

# Dr. Robert C. Newman, Synoptic Gospels, Lecture 13, Controversy Passage

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Okay, here we are again. We're looking at the Synoptic Gospels. We're just about to begin the eleventh unit of the twelve.

We've looked so far at the historical Jesus, the Jewish background, introduction to exegesis in a narrative genre, authorship and date, and also characteristics of the Synoptics, exegeting Jesus' parables, the Gospels as literary works, the Synoptic problem, geography of Palestine and Jerusalem, exegeting miracle accounts, the biblical theology of the Synoptics, and now we want to look at exegeting controversy accounts, or perhaps more broadly, controversy and dialogue accounts. Controversy passages may take the form of either a narrative, in which Jesus responds in a dialogue fashion to opponents, or of a discourse, such as a report of Jesus' speech dealing with some controversial topic. In either case, there are certain things we need to think about in order to be sure we don't misunderstand what is happening.

So, I think these are some items to keep in mind. A first item to keep in mind has to do with what we might think of as historical background. Jesus may not be addressing the particular controversy you are concerned about since his first concern is with the controversy going on at his own time.

If you've heard anything about the new perspective on Paul, etc., that basically turns on something of that sort, that Paul's writings were used rather heavily in the Reformation as the reformers tried to deal with the legalism of the Roman Catholic Church, and certain people connected with the new perspective have said, but that's not the controversy that Paul had with the Judaizers at that particular time. Well, we're not going to jump into that particular one, but that sort of thing does occur, and you need to try and get a good feel for what's going on at the time. So that then is the item to keep in mind.

You need to see what the controversy was at the time that we're talking about. So, what sort of things do you need to see? You need to try and figure out who the opponents are and where they are coming from ideologically, theologically, practically, and something of that sort. Then, the next thing you try to figure out is Jesus' view of the matter, and that might actually involve looking at passages other than our particular passage that you're interpreting, preaching, teaching, or something of that sort.

Here, we need to be careful since Jesus' view of the matter might not be my view. After all, one of the purposes of Scripture is to correct where we are messed up in one way or another, and so that's what we kind of need to do. The purpose of

Scripture is not looking around for verses that you can use to lay on your opponents; it's for finding out what the Scripture is teaching, and you may have to lay that on yourself as well as on your opponents if you like.

A fifth matter to consider is how Jesus argues for his position. Here, it's helpful to remember that Jesus' opponents do not accept his claims; the disciples accept some of them and probably don't know what some of them are, so Jesus' opponents are not about to take his word for it. So, the question is, can we understand his words as actually arguing from where they are to where he is? Sixth, something that comes up I think, a number of times when we're trying to understand a writing that is from a different culture than ours is that, in this case, Jesus may leave out some steps in an argument that would be easily understood by his original audience or opponents, but doesn't follow that we will understand him unless we can supply those steps. I remember when I was working on my doctoral program at Cornell in journal articles, and the authors would say, from this equation, it may be easily shown that this is so, and leave out a bunch of steps, and you need to try and work through and try to figure out what those are if you want to understand what the writer is saying, well when you're talking to somebody that already has the same background you may not say something like that, but that might still be true.

So, Jesus might leave out some steps, but we need to be careful and try to see if we can figure those out. Lastly, once we understand what Jesus is saying to his original opponents and audience, we're ready to see how this might carry over to us and to others living today. One way of picturing this is as though the perspective back in ancient times is one horizon, and we're trying to take the perspective there and put it in our horizon and do it in a fair way that we're dealing with the biblical material in a satisfactory manner.

Well, as I've done for the miracles and the parables, I want to give a kind of a walk-through of the controversy and dialogue accounts in the synoptics. So, this is a list of passages that more or less fall into this genre. And here, one of them will be a controversy between John the Baptist and the Pharisees rather than between Jesus and his opponents, but the rest of them are Jesus.

So, the incident of Pericope, first of all, John the Baptist preaching in Matthew 3 and Luke 3, and there he's dealing with the Pharisees and some of the others who are not repenting basically, and so he's trying to get them to see the seriousness of the situation. Then there's the temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4 and Luke 4, temptation in the wilderness where you've got a dialogue and also a controversy, if you like, between Jesus and Satan and basically showing how Satan was trying to turn Jesus aside. The Sermon on the Mount in at least that section in chapters 5:17, through 47 is obviously some sort of a controversial account.

Jesus just said, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you'll never enter into heaven if you like. And then he says, you've heard that it was said, but I say unto you. And it appears from thinking through those that we're working with how the Pharisees handle various Old Testament passages or extend various Old Testament passages and what Jesus having to say regarding, well, this is what they're really about, and this is what you need to do with them.

Moving on, there's the dialogue controversy, if you like, regarding the man with leprosy in Matthew 8, Mark 1, and Luke 5. The cost of following Jesus in Matthew 8 and Luke 9. The healing of the paralytic, Matthew 9, Mark 2, and Luke 5. Remember, that's the one where they lower him down through the roof, and then Jesus says rather strikingly to him, Son, your sins are forgiven. The controversy then is basically in the minds of the Pharisees, who can forgive sin but God alone, etc. The calling of Matthew is, we probably call more dialogue, but in chapter 9 of Matthew and chapter 2 of Mark and 5 of Luke.

A question regarding fasting in the same three chapters: the dead girl and the sick woman are in Matthew 9, Mark 5, and Luke 8. John the Baptist question, are you the one who is to come, or should we look for someone else in Matthew 11 and Luke 7? Jesus as Lord of the Sabbath in Matthew 12, Mark 2, and Luke 6, which is one of the Sabbath controversies. Jesus went through the wheat fields, and his disciples picked grain and rubbed it with their hands and ate the food if they liked, which Pharisees would have seen as doing some reaping and winnowing and such.

The healing of the fellow with the shriveled hand is in Matthew 12, Mark 3, and Luke 6. The Jesus and Beelzebul controversy, and that's one we're going to come back and look at in some detail in Matthew 12, Mark 3, and Luke 11. The sign of Jonah in Matthew 12 and Luke 11. Jesus' mother and brothers are in Matthew 12, Mark 3, and Luke 8. Then, there is the controversy over clean and unclean in Matthew 15 and Mark 7. The Canaanite woman who comes to Jesus in Matthew 15 and Mark 7. There is a demand for a sign in Matthew 16 and Mark 8. Peter's confession is in Matthew 16, Mark 8, and Luke 9. Jesus predicts his death in Matthew 16, Mark 8, and Luke 9. Then, there is the demonized boy in Matthew 17, Mark 9, and Luke 9. Then there's the temple tax question in Matthew 17, not to be confused with the Oriental to Caesar passage, which is later on.

This one is the guys that go around collecting the half-shekel temple tax and basically ask if Jesus pays the temple tax, and Peter says, well, yeah, sure. And then when he comes back to Jesus, perhaps a few minutes or hour or so later, Jesus, if you like, beats him to the punch and says, from whom do kings of the earth collect taxes from their own royal family or from others? And Peter knows the answer to that, that the typical tax-exempt people in antiquity were people who were in the royal family and the nobility and that sort of thing. So, he says, he gives the right answer to that.

And then Jesus says, so the sons are free. And the implication then is that Jesus and his disciples don't need to pay the temple tax anymore. But he says, so that the people won't be offended, you go out and Peter goes out and catches this fish and it's got the right size coin in its mouth to pay for Jesus and Peter's temple tax.

The debate among the disciples over who is the greatest, we don't actually hear the details of the debate, but Jesus' response to it is given in Matthew 18, Mark 9 and Luke 9. And then the whole matter of divorce that comes up in Matthew 19 and Mark 10 leads to a dialogue. The question of the little children coming to Jesus, Matthew 19, Mark 10 and Luke 18. And the rich young ruler coming to Jesus in Matthew 19, Mark 10 and Luke 18.

The mother's request—that's James and John's mother's request in Matthew 20 and Mark 10. The cleansing of the temple in Matthew 21, Mark 11, and Luke 19. Jesus' authority is questioned after that, and that's in Matthew 21, Mark 11, and Luke 20.

Paying taxes to Caesar, which was mentioned a few minutes ago in Matthew 22, Mark 12, and Luke 20. Then, the Sadducee's question about marriage and resurrection comes up in Matthew 22, Mark 12, and Luke 20 as well. Then, the scribe's question about what the greatest commandments are is Matthew 22 and Mark 12.

And then Jesus' counter-question, who is the Messiah? And they say, well, he's the son of David. And then Jesus asks why David calls him Lord in a patriarchal society. The ancestor doesn't call the descendant Lord, so something else is going on is the implication. That's in Matthew 22, Mark 12, and Luke 20 as well.

Then there's the anointing at Bethany, Matthew 26, Mark 14. Peter's denial predicted Matthew 26, Mark 14, and Luke 22. The dialogue at Gethsemane is in Matthew 26, Mark 14, and Luke 22.

Jesus' arrest, same chapters. Sanhedrin, Jesus before the Sanhedrin, Matthew 26 and Mark 14. He that is not against us is for us, Mark 9 and Luke 9. We've now finished the ones that are in Matthew and some other gospels, so we're now over to just that one.

It's the only one that's in Mark, but not in Matthew. And then the ones that are just in Luke. Jesus at age 12, Luke 2. Jesus' rejection at Nazareth, Luke 4. The great catch of fish, Luke 5. Jesus anointed Luke 7, 36 to 50.

He's anointed a couple of different times. This is the one where he's at Simon the Pharisee's house, and this one puts ointment on his feet and then weeps on his feet and then wipes his feet off with her hair. Rather striking example of one of Jesus' arguments there.

The parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10. The incident with Mary and Martha, where Martha wants Mary to help out with preparation is also Luke 10. Jesus' six woes in Luke 11.

The parable of the rich fool in Luke 12. Repent or perish, Luke 13. The crippled man in Luke 13.

The narrow door, Luke 13. Herod the fox, Luke 13. Jesus at the Pharisee's house, Luke 14.

The lost sheep, coin, and son, Luke 15. Pharisees and money, Luke 16. Ten lepers, Luke 17.

Zacchaeus, Luke 19. Daughters of Jerusalem, Luke 23. Two thieves, Luke 23.

Road to Emmaus, Luke 24. Appearance to disciples, Luke 24. If you were kind of thinking those over in your mind as we whipped through them, you'd notice some of them are miracles, some of them are parables, and some of them are something else.

So, some miracles involve a dialogue or a controversy, whether once or not. Jesus' miracles on the Sabbath invariably produced controversy, and Jesus' parables were often responses to some kind of controversy.

Well, we want to walk our way through and think through one of these in some detail, and that is the casting out demons by Beelzebul in Luke 11. And we're going to start back in 14 and go down to 28. Luke tells us, and he, that is, Jesus, was casting out a demon, and it was mute.

And it happened when the demon came out and the mute man spoke, and the crowds marveled. So, we've got kind of a miracle account there, even with the crowd response, etc. But that's just kind of the introduction to this.

Verse 15, but certain of them said, By Beelzebul, the ruler of demons, he casts out demons. Others, testing him, began to seek, or were seeking, a sign from heaven from him. But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, Every kingdom divided against itself is lay waste, and a house divided against a house falls.

Now, if indeed Satan is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? Because you're saying, by Beelzebul, I'm casting out demons. Now, if I'm casting out demons by Beelzebul, by whom are your sons casting them out? Therefore, they will be your judges. But if by the finger of God, I'm casting out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Whenever a strong man, fully armed, guards his own courtyard, his possessions are safe. But as soon as one stronger than he comes and conquers him, he takes away his armor in which he had trusted, and he distributes his spoils or distributes his weapons. He who is not with me is against me, and he who is not gathering with me is scattering.

When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he passes through waterless places seeking rest, not finding any, says, I'll return to my house from which I departed. And he comes and finds it swept and ordered. Then he goes and brings seven other spirits worse than himself, and they come and dwell there.

And the last circumstances of that man are worse than the first. Now, it happened while he was saying these things that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to him, Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breast you sucked. But he said, On the contrary, Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it.

Let's walk through those verses and look at a couple of things that have to do with the Greeks. Then, we'll come back and think about the passage as a whole. In verse 15, certain of them said by Beelzebul, the ruler of demons, casts out demons. We look at the parallel passage in Matthew, and they're described as Pharisees.

If we look at the parallel passage in Mark, they're described as scribes from Jerusalem. That reminds us something fairly important. If you're working through a passage, you should check and see whether it has parallels, which in the gospels is not uncommon.

Then, read over those and make sure you don't do anything in your interpretation that contradicts one of the parallel passages. That's kind of a first-order thing. One, which, by the way, is not always observed by liberals because of their theories of what's going on with its history and things of that sort.

In verse 16, others testing him begin to seek a sign from heaven. That actually connects us beyond our context to verse 29, where that comes up again, but we're not dealing with that here. Then, he goes on and begins to respond to them in verse 19.

Now, if I'm casting out demons by Beelzebul, by whom are you casting them out? This is a good example of an if construction, which in some of your older grammar was called a true-to-fact if. But in more recent years, the grammarians have seen that those are, in fact, what we might call logical if that is. If this is true, this is what follows from it.

But I'm not granting that this is true, OK? And Jesus is obviously not granting that he's casting out demons by Beelzebul. Whenever a strong man is fully armed is the way I translated the beginning of verse 21, but it's actually a definite article in front of a strong man. And some people have wandered off and thought in terms of, well, Jesus is hinting that this is he, etc.

But that's just the generic use of a definite article. And yes, indeed, when you look at how the parable is set up, Jesus is representing himself as the strong man, but not a hint, I think, in the Greek there. What else is going on here of note in the Greek? There's a pluperfect that shows up in verse 22, which he had trusted, which is pretty rare in our New Testament Greek.

Then we get the generic use of the definite article down with the unclean spirit in verse 24, which I translated as an unclean spirit. And that pretty well takes care of the notable Greek things going on in our passage. The next thing I took a look at here is the elements of narrative in this particular incident.

This is a narrative with implied dialogue. Actually, you do have the Pharisees or whoever is saying he's casting out demons by Beelzebul. And actually, Jesus' response to that is what's going on most of this.

And then you do have this woman at the end. Blessed is the womb that bears you. And then Jesus responds to that.

And there's the one seeking the sign up earlier, and he will pick that up just past our passage. So, we're looking at a kind of a complicated dialogue here when, in fact, you're addressing a crowd, and you have various people say something from the crowd. But it's also a narrative.

So, the elements of the narrative here are actors or characters. Well, there's Jesus. There are the unnamed opponents, which are described further for us in Matthew and Mark as scribes and Pharisees.

There are some others, and those are not identified for us. And there's this woman. Events and actions.

Jesus heals a mute who is demonized. The opponents claim he's working by Beelzebul. We'll need to come back and think about who Beelzebul is.

Others are seeking a heavenly sign. Jesus responds to those claiming he's working by satanic power. The woman interrupts by blessing his mother.

And Jesus responds to her. And then, just out of where we stopped our passage, Jesus responds to those seeking a sign. Scenes not specified, but presumably this is all one scene.

In that sense, he's speaking to them under some circumstances. The plot. Well, there are various responses to Jesus are dealt with by him.

That's the main plot, you might say. And so, opposition to Jesus and attempts to discredit Jesus, perhaps, are answered. Perhaps we could say with the woman's remark that a distraction is refocused.

We do have two or three examples where somebody says something to Jesus, and it's a distraction in some sense. It carries them away from what's going on, trying to carry the audience away from what's going on. I remember the guy who wanted Jesus to arbitrate in a dispute with his brother over dividing the inheritance, and Jesus did respond to it.

But in some sense, it's a distraction. So, the controversy in its background. Who is Beelzebul? These, by the way, were questions I put on a study sheet.

My students to think through on their own and then to discuss in class. Who is Beelzebul? What are Jesus' opponents saying when they accuse him of casting out demons by Beelzebul? Well, our narrative itself identifies Beelzebul as the ruler of demons. That doesn't automatically make him Satan, okay? Because Satan may have some, as C.S. Lewis calls it, lorarchy under him, okay? So, this guy might be someone else there.

The name comes from Baal, the standard word for lord, which became a name for a god or... Yeah, it's probably a god with different locations identified rather than seen as different gods. And so, specifically the god Baal here, combined with Zebul, has various possible meanings and even has over the centuries also been ended with a B instead of an L. Beelzebub as well as Beelzebul. The various meanings are filth, lord of filth, obviously not complimentary, lord prince, lord of the dwelling, etc.

Whether Beelzebul is to be understood as a synonym for Satan or as a name of one of his underlings who is over the demons is really not clear. That's a trickier question. We certainly do have warrants from both the Old Testament and from remarks of Paul in the New Testament that satanic and demonic powers lie behind false religions of various sorts.

And so that we can see. What is clear is that the opponents are charging Jesus with using satanic power, probably because this is what they believe, but also to discredit him with the crowd. If you try and back up and look at this from the perspective of the Pharisees who have moved into opposition or the scribes who are in the same



kind of category, they've got the problem that Jesus is doing miracles that nobody has been doing for some centuries.

In fact, a huge problem if you think about it is that when you analyze Jesus' miracles, they're in the same ballpark with Moses and Elijah and Elisha and such. So, what are you going to do about that? Well, that kind of background is going to be rather important in regard to Jesus' answer. So, what they have to really do is if they're not going to admit that Jesus is who he claims to be, they're going to have to assign him having demonic powers.

You have some of that same situation going on, say, a generation ago when non-charismatics were responding to charismatics and such, perhaps has blown over to a certain extent now, though non-charismatics are still suspicious when miracles are done and, of course, are right, I think, trying to examine them against scripture and see whether that's fair or not. So, what's the controversy that Jesus is addressing? Well, that's really pretty straightforward. The question is, what is the real source of Jesus' power? Who are his opponents here? Where are they coming from? Well, as spotted, pointed out already a couple of times, the opponents are not specified in Luke, but Matthew 12:24 identifies them as Pharisees, and Mark 3:22 is a teacher of the law who had come down from Jerusalem.

They cannot deny that Jesus is doing miraculous works, but since they're unwilling to accept Jesus from God, then they must be from Satan. So, then, the question here in our passage is, how is Jesus arguing for his position? Can you spot any places where Jesus may be leaving out some steps in his argument because his opponents or the audience may not need them? Well, I went through verses 17 through 26, and that's basically what I urged my students to do, and I tried to see if they could divide that up into distinct arguments. So, it doesn't hurt then to dig out the verses and look at them again.

It looks like 17 and 18 are some kind of arguments from a divided kingdom. He, knowing their thoughts, said every kingdom divided against itself is a late waste, and a house divided against a house falls. Now, if indeed Satan is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? And then explanatory, because you're saying by Beelzebul, I'm casting out demons.

He perhaps says that at the end because perhaps some of the people in the crowd don't hear what the opponents are saying. Then, 19 seems to be a slightly different argument. I mean, these obviously link together in some way, and I labeled it, your exorcists.

Now, if I'm casting out demons by Beelzebul, by whom are your sons casting them out? And sons there may be, you know, your disciples, etc. And it's probably fair to

say that the Pharisees had exorcists of one sort or another. Josephus makes reference to exorcism taking place.

His example actually connects it with the Essenes, but it wouldn't be unreasonable that the Pharisees also had something of the sort. And then, in verse 20, I have kingdom come here as my label for the argument. Jesus, but if by the finger of God I'm casting out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

So, arguing, you know, if this, if I'm miraculously casting out demons, that says something about coming to kingdom. That carries us back into the discussion of biblical theology, the synoptics there, just last time, where this would be one of the evidences that the kingdom has come, if you like. Then verse 21 through 22, I label strong and stronger.

Whenever a strong man fully armed guards his own courtyard, his possessions are safe. But as soon as one stronger than he comes and conquers him, he takes away his armor which he trusted, and distributes his spoils, the property or his weapons, which he's been using to defend himself. Verse 23, I take to be another argument, no neutrality.

He who is not with me is against me, and he who is not gathering with me is scattering. Then, we get a somewhat puzzling section in verses 24 through 26, which I call the spirit's house. When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he passes through waterless places seeking rest.

Not finding any, he says, I'll return to my house from which I departed. And he comes and finds it swept and ordered. Then he goes and brings seven other spirits worse than himself, and they come in and dwell there.

In the last circumstances, this man is worse than the first. All of these respond to the opponent's tactic of explaining away Jesus' miracles as satanic. They appear to argue something like this.

And so, we're filling in steps if you like. Verses 17, 18, divided kingdom. In view of Satan's warfare with God, okay, that would be the Pharisaic view of the matter as well as Jesus' view of the matter.

Can Satan afford to divide his forces in the face of God? When you look through battles in ancient history and modern history, et cetera, often a clever tactician will divide his forces and bring one of them around somewhere et cetera. And that often works, but it works because the opponent general doesn't know what's happening. Now try and bring that into the spiritual realm.

Satan is going to divide his forces because God doesn't know what's happening and not going to work. So, can Satan afford to do that? After all, God is not a human general from whom troop movements might be hidden or one who might be outwitted. Isn't Satan taking a real chance that God will intervene to destroy him? Satan does not know the future well enough to know that he may not be defeated in a particular thing if he doesn't do the right, you know, the safe thing, the thing that will work to his advantage.

Verse 19, your exorcists, goes something like this. On what basis can you make a distinction between my exorcisms and those of your Pharisaic exorcists? Are yours more powerful? Are they more efficient, et cetera? And if they're not, you know, you guys are working from God, and you're not as powerful or efficient, etc., that argument's not going to run too well. Then in verse 20, read that again here for you.

If by the finger of God, I'm casting out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. It looks like Jesus' use of the phrase finger of God is intended to recall Exodus 8-19, where the Egyptian magicians, in competing with Moses, finally when he makes the, you know when God allows Moses or guides Moses to bring the gnats in, the Egyptian magicians can't match it. And so, they say, this power comes from God.

This is God's power. But if Jesus' miracles come from God, you then have to face the fact that in him, God's kingdom has come, and you have to respond on that basis rather than trying to dismiss it as satanic. Verses 21 and 22, strong and stronger, I think the argument looks something like this.

In fact, Jesus' power to cast out demons shows, like the defeat of an armed warrior by another and the plundering of his property, that Jesus has defeated and plundered Satan. He's taken away Satan's captives and set them free, if you like. 23, I already called it up here, no neutrality.

23, there is no neutrality in this war. You're either on God's side or you're on Satan's side. If you're not for me, you're against me.

If you're not cooperating with me, you are working against me. Now, verse 24, 26 is puzzling in several ways. This is the one about the, let me get back here to the, I lose my verses.

I think I've got something out of order. Let's see if I can get it back in order. There we go, I think.

Verses 24 through 26, is some kind of a narrative, okay, when an unclean spirit goes out of a man, passes through a waterless place, seeking rest, not finding any, he says, I'll return to my house, comes find it swept and ordered, he brings with him seven

other spirits worse than himself, and they come and dwell there, etc. It appears to be a parable, picturing what happens to a man who has been delivered from demon possession. And as happens in a couple of other places in scripture, the person is pictured as a house in some sense, and the demons are people living in the house.

We have a picture a little bit that way, where Paul pictures our current body as a tent, and the resurrection body as a house, and we as presumably the soul dwelling in it, if you like. So, we've got something like that here. And so basically, this parable seems to picture what happens to a man who's been delivered from demon possession if there's no power placed within him to resist a demonic return.

And so that's what seems to be going on. I'm guessing it's a parable. Jesus doesn't always tell us when he's speaking in parables.

And the comparison then seems to be that if Israel or if the people he's speaking to individually reject Jesus after all this miraculous power has been displayed, then they will be overwhelmed when the demonic forces return. That would be my read of that. And that's a little tricky on what to make of that, but that's the direction I think I would suggest going with this particular response.

So, it's a kind of warning then at the end of these remarks. Does the remark by the woman and Jesus' response in verses 27-28 fit into this, or is it a new pericope, a new incident? Well, I'm not sure whether this is a new incident or not. It's very short if it is.

Besides verse 16, others seeking a sign seem to connect with verse 29 after the passage we're discussing. That is a wicked generation that seeks for sign. So, I think it's probably not.

Maybe, of course, our idea of dividing everything into pericopes is a little artificial in places, so that might be a problem there. If this is the last or next to the last item in this pericope, its connection to the rest may be that it is not a physical birth, but obedience is what counts and that a proper relation to God is an even greater blessing than bearing the Messiah. How would that come up? Well, a woman brought it up, and so from Jesus' perspective during his time of humiliation, his conception to his resurrection or ascension, if you like, he does not make use of his divine powers all the time.

So, he's surprised by things at various times. So, this may be a surprise that the woman throws in, and yet Jesus responds to it well, if you like. And again, it would continue to be a warning then that here are these people who think they're safe because they're Israel, as has happened a couple of other times in salvation history, but rejecting the Messiah is really going to muck things up.

And so, it's a correct response to God not being close to the Messiah even to be his mother. This is not a great passage for Roman Catholic Mariology, as a matter of fact, but that's not what it's primarily about. But so that's my reading there, I think, that obedience rather than physical birth is what counts, how you respond to Jesus rather than how you're related to him in a physical sense, and that proper relation to God is even a greater blessing than bearing the Messiah.

And the last question I asked on my study sheet was, what applications do you see in this response of Jesus to the various controversies which you might encounter today? And well, let's see. We might summarize the arguments in verses 17 through 22 and go back here to pull those out for you. They would be... There we are.

I still got this stuff fouled up, moving it around. Okay, here we are. Divided kingdom, your exorcist, kingdom come, strong and stronger.

Okay, how would you handle those? Uh, we might summarize the arguments in verses 17 through 22 as pointing to our responsibility to use sound judgment rather than partiality for our particular group we're already in, or special pleading, and to deal fairly with the evidence God provides rather than letting our presuppositions control us. And this, of course, is good advice for any age. Uh, the Jews at Jesus' time were faced with a rather difficult situation.

Jesus wasn't exactly what they were expecting in the direction of the Messiah. On top of that, he went against some of the theological views that the Sadducees held, and some of the theological views that the Pharisees held, and people who belonged to those groups who were seriously trying to follow God had to deal with that matter and try and rethink their position. And that might happen to us in our own Christian life, that something we've held turns out to be wrong.

It's, you know, we perhaps thought we were interpreting the Bible, but we weren't properly doing so. I mean, that sometimes shows up. We're not infallible.

And so, we need to deal fairly with the evidence God provides rather than letting our presuppositions control us. Verse 3 reminds us that, finally, there's no neutrality when it comes down to what we'll do with Jesus. Not back then, not today.

Verses 24 through 26 suggest that the blessings we have cannot last without our being in a proper relationship with God. As we can see from other passages, even if we don't seem to be getting any blessings at the moment, if we are clinging to God and trying to do the right thing, the blessing will come one day. So, we just need to be ready to wait for it.

And verses 27 through 28 indicate there's no greater blessing than knowing and loving God. So, with that, we stop at this. Any of these passages would doubtless, you could get more profit from with further work on them.

But as I basically tell my students in a course like this, you're typically going to be preparing a Bible study or a sermon. You're not writing a dissertation. And so, you need to spend what would be a reasonable time along with your other duties to try and understand the passage better than you did before.

So that's kind of what we're doing here. Okay, well, that's enough for today. And we will see you, Lord willing, at our next session.