

SESSION TWO

The Early Ministry of Jesus: *His Authority Over Our Lives (Mark 1:21-39)*

“His authority on earth allows us to dare to go to all the nations. His authority in heaven gives us our only hope of success. And His presence with us leaves us no other choice.” ~John Stott

I. Overview

Verses 29 and 32 indicate the time frame of events. These temporal markers hold the episodes together, as Mark presents these events occurring on the Sabbath. Eventually, Christ’s ministry on the Sabbath will become a major point of contention with the Jewish religious leaders (cf. 2:23-3:6). This brief section of Mark also provides an excellent overview of Jesus’ two major roles of His ministry: a teacher and a miracle worker.

II. The Content

A. Jesus’ Authority in His Teaching (1:21-23)

1:21-22 With a small band of disciples, Jesus journeys to Capernaum—most likely the hometown of these four fishermen and the center for Jesus’ preaching and healing ministry in Mark’s narrative.

The reader should not miss the authority in Jesus’ words. This authority was first seen in the calling of four fishermen to forsake their occupations and their families to follow a figure who, at least in the narrative, they do not know. Now Jesus’ authority is observed in the crowd’s declaration of His unique teaching. The crowd contrasted Jesus’ teaching with rabbinic exposition, which relied heavily upon the tradition of the elders. Jesus’ teaching cited no other source for authority.

B. Jesus’ Authority in His Miracles (1:24-34)

1. *His Power over the Spiritual (1:24-28)*

1:24 The authority seen in Jesus’ speech will now be observed in Jesus’ actions. This demon knows both Jesus’ earthly and heavenly existence; therefore, he fears Jesus’ response.

. . . *what to me and to you?* The phrase calls for disassociation, and thus, could be translated: “Go away and leave me alone!” (cf. Jdg 11:12; 1 Kgs 17:18).

There exists a striking difference between the forms of address employed by the demons versus how the physically sick individuals reference Jesus. The latter group appeals to Jesus as “Lord” (7:8), “Teacher” (9:17), “Son of David” (10:47-48), or “Master” (10:51); whereas the former group addresses Jesus as “the Holy One of God” (1:24), “the Son of God” (3:11), or “the Son of the Most High God” (5:7). The contrast reflects the demons’ superior understanding of Jesus’ identity—an identity on par with God Himself.

1:25-26 Jesus immediately silences the demon, curtailing any self-defense on the part of the evil spirit. The word for silencing carries the notion of “to muzzle, like an ox, or to tie.” The rebuke demonstrates Jesus’ superiority, by commanding the evil spirit to depart from the individual. There is no incantation, ceremony, or service for the exorcism; Jesus simply commands the demons to depart.

Why does Jesus demand silence concerning His identity?

1. Jesus seeks to avoid unwelcome _____. This exposure would create an unwanted political and religious disturbance before His intended timetable (cf. 1:45-2:2; 6:14-16). Jesus’ understanding of His messiahship varied radically from the crowd’s understanding.
2. The disclosure of the Messiah is on the Lord’s _____, not the demons (14:61-62).
3. The command to secrecy serves as a _____ to highlight the greatness and glory of Jesus and His identity.

1:27-28 The crowd’s questioning refers not only to the actions of Jesus, but they also questioned his words (i.e., “a new teaching”). Again, this stresses the uniqueness of what has transpired—nothing has been seen or heard before by these people. No wonder his fame spread exponentially throughout the Galilean region?

2. *His Power over the Physical (1:29-34)*

1:29-31 Unlike the healing of the demoniac, Jesus does not speak when healing Peter’s mother-in-law. The thoroughness of the healing can be seen in her ability to turn around and serve them.

1:32-34 With the passing of the Sabbath (“evening had come”), the people could bring or carry the sick individuals to Jesus. Mark describes the size of the crowd by utilizing a particular verb tense for “carry,” which indicates a continual flow of people. He also uses a particular tense of the participle, “to gather together,” implying an ever-growing mass of people.

The final verse of this pericope demonstrates Jesus can heal a variety of illnesses and cast out many demons.

C. Jesus' Authority in His Agenda (1:35-39)

1:35 Despite having ministered to the people late into the night, Jesus arises before sunrise and goes to a secluded spot to pray.

1:36-37 This is the first indication of Peter taking the leadership role among the disciples in Mark's gospel. Peter's statement seems to imply an annoyance at the fact that Jesus should depart when the entire crowd is seeking Jesus.

1:38-39 Contrary to Peter's expectation, Jesus desires to go to another village. To further increase the disciples' anxiety, Jesus mentions they will leave Capernaum and travel to smaller villages! Jesus' response illustrates Peter's improper assessment of what has transpired in Capernaum. The people were not concerned with spiritual matters (i.e., repentance); rather, they were focused upon their physical needs (e.g., ailment). The kingdom of God was the focal point of Jesus' ministry, not the casting out of demons or healing the sick.

III. The Intersect

The same authority Jesus displayed when He walked this earth is the same authority He operates by in the world today.

- As believers, we have the privilege of having this same "power reserve" dwelling within us!

2 Timothy 1:7 -

- We need to be careful not to become consumed with immediate physical or spiritual trials and be reminded that the Kingdom of God supersedes any trial we face today.

Psalms 107 -

- A recognition of the Lord's authority results in allowing *Him* to lead.

Isaiah 48:7 -

"Faith never knows where it is being led, but it loves and knows the One who is leading."

~ Oswald Chambers