

"21 They *went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and began to teach. 22 They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. 23 Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, 24 saying, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are--the Holy One of God!" 25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" 26 Throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him. 27 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." 28 Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee.

Jesus continues with his public ministry on this Sabbath day by going to the Synagogue to teach.

In the OT, once a judge or a king had been anointed, proclaimed and given God's Spirit for the task, he had to go out and prove his calling. This is the purpose of the following events as Mark has written them. Mark has said that Jesus was the Messiah and God's Son, now he shows it. Jesus had already conquered the enemy in the wilderness; now he conquers him in the ordinary everyday life of Galilee.

The account of the fishermen demonstrates the claims Jesus' authority makes on his followers' lives, but the verses that follow it demonstrate his authority over evil spirits (cf. 1:12-13). The only recorded exorcist in the Old Testament was David (1 Sam 16:23). Although wandering demons appear frequently in Jewish literature, the only demons that appear in the Gospels (except Satan - Mk 1:13) are in people they possess (or, as a second choice, in pigs- 5:12). The place that Jesus encounters his first demon may shock Mark's readers: it is in a religious institution.

1:21. Most synagogues were community centers and places of prayer and study. When visiting teachers were present, synagogue leaders would invite them to lecture, especially on the sabbath. Archaeologists have found the site of Capernaum's synagogue, which was built from basalt blocks. Although later synagogues were more elaborate, most people in this first-century Galilean synagogue probably sat on mats on the floor.

1:22. Synagogue services were conducted by priests or by what we would call "lay leaders," but those most skilled in the Scriptures undoubtedly contributed their share

when the Old Testament was to be expounded. Many local teachers were village scribes who also wrote down and interpreted legal documents for their village; some of them taught children the Bible. Most teachers would try to expound the law (normally from their Scripture reading) by explaining the proper way to translate and apply it or by appealing to their traditions. Jesus' teaching went quite a bit further than this kind of exposition.

In this synagogue at Capernaum, people were amazed at the confidence with which Jesus spoke; he was so different from their usual teachers and his words had the sound of authority. Mark often notes that people were amazed at what Jesus said or did, but he also notes, as here, that it did not necessarily lead to faith in him. We might say that it remained in their heads and did not reach their hearts. It was not only the worshippers in the synagogue who realized the authority of Jesus; so did a man who was under the power of an evil spirit. This man was completely under the power of the enemy.

1:23-24. Demons (also sometimes called "unclean spirits,") were often associated with magic, and magicians tried to subdue other spiritual forces by invoking their names. If the demon here is trying to subdue Jesus in this way ("I know who you are" was used to subdue spiritual powers in magical texts), as some scholars have suggested, this ploy does not work. Ancients often recognized that demons had access to supernatural knowledge; it is not surprising that these demons perceive Jesus' true identity, which the people there still do not recognize. "Holy One" was normally a title of God but "Holy One of God" here probably means something like "God's right-hand agent" as in the Messiah; in Jewish literature, demons recognized their inability to harm those who walked close to God.

1:25-27. Demons were rebuked and subdued with orders like "Be silent" (Testament of Solomon - Probably a non-Christian Jewish work from about the third century A.D., possibly from Asia Minor; its exorcist rites reflect thorough familiarity with magical texts.); rebukes in the New Testament and other ancient literature never involved a

formal statement like “I rebuke you.” Exiting demons usually caused a commotion to make clear that they were leaving, regardless of the person who was casting them out.

Although exorcists—people who tried to chase demons out of other people—also occasionally used phrases like “Come out of so-and-so!” they used the phrases as parts of elaborate magical incantations. They had two main methods of expelling demons: (1) revolting or scaring the demon out (e.g., by putting a smelly root up the possessed person’s nose in the hope that the demon would not be able to stand it); (2) invoking the name of a higher spirit to get rid of the lower one. The people are thus amazed that Jesus can be effective by simply ordering the demons to leave. Jewish tradition praised teachers who could draw special insights from the law and sometimes attributed miracle -working powers to popular teachers; but Jesus seems to earn a category by himself (“new teaching”).

It has been well said that there are two equally great dangers when thinking about the enemy. The first is to ignore him, or to try and explain him away scientifically. The second is to concentrate on him in an unhealthy way, instead of concentrating on Christ, and to concentrate on evil spirits, rather than on the Holy Spirit. People in the west have tended towards the first of these dangers, but it may be that experience of world wars and the breakdown of society is forcing psychologists to look more deeply for the causes of evil. Concentration on evil spirits has traditionally been the danger of the Third World. Neither extreme is biblical, and we must try to keep a balance between the two

We may try to explain away the references in the Bible to those under the power of the enemy by saying that that was how people in an unscientific age spoke and thought of illnesses, bodily or so called mental illness. Those who work in non-Christian or post-Christian lands, however, know well that there is such a thing as demon-possession. In the NT a clear distinction is made between demon-possession and ordinary sickness, or even madness. Usually the Bible restricts ‘demon-possession’ to cases where there is some inner resistance to God through whom healing could

come. We must be very careful not to use the term too widely or lightly, but equally we must be careful not to reject it altogether.

Here at the beginning of Mark's gospel Jesus is shown to be engaged in a conflict with the enemy which will continue throughout his ministry. The Bible makes it clear that until Christ sets us free we are all under the power of the enemy to a greater or lesser degree just as all Christians are to a greater or lesser degree under the control of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes there are those (as third-world Christians at least will well know) who are so totally given over to the enemy that they can be described as 'possessed'. The other side of this is being 'filled' with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). The man in the synagogue at Capernaum was completely controlled by an evil spirit, who recognized at once the claim to authority in Jesus' teaching and so reacted violently. Notice that in the Bible, driving out evil spirits is not a magical rite, needing the use of spells and names (as in other religions) but the bringing of the good news of Jesus to the person concerned. That is what is meant by driving out demons 'in the name of Jesus' - not merely a mechanical repetition of the name itself. That is why 'exorcism' is not a good word to use as it brings up the idea of a 'spell'. The only sort of 'exorcism' that is lasting is the replacement of the enemy by Jesus as the center of our lives. Anything less will only lead to worse troubles (Mt. 12:45).

**"25 And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand."
Matthew 12:25, NAS95.**

Let me read you an example of how sadly absurd this can become.

Cast out demons: from web page. Dr. J. J. Domínguez, M.D.
<http://biblia.com/jesusbible/mark.htm>

If you are a Christian, you should cast out demons, or drive them out, as other bibles translate... it is the first of the five signs that will accompany any believer in Jesus, any Christian, "These signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will cast out demons".

"We already mentioned some kinds of demons who hurt people with Alcohol, Drugs, Tobacco, Smoking, Gluttony, Homosexuality, Masturbation, Fornication, Pornography, Adultery, Lies, Stealing, Anger, Pride, Hate, Avarice, The Occult: Horoscope, Witches, Magic, Spiritism, Errors, Heresies..."

You and I should cast them out, and doing so, we can be of great help to many of our neighbors!... it is our glorious privilege and duty as a Christian!...

Again, the great problem is that most of us Christians do not do it!... when was the last time you drove out a demon?...

Lets do it!... in the name of Jesus A hint again: Jesus does not say that the demon will be cast out right away, or in a month, or in 10 years... and does not mention the way it will be done, by an instant miracle, or by the care or compassion of many... that's God's work!... let him do it the way he wants and whenever he wants...

The Book of Exodus is a model of deliverance, and it took 430 years of prayer of the Israelites to be delivered from the slavery of Egypt... may be the deliverance you do will take less than a month!

If you meet an alcoholic or a drug-addict or a homosexual, cast out his demon, in the name of Jesus!... that's the greatest help you can do to that person... you and I have the glorious honor and duty to do it as a Christian.

Next time you meet someone who claims to be a Christian, but denies that Jesus is God, don't argue with him, that's got to be a work of a demon, just cast out the demon... that's the problem of the Jehovah's Witnesses..."

Jesus saw demons for what they were, disrupters of human life. He did not give them any more importance than what was due them.

So many believers today have the wrong ideas about Satan and demons because their view of Christ is also tainted.

Christ's casting out of demons demonstrates his authority over them as created beings, and his compassion towards those who suffer because of them.

"24 saying, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are--the Holy One of God!" Mark 1:24, NAS95.

The outburst of the man in v 24 was in response to the preaching of the good news by Jesus in the synagogue that day. The enemy within him recognized Jesus at once as the Holy One of God (which was at least a Messianic title, if not a divine one). Such unwilling forced witness Jesus would not accept; it was not the witness of the Holy Spirit. So he rebuked and expelled the spirit (25). Even this exhibition of power only produced amazement among those who saw it, not followers.

This is critical to our understanding of Jesus ministry. Multitudes will know his healing and compassion in many ways and yet they will turn from him want to murder him and in the end will crucify him.

"27 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 1:27, NAS95.

The good news was new to them and to see the Good News in action was a sight to behold. This was not your typical Sabbath service. Yet today some want to make demon confrontation a weekly event as part of the church service.

1:28. Galilee's villages were close together, and close connections among them would allow the word to spread rapidly.

"29 And immediately after they came out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 Now Simon's mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and immediately they *spoke to Jesus about her. 31 And He came to her and raised her up, taking her by the hand, and the fever left her, and she waited on them. 32 When evening came, after the sun had set, they began bringing to Him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed. 33 And the whole city had gathered at the door. 34 And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who He was." Mark 1:29-34, NAS95.

A newly married couple normally lived with the husband's family until they made enough money to move out on their own. Many parents died while their children were young adults, so it is possible that Simon and Andrew took over their parents' home. Simon's father-in-law had probably passed away, and Simon and his wife had taken her widowed mother into their home. Caring for one's extended family was more common then than it is today.

Mark has shown Jesus expelling demons as a sign of the kingdom of God, now he shows him healing the sick. Simon Peter's mother-in-law was healed of a fever that very Sabbath evening, in her own home (are these details that we owe to Peter?). Next, after sunset (i.e. it was no longer the Sabbath and 'work' like healing the sick was allowed) it seemed as if all Capernaum gathered at the door, bringing both sick and demon-possessed. Mark makes a distinction between the two groups, but Jesus healed them both. When Mark says many were healed, he does not mean that some were left unhealed but is simply referring to the numbers involved. Again, Jesus refused to accept the witness of demons, though he drove them out.

Nor as we will see will he accept the witness of some men, because it would at the

time, only cause a greater misunderstanding of who he was.

"35 In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there. 36 Simon and his companions searched for Him; 37 they found Him, and *said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You." 38 He *said to them, "Let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for." 39 And He went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out the demons. 40 And a leper *came to Jesus, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." 41 Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and *said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." 42 Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. 43 And He sternly warned him and immediately sent him away, 44 and He *said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." 45 But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere." Mark 1:35-45, NAS95.

Jesus, now a famous healer and expeller of demons, might have been expected to have taken advantage of this. We face the same pressures to choose the way of this world in our 'healing campaigns' or 'miracle rallies' today.

Here we see Jesus slipping away quietly to a lonely place to pray (35). Simon and the others seemed to think that he was making a mistake and losing the great opportunity the recent publicity had brought. This was not the last time that Simon's thoughts would be human thoughts, not God's (8:33). Jesus refused to be sought out as a mere miracle-worker; he wanted to be recognized as a savior. The way to achieve this was to preach the good news, and Jesus committed himself to doing that in the nearby villages. He therefore took the disciples on a tour of the synagogues of thickly-populated Galilee, preaching the word, driving out demons and healing the sick. The driving out of demons is fundamental for it affects the soul, Christians cannot be demon possessed, whereas bodily healing can only prolong earthly life for a while.

The word used here for leprosy covered many kinds of skin diseases as well as leprosy itself. They all cut off the sufferer from any contact with other people, since lepers were considered ceremonially unclean. In fact, the attitude to leprosy then was almost exactly that to AIDS today, a mixture of fear and disgust. Leprosy was often seen as God's punishment for sin, so although this man did not doubt Jesus' power to

heal, he doubted his willingness. He need not have doubted because (as often stated in Mark) Jesus was filled with compassion for him and touched and healed him. The effect on the man of Jesus touching him must have been tremendous. Not only did Jesus risk infection, he deliberately became religiously 'unclean' so that the man might become clean. Did Mark intend this to be a picture of what Jesus would do for all of us on the cross?

Here was another wonderful chance for more publicity, which Jesus refused to take. Jesus warned the man in the strongest terms to do two things. The first was to go and get a 'health certificate' from the priests, without which he could not re-enter society and join in worship of God. The second was to tell nobody about his healing. Like many of us, the man thought that he knew better than Jesus, so he told everybody about his healing. Did he perhaps enjoy the publicity for himself? The results of his disobedience was that Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places.

Because of the attitude of Jesus, it is no wonder that the Christian church pioneered a work of love and mercy and healing to lepers, when all others rejected them. But what of sufferers from AIDS today? Will Christians show the same love and compassion to them? What would Jesus do?