

THE INCONTROVERTIBLE EVIDENCE

⁷ But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judaea, ⁸ 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. ⁹ And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him. ¹⁰ For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues. ¹¹ And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. ¹² And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.

... But Jesus ... In summing up the contribution of the Gospel writers, the apostle John wrote, Jn. 20:30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: ³¹ But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name ... 21:25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. ... What a legacy! Here is the purpose of the Gospel, - here is what it is all about ... that everyone who reads the account of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ would believe He is the Son of God, - and that is why the Holy Spirit inspired Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to write. And yes, - as John informs us, - there were many other documents written concerning Him ... Church History has a plethora of documents, - some more reputable than others. They are known as the 'apocryphal gospels'. They are not considered inspired, as are the twenty-seven books of our New Testament, and yet some of them give us an insight into the development of doctrines and conduct within the Early Church.

For example, there were the Jewish Messianic Gospels, - the Gospel of the Ebionites, the Gospel of the Nazarenes, and the Gospel of the Hebrews. There was the Gospel of Peter, the Gospel of Nicodemus, the Gospel of Bartholomew, the Epistle of Barnabas, Epistles of Clement, Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians ... the Didache and *many* others. ... Also, when Paul was writing to the church in Colosse, he instructed them, Col. 4:15 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house. ¹⁶ And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the *epistle* from Laodicea.

Another 'extra-Biblical', - or 'extra-canonical', - source quoted in the New Testament is found in Heb. 13:5 for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. You will not find Jesus saying those words in either Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John ... But, what Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John *were* doing was clearly presenting, - under the 'editorship' of the Holy Spirit, - Jesus as the Son of God, so those who would hear the message would be confronted by the Gospel and, - in the will of God, - come to a saving believing faith in Christ.

Now, it is a fact that not everyone who met Jesus, or was healed by Him, or by Him demons were exorcised, came to a saving faith. Mary Magdalene is an example of one who did, but generally, most of the people who were healed returned unchanged, - spiritually speaking, - into the life from which they came. Usually, they went away changed on the outside, but remained unchanged in the inside, for example, nine of the ten lepers. So, in reality, - overall, - **He came unto his own, and his own received him not (Jn. 1:11)**.

Also, to heal and to teach great doctrines was not the primary purpose of Jesus coming into this world ... He was sent by His Father, - Whom He obeyed with perfect obedience, - to seek and to save the lost (Lk. 19:10), and to become a ransom for many (Mt. 20:28). And that is our purpose in preaching the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ today ... for the salvation of souls, and for the building up of God's people. And we must preach that Gospel as it is clearly presented in God's Word. Spurgeon told a student, "No Christ in your sermon, sir? Then go home, and never preach again until you have something worth preaching".

And that is the truth! ... We can never hear often enough that Jesus died for us, and rose again. If the Gospel story was ever in danger of becoming boring for you ... 'pinch yourself' spiritually, for there is a problem brewing. If you start thinking you are hearing the Gospel too often and you are not as eager to listen to it anymore ... there's a serious problem developing ... Even in Heaven the message of the Gospel is the focus of God's Redeemed, and that is how it is throughout eternity. God's people never grow tired of it. For, when the incalculable number of the Elect is gathered around the throne ... they unceasingly sing the Gospel Redemption Songs of Victory, **Worthy is the Lamb that was slain (Rev. 5:12)**. They are praising the Saviour and remembering with perfect joy and gratefulness what He did for them at Calvary ... because what He did for them there paid their price of redemption that gained them entrance into Heaven's everlasting glory.

So, what is Mark doing here in 3:7-12? Well, very simply, he is summarising. He wants the reader to capture every word, and every thought, and every image he is presenting. This is too important to take lightly, and to read over too quickly. Eternity is forever ... and here is the great work of salvation Jesus did on earth so that you and I would be saved ... So, let's not rush it, he's telling his readers, "Slow down" ... For someone reading through his Gospel for the first time, this would have been a lot to take in. Mark wasn't writing about something that didn't matter ... something frivolous or immaterial. ...

He wasn't addressing the subject of whether or not Jesus was some kind of a hero, or another type of a 'god' ... Instead, Mark was writing, - as were Matthew, Luke and John, - to present Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the only *God!* He is declaring and confirming the deity of Christ. This Christ has healed the sick. He has released the imprisoned from the possession of demons. He has taught with unparalleled authority ... and Mark is saying here, "Let's slow down, consider what He has done and what He has said, and take all in so everyone who hears and reads this account of the Saviour would believe in Him to be saved". *That is how John described it, these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name (20:31).*

Now, just consider the first century Jew reading Mark's Gospel for the first time, and how 'strange' it would have been. This was altogether different to how they had been brought up to believe. Their Jewish religion taught them to seek their salvation by attendance at the temple and the synagogue, by keeping the festivals and the Law ... They were taught to gain Paradise by their works. They had no concept of a Saviour and a Redeemer ... Is. 53 was 'lost' on them, - they didn't understand it as God sending His Son to be the Man of Sorrows. Mark's message was new, and strange, to them ... difficult to believe!

Someone was saying to me recently how they could not understand why the Jews hated Jesus, for after all Jesus was a Jew. Yes, Jesus *was* a Jew ... and to understand His ministry you must remember that. Jesus was a Jew Who preached the Gospel of repentance to the Jews. He didn't preach a message any Pharisee would preach. He didn't come as some kind of a 'reformer' ... to reform Judaism and bring it back more into line with the Law of Moses. This wasn't a 'reformation' Christ was calling for, - Jesus wasn't a reformer ... instead, He was a *transformer* because He came to bring a *transformation* in the lives of those who would believe in Him. He didn't come to revamp the old ... He came with a message from God that was new, and at odds with the popular message of the day, and that was why He told Nicodemus, he must be born again to see the Kingdom of God (Jn. 3:7). You don't simply 'turn over a new leaf' ... you receive a new life! ... Complete salvation in Christ completely!

Many people today see their salvation in the same way these Jews would have seen it, that is, their salvation is depends upon how they can achieve it ... how they can work towards it and 'hope' they have done enough to please God through their efforts ... That is why it is equally as hard to get the Gospel across today, as it was to get it across to the people in ancient Galilee. ...

There is such a seemingly impenetrable wall of unbelief that is far too high to get over, and far too wide to get round, and far too thick to see any way through.

In essence, the Jewish hope for salvation is the way religion tries to bridge the gulf of man's hopelessness to God's holiness. It is all about hoping you can do enough ... but there is nothing about a Saviour Who died as the sinner's Sacrifice on the cross of Calvary, taking upon Himself our sin and our punishment that alone is sufficient to remove God's wrath. Sadly, the legacy of the Pharisees lives on in many who occupy pulpits today because they are preaching a 'gospel' of deception, deluding their congregations and leading them away from God towards a lost eternity in Hell.

That's what the Pharisees and the religious leaders were doing. They contradicted and denied the teachings of Jesus. They 'sowed doubts' into the minds of the people ... the very people whom Christ had come to heal and to save ... the very people who were naturally drawn out after Jesus, - the Pharisees polluted their minds! It did not change the fact, though, that the only Saviour is Christ ... not a temple, a synagogue, a church, not a priest, or not a minister ... not being circumcised or baptised as an infant, not having your name on a church roll ... Salvation is only by knowing Jesus Christ as Saviour.

In Mk. 3:7 Jesus brought His twelve disciples down onto the seashore to try and get away from the crowds for a little while. He wanted 'peace and quiet'. Don't forget, He is human as well as Divine, [Phil. 2:7 He took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men](#) ... for example, the Bible records He was thirsty, hungry, tired, He grieved, He wept, He endured pain ... and so, He said to His disciples, Let's go down by the seashore and choose a quiet spot to withdraw from the crowds.

He went down to the seashore ... to the stony beach, but He couldn't get away from the great multitudes, for they followed Him. Now, of course, being God, He could have escaped them ... but also, being man, His heart was touched by what He saw, - Mark later described how Jesus felt towards them, [6:34 they were as sheep not having a shepherd](#).

And so they came from a wide area to meet Jesus, [v.8 from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude](#). There had never been such popularity! No one had ever attracted the crowds Jesus gathered. He was a new and unique 'phenomenon'. You couldn't afford *not* to go and hear and see Him. This was a once in a lifetime opportunity ...

and so the crowds *flocked* to Him. ... How increasingly jealous this must have made the Pharisees! In their droves the people came from every direction. Not once did the Pharisees ever have such success ... and, - like, - *Who* was Jesus? He was a carpenter from up in the hills ... from Nazareth! He hadn't attended any theological school or divinity faculty in a university for training Pharisees ... and yet He was attracting such huge numbers ... Imagine, if they, - the Pharisees, - could harness the potential for their cause! They were seething with jealousy! ... And there He was ... He didn't have to put up posters, or announce where He would be having His next meeting ... The crowds thronged after Him, such was His attraction.

There is also another reason why Jesus wanted to withdraw from the crowds ... He has had three confrontations with the Pharisees in chapter two, and another with them in chapter three, after which they went and made a pact with the Herodians. With the rise in hostility against Him, He decided it would be wise for His own safety and the safety of His disciples to retire for a short time 'out of the limelight' to the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

However, this crowd were not going to be easily dispersed ... in fact, not dispersed at all! They had come from near and far to see Jesus, and to see Jesus, *they would!* ... v.7 a [great multitude](#) from Galilee followed him, and from Judaea, ⁸ And from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and *from* beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a [great multitude](#) ... This wasn't simply a few dozen, or even a few hundred ... This was *thousands*, even *tens* of thousands! They came from all over the place! And their one objective was to meet Jesus! ... That sounds good, - to meet Jesus, - but, they wanted to meet Jesus for their curiosity's sake ... And it wasn't that they wanted to hear what He said, they wanted to see what He would do.

... And this great multitude would have consisted of all types of different people. Some were rich, some were poor ... Some were educated, some were just simple-folk. Some were Jews, some were Gentiles. Some knew plenty about religion, some knew next-to-nothing. ... This crowd, indeed, comprised people 'from all over'!

Once again, isn't this something we also see today? People sometimes come along to church out of curiosity ... to find out what happens here. They tell us they 'might' start to come ... they are looking round a few places, and then they will decide. You see, that is what was happening with these people coming to *view* Jesus. ... Were they going to follow Him? ... Well, it all depended ...

They would have to see, they would have to make their minds up! The way they worked it out was ... what could He give them, rather than what *they* could give to *Him*. ...

Coming to discover whether a church is right for you or not, surely it has got to do with a few basic factors ... and one of the most important is that its people love the Lord and seek to serve Him in accordance with His Word ... It is not only about what you can take, it is also about what you can give. Spiritual 'leeches' are of no benefit to any congregation ... but that was what the majority of these people were, who were coming to Jesus. ... Look at them again ... Some of them came from the capital, Jerusalem, - they would have been fairly-well educated and secure in life. Others came from Idumea which was out in the desert country, to the south and east of Judah. Idumea was where the Edomites, - the descendants of Esau, - came from. They were a mixture of Jews and pagan idolaters, - Herod was one of them; they weren't popular, and generally they were quite secular. There were also people from beyond the Jordan, - on the eastern side of the river, running north to an area called Peraea. They were also a mixture of Jew and Gentile. And there were even people from away up in the north-west ... from Galilee to the Mediterranean shore, around the old seafaring world of the Phoenicians centred in Tyre and Sidon. This was a strictly Gentile region. ... So, indeed, they came from the length and breadth of the country, - ... a kind of 'liquorice all-sorts', - who came in their great multitudes to Jesus in Galilee. ... Nothing like this had ever happened before!

And so Jesus spake to his disciples, that a small ship [*πλοῦάριον*] should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him (v.9). The word for 'throng' is normally used to describe grapes being pressed ... and it shows how this crowd was pushing up against Jesus, and how they were *crushing* Him. ... They were *shoving* up against Him! They were clamouring over each other to touch Him, and to get healed by Him (v.10). They were a multitude ... but they weren't much better than a mob!

The demons were also present, and, - importantly, - they were in no doubt as to Who Jesus was. They knew and recognised Him to be the Son of God, *God*. Indeed, notice how the demons have featured thus far in this Gospel account: 1:13, Jesus was tempted of Satan; 1:23, the man with the unclean spirit in the synagogue; 1:32,34 the demon-possessed were brought to Him for deliverance; 1:39, He cast out many demons ... But also notice Christ's sovereignty and His supremacy over them, the unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.

Look again at these people ‘shoving’ against Him ... many of them quite obviously had ‘plagues’. The word for ‘plague’ is an interesting word (μάστιξ). Another word for translating it is ‘afflictions’. What it really means is explained in Acts 22:22, *And they gave him [i.e. Paul, when he had returned to Jerusalem] audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.* ²³ *And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air,* ²⁴ *The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging [i.e. whipping and beating, μάστιξ] ...* That is exactly the same word as we have in Mk. 3:10 which is translated by ‘plagues’. In other words, in Mk. 3:10 we could read, *insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had scourges.*

You see, that was how they understood their illnesses and disabilities, - they were like a ‘whip’, a ‘scourge’, and an ‘affliction’ that indicated God was judging them for something. It was a punishment. For example, Jn. 9:1 *And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.* ² *And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? ...* This man is being ‘scourged’, ‘afflicted’, ‘punished’, ‘plagued’ ... why? Was it because he did wrong, or was it because his parents did wrong? That was how they were taught! It also explains how they were in such a struggle to press against Jesus to be freed from their plagues/scourges ... They wanted to touch Him, for they believed that simply by touching Him they would be healed, cf. 6:56 *And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole. ...* Their religion, therefore, was like a ‘fix’ ... Come to Jesus to be rid of your troubles! ... Coming to Jesus was a ‘fix’, and not a commitment.

It’s quite sad though, isn’t it! It’s good they came to Him, but, - at the same time, - they came to Him for the wrong reasons. They were driven by a desire other than to listen and heed the Gospel He preached. They came and went without receiving Him as Saviour, Messiah, and Lord. They got what they wanted, and headed back off home, and left Jesus behind. It still happens. ... We are asked to pray for loved ones to be healed, but we are seldom asked to pray for their salvation.

Notice also the unclean spirits loitering in the crowd. They were hiding under the mantle of the people pressing up against Jesus ... but when He saw them, they couldn’t hide and they couldn’t run. When they saw Him they fell down before him at His feet, - *there* is the sovereignty of God! ...

The devil is powerful, but he is not all-powerful. Any authority he has is only given to him temporally because he has already been judged, and there is also coming a day when he will be taken and cast into the pit (Rev. 20:3), and after that he will be thrown into the lake of fire forever (Rev. 20:10)! He is defeated, and he is only allowed to go where God gives him permission, and he is only permitted to do what fulfils God's purposes. ...

And here in Mk. 3:11, the demons fell, - bowing, - at the feet of Jesus, - they lost their strength to stand, - and they cried, *Thou art the Son of God*. Paul declares, Phil. 2:10 at the name of Jesus *every* knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; ¹¹ And *that every* tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father. ... These demons could not stand in the presence of God the Saviour! James wrote, 2:19 *the devils also believe, and tremble*. ... They knew Who Jesus was! They *know* Who He is, and they know the power of His authority!

So, in these verses we see the popularity of Jesus, and the power of Jesus, and here are the demons testifying to the Person of Jesus. They knew the truth ... the people didn't, but the devils did! They were frightened of Jesus for they knew exactly Who He was.

In the closing verse of our present study, v.12, *he [Jesus] straitly charged them that they should not make him known*. The demons weren't to tell anyone. He didn't want them going round telling people Who He was, - He would have no association with them. Besides, it wasn't yet the time. God was working out His plan in the earthly ministry of His Son, and He needed no contribution from the devil's henchmen and associates. ... There is a lesson for us too, - we don't need to enter into alliances with the enemies of God's truth to see God's work being done! II Cor. 6:15 *what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?* That is also why James instructs the believer, 4:7 *Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you*.

So then, this is how Mark established the reason for writing his Gospel ... it was to proclaim Jesus Christ as the Son of God in such a way that none could avoid the evidence. ... Here it is ... now embrace it. ... And, the lesson for us also is to be more convinced of it, - and more persuaded of it, - than ever! I trust we are! Amen.