

## Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: March 1, 2009

### A New Teaching With Authority

by Dan Trygg

“And they went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and *began to teach*.<sup>22</sup> And they were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes.<sup>23</sup> And just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,<sup>24</sup> saying, ‘What do we have to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are-- the Holy One of God!’<sup>25</sup> And Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be quiet, and come out of him!’<sup>26</sup> And throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice, and came out of him.<sup>27</sup> And they were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, ‘What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.’”

Mark 1:21-27

**It is interesting to see what the different synoptic gospel writers choose to present to their readers as they tell the story of Jesus’ ministry. We have a common fixed reference point**, occurring right after the verses for today’s study, which is in all three of these gospels. It is the account of Jesus healing Peter’s mother-in-law (Mk. 1:29-31; Matt. 8:14,15; Lk. 4:38,39). **This allows us to compare the chronology of the events in each gospel, and get a more complete understanding of what happened.** It also helps us to understand the nature of the gospel writings, how they were edited by the writers to include those events that would be of interest or importance for their target audiences. They were not meant to be complete histories. The writers selected those events and teachings that were significant to their purpose, and did not mention other events which they did not consider pertinent. Add to this obvious reality the tidbit that John shared, namely, that if all the things Jesus did were recounted in detail, the *world* could not contain the books that would be written (Jn. 21:25). If this is true, then He must have been incredibly busy, as we shall see. **The gospels offer us only the smallest sliver of what Jesus actually did and said. They are only representative selections of His life, each one crafted to address the needs and interests of different audiences.**

Thus, by this same juncture in Mark, Matthew (4:23-8:13) tells us that Jesus had an extensive ministry, teaching in synagogues throughout Galilee, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of heaven, healing every kind of disease and sickness among the people, and casting out demons. Great multitudes were following Him. Moreover, **Matthew includes a rather extensive overview of Jesus’ teaching to His disciples regarding what it means to embrace the dominion of the King of heaven.** This Kingdom goes way past the status quo of the Judaism of Jesus’ day. God calls His people to *radical obedience*. He is recruiting those who are *desperately hungry* and *committed* to Him, and calls them to a righteousness far beyond that of the religious notables of their day. He is looking for those who are *devoted with passion*, who seek and serve God *from the heart*, without any regard to the opinion of others. He is looking for people *willing to give up their rights and comforts* in order to show grace to *both* the just and unjust, ...ones who will trust themselves to God and His provision as their hope. He warned them against judging others, and emphasized *treating others as you would like to be treated*. **The way of the Kingdom is narrow. God is looking for definite change and the good fruit that comes from knowing Him and obeying His teachings.** Matthew then recounts the healing of a leper, showing His compassion for the unclean and despised. He is careful to report that Jesus sent him to a priest to obtain the proper examination *to fulfill the Law*. His next encounter is a Gentile centurion from Capernaum, who asked Him to heal his servant. Even though Jesus was willing to come, the man recognized Jesus’ authority to simply utter the command, and it would be done, even from a distance. Jesus marveled at the man’s faith, commenting that **in the Kingdom of heaven there will be many people from other nations who would be included among the righteous**, but many of Jewish background would be rejected for their lack of faith and relationship with God.

Luke, on the other hand, takes an entirely different tack (4:14-30). He mentions that Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, was teaching in their synagogues, and was being praised by all. Then **Luke recounts Jesus’ visit to His hometown, Nazareth. There He declared the purpose of His ministry. The Spirit was upon Him to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom to captives, and recovery of sight**

to the blind, to liberate the broken and proclaim the time of God's favor. While teaching, however, **He could see that they were skeptical of Him**, remembering Him as "Joseph's son". They wanted Him to prove Himself by doing there the miracles He had been doing at Capernaum (not recorded). He commented that *no prophet is welcome in his hometown*. He reminded them how **in the past God had disregarded the needy and sick in faithless Israel, but miraculously helped people of other nations who believed and obeyed Him**. This so enraged the crowd that they intended to kill Jesus by throwing Him down a cliff, but He walked through their midst. Then he records the same encounter as our study today.

Jesus was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum. The teaching itself amazed the congregation, because **He was teaching them as one having authority, not in the manner the scribes and Pharisees typically instructed**. If the sermon on the mount (Matt. 5-7) is representative of His teaching, it is quite clear why they felt that way. **Scribes would give an interpretation of a passage, citing the opinion of other rabbi's**, being very careful to stay within the traditional, accepted understandings of the passage in question. **Jesus, by contrast, did not base His teaching at all on what other people thought. He taught and plainly explained the meaning of the scriptures with a clarity and boldness that impressed people**. He not only understood the scriptures clearly, **He was also not afraid to confront the excesses of the current religious institutions**. He cut right through the foolish legalism and hypocrisy with clear and solid Biblical teaching. **What He said rang true to those who had an ear to hear the things of God**. It was not dry and academic like that of their scribes. It challenged and stirred them, and quickened their spirits. **They knew He was speaking from God**. This was *confirmed* by His actions and the miracles He was performing (Jn. 3:2).

Just then, **in the synagogue meeting there was a man with an unclean spirit**. He was there right among the rest of those gathered to worship God. **The spirit in the man disrupted the meeting** by blurting out, "What to us and to you, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are – The Holy One of God!" **The term "unclean spirit" is Mark's preferable term for "demon"**. (That they are the same thing is demonstrated by Luke's account of this encounter . Many modern translations of Luke 4:33 say that the man was "*possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon*". That is a poor translation. The Greek says that he was a man "*having a spirit of an unclean demon*".) This is the first time in Mark's gospel that we find out that Jesus was from Nazareth. Undoubtedly, this was an attempt to put Jesus down in the eyes of the people, since Nazareth had a bad reputation (Remember when Phillip told Nathanael about Jesus, he scoffed, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"). The demon also cried out, however, "I know who you are, the Holy One of God." **The demon knew, and confessed, who Jesus was, but it was empty knowledge, not a statement of faith or submission**. Thus, James writes that "...even the demons believe, ...and shudder!" (Jas. 2:19). **This man, who had the unclean spirit was in the midst of the believers, and could even confess his faith in God, but something was amiss. Inside his mind was a spirit who filled his thoughts with confusion and uncleanness**. At first blush, this confession might seem to be a positive development, but Jesus immediately stopped him from talking any more. He rebuked the demon, saying, "Be quiet and come out of him!" The Greek is actually is "be muzzled". The word is used for tying shut the mouths of animals. Here, the implication is to "be silenced". Jesus did not want the spirit to talk more about who He was, because He would be attracting enough attention and speculation by His own actions and words. He repeatedly tried to keep people (and demons) from drawing attention to Him, because He knew that His popularity and claims would eventually be the cause of His death. The apparent "helpful confession" could actually hasten His early demise, so **Jesus immediately put a stop to the man's talking. At the command to "come out from him" the demon cried out in a loud voice, convulsed the man** (a last act of rebellion and attempt to cause pain), **and left, without causing any serious harm**.

**The crowd was amazed! They marveled, because they had never seen or heard of a man commanding a demon to leave, and it did so**. Normally, people with demons were imprisoned, if dangerous, or just left to wander in their affliction. When exorcists did try to cast them out, they used a variety of methods, including casting spells, using incantations and various rituals. For Jesus to command them out was an unheard of strategy, one far superior than anything else they knew of. **No wonder they exclaimed, "A new teaching with authority!** He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him!"

**The crowds recognized the key issue: Jesus had authority over the demons**. The Greek word for "authority" means both legal right and power; freedom and ability to act; even jurisdiction and right to control

or rule. Jesus demonstrated His compelling authority over the unclean spirit in this case. In Luke 9:1, “He gave power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases” to the twelve apostles. In chapter 10, He appointed 72 others to go ahead of Him to preach the Kingdom of God. They return to say, “Even the demons are subject to us in Your name” (vs. 17). Jesus went on to say, “Behold, I *have given* you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall injure you.” In Matthew 28:18, He says, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, ...and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” From these passages, it is clear that **the legal right and dominion over the demonic realm is transferable** to whomever Jesus appoints. **The demons *must* be subject when a person is operating in the name and authority of Jesus. When that is the case, we, too, can cast out demons with a word.** The case of the seven sons of Sceva (Acts 19:13-16) serves as a warning against coming against evil spirits in a ritualistic way, even using His name. These men did not have a real relationship with Jesus, and therefore they did not have any true authority from Him. The demon overpowered them and left them wounded and naked. **Demons are real, but Jesus is greater.**