

## **“Jesus Came to Set You Free”**

**Mark 1:21-28**

by Michael R. Jones

When I was four years old, I got locked in the bathroom during a power outage. I wasn't afraid at first because I didn't realize that I was locked in. After I realized it, I was terrified. Imagine being trapped in your own body. A man in our text was trapped by the forces of darkness and set free by the power of Jesus. You don't have to live as a prisoner, trapped in the bondage of sin, because Jesus came to set you free.

Mark wants us to know that Jesus' power is greater than human and spiritual powers so he records this story which is really two events that happened at the same time and the same place. His authority over human powers is detailed in the first portion where Jesus preaches in the synagogue. Mark does not tell us what Jesus preached in the synagogue because the emphasis here is not on his preaching, but his power and authority. The scribes were the only standard the Jews had to use as a measure or gauge for his teaching. Even though the Romans were in power and had a puppet king over them, the scribes taught them what God demanded. Or rather, they taught them what certain men had to say about what God commanded. Their authority was a derived authority: derived not only from the Torah, but also from the rabbis that preceded them. Jesus, on the other hand, spoke with an authority that surpassed even the scribes because he taught a new teaching, presumably teaching that was evident had come from God himself.

This authority is put to the test right out of the gate. Having demonstrated authority over the temporal, human powers of his day, Jesus is confronted by spiritual powers. In presenting this exorcism and the following ones, Mark portrays the conflict between the kingdom of God and the forces of the dominion of Satan. In the coming of Jesus, the kingdom of God is intruding upon this world which had been Satan's dominion. If Jesus truly is the Son of God, and if his authority is real, heavenly authority, then he must “bind the strongman” (3:27). This Jesus does. He is anointed with the Holy Spirit and he puts to flight the unclean spirits that hold men captive.

These spirits recognize Jesus and call him by name and by title. It is interesting to note that the names used by the sick whom Jesus heals emphasize his relation to humanity: “Lord” (7:8), “Teacher” (9:17), “Son of David” (10:47-48), and “Master” (10:51). Every title that the demons use, however, in Mark in some way emphasizes his divine personhood and authority: “the Holy one of God” (1:24), “the Son of God” (3:11), “the Son of the Most High God” (5:7). Though the people don't understand yet who Jesus is, and won't for some time, the demonic powers affirm what the voice of the Father said from heaven at Jesus' baptism.

And they know what Jesus' coming means. Jesus is not here to drive out one demon or one band of demons; he is here to push down the entire power structure of Satan's kingdom. 1 John 3:8b, *“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”* Likewise, Jesus is not here to heal one person or to set one sinner free, but to set free a whole host of captives as he establishes his new kingdom and builds a new people. He has overthrown the power of man's wisdom, even those who use the Scriptures to wield power, and has surpassed the power of human strength by overthrowing the power of the one who held sway over the world with demonic force. *Jesus and Jesus alone has the authority to set one free.*

Please understand that exorcism was not infrequent in the ancient world. The Jews were renowned during this time for being exorcists. Stories are told of Jewish exorcists making

demons perform tricks and other crazy things before exorcising them. Jesus does not perform any hocus-pocus or use any magic words or perform any ticks, he simply speaks, and the demon must obey. He demonstrates tangible, visible evidence of his power and authority and, in so doing, paints a picture of his ultimate triumph over the enemies of his people in the Day of Judgment.

But what of the man who was possessed? He apparently got up that morning ate his breakfast, shined his shoes, brushed his teeth, and went to church. Had Jesus not been present, the demon apparently would have been content to hear what the scribes said and go on about their business. But the presence and teaching of Jesus stirred up the devil inside him. The unclean spirit saw the in-breaking of the kingdom and he feared. The people feared along with him. You'd be crazy not to fear when confronted with the power of Jesus the Holy One of God.

I minister to people who are can't get by without liquor, without pornography, or obscene amounts of money. They trust in and hope in those things to bring them satisfaction. These people are in bondage. Remember that Jesus came to find you in your bondage and to set you free. You do not have in your power the ability or authority to set yourself free from sin. You may fight one sin and another one will rise because it is in your very nature: you are in bondage trapped in your own nature. Jesus will set you free and also remove you from the righteous judgment of God that we each deserve for our sin. There is no person too sinful, no power too great, no sin too heinous, but Jesus can break the bonds of it and set you free.

I also minister to professing Christians but who are still in bondage. I minister to people who serve God because they think God works tit-for-tat and if they serve him he will give them their champagne wishes and caviar dreams. I minister to people who think they are safe because they were baptized a certain way or in a certain church or because they have held this title or given this offering. They too are in bondage. Maybe you, too, are fighting with something like this. Remember that Jesus came to find you in your bondage and to set you free. You strive and struggle and do not know that Jesus has already won the battle. You fight in your own power what you do not have the power to defeat, but Jesus has all power and all authority and he has already defeated your greatest enemies: the world, the flesh and the devil. Just as you believed the gospel by faith for salvation, you must live in the gospel and trust Christ by faith now for your deliverance from the sin that holds you in bondage. Jesus has set you free, he has delivered you from bondage and now he lays claim to your whole person. This word translated "authority" is used nine times in Mark's gospel, six times to refer to Jesus' authority and three times to refer to the authority he confers on his disciples. Go forth in his power, free to serve him with everything in you because you are no longer in bondage because Jesus has set you free.