

Slide content for Mark 1:21-45 “Authority” (5/15/22)

Outline:

1) Authoritative teaching (1:21-22)

James Edwards, “Unlike the temple in Jerusalem where animal sacrifice was practiced by priests, Jewish synagogues, according to rabbinic nomenclature, were ‘assembly halls’ or auditoriums where the Torah was read and expounded. There was but one temple (in Jerusalem), whereas synagogues, the Greek derivation of which simply means ‘gathering places’, could be found throughout the Mediterranean world wherever ten or more Jewish males, thirteen years of age or older, were present. The only official in charge of a synagogue was the ‘ruler of the synagogue’, position that included the responsibilities of librarian, worship committee, custodian, and perhaps school teacher. The ruler of the synagogue did not preach or expound the Torah, however, which meant that Sabbath teaching and exposition fell to the laity, and on this occasion to Jesus.”

2) Authority over demons (1:23-27)

William Lane, “The recognition formula is not a confession, but a defensive attempt to gain control of Jesus in accordance with the common concept of that day, that the use of the precise name of an individual or spirit would secure mastery over him.”

3) Authority over disease

a. Peter’s mother-in-law (1:29-31)

b. The leper (1:40-42)

Lev. 13:45 “The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, ‘Unclean, unclean.’ ⁴⁶ He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp.

James Edwards writes, “This is not simply the description of an illness. It is a *sentence*... lepers were victims of far more than the disease itself. The disease robbed them of their health, and the sentence imposed on them as a consequence robbed them of their name, occupation, habits, family and fellowship, and worshipping community.”

James Edwards, “Surprisingly, the response of Jesus is no less scandalous than the leper’s audacity. In the face of such an intrusion, one would expect an observant Jew to recoil in

protection and defense. But with Jesus compassion replaces contempt. Rather than turning from the leper, Jesus turns *to* him; indeed, he *touches* him, bringing himself into full contact with physical and ritual untouchability. The outstretched arm of Jesus is a long reach for his day... for any day. It removes the social, physical, and spiritual separations prescribed by the Torah and custom alike. The touch of Jesus speaks more loudly than his words; and the words of Jesus touch the leper more deeply than any act of human love. Jesus is not only able but desirous: 'I am willing,' he says, 'be clean'. Unlike an ordinary rabbi, Jesus is not polluted by the leper's disease; rather, the leper is cleansed and healed by Jesus' contagious holiness."

James Edwards, "An adverse irony results. Jesus has relieved the leper of his burden, but in broadcasting the news the leper imposes a burden on Jesus, for 'he could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Mark began this story with Jesus on the inside and the leper on the outside. At the end of the story Jesus is outside in lonely places'. Jesus and the leper have traded places. Early in his ministry Jesus is already an outsider in human society. Mark casts him in the role of the Servant of the Lord who bears the iniquities of others (Isa 53:11) and whose bearing of them causes him to be numbered with the transgressors (Isa 53:12)."

4) Why the silence? (1:25, 34, 43-44)

Matt. 12:15 Jesus, aware of this (i.e. that the Pharisees wanted to destroy him), withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all ¹⁶ and ordered them not to make him known. ¹⁷ This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:

¹⁸ "Behold, my servant whom I have chosen,
my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased.
I will put my Spirit upon him,
and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.
¹⁹ He will not quarrel or cry aloud,
nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets;
²⁰ a bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not quench,
until he brings justice to victory;
²¹ and in his name the Gentiles will hope."

James Edwards, "That which truly changes the human heart and ultimately compels one to recognize and follow Jesus can never come from coercion or a display of miraculous power."

5) Why he came

William Lane, "His purpose is not to heal as many people as possible as a manifestation of the kingdom of God drawn near in his person, but to confront men with the demand for decision in the perspective of God's absolute claim upon their person."