

# Demonstrating Authority

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's go.

Let's go ahead and read those verses. Again, the verses are Mark chapter 1, verses 21 through 28. Have you come to destroy us?

I know who you are, the Holy One of God. But Jesus rebuked him, saying, Be silent and come out of him. And the unclean spirit convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice came out of him. And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, What is this, a new teaching with authority? He commands even unclean spirits, and they obey him. And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

In this passage, Jesus demonstrates his divine nature and his authority by teaching God's Word and by casting out a demon. And that's the main idea for tonight.

[ 1 : 45 ] Jesus demonstrates his divine nature and his authority by teaching God's Word and by casting out a demon. Mark's fast-moving 20-verse introduction established the messianic character and divine nature of the Lord Jesus.

From this point, as Mark begins the body of his gospel record, he will slow his pace to focus more intently on specific events from the ministry of Jesus.

From the first verse of his introduction, Mark has been clear that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. If you remember Mark 1.1, it says, The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

In the next 19 verses, Mark quickly did several things. Mark introduced us to the herald of the King. Of course, that herald was John the Baptist. Mark told us about Jesus' baptism.

Mark summarized Jesus' victory over temptation. Mark told us about what Jesus preached. And Mark documented how Jesus called his first four disciples. Given Mark's insistence that Jesus is the Son of God, his initial readers may have wanted more proof of that statement.

[ 2 : 56 ] If Jesus really is the Son of God, and he is, then Jesus should be doing things that only God can do. You might be thinking that only the Son of God could resist temptation, like Jesus did.

Resisting temptation did show that Jesus is God. Remember, though, that no humans were eyewitnesses to Jesus' actions during the temptation period. Today, we have television shows like Survivor, where video cameras and microphones follow people around in the wilderness.

That Jesus' temptation period included only him, the wild animals, Satan, and the angels who ministered to him. Last week, we saw Jesus walk into Galilee and proclaim words that people living there would never have expected to hear.

Mark 1.15 quoted Jesus as saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel.

In just those few words, Jesus identified himself as the long-awaited king from God. As king, Jesus was making some audacious demands. The king was telling people to repent for their sins, to believe his message, and to drop everything they were doing so that they could follow him.

[ 4 : 13 ] That's why Mark's initial readers would have wanted more proof that Jesus is who he says he is. Most of the people who heard Jesus' words in Mark 1.15 would have wanted more proof, too.

And in this section from Mark 1.21 through 2.12, Mark documents how Jesus proved his divine nature and demonstrated his authority by doing three different types of actions.

First is teaching God's word. Second is casting out demons. And third is healing sick people. And we'll see two of those three things tonight. As we get into subsequent passages early next year, Mark will give us even more evidence of how Jesus did those same types of things and more.

We repeatedly will see that Jesus did only things that the Messiah, the Son of God, who of course is God himself, could do. We'll break tonight's passage into three parts, and we'll start with verses 21

and 22.

And in those verses, we see astonishing authority. So, astonishing authority is your first blank. In verses 21 and 22, Jesus demonstrates astonishing authority through his teaching.

[ 5 : 27 ] So, here are verses 21 and 22 again. And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching.

And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority and not as the scribes. Many people can teach what makes Jesus different is how he taught.

We will see the difference when we get to verse 22, but let's first set the scene with verse 21. Verse 21 lets us know that these events happened in Capernaum.

Capernaum was located on the northwest edge of the Sea of Galilee, and it was a prosperous fishing town. Peter, Andrew, James, and John had their fishing operation there.

It also contained a Roman garrison and was under the rule of Herod Antipas, on the border of his brother Philip's domain. And after being rejected at Nazareth, Jesus established his headquarters there during his Galilean ministry.

[ 6 : 34 ] Verse 21 also tells us that the events in tonight's passage happened in the Capernaum synagogue. Similar to a local church building in our day, the synagogue was an assembly hall where the scriptures were read and taught.

There was only one temple, and that was in Jerusalem, but synagogues were established wherever 10 or more Jewish males lived. They had to be 13 years of age or older, but if they had 10 or more, that qualified the town for a synagogue.

The Jews used them for worship, education, and community gatherings, and the first synagogues probably can be traced back to the Babylonian exile in 586 B.C.

Jesus entering the synagogue on the Sabbath and being asked to teach may seem strange to us. After all, if a visitor walked in today, we probably wouldn't just turn the pulpit over to that person.

But that was typical for Jesus' day. A policy known as freedom of the synagogue allowed any qualified man in the congregation to deliver the exposition of the Old Testament passage.

[ 7 : 38 ] That privilege was often extended to visiting rabbis, as it was on this occasion to Jesus. The Apostle Paul similarly used such opportunities to proclaim the gospel in various cities throughout the Roman Empire.

We talked last week about how a year passed between the events ending in Mark 1.13 and the time that Jesus entered Galilee in Mark 1.14. And during this period, the Lord performed His first signs and miracles and gave some of His earliest teaching.

He traveled between Galilee and Judah. The miracles were performed mostly in Galilee and the teaching was given primarily in Judah. Even without the mass media that we have today, reports of Jesus' teaching would have reached Galilee.

The Galileans, especially those who had seen Jesus' early miracles, would have been excited about the opportunity to hear Jesus teach. Mark 1.22 tells us that Jesus' teaching was much different than what the people normally heard at their synagogue.

Look at verse 22 again. And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one who had authority and not as the scribes. Scribes were the primary teachers in first century Jewish society.

[ 8 : 58 ] They traced their heritage back to Ezra, who according to Ezra 7.10 and Nehemiah 8.4-8 read the law and then explained it to the people.

Most people had only limited access to the scriptures. That's because copies were far too expensive for ordinary working people to own. Consequently, they would go to the synagogue to hear the scriptures read and explained by the scribes.

Because they handled the scriptures, the scribes became so revered that they were given the title Rabbi, which means honored one. The scribes' knowledge and prestige reached legendary proportion by the first century, and at times it even surpassed that of the high priest.

Many of the scribes were Pharisees, though there were also some Sadducees and some priests among them. The Sanhedrin, which was the Jewish Supreme Court, was made up mostly of scribes.

So you can think of scribes kind of like PhDs in theology. Their opinions were given great weight by those who heard them. But when Jesus spoke, he demonstrated an authority far beyond anything that people had experienced with the scribes.

[10:10] The scribes could cite other scholars and rabbinic traditions. The scribes could try to marshal arguments to support what they were teaching, just as we try to do today. That Jesus provided no footnotes, no citations, or no usage of other people's arguments.

When a fallible human teaches, you should expect that person to provide external support for his arguments. If someone today says that the Bible teaches something that lacks corroboration from established solid teachers, run away from that person.

These Wednesday lessons in your handouts always include quotes from others to show that respected, conservative, Bible-believing scholars have reached the same conclusions. Jesus, as God in human form, needed no external validation.

He was and is his own authority. When Jesus began to explain the biblical text perfectly with clarity, conviction, and authority, his listeners were stunned.

They had never heard anything like it before. Their astonishment is bound up in the word that is translated astonished in the ESV. It literally means to be struck out of oneself with awe and wonder.

[11:26] To put it as we might say it today, Jesus blew them out of their minds. There are a number of New Testament words that can be translated amazed or astonished, and the one here is one of the strongest and most intense.

The picture you need to get is that Jesus' message was so riveting and powerful that his audience sat in stunned silence hanging on to every word that he said.

Here's one of those cases where we wish that the Holy Spirit would have inspired Mark to record exactly what Jesus said. Instead, Mark simply records the reaction to what Jesus said.

We can look to other places in Scripture to get an indication of what Jesus said and an even better idea of how he likely said it. Perhaps Jesus said something in Capernaum like what he told the people of Nazareth.

When Jesus taught in Nazareth, he quoted from the opening verses of Isaiah 61. Listen to what Jesus said in Nazareth. These verses are Luke 4, verses 16-21.

[12:35] Luke 4, 16-21 say, And he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day and he stood up to read.

And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him and he began to say to them, Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

Regardless of what Old Testament passage Jesus used in Capernaum, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 5-7 give us a good indication of how Jesus probably structured his Capernaum message.

[13:43] Frequently in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' teaching included the statement that we first see in Matthew chapter 5 verses 21 and 22. And there he said, You have heard it said, but I say.

So in the Sermon on the Mount and everywhere in his teaching, Jesus never contradicted what the Old Testament text said. Instead, he explained the Old Testament text in more detail and in greater clarity than even the most learned scribe could have hoped to do.

So you might be asking, how can we be reasonably certain that Jesus' teaching on that day in Capernaum was similar, at least in style, to what we see in the Sermon on the Mount? Well, listen to Matthew's summary of the people's reaction to the Sermon on the Mount.

These verses are Matthew 7, verses 28 and 29. Matthew 7, 28 and 29 say, And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority and not as their scribes.

Does that sound familiar? Listen again to how Mark summarized Jesus' teaching in Capernaum in Mark 1, 22. And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority and not as the scribes.

[15:06] In both cases, different groups of people had the same reaction to what Jesus said. So we've seen Jesus demonstrate astonishing authority through teaching, and we've speculated a bit

about what that teaching may have contained.

Let's go back to our Mark text and move to the next section of the passage. In the second section, we will see Jesus demonstrate amazing authority.

Amazing authority is your second point. That amazing authority is evidenced by how Jesus deals with the demon. And here are verses 23 through 27 again.

And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?

I know who you are, the Holy One of God. That Jesus rebuked him, saying, Be silent, and come out of him. And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him.

[16:11] And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, What is this? A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.

Picture the scene here by remembering how the previous section ended. Jesus' message was so riveting and powerful that his audience sat in stunned silence, hanging on to every word he uttered. Suddenly, that silence is broken by a blood-curdling scream. The ESV says that a man with an unclean spirit cried out, but that translation fails to convey the true sense of Mark's original word. The word translated cried out is very strong. It means to scream. So the man made a big disturbance in the synagogue. And it says the man cried out because he had an unclean spirit. The more usual term for unclean spirit is demon. And we see that used 63 times in the New Testament for the same word. The demon-possessed man responded by screaming at the top of his lungs.

[17:17] The demon inside him was borrowing the man's vocal cords to express pure terror. The use of the plural pronouns we and us suggests that this particular demon was asking these questions on behalf of fallen angels everywhere.

As those who had joined in Satan's failed coup, demons once served in the presence of God. They knew each member of the Trinity intimately and immediately recognized Jesus as God the Son whenever they found themselves in his presence.

They knew he was the Holy One of God, the Messianic King who had come to save the world from the power of Satan. The demon's reaction followed directly on the heels of Jesus' preaching and the demon's shrieking outburst provided audible evidence that fallen angels tremble at the power of Christ's word.

The content of his exclamation which is recorded in verses 23 and 24 indicated that this demon was also terrified by the authority of Christ's judgment.

We'll dig into what the demon said and why he said it in just a little bit. But to set the context, let's take a brief side trip to talk about what we know from the Bible about demons and demon possession.

[18:34] Here's a quote from R.C. Sproul. He said, In the Old Testament, there are very few references to the demonic world and instances of demonic possession are extremely rare.

Likewise, there are few references to it later in church history. However, while Jesus was on earth, it is safe to say all hell broke loose. Demonic representatives and Satan himself seem to oppress people everywhere.

Then Daniel Akin said, What else can we know about demons? From Revelation 12.4, it seems that one-third of the angels fell with Satan in his rebellion against God.

Some are now free to roam. Some will still be free during the tribulation. Others are confined now, never to roam freely. They are powerful personalities, though not omnipotent.

Their activity may have increased during the time of Christ and it will do so again in the coming end time. They are set up under Satan's control, probably in rank and possibly in geography.

[19:40] They have authority and promote disunity, propagate false doctrine, inflict disease, cause mental difficulties, and hinder Christian growth. Demons can oppress but not possess believers.

And that last piece is important to remember. Demons can oppress but not possess believers. We shouldn't be surprised to find this evil spirit hanging around the synagogue.

The demons had developed a false system of hypocritical religion that was highly successful in first century Israel. As is their nature, demons hide in the middle of false religion, disguising themselves as angels of light.

We see that in 2 Corinthians 11.14. They perpetuate error and deceit, and we see that in 1 Timothy 4.1. Like their leader Satan, they are liars and murderers who seek people's eternal destruction.

Getting back to our text, Mark 1.24 records the demon's words. He said, What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?

[ 20 : 50 ] I know who you are, the Holy One of God. This demonic spirit used a name and a title to address Jesus. The name, Jesus of Nazareth, expressed his antagonism, and the title, Holy One of God, expressed his fear.

Jesus of Nazareth carried a tone of scornful disdain. Nazareth was an obscure town held in low esteem by other Israelites. The Jewish leaders even used the term as a demeaning term. They mocked the idea that the Messiah would come from a place like that with humble Galilean origins and the demon joined in the scorn. At the same time, the evil spirit knew exactly who Jesus was, so his scorn is mixed with terrified dread.

The demon called Jesus the Holy One of God because he was fully aware of Jesus' divine authority. This demon, characterized by ultimate depravity and incurable wickedness, cringed in the present of perfect virtue and holiness.

The demon had perfect theology, but perfect theology alone never is good enough. Listen to this quote from J.C. Ryle. He said, The mere belief of the facts and doctrines of Christianity will never save our souls.

[ 22 : 11 ] Such belief is no better than the belief of demons. They all believe and know that Jesus is the Christ. They believe that he will one day judge the world and throw them down to endless torment in hell.

It is a solemn and sorrowful thought that on these points some professing Christians have even less faith than the devil. There are some who doubt the reality of hell and the eternity of punishment. Such doubts as these find no place except in the hearts of self-willed men and women. There is no unbelief among demons. The demons believe and shudder. And of course that last part comes from James chapter 2 verse 19.

The demon probably used Jesus' name for another reason. The use of Jesus' name by the demon and the title Holy One of God is believed to be an attempt by the demon to gain control over Jesus. In that day people believed that by uttering someone's name you could gain control or power over that person and the demon seemed to hope to do this with Jesus. The demon unveiled Jesus' identity thinking that if he named Jesus properly he could defeat him.

[ 23 : 26 ] But that demon was wrong. Look again at verses 25 and 26. But Jesus rebuked him saying be silent and come out of him.

And the unclean spirit convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice came out of him. Attempted exorcisms involving various formulas and rituals were common among the Jews of New Testament times.

But they produced no real success. Jesus' success rate was perfect. He never failed to cast out the demons he confronted nor did he rely on any special formulas or rituals to do so.

He simply issued a command and the demons obeyed. So Jesus' command came in the form of two short imperatives be silent and come out of him.

The demon had no choice but to obey immediately. The first command silenced the demon the second command drove him out. Throughout Jesus' ministry he repeatedly forbade the unclean spirits to testify about him.

[ 24 : 35 ] Though their identification of Jesus was accurate he did not need any publicity from the agents of Satan. As it was the religious leaders accused him of casting out demons only by the power of Beelzebul the ruler of the demons.

Permitting the demons to continue speaking about him would have added support to the sneering speculations of the Pharisees. Whenever the demons affirmed Jesus' identity he shut them up. And the word for be silent is the same word that Jesus will use when rebuking the wind and the waves in the stilling of the storm when we get to Mark 4 35-41.

It's also the word used for muzzling an ox in 1 Corinthians 9-9 and in 1 Timothy 5-18. Be muzzled is just another way of saying shut up don't say another word.

Jesus has authority over demons just as a farmer has authority over livestock. We see here that Jesus does not derive his power from anywhere else. It belongs to him.

[ 25 : 45 ] Jesus' second command come out of him resulted in the demon's violent departure. The unclean spirit preferred to remain in that man's soul and hold that as captive for hell but he was forced to go unwillingly but not quietly.

And with a dramatic final protest causing the man's body to convulse the demon let out a final scream as he departed. Before we move on to verse 27 here's another quote about demonic possession and this quote is from James Brooks.

He said as difficult as the concept of demonic possession is for most people today it cannot be satisfactorily treated as a primitive explanation for various kinds of physical and psychological illnesses.

A better explanation is that there is much less evidence of demonic possession today because Jesus won a decisive although not yet total victory over it. Verse 27 then records the people's reaction to the exorcism.

That verse says and they were all amazed so that they questioned among themselves saying what is this a new teaching with authority he commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him.

[ 27 : 02 ] this Greek word for new when the people were talking about a new teaching means new in point of quality not new in point of time so again you see a reference here with Jesus' teaching being different than anything they had seen before.

Notice how verse 27 ties the demon's expulsion to the teaching that Jesus did. Jesus taught the truth with such authority that the demon no longer could stay silent.

Then when the demon revealed himself Jesus casted out the demon using only words. That is why people were saying what is this? They had never seen anything like it before.

Jesus' teaching astonished them and Jesus' power over the demon amazed them. But astonishment and amazement are not the same as people repenting and believing.

Astonishment and amazement just mean that Jesus blew apart all of their categories for who he could be. No category except divine can explain what Jesus does and says.

[ 28 : 09 ] And for now the crowd simply ask, what is this? So we've seen Jesus demonstrate astonishing authority and amazing authority. As you would expect, news about Jesus spread quickly, even in that time without mass media.

And in verse 28, the last section of the lesson, we see acclaimed authority. So acclaimed authority is your last section. Here is verse 28 again.

Verse 28 says, And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee. Word about Jesus began to get out.

This was just the beginning. The divine king launched his public ministry by putting on displays of power over evil spirits that was unprecedented in Israel and the world.

Jesus taught like nobody else, and he possessed and used force that no one had seen. Behind Jesus' power was Jesus' authority. To show that what we've seen is just the beginning, here's a preview of what we will see next week when we look at Mark 1 verses 29 through 39.

[ 29 : 21 ] Mark 1 39 says about Jesus, And he went throughout all Galilee preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons. As we've seen tonight, preaching always is the priority.

The last verse of our text tonight tells us how Jesus' authority was acclaimed. Sadly, simply acknowledging the facts about Jesus is insufficient for salvation.

The people in Capernaum were impressed by what Jesus did. And as we go through the Gospel of Mark, we will see that the people in Capernaum will continue to be impressed by Jesus' action.

However, Mark omits any reference to the eternal destiny of the Capernaum citizens who saw Jesus firsthand. To find out what happened to most of the citizens in Capernaum, we must go to Matthew chapter 11 verses 23 and 24 or Luke chapter 10 verse 15.

So let's go to Matthew 11 23 and 24. In these verses, Jesus is speaking, and Matthew 11 23 and 24 say this, Jesus said, And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven?

[ 30 : 38 ] You will be brought down to Hades, for if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.

Those are some pretty harsh words there to think that Capernaum is going to be treated worse than the people of Sodom will be treated. About our passage tonight, John MacArthur said, The demons recognized Jesus and were terrified.

The crowds witnessed him and were amazed. The demons believed him but could not be saved.

The crowds refused to believe in him and therefore would not be saved.

The people who heard Jesus teach and witnessed his authority on that Sabbath day in Capernaum were left with no excuses. Yet the population of that city ultimately rejected him as their Savior and

Lord.

Perhaps they considered Jesus a good teacher, a moral idealist, or a misunderstood social activist. None of these conclusions was adequate. They may have been amazed by him in the moment, but unless they came to embrace him in saving faith, worshiping him as the Son of God, trusting in him as the Savior of the world, and submitting to him as the Lord over all, their amazement was ultimately worthless.

[ 32 : 06 ] It was no better than the trembling terror of the demons. So it is for all who reject the true person and work of Jesus Christ. H.A.

Ironside said, It is one thing to recognize in Jesus a great teacher, prophet, or wonder worker, and it is quite another thing to bow in repentance before God and receive the Savior that he has sent as the Redeemer from sin.

This next quote comes from J.C. Ryle, but it includes a quote from Martin Luther within it. Ryle said, Let us take care that our faith is a faith of the heart as well as of the head.

Let us see that our knowledge has a sanctifying influence on our affections and our lives. Let us not only know Christ, but love him from a sense of actual benefit received from him.

Let us not only believe that he is the Son of God and the Savior of the world, but rejoice in him and cling to him with heartfelt determination. Let us not only know him by hearing with our ears, but by coming to him every day for mercy and grace.

[ 33 : 19 ] The life of Christianity, says Luther, consists in possessive pronouns. It is one thing to say Christ is a Savior. It is quite another to say he is my Savior and my Lord.

The devil can say the first. The true Christian alone can say the second. Let's go back to that John MacArthur quote I read earlier.

It started like this. It said, the demons recognized him and were terrified. The crowds witnessed him and were amazed. MacArthur then went on to say this, a combination of both responses is necessary for salvation.

Sinners need to be both terrified and amazed. Terrified by such a judge and astonished by such a Savior. It is not enough simply to be amazed by Jesus Christ.

He is not satisfied with mere curiosity, wonder, or astonishment. He wants sinners to fear him as the judge and then run to him as the Savior. Be sure to catch that last part.

[ 34 : 25 ] Jesus wants sinners to fear him as the judge and then run to him as the Savior. Many of us have read tonight's verses so many times that they seem almost ordinary to us.

We no longer see the major upheaval that started after the events in these verses happened. From an individual standpoint, everyone who witnessed these events now had a choice to make.

Would they recognize Jesus as both Savior and Lord, or would they treat Jesus just as an astonishing teacher who could do some amazing tricks? Unfortunately, for most of the people in Capernaum during Jesus' time on earth, we just read what choice they made.

In human nature is still the same today. There are people today just like the demonized man before Jesus intervened. The man was in a religious meeting, able to recognize Jesus, and even trembling with fear of judgment, but he was lost.

As a group, the religious leaders in Israel also had a choice to make. After seeing such a dramatic display of authority, how would those religious leaders react.

[ 35 : 38 ] We'll see that the source of Jesus' authority would become the central issue between Jesus and those religious leaders. They could not deny Jesus' power, so they challenged and denied the power's source.

Tonight's passage is part of a bigger section, but we already can see the theme. The disturbance of men and demons by the servant king of God has begun. Life will never be the same.

Demons are expelled and broken people are made whole. And this is God's kingdom. This is what the great king can do, and this is why he should have absolute authority in your life, my life, and every life.

That leaves us with the question that we all need to answer for ourselves, and that question is this. What is your response to Jesus' authority? The answer to that question matters for eternity.

Only one answer is correct, and last week we saw Jesus command the right response when we looked at the end of Mark 1.15. That is where Jesus said, repent and believe in the gospel.

[ 36 : 51 ] Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this passage of scripture that shows Jesus' authority in his teaching.

Let us always remember who Jesus is, and let us also always remember what Jesus has done for us. Although he is a terrifying judge, he is a loving Savior for everyone who puts their trust in him. Let us always remember that, and let us more freely share the gospel with others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.  
Thank you.