

He Is On Our Side
Mark 9:38-41

Theme: Sectarianism

Aim: To show that one cannot cast out demons if he is not in right relationship with Jesus.

1. The question has been asked “What does Mark 9:38-41 teach?”
2. Some have argued that this passage means we must accept and approve every effort put forth in the name of Jesus, regardless of what else might be taught or practiced.

I. To understand the passage, let’s try to come to it with an open mind and lay aside any preconceive notions about it.

A. Sometimes that is very hard to do.

1. John Smith, a well know Restoration preacher was once rebuked by his wife for his strong preaching on a particular topic.
2. His reply was to point at a glass that was half full of milk. He asked her “Can I fill the glass with water until I have removed the milk?”
3. Sometimes we have to get our minds empty before we can fill them.

B. Let us also remember two principles of Bible study.

1. Every verse must be considered in the context of the word. Any interpretation of a passage that puts that passage in conflict with another is an incorrect interpretation.
2. A passage cannot mean today what it did not mean then.

II. What does Mark 9:38-41 mean?

A. A close look at verse 38.

1. Who is the “we” and “us” of verse 38? The apostles.
2. What was the motivation of their disapproval of the man’s actions? Could it have been their desire for prominence, Mark 9:33-37?
3. John’s statement is “He is not of our group...”
4. The man was actually casting out demons in Jesus’ name, i.e. by His authority.

B. A close look at Jesus’ response, 39-41.

1. Jesus in effect says, “This man is not against us, but with us.”
2. That tells us the man was not an enemy of Jesus and the apostles, but an ally.
3. The conclusion is that this man was walking in harmony with Jesus and his teachings.

III. But let us put some other truths on the table.

A. Remember the purpose of miracles. They were given to confirm the word proclaimed.

1. Hebrews 2:1-4.
2. If this man taught anything other than what Jesus authorized, and was able to really do such a sign, God would have been affirming contradictory messages. But truth does not contradict truth.
3. John 14:23-24. God would not abide with one who taught or did that contrary to truth.

B. Jesus Himself had taught a house divided cannot stand, Mark 3:24-25.

C. This event takes place well into the second year of Jesus’ ministry. Are we to think that only those of the twelve were followers of Jesus?

1. He had fed the 5,000, Mark 6:30ff and the 4,000, Mark 8:1ff.
2. This event takes place after the sending out of the twelve, Mark 3:13-15.
3. There were, in all probability, many who were disciples of Jesus who were not of the apostolic number, or of the seventy, or even of the 120.

D. The sending out of the seventy shows others beside the apostles were given power over demons, Luke 10:1-20.

E. Demons were never subject to false exorcists, Acts 19:11-17.

F. God will not accept those who claim to work signs in His name but do not do His will, Matthew 7:21-23.

IV. What conclusions can we draw from all of this?

A. The man in Mark 9 must have stood in exactly the same approved relationship to Jesus as the apostles did, or he would not have been able to cast out demons.

B. Given the context of the discussion about greatness, it is possible that Jesus is here instructing the apostles about pride and exclusiveness.

C. But this passage in no way teaches that we should treat those outside of Christ as though they were in Christ.

1. We should rejoice in every good effort to do God's will.

2. But as Jesus said to the seventy when they returned, "Do not rejoice that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." Luke 10:20.

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