

The jaw-dropping authority of Jesus to defeat Satan with a word

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[0 : 00] And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath, Jesus entered the synagogue and was teaching. And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority and not as the scribes.

And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?

Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God. But Jesus rebuked him, saying, Be silent and come out of him.

And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, What is this?

A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him. And at once his fame spread everywhere, throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

[1 : 12] I'm going to do something slightly strange to start with. Turn to your neighbour, and this question. Who's got the most authority in the world at the moment?

Which human, would you say, has the most authority in the world at the moment? It's a difficult question, isn't it? It's a difficult question. I don't imagine Keir Starmer came up.

Anyone? Elon Musk? No? Taylor Swift? No, we won't go there. Well, if I can do a gear shift, which I didn't predict.

There's a big gear shift from the ridiculous to the sublime. Because the subject in front of us, not just this week, but actually for the following few weeks and last week, is the jaw-dropping authority of Jesus that he showed when he came to earth.

It was authority that no one had ever seen before, and that no one has ever seen since. Just look down at verse 22. You can see that's the subject in front of us.

[2 : 28] They were amazed, for he taught as one who had authority. Look down at verse 27. What is this? A new teaching with authority. But it spans to the end of this section, which comes in 2, verse 12.

As he proves his authority, 2, verse 10, to forgive sins. And then as the man is raised from paralysis, they cry out in amazement.

We never saw anything like this. In other words, this authority is something we've never seen before and never since.

That is the subject of Mark's first section of his gospel. Of course, actually, because if you think about it, Mark has introduced Jesus with the claim that he is God's king who would rule over God's kingdom forever.

You remember that from chapter 1, verses 1 to 15. And so doesn't it stand to reason that the first thing Mark does is to showcase, to put on display, the authority of the king?

[3 : 44] If he's made the claim that Jesus is the eternal Lord who has come to rule over God's kingdom, then it stands to reason that he now shows us authority that would be fitting of this king.

Does that make sense? A king whose kingdom would never end and in whose kingdom we can find the true peace that we long for.

And as we read this section of Mark's gospel, we cannot help but be drawn to Jesus and to want to be where he is.

I think that is the impact of these words on us. We saw last week his authority to call people to follow him into his kingdom. Today, we see that he has authority to bring the kingdom of God.

And first up, he has the authority to destroy Satan and his forces. Now, can I say at the beginning, this is perhaps not the salvation we might have asked for.

[4 : 58] But it is the salvation that we need. Isn't it interesting, number one on Mark's list of things to show us about Jesus' authority, his authority over Satan.

Clearly, it is a greater priority than we think to be saved from Satan and his forces of evil. Verse 27, that's where it ends, isn't it?

He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him. There was a moment when Adolf Hitler had to accept that the game was up, even though the war wasn't quite over.

There he was in the bunker in Berlin. It's actually been captured in the film Downfall. If anyone's seen it, that scene, which has then now been reproduced ad infinitum on YouTube with different dubbings.

But that moment where Hitler has to face the reality that it's over. The game is up. He was defeated. The end was inevitable.

[6 : 07] Now, I think that that is something like the moment we have here for Satan. It is a huge moment in salvation history.

Satan, who has run riots since the beginning of the Bible, Genesis chapter 3. A huge moment where the enemy that Satan has dreaded strolls onto the scene at last.

And he demonstrates with effortless ease that he has come to release people from Satan's grip and to destroy Satan and his forces forever.

The game is up. The writing is on the wall. It's only a matter of time now. Just look down at 1 verse 15 again. What does Jesus go around preaching?

The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God has come near. In other words, Jesus says, we're right at the cusp of the end now. The kingdom of God is about to come.

[7 : 17] Well, let's have a look at these verses. Just look down with me at verse 21. And they went into Capernaum and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching.

And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority and not as the scribes. Now, we won't stop here, but just notice this in passing.

There was something about Jesus' teaching alone. Do you see that? It was a word that gripped the hearts of men and women as he taught them in the synagogue.

It was like nothing that they'd ever heard before. His words alone. It was astonishing. It was amazing teaching. It seemed to come with the ring of truth.

Of course, that's as true today as it was back then. Don't his words in the Bible just ring on our hearts as if coming with a kind of mysterious authority, as if he knows us more deeply than we know ourselves.

[8 : 28] Have you experienced that? It's the amazing teaching of the Lord Jesus. They experienced it. Why?

Because he is the Son of God who made us. And therefore, his teaching alone, just enthralling, amazing, grips the hearts of men and women.

In fact, that's happened across history for the last 2,000 years and continues to happen, doesn't it? No other words have gripped humanity like Jesus' words.

Think of Plato. Great thinkers. Who reads Plato today? A few students. Unfortunate students, perhaps, you might say, in philosophy degrees.

Shakespeare's words. Shakespeare's words. Wonderful words. Whose lives are transformed by Shakespeare's words today. Jesus' words. Today.

[9 : 30] Transforming lives. Gripping the hearts of men and women. Why? Well, that alone is evidence enough that he is the Son of God. But the main emphasis of this account is then what happens next.

Verse 23. Immediately, there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, What have you come to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?

Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are. The Holy One of God. That word, cried out, literally could mean shrieked out.

Jesus is heckled. But not by a man. By a demon. And so I don't think we should be, I don't think we should be imagining Warren sort of standing up and sort of heckling me, you know, giving it some welly, simply shouting.

Whatever this voice sounded like, they seemed in no doubt that Jesus had been dealing with a demon. Now just to pause here, can you imagine it?

[10:43] I'm conscious that we live in a culture that would question the existence of demons and of Satan. None of our colleagues really believe, or many of them would say to us, you're nuts.

You believe these things. Why is that? Well, that's because one of the main doctrines of our culture's belief system is materialism. In other words, there is nothing that exists beyond what we can see or observe with our five senses.

But as C.S. Lewis, I think, has put it, Satan's greatest achievement in the West is to convince people that he doesn't exist. It makes sense.

Think about human warfare. Very often the case in human warfare that the best tactic is to convince the enemy that you don't exist. Take camouflage, for example.

Why is there camouflage? Why are submarines not painted bright pink, but the colour of the sea? The success of the U-boat hinged entirely on the ignorance of the enemy of its existence.

[11:49] It is the same with Satan in our generation. To be convinced that Satan is not real and that there are no spiritual forces of evil is to be like the ship in denial of U-boats in the Second World War because he couldn't see them.

It's naive, it's foolish, and it's a denial of reality. Interestingly, other cultures considered more backward by the West are actually much less naive than us on these matters.

There are plenty of accounts, even in London. I was at a church in Limehouse recently of someone, where there was someone there who had wonderfully been rescued, a Christian lady.

rescued from a drug den where she'd spent much of her twenties, which was full of people who invited the occult practices. She was under no illusions of the reality of Satan.

Just think for a second of the brutality of some of the evil that we see in the world. Can it really be explained simply by the selfishness of the human heart?

[13:13] Think of what we see on our news channels. So much of the suffering that we see around is caused and intensified by the invisible enemy.

Well, this demon shrieks out. I take it it can't help it. Confronted with Jesus, a few verses later in chapter 3, it says that whenever demons saw Jesus come near to them, they fell to the ground and cried out, you are the Son of God.

The evil spiritual forces, it seemed, were simply mesmerised by Jesus. And this demon seems to know that it's a hopeless fight.

Did you see that? He says, what have you come to do with us? What have you to do with us? What have you come to do with us? Have you come to destroy us?

You see that? You notice that is not a question of can you destroy us? But will you? He knows Jesus can. These therefore are not questions of a confident warrior or boxer saying to Jesus, bring it on, let's get in the ring.

[14:26] but rather they're the questions of something in the created order knowing that it's met its ruler and it's pointless to fight. He says, you are the Holy One of God, the Lord of all eternity.

I know who you are. It's interesting, isn't it? The best he can do to resist is simply to say, I know who you are, the Holy One. Jesus says, be silent.

Jesus isn't interested in confessions of his identity from evil spirits. He does not engage the demon in conversation. Be silent.

Come out. And the demon gets the answer to his question, have you come to destroy us? As Jesus casts him out with a word. And I've been pondering this week just thinking what it would have been like to be there and thinking we're not told what tone of voice Jesus used to say this.

There's no exclamation mark in the original. Did he shout it? Possibly. Did he just speak it without even raising his voice? Be silent and come out of it.

[15:45] Either way, the demon against its will must come out and so gives one last cry of rebellion, verse 26, before it's gone.

And the crowds were, it says they were, astounded, amazed. That word amazed can come with an element of fear. Now these people, they may have seen exorcisms before, things like that did sometimes happen.

But never like this. With a word. And so they say, what sort of authority is this? That he can command even the demons and they have to do what he says.

There is therefore no contest between Jesus and the forces of evil. I wonder if you realise that. He brushes aside this demon as if it's shaking a grain of sand off his shoulder.

Get out. I take it therefore Jesus versus Satan would not make a good trilogy. Just imagine the Lord of the Rings with Jesus instead of Gandalf and Aragorn.

[17:02] I'm actually, as many of you will know, the Lord of the Rings, it is very long. And I'm actually trying to read it at the moment to one of my sons. I'll be honest, we struggled a bit during the Council of Elrond's.

Nearly lost it. But we did make it through. He actually said to me recently, he said, Dad, there's a lot of waiting in Lord of the Rings, isn't there? Which is true. But imagine Lord of the Rings with Jesus. Page one, sentence one. Right, Sauron, game over. One of the nine riders comes up. Have you come to destroy us?

Yes. On your bike. The end. Why is that? Well, it is because Jesus towers with irresistible authority. Because he is the victorious, conquering king who will defeat all of God's enemies and he will do it with a word. Simply by speaking.

[18:12] There is no contest. It is glorious, sparkling, breathtaking, holy, authority. In fact, there is only one person we've seen in the Bible whose words carry this kind of authority.

Who can speak to the created order and it must obey. Well, so what does all this mean?

I've got three implications. Number one, the game is up for Satan. Satan is on borrowed time. His destruction is near. The end may not be quite yet.

Verse 15, the kingdom of God is near. But just like Hitler in the bunker, here is the moment where we see that Satan's defeat is inevitable even if that final formality has not quite yet come.

It is like watching, this event is like watching the first rock of Satan's crumbling fortress fall to the ground at the command of the king. the writing is on the wall, Mark says.

[19:28] The king has come bringing the kingdom of God, the game is up. And that is very good news, very good news for all who would turn to God.

God, I say it's good news, it's good news for those who do not resist the Lord Jesus but repent and come to him.

It is not good news, in fact, it is very bad news for all those who would persist and refuse to surrender to Jesus now.

if Satan can't stand against him, well, how much less all the ranks of humanity who would oppose him to the bitter end.

Take warning here, a foretaste of the end for the enemies of God. But it is good news for all who would turn to God and I've got just two things to say on this.

[20:33] Today, it's good news today and it's good news one day. It's good news today because Jesus is releasing people from the kingdom of Satan through the preaching of the gospel as his words have authority to drive back Satan's kingdom.

Do you see that, verse 27? What is this? A new teaching with authority. That is the gospel proclaimed drives back Satan and his kingdom as people are brought from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light.

That is what is happening today in this city as people are being rescued out of Satan's dark grip every day. So it is good news today and it's good news for the Christian.

The Lord Jesus is more than capable of defending us and protecting us from all the evil plans of Satan as we walk with him through this life. it's good news today and it's good news one day.

One of the reasons that Jesus is able to bring a kingdom of everlasting peace for his people is that he can destroy Satan forever. That is much more important than we may give it credit for.

[21:54] But right from the beginning Satan has been the destroyer of peace and joy the peace and joy with God that we were made for. Right from the beginning he's been the destroyer of life of peace and joy that we were made for with God.

Well here is the one who can destroy the destroyer forever and therefore of his kingdom and of peace there will be no end.

no more Satan in the kingdom of Christ. That is the eternal hope that every Christian can have.

And so finally it is one thing to be amazed as they were at this authority but I think we're meant to be drawn to him to want to be with him where he is forever.

Don't you want that? Let's pray. Father we thank you for the jaw-dropping wonderful authority of Jesus to defeat Satan to destroy him forever and his forces.

[23 : 20] Thank you for what that means today that we can be and have been rescued from Satan's grip by the power of Jesus' words. Thank you for what that means as we walk with Jesus that he is well able to defend us and protect us from Satan and all his plans.

And thank you for what that means one day that there will be a kingdom where the peace will never end. Jesus' kingdom O to be with him forever.

Fix our eyes we pray on him and on that day we thank you so much for him in his name. Amen.