

Throw Down in the Synagogue

Galilean Ministry Part 3
Mark 1:21-27 10/13/2017

Summary: The reason people do things like mass murder is not because of mental disorders; it's because of evil. To be qualified to be Messiah, Jesus must have the power to overpower the forces of evil. Jesus method was to recruit disciples to fish for men, capturing men from the dominion of darkness. That is done not by violence, but by preaching the gospel. Jesus preached with astonishing authority, not like the rabbi-quoting scribes. The reaction was a panicked response of a demon. Then they are astonished at Jesus' authority to cast him out. But they just wonder who Jesus is, which is an inadequate response.

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Mark 1:21 They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. 22 The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. 23 Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, 24 “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!” 25 “Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” 26 The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. 27 The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him.”

Introduction

Why Did He Do It?

At about 10pm on Oct 1 a security guard in a Las Vegas hotel went to check on an alert about a door on the 32nd floor that was left open. He gets up there and a guy in a nearby room suddenly shoots 200 rounds into the hallway, and hit that guard in the leg. Then that guy started shooting out his room window at a large crowd below and shot 500 people. He tried to blow up some jet fuel tanks near the crowd, and

his car was full of explosives. Evidently, he had more plans for more killing and injury, but his plans fizzled out, and after 10 minutes of shooting, he put the gun to his head and entered eternity.

And everyone is asking the same question: why? This guy was rich, he was living the way he wanted – gambling millions of dollars, staying in luxury hotels, eating at nice restaurants, doing whatever he pleased. He went on 40 some cruises. No history of violence, no ties to terrorism that we know of. Why would a guy like that suddenly try to murder hundreds of people that he didn't even know?

I'll tell you exactly why. The talk shows and TV pundits are so predictable. They always say the same thing. They speculate about motive, but they always start by saying, "Obviously, anyone who would do something like that has to be mentally disturbed. Obviously this was a deeply troubled individual who was mentally sick." And they always use the word *obviously*. That conclusion is so accepted in our culture that it's like an axiom. By definition, if you commit mass murder, you have a mental disease.

And whenever I hear that I just want to ask, "Why is that obvious?"¹ Maybe I'm just slow, but it's actually not obvious to me. Not only is it not obvious to me, but I don't even see any connection at all between mental disease and mass murder. 50 million people suffer from insanity – how many of them commit mass murder? I don't know if any of them do. And the people who do commit mass murder – how often do they show signs of mental deficiency? When you read about the Vegas guy and all his planning, it sounds to me like his brain was working just fine.

The definition of insanity is a detachment from reality. When you hear things that aren't there, see things that aren't there, feel things that aren't there – you're unable to interact with the real world. That's insanity. There's no evidence that I've heard that this guy had a detachment from reality. It's not like they went into his room and he said, "What? I'm shooting people? I thought I was playing poker!" No, all evidence shows that he was interacting with the real world and knew exactly what he was doing. They actually examined the shooter's brain in the autopsy, and they didn't find any abnormality.

If we want to use the word *obviously*, I'll tell you what seems obvious to me. Here's why the guy did it: evil. I don't know if he had a mental problem, but I know for sure he had a moral problem. Is that an outrageous thing to say? Am I out on a limb when I say people do things like this because they have way too much unrestrained evil in their hearts? It's not a brain problem; it's a heart problem.

Almost all these cases of mass shooters, they find out the shooters were on psychotropic drugs and mood medications. Why don't those medications prevent the shootings? Because the problem is not chemical; it's moral.

People call for gun control, but is it guns that are out of control? Or is it evil that's out of control? It's evil that's out of control, and so the only solution is evil-control. We've got to do something about the problem of evil in people's hearts.

How can we do that? We can't. There are some things we can do to suppress evil. God gave us church, family, and government to keep evil from becoming completely dominant in this world. But churches, families, and governments have existed for thousands of years, and still – we've got a huge problem with evil in this world, don't we?

Jesus vs. Evil

So what then – are we just stuck with evil forever? No. The OT promises that someday God will send his Messiah who will put an end to all evil forever. That's one of the bullet points in the job description of the Messiah. He has to be the one in Daniel 7 who has the power to bring final, decisive victory over the beast, and the one in Psalm 2 who will rule with a rod of iron and bring about perfect justice.

¹ When people see extreme evil, why do they assume that the problem is mental? Maybe it's because in our infantile, primitive, naturalistic culture, they reduce man down to nothing more than matter, so if something goes wrong in your behavior, it must be your brain, because that's all there is to you. There's no soul, no spirit, no moral component – just grey matter that either works well or is diseased. And so they imagine that the only factor that goes into deciding whether or not you get some guns and murder hundreds of people is whether or not your brain is healthy or diseased.

So to qualify to be the Messiah, he's going to have to demonstrate something no one else in the world has – power over evil. The power to overpower it and end it.

Recapturing Souls

So what does all that have to do with what we're studying in Mark 1? We left off last week with Jesus calling disciples and promising to make them fishers of men. Just as God's people were captured by their enemies in the Old Testament, now the Messiah is going to recapture them for God. And to do that, he's going to have to deal with the powers of evil that holds those people. Fishing for men means he's going to populate his kingdom by snatching people out of another kingdom.

Colossians 1:13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.²

That's what fishing for men is all about – rescuing people out of the dominion of darkness and bringing them into the kingdom of Christ. That's what Jesus came to do, and that's what he recruited his disciples to do. But the ruler of the dominion of darkness is going to fight back. He's not going to let go of those souls without a fight. And we're going to see that fight right here in this passage. Jesus doesn't waste any time - he begins his ministry by rattling the cages of hell.

What Is the Net?

Capernaum

So where does Jesus go right after telling these men, "Follow me?"

21 They went to Capernaum

Capernaum was a town right at the top end of the Sea of Galilee. Fishing for men happens not out on the lake, but in town.

Before we were thinking of Jerusalem as Denver and Galilee up by Fort Collins, but now that Jesus is in Galilee and we're going to spend the next few years up here, let's make Denver Galilee since we're more familiar with Denver. So, get in your car, start at the mousetrap (I-70 and I-25), take 25 south all the way down to 225. Take 225 back up to I-70, and 70 back to 25. You just drove a lap around the Sea of Galilee. That's roughly the distance and shape.

Capernaum is right near the top of the lake, a little bit west from the center. Peter lived there, and it ends up being Jesus home base.

Astonishingly Authoritative Teaching

So Jesus takes these guys into town, and **21 ...immediately, on the Sabbath, Jesus went into the synagogue. Immediately** - this was Jesus' urgent priority. Jesus goes immediately into the synagogue and does something that astonished the people. I pointed out last week that in v.22 all the people in the synagogue are in shock. That's that word that means to be knocked backwards like you're struck with a blow, and you can even process what you've seen because it's so mind blowing. That's the condition of the people in verse 22.

You see that and think, *Wow, what kind of eye-popping miracles did Jesus do in v.21 to cause that kind of reaction?* He didn't do any miracles. What did he do that blew everyone's mind?

21 ... immediately on the Sabbath, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to ... teach.

² See also 1 Pe.2:9.

That's it. He did what they always do in the synagogue on the Sabbath – he opened up the Bible and taught them. You say, "Wow, this must have been his best sermon ever - His magnum opus!" No, this was actually very typical.

There are other terms for amazement,³ but if we track just this one term...

Matthew 7:28 the crowds were amazed at his teaching;

Matthew 13:54 He ... began teaching them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom...?"

Matthew 19:25 they were very astonished

Matthew 22:33 the crowds...were astonished at his teaching.

Mark 1:22 They were amazed at his teaching

Mark 6:2 the many listeners were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to him..."

Mark 7:37 They were utterly astonished

Mark 10:26 They were even more astonished

Mark 11:18 the whole crowd was astonished at his teaching.

Luke 2:48 When they saw him, they were astonished

Luke 9:43 And they were all amazed

Whenever Jesus opened his mouth, it blew people away. I think it's summed up best by the guards sent to arrest him in the Temple in Jn.7. They return without him. "What happened? Why didn't you arrest him?" "Well, we were going to, but then ... he ... it was ... you see ... he started talking and ... no one ever spoke like this man." The guards who were sent to arrest Jesus show up without him and when they think back about what happened, all they can say is that Jesus started talking. There have been entertaining speakers, deep thinkers, dynamic communicators, but Jesus was in a completely different category.

So what was it that was so amazing about Jesus' sermons? Well, it was definitely the most accurate doctrine they had ever heard from a preacher. And Jesus had a deeper understanding of the Old Testament than any preacher they had ever heard. His teaching came out of a more profound heart of compassion and obvious love than anyone they had ever heard. His life matched his doctrine more perfectly than any other preacher. A lot of things about his teaching were amazing – everything about his teaching was amazing. But the thing that astonished people the most was his authority.

Scribes

22 The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.

The **teachers of the law** (or **scribes**) were the Bible scholars of the day.⁴ Various different people taught, but the scribes were definitely the most authoritative voice the people ever heard. They were the scholars. But they got their authority not by their knowledge of the Bible, but by their knowledge of the

³ Mark employs a variety of terms to express the astonishment of the multitude and the disciples at the word and deed of Jesus: *ekplessein* (ἐκπλήσσειν - 1:22, 6:2, 7:37, 10:26, 11:18); *thamazein* (θαυμάζειν - 5:20, 15:5, 15:44); *ekthamazein* (ἐκθαυμάζειν - 12:17); *thambeisthai* (θαμβείσθαι - 1:27, 10:24, 10:32); *ekthambeisthai* (ἐκθαμβείσθαι - 9:15); *existemi* (ἔξιστημι - 2:12, 5:42, 6:51); cf. *phobeisthai* (φοβείσθαι - 4:41, 5:15, 5:33, 5:36, 6:50, 9:32, 10:32, 11:18); and *ekphobos* (ἐκφοβος - 9:6).

⁴ Each of the various religious groups had their scribes - the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, etc. But the great majority of scribes seem to have belonged to the Pharisees in Jesus' day (WBC).

writings of the great rabbis. They lived their whole lives inside a set of quotation marks. “Rabbi so-and-so’s view on this verse was..., but this other rabbi argued this...”⁵

They had shifted from studying the Bible to studying the theology of the great theologians.

Rabbi Eliezer boasted, “Never in my life have I ever said anything that I didn’t hear from my teachers.”⁶

And most of their commentary was not on the Scriptures, but on all the rules they had come up with in their legalistic additions to the Scriptures.

Alexander Maclaren: The people had got so accustomed to the droning dreariness and trivial subtleties of the rabbis, that it had never entered their heads that there could be any other way of teaching religion than boring men with interminable pedantries about trifles of ritual or outward obedience. This new Teacher would startle all, as an eagle suddenly appearing in a [group] of owls.

They developed a religion that was a joyless, petty, complicated maze of powerless human ideas and opinions that held the people in the death grip of legalism.

How the people must have longed for a prophet, who would come along and instead of saying, “Here’s what the rabbis say...” would just say, “Thus saith the Lord...” But Jesus – he didn’t say, “this is what the rabbis say,” or even “thus saith the Lord.” He said “Thus saith Me.” He only mentioned the rabbis when he said things like, “You have heard the rabbis say this, but I say unto you...” and went on to contradict them.

Jesus said things no one had ever said before. It was like if a person descended down into an ant hill. The ants can’t conceive of anything beyond the little radius around their little hill, but the human has a perspective on the whole world. That’s what Jesus’ teaching was like.

There’s just nothing like the teachings of Jesus. Pick up any religious book, any writings from any guru or religious leader – Mohammad, Confucius, Buddha, Krishna, Joseph Smith, pick any one you want, and read their words. Then read Jesus’ words. They are in the completely different category.

And yet, they have the ring of truth. There have been people who lost their sanity and said things different from what anyone else is saying, but it’s easy to see that those people are out of their minds. But people don’t come to that conclusion when they hear Jesus’ words.

His words were so deep. Thousands of years of study have not exhausted them. What we have in the Bible are summaries of some of Jesus’ sermons, but if you would have heard the full sermon in person, the way he delivered it, you would have been blown away just like those people were.

Gospel Fishing

Now, keep in mind the context. This is Jesus showing the disciples what he meant by fishing for men. Fishing for men in the OT was a violent, military image. Is that how the disciples were to re-capture men’s souls – through violence (like Mohamad)? Convert or die? No. Jesus says, “I’m going to make you fishers of men. Ready. Set. Here we go...” And he went straight into Capernaum and straight into the synagogue and began teaching the gospel. That’s the net. That’s how the work of reclaiming souls is to be done. Establishing this phase of the kingdom is not going to be a military campaign. It’s going to be a teaching campaign, because the objective is not to just capture the bodies of men, but their hearts. He didn’t want to just defeat the rebels; he wanted to defeat the rebellion itself by winning their hearts. And that’s done through preaching and teaching the gospel. And doing so with authority, which is not a popular thing in our day.

⁵ Here is a sample of what their teaching was like: “One passage says: His throne was fiery flames; and another Passage says: Till thrones were places, and One that was ancient of days did sit! — There is no contradiction: one [throne] for Him, and one for David; this is the view of Rabbi Akiba. Said Rabbi Jose the Galilean to him: Akiba, how long wilt thou treat the Divine Presence as profane! Rather, [it must mean], one for justice and one for grace. Did he accept [this explanation from him, or did he not accept it? — Come and hear: One for justice and one for grace; this is the view of Rabbi Akiba. Said Rabbi Eleazar b. ‘Azariah to him: Akiba, what hast thou to do with Aggadah? Cease thy talk, and turn to [the laws concerning defilement through] leprosy-signs and tent-covering! Rather, [it must mean] one for a throne and one for a stool...” (Babylonian Talmud 14a).

⁶ Leon Morris, Luke, Tyndale NT Commentary, 119.

Authority Unpopular

I looked up the word *preach* in a dictionary and it said, *to give moral advice to someone in an annoying or pompously self-righteous way*. And it gave these words as synonyms: *moralize, sermonize, pontificate, lecture, harangue*. I looked up the word “preachy” it said *to be sanctimonious, portentous, or pompous*. Nothing turns people in our culture off more than authoritative preaching.

And so thousands of pastors are working on perfecting the art of delivering a sermon without preaching. Get rid of the pulpit, put on some ripped jeans, and just share – like some guy at the bar sharing his opinions. Give an inspiring message, a funny message, an interesting message, tell people things they want to hear, keep your doctrine vague enough so no one is offended, then pass the plate. You’ll have the fastest growing church around. But the nets will be mostly empty, because that’s not the model Jesus gave us for fishing for men. He gave us a gospel that commands people to repent and believe, and said, “That’s how you fish for men.”

Demonic Reaction

Letter

Imagine your nephew lives in Capernaum and writes you this letter:
Dear Uncle,

I thought I would drop you a note to let you know what’s going on in my life. You’re always telling me that I need to get back into the synagogue, and I did last Saturday. You will believe what happened.

The reason I don’t like going to the synagogue is because it’s so boring. Some dry, stuffy Rabbi will drone on: “I want to begin today’s discourse about on Rabbi Hillel’s remarks on Rabbi Akiba’s view of ceremonial cleansing of sacred vessels... blah blah blah,” and frankly dear uncle, that’s usually about the time I’m nodding off. And I wish I never had to go into another synagogue.

But last Saturday was different. The teacher was this young guy, no more than 30, from up in the hills somewhere. From what I understand, he’s not even a trained rabbi.

But he just had this quiet authority which was absolutely riveting. He didn’t talk about tedious ceremonial rules. When he talked, it seemed like he was just reaching right into my soul. And he didn’t quote anybody. He spoke about heaven as if he’d been there. And he spoke about God as if they were friends. And the more he talked, the more I felt this overwhelming pressure inside me – like I had to make a decision. I had to forsake my sin right this minute.

But right as I was wrestling with that, suddenly one of the ushers jumps up and starts shrieking at the top of his voice. It scared the bejeepers out of me. He was shouting at the preacher.

And I thought, *What’s this young guy going to do? He just talked with a lot of authority – now it’s being tested. Is it real authority, or just talk?*

So the preacher turned toward this guy with a strong, intense look. It was a look I’ll never forget - a look of controlled anger and tremendous power. He didn’t touch the man; but he spoke with commanding authority, and drove out a demon.

I’ve seen rabbis try to cast out demons before, and they try to hide their fear and muster up some kind of modicum of authority, but this preacher – he sounded like a master talking to a slave.

And what struck me more than anything was the abject fear in this demon. You could tell that there wasn’t the slightest possibility that the demon would do anything other than obey.

The Unclean Spirit

That’s a fictional account. Here’s how Mark records it. Verse 21, Jesus is teaching.

22 The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the scribes. 23 Just then a man in their synagogue who had an evil spirit cried out, 24 “What do

you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!” 25 “Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” 26 The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

In my fictional letter I made this guy an usher in the synagogue. I did that because it says he was a **man in their synagogue**, which implies that he was one of them. He belonged to the synagogue. He was a member.

Evidently, this demon was perfectly comfortable week after week in that synagogue, listening to the typical teaching. That kind of makes you wonder how many churches today are attracting unchurched people by the thousands, and everyone is comfortable to just come as they are – including demons. They are seeker sensitive and even demon-sensitive. Not even demons are offended, and they can sit through the service week after week without any problem. But Jesus’ teaching shook things up. I think of a physical therapist who has the ability to pinpoint the source of some nerve problem, and can press his finger on one little spot and make a grown man squeal like a little schoolgirl. Jesus did that with his preaching. He pressed his finger right on the nerves of sin and rebellion against God, and this demon can’t stand it for another second, and he erupts into a panic.

Wherever Jesus preached, he created a disturbance – with demons and with people. The word describing their amazement is a word that goes beyond just being amazed. It’s associated with things like alarm or fear. That was always the effect of Jesus’ preaching. Like if you kick down an anthill, and then come back 5 minute later and look at it. The ants are running around in a frenzy. All the synagogues in Israel were like anthills that were operating just fine, like a well-oiled machine, and Jesus blows in and kicks the top off one synagogue after another, and all the ants get stirred up.

He doesn’t just give them some interesting doctrinal points to debate. He doesn’t just float out some inspiring thoughts for the day. He doesn’t just lay out some thought provoking ideas for them to ponder. He boldly declares the arrival of the kingdom of God and demands an immediate response of repentance and faith. He went straight for the heart, and it rattled people – especially people with hidden rebellion against God. And it rattled the cages of hell itself.

Satanic resistance

When Jesus preaches a gospel that rescues the souls of men and women from the dominion of darkness, that’s going to run into to some resistance from the ruler of that kingdom. Satan dominates this sinful world.

1 John 5:19 ...the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

Three times in the Gospel of John Jesus referred to Satan as **the prince of this world.**⁷ And Paul called him **the god of this age who blinds the minds of unbelievers,**⁸ and **the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.**⁹ That is the kingdom of darkness.

And when Jesus starts snatching souls out of that kingdom, the hosts of hell are going to fight back.

Purpose of Miracles

Here’s something you need to know about Jesus’ miracles: they all had specific purposes. Jesus didn’t just do random acts of power. Of all the millions of displays of supernatural power Jesus could have done, the ones he did do were carefully chosen to show us his ability to fulfill OT promises connected to the Messiah. And so each miracle is like a preview of the kingdom. If you want to know what the final form of the kingdom of God will look like, look at Jesus’ miracles.

⁷ John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11.

⁸ 2 Cor.4:4.

⁹ Eph.2:2.

I'll say more about that as we study each individual miracle in Mark, but for today, we're looking at the very first miracle Mark records, and it is a demonstration of Jesus' ability to finally, decisively defeat evil. You can check that box on his messianic resume.

Luke 11:20 if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

1 John 3:8 The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

The Demon's Words

So look at what this demon says to Jesus.

24 "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth?"

The phrase translated **what do you want with us** is an idiom that means something like, "You're out of line, and here's why..."¹⁰ Then he says this: **24 ...Have you come to destroy us?** That could be a question, but a little more natural way to translate it would be as a statement. **You have come to destroy us.**

Why does he say **us**? In the next sentence he goes right back to the singular – I know who you are. The most common assumption is that the demon is alternating back and forth from speaking for himself and speaking for all demons. So he's asking, "Is this the time that you're going to destroy all of us demons?"

That could very well be the correct interpretation. But there's another possibility that's worth considering. Think for a second about the context here. How would this have sounded to the people who were there? They wouldn't have any way of knowing this was a demon at this point. They are just listening to the sermon and suddenly one of their members gets up and says this. So think of how that

¹⁰ Literally the phrase is **what to us and to you?** It's used somewhat differently in different contexts, but it's never a question that just sits by itself. It's always immediately followed by some words that explain the meaning. Here are the instances I found: **Jdg. 11:12 Then Jephthah sent messengers to the Ammonite king with the question: "What to me and to you, that you have attacked our country?"**

2 Sam. 16:10 But the king said, "What to me and to you, you sons of Zeruiah? If he is cursing because the LORD said to him, 'Curse David,' who can ask, 'Why do you do this?'"

2 Sam. 19:22 David replied, "What to me and to you, you sons of Zeruiah? This day you have become my adversaries! Should anyone be put to death in Israel today? Do I not know that today I am king over Israel?"

1 Kings 17:18 She said to Elijah, "What to me and to you, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?"

2 Kings 3:13 Elisha said to the king of Israel, "What to me and to you? Go to the prophets of your father and the prophets of your mother." "No," the king of Israel answered, "because it was the LORD who called us three kings together to hand us over to Moab."

2 Chron. 35:21 But Neco sent messengers to him, saying, "What to me and to you, O king of Judah? It is not you I am attacking at this time, but the house with which I am at war. God has told me to hurry; so stop opposing God, who is with me, or he will destroy you."

Hosea 14:8 O Ephraim, what to me and to idols? I will answer him and care for him. I am like a green pine tree; your fruitfulness comes from me."

Mt. 8:29 "What to me and to us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?"

Mk. 1:24 "What to me and to us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are-- the Holy One of God!"

Mk. 5:7 He shouted at the top of his voice, "What to me and to you, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won't torture me!"

Lk. 4:34 "Ha! What to me and to us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are-- the Holy One of God!"

Lk. 8:28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What to me and to you, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!"

Jn. 2:4 "Dear woman, what to me and to you?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come."

would sound if you were in that congregation. They would naturally take the us as referring to the membership of their local congregation. What do you want with us Jesus of Nazareth (from out of town)? You've come here to destroy. I know who you are – the holy one of God.”

Jesus had been calling them to repentance, which involves preaching about their sin. And what's one of the first things Satan wants to convince people of when that happens? God is angry with you, he's against you, he wants to destroy you.

Is that what this demon wants to convince the people of? Yes, Jesus is the holy one of God, but he's here to bring wrath and judgment on us. Satan works hard to convince people to think of God that way, because that makes people have an aversion to God so they will never love him.

Is that what's going on here? I'm not 100% sure. It could be that, or it could be that the demon really is asking if this is the time when Jesus is going to send all demons into the lake of fire. But either way, the answer is no – sort of. Is it true that the Messiah came to eradicate evil? Yes, but not at his first coming. He is going to someday throw all demons and all evil people into the lake of fire forever, and totally eliminate evil once and for all. But not yet.

“Why? Why the delay? I'm sick of turning on the news and hearing about some piece of human refuse getting a gun and causing so much multiplied agony and pain in the lives of so many people for no reason. I'm sick of hearing about child abuse and the slave trade and human trafficking – or even my friend getting his car vandalized or some idiot creating a virus that ruins my computer. Why doesn't Jesus come in judgment?”

Let me ask you this: would you have liked Jesus to come in final judgment before you were saved? He didn't come before your conversion because he was waiting for someone to catch you in the net of the gospel. And he's not coming now because he's waiting for you to catch some others in the net. He's not slow in keeping his promises; he's patient, not wanting anyone to perish (2 Pe.2:9).

But rest assured – the day will come when Jesus eradicates evil altogether, and he proved his power to do that whenever he encountered a demon. Demons are incredibly powerful beings – far more powerful than human beings. There is absolutely nothing we can do against them. They had exorcists back then, and they would struggle and work and shout and sweat and try all their incantations and formulas, but with very little success. And even in the rare instances when the demon would leave, it would usually come back. They were powerless against the demonic realm. But look at Jesus.

25 “Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” 26 The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. 27 The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him.”

They had seen the exorcists use their methods, but they had never seen anything like this. Jesus says, **be quiet** (literally **be muzzled**), and **Come out of him**. No incantations. No struggle. No difficulty. Just 2 simple commands: "Shut up" and "get out" and the demon immediately obeys.

Preach the Gospel and Trust Jesus to Dominate Satan

Now, is that something we are supposed to be doing? No. Jesus cast out demons to prove that he was who he claimed to be, and he gave that power to the Apostles to prove they were speaking his words. But in the epistles, which instruct us about how to carry on our work in the church today, what do we read about casting out demons? Nothing. No instructions on how to do it, no commands that we ought to do it, no comment about it happening in any of the churches – nothing.

Our job is not to cast out demons. Only Jesus can enter that strong man's house. Our task is to fish for men by preaching and teaching the gospel. That's everywhere in the epistles. We are to be going after souls. And our method is the gospel. Tell people the gospel and call them to repentance and faith.

And when you do that, you can have full confidence in the power of Christ to use that gospel to snatch souls from the clutches of the enemy, because Jesus Christ dominates Satan and the demonic realm.

Conclusion: What Is This?

27 The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him.”

Their question is just like the one the disciples ask later when Jesus stills the storm: **“Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”** People keep on asking that all through the book: “Who is this?” “Where did this man get these things?” “What is this wisdom that has been given him that he even does miracles?” Why don’t they know the answer? Didn’t the demon just tell them? He just got done telling them exactly who Jesus is. He’s Jesus of Nazareth, the holy one of God who came into the world to destroy the demonic host.

These people knew that it was a real supernatural being. They just saw it with their own eyes and heard with their own ears. They believed that Jesus really did have total authority over this demon and cast them out with a single command, unlike anything that ever seen. They saw the demon panic in abject fear. And everything the demon said checks out. Yes, this is Jesus of Nazareth. At his birth the angel called him the holy one,¹¹ and everyone saw the Holy Spirit come down on him at his baptism. So the holy one of God – that checks out. His ability to destroy demons - that definitely checks out. Everything that demon said checks out. They saw it all with their own eyes, heard it with their own ears, and believed it all to be true.

They have all this evidence and all this proof and the real action is to say, “Wait, what?” And that’s it. Why are they still confused about who Jesus is? Because there hasn’t been repentance. Their hearts can’t open up in true faith to believe because they are still in the grip of sin. What they needed was not just a show of miracles and supernatural testimony to prove who Jesus was. All of that is helpful for people who are willing to believe, but for people who haven’t repented, all it does is create confusion.

Yes, it is important for people to discover who Jesus is – that he really is the Son of God. But that truth won’t penetrate their hearts coming from a panicked demon at this point. Nor will it penetrate coming from some happy people who got healed, or even some disciples who are excited about the Messiah. It will penetrate when they understand the second leg of the gospel. David Garland: “They remain in the dark about the source of Jesus’ power or his mission, and no shrieking demon will reveal it to them. The full truth can only be revealed by the one who cries out in pain on the cross.”

Make a Decision

God never lets us off the hook with just acknowledging a bunch of true facts about God, then scratching our head and wondering, and then walking away. That doesn’t cut it. I said a few weeks ago, you can do that with the Loch Ness monster if you want, but not with Jesus.

Why did the people fall on their knees and worship when they saw all these evidences? Because their hearts simply did not want to believe because they were held in the grip of sin. They had not repented. People are driven by what they want to believe far more than by the evidence.

And what’s amazing is that that’s what they accuse us of. Your these atheists and agnostics point to Christians and say, “You just believe in that stuff because you need it. You need a crutch to get through life. It’s just wishful thinking, and you’ve convinced yourself that your fairytale is true because he wanted to be true.” Whenever I hear that kind of thing I just want to ask them, “Have you ever heard of a mirror?” You want to talk about adjusting reality to fit what you want to believe? Think about your belief system for a 2nd. Here’s the reality that your banking on being true: there is no God. There is no creator, and if there is, you’re not answerable to him. No judgment day, no concern that you’ll ever have to answer for your sin. All the things you’ve done wrong in your life, you got away with it. No ultimate justice you have to worry about, no punishment. And it just so happens that morality is defined by whatever you think. Whatever feels right to you just happens to be right. Whatever you think is wrong, is wrong. And if your feelings change in the future, then right and wrong will change with them and that

¹¹ Luke 1:35.

new system will be the true right and wrong. How convenient is that? Does seem a little strange to you that almost everyone who's ever been born believes there's a God and a Judgment Day, but all of them are wrong, and you right? You just have to be born into a world where morality is defined by everything you think and feel? And then you look at me and say that I'm the one who's adjusting reality to fit what I want?

Who in his right mind would invent a religion with a holy God? Or a system of salvation requires humbling myself and being broken over my sin and getting all glory and honor to someone else said to myself, and striving to be the slave of all?

Do we Christians interpret the data through a filter of what we want to believe? Yes, we do. All human beings do that. There's absolutely no way to escape that. Everyone interprets all the evidence and data through a lens of what they, deep down, really want to be true.

So the goal is to get your heart into a condition that will be receptive to and desirous of the actual truth that corresponds to reality. And how you do get to that point? By repenting of your sins and believing the gospel.