

The Authority of Jesus

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[0 : 01] In verse 21 we read these words, and they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he, Jesus, entered the synagogue and was teaching.

I'm sure you're very much aware that every time Mark uses the word immediately, you see that there's no let up in the mission of Jesus to confront Satan, to reveal Jesus' power, to reveal his authority, to preach and to heal and to teach, to proclaim the good news of the kingdom.

Jesus calling, the urgency of Jesus calling people to repent and believe the gospel, believe the message, the good message of salvation in Jesus alone.

I'm sure you've noticed already that, you know, for Jesus there's no leisurely stroll into enemy territory. This is war. This is war.

And Jesus is on that war footing. He's confronting the enemy of our souls. He's leading people away from darkness and bringing people into his glorious light.

[1 : 16] And as we've already noticed, he's already faced the continuous temptations of Satan. And Jesus hasn't succumbed. He's already called, as we saw last time, last week, he's already called four men to leave their livelihood, to leave their fishing in Galilee, to become fishers of men.

As we noticed last week, that purpose for the fishing of men to warn of the judgment to come and to join with Jesus in revealing the urgency of the message to repent and believe the gospel.

And now that Jesus has what we might call that first cohort of his disciples, Jesus continues his mission. Jesus will continue to teach and to heal and to reveal his identity once more as the Savior who's come to save his people from their sins.

So, what do we notice in this passage that reveals again the identity of Jesus? Well, you'll see in your notes there, we can see authority. Two things I want to draw to your attention this evening. The authority of Jesus in his word and the authority of Jesus in his works. Let's look at the smaller section firstly in verses 21 to 22, the authority of Jesus in his word.

[2 : 34] Because that mission that Jesus and the fourth disciples are on and going to Capernaum, well, where's Capernaum? It's on the Galilee shore. And as we said, you know, right at the start there, Mark's using this word immediately to show that, you know, Jesus' utter urgency in the work of proclamation.

You see that in verse 21. Immediately on the Sabbath, immediately on that seventh day, Jesus goes into the local synagogue. Now, the pattern of worship would have been, as had been for such a long time, the service, well, it would have followed the required pattern, the pattern of a portion of Scripture being read.

And then one of the congregation indicating his desire to speak to that passage. And in that synagogue in Capernaum, a relatively small building, one of the congregation, well, of course, that one of the congregation is Jesus.

Jesus indicates he will speak. Now, he'll have been given permission to do so. He'll have read from the Old Testament law standing.

And then sitting down, he'll explain the passage. As would have been done on many occasions before by others. But this time, of course, it's different. It's very different.

[3 : 55] Because the one who's explaining the passage of Scripture, he's the author. He's the author of that Scripture. He's the author of that word. Look at the word authority.

You see where the word author comes in there. Author. Authority. Jesus speaking with authority because he is the author of his word. And he's not speaking as the scribes did.

You know, they would simply quote from another scribe and other traditions. No. Jesus speaks with his own authority because of who he is.

He is the word of God. He is the son of God. He's the one whose authority was so obvious. Even the people who were there in that little synagogue that particular Sabbath morning. You know, you can just feel the difference. The difference was palpable. You know, we're told there the people were astonished. Verse 22.

[4 : 52] They were amazed. In fact, you might even say they were disturbed at what they were hearing. Because the authority of Jesus, as Jesus is explaining the Scripture, we don't know which particular Scripture he's reading from, but as he's showing the meaning of Scripture, he's showing, if you like, his originality.

And in his explanation, his direct explanation, in his application of the word, that shocked people. That shocked people. I mean, they'd never heard anything like that before. They're being challenged out of what we might call their dull complacency. They've been shaken to the core at what they've been hearing and who they were hearing. And they know they can't ignore this.

And surely that's how the authority of Jesus should shake us, shake you, shake me, out of our spiritual complacency. Because you know, the word of God offends.

And the word of God so often will offend what we call our comfort zones. The sensibilities of our comfort zones. Because the word of God challenges us.

[6 : 06] Challenges us, you know, in a way that no ordinary teacher can challenge us. Because the word of God, the word proclaimed, searches our hearts.

It convicts. It brings us to the point where we either receive that word, receive it by faith and trust in the Lord Jesus, and we know that that word is true, or we'll reject that word.

We'll remain offended at the teaching of the Savior. So how are you responding to the word of God, the word of the Savior? Are you still complacent?

Aren't you willing to accept that his word is true? And that it's for you to respond to that word in faith? When you receive that word with joy, turn to him and ask the Lord Jesus into his heart.

Into your heart. Well, as well as the hearers of Jesus' word here were confirmed, that very morning, they were shaken, there's no doubt, they were shaken, they were disturbed at what they heard.

[7 : 09] Their heads knew, their head knowledge that they had, they knew that this Jesus was different. His words proved it. But there's no indication in this passage that the same people, certainly not at that point, put their faith in him.

There's no indication that their hearts were near him, but rather still far from him. Isn't that so often the way in the world? Yes, there's that recognition that Jesus is different.

Maybe even the name of Jesus proclaimed in a sermon. Maybe there's that recognition that, yes, somehow his words have some kind of authority beyond the ordinary.

Maybe there's a little bit of disturbance for a while, but then that's it. A slow drifting back to the things of the world and God's word forgotten. I pray that's not the case with anyone here this evening.

You who sat under the sound of the preaching of the word of God, and you've heard the name of Jesus proclaimed. You've heard the name of Jesus, not just as a name, but what that name means, as a saviour. And you know that he has authority as the Son of God.

[8 : 15] But you still don't go any further and still refuse to receive him by faith. Refuse to recognise that he is the one who came to die for sinners such as you.

For you to repent and believe the good news of salvation in him alone. Well, we've seen the authority of Jesus in his words, but the more extensive part of this passage, certainly from verse 23 to 28, the authority of Jesus in his works.

And there's drama happening here. There's this drama of Jesus' authoritative teaching, and it's followed immediately by the drama of the interruption of Jesus by demonic activity.

Happening right there in that synagogue. Mark tells us, Mark tells us, as you see from verse 23, he tells us that there's a man there with an unclean spirit.

And he interrupts Jesus and cries out, you can see in the passage there, 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.

[9 : 22] What do you read there? Immediately following? You read the response of Jesus. Jesus rebukes that unclean spirit. Jesus casts that spirit out of the man.

And again, notice the response of the people. There's wonder, there's astonishment. That Jesus has authority even to cast out demons. Now, there are many levels we can look at this.

Many levels in our response to this dramatic, perfection. Firstly, just let's remember who's writing this. This is Mark.

This is Mark who's telling us of this incident. And this is happening very, very early in Jesus' ministry. Now, remember Mark, the author of this gospel. And all probability has been given that information from Simon Peter.

Simon Peter, who was an eyewitness of these events in Capernaum. I mean, Simon had lived in that area. Simon would know every single person in that synagogue. He'd know that that event that Mark's recorded for us, he'd know that this was no ordinary event.

[10:27] He'd know that this was no figment of some kind of overindulgent imagination. This really happened. It happened for a reason. So we've got to ask, what did happen?

And again, ask, why did this happen? What can we learn from this episode about Jesus? What can we learn, yes, about the activities of the demoniac, about the word and the world of demon activity? What can we learn about the people who witnessed all this? What can we learn about our own response to demonic activity? There's lots of questions in this little episode.

So what did happen? Well, we're told simply that Jesus cast out an unclean spirit, a demon, from this man who was attending synagogue worship. Remember what's Jesus doing here?

He's asserting his authority as the Son of God, as Lord, as Messiah, and he's showing now his authority over evil spirits, over the forces of Satan. Remember, he's already confronted Satan in the wilderness, and he's now confronting Satan's demons in that synagogue in Capernaum, because Jesus is showing his victory over the world of evil.

[11:44] Of course, that victory that will be seen in all its fullness on the cross. I mean, that incident that we read there in Capernaum, is but a prelude to the final victory, the final decisive victory of Jesus on the cross.

That victory over the demonic powers that Paul informs us in Colossians 2.15, and we actually quoted this this morning. In speaking of Jesus, he disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him.

Because on the cross, Jesus won that victory over Satan and all his forces of evil. And remember this, keep this with you and take this with you, because on the cross, Jesus won that victory over Satan and all his forces of evil so that Satan would not be able anymore to accuse blood-bought sinners, blood-bought Christians before God.

Because the cross revealed the ultimate victory of Jesus and the failure of Satan, the failure of Satan's forces to divert Jesus from his mission to save sinners.

There in that synagogue, three years before Jesus' death on the cross, three years before his triumphing over the demonic powers of darkness on the cross, Jesus revealed his authority over these powers.

[13:08] There in that synagogue, that demon had left that man and was crying out in a loud voice, you know, in that loud voice to indicate that Jesus had defeated that demonic power and done so by his word, by his authority.

Remember on the cross, Jesus cried out with that loud voice. What did he cry out? He cried out, it is finished, it's accomplished. Because in that loud voice, Jesus indicated that he had borne the sins of his people.

He had defeated the power of sin, the power of Satan. He's shown his authority to the saviour of the world. It's for you and for me to rejoice that Jesus has won that victory over evil.

He's won that victory over sin and Satan and all the forces of Satan's power. He's Lord, Jesus is Lord. And that lordship's revealed in this incident.

And I mean, you know, you can see that the power of the demoniac causing damage to that particular individual. But remember, Jesus is stronger, infinitely stronger.

[14:16] He is the victor. Go with that into this new week. Jesus is the victor. Satan is already defeated. Now, I think at this point we need to take a step back.

And just consider the whole matter of demonic activity in the world today. And certainly to avoid two extremes. I mean, on the one hand there's the extreme of denial. You know, denying that there's any such thing as demons, as Satan.

But there's the other extreme. The other extreme of, you know, having this constant focus on demonic activity. I mean, it's not for us to deny scripture. It's not for us to deny the reality of the demoniac.

And yet, as we've just mentioned, Jesus has won that victory over the powers of evil on the cross. He disarmed that power. Yes, demons continue to exist and will do so until Jesus returns and the kingdom of darkness is destroyed forever.

Which means that demonic activity is certainly very prevalent in the world today. And again, think of Paul when he was writing after, remember, after Jesus triumphed on the cross.

[15:28] Paul warning Christians of the activity of demons. You see that in Ephesians 6.12. We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, the demonic authorities, against the cosmic powers over the present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil.

And therefore, as Paul tells us in that passage, we're to put on the whole armor of God and fight against such forces. Because if the devil's still active, his legions are still active, even though they know they're ultimately defeated by Jesus because of Jesus' work on the cross.

But as we said, we're not to be over-fascinated by this subject. I mean, Scripture affirms this. You know, that incident we read there in Mark chapter 1, this certainly wasn't a regular miracle of Jesus. You know, when you count the number of these actions of Jesus against the forces of evil, the demons, there's only a handful of these incidents recorded in the four Gospels.

And certainly, you know, we're not to attribute every single sinful action as somehow emanating from demonic activity. No, we have culpability in sin from our own sinful hearts.

[16:47] You know, so often Satan can be very conveniently blamed for our own sinful hearts that cause us to deviate from God's Word. But at the same time, don't be discouraged when we do and we do, don't we?

We do see the evidence of demonic activity in the world. Don't be discouraged because Jesus has triumphed over the powers of darkness. He has overcome and you are an overcomer in Him by faith when your faith and trust are in the living Lord Jesus.

What of those? What of you? You've no saving faith and hope in the living Lord Jesus. Well, look at the passage again. Look at, particularly, the response of that evil spirit, that unclean spirit, and look at that response in recognizing Jesus.

Because that unclean spirit knows who Jesus is. He recognizes Him as the Holy One of God. He's indicating in fact what's so prevalent in so many parts of the world.

You know, men and women who claim to know Jesus, but that knowledge is only head knowledge and not heart knowledge. It's what old Bishop Ryle calls the uselessness of a mere intellectual knowledge of religion.

[18:07] The uselessness of a mere intellectual knowledge of religion. I mean, you know, that demon, that unclean spirit, and that poor man in Capernaum, he had superior knowledge of Jesus.

Far more superior than even the religious elites of Jesus' day. I mean, the scribes and Pharisees, they wouldn't even acknowledge Jesus as the Holy One of God. And yet, the knowledge of that unclean spirit, of that demon, wasn't saving knowledge.

It was mere intellectual head knowledge. And you know, that brings us to see the tragedy of so much that's claimed in the name of Christianity.

Mere belief, mere intellectual assent to the doctrines of Scripture. Mere intellectual assent won't save anybody. What the Apostle James writes in James 2, 19, you believe that God is one, you do well.

Even the demons believe and shudder. The devil, Satan, and his forces of evil, they have that knowledge of God.

[19:17] They know who God is. They know that Jesus has won the victory over them on the cross. But they'll still seek to cause damage, damage to Christians and to the world until Jesus returns in that final judgment.

Just because they're defeated doesn't mean a cessation of hostility. I'm sure many of you know that in the last few days of the Second World War, Germany knew it was defeated.

German forces knew they were finished. But particularly if you look at the conflict in Berlin, for example, there were forces of German troops and German small battalions who would continue to engage with the Russians even though the Germans knew they were defeated.

They still wanted to cause some kind of lasting damage to the forces that were opposed to them. And so it is with the devil and his legions. They'll continue to tempt you.

They'll continue to wreak havoc in the world and do so before the great judgment of God when the Lord Jesus returns and Satan's cast out into that everlasting lake of fire.

[20 : 26] Now, of course, many even who profess the name of Jesus, many will deny the presence of Satan and the demoniac. Many deny the reality of hell and the reality of eternal judgment.

But in that denial, remember, if that's the denial from those who claim the name of Jesus, there's actually a denial of Jesus himself.

Jesus is telling us of the reality here of the demon world. But you who believe every word of God, you who believe that every word comes from the mouth of Jesus, you know that what Jesus declares is true.

You have that heart knowledge in believing every word of the Lord Jesus. That knowledge that drives you to faith in Him, to trust in Him, and knowing that you have that eternal prospect of being with Him in the glory of the new heaven and the new earth.

Yes, when after that judgment comes, after the Lord Jesus comes, when you will know that eternal blessing with God in eternity.

[21 : 42] The devil and his demons, they know that judgment is coming. They've got no faith, no trust in the Lord Jesus. They're doomed to eternal destruction. They've rejected Jesus' authority.

They're not calling on God as the Lord and Savior. But you who love the Lord Jesus, you who love Him with all your heart and soul and strength and mind, you have that sure hope of eternal life.

And you know that your knowledge of Jesus isn't mere head knowledge, it's heart knowledge. And that heart knowledge that calls on Jesus, calls on Him as my Lord and my God.

You know that He is yours and you are His. It was Martin Luther who said that the life of Christianity consists in possessive pronouns. You know, in other words, there's all the difference in the world between somebody who says, oh Jesus is a Savior to the one who says that Jesus is my Savior, possessive pronoun, my Savior.

In three weeks time, God willing, we'll be celebrating once more Lord's Supper, communion. The Lord's people invited to share in that fellowship meal and remembering the death of the Lord Jesus that death for us.

[23 : 01] And if you're going to be at that table, you'll be there to declare that Jesus is my Savior, my Lord, my Redeemer. What if you can't say these things?

What if you can't declare from your heart that Jesus is my Savior? Well, what's your eternal prospect? Is it with Jesus and all who acknowledge Him as Savior and Lord?

Or is it with those who with Satan and his demons? Yes, we'll acknowledge that Jesus is our Savior, but not their Savior. Well, for the people there who witnessed the casting out of the demons and that man in the synagogue, well, again, we don't see any immediate acknowledgement of Jesus as their Savior.

Again, as we've said before, there's a response of astonishment. We might even see alarm of what they just witnessed because they've seen that something new has happened. Verse 27, they're all amazed and they questioned among themselves saying, what is this?

A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey Him. That authority that they recognize in Jesus, teaching from Scripture, the authority of His work.

[24 : 16] Again, the authority of Jesus is seen in His works over the demonic world and this shakes the audience there, the people there. But a word from the teacher, the Lord Jesus, that they just heard, that that should, you know, a word, should affect power over demons, that was something that amazed them and disturbed them.

Now, yes, they'd heard of their own religious leaders who'd conducted exorcisms with incantations and spells, you know, the sort of dramatic, aspect of it.

Jesus simply spoke the word, freed that man who'd been so demon-possessed. Jesus demonstrating His authority again by His word, that word of power. Remember, it was prophesied. Jesus had come to set the prisoners free and He's showing that truth there and then. He's casting out that demon. He's come to set the prisoners free and the people are seeing this, that disturbance again in the people because God has begun, you might say God has begun to disturb men and women, disturb men and women with the word of the Lord and that word that continues to disturb because of the power of that word.

Jesus' mission was clear. Jesus' mission was evident. He was showing, and certainly here showing, His authority in proclaiming the ministry of salvation through Him and that proclamation that would

continue until His death on the cross.

[25 : 58] And with that outward show of His authority, that outward show, witnessing the name of Jesus of Nazareth, well, what do we notice in verse 28?

People have seen what Jesus has done, this has disturbed them, and we notice that we're told His fame spreads throughout all the surrounding area of Galilee. I mean, we would say Jesus' 30 years of obscurity gives way to fame in Galilee and beyond.

Of course, fame didn't mean belief. Fame didn't presuppose the receiving of Jesus as Lord, as King, as Messiah, as Savior. But for you who have received the Lord Jesus by faith and received Him as Lord and as King and Messiah and Savior, you can say He is my Lord, my God, my Savior. It's for you. It's for you not so much to spread Jesus' fame, but Jesus' name. It's for you to tell others that He is my Lord, my Savior.

It's for you to tell them of the authority that you acknowledge, whose word you follow, because you know that His authority demands your obedience, your humble serving the Lord Jesus.

[27 : 22] And you know Jesus as Lord and Savior. Well, you know that you're serving under His authority. You know there was a time when you didn't serve under His authority, but that you served under another authority, the authority of the evil one.

You are equipped to proclaim the good news, to tell of that authority authority that you acknowledge as from coming from the loving Lord Jesus Himself.

So don't be ashamed to tell others of that. Tell your friends, tell your neighbors, tell your family of the greatness of your Savior, the Lord Jesus. Tell them that He is the only Savior of mankind.

Tell them so that they'll know that Jesus isn't a Savior, but their Savior, Savior, and their Savior by faith in Him. So don't hide this truth, tell it.

And of course, not just in telling, but in living under that authority, and you're seeking to honor Him, honor Him by your words and your works.

[28 : 26] Proclaim the power of the Lord Jesus, yes, that power over Satan's darkness. Proclaim that He's brought you, He's brought you into His kingdom of His marvelous light.

And praise God. Even as we've praised Him already, praise Him again this evening. Praise Him for that great work of deliverance that happened and has happened through the life and through the death of the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, my Savior and my Lord.

And may you be able to say that in your heart, my Savior and my Lord. Amen. Let us pray. Lord, what an undeserved privilege it is to call you my God, to call the Lord Jesus my Savior, to call on Him and to know that He is my Redeemer.

Lord, may it be that in recognizing the Lord Jesus and who He is, that we will live under His authority, that we will not simply be hearers of that word, but doers also, even for the glory of Your name.

So help us each one so to do, to honor You with all our words, with all our works. Help us, Lord, not to faint and be weary, but to be strong in You and to know again that Your strength is made perfect in our weakness.

[29 : 54] Help us then, we pray, to acknowledge this and to honor You and do so in the name of Jesus. We pray in His name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Well, let's close in Psalm 111 on page 391. Psalm 111, page 391. We'll sing from the beginning down to verse 4.

So often we sing these psalms of praise at the beginning of a service, to sing them at the end of a service. Praise ye the Lord with my whole heart, I will God's praise declare when the assemblies of the just and congregations are.

1 to 4, Psalm 111 to God's praise.