

THE CROWD AMAZED

CORE PASSAGE: MARK 1:21-34

CONTEXT

Mark the Gospel writer was not one of the twelve apostles, but he based his account on the testimony of the apostle Peter, a close companion of his. Mark succinctly and rapidly reported the story of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection. Mark 1 begins with John the Baptist's ministry, Jesus's baptism and temptation, and Jesus's calling the disciples. Jesus was in Capernaum teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath when He encountered a man with an unclean spirit.

KEY CONCEPT

Jesus, as God the Son, has authority over all in the spiritual and physical realms.

As you examine Mark 1:21-34:

- Recognize that Jesus had authority to drive out unclean spirits.
- Emphasize that Jesus's authority over all things included His ability to heal the sick.



TIMELINE

Jesus Is Tempted in the Wilderness (Mark 1:12-13)

SESSION STUDY:
Jesus Demonstrates His Authority in Capernaum (Mark 1:21-34)

Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man (Mark 2:1-12)

Jesus Ministers in Galilee (Mark 1:14-15)

Jesus Heals a Leprous Man (Mark 1:35-45)

Daily Readings

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 1: Mark 1:21-28 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 4: Matthew 8:18-22 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 2: Mark 1:29-34 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 5: Matthew 8:23-34 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Day 3: Matthew 8:14-17 | <input type="checkbox"/> Day 6: Psalm 56 |



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

Notes



SCAN ME

Bonus Content

Scan this QR code to learn why Jesus commanded people and unclean spirits not to make His identity known.

JESUS HAS AUTHORITY OVER ALL THINGS SPIRITUAL (MARK 1:21-26).

Underline the unclean spirit's reaction to Jesus. Circle Jesus's response.

21 They went into Capernaum, and right away he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and began to teach. **22** They were astonished at his teaching because he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not like the scribes. **23** Just then a man with an unclean spirit was in their synagogue. He cried out, **24** “What do you have to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!” **25** Jesus rebuked him saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” **26** And the unclean spirit threw him into convulsions, shouted with a loud voice, and came out of him.

Entering Capernaum on the Sabbath, Jesus “right away” went to the synagogue to teach. Teaching was a primary focus of Jesus’s ministry. The people were “astonished” by Jesus’s display of authority through His teaching—it was “not like the scribes” (v. 22). There was something different about Jesus. Imagine listening to someone who not only knows the Scriptures but who understands them fully and speaks of them with Spirit-inspired authority!

So as Jesus was teaching, a man possessed by an unclean spirit interrupted Him. The spirit’s tone was one of chaotic disruption but also fear, for Jesus’s authority was a threat to him. It had been prophesied from the beginning that though Satan would inflict pain, Christ would have the victory (Gen. 3:15). The unclean spirit cried out in fear, wanting to know if Jesus had come to destroy it since it knew that the Holy One of God had authority over all spiritual beings.

LEADER NOTE: The demon and Jesus came head to head in a battle here. The demon tried to strike first by naming Jesus with His earthly name, “Jesus of Nazareth,” as well as His spiritual identity, “the Holy One of God” (Mark 1:24). The demon knew better than the crowds or the disciples that Jesus is God the Son. And being God, Jesus had come to have victory over Satan and all demonic forces.

How do people view demons today, and why is it more difficult in modern Western cultures to believe in them?

Key Concept: Jesus, as God the Son, has authority over all in the spiritual and physical realms.

Notes

With a quick rebuke, Jesus won the battle against the demon; it was no contest. He commanded it to be silent and to come out of the man, and it did, but not without a small tantrum. It threw the man into convulsions, shouted with a loud cry, and finally came out. Jesus was revealing Himself as one with authority over Scripture as well as one with authority over the spiritual realm, which included demons and angels.

Our souls are battling daily with temptations and the fiery arrows of the enemy. On our own, we cannot combat the evil forces that plague our world and mind. Jesus displayed authority over this unclean spirit, and He also has power over every temptation, sin, and unclean spirit that tries to take hold of our affections. Knowing Christ has authority over all things spiritual gives us hope to walk in this broken world with victory. Take great joy in knowing that the One who silenced and cast out the unclean spirit is also able to reign authoritatively and victoriously in you.

LEADER NOTE: As believers, we cannot be possessed by demons, but they still tempt us to sin. Yet sin is not always a result of the work of Satan and demons. Our own sinful will and flesh often leads us to sin (Jas. 1:13-15). When we sin, we don't need to spend time figuring out who led us to sin. We simply need to repent and confess, asking God for forgiveness and moving on with the help of the Holy Spirit.

What parts of your spiritual life do you need to yield more fully to Jesus?

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

JESUS'S DEITY: Within the person of Jesus Christ, there are two natures—the divine nature and the human nature. Scripture teaches He is fully divine and fully human. His divinity is on display in passages that describe Him as being equal with God (John 1:1-18; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:15-20; Heb. 1:1-3). The New Testament also points to the deity of Christ by showing how He possesses attributes that God alone possesses (Mic. 5:2; John 1:4), how He performs works that only God performs (Mark 2:5-12; John 10:28; 17:2), and how He Himself claims to be the Son of God (Matt. 26:63-64; John 8:58; 10:30; 17:5).

JESUS HAS AUTHORITY OVER ALL THINGS PHYSICAL

(MARK 1:27-34).

Highlight the reactions of the people to Jesus's authority and power.

27 They were all amazed, and so they began to ask each other, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." **28** At once the news about him spread throughout the entire vicinity of Galilee. **29** As soon as they left the synagogue, they went into Simon and Andrew's house with James and John. **30** Simon's mother-in-law was lying in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. **31** So he went to her, took her by the hand, and raised her up. The fever left her, and she began to serve them. **32** When evening came, after the sun had set, they brought to him all those who were sick and demon-possessed. **33** The whole town was assembled at the door, **34** and he healed many who were sick with various diseases and drove out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

After Jesus cast out the demon, the people were amazed and said, "A new teaching with authority!" (v. 27). They saw that teaching with authority went hand in hand with action. But Jesus didn't stop there. He went into Simon Peter's house and healed Simon's mother-in-law, showing He had authority over the physical as well as the spiritual.

LEADER NOTE: Although we do not see these kinds of miraculous events happening as regularly today, that does not diminish the reality of Jesus's authority. Jesus still has control over the physical, and there are many accounts of healing that cannot be explained. But there are many times that He chooses not to heal physical ailments because His plans are better than ours. We may not know why He heals some and not others, but we know He is a good God and we can trust in His plans above ours.

After Jesus took Simon's mother-in-law's hand and raised her up, she began to serve them, being healed. That is the same response we should have to the authoritative Son of God—immediate and unconditional service to Christ.

As you reflect on God's provision in your life, how can you respond in service?

As news spread about Jesus's works, the community brought Him all the sick and demon-possessed, and they crowded at the door of Simon Peter's house. Jesus displayed His authority over the physical and spiritual by healing the sick and casting out demons. And like before, it was not yet His time

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to be revealed, so He did not permit the demons to speak. Jesus’s actions revealed His identity as the Son of God, although the crowds couldn’t see that. Ironically, only the demons knew who He truly was.

LEADER NOTE: “When evening came” in verse 32 shows that the Sabbath had ended and everyone was able to bring the sick to Jesus. The word “brought” is an imperfect tense in Greek, which could be translated “kept on bringing.” Seeing Jesus’s abilities, the crowds kept coming. They came for the healing, but they didn’t know and didn’t believe in Jesus. The demons knew, but their knowing didn’t mean believing in terms of trusting or surrendering to His lordship. James wrote: “You believe that God is one. Good! Even the demons believe—and they shudder” (Jas. 2:19). This fact should cause us to reflect on whether we just know things about God or whether we actually know and trust in Him as Lord and Savior.

VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

“Rather than engaging in exorcisms, believers today are called to engage in evangelism. Whenever we bring the gospel to nonbelievers and they put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit washes them clean, takes up residence, and the demons are evicted.”¹

–John MacArthur (1939–2025)

Jesus’s authority over all things helps us see that His claims as the Son of God are indeed true. The foundational revelation that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, required Jesus to graciously work miracles over the physical. The apostle Paul reiterated this truth by claiming that Jews required signs for belief (1 Cor. 1:22), yet now, as believers in the new covenant, we see Christ’s authority fulfilled and graciously displayed to us in His Word.

What convinced you or would convince you that Jesus is Lord and Savior?

GOSPEL CONNECTION

Jesus’s authority over the physical world and over the spiritual world includes His authority over Satan and demons as well as over sin, guilt, shame, and death. This authority and power reveals His identity as the Son of God.

Notes

BIBLE'S ACCOUNT	HOW IT FEELS	SCRIPTURE
Jesus calls Matthew.	Jesus calls Matthew to follow Him and to leave his tax-collector's booth. Jesus says, "Follow Me, and I will make you a fisherman."	Matthew 9:9-13
Jesus cleans a leper.	Jesus cleans a leper and says, "I will make you clean. Go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for lepers."	Matthew 8:1-4
Jesus heals a man with an unclean spirit.	Jesus says, "You unclean spirit, leave the man!" The unclean spirit leaves the man.	Matthew 12:22-28
Jesus heals a man with a withered hand.	Jesus says, "I will make your hand whole." Jesus heals the man's withered hand.	Matthew 12:10-13
Jesus heals a man with a fever.	Jesus says, "I will make your fever go away." Jesus heals the man's fever.	Matthew 8:14-15
Jesus heals a man with a demon.	Jesus says, "I will make you whole." Jesus heals the man's demon.	Matthew 9:32-34
Jesus heals a man with a demon.	Jesus says, "I will make you whole." Jesus heals the man's demon.	Matthew 9:35-36

ARRIVAL

INTERACT: As people arrive for the group experience, begin by asking: “What verses in the Bible have ministered to you in the past? Why?”

CONTEXT

SAY: Over the past few sessions, we have had the opportunity to study Jesus as God and man. In today’s account, we once again will see His divinity and humanity. However, in this particular account in Scripture, we also will see that even the demons know Jesus’s authority and must yield to His power. His authority holds weight even today.

TRANSITION: Give each person a copy of **Pacl/ Item 5: Jesus’s Authority**, and review the signs of Jesus’s authority. Say: “The people in the synagogue were amazed at the authority with which Jesus taught the Scriptures. Jesus was able to teach boldly and with authority because He is God the Son, speaking the words and heart of God the Father. In rebellion to His authority, an unclean spirit shouted out, seeking to distract the listeners from Jesus’s teaching. Immediately, Jesus commanded the unclean spirit to leave the man. Similarly, the Word of God holds power today. It has the power to bring hope to the hopeless and call the lost soul to repentance.”

RECAP

ASK: What was one key idea that stood out to you in your personal preparation this week?

SAY: As we study this passage of Scripture, it is important to remember that Jesus holds all authority over both the spiritual and the physical realms. What this means is that while the spiritual forces might hold sway right now, one day every spirit will bow and acknowledge Jesus as Lord. Even the unclean spirits know Jesus’s name and fear Him. Yet as God the Son, One to be feared and respected, Jesus had compassion on Simon’s mother-in-law and all the people in the village who brought the sick and demon-possessed to Him for healing.

TRANSITION: Jesus’s divinity and humanity do not contradict one another; rather, these two natures lead us to a fuller understanding of God’s character. Jesus has the authority to command spirits, to forgive sin, and to break the chains of addiction, hurt, and shame. He is also tender to call little children to Himself, to comfort the mourning, and to care for the outcasts of society.



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ministrygrid.com/gospelproject · gospelproject.com/leader-training.

Key Concept: Jesus, as God the Son, has authority over all in the spiritual and physical realms.

GROUP ACTIVITY

CHART: Direct your group to page 38 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find a chart titled “Jesus’s Authority.” Recreate this chart on a board in your room so you can record the group’s responses.

Jesus’s Authority		
Read Mark 1:21-34. Record the ways Jesus revealed His authority and power and the corresponding responses of the witnesses.		
	JESUS’S AUTHORITY	RESPONSE
THE CROWDS		
THE DEMON		
THE MOTHER-IN-LAW		
ME		

READ: Invite two volunteers to read aloud Mark 1:21-26 and 27-34.

INSTRUCT: Divide the large group into two groups. Assign one group the “Jesus’s Authority” column and ask the group to write down how Jesus displayed His authority to those in the first three rows on the chart. Assign the other group “The Response” column and ask them to write the responses of those in the first three rows to Jesus’s action and authority.

DISCUSS: As a group, discuss the following: “Why do you think the crowds [the demon, the mother-in-law] responded in this way?” Ask: “How would you have responded if you were the crowds, the demon, and the mother-in-law after seeing Jesus’s authority revealed in the way that He did?”

REFLECT: With the last row, first column, encourage each person to write down an example of how Jesus has worked or shown His authority in their life, whether in a difficult way or in a miraculous way. In the second column, encourage them to record how they responded to His work. Ask if anyone would like to share a difficult example. Ask if anyone would like to share a miraculous example.

SAY: Jesus has authority in the world and in our lives, but we get to choose how we respond to it. Sometimes we don't like His authority because we want control. Other times we are thankful for His authority and work in our lives. Jesus did not exercise authority in an oppressive way; rather, He drew people in with His authority. In His mercy, He calls us to holiness. In His gentleness, He calls us to strength.

DEBRIEF

When is it difficult to submit to Jesus's authority?

In what areas of your life do you need to recognize Jesus's authority and submit to it?

SUMMARIZE

As children of God, we submit to the authority of Jesus Christ because we know and trust He is the Son of God. His words still hold power to break chains and breathe life. Let us walk with authority and confidence not in our power but in the power of the One who has called us from death to life.

HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 39). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Heart** section in this week's study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



HEAD: It is difficult to comprehend the spiritual realm, let alone the miracles that Jesus performed. Yet the spiritual realm is real and active. Spiritual forces wrestle for our affections, but take heart in knowing that Jesus is Lord over the spiritual. There is no unclean spirit that is not subject to Jesus Christ. Be careful that you are not influenced by an obsession with the supernatural, but instead, set your mind on Jesus Christ, who is Lord over all.

In what ways should you approach the spiritual realm with a belief that Jesus is Lord?



HEART: Jesus's authority should affect us. The fact that the authoritative Lord over all willingly humbled Himself to death on a cross for us is truly a gracious gift for the forgiveness of our sins. As He showed His authority over the spiritual and physical, He also showed authority over sin and death. Our hearts can be made new in Christ because He has the final authority to give us eternal life.

How does Jesus's authority over the physical and the spiritual help you in your relationship with Him?

Key Concept: Jesus, as God the Son, has authority over all in the spiritual and physical realms.



HANDS: Since Jesus has authority over the spiritual and the physical, we have a Savior and Lord who empowers us. Since Jesus has all authority, believers have been tasked with the mission to go and make disciples of Him (Matt. 28:18-20). In Christ, we have victory over sin and can combat the world's temptations because He has already won the victory in our place.

With whom can you share about Jesus's authority and work in the world this week?

NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this week's session.

- Read Ephesians 3:16-21. How does God's Word give us power? Take a few moments to think about an area of your life in which you need to remember that Jesus declared victory.
- Read Ephesians 4:1-3. Ask the Lord to give you a spirit of humility and gentleness in areas where you struggle with pride.
- God uses each of us to accomplish His will and purposes. Ask Him to give you the boldness and authority you need to accomplish His will.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 39 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

CLOSE: Pray through Psalm 56:3-4 with your group, thanking God for protection over fear and evil, both physical and spiritual, because He has the authority to do so. Praise Him that we can put our hope in Him whenever we are afraid.

References

1. John MacArthur, Mark 1-8, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2015), 65-66.

Notes



CAPERNAUM IN JESUS'S DAY

Adapted from an article by Argile A. Smith



Suppose you had the chance to walk with Jesus everywhere He went. What would you see as you followed Him to Capernaum? Resting on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee, you would have found Capernaum not far from the place where the Jordan River flowed into it from the north. Although the exact location in Jesus's day has been debated for some time, the most likely spot is the present-day site of Tel Hum.

An ancient city, Capernaum probably existed during the days of the Old Testament. The name itself means "village of Nahum," though no evidence has been found to link the city with the prophet Nahum. During the intertestamental years, Capernaum experienced a transformation under the reign of the Greeks, from the grid-like layout of city streets and city blocks, each block measuring approximately 40 square meters. The center of each block contained three or four multi-family houses surrounding a common courtyard. Each house had several rooms that served as private living quarters. The floors and walls of the rooms were made of unfinished black basalt stone quarried from the nearby mountains.

By the time of Jesus's ministry, Capernaum had become a city of some size, boasting a population of over 1,000 residents. Compared to Nazareth with under 500 residents, Capernaum would have been considered rather large. It depended on two important industries: fishing off the Sea of Galilee and agriculture. Docked at the harbor, you would notice an assortment of boats, nets, and other equipment as well as a market for selling a fresh catch. Excavations of the family dwellings have even uncovered fish hooks lying on the floors of some of the houses.

Capernaum was also blessed with good soil as well as plenty of sunshine and rain for growing crops. Farmers usually fared well, harvesting everything from citrus fruits to dates to sell in the city. You would be able to see the signs of agricultural success everywhere in the city.

ROMAN RULE

During Jesus's ministry, the Romans ruled over Capernaum, and they seemed to be quite interested in the city. One reason for their keen interest had to do with tax collection from the income the locals made when they sold fish or agricultural products. The city also happened to be situated on an international trade route. This major first-century highway went all the way from Egypt through Judea to Syria and Mesopotamia. The city was also near a significant border crossing.

Imagine the number of travelers from all over that region who would come in and out of the city. Perhaps that's why the Romans placed a centurion and troops there (Matt. 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10), to make the Roman presence known to visitors and residents of the city. Along with the soldiers stationed in the city, the Roman high official might have lived there (John 4:46). The Romans also had a tax office in Capernaum (Matt. 9:9) to tax the residents as well as travelers passing through.

JEWISH INFLUENCE

During Jesus's day, the Jews also figured prominently in the culture of Capernaum, making up the majority of the city's population. The Jews in Capernaum prospered. Recently, archaeologists found the remains of a large, impressive synagogue built with white limestone instead of black

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basalt stone. It stood two stories high and was 65 feet long with three large entrances, rows of decorated columns, and a courtyard on the east side. Inside were seats for the leaders of the Jewish community. At the south end, you could view a stone carving of the ark of the covenant. The synagogue was quite elaborate, indicating the Jews had wealth to build such a monumental structure.

When archaeologists first discovered the remains of the building, they thought it may have been the synagogue in which Jesus taught and performed at least one miracle (Mark 1:21-26). But the structure was built at least two hundred years after Jesus's ministry. Beneath the floor of the synagogue, they did find another foundation of black basalt, which may have been the foundation of the synagogue in Jesus's day.

JESUS'S HOME

Capernaum became an important city for Jesus as He ministered in Galilee. For Him, the city served as a base of operations and a home away from home (Matt. 4:13; 9:1). Some of the most significant events of His ministry took place there, such as calling three of the twelve disciples—Peter and Andrew (originally from Bethsaida), and the tax-collector Matthew (Matt. 9:9; Mark 1:29; cf. John 1:44).

The Gospel writers recorded several miracles Jesus performed in the city. He healed the centurion's servant (Matt. 8:5-13). A paralyzed man's friends lowered him through the roof of a house to get him to Jesus, who they knew could heal him (Mark 2:1-12). Simon Peter's mother-in-law also suffered from a fever that Jesus healed (Mark 1:29-31). In fact, just south of the remains of

the synagogue, archaeologists found the remains of an octagon-shaped church built 400 years after Jesus's ministry. Underneath the foundation of the church, they uncovered another family dwelling. Christians must have used the building as a church because of the Christian names, writings, and symbols. The house dates all the way to the time of Jesus's ministry. Some scholars think the house belonged to Simon Peter, though others are not so sure. They agree, however, that the house was an important structure in the lives of early Christians in the city.

Jesus made Capernaum His home, but He did not avoid telling the sad truth about the city's future. He condemned Capernaum along with two other Galilean cities: Chorazin and Bethsaida (Matt. 11:20-24). In time, His prophecy came to pass. In the centuries after Jesus's ministry, Capernaum faced war, captivity, earthquake, and intrigue. After being destroyed and rebuilt repeatedly over the next nine centuries, the city was abandoned. Today, the site of Capernaum is owned by two religious groups. Franciscans—a Catholic order—purchased the western part of the site in order to preserve it. The Greek Orthodox church owns the eastern part for the same reason.

If you had the chance to step back in time into Capernaum, you would see a thriving Galilean city situated on an international highway that was the object of Roman and Jewish interests. Most of all, you would see the city that Jesus called home for most of His ministry.

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