

Behold! The Authority of the Nazarene – Mark 1:21-34
Series: Look and Live #4

Mark 1:21. Authority. There is something about certain people. They seem to exude raw authority when they speak God's Word. I've told you often that R. C. Sproul preached at the conference I went to in April (T4G). His mannerisms, his tone of voice, and best of all, his content showed such pure authority that as I looked around the room, thousands and thousands of men were seriously on the edge of their seats. And as he spoke, I honestly felt my heart begin to give way and melt to the point that I was overwhelmed and had to take a moment – to stop listening.

I could also tell you about Al Martin, and the day back in 1990 in Dayton, TN when he preached so powerfully and authoritatively at a Family Conference that the motion detectors in the sanctuary thought the full sanctuary was actually EMPTY and so the lights automatically turned out! And even more amazingly, *no one got up to turn them back on!* No one even moved; Al Martin just continued to preach. When his sermon was finally over and he called the congregation to pray, everyone bowing their heads finally made the lights come back on. Authority. (From <http://www.alfredplacechurch.org.uk/sermons/mark7.htm>)

I imagine that these men, and others like them, are as close as we can get to the raw, fundamental authority that a man from Nazareth manifested some two thousand years ago. When he spoke, the crowds were hushed. When he commanded, spirits obeyed. Winds obeyed. Waves obeyed. Sickness obediently carried out his word. In the 6000 year history of this world, one man, *one man* commanded the power and the right to direct all men, all matter, and all spirits. One man, and only one, stood, not at the top of creation, but actually over all creation. And that man hailed from the small town of Nazareth. His name was Jesus. Listen to Mark as he brings us face to face with the authority of Jesus, the Nazarene.

Reading of Mark 1:21-34.

There is *absolutely no questioning the fact* that the main point here is the overwhelming, all-encompassing authority of Jesus. What astonished the people about his teaching was his authority. What astonished the people about his exorcisms was his authority. What's amazing about his healing of Simon's mother-in-law is the authority in just taking her by the hand. And what led the entire town to come to him with their sick, lame, and demon-possessed was the report of this Nazarene's authority!

So that's what we should focus on together. We'll look at three aspects of Jesus' authority. And all the while, we want to be asking how this affects us and why this makes Jesus appear so glorious. So here are the three components we are going to see in this text: first we'll see Jesus' ability to instruct us with absolute authority. Second, we'll see Jesus' authority over the kingdom of this fallen world. And third, Jesus' authority over creation itself.

1) **First of all, Behold Jesus' ability to speak authoritatively to us (vv. 21-22).**

- a) On a particular Sabbath day, while Jesus was still near the Sea of Galilee, he and his disciples went into a local synagogue (a place where Jewish men gathered once a week to read the Law and study its application).
- b) That day, Jesus was actually asked to teach. They didn't have official designated preachers; but they asked Jesus to teach because they already recognized his knowledge of God's Word.
- c) Unfortunately, Mark does not tell us *what* Jesus taught. His main concern in verses 21, 22, and 27 is not *what* Jesus taught, but rather it's *how* Jesus taught. He taught with a unique, special authority.
- d) In a day when most people could not read or write, and where few had actual access to the Bible, there was a group of men collectively called the scribes who were able to read and write, and who had some knowledge of God's Word. They became what the New Testament sometimes calls "the teachers of the Law".
- e) When *they* spoke in the synagogue, they would quote other so-called experts in the Law, they would talk about books they had read and about their opinion of this verse or that verse.
- f) But when Jesus begins to speak, he wasn't just interpreting and quoting other people. His teaching sounded more like the actual Scripture than it did an interpretation *of Scripture*. In other words, he did not speak as one *under* the Scripture as much as one *authoring Scripture* on the spot!
- g) He spoke as *the Authority* on God's will and commands.
- h) What caught these folks off guard and so shocked them (verse 22 says they were astonished and verse 27 says they were amazed) was that even though he was clearly *in this world* (he was standing in front of them as a flesh and blood man), despite that, he spoke and taught as one *outsider of and even above* the entire system of this world.
- i) Well, they were right. They were right to perceive such authority in Him.
 - i) What those men were seeing in the synagogue that day was two-fold:
 - (1) They were seeing and hearing the authority of Jesus that he has as *Creator God*, first of all.
 - (a) Col. 1:16 "For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through him and for him."
 - (b) Through him and for him! Meaning he is the one who created them, and he is the reason they were created. Everything exists for his glory!
 - (2) But there's more. The synagogue worshippers were hearing something else that day. They were also hearing the authority of Jesus as *King* over God's Kingdom. They were hearing the one whom God appointed to gloriously rule and reign over his Chosen People *speak and teach and command*.
- j) It's really no wonder that when he opens his mouth and words come through his lips, of course, would they be authority-less? Impossible. When he speaks, his words must bear the weight of the universe and land as rock hammers shattering our stony hearts.
- k) So let's draw a conclusion from this: as the one who creates all and defines all (because everything finds its purpose in that little phrase "all things were created through and **for him.**") then as much as any teaching whatsoever contradicts Christ's teaching, *that teaching is authority-less*. This is how much authority Jesus has. The only people who have authority, the only truth-claim that has authority, is that which aligns with his.
- l) This is important for us today in many ways but I'm just going to finish this point with three. Three ways that this applies to our lives.

- i) **First of all**, every day, we are receiving instruction and teaching. And don't just think about instruction in terms of Bible and Christianity, but we are being taught in a million different ways everyday about all of life. Television shows teach us about the meaning of life. They teach us about marriage. They teach us about how to raise our kids. They teach us about what is important and what our priorities should be. Lots of things teach us and instruct us. Just like these people had the scribes, we have countless competing voices *teaching* us what is true about the world and about ourselves! But calling out among all the other voices, Jesus' voice is different! Jesus' *word* is different because whatever he says to us, and whatever he says about us takes precedence.
- (1) So friends, think through this with me. What should we do when our feelings contradict Christ's Word? When our *passions* and *desires* and *cravings* are not aligning with Christ's Word?
 - (2) Well our passions and our desires are not infallible.
 - (3) In a society that teaches us the only right thing to do is to do what makes us happy and to do what we *feel* like *and truly deep down want to do*, we need to say, "Wait a second. If my feelings determine what is right for me. If my desires set my agenda, then that means I am my own ultimate Authority!" But that's a lie!! Or I should say, That's the essence of sin!
 - (4) We are self-deceived if we submit to our feelings and desires as our authority.
 - (5) Our passions, our wants, our likes, our desires, they too are under the authority of Jesus Christ!
 - (6) So if Jack *wants* to get out of this marriage, if Jack's *feelings* want out, but Christ says to stay in, who's the authority?
 - (7) If Joe's *desire* is to be out with his buddies deer hunting every spare minute, but Christ says that he needs to be a husband, a father, and a member of the local body of Christ, then *who's the authority?*
 - (8) If Jane's *passion* is telling her, "This coworker is a jerk, a bad employee, and they deserve my contempt." And Christ says to bear with the coworker, to speak only that which is useful for building up that coworker, and to forgive as Christ has forgiven us. Jane has to answer: who's her authority?
 - (9) Our sin always comes down to that. When we *sin*, we have rejected the authority of Christ!
- ii) **Second, this is important for us in terms of how we feel about ourselves and how we assess our lives and our purpose.**
- (1) So much of our depression in life, so much of our doubt and dullness and numbness in life comes from us listening to ourselves instead of listening to Christ.
 - (2) We are not our authority, Christ is! So our interpretation of our purpose, our assessment of our life, our inability to make sense of things or find meaning, well, how does that trump what Christ has said *about* us? Who is our authority?
 - (3) I *know* that there are Christians here who drove to church this morning with the impression: my life is joy-less. My life is purposeless.
 - (a) Do not entertain those thoughts! Who is your authority? Christ says, about you Christian, that his Father has adopted you by grace, that he is making you into a sibling of Jesus, that he is being glorified through you, that he is building his eternal Kingdom in you and through you! He says that you have joy and satisfaction in Christ.

- (b) When we feel like and think we don't have those things, we are listening to the wrong authority.
- (4) So counsel and preach to yourself the authority of the word of our Creator, of our Eternal King, of our Brother by adoption, Jesus.
- iii) **And third, we need this truth about Christ's ability to teach us with absolute authority** because today, so many are wandering aimlessly through life like they are lost at sea in a little raft. So many are on this quest of trying to figure out, where is truth, what is truth, what matters, is there meaning, is there purpose.
 - (1) Rejoice, because we are not aimlessly adrift at sea, we are not lost in a world of many voices wondering who is right, where is truth, what is our authority. We are not lost in groping around trying to define ourselves, identify ourselves, and find our purpose.
 - (2) We're not because though we rebelled against God, He has graciously brought us back under his Glorious Authority in Jesus, and his voice sounds out above all the rest defining truth for us, defining purpose and reality. And we have ears to hear! We hear him speaking so clearly in His Word! What a joy to know *exactly* where our real authority is: in Christ.

POINTS TWO AND THREE WILL BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

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