

### Our Lord's Power over the Demonic Realm

#### Mark 1:21-28

Mark 1:21-28 – *“Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught. <sup>22</sup> And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. <sup>23</sup> Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, <sup>24</sup> saying, “Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!” <sup>25</sup> But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet, and come out of him!” <sup>26</sup> And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him. <sup>27</sup> Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, “What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.” <sup>28</sup> And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee.”*

#### Background Notes

Here we have the account of the healing of a demon-possessed man at Capernaum. It's the first miracle recorded by Mark, and it certainly emphasizes our Lord's power over the demonic realm.

Verse 21 says that Jesus and His disciples entered Capernaum. Capernaum was a town on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was an important commercial city on the old road that went all the way from Egypt to Damascus in Syria. Matthew 8 tells us that Roman soldiers were garrisoned there. It was also the current home of Peter, Andrew, James and John. It had become the new home-town of our Lord, as He had relocated there from Nazareth (Matthew 4:13).

There was a synagogue in Capernaum (v21). A synagogue was a place for teaching, and it was also a place for schooling, a Hebrew school for Jewish boys. If you visit the ruins of Capernaum today you'll see the remains of a magnificent synagogue. That synagogue dates from a later century, but archaeologists have excavated beneath it. The foundations of the 1st century synagogue where our Lord taught are visible under the later synagogue.

The leader of the synagogue gave the Lord an opportunity to teach in the synagogue, and the people were astonished at His teaching because He taught them *“as one having authority, not as the scribes”* (v22). What does that mean? The people were used to hearing the scribes teach by quoting rabbinic opinion and quoting other scribes, like: “Rabbi so-and-so said such-and-such” or this rabbi has this opinion, and that rabbi has another opinion. But that's not the way our Lord taught! Our Lord taught with authority—“I say unto you”...“God says”...“the word of the Lord says...” **He taught with authority because He is God.**

A man with an “unclean spirit” was in the audience. That means that the man was possessed by a demon (or demons) that caused unclean or immoral thoughts, language and action. Now that does **not** mean that everyone who has unclean thoughts is possessed by a demon. But in this case the man was possessed by a demon(s), and these demons caused unusual impure and unclean and immoral thoughts, language and action. It is possible, even today, that a person who is characterized by unusually unclean actions or language, unusual impure or lewd thoughts, language and actions, may be demon-possessed.

However, I want to emphasize that a person who has impure thoughts, actions or language is not necessarily demon possessed. However, there’s a possibility that he **might** be demon possessed. The true determining factor, of course, would be the person’s reaction to a question about the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. When the subject of the deity of Christ and of Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation comes up, if the person seems to have an uncontrollable anger and refusal to admit to those truths, then it may indeed be possible that the person is demon-possessed - and his impure, immoral, lewd thoughts, actions and language is as a result of demon possession.

## Doctrinal Points

In this passage we see at least three doctrinal points that the Bible teaches about demons.

### 1. Demons can inhabit religious places.

Notice that the demon-possessed man wasn’t outside the synagogue. He wasn’t dealing drugs in a dark alley, or hanging out in a seedy bar, or someplace like that. He was right in the synagogue, in the midst of the professing people of God! Can that happen today? Yes! Satan is not opposed to infiltrating the church. 2 Corinthians 11:14 says that he comes as “*an angel of light.*” And 1 Timothy 4:1 says, “...*the spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.*” It was within the “religious place” that this confrontation with demons took place.

Demons will do whatever they can to sneak into the midst of God’s people, and they’ll do whatever they can to deceive God’s people. They may even be involved in a display of supernatural power, such as occult healing. Some people get the idea that just because a supernatural display of power (such as a healing) takes place within a church, “Of course this miracle was from God! It happened in the church!” Not necessarily. Satanic power may possibly be involved. “...*do not believe every spirit, but test the spirit, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*” (1 John 4:1). **Demons can inhabit religious places.**

## **2. Demons are orthodox in their belief.**

Notice that the demon(s) knew that Jesus was the Holy One of God. “*What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did you come to destroy us? I know who You are—The Holy One of God!*” (v24). The Lord silenced the demon, because He did not want to accept the witness of demons. He didn’t want people coming to Him because of the testimony of demons, either then or now!

But notice that demons are orthodox or correct in their belief. James 2:19 says, “*You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!*” Demons are not saved, but they are orthodox in their belief. They don’t have any problem believing in the existence of God, and they know that God is the Creator, and they know that Jesus is God. But James’ point here is that having orthodox or correct knowledge **only** does not save a person. There must be true faith. Do you have **more** than just belief in God and Jesus Christ? Have you committed your life by faith to Jesus Christ as your Savior?

## **3. Demons must submit to the authority of Christ.**

In verse 25 we read, “*But Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be quiet, and come out of him!’*” Notice, the Lord did not have to conduct an elaborate ritual of exorcism. There was no chanting or incantations or even laying on of hands. He simply spoke the word. No wonder we read in verse 27 that “*they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, ‘What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.’*”

Jesus spoke with authority, and the obvious evidence of that authority was that when He commanded demons, they obeyed. **Demons must submit to the authority of Christ.**

## **Practical Applications**

### **1. We can speak with authority.**

Verse 22: “*...they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*” The Lord did not quote other people’s opinions. The Lord Jesus said, “God said,” or “I say,” or “the word of the Lord says.”

We too can speak with authority, because we have the Word of God. We don’t have to say, “In the opinion of some biblical scholars, there may be a hell, and there might be a heaven.” We don’t have to teach, “We think that there’s a heaven, or we think that Jesus might be the only way of salvation.” No! We can say with authority, “There is a place called hell, because the Word of God says there’s a hell.” We know - and therefore we, too, can preach with authority.

Jesus said, “*No one comes to the Father but by Me*” (John 14:6). There’s only one way. Not all roads lead up the same mountain. There is only one way. And we can preach that Jesus is the only way because the Bible says so, and because the Lord Jesus said so. That’s preaching with authority.

As the unbelieving scholars in Jesus’ day only quoted opinions, so unbelieving scholars do the same today. But just as Jesus was different, and taught with authority, so we are to be different: we are to teach and preach with authority. Believers may even, at times, be called on to command evil spirits to depart. As committed Christians we do have authority over demons. We have God’s Word, and therefore **we can speak with authority**.

## **2. Let’s not be surprised if healing is painful.**

When the Lord cast out the demon (v26), we read, “*And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him.*” That was not a pleasant experience, was it? But it left no doubt in the minds of the people – and of the man himself - that demons are real, and that they were under the authority of Christ, and that now they were gone. There was no question about it!

There’s a lesson for us here. Just as going to the dentist or doctor may involve some pain but we do it for our physical well-being, pain may be necessary for our spiritual healing and spiritual well-being. This could be applied in a number of ways, but let’s take relationships as an example. Maybe, to regain your spiritual well-being, there’s a relationship in your life that needs to be broken off. Maybe you’re a single person and you have a growing relationship with an unbeliever - that relationship needs to be broken off. It may be painful, but in the long run it’s crucial for your spiritual well-being. Or maybe you’re married, but you have an improper relationship with someone who is not your spouse. You need to **break** that relationship. Yes, it will be painful, but it is absolutely necessary for your healing and spiritual well-being.

Perhaps there is a relationship that needs to be healed between you and a fellow-believer. You need to confess your faults one to the other. This can be painful, but it will lead to healing and spiritual well-being.

## **Let’s not be surprised if healing is painful.**