

## **Mark 1:21-28 Jesus Teaches with Authority**

### **<sup>21</sup>They went into Capernaum;**

From this time on, the four former fishermen, now disciples, traveled with Jesus is indicated by that “they went into Capernaum.” After the arrest of John the Baptist, Capernaum became the home base for Jesus’ ministry. Capernaum was a border town between the tetrarchies of Philip and Herod, and so this was the site of Matthew’s customs, tax office, which becomes important later, when Jesus calls Matthew to be a disciple. Relations between Jews and Gentiles were evidently cordial since, according to Luke 7:1–10, a Roman centurion not only built a synagogue for the Jews in Capernaum, but asked Jesus to heal his servant.

### **and immediately on the Sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and began to teach.**

According to custom, Jesus enters the synagogue on the Sabbath and begins to teach. Unlike the temple in Jerusalem where animal sacrifice was practiced by priests, Jewish synagogues, according to rabbinic nomenclature, were “assembly halls” or auditoriums where the Torah was read and expounded upon; taught to the people. Synagogues could be found throughout the Mediterranean world wherever ten or more Jewish males, thirteen years of age or older, were present. The only official in charge of a synagogue was the “ruler of the synagogue,” a position that included the responsibilities of librarian, worship committee, custodian, and perhaps schoolteacher. The ruler of the synagogue did not preach but rather the members of the synagogue, and on this particular day, Jesus was the one teaching.

### **<sup>2</sup>And they were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.**

Mark concentrates on this sabbath, when Jesus was teaching, however he doesn’t tell us exactly what Jesus said. He only says that Jesus taught with authority, and not as the scribes.

**The Scribes**--The teaching the congregation hears from Jesus is unlike anything it has heard before. Reactions of those in attendance range from astonishment to incredulity—“**The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, ‘What is this? A new teaching—and with authority!’**” ( Mark 1:27). The only possible standard to which Jesus’ teaching might be compared is to that of the scribes.

The scribes derived their authority from the “tradition of the elders” (Mark 7:8–13)—the fathers of Judaism, we might say; whereas Jesus receives his authority directly from the Father in heaven (Mark 1:11).

**With Authority**--Now, the usual style of teaching by the scribes, and others in those days would be to read a section of the scripture, and then explain it, but not using their own ideas—instead they would explain what eminent rabbis, like Hillel thought about the passage. “Rabbi Hillel says that this means...and I agree” We know from earlier verses that Jesus’ message was the same as John the Baptist, and was about the need for repentance to come into a right relationship with God, and be baptized for the remission of sins, for the **Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand**. But, what was so shocking and amazing about this? Well, we don’t know exactly what Jesus said on that occasion, but looking at some of His early sermons, Jesus continually claimed to have the authority from God to command that people uphold a new standard of living that they were not used to. For instance, in Matthew 4:21-30 **21 “You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not murder,’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be answerable to the court.’ 22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be answerable to the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be answerable to the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell. 23 Therefore, if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there you remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. ... 27 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall**

**not commit adultery'; 28 but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 Now if your right eye is causing you to sin, tear it out and throw it away from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.** ...Jesus continually taught out of His Own authority as God, the Son, and of course that shocked people. He was adding to the understanding of the Law of Moses, explaining that it wasn't about keeping outward rules, but a relationship with God from the heart, that would be marred by sin. This shocked people, wherever he went. Over and over he was questioned "who gave you this authority, to speak this way", and for those willing to accept it, and even some who weren't willing, Jesus let them know that His authority came from God. Jesus taught like one of the prophets, with a word, directly from God, without room for argument or theory—just telling them like it is! Jesus was forcing them to make a decision regarding Himself, His Ministry, and their relationship with God. And, it's the same with us today. When we're confronted with the Word of Truth from Jesus, we are forced to make a decision to believe that He is the Son of God, sent by God to preach the Kingdom of God. And nodding and smiling wasn't an option.

**<sup>23</sup> Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, <sup>24</sup> saying, "What business do You have with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are: the Holy One of God!"**

Within the synagogue there was a man possessed by an unclean spirit. His personality had been damaged to the point that the demonic power had usurped his self—possessed him, and spoke through him. The disturbance which Jesus brings to the people was one thing, but the disturbance to this spirit was even more pronounced in the terror of the demon, who perceived in Jesus a threat to his very existence. His cry of terror, is an attempt to make Jesus leave him alone, and resist Jesus, but he can't. The demon says "you have no business with us.--yet" "It's not time for our judgement". The demons know that Jesus mission is to "destroy the works of Satan", and they know that they are on the target list. It is probable that the following statement is not a question but a declaration: "You have come to destroy us."

That the demonic powers possess a certain knowledge of Jesus' identity is clear from the cry of recognition, **"I know who you are, the Holy One of God."** The unclean spirit recognizes Jesus as the Holy One of God, the Bearer of the Holy Spirit, and between the Holy Spirit and an unclean spirit there exists a deadly enmity the demons know. These demons are not so much confessing who Jesus is, but appealing to some sort of agreement between God and these creatures, that they will be allowed to work their evil for some period of time before the judgement. They always acknowledge Jesus' identity as the Son of God, and His power over them. Their statement regarding Jesus' power isn't founded on His status as Messiah, or His skill as a teacher, or any such thing. It's founded on His personal relationship with God, and his Holiness. And that's why His name, and the claim that we have on Jesus, as Christians living our lives in accordance with His Word takes away all power of the enemy over us. It's His power, not ours. It's His holiness, not ours. It's the Holy Spirit within us, not our own power. But, it's also based on our relationship with Jesus, and our confidence in our relationship with Him. Yet another reason to stay close to Jesus.

**<sup>25</sup> And Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" <sup>26</sup> After throwing him into convulsions and crying out with a loud voice, the unclean spirit came out of him.**

Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit with the words, "Be silenced! Come out of him." The Greek word behind "said sternly" (v. 25, *epitiman*) is a technical term in Judaism "by which evil powers are brought into submission and the way is thereby prepared for the establishment of God's righteous rule in the world."

**<sup>27</sup> And they were all amazed, so they debated among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey**

**Him.”<sup>28</sup> Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding region of Galilee.**

The word that describes the people in the synagogue’s reaction to this demonstration of power over the demon *thambein* derives from the Greek word root “to strike,” meaning to astound or astonish. They were struck at this display of authority from Jesus.