

Mark | The Making of Christ Followers

07 A New Teaching With Authority

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I. Introduction

Have you every meet someone that was the real deal...in whatever field of interest you respect; academics, engineering, sports, writing, running a business, etc.. There are just individuals who have a level of skill and passion about things that when you meet them you conclude that they are the real deal. This was never more true to me when in college myself and a few others went to play in a Nike flag football tournament at Ohio State University. Now we were a rag tag group of people from a small town in Tennessee but we held our own and did well. But there were several distinct moments in that weekend that I had to step back and say, that is a real athlete, he is the real deal. One particular play, I was step for step with a guy running down the sidelines. As I see the ball leave the QB's hand I realize I have a good read on it and positioned well to make a play. I jump, grab the ball out of the air and feel deeply satisfied...until the real deal athlete I was covering jumped about another foot higher than me and snatches the ball out of my hands for lets just say huge completion. All I could do was marvel at the unexpected athleticism of this guy. Here I thought I had it all under control and just like that, he was better. He did something I could not. It did not matter how calculated I was, he was more athletic and could do things I could not; therefore, he won the play. A humble experience for sure.

Every time Jesus speaks in the gospels, people marvel, they are astonished at his words and actions as he moves throughout Galilee and into Jerusalem. He speaks and acts in a way that is

well beyond the religious leaders of the day. He is the real deal, he is like no other!

Read Mark 1:21-28

After Jesus calls the first 4 disciples they get to fishing, “*They (Jesus + the Four) went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching.*”

Capernaum was the nearest village to the river Jordan on the NW shores of the Sea of Galilee.¹ The Sea of Galilee is a wide spot on the Jordan River. The river enters on the the north side then widens rather large and then exits on the south side of the Sea of Galilee. So these fisherman leave their fishing on the Sea of Galilee and follow Jesus into a synagogue and Jesus begins to teach, he begins to fish by teaching in this synagogue.

Now what is a synagogue. The significance of the synagogue in the life of Judaism cannot be overstated. It served as a substitute for the Temple, which was the place God dwelled. Prayer and reading in the synagogue took the place of sacrifice. It had a tremendous social function and was a gathering place for people to discuss important community affairs. It became the center of religious life. In essences, “God was now brought to the people wherever they dwelt” through the synagogue.² So one cannot overstate its importance for the life of God’s people, those anticipating God’s kingdom coming. It is no surprise that Jesus would walk right into that place and start his bringing the kingdom,

¹ J. P. Kane, “Capernaum,” ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 175.

² C. L. Feinberg, “Synagogue,” ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 1142.

his fishing for men/women. This is a pivotal moment for the work of Jesus, his first action of bringing the kingdom is to teach in the most important place for religious life, and it is the Sabbath! The day of public worship, all are there listening again to teaching declare that God's rule and reign will come, declaring all the OT promises of a Servant King who would come and save the people. Then Jesus walks in, the fulfillment of everything the read aloud in the synagogue week after week. Jesus walks in and shows his authority.

There are two major things that affirm the authority of Jesus and that make the crowd step back and marvel at Him; 1) His teaching, and 2) his commanding of unclean spirits.

II. Teaching with authority (21-22)

- A. *Astonished* at the teaching of Jesus. Now let's consider the prevailing culture of Jesus' day. They would have had listened to lots of teaching from many scholars. These individuals had heard many eloquent speakers go on and on about the things of God. Greg Gilbert unpacks in his book *Who is Jesus?* that people of this day would listen to religious teaching not only for learning and living more righteously, but for sheer entertainment.³ They probably were not easily impressed considering the large amounts of teaching they had heard, but yet they are astonished at Jesus' teaching.
- B. What was it about Jesus? Well His teaching had authority. It carried with it something they had never heard before, authority. His words were of massive importance because if they had authority then one needed to consider the implications of not following what he was saying. It is in

³ Greg Gilbert, *Who is Jesus?*, (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2015), p 28.

the comparison Mark gives us that is insightful to what separated Jesus' teaching...

C. *Jesus vs Scribes*...The scribes were individuals whose sole purpose was to study the scriptures and uphold them in the life of God's people. Scribes were theologically learned individuals and functioned as:

1. Professional students in order to preserve the law, which had a tendency to facilitate heartless formalism
2. Since they knew the law so well they taught in the temple services
3. And were entrusted to administer the law as judges.⁴

So Jesus enters into the synagogue and they allow him to speak, which it was the scribes role to teach. But in his teaching he separates himself from them and the people there can only describe it as he had authority. Now we don't have any insight to specifics of Jesus teaching but it is a more thorough working out of what Jesus has come to do and will do. A few verses back in verse 14 we see Jesus preaching (κηρυσσω), "*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.*" He preached that the kingdom has come in his presence and now here he is apparently teaching (διδασκω) further implications of what the scribes knew so well and had been teaching but not fully understanding. If you think about it, Jesus embodies all their teaching that comes from the OT and He fulfills all the promises of God; he certainly has plenty of authority to teach the scriptures! He speaks to fulfillment not as we hope this happens. He does not have to declare the truths of God's promises with fingers

⁴ NBD, 1068-69

crossed. He is bringing them to fruition. He is the promise!

Though we don't have specifics of Jesus teaching here and really throughout all of Mark even though he calls him teacher more than any other gospel, we do see later on in Mark 12 Jesus confronting the scribes for their lack of humility, lack of selflessness, and not practicing what they teach.⁵ Jesus address the scribes a good bit throughout Mark's gospel, 20+ times. He, Jesus, is deeply concerned about people fully understanding the scriptures and true teaching seems to be reserved for the God-man. He has the greatest and final authority on the teachings of God. It did not take long for those gathered there that day to see something different that they had never seen or known... Jesus was the real deal. He handled the truths of God with such care and concern and gives greater insight that the scribes were unable to do. He demands a response...his authority confronts us and ask what will you do in response to the God-man's teaching? But it was not only Jesus' teaching that stood out that day...

III. Commands unclean spirits (23-28)

- A. Not only was Jesus' teaching other worldly and held much more authority, he commanded unclean spirits, and they obeyed! Imagine the awe that Jesus brings with His presence. He has brought truth that demanded a response, it had authority, and now unclean spirits listen to Him. Not only listen, but they rightly declare His divinity. They know who He is, Jesus of Nazareth and the Holy One of God, and they know what he can do, destroy them! They rightly know Him and His power but yet don't follow Him.

⁵ TDNT, Vol. 1 p 741-42

They at this point in Mark's gospel have more knowledge than the 4 who are probably standing in the corner overwhelmed!!!

- B. Now believe it or not, exorcism were much more common than we experience today. Jesus steps in and performs something that had more than likely been seen before, but yet it was way different. First the unclean spirit confesses rightly who Jesus was and what he is capable of, then Jesus with his speech commands the spirit and it listens. It worked immediately, there was no struggle between the two; Jesus is simple greater and the unclean spirit simple listens. He commanded it to leave and it left. I cannot imagine what other scenes looked like when exorcism took place but this one is powerful and effective. R.T. France in his fabulous commentary observes that the immediate success of Jesus' authoritative command against the longer struggle and uncertain outcome that characterized other attempts at exorcism, radically separates Jesus from others.⁶ Remember Acts 19:14-16 when several itinerant Jewish exorcist, as the scriptures describes them, from the Priesthood tried to cast out evil spirits, here is what happens *"And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded."* Not very successful and a little embarrassing. This is not the case for Jesus, he speaks, they leave! This becomes the most compelling thing for those gathered that day. In the way they express his exorcism indicates that the teaching was phenomenal but Jesus EVEN commands the unclean spirit. He is truly extraordinary, he is the real deal...

⁶ France, *Mark: NIGTC*, p 105.

IV. Therefore...

Jesus is an extraordinary man that demands attention and if you are going to follow, it takes more than lip service

- A. **Jesus...** He is truly extraordinary and demands attention and ultimately, obedience. You have to come to grips with Jesus' authority at some point, now you don't have to surrender but you will have to come to grips with his authority.
- B. **Following Jesus...** *"What distinguishes saints [followers of Jesus] from demons is loving obedience, not naked knowledge"* D.A. Carson. "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder." James 2:19