

# The Final Authority

Mark 1:21-45

## Introduction

Please turn to Mark, chapter 1. We are going to complete this chapter today, as we study through this gospel.

This week, I came to a point in my study in which I almost threw up my hands and said, “What’s the use? How in the world can we ever get all that God has given us in this presentation of the life of Christ?”

At one point, in fact, I got out my calculator, went to my bookshelves, and began to add up the number of pages that specifically deal with the life, the words, or the works of Jesus Christ. I finally stopped after about fifteen minutes, and already had a total of more than 23,000 pages!

This sermon will be about a twenty-five minute sermon, and there may be ten or twelve of them – and we are to study the life of Christ?! We could study this for the rest of our lives. It is an almost futile attempt. So, in my study, as I prepare what to present to you, I am asking the Lord that we might find the ingredient necessary for us to be edified, to be challenged, to be equipped as we live for Christ.

As I read, and reread, and reread the passage of scripture for today, one word seemed to come to my mind. It is a word that the gospel writer gives us twice. It is the word, “authority”. You should underline that word. We find it in:

- Mark 1:22 – ***“They were amazed at His . . . authority . . .”***
- Mark 1:27 – ***“They were all amazed . . . A new teaching with authority! . . .”***

I then began to relate every incident in this chapter to this thought. I came up with something that, I believe, can be challenging to us, and that is:

*Jesus Christ is the final authority.*

Let me give several illustrations of areas in which Jesus exercises His authority.

## Jesus’ Authority As a Teacher

First, Jesus is the authority as a teacher. Look at Mark 1:21,

***They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and began to teach.***

Now, understand that in this geographical area or region, there were probably 450 synagogues. According to the Law, they were to plant a synagogue for every ten families who were followers of God. So, ten families formed, in a sense, a synagogue, with a priest to oversee them, or, as he was called, a ruler or minister of the synagogue.

There were no sacrifices in the synagogue as it was designed to be a teaching tool in that society. The children were taught there or catechized, and the adults were taught as they worshiped on the sabbath day. The pulpit was basically open to anyone who would be available to teach. It was a layman’s institution.

So, if you came to the synagogue on the Sabbath and had been studying the Law and had something to give to the people, you would make that known and would then teach. That is why, when we study the life of Christ and the life of the apostle Paul, we find them constantly teaching in the synagogue. You did not

have to have a reservation, you just basically showed up and taught the adults who were present.

This provided a great opportunity to present the kingdom promise. The pulpits were open to Jesus Christ, and He took advantage of that.

So, we find Jesus in Capernaum, teaching in one of the synagogues. Notice verse 22.

***They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.***

Luke broadens this story, in chapter 4 of his gospel account. He tells us that Jesus Christ was preaching from Isaiah (Luke 4:17). Let us look at Isaiah 61, the text our Lord used on that sabbath day.

Now, in that day, the custom was for them to read from the Old Testament or the Hebrew scriptures. I wanted to be authentic today, so I pulled out my Hebrew Bible, dusted the thing off, and opened it. In about thirty seconds, however, I closed it and thought, "There is no need to be authentic – I'll just read from the translation we are given!"

The Lord stood up, was handed the scroll of Isaiah by the minister of the synagogue, and unrolled that prophecy. Of course, Hebrew is read toward the left, instead of to the right as we read English. He would unroll the scroll toward the left and select His text.

According to the custom, one to three verses of scripture would be read and then, someone would be standing who would interpret it. The language of that day was Greek, so the interpreter would translate the Hebrew text into Greek. I would imagine that since the Lord knew Hebrew and Greek, having been trained as a Jewish boy, He might have translated it Himself.

So, Jesus stood and read Isaiah 61:1. This is what it said, after He translated it,

***The spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and freedom to prisoners;***

Imagine that text! Jesus Christ was reading from the prophet Isaiah – and He was speaking of Himself! Before He had come, when they read it, they were speaking of One who was yet to come. But Jesus unrolled the scroll to Isaiah 61:1, and read about

Himself. He spoke it with authority, as Mark 1:22 tells us,

***They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority . . .***

### **Why was Jesus so authoritative**

Now, we need to take a moment to answer the question of why Jesus was so authoritative.

In that day, if you were a man and were going to speak in the synagogue, you would have two choices. One choice would be to speak a sermon, or something they called the "darsha," which was not a direct sermon. A "darsha" was spoken when the rabbi, or the learned one, would whisper some great theological truth into the ear of the man called the "amora". The "amora" would then, put that truth into popular language so the people could understand. It should not be surprising that this was the least popular kind of sermon in that day.

There was a second kind of sermon that was the most popular among the Jews. It was called the "maamar," and was an exposition of scripture. When the scribes or the laymen preached a "maamar," they always said, "It hath been said," and would then, quote other scribes. They would always go to some other tradition to give validity to their point.

Why was it that Jesus Christ spoke with authority? Why were they amazed? Because when Jesus Christ stood and preached, He did not quote a scribe, He quoted Himself; He did not refer to a tradition, He referred to His person.

Luke expands this by telling us that after Jesus read from Isaiah 61, He sat down, as was the custom, and preached a brief message. Luke 4:21 records that the message was,

***. . . Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.***

In other words, "That which I have just read to you is speaking of Me. I am He."

Jesus did not quote a scribe; He did not go to a tradition, He simply quoted Himself.

Have you noticed, as you read through the gospels, that the Lord is constantly saying, "You have heard it said . . ." or "But I say unto you . . ." or "Truly, truly I say unto you . . .". He is the final

authority. He does not need to quote some other man, for He is God/man.

So, they were amazed that He would assume the authority as a teacher and teach them, quoting no one but Himself.

### **Jesus' authority was delegated**

Now, before we go any further, let us dig a little deeper. The authority of Jesus Christ was delegated authority.

As I read this passage and saw the word "authority" used twice, I did what I usually do and went to the dictionary to look at the definition. The definition of authority is, "a delegated right or power".

Jesus Christ came to earth to do the will of His Father. By doing His Father's will, He had all of the authority of His Father delegated to Him as He lived on earth's plain as a man. In fact, Jesus Christ said,

***For I have come . . . not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. (John 6:38)***

Jesus had authority, but it was delegated authority.

Guess what Jesus has given to you and to me? In Matthew 28:18b-20, He tells us (paraphrased), "All authority have I given to you to fulfill the great commission."

How can you and I realize and experience this authority in our lives? As we yield, as Christ, to the will of the Father, He then delegates to us the necessary authority to live our lives in an effective way.

Let me illustrate this in the following way. There is a lady in our church who works as a school crossing guard. Every Monday through Friday, she puts on her uniform, goes to the her assigned school intersection, gets out in the middle of the road, and puts her hand up to the oncoming cars – and she is not paid that much! Why is it that when the drivers of oncoming cars see her standing there with her hand up, instead of easily just running over her, they stop? Because they see her uniform and they know that she has delegated authority. In fact, when she raises her hand, she has all of the authority of our county and of our state behind her. Because she has that authority, she has the power to stop the automobiles.

The same thing is true in your life and mine. Upon whose authority; upon whose power do we

present the kingdom program to this earth? What right do we have to stand as ambassadors of God? We have all the authority because we were delegated it by God. We represent Him. Although in our flesh, we are weak; we are puny; we are infantile, because God is behind us, we have power; we have authority. It is the same authority that astonished them that Jesus Christ came along and evidenced.

The question is, "How effective can I be in my life? How effective can I be as a Christian? How effective can I be as a father; as a husband?"

In myself, I have absolutely zero effectiveness. But as I yield to the authority of God, He then delegates authority to me that I might be all that I should be. That is power. That is authority.

## **Jesus' Authority Over the Underworld**

Now, the realm through which we use our authority is the underworld. That is, in fact, the secret world we battle. The battle is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities (Ephesians 6:12). The cause that we fight is a spiritual cause, right? It is interesting that the next thing that happens with Jesus in our text, is the exercising of His authority against the demons.

Look at Mark 1:23-25.

***Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, 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!" And Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!"***

Belief of demons, in that day, was not an unheard of thing. In fact, it was very common. I read recently of ancient cemeteries that archaeologists have discovered with, of course, the remains of those who died centuries ago. Upon excavation of these remains, they found a very interesting thing – the skulls of many of the people had a tiny hole bored into them. Through study, they discovered that the hole was bored into the skull while the person was alive – the person was trepanned.

The belief, even centuries ago, was that boring a hole into the person's skull would allow the evil demon to get out; to escape. So, they underwent this very serious operation. They would often wear the

fragment of bone on some kind of necklace or chain around their neck as a good luck symbol.

Belief in the underworld; belief in demons goes way back. Why? Because demons go all the way back to the fall of Satan.

So, when Jesus Christ exercises His authority, one of the first arenas in which He must exercise it is in the realm of the underworld; in authority over the demons.

By the third century, the church had what they called “the order of exorcists”. “Exorcist” is a very familiar word to us today, is it not? They believed so strongly in demons that they had the order of exorcists. Men in this order, by incantation; by ritual; by formula would drive demons from the bodies of people.

Notice, however, what Jesus Christ does. There was no incantation; there was no formula; there was no ritual or symbol. He simply says, in Mark 1:25, which is one Greek word that is translated as an entire sentence in our Bible,

**. . . Be quiet, and come out of him!**

This is literally, a compound word that means, “be muzzled and get out”. There is no ritual in that.

In Christ’s day, in fact, they had the *Talmud*, which we have previously discussed, from which the scribes were shown how to exorcise demons. They were instructed to take a knife made of iron, tie it to a thorn bush by a braid of hair from the person who was supposedly possessed, and to do that three days in a row while saying some kind of formula. Then, on the third day, they were to go back and say some special formula that would drive the demon from the person’s body.

Now that existed in the time of Christ. However, Christ does not come along and say, “Hey, who has the knife? Let’s cut a piece of hair off the person’s head.”

No. Jesus says simply, “Be muzzled and get out.”

Notice what happens, in Mark 1:26-27.

***Throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him. 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.”***

Not surprisingly then, we read in Mark 1:28,

***Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee.***

Now, before we go on to the next incident whereby Jesus Christ exercises His authority, I must stop. Note Mark 1:23 again.

***Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; . . .***

Is it not interesting to you, as you read this passage, that there was a man in the synagogue who was demon possessed? He had remained undetected until the person of Christ arrived on the scene. He was worshiping; he was reading; he was hearing the scriptures. We do not know, but he might have even been preaching the message.

This lead me to believe that it is possible to sit in church and belong to Satan; it is possible to be a member of a church and not a member of the kingdom of God. Someone could come to church on Sunday morning and sing, “When the roll is called up yonder, I’ll be there,” and yet, have a reservation waiting in hell.

## **Jesus’ Authority Over Sickness**

Notice the next incident in which Jesus Christ exercised His authority. Look at Mark 1:29-30. Note Mark’s use of the word “immediately” again. Mark is always in a hurry.

***And immediately after they came out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon [Peter] and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever . . .***

Simon Peter’s mother-in-law is sick. Luke, the doctor, adds a perceptive statement, saying that she is sick with a high fever (Luke 4:38). He knew the symptoms and that it could be fatal.

Jesus Christ is about to exercise His authority, not only as a teacher, not only over the underworld, but now, over sickness.

You may remember that this is one of the first days of Jesus’ ministry. He will give us two illustrations in which He heals. First, He will heal Simon’s mother-in-law. Secondly, later, He will heal a leper.

We are told in Mark 1:30-31,

***Now Simon’s mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and immediately they spoke to Jesus about her. And He came to her and***

***raised her up, taking her by the hand, and the fever left her, and she waited on them.***

I am not going to belabor this passage of scripture, but I want to give two simple thoughts.

First, Simon's mother-in-law was healed of the fever and rose up, evidently with all the strength of a person who is healthy, and served them. What a picture this is! She was in the clutches of death, and Jesus Christ gives her *new life*. She then, turns right around and serves Him.

Should that not be seen in our lives as well? We are held in the clutches of sin in the arms of Satan. We are children of Satan apart from Christ (John 8:44), and Jesus gives us *life*! We should then, turn that life into service for the person of Jesus Christ and His kingdom program.

One more thought, secondly, before we go on, and it is, I think, a powerful one about the ministry of Jesus Christ. I love this. Jesus Christ did not need an audience to exercise His power; He did not need a crowd.

Jesus' healing could be in the cottage with just a few people present or it could be outside with thousands of people watching. The size of the crowd was incidental to Jesus Christ. He fulfilled this commission by God, whether it was in front of many or few.

Do we serve Jesus Christ that way? Do we serve Him with the need of everyone watching and everyone saying, "Oh, you're doing great, keep going," or can we serve Him when no one else seems to notice? What a test that is for us. It is a test that Jesus Christ passed.

Jesus, secondly, if you will skip to Mark 1:40-41, heals a leper.

***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." Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed."***

The lives of lepers, ladies and gentlemen, were tragic lives. I have a book in my library, called, *Where Is God When It Hurts?* Philip Yancey writes this fascinating book that you should buy and read sometime. He quotes Dr. Paul Brand, who spent his life working in leper colonies.

We often think of leprosy as being a very contagious disease and yet, it is not. There are many kinds of leprosy – at least three that I have found in my studies. The one that this man had was probably in the advanced stage.

We often read in the Bible, of a leper being white. Do you remember that Miriam, when she rebelled against Moses, was turned white as snow?

This type of leprosy began as small scales on the flesh. The scales would quickly grow, until the person would be covered with white scales. As a result, he or she would be considered white as snow. This leprosy was so advanced that the person was soon ostracized from society.

In the middle ages, in fact, the church would have a burial service for one with leprosy. The priest would walk into the sanctuary, holding a crucifix and wearing a stole. Behind him, the leper would come, dressed in black. He would follow the priest up to the altar and the priest would read the burial rights over him. He was living and yet, he was considered dead. So, they would cut a little slat into the wall of the church, called the "leper's squint". The lepers would peer in from outside, and worship from a distance.

Those in New Testament times were no less compassionate. In fact, lepers had to wear a mask, at least to the top of their nose. They also had to say, "Unclean. Unclean." as they walked about. To touch a leper meant defilement. If the leper was married, they were automatically divorced when the priest said that they indeed, had leprosy. They could not worship, as the believers in God could worship. They were ostracized and were lonely people. There was no hope.

We find this leper coming to Jesus Christ. The scribes said that this leper had upon him the finger of God; of judgment.

Notice what happens, in Mark 1:41-42. He indeed does have the finger of God upon him.

***Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.***

He had an incurable disease, and yet, he is made whole.

Now, a fascinating thing happens. Let us start with Mark 1:44.

*and He [Jesus] 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.”*

In other words, if a leper was somehow cleansed, he brought two birds to the priest. They would kill one bird and would shed his blood in a little basin. They would take the other bird, dip him in the blood of the deceased bird, and would let him go free. That was the picture that the leper had been cleansed and made sacrifice.

Jesus Christ said, “Go to the priest and fulfill what Moses commanded.” Understand that they are still under Mosaic Law until the time of Christ’s death.

In Mark 1:45, we are told,

*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 . . .*

Jesus said, “Look, I’m not ready to openly declare that I’m the Messiah. I’m not ready to openly declare all that I’ve come to do. If you go out and spread it abroad, the masses are going to come to Me and all the leper colonies will empty. It will hinder Me from going into the synagogue.”

So Jesus asked the man not to say anything, but to go to the priest. But the man hit the streets shouting. It says he, “spread the news around”.

This is a picture to us of challenge. This is a man who was told to keep quiet, and he spreads the news around. You and I have been commanded to spread the news around, and we keep quiet.

I wonder, if we had had leprosy or had been sick with a serious fever or had been afflicted in some way that Jesus Christ touched and healed, could you keep us quiet? But yet, we forget that we have been touched by the grace of God. Can we keep quiet? Can we do anything less than spread around the news that Jesus Christ has made a difference; that He has given us life and something to live for?

## **The Source of Jesus’ Authority**

Now, with the thought of authority being the theme throughout the remainder of this passage, I want to dig a little deeper and go back to Mark 1:35-39. Let me give three principles as to the source of Jesus Christ’s authority and the source of the

authority of Jesus Christ for you and for me – they are the same.

1. First, Jesus Christ was diligent with His devotion.

Look at Mark 1:35.

*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.*

Now, let us back up in time for a moment. Jesus must have gone to bed at 10 o’clock at night, or perhaps at 9 o’clock, for Him to get up before the sun was up and pray. Understand that the day before was probably the busiest day in the recorded life of Jesus Christ.

The day before He arose so early, the whole town had been at Peter’s door and Jesus Christ had healed time and time and time again. We are only given two instances in this passage. He had preached in the synagogue, and might have preached in several on that sabbath day. Then, as soon as three stars appeared in the sky, which was the way the Law said the sabbath had ended, all of the people of the town brought the sick to Him.

Jesus must have been tired; worn out as a man. Yet, He rises early the next morning to go and pray. This man was diligent in His devotion. That was the source of His authority.

2. Secondly, Jesus was consistent with His priority.

Look at Mark 1:36.

*Simon and his companions searched for Him;*

The word “searched” could be translated, “they tracked Him down”.

“Hey, where did Jesus go? We’ve got all these people here looking for Him.”

Jesus is out praying, but Simon and the rest come and track Him down. Look at Mark 1:37.

*they found Him, and said to Him, “Everyone is looking for You.”*

They were probably out of breath and excited, saying, “What are You doing alone here praying? We’ve got the whole town looking for You.”

Continue to Mark 1:38.

*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."*

You might say, "Now wait a second! Isn't that cruel? Isn't that insensitive of Jesus Christ to have the ability to heal and yet, leave sick people in this town? Isn't it insensitive and cruel of Him to walk away from a city where there are people begging to see Him?"

Why could He do this? Because, ladies and gentlemen, He did not come to planet earth to heal. He came and healed so that He might prove that He was the Son of God. As the apostle writes,

*. . . Jesus . . . [was] attested to you . . . with miracles and wonders and signs . . . (Acts 2:22)*

Jesus' priority was in presenting the kingdom to the world. He was preaching the gospel of the kingdom. So, healing was not the priority.

Jesus Christ could have opened a shop, hung out a shingle, and charged a few denarii of everyone who was sick. All He needed to do was just touch them. There would have been no need for a pharmacy in Capernaum. Wouldn't that be fantastic? Why didn't He do it?

Jesus did not come to earth to heal. He had His priorities in line. He says, basically, in Mark 1:38, "I came to preach. That's why I came into the world. Yes, all men seek Me, but all men have not heard Me. There are people in this town . . . and people in that town . . . and people in the town over there . . . who have not heard. Yes, I'll heal a few to prove I am supernatural in origin, but I will preach to them, 'Come ye after Me and join My kingdom program.'"

That was Jesus' mission.

Do you know what one of the greatest problems, ladies and gentlemen, is, in your life and in my life? It is the inability to determine priorities. I submit that that is one of the battlegrounds that we must face. With all of the different hats that we have to wear, what is the priority?

A man recently told me that a survey was given and many career men were asked the question, "What is important to you?"

They all kind of settled back and thought, perhaps scratched their chins, and said, "Well, let's see – my job and my wife and my kids."

"My job, my wife, my kids."

What comes first in your life?

Now, of course, they did not know the Lord, so God could not even be in the picture. But if you know God through Jesus Christ, *He* is first – then your wife, if you are married, and then your children, if you have children – and *then* your job, which is a means to an end. The job is merely putting the bread on the table and the clothing on your back that you might, like Jesus Christ, preach the gospel of the kingdom.

Where are your priorities today?

3. Thirdly, Jesus was urgent with His mission.

He was diligent with His devotion – that was His prayer life. He was consistent with His priorities – that was the life of His priority. And, He was urgent with His mission – that was His public life.

Jesus Christ lived with a sense of urgency. I cannot imagine what went through His mind as He saw all of the people as He ministered to them. However, I was given a little more light, this past week, as I studied.

I discovered that synagogues built in that day, by Law, were supposed to face west. So, those who were seated, faced west, and those who spoke, faced east, or toward the city of Jerusalem.

Every time Jesus Christ stood up and spoke, He faced Jerusalem. That was the city where He would die; that was the city where He would be crucified. Every time Jesus got up to speak, He could look out that open doorway and see the city where He would die for men. Yet, He was never distracted. Jesus was urgent in His mission.

## **Conclusion – Jesus' Authority For Us**

The authority of Jesus Christ has been seen as a teacher, as over the demonic world, and as over sickness. The authority that Jesus Christ had then and has now, can be yours today, if you submit to the will of the Father. That authority can be yours if you, like Him, will be diligent in privacy, will be consistent in aligning the priorities according to this Bible; this authority, which is the written word of Jesus Christ, and will have in your body a sense of urgency that you are here for more than a paycheck; for more than the house you live in; you are here to present the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

If we could just grab on to that sense of urgency, how different our town would be. I think we, like the

early Christians, would literally, turn this city upside-down for Jesus Christ.

Is He the authority in your life? Is He the authority in mine? Jesus Christ is, and demands to be, the final authority.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 10/18/1987 by Stephen Davey.

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