

## **DON'T MISJUDGE JESUS**

*3 Then [Jesus] entered a house, <sup>20</sup>and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. <sup>21</sup>When his family heard about this, they went to get him; for they said, He has lost his senses. <sup>22</sup>But the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, He has Beelzebub, and, By the prince of the demons he casts out the demons. <sup>23</sup>[Jesus] called them to himself, and speaking to them in parables, he said, How can Satan cast out Satan? <sup>24</sup>And if a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. <sup>25</sup>And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. <sup>26</sup>And if Satan has stood up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but comes to an end. <sup>27</sup>No one can enter into the house of the strong man, and take his possessions, unless he first ties up the strong man; then he will be able to plunder his house. <sup>28</sup>I tell you the truth, Men shall have all their sins forgiven, and whatever blasphemies they have uttered; <sup>29</sup>but whoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit shall never be forgiven, but is guilty of an eternal sin. <sup>30</sup>[He said this] because they were saying, He has an unclean spirit.*

*<sup>31</sup>Then his mother and his brothers came; and, remaining outside, they sent someone in to call him. <sup>32</sup>Now a crowd was sitting around him; and they told him, Listen, your mother and your brothers are outside asking for you. <sup>33</sup>But he answered [by asking], Who is my mother and who are my brothers? <sup>34</sup>Then looking round about at those who sat around him, he said, Look, [here are] my mother and my brothers! <sup>35</sup>Whoever shall do God's will, that person is my brother, and sister, and mother. (Mk. 3:19-35)*

**See attached Appendix for the parallel passage of Matthew 12:22-50**

### **Introduction**

If you were living during the World War II era, you might pick up the newspaper, turn to the comic section, and there read the latest exploits of that battle-wise, war-weary twosome, Willie and Joe. That particular comic strip was created by a famous cartoonist by the name of Bill Mauldin.

About 45 years later, someone wrote an article in which they referred back to that World War II era and that particular comic strip and to that famous cartoonist, Bill Mauldin. But when the article appeared in the magazine, the editors had accidentally transposed the letters in Bill Mauldin's name; they spelled his name M-A-U-D-L-I-N, instead of M-A-U-L-D-I-N. A few issues later, the letters to the editor page of the magazine carried the following note from one of its readers: The thousands of us who appreciated the Willie and Joe comic strip know that cartoonist Bill Mauldin was never "maudlin!" (*POWER*, 9/15/91)

The word "maudlin" means, "to be so drunk that one is emotionally silly;" it means, "to be confused, disoriented, or drunk." That unintentional transposition of letters created a real misconception of a very astute and intelligent man; it was a grave injustice to the cartoonist, Bill Mauldin.

In the passages of Scripture presently before us we find the people of His day entertaining misconceptions about the person of the Lord Jesus. It is important that we have a true biblical understanding of who Jesus is, as opposed to holding a self-conceived misconception of Him. As we consider these passages of Scripture, let us learn not to misjudge Jesus and not to entertain any self-conceived misconception of Him.

### **I. Don't Misjudge Jesus, Regardless of Your Motives (Mk. 3:19-22)**

Mark has previously reported (3:7-8) that great crowds of people were following the Lord Jesus; upon hearing of the great things He was doing, they flocked to Him. Now Mark reports (3:19b) that a large crowd has gathered around Jesus in Capernaum—they literally invade the house where He is staying and they do not even give Jesus and His disciples the chance to eat their meal!

When His friends and family hear what is happening, motivated by concern for His well-being, they set out to “rescue” Jesus, fearing that *“he has lost his senses.”* Jesus’ urgent sense of mission, His deep sense of compassion, His self-denying love (even to the point of depriving Himself of His necessary food), caused His family to conclude that He had “gone overboard” and had lost His senses.

The scribes who were present, observing this scene, voice their opinion: *“He has Beelzebul”*—they are charging that the Lord Jesus is demon-possessed. Matthew (12:22) informs us that one of Jesus’ mighty works was the deliverance of a demon-possessed man. The scribes, unable to deny Jesus’ miraculous power, choose to attribute that power to the devil, rather than acknowledge that it came from God. They choose to make this their official position because of their heretical theology by which they distanced themselves from the presence and person of God, and therefore could not and would not recognize Him when He came into their very presence. Furthermore, they choose to do so because of their jealousy, as Pilate will perceive on a later occasion: *“[Pilate] knew it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him”* (Matt. 27:18.)

Here we have two striking examples of Jesus being misjudged. Jesus’ zeal for God is compassionately mistaken for insanity. The people who held that view were sincere, but extremely superficial: they lacked spiritual discernment, comprehension, perspective; they had no true sense of who it was with whom they were dealing. Jesus’ divine authority is blasphemously mistaken for demonic power. The people who held this view were entertaining ulterior motives: they had a self-preserving and self-seeking agenda and, consequently, they could not and would not acknowledge who Jesus really is.

We must be careful that we do not misjudge Jesus, regardless of our motives. We must not entertain a superficial view of Christ, which fails to recognize that we are dealing with the Almighty God Himself. We must not harbor any ulterior

motive—a self-seeking, self-preserving agenda—that prevents us from acknowledging and yielding to the divine authority of Christ.

We must not misjudge Jesus by entertaining such views as the following. One popular misconception is that “Jesus is irrelevant.” This view maintains that Jesus is confined to the pages of the Bible and to the realm of heaven; He has no bearing upon our everyday life. Another misconception is that “Jesus is ignorant.” This view maintains that Jesus doesn’t know our contemporary situation—He doesn’t understand modern life; after all, the world was so much different when He was on the earth. A third misconception is that “Jesus is naïve.” This view maintains that His standards, His demands, His counsel, are impractical, impossible and out of this world; they can’t possibly be implemented in “the real world” of everyday life. One other misconception is that “Jesus is not authoritative.” This view maintains that we do not have to take seriously His commandments and His warnings; after all, He and God His Father are much too kind to ever inflict punishment and judgment on anyone.

## II. Don’t Misjudge Jesus, On the Contrary, Accept Him on His Terms (Mk. 3:23-35)

Jesus declares, “*He that is not with me, is against me*” (Matt. 12:30.) In Mark 3:24 He presents this mini-parable: “*If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.*” That is to say, if a nation is torn apart by civil war it cannot continue, it will eventually destroy itself. Then in Mark 3:25 Jesus presents a second mini-parable: “*If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.*” His point is that a family torn apart by internal conflict cannot function; it will become alienated and dysfunctional. Finally, in Mark 3:27 Jesus presents yet another mini-parable: “*No one can enter into the house of the strong man and take his possessions, unless he first ties up the strong man.*” You can only plunder the house of a strong man if you are stronger than him. Jesus, by His actions—especially the deliverance of the demon-possessed man—is unmistakably demonstrating that He is mightier than Satan and He is using His might to confront and conquer him. In Matthew 12:30 Jesus concludes His parables of the divided kingdom, the divided household and the plundering of the strong man with the words, “*He who is not with me, is against me.*” The point that He is making is that we either acknowledge the divine authority and power of the Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to it and availing ourselves of it for our salvation, or we are standing in opposition to it. Our prayer should be: Apply Your saving power to me, Lord Jesus, and grant me to partake in it.

Furthermore, Jesus declares, “*Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven*” (Mk. 3:29.) In Matthew 12:27-28 Jesus points to the fact that “*the sons*” of the Pharisees—that is to say, the Pharisees’ disciples—were also casting out demons. Thus, there were others at that time in Israel who were granted divine authority to cast out demons, and they were acknowledged and accepted by the Pharisees as their “*sons.*” According to one commentator, “It was

accepted among the Jews that when a rabbi delivered anyone from the possession of the devil it was a sign that God worked through him” (Norval Geldenhuys, *The New International Commentary, The Gospel of Luke*, p. 329.) Why is it that the Pharisees freely acknowledge it to be the self-evident power of God in the case of those others, but they deny it in the case of Jesus? Jesus is confronting them with the fact that they are irrationally discrediting Him and denying the witness of the Holy Spirit, (note Matthew 12:28.)

In this context Jesus confronts the Pharisees (and us) with the seriousness of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:28-30.) Jesus assures us that all sins are forgivable—consider the call of Levi, the publican; the conversion of the penitent thief on the cross; the restoration of Peter after he had denied the Lord three times. But Jesus then goes on to warn us that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable.

What it means to blaspheme against the Holy Spirit is explained in verse 30: *“they were saying* [the Greek imperfect tense of the verb, λεγω, indicates a continuing action], *He has an unclean spirit.”* To blaspheme against the Holy Spirit means to either persistently deny His convincing work or persistently resist His convicting work. Since the Holy Spirit’s work is to reveal Christ to us and bring us into the bosom of Christ and under the Lordship of Christ, to resist the Holy Spirit is to cut ourselves off from the only Savior, as Peter, referring to the Lord Jesus, proclaims, *“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12.) In effect, the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the unforgivable sin because it is a self-induced and self-imposed sentence of condemnation: it is willfully rejecting the Holy Spirit’s appeal that we come to Christ, the only Savior. May Stephen’s indictment of the Jewish leaders never be true of us: *“You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers. You always resist the Holy Spirit!”* (Acts 7:51.)

Finally, Jesus declares, *“Whoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother”* (Matt. 12:50.) The report is brought to Jesus that His mother and His brothers want to speak to Him. In effect, the report is: “Jesus, your mother requests you to submit to her authority and come home. Be a good son and obey her!” In response, Jesus asks the question, *“Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?”* Jesus is asking, “To whom am I really accountable, and with whom am I in a true spiritual relationship?” Jesus answers His question by declaring, *“Whoever shall do the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother.”* As the Son of God, Jesus’ divine relationship to His Father and His spiritual relationship with those who obey His Father transcend all earthly relationships.

What is the lesson for us to learn from this? We may not define our relationship to Christ, conceiving of that relationship in earthly and human terms, viewing Jesus merely as our Friend, our Counselor, our Consoler, our Companion, or even

our Servant. It is Christ who defines our relationship to Him, and He does so in divine and heavenly terms—we are His brother or sister when, like Him, we show ourselves to be obedient sons or daughters of His heavenly Father.

Let us not misjudge Jesus; on the contrary, let us be sure to accept Him on His terms and take to heart His counsel.

## Conclusion

In the case of cartoonist Bill Mauldin, an unintentional transposition of letters created a misconception that was a grave injustice to a very astute and intelligent man. In the case of the Lord Jesus Christ, a spiritual ignorance, or a sinister resistance to Him, can create a very serious misconception of the Son of God. For His honor, and for our spiritual well-being, let us never misjudge Jesus.

## Appendix: The Text of Matthew 12:22-50

*12<sup>22</sup>Then there was brought to him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute; and he healed him, so that the man could speak and see. <sup>23</sup>All the crowds were amazed and said, Can this be the son of David? <sup>24</sup>But when the Pharisees heard about it, they said, This man only casts out demons by Beelzebub the prince of the demons. <sup>25</sup>Knowing their thoughts he said to them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to destruction; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. <sup>26</sup>If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand? <sup>27</sup>And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. <sup>28</sup>But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you. <sup>29</sup>Or how can one enter into the house of the strong man, and take his possessions, except he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house. <sup>30</sup>He that is not with me is against me, and he that does not gather with me scatters. <sup>31</sup>Therefore I say to you, Men shall be forgiven every sin and blasphemy; but the blasphemy against the [Holy] Spirit shall not be forgiven. <sup>32</sup>And whoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, he shall be forgiven; but whoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, he shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in the world to come. <sup>33</sup>Either make the tree good, and its fruit [will be] good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit [will be] bad; for the tree is recognized by its fruit. <sup>34</sup>You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? for the mouth speaks from the abundance of the heart. <sup>35</sup>The good man from his good treasure brings out good things; but the evil man from his evil treasure brings out evil things. <sup>36</sup>I tell you, On the day of judgment, men shall give an account of every careless word they have spoken. <sup>37</sup>By your words you shall be justified, or by your words you shall be condemned.*

*<sup>38</sup>Then certain of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, Teacher, we desire to see a sign from you. <sup>39</sup>But he answered them, An evil and adulterous generation desires a sign; but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. <sup>40</sup>Just as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights; so shall the Son of man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights. <sup>41</sup>The men of*

*Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; because they repented when Jonah preached [to them]. Listen, someone greater than Jonah is [now] here. <sup>42</sup>The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Listen, someone greater than Solomon is [now] here. <sup>43</sup>But the unclean spirit, when he has gone out of a man, passes through arid places, seeking rest, but cannot find it. <sup>44</sup>Then he says, I will return to my house from where I came. When he returns, he finds [his house] empty, swept [clean], and decorated. <sup>45</sup>Then he goes, and takes with him seven other spirits who are more evil than himself, and [together] they enter [that house] and live there. So the final state of that man becomes worse than the first. So shall it also be for this evil generation.*

*<sup>46</sup>While he was yet speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. <sup>47</sup>Someone said to him, Listen, your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak with you. <sup>48</sup>But he answered and said to the one who told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brothers? <sup>49</sup>And he stretched out his hand towards his disciples, and said, Look, [here are] my mother and my brothers! <sup>50</sup>Whoever shall obey the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother. (Matt. 12:22-50)*