

Awesome Authority

Summaries of Mark Part 3

Mark 1:14-34 5/6/2018

Summary: Jesus is the promised Son/King from Psalm 2, and has awesome authority over people's lives, what people become, roles in the kingdom, over the Word of God, over evil, and over disease.

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Introduction

Authority

We live in a culture that hates authority. Part of that comes from the natural, prideful, rebellious human heart. And part of it comes from the fact that so many of us have been under terrible authorities who abused their authority. But the truth is, life is most wonderful when you are under a good, wise, powerful, compassionate authority, and you are submissive to that authority.

Jesus is the Promised King

In v.15 of ch.1, for the first time in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus speaks. Jesus goes out and begins preaching, and his message is summed up in this verse. These are the first words we hear out of Jesus' mouth in the book of Mark.

Mark 1:15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the gospel!" You take everything Jesus preached and boil it down to one sentence – that's it. Every time a Bible writer summarizes Jesus' message in a single sentence, it's the same – he preached about the kingdom of God. Every preacher has his hobbyhorse – for Jesus it was the kingdom of God, because that's what the entire Bible is about. On page 1 of the Bible God creates man and talks to him about ruling the world. But right away there is a problem. Mankind rebels against God's rule and sets up his own kingdom on earth that is opposed to God's kingdom. So you have two kingdoms – God is reigning in heaven, but human kings on earth are trying to establish their own authority.

So then God comes up with a plan to deal with that, he puts the plan into place – that’s what the whole rest of the Bible is about – God carrying out that plan for dealing with that rebellious, earthly kingdom. Then you skip ahead to the very end of the Bible at the climatic conclusion of the whole story.

Revelation 11:15 "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."

That’s where all of history is going. So what is God’s big plan for bringing all that about? It’s in Psalm 2.

Psalm 2:2 The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One. 3 "Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters."

There’s that rebellious, earthly kingdom. And what’s God’s plan for that?

6 "I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill."

Then the Messiah begins speaking.

7 I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father. 8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. 9 You will rule them with an iron scepter."

God’s plan for dealing with the rebellious kingdom is to anoint his own human king to defeat them, eliminate all rebellion, and reign over all. That’s the promise in Psalm 2, and the people have been waiting for the Messiah, the Son of God from Psalm 2, to arrive and establish the kingdom of God on earth and eliminate evil and all rebellion against God. They have been waiting for hundreds of years. Then along comes Jesus, God speaks from heaven and confirms, “Yep, this is my Son.” And then Jesus goes around preaching, “**15 The time has come!** No more delay. The kingdom is here, because I am here, and therefore everyone everywhere must repent and bow the knee.”

But Jesus Doesn’t Seem Powerful

But does Jesus really have that kind of authority? This guy from nowhereville (Nazareth) – no political power or connections, no army, no money, no position of leadership in the religious system. The Spirit of God came down on him, but he doesn’t come swooping down as an eagle or hawk, which in that culture symbolized victory on the battlefield. Instead he comes down as a dove, which was a sacrificial animal for poor people.¹

And look at what happens to John the Baptist in v.14. He gets arrested by Herod. If you’re the great ruler of the kings of the earth, why is some petty gentile king slapping the cuffs on your number one guy? And that same terminology is used many times to describe Jesus’ arrest later on. And guess who else gets arrested in the book of Mark?

Mark 13:9 You must be on your guard. You will be arrested ... and flogged 11 ... and brought to trial

So this great King and all his followers just end up getting arrested by their enemies? That doesn’t sound like the ruler of the kings of the earth. Does this humble, lowly Jesus character have authority or not? And if so, what is the extent of his authority? Those are the questions Mark wants to answer at the beginning of his Gospel.

Authority Over People’s Lives

Let’s look at the first thing he does after his baptism.

¹ Lv.5:7.

16 As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.

So Jesus is walking by himself along the beach, stepping over some rocks, making his way through some brush, and he comes out to an opening. And he sees a very common scene on that lake – some fishermen at work. Two brothers are out there about waist deep in the water with the little, one-man casting nets trying to catch some fish.

17 “Come, follow me,” Jesus said

And these two guys stand there for a moment in stunned silence. Jesus just hit them with something, and they realize that at this moment they are facing the biggest decision of their lives. Andrew looks over at his brother Simon, who is normally mister impulsive, and sees that he is just as frozen as Andrew was. Andrew looks back at Jesus, whose eyes haven’t left him. They are burning holes in him, and Andrew realizes at that moment that he has no choice. It’s not an invitation; it’s an order. It’s not a request, it’s not a suggestion, it’s not a plea; it’s a command.

18 Immediately, they left their nets and followed him.

Well, I guess Jesus carries some authority!

19 When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. 20 Immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

How many people can you think of who have this kind of authority – to where they can just walk up to people right in the middle of their work day and require them to leave their property, their job, their livelihood, their families and follow them into a life of suffering and hardship and they do it? Jesus was a man of awesome authority. People will obey presidents and kings or police, but how many carpenters do you know who can command this level of obedience?

The only one who calls like this in the OT is God himself.² God called Abraham, and he left his family and home and culture and followed God’s call, even though he didn’t know where he was going.³ Only God does this sort of thing in the OT, and now Jesus, right out of the hatch as his ministry begins, this is the first thing he does.

And people respond. There are some people who have *positions* of authority, but people don’t listen to them. Like a school teacher whose class is out of control. But Jesus’ authority went beyond just a position or title; it also included the power to bring people to respond.

So what kind of authority does Jesus have? He has total authority over everyone’s life. He can just suddenly command you to leave everything including family and you must obey on the spot. He can command anyone at any time to give up anything, pay any price, and they must do it.

Authority Over What People Become

So there’s one picture of Jesus’ awesome authority – he has total authority over everyone’s life. There’s another one in v.17. Look at the promise he makes these guys.

17 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

What is it about being fishermen that will make these guys good at teaching and preaching? Nothing. Jesus doesn’t pick them because they are good at teaching and preaching. It wasn’t, “Follow me, because

² The closest human example is Elijah calling Elisha, but that was still less than what Jesus does. And what we are going to see with Jesus as we go through the gospel is that he not only does the same things that the greatest spiritual giants of the Old Testament did, but he goes way beyond what they did. Elijah calling Elisha was a unique, one-time event. Jesus does this with Andrew and Simon and then James and John and then Levi, and ends up doing it twelve times. And we find out later that he wants to make disciples of *all* nations.

³ Hebrews 11:8.

you are great preachers.” It wasn’t, “Get some training in evangelism and then follow me.” It’s “Follow me because of what I will do.” Literally he says **I will make you to become⁴ fishers of men.** Jesus has authority to call you, and he has authority to make you into whatever he wants you to be.

Authority to Assign Tasks in the Kingdom

And what he wants us to be is fishermen. And that’s a very striking image, because in the OT, fishing for men was always a negative thing.⁵ Many times God told Israel, “I’m going to bring judgment on you – your enemies are going to come like fishermen and drag you away into captivity with fishhooks.” And now Jesus takes that same imagery and reverses it. Jesus’ task was to recapture the hearts and souls of God’s people and bring them back to God. They were captured and dragged away by sin; Jesus will bring them back.

But he won’t do it alone. He’s going to call his followers to do the work alongside him. When you submit yourself to someone’s authority, you want him to be a great person who is doing a great work, and who will involve you in that work. If you’re going to be following someone’s orders, you want those orders to come from someone who is ordering you to do great things. You want it to be someone who, every time he gives you an assignment, you can go to bed that night thinking, “Whatever his reason was for telling me to dig that ditch or talk to this person (or whatever task), I know for sure it’s part of accomplishing a huge, great mission. So by digging that ditch, I accomplished something great today!” That’s one quality of a great authority, and that’s what we have in Christ.

Isn’t it amazing that Jesus would entrust such an important work to people like us? Tell me – who was more gifted, Jesus or the disciples? Even after they were fully trained, who was the better preacher – Jesus or those guys? Who had more skill? Who had more wisdom and more love and more power and a greater measure of the Holy Spirit? Jesus. So why not just do the work himself?

John 14:12 I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these

Jesus never traveled outside of an area smaller than Colorado. The Apostles turned the whole world upside down. Even though Jesus was far more capable and far more qualified, the Holy Spirit was pleased to do the greatest work of reaching the world through the church. He has entrusted to us the task of going out into all the nations like fishermen and recapture God’s people and drag them back to God. And the net that we use will be the gospel (we’ll see that in the context).⁶ The fishermen in the OT who captured God’s people used violence. Now, when we recapture people for God, instead of using violence, the net we use is the gospel.

Jesus Has Authority to Speak for God

21 They went to Capernaum

Then Jesus does something, and then look at the reaction in v.27.

27 The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this?”

The word translated **amazed** is a very strong word. It means to be knocked backwards like you’re struck with a blow – that’s how astonished they were. Wow. What kind of earth-shattering miracle did Jesus do? It must have been a doozy to get that response, right? No – no miracle. He just preached a sermon.

⁴ Aorist infinitive

⁵ See for example Jeremiah 16:16-17, Ezek 29:4-5; Amos 4:2; Hab 1:14-17.

⁶ This is shown in the context. Mark frequently makes connections between ideas by “sandwiching” – speaking of one idea immediately before and after another idea. He does that here. Immediately before and after he calls them to be fishers of men, we see his method is preaching (see vv.14-15 and v.21).

21 ... when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. 22 The people were amazed at his teaching

Jesus also did a miracle, as we'll see in a minute, but the people were more astonished and blown away by his teaching than by the miracle! Jesus' miracles were the most powerful miracles that had ever been performed in the history of the world, and his teaching was even more amazing than his miracles. "What was so amazing about it? Lots of stories? Great jokes? Brilliant insights?" What does v.22 say?

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 were the highest authorities on the Bible of the day. They were the scholars. Their teaching was the most authoritative thing the people had ever heard until Jesus came. But they got their authority not by their knowledge of the Bible, but by their knowledge of the writings of the great rabbis. Just like today – they shifted from studying the Bible to studying the theology of the great theologians. 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..." like the prophets of old. 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.

27 The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching—and with authority!"

Jesus had authority over people's lives, he had authority over what people became, he had authority to assign tasks in the kingdom of God, and he preached with such astounding, divine authority that it blew people's minds. Jesus said things no one had ever said before. It was like if a human being descended down into an ant hill. The ants can't conceive of anything beyond 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.

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.

And he also has absolute intellectual authority. He is the foremost authority on God. No one can contradict him, no one can prove him wrong, no one can add anything to what Jesus taught us about God; Jesus' teaching is the absolute final word.

Jesus Has Authority Over Evil

Jesus has authority over people's lives, authority over what they become, authority over the kingdom of God, he preached with the greatest authority they ever heard, now another category - how about authority over evil? We hear about school shootings, mass murders, terrorism, human trafficking, child abuse, sexual abuse – all the horrors that go on all around us, and we say, "When will it end?" It will end when we finally make it to Revelation 11:15 and the Messiah establishes the eternal rule of God over every being in the universe and eliminates evil altogether forever. That's on the job description for the Messiah. So does Jesus have that kind of authority? Can he handle the problem of evil? He did battle with Satan in the wilderness for 40 days – what was the outcome? Mark didn't tell us, but now he's about to show us.

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. 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.”

Letter

Let’s see if we can transport ourselves back into that synagogue that day. Imagine your nephew lives in Capernaum and writes you this letter: Dear Uncle (or Aunt), 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 won’t 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 aunt, 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 bejeeppers out of me. He was shouting at the preacher. The man was shrieking with a voice that wasn’t his and you could feel the evil in the room. It was obvious to everyone that this was a demon, and the people were scared to death. Some were running out, and I was thinking of running, but I wanted to know, *What’s this young preacher from Galilee 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.

Satanic Resistance

Throughout his ministry, Jesus was confronted with demons constantly. You read about demons inhabiting people in the OT, and you don’t really see it all that much after Jesus’ time, but Jesus had to deal with thousands of demons. You get the feeling that after the Son of God bested Satan in the wilderness, the devil mustered all the forces of hell in an all-out onslaught of satanic and demonic attack, because he knows why Jesus came.

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

And when Jesus starts snatching souls out of that kingdom, the hosts of hell are going to fight back. And so the very first miracle Mark records 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.

They had seen the exorcists use their methods – lots of formulas and sweat and yelling and shouting and all the rest, usually with very little success. But they had never seen anything like this. Jesus just

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.

28 News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

Jesus Has Authority Over Disease

So Jesus' authority extends over people's lives, over the kingdom of God, over the Word of God, over evil, and now another one.

29 As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. 30 Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever

Fever Was a Serious Problem

So after the service they go home for lunch, and they find that Peter's wife is upset, because her mom is sick with a fever. Luke, who was a doctor, calls it a high fever,⁷ so this is a serious illness. She might have had malaria or something like that. Very often, at that time, if you got a high fever, it was fatal.

It was a common problem, so they had a lot of treatments and remedies for fever. There's even a section in the Talmud on how to treat fever. Most of the Jewish remedies were superstitious, like wearing an amulet consisting of seven sets of seven things hung around the neck,⁸ or go to a cross-road and pick up the first ant with a burden that you see and place it in a copper tube, and shake the tube and say: "What thou carriest on me, that I carry on thee."⁹

Other remedies were more practical, like suddenly spilling water on the person.¹⁰ I'm sure that was a real joy – having people do a surprise ice bucket challenge on your head when you have the flu.

For pagans, it was more of a religious issue. The Romans had at least 3 temples devoted to the god of fever, where they would try to placate the god who sends fevers. They had a lot of remedies, but the one thing all the remedies had in common was that none of them worked very well.

Somebody Call a Carpenter!

All that to show you that fevers were a serious problem in that culture, and so you can imagine their concern. Some of you know what it's like to sit outside the ICU, not knowing if your loved one is going to pull through. Or maybe you've been the patient in the ICU not knowing if you will pull through. They are worried, so they go to get help. But instead of calling a doctor, they call a carpenter.¹¹ Those of you who have gone through something like this – how many of you sat out there in the waiting room of the ICU searching Google for carpenters? When have you ever seen a medical emergency and you shout out, "Quick, somebody call a carpenter"? Why do they go to a carpenter in a moment like this?

It's because they knew Jesus had authority over everything. They knew, he's not a fisherman, but he can make every fish in the sea of Galilee jump into your net. He's not a trained rabbi, but he can preach like nothing you've ever heard. He's unschooled in the procedures for exorcism, but he orders demons around and they obey. They had seen the miracles, they saw what happened at his baptism, they saw what he did to that demon that very morning – he may not be a doctor, but they knew mom's chances of survival would be higher with this carpenter than with an actual doctor. And they were right.

⁷ Lk.4:38.

⁸ Babylonian Talmud, Shab. 67a.

⁹ Shab. 66b.

¹⁰ *Der Urquell* v. 223.

¹¹ When Mark says that they told Jesus, the implication is that they were asking Jesus for help. And what Mark implies, Luke states explicitly. **Luke 4:38 ... Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her.**
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The Healing

30 ... they told Jesus about her. 31 So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her.

Jesus took her hand, and at that split second her temperature was 98.6. All the millions of diseased cells in her body suddenly disappeared. He readjusted her hypothalamus. Proteins and chemicals were brought to normal levels, and any infection was gone without a trace in an instant. No formulas or incantations, no shaking ants in a tube or making her drink some weird concoction or splashing water on her or going to a pagan temple. He just takes her hand in his, and she's healed.

Mass Healing

32 That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demonized. 33 The whole town gathered at the door, 34 and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons...

He healed the whole city of Capernaum. Mark is showing us the spectrum of the healings. He wasn't like a modern faith healer who can heal some people in some situations but not others. Jesus healed everyone in every circumstance - those very close, and those he never met. He did miracles on a small scale/large scale - friends and enemies - believers and unbelievers. Jesus has total authority over sickness, disease, and death, and when the time comes for him to eliminate all suffering and death forever, it won't be any problem for him.

Conclusion

We're out of time, but Mark isn't done. The more we move through this book, the more he's going to show us more and more glimpses of this facet of Jesus' glory: namely, his authority. In the chapters to come Jesus will show his authority over all religion, over the traditions of the elders and all religious practices, authority over the Sabbath Day, authority over storms, authority over everything. No religious leader has ever done the things Jesus did, no one ever spoke like this man, no one has ever even made claims like Jesus made. Jesus comes along and says, "I am the Son of God from Psalm 2. I am the Son of Man who will rule all kingdoms of the earth, the one to whom all authority and power and dominion are given forever. I am the fulfillment of the entire Old Testament. The kingdom of God is here because I am here. I have authority over people, over demons, over disease, over the creation, over the souls of men, over the lives of men, over all kingdoms and nations and peoples. I have the authority to forgive sins, I have authority over the traditions of the elders and religion, I even have authority over the law of God. I am greater than Moses, greater than David, greater than the Temple - you have never met anyone like me. And I require that you repent and follow me. And if you don't, you will be shut out of the kingdom and die in your sins. If you do, I will make you fishers of men and you will reign with me forever." Glorious authority.