 's'). This is the name given to the leader or prince of demons, Lucifer. Though many commentaries and dictionaries refer to Satan as 'superhuman', he is not. Rather, he is sub-heavenly, or less than divine. He is not 'superhuman' because he is a different kind of creature to humans. The most primitive root of satan is also satan, but the verb; it means to act as an adversary, to resist and to oppose, which describes Satan accurately. Adversary also means to 'lay in wait' with a trap.

After mentioning this obvious problem in their thinking, Jesus then asked the scribes 'How can a kingdom stand if it fights itself?' and 'If a house is divided, it will fall' and 'If Satan attacks himself, he is divided and will finish himself off.'

He then expanded on this theme. 'No thief can get into a powerful man's house and steal his goods, unless he firstly ties-up the man. Only when the powerful owner is tied up can the thief steal the goods.'

Truly, Jesus said, 'Men will be forgiven all kinds of sin, even blasphemy... but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven, and will suffer eternal damnation.' Jesus said this to the scribes because they accused Him of having an unclean spirit. His reason for saying these things is the key to understanding what He meant. He meant this: Satan is the strong man. Because of his power someone who tries to get into his house to take things away, must bind him up – and this must mean whoever does that is even more powerful... the Holy Spirit. Therefore, to say the Holy Spirit is evil and satanic is the greatest sin of them all and will not be forgiven.

Jesus Christ paid a great price for the souls of men. What Satan thought was weakness – His death – was His greatest triumph, for by it Christ conquered death and Satan. Therefore, if any person says the Holy Spirit/God is Satan or evil, he is wicked above all salvation and will enter hell. There are certainly people in this world who defy God and tell others that God is not holy, or that Jesus is not the Saviour, or that the Spirit is a deceiver. These people are tied to Satan's back forever, and will never be released from their reward, Hell. Calling the Holy Spirit 'Satan', or implying that His word or works are evil, is, then, the 'unforgivable sin'.

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In the mid-1990s, when I was opposing the Toronto Blessing, charismatics accused me of this very sin. It was a fearful thing to say to me, and even today it is repeated. But, I knew, had, and still have, the total conviction that I was true to God. I was not blaspheming Him and His work, but was fighting against the demonic, whose task it was to deceive me with lies and accusations. God has since shown the so-called 'Blessing' to be a foul deception, vindicating my stand for the Lord. God kept me unshakeable. If I had listened and 'repented', I would effectively have given in to Satan and paid him respect. As it was, the Holy Spirit kept me true through countless accusations, and gave me strength to carry on.

In the past I have found that whilst Satan does not oppose himself and does not cast himself out, or his demons, he can certainly fool many. He does this through the wicked actions and words of false prophets, false healers and exorcists. In a sense, he plays a game, by going along with the various incantations and rites, enjoying the deception of both the one supposedly casting out, and the one who has supposedly been relieved of demons! In this way, people will come to rely on false exorcists and prophets. They rely on spiritualists, and thus keep going back, believing 'God' is behind it all. Satan did not cast out demons by demons: he just plays the game, so that everyone thinks the non-Christian can have power over him. In this way, he gains more power and authority.

How he must laugh when charismatics try to cast out 'territorial spirits'! The foolish charismatics literally drive to a spot in a city and claim to 'cast out' demons who they think rule it. They even laugh at Satan and say they are more powerful! Rather than crush them, Satan lets them carry on, knowing they are deceived and vainly acting out a silly myth, one that draws them even closer to Satan. When you think that even the arch-angel Michael dared not oppose Satan in his own power, it is fearful to think charismatics laugh at Satan and tell him they are greater than he is! Only genuine Christians have the power and authority to cast out demons, but they do it in the name of Jesus Christ, Who is greater than Satan. To scorn Satan and boast to him is not just unwise – it is unscriptural.

Verses 31-35

1.

There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him.

2.

And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.

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3.

And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren?

4.

And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!

5.

For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

After this devastating argument, someone came from outside the house and told Jesus His mother and brethren (brothers and sisters) were waiting for Him outside. The crowd who were inside, sitting on the floor, told Him His relatives were there. Jesus then uttered some remarkable words: "Who is my mother, or my brethren?"

The astonished people then heard Him say, probably as He waved his arms over them, "Behold my mother and my brethren!" Was He distancing Himself from His earthly family? No, not a bit of it! Rather, He was making a very strong theological point, that everyone who believes in Him are His family. "For whoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother."

At another time, He told His disciples that only those who obeyed His commandments are His people. On another occasion, we are told we (the Church) are the bride, and He is the bridegroom. All who are saved are His brethren, of the closest kind; as close as a brother, sister or mother.

Is this the way you look upon yourself? Many claim to belong to Christ's family, but they do not. Many religions claim to be of God, but they are not. In reality, very few belong to God... just a remnant. The rest are doomed. This is why we must make very sure of our salvation, by acting it out truly, in faith. Simply being good will not do it; that would just be a lie. Only a genuinely

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saved person can work out his own salvation in this life, meaning that he believes and obeys. Those who continually sin are suspect.

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