

# Check-in

- \* Follow-up on last week
- \* “Aha moments”
- \* Questions
- \* Comments
- \* Reflections

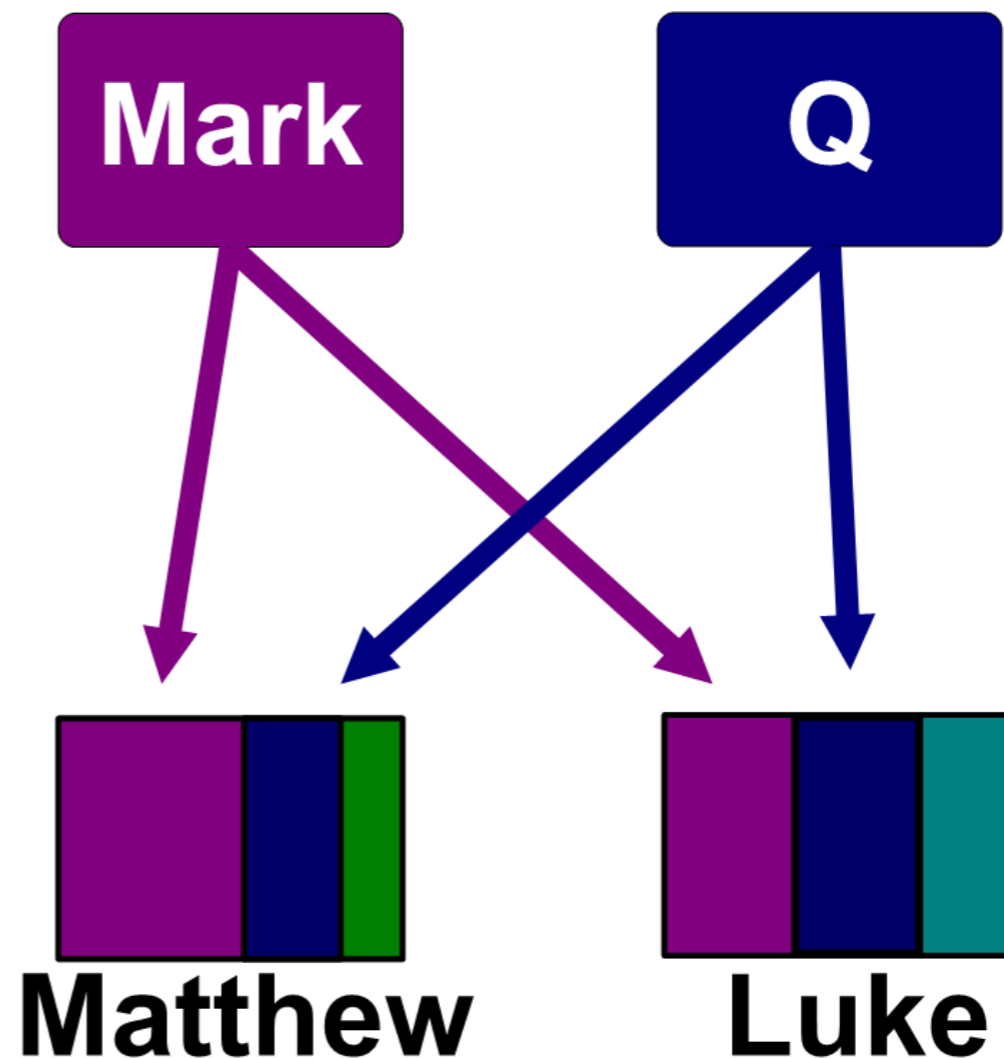


# Exegesis of Q 12:10

“Speaking Against the Holy Spirit”

- Matthew preserves two separate traditions:
  - adapts Mark for Matthew 12:31,32d
  - adapts Q for Mt. 12:32a,b,c.
- Luke uses Q almost exclusively for Lk 12:10.

## Two-source Hypothesis



- **Mark 3**

“28 Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter;

29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin” —

30 for they had said, “He has an unclean spirit.”

- **Matthew** adapts Mark (Matthew 12:31,32d) & Q (Mt. 12:32a,b,c):

“31 Therefore I tell you, people will be forgiven for every sin and blasphemy,

but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.

32 Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

- **Luke** uses Q almost exclusively for Lk 12:10

“10 And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.”

## **Surrounding contexts of the passage**

- supports the theory that the core saying originally circulated independently
- none of the extant Gospels contain the original context of the verse
- in each case there are loose threads where the saying has been incorporated into the larger text of the Gospel.

**Mark** incorporates this saying at the end of the Beelzebul controversy (Mark 3:20-30), which itself is preceded by the “Choosing of the Twelve” (3:13-19) and which is followed by a section on “Jesus’ True Family” (Mark 3:31-35). It could initially seem plausible that the unforgivable sin passage was said in response to accusations made about Jesus’ exorcisms (especially given Mark’s addition in verse 30 that “for they had said, ‘He has an unclean spirit’”), but Eugene Boring lists four reasons why the passage seems independent:

- Verses 28-29 turn on the question of *forgiveness*, which is unrelated to the rest of the Beelzebul controversy.
- The tone changes from *engaging and persuasive* in vv. 24-27 to *didactic* in vv. 28-29
- Verse 23 says, “he...spoke to them *in parables*,” and although verses 24-25 “are somewhat parabolic,” 28-29 are not parabolic at all.
- The introductory formula (“Truly I tell you”) is a conspicuous seam, where this saying is attached to the narrative flow of the text.

- Matthew also amends this saying to the end of the Beelzebul controversy, but he is only following Markan order.
- Luke's use of this passage is derivative of Q order.

Boring poses that the Q-community edited Q 12:10 (also Luke 12:10) together with “verses 2-3, 4-7, 8-9, ... [and] 11-12” because of their common eschatological connotation and prophetic link between the short, individual sayings. It was probably located in this specific order because of “the catchwords...in verses 8-9 and 10.”

- 2 Nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. 3 Therefore whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be proclaimed from the housetops.
- 4 "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that can do nothing more. 5 But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him! 6 Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight. 7 But even the hairs of your head are all counted. Do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.
- 8 "And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God; 9 but whoever denies me before others will be denied before the angels of God.
- 10 And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.
- 11 When they bring you before the synagogues, the rulers, and the authorities, do not worry about how you are to defend yourselves or what you are to say; 12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what you ought to say." 13 Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." 14 But he said to him, "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?"



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SAYINGS OF  
THE RISEN JESUS

CHRISTIAN PROPHECY IN  
THE SYNOPTIC TRADITION

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M. EUGENE BORING

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

1982

pages 158-159

It is most probable that Luke is following Q order here because otherwise he would not place

verse 10 (“And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven”)

immediately after verse 9 (“But whoever denies me [the Son of Man] before others will be denied before the angels of God.”),

placing them in almost direct contradiction.

It is impossible to be certain about whether a saying attributed to Jesus is original to him, but one can offer more and less probable possibilities. To this end, Helmut Koester offers the following helpful model for comparing the parallel passages:

- Any kind of blasphemy (forgiven): Mark and Matthew.
- Blasphemy against Father (forgiven): *Gospel of Thomas*.
- ‘Word’ against Son of man (forgiven): Luke & Matthew [thus Q as well]
- Blasphemy against Son (forgiven): *Gospel of Thomas*
- Blasphemy against Holy Spirit (unforgivable): ALL (Matthew twice).

**1990**

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ANCIENT  
CHRISTIAN  
GOSPELS

THEIR HISTORY  
AND DEVELOPMENT

HELMUT KOESTER

The text critical guideline of multiple attestations would initially seem to indicate that the unforgivable blasphemy against the Holy Spirit would be most original.

But Boring has argued that perhaps the **actual words of Jesus may have been a radical forgiveness proclaimed in Mark** and adapted by Matthew. It could be that Jesus repeatedly made a pointed, radical statement in various contexts that all sins can be forgiven.

- This can be supported at least partially by the criteria of “it sounds like Jesus.” Additional support is garnered by examining the historical circumstances as to why an exception might be made to this unqualified forgiveness.
- It is, of course, possible that Jesus made multiple — even contradictory — statements at different times and in different contexts. Also, if one takes the humanity of Jesus seriously (e.g. Luke 2:52 that Jesus “***grew*** in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and humanity”), then Jesus may have changed his mind (or come to a deeper and more full understanding) of how forgiveness operates. *[expanding concentric circle]*

**M. Eugene Boring. “The  
Unforgivable Sin Logion  
Mark III 28-29/Matt XII  
31-32/Luke VII 10:  
Formal Analysis and  
History of the Tradition.”**

**Novum Testamentum  
18:258-279 (1976), 277.**



James Dunn notes that regarding “Any kind of blasphemy being forgiven,” Mark’s version reads plural “sons of men,” whereas the Q parallel says singular, “son of man.”

- New American Standard Version of Mark 3:28, “Truly I say to you, all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter.”
- Dunn posits that both of these phrases are derivative of the single, ambiguous Aramaic phrase *bar nasa* that could be understood either way when translated to Greek, especially if heard outside the specific context of the historical Jesus or early Palestinian Christianity. He accordingly offers the following two possible reconstructions:
  - **“All (=everything) that (the son of) man blasphemes will be forgiven him...”**
  - **“All (=everyone) who speaks against the son of man will be forgiven....”**
- Thus two possible contexts here are
  - **(1) Jesus is defending himself by saying that whatever actions that he commits that seem blasphemous will be forgiven**
  - **(2) those who attack Jesus will be forgiven.**

Westminster,  
1975  
page 50



# JESUS AND THE SPIRIT

*A Study of the  
Religious and  
Charismatic  
Experience of  
Jesus and the  
First Christians  
as Reflected  
in the New  
Testament*

JAMES D. G. DUNN



- Barnabas Lindars probes further to emphasize that the original may not have been a reference to the title ‘Son of man’ at all.
- Instead, the Markan text of all sins being forgiven the “sons of men” may have been altered by later theological understandings of Jesus as ‘Son of Man’ (although he admits a Christological claim is possible here as well).
- Barnabas Lindars “The New Look on the Son of Man.”  
Bulletin of the John Rylands Library  
63:437-462 (1980/81), 444-445.
- J.D. Crossan notes that perhaps this is one of other “generic” uses of ‘son of men’ that has falsely evolved into the title ‘Son of man.’
- *(The Historical Jesus: The Life of Mediterranean Jewish Peasant.*  
(San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 257-258.)

- O'Neill hypothesizes that when scribes (operating with a Christological hermeneutic) encountered the polyvalent Aramaic phrase *bar nasa*, it would be quite understandable for them to interpret it as 'Son of man' (echoing the familiar Daniel 7) instead of "sons of men."

- J.C. O'Neill. "The unforgivable Sin."  
*Journal for the Study of the New Testament.*  
19:37-42 (1983), 37-38.

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- It is possible the Q community inherited an oral or written Greek translation of the Aramaic *bar nasa* which already read singular, ‘son of man’. An early translation event such as this would have been written down in the Q document and inherited by Luke and Matthew.
- Mark 3:28-30 has no title ‘Son of Man,’ so he may have translated the Aramaic oral tradition from memory and interpreted the phrase as ‘sons of men’ (which perhaps was the original intent of Jesus).
- The errant evolution of the phrase captured in Q was exacerbated by *The Gospel of Thomas*’ redaction of a Trinitarian bent to the previous Christological corruption. It is possible that Thomas may not have known Q at all and may represent a separate tradition that also inherited the same pre-Q Greek, oral translation of *bar nasa* as “*the Son of Man.*”
- J.C. O’Niell. “The unforgivable Sin.”  
*Journal for the Study of the New Testament.*  
19:37-42 (1983), 37-38

Adapting Boring's lead, the following reconstruction of the passage's development can be offered:

- **Jesus makes a radical statement of unqualified forgiveness preserved in Mark 3:28a, b:** “All sins shall be forgiven the sons of men.”
  - It is unclear if the “blasphemy” language in 3:28c is original or later.
  - Dunn notes that “Blasphemy” is a quite appropriate translation of the Aramaic ‘speak against’
  - (compare Daniel 3:29, “Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap, inasmuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way.”)
- **A caveat is appended to Jesus' original statement:** blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable. Since all extant versions contain this condition (Matthew twice), an early and central location is necessary to explain this widespread attestation. Boring posits “Palestine in the first decade or so of the church's existence.” This may well have all been done in Aramaic.

A probable hypothetical scenario:

- **Christians, who claim to speak with the authority of the Holy Spirit, are being charged with blasphemy.**
- Alternative or supplemental explanation is that a prophet repeated the radical, unqualified forgiveness of the original saying with the threat that **rejecting this forgiveness was unforgivable** (c.f. Didache 11:7: “Do not test or examine any prophet who is speaking in the a spirit, for every sin shall be forgiven, but this sin shall not be forgiven).
- The eschatological flavor of Mark 29c (“eternal sin”) may have been added at this point as well within the context of prophetic proclamation.
- **Jesus’ original short statement is lost as is the context of the addendum.** When a Greek translator (operating under a Christological hermeneutic with a familiarity with the title ‘Son of Man’ for Jesus) encounters the Aramaic in its altered state, the secondary reference to “speaking against *Holy Spirit* as unforgivable” prompts him to translate the ambiguous *bar nasa* as “Son of Man” as opposed to “sons of men.”
- It is possible that Mark translated an Aramaic oral tradition himself, or it could be that there was another Greek translation made that Mark inherited, where ‘son of men’ was used instead of ‘Son of man.’

# Mark 4

- [biblestudytools.com/mark/4.html](http://biblestudytools.com/mark/4.html)
- Fuller shades of meaning
- End of Mark 4 - Mark 5:  
series of seemingly supernatural events



“Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”





## Psalm 107

**Some went down to the sea in ships,**  
**doing business** on the mighty waters;  
they saw the deeds of God,  
God's wondrous works in the deep.  
For God commanded and raised the **stormy wind,**  
**which lifted up the waves of the sea.**  
They mounted up to heaven,  
they went down to the depths;  
**their courage melted away in their calamity;**  
they reeled and staggered like drunkards,  
**and were at their wits' end.**  
Then they **cried to God in their trouble,**  
and God brought them out from their distress;  
**God made the storm be still,**  
**and the waves of the sea were hushed.**  
Then they were glad because they had quiet,  
and God brought them to their desired haven.



- Legion
- “herds” - slang for a band of military recruits.
- “dismissing” - troops
- “charged” - into battle
- Echo: Pharaoh’s army into sea



[storycorps.org/listen/carlos-mosqueda-and-his-daughter-cindy/](https://storycorps.org/listen/carlos-mosqueda-and-his-daughter-cindy/)



- There have always been individuals gifted at traditional healing.
- No mental health professionals in the 1st-century (“exorcism” may at least in part = mental illness)
- “The child is not dead but sleeping” = coma?

**M. SCOTT  
PECK, M.D.**

**A PSYCHIATRIST'S  
PERSONAL ACCOUNTS of  
POSSESSION, EXORCISM,  
and REDEMPTION**

**GLIMPSES OF  
THE DEVIL**

Enough Is  
as Good as a Feast

*Mark 6*

- 8 He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff;
- no bread,
- no bag,
- no money in their belts;
- 9 but to wear sandals
- and not to put on two tunics.

- 10 He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place.
- 11 If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them."



- Who do you relate to when reading?
- Whom do you have most in common with?
  - Itinerant, homeless disciples — or
  - householders on whose doors they were knocking?



“Send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat.”

# FISHES



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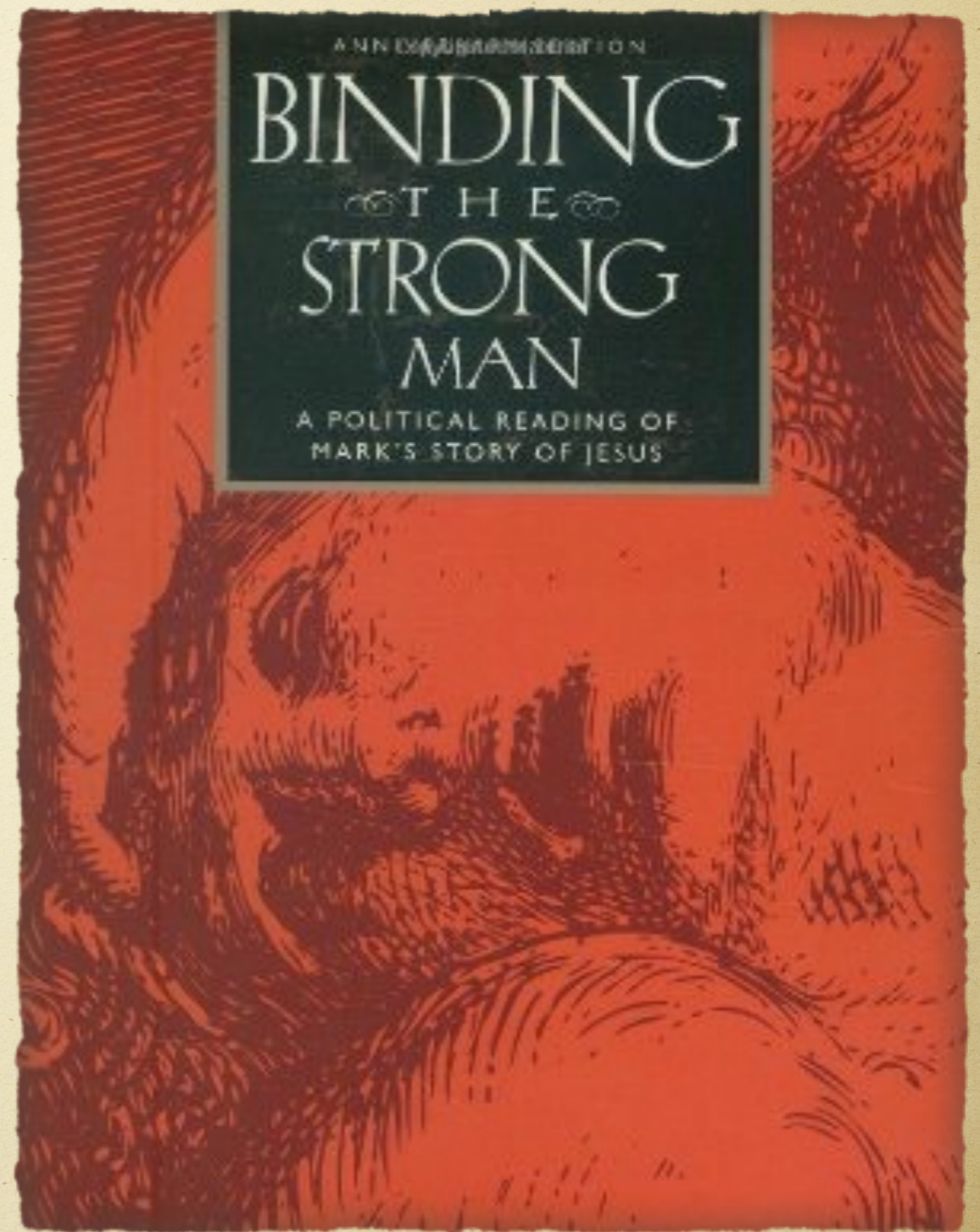
Takes - Blesses - Breaks - Gives

# Inspired the crowd to share

## Hospitality

Mark 4: “good soil...yielding thirty,  
sixty, and a hundredfold.”

“Enough for everyone’s *need*—not  
enough for everyone’s *greed*.”



Ched Myers (1988/2008: 206)