

Jesus Demonstrates His Authority

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Mark / Teaching; Sickness; Demon Possession; Jesus Casts Out Demons in Capernaum / Mark 1:21–28

Jesus has complete and unmatched authority over all things, including sickness, death, and spiritual forces. Join Pastor Steve as he looks at Mark 1:21-28 and shows how Jesus authority was demonstrated in the synagogue in Capernaum.

INTRODUCTION

- We are looking again at Mark’s Gospel this morning
- Please take your Bibles and turn to Mark chapter 1
- Today we are considering verses 21-28

Mark 1:21–28 NASB95

They *went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and *began* to teach.

They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes.

Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,

saying, “What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—

the Holy One of God!”

And Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet, and come out of him!”

Throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him.

They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.”

Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee.

- The Bible teaches that Jesus possesses all authority
- He told His disciples this in [Matthew 28:18](#) when He said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”
- In other words, there is no place where His authority does not extend
- He has authority over everyone and everything
- There is no limit to His authority
- The Bible demonstrates the authority of Christ in a number of ways:
- The first is seen in creation
- The Bible says when everything was created in [Genesis 1-2](#), it was Jesus who created it

- [John 1:3](#) says, “All things came into being through Him (Jesus), and apart from Him (Jesus) nothing came into being that has come into being.”
- Everything we see in both the physical and spiritual realm was created by Jesus
- Therefore nothing or no one exists apart from Him
- If it weren't for Jesus and His role in creation, you wouldn't be here
- [Colossians 1:16](#) also says, “For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.”
- That includes all life forms, all people, whether they are redeemed or not
- He made us
- And He did that for one reason
- Listen again to the last line of [Colossians 1:16](#)
- It gives us the reason why He created all things
- Paul says it was “for Him”
- Therefore the Westminster Catechism asks, “What is the chief end of man?”
- What's the answer?

- “The chief end of man is to glory God and to enjoy Him forever.”
- Man was created for Jesus for one purpose—to glorify and enjoy Him
- The second way in which He demonstrated His authority was over spiritual creatures like angels, demons and Satan
- When He was tempted three times by Satan, He told Him after the third temptation to leave and what did he do? He left
- When He told demons to come out of a person, what did they do? They came out
- Since He had full authority all He had to do was say a word and they had to obey
- A third way that He demonstrated His authority was over death
- In [John 11](#), after Lazarus died and had been in the grave for 4 days (v.39), He said to Lazarus to come out of the grave and what did he do? He came out (vv.43-44)!
- Why? Because He had authority to raise the dead
- When He spoke about His own death, He said in [John 10:17-18](#), “17 “For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. 18 “No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.””

· Authority over creation, over angels, over demons, and over Satan...

- A fourth way that He demonstrates His authority will be seen in the future when He judges the dead
- [John 5:22](#) says, "...[God] has given all judgment to the Son"
- [Acts 17:31](#) says that God "has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed"
- Who is that man? It is Jesus
- All authority has been given to Him!
- When Jesus began His Galilean ministry, no one knew anything about Him until they met and spent time with Him
- After a day with Him, Andrew runs to tell His brother Peter that he had found the Messiah
- And he then takes Peter to Jesus
- Two other men, James and John, sons of Zebedee, meet Jesus and are told to follow Him, so they did
- Here we also see that Jesus demonstrated His authority over people
- We saw that last time when He called His first disciples in verses 16-20
- And now Mark takes us to Capernaum where, once again, we see His authority as He teaches and casts out a demon from a man in the synagogue
- Before we look at vv.21-28, we need to understand that there are events the other Gospel writers mention that Mark passes over

- Just as He skipped a full year of ministry in Judea, there are also several weeks that he does not mention
- Lowell Johnson says, “During the several weeks that are not mentioned by Mark, Jesus was carrying out His ministry in Nazareth, His hometown (Lk.4:14-15). It was during this time that He preached the Sermon on the Mount ([Matthew 5-7](#)) and called the rest of the twelve disciples. It was also during this period that Jesus suffered rejection at the hands of the people in His hometown of Nazareth. According to Luke 4:16-20, Jesus preached in the synagogue at Nazareth and proclaimed Himself to be the Messiah Israel had long anticipated (cf Lk 4:21). The people rejected His claims and even tried to kill Him (Lk 4:28-29). As a result, Jesus and His men left Nazareth and moved their ministry to Capernaum, which would become His base for ministry. It is there that Mark picks up the narrative once again.” (Sermon)
- So Mark doesn't mention the Judean ministry or His ministry at Nazareth
- Keep in mind this is one of 4 Gospels
- Each give their own account of Jesus and His ministry
- Some mention things the other doesn't
- These are not contradictions
- They are perspectives
- Each presented what they saw and heard regardless of where they heard it or who they heard it from

- So beginning at verse 21, Mark tells us two things that happened in Capernaum
- Let's notice the first...

I. Jesus Began to Teach (vv.21-22)

Mark says, “They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and *began* to teach.”

- We know from verses 16-20...

A. His first 4 disciples were with Him

- We see that by the context
- and by the use of the plural “they” in verse 21
- “They” is referring back to verses 16-20 with Jesus calling His first 4 disciples

- Mark says...

B. They were in Capernaum (v.21a)

- The Arabs call Capernaum “Talhum or Tell Hum” (AYBD)
- The Hebrew name Kfar Nahum means “the village of Nahum”
- The mention of Nahum may be a reference to the OT prophet with the same name
- If so then Capernaum dates back to “the days of the OT prophet” (Sproul)

- In addition to this, Matthew gives us the only location we know
- He says in [Matthew 4:13](#), “and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali.”
- The west shore was settled by the tribe of Naphtali (LBD)
- Scripture gives few details about that first year of Jesus’ public ministry
- Most of what we know about those months is found in John’s gospel, and it suggests Christ ministered mostly in Judea
- However, [John 2:12](#) mentions a brief visit to Capernaum, with no other details.
- [John 2:12](#) says, “After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and His brothers and His disciples; and they stayed there a few days.”
- The Gospels refer to Capernaum as Jesus’ “own city”
- [Matthew 9:1](#), “Getting into a boat, Jesus crossed over the sea and came to His own city.”
- [Mark 2:1](#), “When He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home.”
- So “After leaving Nazareth, He went to live in Capernaum, for...a time” (Lexham Bible Dictionary)
- Capernaum was the center of fishing and trade
- We know that because archeologists have found fishhooks among the artifacts during excavation (Myers, Allen C. *The*

Eerdmans Bible Dictionary, Eerdmans, 1987, p. 191.)

- The town was also a Roman taxing polling station
- Matthew tells us this is where he and other tax collectors were located
- Mark mentions Matthew's call by Jesus in [Mark 2:14](#).
- The town also had a Roman garrison ([Mat.8:5-13](#))
- According to [Matthew 8:5](#), after Jesus entered Capernaum, He was met by a Centurion
- Archaeologists have discovered a milestone 100 meters NE of the synagogue bearing the inscription "Imperator Caesar Divin..." ("The Emperor Caesar of the Divine") indicating it was a strategic post for Rome (LBD)
- It is also important to note that Capernaum is only mentioned in the Gospels (16 times)
- It is never mentioned anywhere else
- Jesus later pronounces judgment on Capernaum because of their refusal to repent
- He said in [Matthew 11:23-24](#), "23 "And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. 24 "Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you.""

- Mark not only tells us the place but also the time when they entered Capernaum
- He says, “They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath”
- So Jesus’ teaching...

B. It was on a Sabbath (v.21b)

- Why does Mark mention this?
- I believe by mentioning the Sabbath, three things were occurring: 1) this is indicating the time/day when He taught them and 2) This is why they were meeting. They gathered for worship and teaching and 3) Jesus was challenging their erroneous views of the Sabbath
- The sabbath was the traditional day of rest for the Jewish people as prescribed by the Law ([Exod 20:8–11](#); [Deut 5:12–15](#)) (Barry)
- The word “sabbath” comes from the Hebrew *shabbat*, meaning “to cease” or “desist.”
- The primary meaning is that of cessation from all work. (Holman)
- But the Jewish leaders perverted it
- During the time of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, the Jewish rabbis banned 39 tasks that couldn’t be performed on the Sabbath

- This was known as the Melachot, which means “creative work” in Hebrew
- These tasks were based on the types of work that were required to build the Tabernacle in the wilderness as described in the OT and became the basis for banning different types of “work”
- These tasks were sowing, plowing, reaping, gathering, threshing, winnowing, sorting, grinding, kneading, baking, shearing, washing, combing, dyeing, spinning, weaving, making a knot, untying a knot, sewing, tearing, trapping, slaughtering, skinning, tanning, scraping, cutting, writing , erasing, building, demolishing, extinguishing a fire, igniting a fire, completing any work, carrying, transferring, using any kind of material or object in a way that alters it, completing, planting, and harvesting
- If these were not enough they also added: buying and selling, exchanging money, and engaging in trade, traveling, and lighting a fire whether it’s for cooking or heating
- Jesus was angered over their abuse of the sabbath
- Mark tells us in [Mark 3:1-6](#), “1 He entered again into a synagogue; and a man was there whose hand was withered. 2 They were watching Him to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. 3 He said to the man with the withered hand, “Get up and come forward!” 4 And He said to them, “Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill?” But they kept silent. 5 After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored. 6 The Pharisees

went out and immediately began conspiring with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.”

- Jesus constantly challenged their interpretation of the Sabbath
- He stated in [Mark 2:27-28](#), “27 Jesus said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. 28 “So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.””

• Verse 21 continues will telling us that...

C. Jesus was teaching in the synagogue (v.21)

- The word “synagogue” means “assembly” or “gathering”
- The term is from Greek and reflects the Hebrew (Bet Keneset) or “house of gathering”
- Some say the first synagogue was established during the Babylonian exile in 586 B.C. after the destruction of the first temple in Jerusalem
- During the exile, they gathered in small groups in homes and public places to study the Torah, pray, and share communal meals
- By the 1st century the synagogue had become so important and central to Jewish life that the Talmud, which was composed of the Mishna, which is the rabbinic interpretations of the Torah, and the Gemara, which is a commentary on the Mishna, says there were 480 of them in Jerusalem at the time of Vespasian (AYBD) the Roman ruler

- In 1913 a Greek inscription was found in Jerusalem dating to the 1st century
- It said the synagogue was built “for purposes of reciting the Law and studying the commandments, and as a hotel with chambers and water installations to provide for the needs of itinerants from abroad” (AYBD)
- Philo said that synagogues drew the name “Houses of Instruction” because there the Law was read on the Sabbath and explained
- And during the week, it was a school
- And also during the week, it was a civil court
- Scribes who taught, elders who taught, would become judges who would rule in cases of the Law (MacArthur)
- Josephus tells us there were about 240 towns and villages in Galilee and they all had synagogues
- We are told that a synagogue could be started with 10 Jewish men over the age of 13
- Each would have a rabbi as its organizer
- The elders and scribes would be the teachers
- [Luke 4:16](#) tells us that Jesus’ custom was to visit the local synagogue every Sabbath
- Just a footnote: South of the synagogue is an octagonal stone building used in previous centuries as a Christian church
- Inside the walls are stones from another structure

- Archaeologists believe it to be the original house of Peter because they have been able to decipher the letters inscribed in the walls as the Greek letters for Peter (Shanks and Cole, *Archaeology and the Bible*, 188-207)
- Now Mark doesn't tell us what Jesus was teaching
- He only focuses on their response
- He says...

D. The crowd was amazed at His teaching (v.22a)

- Mark says in verse 22 that “they were amazed at His teaching; For He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”
- The word Mark uses for “amazed” (ekplesso, imp.pass.ind.) means “to be or become astounded to such a degree as to nearly lose one’s mental composure” (Brannan, Rick, *Lexham Research Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*)
- They were “overwhelmed” at His teaching
- They had never heard anyone teaching like this
- Mark uses the imperfect tense when he notes their response
- This means that the audience’s astonishment matched Jesus’ activity of teaching: as long as he taught, astonishment overwhelmed them.” (Gundry, Robert H. *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross.*)

- The crowd that heard Jesus teach the Sermon on the Mount in [Matthew 5-7](#) had the same response
- [Matthew 7:28-29](#), “28 When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed (same word as [Mark 1:22](#)) at His teaching; 29 for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.”

· Jesus’ teaching...

E. It was with authority and not like the scribes (v.22b)

- Not only did He teach with authority but according to [Luke 4:32](#) “His message was with authority”
- The word “authority” (exousia) means “rule, dominion, jurisdiction, full right, power, privilege, prerogative” (MacArthur)
- In other words, He spoke with “absolute conviction, objectivity, authority, dominion, as if He were in charge and as if this was the truth” (MacArthur)
- Jesus’ teaching was “absolute, not arbitrary...logical, not evasive...concrete, not esoteric...reasonable, systematic— not mystical, muddled”
- His teaching was on essential matters, not trivialities
- His teaching was clear by way of illustrations and progression— not confusing [or] allegorical

- His teaching had the conviction of truthfulness, not merely suggestion
- They never heard anything like this
- They said as they heard Jesus teach, that it was “not as the scribes”
- How did the scribes teach?
- They didn’t speak with authority
- They quoted other rabbis
- They prided themselves on being able to attach themselves to the past and quote various revered rabbis (MacArthur)
- But here Jesus doesn’t quote anyone
- He doesn’t get His theology from anyone
- He doesn’t give His view of the rabbis
- They were not use to that
- His teaching literally blew their minds
- The scribes prided themselves on familiarity with all the possible views
- They prided themselves on their “twisted musings, their obscure insights, their mystical notions, and never saying anything original” (MacArthur)
- Most people during this time were illiterate

- They didn't have copies of the Scriptures because they were kept in private places and only available in the synagogue to the one who had access to them
 - So the people had to hear the Scriptures read and explained to them
 - So the scribes became the ones who did that
 - They were the ones who read it and who explained it
 - Because of this they were given the title rabbi
 - Rabbi means "honored one"
 - These were the elite because they handled the Scriptures
 - So for Jesus to speak authoritatively by quoting no one and speaking concretely, objectively and clearly was something they were not used to
- Mark tells us while they were astounded at His teaching all of a sudden there was...

II. The Interruption (vv.23-28)

A. It came from a man in the synagogue (v.23)

B. He had an unclean spirit (v.23)

- The word "unclean spirit" is a synonym for "demon"

- Both terms are used interchangeably in Scripture
- Some translations refer to them as “impure spirits”
- Scripture refers to demons as unclean spirits over 20 times in the NT
- Scripture says they are “unclean” in that they are “wicked”
- They are not only wicked but delight in wickedness and promote it
- They seek to contaminate all of God’s creation with their filth
- “Their foul, putrid nature is in direct contrast to the purity and incorruption of the Holy Spirit’s nature” (Gotquestions.org)

· Mark says the unclean spirit...

C. He cried out (v.23)

- Usually demons do not want to be discovered
- But that’s not true here
- When Jesus spoke the truth it caused him to “cry out” (v.23b)
- The word for “cry out” (anakraxen, aor.act.ind.) is “a strong emotional outcry: “shrieked.” (Hiebert)
- It is translated “shouting” in [Matthew 15:23](#), “screaming” in [Mark 5:5](#) and “yelling” in [Acts 7:57](#).
- It was a loud interruption and drew attention to the man
- What did he say when he cried out?

D. He exposed Jesus' true identity (v.24)

- He said, “What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are —the Holy One of God!”
- Satan and all demons know their fate
- Notice the plural “we” and “us” in verse 24:
- They said, “What business do we have with each other...“Have You come to destroy us?”
- A similar phrase is used in [Matthew 8:29](#) but with the added “before the time”
- There is a definite time coming where God will judge Satan and all fallen angels
- Scripture teaches when Satan was cast out of heaven, he took a third of the angels with him in his rebellion ([Rev.12:4](#))
- Some of the fallen angels that fell with him were sent directly to the Abyss
- [2 Peter 2:4](#), “For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment”
- Peter borrows a word from Greek mythology for hell, “*tartarus*.”
- The Greeks taught that *tartarus* was a place lower than Hades reserved for the most wicked of human beings, gods, and demons.

- The Jews eventually came to use this term to describe the place where fallen angels were sent.
- It defined for them the lowest hell, the deepest pit, the most terrible place of torture and eternal suffering.
- Jesus, in spirit, entered that place when His body was in the grave, and proclaimed triumph over the demons during the time between His death and resurrection (*See note on [Col. 2:14](#); [1 Pet. 3:18, 19](#)*). (MacArthur)
- [Jude 1:6](#), “And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day.”
- [Revelation 9](#) says that some of them will be released in the middle of Daniel’s seventieth week
- According to [Revelation 9:13-15](#), there are 4 demons bound at the Euphrates River who will be released at the end of Daniel’s seventieth week
- The ones that were not bound accompany Satan in his bidding
- But he and all the demons will ultimately be “destroyed” in the lake of fire
- [Revelation 20:10](#), “And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”
- [Matthew 25:41](#) says the “eternal fire...has been prepared for the devil and his angels”

- So they know their eternal fate that they will be destroyed in the lake of fire
- The rest of what the demon said was “I know who You are—the Holy One of God”
- The demons knew who Jesus was
- In [Mark 3:11](#) they called Him “the Son of God”
- In [Mark 5:7](#) they called Him “the Son of the Most High God”
- It is interesting to hear that the demons know exactly who Jesus is but the crowd didn’t and “debated among themselves” (v.27)

• So...

E. Jesus rebukes Him and commanded him to come out (vv.25-26)

“25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet, and come out of him!” 26 Throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him.”

- R.C. Sproul says, “What Jesus said would not be considered polite conversation today. A more accurate translation of what He said to the demon would be: “Shut up. I do not want to hear any more from you. Come out of him.”

• So immediately...

- The unclean spirit comes out (v.26) but not until he threw the man into “convulsions” and crying with a loud voice or scream

- This again caused the crowd to be “amazed so that they debated among themselves, saying, ‘What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him” (v.27)
- Their question was to each other
- Hiebert says their response is seen by the present tense
- It “pictures prolonged, animated discussion”
- “The Talmud says that Rabbi Yochanan Ben-Zakkai, [who was the] convener of the Yavneh Council which around 90 A.D. developed the structure of post-Temple rabbinic Judaism, studied the speech of *shedim* (demonic spirits; Sukkah 28a), but not that the *shedim* obeyed him” (Stern, David H. *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A Companion Volume to the Jewish New Testament*)
- They didn’t obey Him because He didn’t have any authority over them like Jesus had

• **Mark ends this section in verse 28 by telling us...**

- Jesus’ popularity grew after this (v.28)

He says, “Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee.”

- This was no longer a secret
- The word is out
- A teacher named Jesus from Nazareth is astounding everyone with His teaching and authority over the demons

- Come hear Him and see for yourself

CONCLUSION

- Lenski says, “...these people...fell short in apprehending what stood forth in their synagogue that Sabbath Day.”
- They had no clue
- All they could say was “What is this?” not “Who is this?”
- That’s the question they missed
- His teachings, healings, miracles, and power over demons and Satan was to demonstrate to everyone who He is
- But they missed it
- You’ve heard it today
- Don’t miss this!
- Don’t get caught up with amazement at what Jesus did but rather what this reveals about Him!
- He is the “Son of God” as verse 1 says
- Mark closes by telling us the effect went beyond Capernaum—the report went out immediately—everywhere—defining this as all over the surrounding region of Galilee (Lenski)
- What about you?
- Are you debating among yourselves as to who Jesus is?
- Or do you see Him demonstrating His authority when He called His disciples to follow Him or when He taught in the

synagogues or beside the lake or when He commanded the demons to come out and they did

- If you have never believed, I call you to believe now
- Come to Him
- Repent of your sin and confess Jesus as Lord
- He is worthy of your confession and your commitment
- Commit your life to Him right now
- Let's pray