

GOSPEL^{of} MARK

StudySheet – Week 3: *Jesus Christ: Teaching With Authority [Mark 1:21-28]*

Often, followers of Jesus Christ study this section and primarily relate it to Jesus' authority over the unclean spirit or demon. While Jesus' ability to command an unclean spirit to come out of a man would have been extremely shocking to the gatherers in the synagogue (and we should recognize Jesus' power and authority today), this miracle is not the only important message in this passage. Let us consider a few of the other important themes we see in Mark 1:21-28:

- Jesus not only had power and authority over the demon, but He also taught with authority. The Jews in the synagogue that Sabbath morning would have been accustomed to hearing rabbis teach every week, yet they all recognized there was something different about Jesus' teaching. He was one who taught with authority.
- The demon was able to recognize that Jesus was the "Holy One of God" before those who Jesus had called to follow Him and before anyone else in the synagogue that morning. This should give us something to think about when considering the reality of the spiritual darkness that exists in the society we live in today.
- Jesus was not anti-establishment or against "organized religion," for lack of better terms. It was Jewish custom to attend the synagogue on Sabbath and Jesus, as a rabbi, participated in organized worship. We live in a culture that often points to Jesus as a rogue teacher who resisted organization or establishment. While that may be the case in some stories in the gospel, it is certainly not the case here.

The reality for those of us who profess faith in Christ is that it's an extremely difficult proposition to believe in the goodness of God apart from the reality of the realm of evil and Satan. In the "enlightened" society we live in today, some may look at us with confusion or pity for believing in an active and real enemy, yet Scripture is clear on this topic. The good news is that Jesus displayed His power and authority over even the demons.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does it mean when two times in this passage the people recognized Jesus as one who taught with authority (vs. 22 & 27)? What implications does this have for us today?
2. Explain the struggle that our society has with believing in evil, Satan, and/or demons. How do you interact with the common belief that the enemy is not real? Is anyone willing to share any personal stories about experiences with Satan or demons?
3. Why is acknowledging Jesus' participation in the Jewish system of life and worship ("corporate religion") important for us to acknowledge? What implications does it have?
4. Create a list of differences between what you know about Jesus' teaching and the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees during that time. What similarities and differences exist?

