

Jesus Drives Out an Impure Spirit

Mark 1:21-28 and Luke 4:31-37

DIG: How is this story related to Ch - The Spirit of the LORD is On Me? Especially verses Luke 4:17-19? What similarities and differences do you see? What two things about Jesus amazed the people? Why? What does it mean to teach without authority? What was the nature and source of Yeshua's authority?

REFLECT: What insights about the kingdom of God do you see here? On a scale of one to ten (with ten being the highest) how much authority does the Lord have in your life? What would He have to throw out for it to be a ten? What about Jesus' authority grabs your attention? How is His authority bringing freedom to you?

After being rejected in His own hometown of Nazareth, He went down to Capernaum. Since Nazareth is about 1,300 feet above sea level and Capernaum is nearly 700 feet below sea level, He had to go down to get there. On this occasion we find Messiah, as was His custom, going into the synagogue in Capernaum where, as we will learn later, Jairus was the synagogue leader. And when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue, and began to teach the people (Mark 1:21; Luke 4:31). The Jewish custom was to permit any qualified man to read and interpret the TaNaKh, even though it was usually reserved for the rabbi.

The people were amazed at His teaching. The Torah-teachers (scribes) did not have *s'mikhah* (were not ordained as rabbis), and therefore could not bring *chiddushim* (introduce new interpretations) or *posek halakhah* (make legal judgments). This is why the people were amazed (one could say they were in shock). He taught like a rabbi, not a scribe. That was one level of amazement.

A second level of amazement was that He taught them as one who had authority, not as the Torah-teachers (Mark 1:22; Luke 4:32). No rabbi taught (or judged, *pasak*) against the *halakhah* of his own rabbi. But Yeshua, who had no rabbi of His own, appeared to have authority beyond that of any of the rabbis. His teaching was like a breeze from heaven, and, as He summarized later, His authority came directly from His Father.⁴⁰⁰

Then Jesus cried out: **Whoever believes in Me does not believe in Me only, but in the One who sent Me. The person who looks at Me is seeing the One who sent Me. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in Me should stay in darkness. If anyone hears My words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. There is a judge for the person who rejects Me and does not accept My words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day** (see my commentary on **Revelation Fo - The Great White Throne Judgment**). **For I did not speak on My own, but the Father who sent Me commanded Me to say all that I have spoken. I know that His command leads to eternal life** (see **Ms - The Eternal Security of the Believer**). **So whatever I say is just what the Father has told Me to say** (John 12:44-50).

They were impressed with the content and **authority** of His teaching without attending a rabbinic academy. But as His reputation grew **their** question was, "Where did He receive His **authority**?" They didn't understand yet. At that time the Jews had rabbinic academies where **they** were taught by a certain rabbi. When the rabbi's themselves taught, they would reference their rabbi as their source of **authority**, saying, "Rabbi Cohen says . . ." Or Rabbi Edersheim says . . ." Eventually, however, **Messiah** would reveal that He not only has the **authority** to drive out **demons**, but the **authority** to forgive sins as well (see **Co - Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man**)!

Although the people were slow to recognize His **authority**, the **demons** were not. Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by a demon, an unclean spirit, cried out at the top of his voice, "Go away! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are - the Holy One of God" (Mk 1:23-24; Lk 4:33-34)! Whenever **Jesus** is confronted with **demons** they instantly recognize Him.

But every time one of the **demons** cried out who **Jesus** is, He immediately silenced them. **Demons** don't make very good character witnesses; therefore, **Christ** accepts no testimony from them. **"Be quiet!"** said Jesus sternly. **"Come out of him!"** The demon shook the man violently and threw him down before all the impure spirits came out of him with a shriek, and doctor Luke adds: **Without injuring him** (Mark 1:25-26; Luke 4:35). But when He threw those **demons** out with a mere command, it created further amazement. They recognized that His method was different than Jewish exorcism.

The act of throwing out **demons** in that day was not particularly unusual at that time. Even the **Pharisees** and **their** disciples were also able to do it. **Jesus** would say later: **If I**

drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out (Matthew 12:27)? The Jewish people had already noticed that there was a difference in the way **the Pharisees** ordered out **demons** and the way **Jesus** did it.

The rabbis used a specific ritual when they threw out demons. The ritual had three steps. First, the exorcist would have to establish communication with the demon. When the demon spoke, it would use the vocal cords of the person being possessed to answer. Secondly, after establishing communication with the demon, the rabbis would ask for the demon's name. Thirdly, once establishing the demon's name, he would order the demon out. Normally **Christ** would cast them out without any ritual, which is what made His exorcisms so different.⁴⁰¹

All the people were so amazed that they said to each other, "What is this? What words are these. A new teaching! With authority and power He gives orders to unclean spirits and they obey Him and come out" (Mark 1:28)! This incident in the synagogue in Capernaum causes word about Him to spread rapidly. News about Him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee (Mark 1:28; Luke 4:36-37). They recognized that He was teaching something new compared with pharisaic Judaism, and despite the fact that **Jesus** had no formal rabbinic training, He taught with authority.

After the morning **synagogue** service, the Jewish practice to this day is to have a special **Sabbath** meal. On this day **Jesus** was invited to the **Sabbath** meal at **Peter's** house.

What quality was it in that special teacher that enabled you to turn on the light? You know, the "ah-ha" moment when you finally "get-it." Some teachers are able to put the cookies on the bottom shelf where they're easier to get to. Perhaps your father had it, or your mother. Maybe it was a teacher at school. But whoever it was, you knew in your heart that he or she knew what they were talking about. It's called **authority**, and we can see here that **Yeshua** definitely had it in a unique way.

To the people of Capernaum, **Jesus** was amazing because through His words, He was opening them up to the thoughts of **the Father**. He was not merely repackaging human wisdom in a new box. No - His words were helping them to encounter **ADONAI**. Because He is **God**, **Yeshua** knows the deepest thoughts and desires of **the Father**. His authority came from above because He Himself was from above. His words were believable, and somehow the people knew He was speaking the truth. But if His words revealed His identity, so did His actions. **Jesus** used His authority and power to overcome the forces of evil and to

restore **His people** to wholeness. We see here that **He** had **the authority** to force an **unclean spirit** to obey **Christ** against his will and leave **the possessed man**.

But **Messiah's** desire to defeat the Adversary is no stronger than **His** longing to heal men and women who are in bondage to sin. Our weak hearts are attached to our earthly ways of thinking; **they** resist **His** new life. Through repentance, turning away from the sin in our lives and turning toward **the Lord**, we too can experience wholeness. Like **the man with the unclean spirit**, we can trust **Jesus** to cleanse our hearts and minds and fill us with new life. Today, let's be clear that through **the Holy Spirit, God** is present among us and within us and that we can meet **Him** as we turn our hearts to **Him** in prayer when **we cry out, Abba, Father.**" **The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children (Romans 8:15b-16).**

*Lord Jesus, open our minds and our hearts to your power and authority. We reject those interests that lead us away from You and ask You to renew our minds and revive our love for You. Amen.*⁴⁰²