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Sermon Notes

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The Authority of the Son of God

Mark 1:21-28

Immediately from the beginning of this amazing book, this Gospel of Mark, we have the theme, the thesis, the central idea:

Mark 1:1 The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The word “gospel” = “good news”

The good news is that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God! How wonderful it is that God promised a Messiah, a King to rule in David’s lineage, and to rule not just the Jewish nation but the whole world...that is the best good news there has ever been. Why? Because Jesus himself is so good! So pure and perfect and holy and righteous and kind and wise. And that is exactly the kind of King we need

And the infinite majesty of his person is established in this title, the “Son of God” ... Jesus is not merely David’s descendent but God’s only begotten Son.

Behind all of this is the idea of the Kingdom of God... that God, the Creator of the universe is a King with the right to rule over us totally and completely. So the central call of the Bible is exactly what Jesus said as he began his public ministry:

Mark 1:15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Because the Kingdom of God has drawn near, every sinner must REPENT and BELIEVE the good news... enter the Kingdom and submit gladly to the King

So, we have already had five proofs that Jesus is the rightful King of the World and therefore King of our lives: 1) a divine forerunner in John the Baptist, preparing his way like a herald who ran before the coming king; 2) a divine coronation ceremony in which Almighty God himself anointed him directly with the descending Holy Spirit, and announced him with his own voice – “You are my Son, whom I love, with you I am well-pleased!” 3) a sound defeat of his central enemy, Satan, in direct spiritual warfare – resisting all of his temptations for forty days in the desert; 4) a clear proclamation of the message of the Kingdom of God; 5) powerful commandment of his servants to follow him immediately (Peter, Andrew, James and John)

Now in this passage, Jesus moves out to build his kingdom and call people to enter it, to submit to his reign

Essential to this is that we sinners recognize his AUTHORITY, his GOD-GIVEN RIGHT TO RULE us, to command us

We tend to be extremely hostile to authority, to be suspicious of it and want to fight it. Jesus seeks to win us to yield to his authority by his ministry as perfectly recorded for us in the New Testament.

I. The Authority of Jesus’ Words

Mark 1:21-22 They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. ²² The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.

A. Context: A Synagogue in Capernaum

1. As a continuation of the previous passage, Jesus had walked along the Sea of Galilee calling his disciples, the future apostles to follow him... Peter and Andrew, James and John... they were fishing along the Sea and Jesus called them to follow him, and instantly they dropped their nets and followed him
2. These disciples went with Jesus to Capernaum... it was a prosperous fishing town on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee
3. The Sea itself was a fresh water lake, 7 miles wide, 13 miles long
4. Capernaum literally means "village of Nahum"... perhaps the hometown of the Old Testament prophet Nahum
5. The town was on the Roman road called the Via Maris
6. Historians tell us that it had a seawall eight feet high, with a promenade that sat upon it about a half a mile long; fishing piers were built along that seawall that extended over a hundred feet out into the Sea of Galilee, a perfect place for fishing vessels to dock and offload their catches of fish
7. Capernaum would become Jesus' base of operations after he had been evicted from his hometown of Nazareth
8. Jesus would do a river of miracles in Capernaum, but he would later condemn that city for failing to believe in him

Matthew 11:21-24 "Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²² But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. ²³ And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. ²⁴ But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you."

9. Mark tells us that on the Sabbath, Jesus went into the synagogue

- a. A synagogue was the center of Jewish religious life in every community
- b. The word literally means “gathering” or “assembly”, a place where the Jews would gather, especially on the Sabbath, to read the scriptures and pray and worship
- c. Keep in mind that the common people did not have individual copies of the scriptures for themselves... that was where they heard the word of God read—what we would call the Old Testament
- d. Furthermore, every qualified Jewish man in the synagogue had the right to speak about the passage that was read

B. Jesus’ Teaching

- 1. Mark is a very efficient and economical writer... he does not give us any sample of Jesus’ teaching here
- 2. He focuses instead on their reaction... they were absolutely STUNNED
- 3. The stunned reactions of people when they heard Jesus speak was very common; later in his ministry, Jesus’ enemies—the religious leaders in Jerusalem—sent the temple guards to arrest him; these men came back stunned and empty-handed

John 7:46 "No one ever spoke the way this man does," the guards declared.

- 4. So it was with this synagogue in Capernaum... AMAZED
 - a. The Greek word implies that they were overwhelmed, maybe breathless, shell-shocked at his words... blown away
- 5. What amazed them the most was the overwhelming sense of authority Jesus spoke with... not like their teachers of the Law
 - a. The “teachers of the law” (sometimes called “scribes”) were responsible for the constant copying of the sacred Jewish writings, the scriptures... again, remember, they didn’t have

printing presses or mass-production of books back then; every copy of scripture was hand-written

- b. So, these men worked all day long copying letter by letter the books of the Law of Moses, the Writings, and the Prophets
- c. They were experts in what the word said, and in the synagogue, they were looked on to teach the people
- d. Scribes were often given honored titles like “rabbi” and were greeted with great honor in the marketplaces and given the seats of honor in the synagogue and at banquets
- e. However, their teaching style was far removed from the truth of scripture; they zeroed in on what previous rabbis from the past had taught, as well as all the debates and wranglings that had gone on over minutia of the law; some of them were mystical and allegorical in their teaching style... their position in Jewish society was secure because they could not be challenged—very few people really fully understood what the scribes were teaching; in that they were parroting what previous rabbis had taught, it got further and further from scripture and was really just the traditions of men
- f. Jesus blew all that away!
- g. He didn’t cite any previous rabbis, or any other human authority; he gave no allegiance to the High Priest, Annas, or to the school of instruction in Jerusalem
- h. Instead, he spoke with direct, unquestionable personal authority
- i. The Sermon on the Mount gives you a sample of his teaching of the Law

Matthew 5:21-22 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca, 'is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Matthew 5:27-29 "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' ²⁸ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

Amazing!! "You have heard... BUT I SAY TO YOU!"

And teaching clearly about the dangers of hell! And teaching that the Law of God does not merely check your external appearance, but probes your heart!

Not only the eternal danger of the physical act of murder, but the eternal danger of ANGER – murder in the HEART

Not only the eternal danger of the physical act of adultery, but the eternal danger of LUST – of adultery in the HEART

And keep in mind that Jesus' handling of the Law was perfectly right, for the Ten Commandments forbids COVETING, and coveting is a HEART sin

And again, keep in mind, that the danger of eternity in the fires of hell was not clearly taught anywhere in the Old Testament! It was given to Christ to reveal it.

C. Perhaps the Greatest Assertion: He Himself is the Fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets

When he had taught in Nazareth, the scroll of Isaiah was handed to him; he unrolled it, found the proper place and read these words (Isaiah 61):

Luke 4:18-19 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

After rolling the scroll back up and sitting down to teach, he dropped this bombshell on them:

“Today, in your hearing, this scripture is FULFILLED!”

Jesus overtly claimed to be the Messiah, the one promised by God through the prophets!

This was a staggering claim... a staggering level of AUTHORITY!

D. Our Salvation Depends on Properly Hearing Jesus’ Words

John 5:24-25 "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. ²⁵ I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.

II. The Authority of Jesus’ Judgment

A. Suddenly: A Demon Rears Its Ugly Head

Mark 1:23-24 Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, ²⁴ "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!"

1. Mark says “Just then” or “Immediately”
2. It was the sound of Jesus’ voice and the purity of his Word that forced this demon to reveal himself
3. This demon’s reaction shows the terror with which demons greeted Jesus, the Son of God

B. The Hidden Power of Demons

1. Many times in Mark’s Gospel, we will come across the issue of demon-possession
2. There is not a single clear example of demon-possession in the Old Testament; there are only two mentioned in the Book of Acts, and none addressed in the epistles
3. Demons are overtly displayed in the Book of Revelation

4. However, Jesus encountered demons it seems every single day... driving out demons was one of the central displays of his sovereign power that proved his authority (we'll get to that more in a minute)
5. It seems that demons like to stay hidden... to do their work silently and subtly and invisibly; so it is even today
6. But when Jesus came into the world, it was like a blinding searing light suddenly burned in the evil darkness and the demons were like cockroaches in a large darkened room suddenly exposed when the light was turned on
7. They knew the power of Jesus and that there was no possibility of hiding from him

C. What Are Demons?

1. We have just addressed this at the end of the Book of Job with the sermons on Behemoth and Leviathan, but it is worth going over again
2. Demons are fallen angels... angels are powerful spiritual beings who were created among God's first creatures to serve him
3. Revelation 12 makes it plain that Satan led a heavenly revolt against the throne of God before the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden
4. Revelation 12:4 implies that 1/3rd of the holy angels fell into Satan's rebellion... that rebellion failed and the devil and his angels (called demons) were hurled to the earth
5. It seems some of them were immediately locked in a bottomless pit to be held for future judgment
6. Demons have far greater power than human beings do... they have the ability to infiltrate human minds and in demon-possession, they can completely take over a human personality
7. So in that synagogue in Capernaum, this demon, inhabiting the body of a man, cries out in terror and rage to Jesus

D. The Demon Cries Out

Mark 1:24 "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!"

1. We will see many times in the Gospel of Mark, as well as other places in the New Testament... the demons have very accurate theology... as James said, "Demons believe that God is one"; a demon-possessed girl walking behind Paul and Silas in Philippi cried out

Acts 16:17 "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved."

That actually was completely true!

So it is with demonic statements about Jesus in the Gospel of Mark... they are factually TRUE!

2. The demon calls him "Jesus of Nazareth..." that is Jesus' human name, human origin, human story; but he also says "I know who you are, the HOLY ONE OF GOD!"
3. In other words, this demon knows that Satan failed to tempt Jesus into a single sin... Jesus is perfectly holy; and not only perfectly holy, but "THE HOLY ONE OF GOD"
4. Later, we have this open testimony:

Mark 3:11 Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God."

5. So the demons knew Jesus' holiness and power as God the Son, God in the flesh, God who was Jesus of Nazareth
6. So, the demons speak the truth about Jesus... and they were TERRIFIED of him

E. Why the Demons Were Terrified of Jesus

1. First, they know who he is; second, they know who they are... Jesus is their mortal enemy, they are in open warfare against Almighty God
2. Beyond this, they know that their time is short

Revelation 12:12 woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short."

3. They know that their final end will be the lake of fire... that will be their penalty... eternal conscious torment in the lake of fire

Matthew 25:41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

4. Furthermore, there is the possibility that Jesus will command these demons to be immediately thrown into the pit to be tortured until the appointed time... that they will lose their freedom to roam on the surface of the earth

2 Peter 2:4 God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment

Jude 1:6 And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home-- these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.

So another time another demon cries out:

Matthew 8:29 "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?"

5. The demon knows full well that Jesus is the Judge of all the earth... that it is his right and his power to condemn all demons to immediate torture
6. The demon is terrified of Jesus' power as JUDGE...

F. So, Our Salvation Begins with a Proper Fear of this Judgment

Proverbs 9:10 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."

John 5:27 And God has given the Son authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

Matthew 25:31-32 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

Revelation 20:11-15 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵ If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

The demon understood better than all those unbelievers in Capernaum what kind of threat Jesus' power as Judge of all the Earth holds for them... the demons were in absolute terror of him!

Our salvation begins when we, by the power of the Spirit, have a sense of that fear, and flee to Christ for salvation from that wrath

III. The Authority of Jesus' Power

Mark 1:25-26 "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" ²⁶ The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

A. Jesus Has Direct and Immediate Power over this and Every Demon!

1. Again and again we will see this...
2. Effortless power over the most powerful of demons
3. Jesus gives this demon an instant command: "Be quiet!"

- a. Though what the demon said about him was true, he did not want demons as his messengers
- b. He would commit to his church the message of reconciliation
- c. Furthermore, he did not want to listen to another word from this evil being, nor did he want the people in that synagogue subjected to demonic lies

1 Timothy 4:1 The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and the doctrines of demons.

John 8:44 When Satan lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

- 4. Then Jesus gives the healing command for this poor man: “Come out of him!”
 - a. The account tells us nothing about this man
 - b. But the time has come for him to be set free from this demon!

B. Demonic “Obedience”

- 1. I find it interesting that in every case, the demons instantly obeyed Jesus
- 2. As a matter of fact, we will find that demons are more obedient than people are... at the end of this chapter, Jesus will command a leper to tell no one about his healing, but he immediately disobeys and spreads the news everywhere
- 3. But this demon does instantly obey... but he does not do it cleanly
- 4. He makes the man writhe around in convulsions, like an epileptic seizure; as will happen later in Mark 9:25-27 with a demon-possessed boy; when that demon came out, he threw the boy on the ground and made him writhe around, foaming at the mouth
- 5. So this is the demon’s way of showing rebellion; he hates Jesus and Jesus’ absolute authority and power over him; he writhes and ranges and is enraged, but he has no choice but to obey

6. He comes out of the man “with a shriek”... howling in rage that he must comply
7. He has the right theology about Jesus... he knows he is the Holy One of God... he knows he is the Son of God... he knows his power is absolute... but he HATES JESUS and everything his kingdom stands for
8. The only reason he complies is he is forced to... because of his TERROR of immediate judgment

C. Here is the Awesome Power of King Jesus

1. By Jesus the entire universe was made... by the word of his power
2. And by Jesus also the entire universe is sustained moment by moment
3. Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords; he is Lord of heaven and earth... as he will say at the end of his Gospel: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me!”
4. All angels, both the good ones and the evil ones, will fall down before his throne
5. All human beings, both the redeemed and the condemned, will bow the knee and confess “Jesus is Lord!”

IV. The Only Right Response: Fear and Amazement Leading to Faith

A. The People’s Amazed Reaction

Mark 1:27-28 The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching-- and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him." 28 News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

B. Again, we have their amazement

1. They marvel at the authority... which is exactly why I organized this sermon around that theme

2. They are stunned... they think about his teaching, how he spoke with such authority...
 - a. "You have heard... but I say to you!"
 - b. Also the fulfillment of the prophetic scriptures... "Today, in your hearing, this scripture is fulfilled!"
 - c. Also "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me!"
 - d. This teaching searched their hearts and their minds... it exposed their heart sins and made them realize their need for a Savior
3. THEN, they see a demon, so obviously far beyond their power to control, immediately obey Jesus' word in terror of him

C. The News Spread Widely

1. As a result of this stunning day in the synagogue, the word spread rapidly throughout all of Galilee
2. But it would not stop there... the word has been spreading ever since

Isaiah 49:6 "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."

D. So... What About You???

1. The people of Capernaum, as we said at the beginning of the sermon, saw many amazing miracles... but they DID NOT REPENT
2. Jesus said that the people of Tyre and Sidon would have repented in sackcloth and ashes if they saw Jesus' miracles
3. He spoke the word of WOE to Capernaum, threatening that it would "go down to the depths" ... meaning hell... because they refused to repent; they did not understand that they were ultimately in the same danger as the demon

4. We must combine the fear of the Lord's power to judge with the amazement of Jesus' words and teachings, resulting in a love and an attraction and a FAITH in Christ that cleanses us and forgives us