

## The Anonymous Disciple

### Introduction

1. Mark records these words in the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of his gospel. (Mk. 9:38-40).

Mark 9:38 John said to Him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us."

Mark 9:39 But Jesus said, "Do not hinder him, for there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me.

Mark 9:40 "For he who is not against us is for us.

2. John, one of the twelve apostles, here mentions a man whom the apostle had seen and who has become known today as "The Anonymous Disciple" or "The Mysterious Disciple" or "The Unknown Disciple."

a. We do not know his name, age, tribe, exactly when he was endowed with miraculous power, etc.

b. Since there is no record or evidence that Gentiles at that time had the power of perform miracles, it can be safely concluded he was a Jew who began his ministry after Jesus did.

3. Many people have been curious about this unusual account, and some have used it to teach or compromise with false doctrine.

### What We Know About This Disciple

1. This man had genuine miraculous power.

a. This was not a claimed power, but he had an actual power recognized by Jesus and the twelve apostles.

b. Neither Jesus nor His apostles denied he was casting out demons, but "we" [the apostles] had witnessed it.

1) It appears the apostles wanted to stop his exorcisms because they did not know him and he was not part of the twelve.

2) This may have involved jealousy or suspicion on the part of the apostles since he was not a part of them and they believed they and the seventy were the only ones who had miraculous power with the exception of Jesus.

3) They were upset they had been unable to stop his exorcisms and now complained to Jesus about him casting out demons.

c. They did not even hint of fraud or false teaching on the part of this mysterious disciple.

d. The enemies of Christ did not deny His power to cast out demons, but they falsely claimed He did the exorcisms by the power of the devil. (Matt. 12:22-24).

Matt 12:22 Then a demon-possessed man {who was} blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and He healed him,

so that the mute man spoke and saw.

Matt 12:23 All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?"

Matt 12:24 But when the Pharisees heard {this,} they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons."

e. One of the rebuttals Jesus gave to the Pharisees' preposterous charge is found in Matthew 12:25-26.

Matt 12:25 And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand.

Matt 12:26 "If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand?"

f. It is interesting to point out that demons were perfectly capable of distinguishing between those who possessed true power to cast them out and those who merely feigned this power. (Acts 19:13-16).

Acts 19:13 But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches."

Acts 19:14 Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this.

Acts 19:15 And the evil spirit answered and said to them, "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?"

Acts 19:16 And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

1) If this unknown disciple had been a fake, he would not have fooled Jesus nor His apostles who had real power to cast out demons.

2) He would not have been able to fool the evil spirits who feared those who actually had the power of exorcism.

2. The exorcisms, of this unknown disciple, were not denied by John, the other apostles or Jesus Himself.

3. Jesus had unlimited power to do miraculous things and could impart miraculous power to whomever He wished.

a. Jesus' miracles clearly manifested He was the Christ, the Son of God. (Jn. 20:30-31).

b. We have no record of Jesus doing miracles before the Holy Spirit descended on Him at His baptism by John the Baptist. (Matt. 3:16-17). See Mark 1:9-11 John 1:32-34.

c. Soon after His baptism He began to perform all kinds of miracles as recorded in all 4 gospels.

d. Jesus imparted miraculous power to the twelve apostles He chose. (Matt. 10:1-8).

e. He also imparted miraculous power to the seventy chosen to preach the kingdom of God was "at hand." (Lk. 10:1-17).

Luke 10:1 Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come.

Luke 10:2 And He was saying to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.

Luke 10:3 "Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.

Luke 10:4 "Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way.

Luke 10:5 "Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace {be} to this house.'

Luke 10:6 "If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you.

Luke 10:7 "Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages.

Do not keep moving from house to house.

Luke 10:8 "Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you;

Luke 10:9 **and heal those in it who are sick**, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

Luke 10:17 The seventy returned with joy, saying, "**Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.**"

- a. The seventy were able to heal the sick. (Lk. 10:9).
  - b. They were also able to cast out demons in the name [by the authority, power] of Jesus. (Lk. 10:17).
4. No one but Jesus and those He gave miraculous power were able to do actual miracles during Christ's ministry.
- a. This leads to an important deduction.
  - b. Although John and the apostles knew nothing about him, Jesus must have given Him the power to cast out demons at some point in time. The Bible is silent about when he received this power.
5. This anonymous disciple was casting demons "in the name of Jesus."
- a. Jesus said, "Do not hinder him, for there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me." (Mk. 9:39).
    - 1) The all-knowing Jesus did not consider this exorcist working in His name a threat.
    - 2) We should not attempt or seek to stop those living and working by the authority of Christ even though we know little about them.
  - b. Jesus did not deny the exorcisms of this unknown disciple nor did He accuse Him of any false teaching.
  - c. He was not an enemy of Jesus, but was supporting the work of Jesus by giving Him credit for his exorcisms.
6. There is no evidence this disciple was teaching any false doctrine and no charge of false doctrine was made by Jesus or His apostles.
- a. Jesus had come to proclaim the truth, that is, saving truth - not the traditions and prejudices of men.
  - b. He taught only the truth will set us free. (Jn. 8:32), and warned against false teachers. (Matt. 7:15).
  - c. One can be very confident Jesus would not have endorsed this unknown disciple if he had been teaching anything false.
  - d. He would have exposed and corrected any false doctrine this unknown disciple was teaching.
  - e. Jesus approved his ministry and gave His apostles this charge "Do not forbid him".
7. It is clear this man was performing genuine miracles and was doing these miracles "in the name" [by the authority] of Jesus.
8. God would not have given this miraculous power to authenticate false teachings, but only to authenticate the truth.

9. The principle purpose of miracles was to confirm the teachings of Christ and the apostles were from God.  
(Mk. 16:17-18; Heb. 2:2-4).

Mark 16:17 "These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues;

Mark 16:18 they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly {poison,} it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

Heb 2:2 For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty,

Heb 2:3 how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard,

Heb 2:4 God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

10. "Signs" [miracles] were always to validate divine instruction - not false teaching!
- Anyone could claim they were speaking for God.
  - Miracles were proof God was speaking through the person.
  - The power to work miracles did not guarantee salvation if those having them failed to keep God's commandments. (Matt. 7:21-23).

### **Distortion Of The Preaching Of The Unknown Disciple**

- As already clearly proven there is zero evidence this unknown disciple was teaching any false doctrine.
  - He was not a false teacher!
  - He possessed a spiritual gift [of exorcism] and was one of the Savior's workers.
  - He certainly was not a worker of Satan. Satan would not cast out his own evil spirits.
- It is a clear distortion of this passage to teach or embrace the idea that he can be used as an example that we should endorse denominationalism and the many false doctrines that are taught in them.
- God's word is truth and it is the truth that sets us free. (Jn.17:17; 8:32).
- It is by the truth that we come to be children of God. (Jas.1:18).
- Jesus was a man of truth and taught only truth. (Jn. 1:14,17).

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:17 For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.

6. Truth manifests those who love and practice truth and are of God. (Jn. 3:21).

John 3:21 "But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

7. God must be worshiped in truth. (Jn. 4:23, 24).

John 4:23 "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.

John 4:24 "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

8. Jesus spoke the truth He heard from God. (Jn. 8:40).

9. Jesus is the only way to God and "the truth" that saves. (Jn. 14:6; 18:37).

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

John 18:37 Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say {correctly} that I am a king. For this I have been born, and **for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.**"

10. False teaching is of the devil. (Jn. 8:44).

John 8:44 "You are of {your} father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own {nature,} for he is a liar and the father of lies.

11. God's wrath will come upon all those "who suppress the truth." (Rom. 1:18).

12. God's wrath will come upon those who reject truth. (2 Thess. 2:10).

2 Thess 2:10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

2 Thess 2:12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

13. Truth must be spoken out of love. (Eph. 4:15).

14. Our loins [waist] must be girded with truth. (Eph. 6:14).

15. God wants all to come to the knowledge of truth and be saved. (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9).

16. The church is to be "the pillar and support of the truth." (1 Tim. 3:15).

17. We are to study that we may be able to "accurately" handle "the word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15).

18. Paul warned against turning one's ears from the truth. (2 Tim. 4:4).

2 Tim 4:4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

Titus 1:14 not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth.

19. Sensuality causes many to malign the way of truth. (2 Pet. 2:2).

2 Pet 2:2 Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be malign;

20. Knowing and keeping God's commandments is absolutely essential. (1 Jn. 2:4).

1 John 2:4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;

21. Being of the truth gives us assurance of salvation before God. (1 Jn. 3:19; 4:6).

1 John 3:19 We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him

1 John 4:6 We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

### **Conclusion.**

1. It is evident that this unknown disciple, at some point, had come in contact with Jesus and was commissioned by Jesus to cast out demons in His name.
2. It is clear the disciples were unaware of the man's identity and work.
3. Though he was not one of the twelve [possibly one of the seventy], Jesus made it clear that he was not against them but he was "for us." The pronoun "us" refers to Jesus and His apostles.
4. He is not an example given to mean we should endorse and fellowship those who preach and teach false doctrine using the name of Jesus.
  - a. Anyone can claim to be working in the name of Jesus, but this claim is tested by their words and actions.
  - b. Only "the truth" is truly "in the name of Jesus."
  - c. Jesus never condoned false teaching nor taught we should condone it. (Matt. 7:15).
5. The Bible clearly teaches that truth is knowable (Jn. 8:32), and we must hear the truth, obey the truth, stand for the truth, proclaim the truth and never endorse false teaching.
6. We must stand against false teaching and constantly powerfully proclaim the truth in love.
7. The anonymous disciple was not an example of embracing or tolerating anti-scriptural doctrine.
8. Liberals need another example to prove we are to have fellowship with those advocating and practicing error.
9. There are many today who desperately want to be a part of the various religious sects.
10. They want the church to be a mere denomination constantly changing with culture apart from the truth of God's word.
11. Just because one has experienced some form of baptism and obeyed some of the Lord's commandments does not mean he pleases Him or is a Christian.
12. The church is being attacked by the government, culture, other religious people and by many of our own number who seek to make the church a mere denomination that is willing to compromise the truth to gain the acceptance of men.

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