

Demonstrating Priorities

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[0 : 00] Let's continue to work our way through several examples of Jesus proving that He is the Messiah.

! We started the section last week when we looked at Mark 1, verses 21-28. And tonight we'll cover Mark 1, verses 29-39.

Let's go ahead and read Mark 1, verses 29-39. And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John.

Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. And the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases and cast out demons.

[1 : 05] And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place. And there he prayed.

And Simon and those who were with him searched for him. And they found him and said to him, Everyone is looking for you. And he said to them, Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.

And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons. Despite fame and adulation from continuing to heal the sick, Jesus prioritizes praying and preaching.

That's the main idea for this lesson. Despite fame and adulation from continuing to heal the sick, Jesus prioritizes praying and preaching. These verses appear very similar to verses 21 through 28. Like verses 21 through 28, we see Jesus casting out demons and also prioritizing preaching. But in tonight's verses, Jesus expands the proof that he is the Messiah by showing us that he has authority over physical diseases.

[2 : 17] We also will get a glimpse of the power behind Jesus' miracles. And we'll learn some things from the people that we'll see in these verses. In tonight's passages, the verses refer to Peter as Simon.

Just remember that Peter and Simon are the same person. And most of the time, I'll probably refer to him as Peter. But you may hear me mix the two occasionally. We need to remember that the incidents recorded in Mark chapter 1, verses 29 through 34, actually took place on the same day as the events that we saw in verses 21 through 28.

That, of course, was when a demon-possessed man was dramatically delivered in the synagogue. Shortly afterward, Jesus and his disciples traveled to Peter's house, where Jesus demonstrated his authority over the physical effects of sin.

And together, the two passages highlight the supernatural nature of Jesus' sovereign power.

Whenever he confronted either demons or disease, both fled at his command.

And that kind of dominion provides undeniable proof of Jesus' deity. And it corroborates Mark's thesis that Jesus is the Messianic King and the Son of God that we saw all the way back in Mark chapter 1, verse 1.

[3 : 33] We'll break tonight's passage into four sections, starting with verses 29 through 31. And in those verses, we learn about Peter's mother-in-law.

So Peter's mother-in-law is your first fill-in. Look at verses 29 through 31 again. Archaeological evidence gives us some important background for these verses.

Excavations of a synagogue in Capernaum have shown that it was a magnificent limestone edifice that was built in the first century on the foundation of an even earlier synagogue.

And that even earlier synagogue is the one where Jesus taught and where he exercised the demon-possessed man like we saw last week. Further excavations have revealed a building that stood very close to the synagogue and dated to the latter part of the first century and even into the second century.

Religious graffiti appear on the walls of that structure, and it was a home, but it was built with the unusual feature of doors opening into a large area where people could gather. Historians and archaeologists believe, based on their excavations, that this home served as a church in early Christian times, and the conclusion of the historians with almost complete certainty is that this excavated building was the home of Peter.

[5 : 18] One commentator describes Peter's house this way. He says, Within a stone's throw of Capernaum synagogue lies a structure that can reasonably be identified as the house of Peter.

The house is part of a large complex in which doors and windows open to an interior court rather than outward to the street. The court accessed by a gateway from the street was the center of the lives of the dwellings around it containing hearths, millstones for grain, hand presses, and stairways to roof dwellings.

The dwellings were constructed of heavy walls of black basalt over which a flat roof of wood and thatch was placed. Peter was more than just an unskilled laborer with a fishing net.

The archaeologists have discovered sacred devotional markings written in stone and scratched into the plaster. The engravings indicate that Peter's house was indeed an early gathering for Christians.

Try to imagine what the people must have been thinking after seeing Jesus teach with authority and watching him cast out demons. Jesus' first four disciples certainly had to have been enthusiastic about what they had seen.

[6 : 30] The unusual man who told them to drop everything and follow them was backing up his audacious claims to be the promised Messiah. However, that excitement would have been tempered because Peter's mother-in-law was seriously ill.

In the parallel account of this episode, Luke, the physician, says it was a high fever. And that's in Luke 4, verse 38. Luke also uses a stronger word for fever, which meant a severe fever.

Modern readers hear about the healing of a fever in verses 29 through 31, and we struggle to be impressed. But people in Jesus' day didn't have medicine to keep a fever from rising, and so fever was a deadly killer.

Sometimes it's easy to forget how many lives aspirin and other fever-reducing medications have saved. The fever was high enough that Peter's mother-in-law was in bed too weak to get up and greet the guest who had come to her house.

The demands of everyday life in the first century did not afford most people the luxury of staying in bed just because they did not feel well. And that would have been especially true when guests had been invited to come after the service.

[7 : 44] Peter's mother-in-law was so sick that she could do only one thing, and that was lie in bed and hope to get better. That would have been bad enough from a physical standpoint, but the situation gets worse.

The societal norms of that day would have caused mental distress for the sick woman and her family. In Jesus' time, many people considered fever an illness in itself and not a symptom of a disease.

According to Leviticus 26.16 and Deuteronomy 28.22, a fever could be interpreted as a punishment sent by God to those who violated His covenant.

According to custom, only God could intervene in such cases. Look at the end of verse 30 to see how the four disciples responded to Peter's mother-in-law's illness.

It says, Immediately they told Jesus about her. Because the customary belief was that only God could intervene if the fever was a punishment from God, we get an indication here that the disciples were beginning to believe that Jesus is the God that He says He is.

[8 : 52] J.C. Ryle said this, he said, Let us not only remember this rule, but practice it too. We live in a world of sin and sorrow. The days of darkness in people's lives are many.

It needs no prophet's eye to see that we will shed many a tear and feel many a heart wrench before we die. Let us be armed with a recipe against despair before our troubles come.

Let us know what to do when sickness, bereavement, cross, loss, or disappointment breaks in upon us like an armed man. Let us do what they did in Simon's house at Capernaum.

Let us at once tell Jesus. Then he continued by saying, We must use whatever means are available in time of need without question.

In case of sickness, we should send for doctors. When property or character needs defense, we should consult lawyers. We should seek the help of friends, but still, after all, the first thing to be done is to cry to the Lord Christ Jesus for help.

[9 : 57] No one can relieve us so effectively as he can. No one is so compassionate and so willing to relieve. Verse 31 tells us how Jesus responded.

It says, And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them. Responding with compassion, Jesus came to her while she was still lying down and raised her up.

The severity of her sickness was irrelevant to Jesus. Jesus rebuked the fever. That comes from Luke 4, verse 39. And taking her by the hand, the fever left her.

Earlier that morning in the synagogue, he rebuked the unclean spirit, and the demon departed. So whether it's in the spiritual realm or the physical realm, whenever Jesus issued a rebuke, the effects were immediate.

Jesus could have just spoken the words, but Jesus reached out and touched her. This shows that Jesus came to enter our pain and not just observe it. In the original Greek, verse 31 is another case where Mark's word choice gives us a hint about coming attractions.

[11 : 12] What the ESV translates as lifted up literally means raised and often refers to both the resurrection of Jesus and believers. This gives us an indication that the early church may have seen in this story a foreshadowing of Jesus' power to raise from the dead at the last day.

We see from verse 31 just how thoroughly Peter's mother-in-law was healed. The recovery of Peter's mother-in-law was so complete that she began to serve them.

We see that Jesus healed instantly and completely. Those who experienced his healing power needed no time for recovery or recuperation. Peter's mother-in-law is a prime example of the immediacy of Jesus' healings.

She did not need to wait to feel better. The Lord didn't tell her to take it easy for a few weeks to give her time to recover. She went from languishing in bed to functioning at full strength.

The fact that disease vanished at Jesus' touch is no more incredible than that the demons fled at his word. What would have been incredible is if these things had never happened.

[12 : 23] He was the creator of the universe and in control of all things. Omniscient knowledge and omnipotent power belonged to Jesus. It would have been stranger if he had sat down to his meal but left the suffering woman tossing on her bed.

Jesus' power over sickness is another sign of his person and his messianic mission. His miracles were as much for the disciples as for the recipient.

Here he's clearly revealing himself to his newly chosen disciples and he acts in compassion on the Sabbath and this would have been shocking to the Jewish men. Word about Jesus healing Peter's mother-in-law must have spread quickly and we can assume that because of our next section of scripture.

In verses 32 through 34 we see Jesus being inundated by a pathetic multitude. So pathetic multitude is your second section.

Listen to verses 32 through 34 again. That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick were oppressed by demons and the whole city was gathered at the door.

[13 : 36] And he healed many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons and he would not permit the demons to speak because they knew him. The first questions that might come to our modern minds are why would the people wait until sundown to bring people to Jesus or why wouldn't they want to be the first in line?

Well they had to wait until the sun had set because Jewish law prohibited them from carrying anything on the Sabbath and according to the Jewish method of keeping time the day ended at sunset around 6 p.m.

as the sky began to darken. So after the sun went down the residents of Capernaum rushed to transport their sick or demon-possessed friends to Jesus. The crowds outside of Peter's house were so large that as Mark explains it the whole city had gathered at the door.

You can see from verses 32 and 33 why pathetic multitude is a fitting description. The people being brought to Jesus desperately needed help and Jesus obliged.

Presumably hundreds of people were healed on this occasion yet this was only one night in the life of our Lord Jesus. He would continue to display this type of divine power throughout his three-year ministry.

[14:56] Approximately 90 gospel texts feature the healings of Christ. During Jesus' ministry there was an unparalleled healing explosion that virtually banished all disease from Israel.

Nothing like it has ever occurred in all the centuries before Jesus' ministry and nothing like it has occurred since Jesus' earthly ministry. Matthew's account of these events adds another detail that we need to see.

Turn over to Matthew chapter 8 and we'll look at verses 16 and 17. Again we'll look at Matthew chapter 8 verses 16 and 17.

Those verses say that evening they brought to him many who were impressed by demons and he cast out the spirits with the word and healed all who were sick. This was to fulfill all that was spoken by the prophet Isaiah.

He took our illnesses and bore our diseases. Jesus certainly acted with compassion that night. That was part of his motivation. But another significant part of Jesus' motivation was to fulfill Isaiah's prophecy.

[16:08] And his actions demonstrated what Isaiah said in Isaiah 53.4. Here is Isaiah 53.4. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

Yet we esteemed him stricken, spent by God, and afflicted. Listen to how John MacArthur explains this fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy.

Jesus fulfilled Isaiah 53.4 in at least three ways. First, he sympathized with the pain and sickness of those whom he healed. He knew perfectly the agony of their hearts.

The gospel writers repeatedly tell of Jesus' compassion for those who experienced his healing touch. Jesus bore the weight of human suffering by commiserating with those who experienced it. Second, he grieved over the destructive power that causes physical suffering, and that is sin itself. When Jesus wept at Lazarus' tomb, it was not because his friend had died.

[17:11] Jesus knew Lazarus would soon be raised to life. Rather, Jesus wept because of the reality of sin, sin that brings suffering and death to every person.

Jesus could not witness the pain of sickness and death without simultaneously being saddened by the effects of the curse. And then third, and most importantly, Jesus took our infirmities and carried away our diseases by conquering sin so completely that ultimately all sickness and suffering will be eliminated.

The king provided a foreshadowing of the glorious nature of his eternal kingdom from which all sorrow and disease will be banished forever. Think about the first two sections of tonight's lesson as a group.

And here's another quote from MacArthur. He said, As the Savior of the world, the Messiah had to be able to rescue souls from both sin and Satan. As the resurrection and the life, he had to have power over both the physical and spiritual effects of the curse.

As the Redeemer, he had to be able to redeem both the soul that was lost and the body that was decaying. Jesus consistently demonstrated necessary heavenly might by repeatedly casting out demons and healing diseases to exhibit his total dominion over both the spiritual and physical realms devastated by sin.

[18:37] By those miracles, he demonstrated that he possessed the power to impart eternal life to souls and bodies, fitting them for resurrected glory in heaven. The healing miracle of Jesus stands in stark contrast to the alleged healings of contemporary faith healers today.

The world always has been plagued by false teachers who prey on the physical sufferings of desperate people to extort money from them. In spite of their brash claims, modern healers are nothing more than spiritual con artists.

They may have the ability to manipulate crowds of susceptible people, but they lack the power to genuinely heal anyone. So now that we've talked about Peter's mother-in-law and the pathetic

multitude, let's move on to the next section of the lesson, Mark gives us a glimpse into the source of Jesus' power and in verse 35 we see the praying Messiah.

So the praying Messiah is your third section. Listen to verse 35 again. Speaking of Jesus, verse 35 says, And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place and there he prayed.

We can learn a lot from this verse. If Jesus, who was God himself, needed to pray, how much more do we need to pray? Jesus knew that prayer was the source of his power.

[20 : 10] The proof of Jesus' identity had been demonstrated in his miracles, but the power behind his action was prayer. He was subject to the will of the Father and was operating in the power of the Spirit.

Consequently, a time of private communion with his Father was crucial. Before the sun even came up, Jesus got up, which suggests that he'd been sleeping if it had only been for just a few hours, and he went away to a secluded place to enjoy fellowship with his Father.

The word translated secluded place is the same word translated wilderness earlier in Mark 1. Here we see the humanity of Jesus.

Even Jesus needed to recharge his batteries by withdrawing from the crowds and talking with his Father. This was a time of renewal and preparation for Jesus. In only two other places did Mark indicate that Jesus prayed.

In 646, after walking on the water, was the other time he prayed before the Garden of Gethsemane, and then the Garden of Gethsemane was the third time that Mark recorded him praying.

[21 : 18] All three of these times were times of crisis when Jesus was tempted to take an easy way out rather than the way of suffering and death. Mark only records Jesus praying three times, but the other Gospels show us that Jesus prayed often.

J.C. Ryle said, when he was baptized, he was praying. When he was transfigured, Luke says that as he was praying, the appearance of his face changed.

Before he chose the twelve apostles, we are told that he spent the night praying to God. When everyone was speaking well of him and wanted to make him a king, we are told that he went up on a mountain side by himself to pray.

Our Lord always prayed and did not give up. Sinless as he was, he set us an example of diligent communion with his Father. His divine nature did not make him independent of the use of all human methods.

His very perfection was a perfection kept up through the exercise of prayer. Ryle went on to say, a praying master like Jesus can have no prayerless servants.

[22 : 25] The spirit of adoption will always make people call on God. To be prayerless is to be Christless, godless, and on the high road to destruction. That's a hard-hitting quote, but if Jesus' prayer life was more than just a model for us to follow, we may need to make sure we learn from it as well.

It definitely was a model for us to follow, but it served a purpose for Jesus too. His prayer life was an essential part of his obedience and submission.

In the incarnation, the Son of God set aside the independent use of his divine attributes. He humbled himself in becoming human, relying fully on the plan of the Father and the power of the Spirit.

That's why he repeatedly explained that he only did what the Father told him to do, and that even his miracles were performed through the power of the Holy Spirit. At every point, he was fully dependent on the Father and the Spirit, and he relied on them completely for the means to fulfill his mission.

Because he was always fully submissive and totally dependent, he prayed, and he prayed often. Hebrews 5, verses 7-10 summarize the result of Jesus' prayers.

[23 : 38] Here are Hebrews 5, verses 7-10. In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.

Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered, and being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Lent verses 9-10 sink in. Those verses say again, and being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

So far, we've talked about Peter's mother-in-law, the pathetic multitude, and the praying Messiah. In the last section of tonight's text, we see the prioritized mission.

So the prioritized mission is the fourth thing. We learn about that in verses 36-39. Check out those verses again.

[24 : 54] And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, and they found him and said to him, Everyone is looking for you. And he said to them, Let us go on to the next towns that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.

And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Reading between the lines, we relatively easily can guess what the disciples were thinking in verses 36 and 37.

Because Jesus did so many healings after sundown yesterday, just imagine what Jesus will do when he has a full day today. Then they realized Jesus was gone.

The disciples start searching for Jesus, and Peter and his group get to Jesus first. They give Jesus what could be considered a mild rebuke when they say, Everyone is looking for you.

But verses 36 and 37 give us another indication for what the townspeople were thinking. The verb Mark chose that's translated looking for near the end of verse 37 is filled with irony.

[26 : 06] It's different than the verb translated searching in verse 36. Everywhere else in Mark, the Greek verb translated looking for in verse 37 means to seek with evil or inappropriate intention.

Mark recognized that the acclaim of the crowd was not good. They only wanted Jesus for what they could get out of him. Jesus clearly recognized the impure motives of the crowd.

Look at Jesus' response in verse 38. He said to them, Let us go on to the next towns that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.

The meaning here is plain and unmistakable. Jesus declares that he came to earth to be a preacher and a teacher. He came to fulfill the prophetic role to be the prophet greater than Moses who'd been long foretold.

One of the first times we see that foretold is Deuteronomy 18.15. Jesus left the glory which he had shared with the Father from all eternity to do the work of an evangelist.

[27 : 14] Luke's account of Jesus' response makes the response even stronger. Listen to what Jesus said in Luke 4.43. He said, I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well for I was sent for this purpose.

The crowds at Peter's house had come looking for miracles. Now apparently they wanted more and that's why they were looking for Jesus. The call to repent and believe the gospel was not on their spiritual radar.

Like so many people today, the people then wanted a Jesus of their own liking. A Jesus who would perform miracles and fit into their agenda. Of course, there was nothing wrong with people coming to Jesus out of their needs of the flesh.

Yet that was not the chief reason for why he had come. He had not come to this earth to heal everyone's diseases or to perform miracles for everyone in need. He had come to preach the truth that his Father had sent him to declare.

Jesus could tell that people were coming to him not out of faith to receive him in his kingdom but for relief from their physical pain. Sometimes we can be like that.

[28 : 29] We can come to God in prayer when we are sick, when our body is hurt, and we should do that. But we sometimes also neglect to come to him in times of health and peace. We go to him quickly when we have needs, but we do not pursue him so eagerly to hear and understand his words.

Jesus was not going to be diverted from his mission because everyone was clamoring for his power. The people lack the faintest understanding of Jesus' method, his message, or his mission. As for his miracles on which they placed so much reliance, notice that Jesus never even mentions them. He placed no particular value on them. A following that was based on miracles would increasingly need more miracles, and such a following would soon fade away if the miracles were withdrawn.

That last sentence reminds me of one of Pastor Mike's signature comments. More than seven years ago, when the pastor search team asked Mike how he planned to grow the church if he became our pastor, Mike said, what you draw people with, you must keep people with.

And he then went on to explain that the only proper way to grow a church is through biblical preaching and teaching. That approach, of course, comes from multiple places in the Bible, and one of those places is Mark 1, verse 38.

[29 : 55] 2 Timothy also has many verses that teach that same truth. Jesus had come to preach. He wanted followers who were grounded on God's word, but it could not be the debased and deluded word as taught by the rabbis.

It had to be God's word as Jesus himself knew, understood, interpreted, and practiced. The disciples did not yet understand that fact, and they wouldn't really understand it until after Pentecost.

Any preacher today should want the same thing as what Jesus wanted. Church members who are grounded on God's word, church members who expect their pastors and teachers to explain God's word accurately, and church members who hold their pastors and teachers accountable if they fail to teach God's word accurately.

Here's another J.C. Ryle quote. He said, By preaching, the church of Christ was first gathered together and founded, and by preaching, it has always been maintained in health and prosperity. By preaching, sinners are awakened. By preaching, inquirers are led on. By preaching, saints are built up. By preaching, Christianity is being carried to the heathen world.

[31 : 13] There are many now who sneer at missionaries and mock those who go out into the highways of our own land to preach. But such people would do well to pause and consider that the very work they ridicule is the work that turned the world upside down and cast paganism to the ground.

Above all, it is the very work which Christ himself undertook. The king of kings and lord of lords himself was once a preacher. In the first section of tonight's text, we learn something positive from the disciples.

They took their problem to Jesus, the best place to take it. Here in the last section of the text, we've learned something equally important. We need to take our problems to Jesus with the right motivation.

We need to take our problems to Jesus because he is the king of kings and lord of lords. We must avoid being like the people from Capernaum who followed Jesus just because of the miracles Jesus did.

The crowds failed to understand their main need. Their main need is not healing. It's not exorcism. Those things are secondary. Their main need is salvation.

[32 : 26] And that is why Jesus came to preach the good news. The same thing applies to us and everybody else today. We still have one verse remaining in this last section.

Verse 39 shows us that as expected, Jesus made good on his word. Verse 39 says, And he, talking about Jesus, went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons. In that one verse, Mark summarizes weeks, if not months, of time as Jesus continuing to do exactly what he had done in Capernaum, and that's preaching the good news and overpowering the demons.

In this way, Jesus validated both his identity as the Messianic king while also proclaiming that salvation can be found only through his name and only in his name.

When he taught throughout the synagogues of Galilee, his emphasis always was on gospel proclamation. Remember the main idea. Despite fame and adulation from continuing to heal the sick, Jesus prioritizes preaching and praying.

[33 : 37] And in this section, Mark succinctly pulls together three core elements of Jesus' earthly ministry. The proof of his divine kingship was in his miracles.

The power that sustained his ministry came from his prayer life as he submitted to the Father and depended on the Spirit and the priority of his ministry was to preach the gospel to the lost so that through him they might have eternal life.

We likely all have prayed for physical healing for ourselves and for our loved ones. Sometimes God chooses to heal people while they're still living on earth. Other times, God declines but God will always heal true believers for eternity, both physically and spiritually.

Here's another quote from John MacArthur. He said, Christ's work of redemption will ultimately be fulfilled for believers in the future when they receive their resurrection bodies.

On that glorious day, all who have trusted in Christ will be given physical bodies that are forever free from sin, disease, and the threat of death. Though that hope is yet future for those on this side of the grave, Jesus proved that he is able to fulfill that promise by what he did throughout his ministry.

[34 : 54] When you consider our present circumstances in relation to eternity, physical healing is much less important than spiritual healing, and of course, I'm talking about our salvation there.

The crowds at Capernaum failed to realize that, but the Bible makes that fact plain. Jesus was not the kind of the first century Messiah that the people had hoped for, and he was not the kind of Messiah that the first century world really wanted, but he was the kind of Messiah that the first century world and our world today truly needed.

Our greatest ailment is not sickness, but sin. It's not demons, but death. We did not need a Messiah who would only bring liberation from political oppression and healing from disease.

We needed a Messiah who would give his life as a ransom for sinners, like you and me, and praise God, he sent us that kind of Messiah that we needed. Regardless of our physical circumstances, everyone who repents of sin and trusts Jesus for salvation will be saved for eternity.

For a reminder of that, here are Romans chapter 10, verses 9 through 13. Paul said in Romans 10, 9 through 13, but if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

[36 : 19] For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek. For the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you again for even more reminders and more proof of how Jesus is the Messiah that you promised.

He is the Son of God and Savior of the world. Even more than that, thank you for what this means for us who have put our faith in him.

Help us to truly be grateful for what you and he have done for us and let the Holy Spirit empower us to live that out more and more in our lives. In Jesus' name we pray.

[37 : 21] Amen.