

Dr. Mark Jennings, Mark, Session 7, Family Rejection (Mark 3:20-35) Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Jennings, Mark, Session 7, Family Rejection (Mark 3:20-35), Biblicalearning.org, BeL

Dr. Jennings's lecture analyzes Mark 3:20-35, highlighting Mark's deliberate narrative structure, specifically the "Markian sandwich" technique. He explains how Mark interweaves the account of Jesus's family's concern with the accusations of the religious leaders to create mutual interpretation. The lecture explores the contrasting responses to Jesus: his family's belief that he is mad, the religious leaders' charge of demonic possession (blasphemy against the Holy Spirit), and Jesus's redefinition of family based on doing God's will. Jennings emphasizes that the interruption about the Pharisees and blasphemy is theologically central, revealing Jesus's power over Satan and God's judgment. Ultimately, the passage contrasts external kinship with a new spiritual family defined by obedience to God.

**2. 13 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Jennings, Mark, Session 7 – Double click icon to play in
Windows media player or go to the Biblicalearning.org [BeL]
Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament →
Gospels → Mark).**



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3. Briefing Document: Jennings, Mark, Session 7, Family Rejection (Mark 3:20-35)

Briefing Document: Analysis of Mark 3:20-35 ("Family and Enemies")

Main Themes:

This passage in Mark's Gospel (3:20-35) centers on the contrasting reactions to Jesus' ministry, highlighting the themes of **true kinship, opposition and blasphemy**, and **Mark's literary structuring (the "Markian sandwich")**. Dr. Jennings emphasizes the deliberate arrangement of events by Mark to convey theological messages.

Key Ideas and Facts:

- **The Markian Sandwich:** Jennings introduces the literary device of the "Markian sandwich" (or intercalation) as a key characteristic of Mark's writing. This involves Mark beginning a story, interrupting it with a second story, and then returning to complete the first. Mark 3:20-35 serves as a prime example:
- **Bread 1 (Verses 20-21):** Jesus' overwhelming popularity leads his family to believe he is "out of his mind" and they come to "take charge of him."
- **Quote:** "When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him for they said he is out of his mind."
- **Meat (Verses 22-30):** The arrival of teachers of the law from Jerusalem who accuse Jesus of being possessed by Beelzebub and driving out demons by the prince of demons. Jesus refutes this accusation through logic and a parable of the "strong man."
- **Quote:** "And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem... made the statement rather, he is possessed by Beelzebub, by the prince of demons, he is driving out demons."
- **Quote (Jesus' rebuttal):** "How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand... In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house."
- **Bread 2 (Verses 31-35):** Jesus' mother and brothers arrive, and when informed, Jesus redefines his family as those who "do God's will."

- **Quote:** "Whoever does God's will is my mother, is my brother, and sister, and mother."
- **Purpose of the Sandwich:** Jennings explains that the Markian sandwich is used to have the two embedded events "mutually interpret each other," with the interrupting "meat" often being theologically crucial for understanding the surrounding narrative.
- **The Family's Misunderstanding:** Jesus' family's concern stems from the honor-shame culture, where Jesus' actions and claims are seen as bringing shame upon them. They believe he has lost his sanity due to his controversial teachings and actions (forgiving sins, declaring himself Lord of the Sabbath, challenging religious leaders).
- **Quote:** "In an honor-shame culture in the ancient world, family members either gave family members honor or gave them shame... they've come to the conclusion that he's out of his mind."
- **The Religious Leaders' Accusation:** The teachers of the law from Jerusalem represent the religious authority and their accusation is more serious than the family's concern. They attribute Jesus' power over demons not to God, but to possession by and collaboration with Beelzebub (Satan). This is seen as an "escalation" of opposition compared to their silence in previous encounters.
- **Quote:** "They come down and they ask the question, or they make the statement rather, he is possessed by Beelzebub, by the prince of demons, he is driving out demons."
- **Jesus' Response to the Accusation: Logical Refutation:** Jesus argues that it is illogical for Satan to work against himself by allowing Jesus to cast out demons. This would signify the end of Satan's power.
- **Quote:** "It's absurd to say that Satan is working with and through Jesus to cast out demons."
- **Parable of the Strong Man:** Jesus uses this parable to explain that his ability to exorcise demons demonstrates his superior power over Satan. He is "binding" Satan and taking his "possessions" (those possessed by demons). This aligns with John the Baptist's earlier description of Jesus as "stronger."
- **Quote:** "In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house."

- **Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit:** Jesus issues a stark warning about the unforgivable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Jennings clarifies that in this context, this refers specifically to witnessing the clear power of God at work in Jesus and attributing it instead to Satan. This is presented as a state of hardened rejection of God's evident work.
- **Quote:** "Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven. He is guilty of an eternal sin. He said this because they were saying he had an evil spirit."
- **Quote:** "Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, then, in this context, is to say, I see Jesus doing what is a clear work of God. Rather than affirming that God is at work in Jesus, I will affirm and state that Jesus is in league with the devil."
- **Redefinition of Family:** By contrasting the rejection of the religious leaders with the misunderstanding of his blood relatives, Jesus emphasizes that true kinship is not based on biological ties but on a spiritual connection through doing "God's will." This includes those who listen to and affirm Jesus.
- **Quote:** "Whoever does God's will is my brother, sister, and mother."
- **Hope for Jesus' Family:** Despite their initial doubts, Jennings points out that Jesus' brothers, James and Jude, later become followers and leaders in the early church, suggesting that their initial misunderstanding was not the unforgivable sin.
- **Continuity of Reactions:** Jennings concludes by noting that the three reactions to Jesus presented in this passage – accusation of evil, perception of confusion, and recognition of God's will – will continue to be seen throughout the rest of Mark's Gospel.

Significance:

This passage is crucial for understanding the growing opposition Jesus faces, the nature of his authority over evil, and the radical shift in defining community and belonging within his ministry. Mark's deliberate structuring underscores the theological weight of the conflict with the religious leaders in understanding who truly belongs to Jesus' "family."

4. Study Guide: Jennings, Mark, Session 7, Family Rejection (Mark 3:20-35)

Mark 3:20-35: Family and Enemies Study Guide

Key Themes:

- The "Markian Sandwich" literary device and its purpose.
- Jesus' authority over demonic forces and the interpretation of his power.
- The accusations of the religious leaders and Jesus' response, including the charge of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.
- The contrasting reactions of Jesus' biological family and his followers.
- The redefinition of family based on doing the will of God.
- The escalating conflict between Jesus and the religious authorities.

Quiz:

1. Describe the literary device known as a "Markian sandwich" or intercalation. Why does the lecturer suggest Mark employs this technique?
2. What accusation do the teachers of the law from Jerusalem make against Jesus, and what are the two components of this accusation?
3. Explain Jesus' initial response to the Pharisees' accusation, using the parables of the divided kingdom and the divided house. What is the main point of this logical challenge?
4. According to Jesus' analogy of the strong man, who does the strong man represent, and what action does Jesus describe taking in relation to him? What does this analogy explain about Jesus' power?
5. What is the "unforgivable sin" of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit as defined in this passage, and why does Jesus make this statement in response to the Pharisees?
6. Contrast the reaction of Jesus' biological family to his actions with the reaction of the religious leaders. What does Jesus say about his family in verse 34-35?
7. What is significant about the fact that Jesus' brothers, James and Jude, are later recognized as leaders in the early church and authors of New Testament books?

8. How does Jesus redefine the concept of family in Mark 3:31-35? What is the basis for inclusion in his new "family"?
9. What does the lecturer suggest are the three distinct reactions to Jesus presented in Mark 3:20-35, and why are these significant?
10. How does the passage in Isaiah 49:24-26 relate to Jesus' explanation of his power over demons in Mark 3?

Answer Key:

1. A "Markian sandwich" is a literary device where Mark begins one story, interrupts it with a second, complete story, and then returns to finish the first. The lecturer suggests Mark uses this technique so that the two events mutually interpret each other, often with the interrupting story (the "meat") being theologically key or more strongly emphasized.
2. The teachers of the law from Jerusalem accuse Jesus of being possessed by Beelzebub (the prince of demons) and of driving out demons by the power of this demonic figure. The two components are that he is possessed, and that he actively works with the ruler of demons to perform exorcisms.
3. Jesus initially responds by highlighting the absurdity of their logic, asking how Satan can drive out Satan. The parables of a kingdom and a house divided against themselves illustrate that it is illogical for Satan to work against his own interests and kingdom by empowering Jesus to cast out demons.
4. In Jesus' analogy, the strong man represents Satan, and Jesus describes entering his house, binding him (subduing his power), and then carrying off his possessions (freeing those possessed). This analogy explains that Jesus is able to perform exorcisms because he is stronger than Satan and has overcome his power.
5. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, in this context, is defined as seeing clear and overwhelming evidence of God's power at work in Jesus and instead attributing that power to being in league with the devil. Jesus makes this statement because the Pharisees are attributing his miraculous exorcisms to an evil spirit.
6. Jesus' biological family believes he is out of his mind and seeks to take charge of him, likely out of concern for his honor and well-being in the honor-shame culture. In contrast, the religious leaders accuse him of being in league with Satan. Jesus states that his true family consists of those who do the will of God, prioritizing spiritual kinship over blood relation.

7. The fact that James and Jude, initially among those who did not believe in Jesus, later became prominent leaders and authors indicates that even those who initially doubt or misunderstand Jesus are not beyond redemption and can come to faith and leadership. This contrasts with the seemingly final judgment declared on the religious leaders.
8. Jesus redefines family by stating that it is not based on blood relation but on a spiritual connection through obedience to God's will. He indicates that those who are gathered around him and actively listening and following him are his true mother, brothers, and sisters.
9. The lecturer suggests three reactions: the religious leaders' declaration that Jesus is evil, his family's statement that he is confused, and the followers' desire to hear and learn from him as the one displaying the will of God. These reactions highlight the different ways people respond to Jesus and his ministry, which continue throughout the Gospel of Mark.
10. The passage from Isaiah speaks of the Lord rescuing captives from the mighty one and taking spoils. The lecturer suggests this aligns with Jesus' explanation that he is the stronger one who is taking people captive by Satan and setting them free through his exorcisms, indicating that Jesus is enacting the work of God described in Isaiah.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Analyze the significance of the "Markian sandwich" in Mark 3:20-35. How do the two interconnected narratives of Jesus' conflict with the religious leaders and his encounter with his family mutually interpret each other, and what is the overall message Mark conveys through this structure?
2. Discuss the escalating conflict between Jesus and the religious authorities in Mark 3:20-30. What are the key accusations made against Jesus, what is the nature of his defense, and what does this exchange reveal about the growing opposition to his ministry?
3. Examine Jesus' statement on blasphemy against the Holy Spirit in its immediate context within Mark 3:20-30. What does this specific instance of accusation reveal about the nature of this "unforgivable sin," and how does it relate to the hardness of heart described earlier in Mark's Gospel?

4. Compare and contrast the responses of Jesus' biological family and his followers to his ministry in Mark 3:20-35. What motivates each group, and what does Jesus' redefinition of family in this passage imply about the nature of discipleship and belonging to God's kingdom?
5. Explore the theme of authority in Mark 3:20-35. How is Jesus' authority demonstrated in this passage, both in his power over demonic forces and in his teachings and pronouncements? How do different groups in the narrative respond to and interpret his authority?

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Markian Sandwich (Intercalation):** A literary device common in the Gospel of Mark where one story is inserted within the narrative of another, creating a bracketing effect. The two stories are often meant to be interpreted in light of each other.
- **Beelzebub:** A demonic figure, often referred to as the "prince of demons" or Satan. The religious leaders accuse Jesus of being possessed by or in league with Beelzebub to explain his power over demons.
- **Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit:** In the context of Mark 3:20-30, this refers to attributing the clear work of God, manifested through Jesus' power over demons, to the power of Satan. It is presented as an unforgivable sin due to the deliberate rejection of divine evidence.
- **Exorcism:** The act of casting out a demon or evil spirit from a person or place. Jesus performs numerous exorcisms in the Gospel of Mark, demonstrating his authority over demonic forces.
- **Honor-Shame Culture:** A societal structure prevalent in the ancient world where an individual's and their family's standing is heavily influenced by their honor (positive reputation and social standing) and shame (disgrace or loss of reputation). Jesus' family's concern about his behavior stems from this cultural context.
- **Parable:** A simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson. Jesus uses parables in his response to the Pharisees to challenge their logic and explain his actions.

- **Eschatological Restoration of Israel:** The belief in a future time when God will restore the nation of Israel and fulfill his promises. The calling of the twelve disciples by Jesus is seen as a symbolic act related to this restoration.
- **Hardness of Heart:** A spiritual condition characterized by an unwillingness to believe or accept the truth, often associated with resistance to God's will. Jesus expresses anger at the hardness of heart of the religious leaders.
- **Kinship Language:** The use of terms associated with family relationships (mother, brother, sister) to describe a sense of belonging and connection. Jesus uses kinship language to redefine his true family based on spiritual rather than biological ties.
- **Pericope:** A self-contained unit of text or passage, often used in biblical studies to refer to individual stories or teachings within a larger work. Mark 3:20-35 can be considered a pericope.

5. FAQs on Jennings, Mark, Session 7, Family Rejection (Mark 3:20-35), Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on Mark 3:20-35

- 1. What is a "Markian sandwich" (or intercalation), and why is Mark 3:20-35 considered an example of it?** A Markian sandwich, also known as intercalation, is a literary device where Mark begins one story ("the bread"), interrupts it with a second complete story ("the meat"), and then returns to finish the first story ("the other piece of bread"). Mark 3:20-35 exemplifies this structure by starting with Jesus in a house and his family's concern (verses 20-21), interjecting the account of Jesus's interaction with the Pharisees who accuse him of being possessed by Beelzebul (verses 22-30), and then concluding with the arrival of his family and Jesus's teaching on true kinship (verses 31-35).
- 2. Why does Mark use the Markian sandwich technique, and what is the likely purpose in Mark 3:20-35?** The general consensus is that Mark uses this technique to have the two embedded events mutually interpret each other. Often, the interrupted "meat" section is theologically key and provides a stronger emphasis that informs the surrounding "bread" sections. In Mark 3:20-35, the intercalation of the Pharisees' accusations and Jesus's response likely serves to highlight the stark contrast between the external opposition Jesus faced and the misunderstanding even from his own family, with Jesus's teaching on true family providing a resolution informed by this conflict.
- 3. What were Jesus's family's reasons for wanting to "take charge of him" in Mark 3:21?** Jesus's family heard about the large crowds preventing him and his disciples from even eating, and they were concerned about his behavior and teachings. In the honor-shame culture of the time, his actions—claiming authority over the Sabbath, forgiving sins, and provoking religious leaders—were likely perceived as bringing shame upon the family. They concluded that he was "out of his mind" and sought to stop him from causing further social and religious repercussions for the family.
- 4. What accusations did the teachers of the law from Jerusalem make against Jesus, and what was their explanation for his power over demons?** The teachers of the law accused Jesus of being possessed by Beelzebul (the prince of demons) and of driving out demons by the power of Beelzebul. Their explanation for his authority over demons was that he was in league with the ruler of demons, suggesting a deliberate participation in demonic power rather than simply being controlled by it.

5. How did Jesus respond to the accusations of the religious leaders, and what was the main point of his counter-arguments and parables? Jesus responded by first pointing out the absurdity of their logic, asking how Satan could drive out Satan, as a kingdom or house divided against itself cannot stand. He used the parable of the strong man to explain that he could only cast out demons (Satan's possessions) by first binding the strong man (Satan), implying his superior power over evil. His main point was to demonstrate the illogic of their claim and to assert that his exorcisms were evidence of his victory over Satan and the arrival of God's kingdom.

6. What is the "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit" according to Jesus in this passage, and why is it considered unforgivable? In the context of Mark 3:20-35, the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is specifically defined by Jesus's statement that it occurred because the religious leaders were saying he had an evil spirit, despite the clear evidence of God's power at work in his exorcisms. Therefore, it is the act of attributing the undeniable work of God, manifested through Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit, to the power of Satan. The unforgivable nature of this sin lies in the deliberate and hardened rejection of clear divine evidence and the conscious alignment with evil, preventing any possibility of recognizing and receiving God's forgiveness.

7. How does Jesus redefine the concept of family in Mark 3:31-35? When Jesus's biological family arrives, he uses the opportunity to redefine family based not on blood relation but on spiritual connection through obedience to God's will. Looking at those gathered around him, his disciples and followers, he declares, "Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother." This signifies a new eschatological community where kinship is determined by a shared commitment to God's purposes as revealed through Jesus, extending beyond traditional familial and ethnic boundaries.

8. What is the significance of the contrast between the reactions of Jesus's biological family and the religious leaders in this passage? The contrast highlights different forms of opposition and misunderstanding Jesus faced. While his biological family doubted his sanity out of concern and perhaps societal pressure, the religious leaders actively and maliciously attributed his divine power to Satan. Importantly, Jesus does not condemn his family in the same way he judges the religious leaders, suggesting a possibility of their future understanding and inclusion in his true family, as evidenced by the later roles of his brothers James and Jude. This contrast underscores that while outward opposition can take different forms, the deliberate rejection and misrepresentation of God's work through Jesus carries the gravest consequences.