

**A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS**  
**XXXII. Christ's Sovereign Authority Over Demons**  
**(Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37)**

**I. Introduction**

- A. The Apostle Paul taught that believers in Christ today do not wrestle against flesh and blood, that is, not only against ungodly human beings, but against evil spirits who influence the ungodly, Ephesians 6:10-12.
- B. Jesus our Lord experienced such spiritual wrestling even in His ministry of God's Word in the synagogue of Capernaum. His ministry in that setting is instructive and encouraging for us in our ministries, so we view the event as recorded in Mark 1:21-28 and Luke 4:31-37 for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

**II. Christ's Sovereign Authority Over Demons, Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37.**

- A. According to both Mark 1:21-22 and its harmonic passage in Luke 4:31-32, when Jesus arrived in Capernaum and taught in the synagogue there on the sabbath days, the congregation was astonished at His teaching, for His word was with *exousia*, "authority," (Mark 1:22; Luke 4:32; U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 121, 218; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 277-278) unlike that of the scribes, Mark 1:22.
- B. To explain, "(t)he scribal method of teaching was to quote the ancient Rabbis and compare teacher to teacher," for the "scribes sought to produce witnesses to support their interpretations of the Scriptures." (J. D. Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 144) However, "Christ did not depend on what other men had said but rested on His own authority . . . The people quickly recognized that His doctrine differed from that of the Rabbis and that He did not quote the rabbinical forbears as His authority," *Ibid.*, p. 144-145.
- C. The congregation's awareness that Jesus relied on His own authority and not that of the ancient rabbis led to the people's wondering about the credibility of Jesus' authority, meaning that His authority needed to be validated that the people might accept Jesus' teaching as true.
- D. At this moment, a demon who possessed a man in the congregation spoke up, trying to undermine Jesus' authority in the minds of the congregation by making a statement to that end (as follows):
  - 1. The "Greeks thought there were both good and evil demons" (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 215), so with Mark and Luke both identifying this demon as an "unclean" (*akathartos*, *Ibid.*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., p. 121, 218; The Analyt. Grk. Lex. (Zon.), 1972, p. 11) demon, that demon would be known by the congregation to be one that would typically make false, profane statements instead of speaking the truth.
  - 2. However, what this demon did in this case was make accurate statements: it said that it had nothing to do with Jesus since He was come to destroy the demons. It confessed that it knew Who He was, the Holy One of God, Luke 4:33-34. The demon meant to get the congregation to believe the **opposite** of what it was saying based on its own "unclean" reputation so as to get the people present to think that Jesus did not mean to destroy the demons, that He was not the Holy One of God but an evil man!
- E. Jesus countered the demon by telling him to "be muzzled; be silenced" (*phimotheti*, aorist passive imperative of *phimoo*, *Ibid.*, The Analyt. Grk. Lex., p. 427; *Ibid.*, Arndt & Gingrich, p. 869) so he would stop trying to mislead the people about Jesus' credibility, and also that this demon would come out of the man, Luke 4:35a.
- F. The demon fiercely tried to resist submitting to Jesus by causing the man it possessed to have a violent convulsion and to express a loud cry or shriek, Luke 4:35b; *Ibid.*, Pentecost, p. 147.
- G. However, Christ's authority prevailed, and the demon came out of the man without harming him, Luke 4:35c.
- H. The whole congregation was amazed and said, "What word is this, that with 'authority' (*exousia* again, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., p. 218) and might He orders the unclean spirits, and they come out?" (Luke 4:36; Mark 1:27)
- I. Consequently, Jesus' victory over the unclean demon led to His fame being spread into every part of the region of Galilee, Mark 1:28; Luke 4:37.

***Lesson:*** *As Jesus taught in the synagogue of Capernaum, He amazed the people by speaking by His own authority instead of citing ancient rabbis like the scribes did, so the people wondered about the validity of His authority. A demon who possessed a man in the congregation then tried to discredit Jesus' authority before the congregation, so Jesus ordered it to be muzzled and come out of the man. The demon tried to oppose Christ's order, but it had to obey and leave the man unharmed, so the authority of Jesus was firmly confirmed in the whole region of Galilee.*

***Application:*** *(1) May we rejoice in the divine authority of Christ over evil spirits. (1) When we minister in the power of the Holy Spirit, may we rely on His power and gifting to proclaim and live the truth, trusting God to validate our credibility before others in order to overcome Satan's efforts to undermine our ministry for the Lord.*