

OpenTheo

Mark 1:21 - 1:39



Gospel of Mark - Steve Gregg

In this exposition on Mark 1:21-1:39 by Steve Gregg, Jesus' teaching in the Capernaum synagogue is highlighted as an example of how Jesus spoke with authority, both with his own knowledge and even when he quoted authorities. The casting out of demons was a tangible display of this authority and evidence that the kingdom of God was coming. The author also notes the possible relationships among Jesus' followers, suggests the reality of demon possession and that it cannot be simply dismissed as pre-scientific belief, and speculates on the identities of several women mentioned in the passage.

Transcript

We're now going to turn to Mark 1, beginning at verse 21. In the first verses of this chapter, we've had really a quick scan over some of the significant events in the early life of Jesus, and the other Gospels actually take them in considerably more detail, but that's Mark's preference. He chooses to cover them rather quickly so that we might have an action-packed narrative, I suppose.

And so we've seen that he, Jesus was baptized, and then he was tempted for 40 days in the wilderness, then he was out preaching throughout Galilee about the kingdom of God, the gospel of the kingdom, and then he called four of his disciples at the Sea of Galilee who were fishermen, and that's really where we left off. Now he has these fishermen with him, and I might just mention that the chronological order here and in Matthew are the same, but in Luke it is different, because we're about to read about Jesus doing some ministry in Capernaum in the synagogue, after which he goes to Peter's house and heals Peter's mother. Now, the order of events here in Mark chapter 1 is different than that in Luke, although the order is the same in Matthew and in Mark.

There's an interesting change of order that Luke has, which we might as well observe, because it raises questions about, well, the early encounters that Jesus and the disciples had. Because in Matthew and Mark we have Jesus calling the four fishermen, as we have seen in the last session when we were here together last time. He called the four fishermen from their nets, and then Matthew and Mark have Jesus on a Sabbath going into the synagogue and casting a demon out of a man, and then going into Peter's house

and finding Peter's mother-in-law sick and healing her.

Now, the interesting thing is that Luke has this healing of Peter's mother-in-law in Peter's house prior to the calling of the four fishermen, and that always seemed to me to be an unnatural order of things for Luke to have, although the question has been raised, maybe that is the right order. It's hard to say, because the Gospels don't always tell the events in the same order. If Luke is correct, that means that Jesus actually was in Peter's home and healed his mother-in-law before he ever called Peter from his nets.

On the other hand, Peter, having seen such a miracle, might have induced him to leave his nets if Jesus at a later point called him. But the way that Matthew and Mark have it, Jesus calls these four fishermen first, and then they host him in Peter's house, but not until there's been an event that takes place in the synagogue, and this is going to be actually a very busy day for Jesus, because he's going to teach in the synagogue, cast a demon out, heal Peter's mother-in-law, and then after dark, the same evening, spend most of the evening and late into the night healing and casting out demons. Then they went into Capernaum, this is Mark 1.21, and immediately on the Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and taught.

And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, saying, Let us alone. What have we to do with you, Jesus of Nazareth? Did you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.

But Jesus rebuked him, saying, Be quiet, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him. And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.

And immediately his fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee. Now, it says this was in Capernaum, and really a fairly large percentage of the recorded miracles of Jesus do take place in Capernaum. That's where Peter lived at this time.

Now, according to John's gospel, Peter and Andrew and Philip and some of these other guys all were from Bethsaida, which was another town elsewhere, further south, or maybe up north. I think it was further north. Anyway, it's not a significant town in the story.

But John tells us they were from Bethsaida, but they must have moved to Capernaum for business reasons. Capernaum is still an interesting site to see. When I went to Israel a few years ago, the only time I've been there, I was in Jerusalem most of the time teaching at a Bible school.

But on one weekend, some of the students and I went up north to the Galilee, as they call it, and saw a few things, a few of the towns that we know from the story of Jesus. And the one I really, the only one I really enjoyed seeing was Capernaum, because it doesn't, it's not very spoiled. It's kind of like it might have looked back then.

Most of the sites in the Holy Land are kind of built up to be tourist attractions, or they're just simply modernized. People live there in modern dwellings. But the part of Capernaum that's old, there's not much that they've excavated.

They've excavated the synagogue that Jesus taught in here. Although they believe that the synagogue that's there today, the ruins of it, are from the fourth century A.D., which means it was a different synagogue than this one, but they found under the ruins the walls of an earlier synagogue, which was almost certainly the one that Jesus taught in. And therefore, it's on the same spot.

It was really interesting to walk into that synagogue, the ruins, and say, well, Jesus stood somewhere around here and gave a sermon and cast a demon out of someone here. Also in Capernaum, one of the ruins that they've excavated is an octagonal building that's sort of in a Byzantine style. Obviously not from the time of Christ.

Sort of a worship, it's a Christian building of some kind that Christians would worship in. But further under it, there's the ruins of apparently a private home, and traditionally that's referred to as Peter's house, although there's no reason, in my opinion, to believe it really is his. But you can still see it.

This is the place where Jesus spent a lot of time, Peter's house. Peter's house, once he became a disciple, became sort of the center of activity for Jesus when he was in Capernaum. And so Capernaum becomes a center of activity of the things we read in Jesus' Galilean ministry.

We read of him traveling throughout Galilee, but he returns to Capernaum. And probably the majority of the famous stories of Jesus' ministry are happening in this town. This is the first time we read in Mark of him entering a synagogue, although it would appear that he already had a reputation as a teacher before this time because he was invited to speak.

The synagogues were gathering places of the Jews that existed in every town where there were ten Jews or more who were adult males. If there were ten Jewish families, in other words, in a town, there was a synagogue. That institution was not ordained by Moses or any Old Testament scripture.

It was something that the rabbis or the scribes or someone had come up with during the time of the Babylonian exile or sometime thereafter. But by the time of Christ, there were synagogues everywhere that Jews were, and Jews were everywhere that there were

towns, really. And we find that later on, Paul also used the synagogues as a preaching platform.

When he traveled to a town, he could go and he could find a synagogue. He could find Jewish people there, and he could speak there. And the reason he could, and the reason Jesus could, is because the synagogues often did not have a resident teacher or rabbi.

Obviously, in every town where there's ten Jewish families, there wouldn't necessarily be a rabbi in every place because not one in ten Jews was a rabbi. It's much more rare than that. And so there was a president of the synagogue who would kind of keep order and so forth in the synagogue, but he wasn't necessarily a preacher.

And if a preacher came through town and was there on the Sabbath, they would invite him to speak because that was a special treat. And that's why when Paul went throughout the Roman Empire and visited his synagogue, they would ask him if he'd share, if he'd speak, because he was clearly a rabbi, probably dressed like a rabbi. Jesus, I suppose, probably didn't dress like a rabbi, but he had a reputation of being a teacher and apparently not too controversial yet at this point.

So a synagogue still allowed him to speak. And so he was there on this Sabbath morning. He entered the synagogue and he taught.

Now, it says that their initial reaction to his teaching was that of astonishment because of the manner in which he spoke. We're not given a specimen of his teaching here. We don't know what he said.

We don't know if he taught them in parables, which was his normal manner of speaking to people who were not disciples. Or if he expounded on some Old Testament scripture. We do know that on another occasion, we don't have very much of Jesus' synagogue teaching preserved for us in any of the gospels.

But in Luke chapter 4, we have a synagogue in Nazareth where Jesus teaches and he expounds on Isaiah 61, verses 1 and 2. So it's possible that he expounded on scripture rather than giving parables in these settings. In any case, when he spoke, they were astonished. And what astonished them most was that he did not speak as they were accustomed to hearing the rabbis speak.

He spoke as one having authority, not as the scribes. Now, the scribes were a professional class of Bible students. They were usually Pharisaic in their association.

The Pharisees were like a religious denomination, like Baptists are a denomination, or like Methodists are a denomination in Christendom. Pharisees were a denomination. A particular set of viewpoints were held by people who were Pharisees.

The fact that a person was a Pharisee did not mean that he was in professional ministry

or anything like that. It just meant he held the views of the Pharisees. And the Sadducees were another group.

And the scribes were usually associated with the Pharisees. In fact, Jesus often denounced the scribes and Pharisees together. The scribes were people who made it their business to study and interpret and transcribe the law and to teach it at times.

Ezra was probably the first man in the Bible who said to be a scribe. In Ezra 7.10 it says that Ezra was a ready scribe and the hand of God was upon him and he was a good one because he had purpose in his heart to seek the Lord, set in his heart to seek the Lord. The law of the Lord and to do it and to teach.

And that's what scribes afterwards were supposed to be modeled as. But apparently, like most of the Pharisees, the scribes were typically fairly hypocritical and legalistic. Now, when the scribes would teach, they didn't claim to know much.

They would always defer to older rabbis. In fact, originality in sermons was not a value in Jewish preaching. There were rabbis that that boasted in the Talmud.

There's boasts of certain rabbis that they had never, ever spoken a word except what they'd heard another rabbi say. Now, most pastors in Christian churches would like people to think at least that their sermons are original. And someone has said that originality is simply the ability to conceal your sources.

But people like to have a reputation of being original, saying something new people haven't heard before. But the scribes, they didn't value that at all. They wanted people to know that they were Orthodox.

They were following the venerable teachings of earlier scribes and they weren't deviating from them one bit. And so when the scribes would teach, they would comment, but they would always quote previous rabbis as their authority and say, well, this is what this scripture means, according to Rabbi Solon. So and on the other hand, Rabbi Solon believes it means this and so forth.

And when Jesus got to teach, he didn't appeal to any rabbis. He just appealed to his own authority. He just said, this is that this is the way it is.

Perhaps we have an example of this in the Sermon on the Mount, as Matthew preserves it in part of Matthew chapter five, where Jesus gave examples, six of them, of things that had been commonly taught in the synagogues. And he said to his disciples on the hillside, not in the synagogue, but he said, you've heard that it was said by those of old time, you shall not commit adultery. Okay, you've heard the scribes say that the older rabbis teach not to commit adultery.

And then Jesus said, but I say to you, if a man looks at a woman to lust after her, he

commits adultery in his heart. You've heard that it was said by those of old time, you should not murder. And whoever murders will be subject to the judgment.

But I say, whoever is angry at his brother without a cause will be subject to the judgment. So that Jesus would say, now you've heard what the rabbis have said about things, but I'm going to tell you what it really is. You know, what's really true about this.

And that's not what rabbis usually did. Rabbis just said, the rabbis of old have told us this. They didn't go further and say, but I say, as if to say, I'm going to modify or correct or at least improve on what the rabbis have said before.

That was shocking to the Jews. That's what astonished them, that he spoke as if he had the authority to just say things himself and to expect people to believe that they were true, because he said them. Now, a lot of preachers do that.

They preach as though they have authority. But remember, authority is doesn't refer to charisma. Lots of preachers have charisma.

That doesn't mean they have any authority in what they say. It doesn't mean that they're dramatic. It doesn't mean that they're loud.

It doesn't mean they pound the pulpit. That's not what authority is. Authority means that you speak knowledgeably and you're in a sense qualified to speak definitively on something.

Now, if a person is in authority over other people, for example, a parent is in authority over their teenage child who lives at home. The teenage child might be larger than the parent and stronger, but the child still obeys the parent's authority because the authority is not something tangible. Authority is something really, it's really kind of theoretical.

The idea is the parent is recognized as having the right to be in charge, quite apart from anything in the parent other than the fact that they're a parent. Just being a parent puts them in charge of the children. That in-charge-ness, that right to be, to give the commands and to expect the children to obey, that invisible quality is what authority is.

Now, when a person speaks with authority on a subject, if they're speaking with authority, it means they have the right to be believed because they're an expert of some kind. You might go to a lecture to hear some authority speak on some area of science or history or something like that because they're a professor who's done special studies on that and they have special knowledge of it. And when they do, they speak with authority.

They are, we would say, authorities on the subject because they know what they're talking about. Now, there are many people who speak as if they have that authority, but they don't. I often think in this connection of Richard Dawkins, who does speak authoritatively when he speaks about scientific things related to his field.

He is a zoological and biological authority. And if he gives a lecture on the way that cells divide or something else that's part of biological science, he speaks as an authority. But when he writes a book about Christianity, about God and about atheism and says there is no God, well, he speaks as if he has authority.

Certainly, he's just as dogmatic. He expects people to believe him. He doesn't feel like he has to prove his point.

I'm Richard Dawkins. I'm an authority. Well, you may be an authority on biology, but that doesn't make you an authority on God.

That's a totally different subject. And therefore, when he speaks as if he has authority to say, you know, atheism is true and Christianity is nonsense. Well, he's not.

He doesn't have authority. He just is talking as if he has authority. And there are preachers who do that, too.

They don't want people to question them. And so they act like they have authority to speak on a subject, even if they're not really more informed than anybody else on it. And they might even be poorly informed on it.

They just count on the air of authority to impress people, to get people to believe what they say and to not question them. Now, Jesus, when he spoke, he spoke as if he had authority, as if he was an authority on the subjects he spoke on. He said, the rabbis say this, but I say this.

Now, that's an authoritative way of speaking. But the question is, does he really have authority? That's what these people didn't know. They'd never heard anyone in their pulpit who really pretended to have authority.

The rabbis didn't claim to have any authority, or the teachers. That would be considered to be too uppity. That would be departing from tradition.

The only authorities you quote are ancient authorities, not yourself. But Jesus quoted himself as the only authority on his topic. So the people were set aback by someone who had the audacity to speak as if he had authority like that.

But did he have it? They didn't know. And then something happened, and then they did know. Because there was a man who had a demon in the synagogue who had apparently managed to sit quietly and draw no attention to himself for some time until a certain point in Jesus' sermon.

At that point, the authority with which Jesus spoke apparently aroused the demon, made it uncomfortable. And many times it is true that people who have demons can more or less conceal it, depending on the nature of their demonization. They can more or less

conceal it until they're confronted with Jesus.

The name of Jesus, the blood of Jesus, something like that, will sometimes arouse a reaction from a demon that's otherwise been laying rather dormant in a person. And while demon possession looks different in different cases, I think because of the difference in severity of cases. For example, the man who had a legion of demons, thousands of demons, he was crazy all the time.

He's a very severe case. He lived a crazy life. This man apparently was a less severe case.

He was able to live among people. It's possible that people didn't even know he was demon possessed. In fact, if they had, there's a good chance he would have been banned from the synagogue.

It's possible that this is the first time demons ever manifest in him, but they were there. And only a confrontation with Jesus personally is what brought that demon to the surface. And so as the man hears Jesus speak, this demon, this unclean spirit in him, begins to cry out saying, let us alone.

What have we to do with you, Jesus of Nazareth? Now, when a man stands up in church and says, leave us alone, you might think he's speaking for the congregation, to the preacher, like, you know, you're oppressing these people. Stop. Why don't you leave us all alone and go somewhere else? But see, the demon is speaking as a demon, speaking for the other demons.

Why don't you leave us demons alone? Why don't you leave our territory? Why don't you just let us live and let live as we've been doing all this time before you showed up? That's what they're asking. And says, the demon referred to him as Jesus of Nazareth. He says, did you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.

Now, did you come to destroy us? There's an interesting statement because it suggests that the demons very well knew that Jesus had the power to do that. In some other instances, the demons said, have you come to torment us before the time? It's interesting that they said that. Have you come to torment us before the time? Meaning they knew there was a time when they would have to face torment.

They knew there was a time when their condemnation would catch up with them, when the judgment would come. But they didn't think this was the time. It seemed premature.

What are you doing here right now? Have you come prematurely to torment us before the proper time? It's interesting that that would be their question. And I really don't know what informed the demons about the proper time and so forth. We don't know enough about the demons and their background to know why they knew certain things like this, but they apparently know that they are going to be judged.

That's probably why, as James puts it, the demons believe and tremble. They know they will be tormented. They know they'll be judged.

But I don't know why they thought this was early for that. And maybe it was early for that. Maybe Jesus actually didn't come to torment them at this point.

When the man with the legion was confronting Jesus and the legion, the demons said, please don't send us to the abyss. The abyss presumably is where they would go to be tormented. They said, send us to this herd of slain.

Jesus didn't send them to the abyss, but to the herd of slain. Perhaps it was not really time for him to torment them. And they didn't understand the nature of his mission at this point.

I think their torment, no doubt, will really be at the day of judgment, at the second coming of Christ. And maybe they didn't have a concept of him coming initially, this early. They may have known that the judgment day is way off of it, but what's he doing here now? Is he here to destroy us early? Is he cutting short our tenure here? And the demons said, I know who you are.

You're the Holy One of God. Now, that sounds like a positive thing for the demons to say, and the demons always said that kind of thing. But Jesus always reacted the same way when he told them to be quiet.

Now, that's interesting because the demons continually acknowledge the truth about Jesus. And Jesus always told them to not say anything about it, told them to be quiet, stop speaking. Actually, Jesus' words, be quiet.

In the Greek, the word is much more severe than be quiet. It's more like shut up. The literal meaning of the word there in the Greek is be muzzled.

Like you put a muzzle on a dog and shut its mouth. Jesus said to the demons, be muzzled. That's the literal meaning of the Greek word.

Some of you may be too young to remember this TV show, All in the Family, but the father on the show, Archie Bunker, he used to say to his wife or to his kids if he wasn't pleased with what they were doing, he said, stifle yourself. That's kind of the same thing. Be muzzled, just stifle yourself.

And so Jesus said to the demons. But why did he say that? Why didn't he just say, that's right, folks, do you hear what the demons said right there? He said, I'm the Holy One of God. And that's not even me telling you.

That's him. So let's all have an altar call. Now, Jesus didn't exploit the demonic testimony.

In fact, he didn't even invite it or welcome it or even permit it. Why? Now, this happened whenever he encountered demons. They always said, you are the Son of God.

We'll see that later in this chapter when it gives just a summary of, in verse 34 in this chapter, then he healed many who were sick of various diseases, cast out many demons. And he did not allow the demons to speak because they knew him. He didn't want them revealing who he was.

Now, later on, after Jesus was gone and the apostles were preaching in the pagan world, and Paul and Silas were in Greece, in the city of Philippi, a demon possessed girl followed them around. And what did it say? Do you remember what the demon said? These are servants of God. Who bring us the message of salvation.

Who show us a way of salvation, she said. Now, what's wrong with that? That sounds like a good thing to say. And it says, Paul became indignant and told the demon, be quiet and come out of her.

And the demon came out. Neither Paul nor Jesus really wanted the demons, you know, testifying to them. Why? Well, first of all, Jesus didn't need the testimony of the devils.

And secondly, it could be a bit confusing. A time would come later on when the Pharisees would accuse Jesus of being in league with Beelzebub, the prince of demons. And people were, in fact, trying to figure out where Jesus got his power and what he was about.

And some would say, well, you know, the demons were promoting him big time. Maybe he's one of theirs. You know, I mean, there's a sense which you don't want.

There's certain people you don't want as your campaign team, you know, your promotion team. They're like what you call embarrassing supporters. I think most people who speak publicly very much know what it means to have an embarrassing supporter.

Someone says, I'm right with you, you know, but everything about them emanates they're kind of crazy, you know, and they're just not really, they're not the kind of person that you're hoping to, you know, get. Point to it as the one who endorses you because you're not sure you want to endorse them and have the demons endorsement is not something that particularly interest. Jesus is certainly not interested in it, and he might even be concerned for another reason, because we know that in addition to that, Jesus, when he healed people, usually told people not to tell.

Jesus seemed to have a habit of trying to keep his miracles and his identity undisclosed as much as possible, although he could not help it. I mean, he couldn't help himself to heal people and so forth. But when he did, he said, don't tell anyone about this.

Jesus did not want his ministry promoted the wrong way. He didn't want people going out and just advertising his miracles and getting people to come for that reason. Jesus

did not ever claim publicly in so many words that he was the Messiah to the public.

He didn't go out and say, I'm the Messiah. The demons said he was and people said he was, but Jesus was not out to broadcast that. The fact that he was the Messiah was something I think he wanted people to discover through a more godly way, like Peter at Caesarea Philippi when Jesus said, who do you say I am? And Peter said, you're the Christ, you're the Messiah.

You're the son of the living God. And Jesus said, you're blessed because flesh and blood didn't reveal that to you. My father in heaven revealed that to you.

That's what Jesus wanted. He wanted people to know who he was because God gave them that revelation, not because demons testified or not even because people testified. Now later after Jesus was gone, he wanted us to testify, but when Jesus was coming down from the Mount of Transfiguration, where three of the disciples with him had seen Moses and Elijah, when they're coming down the mountain, Jesus says, don't tell this to anybody.

Don't tell anyone about this until after I rise from the dead. But obviously he didn't mind after he rose from the dead, you know, them promoting as much as possible. So this is an interesting phenomenon.

Jesus is not a self-promoting act and he doesn't like promotion, certainly not from the wrong sources. And the demons are the wrong sources. You don't want people getting the impression that they're your promotional team.

And so he says, be muzzled and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him. Now this often happened when demons came out, their last hurrah would be to throw the person into convulsions.

I remember when my wife and I were raising little children. We had some Australian friends who had raised children a little ahead of us. Their kids were a bit older than ours and they were giving us counsel.

And, you know, when you have a baby, an infant, a newborn, sometimes they just get really, really fussy just before they go to sleep. And this Australian mother said, we call that baby's last stand. And the baby knows that it's got to surrender to sleep and it doesn't want to.

It throws a big fit and stuff. And she said, we call that baby's last stand. Well, there's times when the demons know that, you know, they can't stay.

They got to surrender to it. But they put up one last bit of resistance and they throw a person into a convulsion as they leave. And we see that in the Gospels quite a bit.

And that happens, of course, now even demon possession. Some of us in this room know a young lady in Santa Cruz who recently was delivered of demons. It was a long process.

She apparently had a lot of demons and it was four months before her complete deliverance occurred. But I was there for some of the time and got to see some of it happen. And I know there was one night where it appeared that maybe four or five demons came out in a row.

And she would go into a convulsion just as the demon left. And then the demon would be gone apparently and she just relaxed. And then another one would rise up and would command it to go.

And it would convulse again as the demon comes out. So, I mean, this is true to life. I mean, the accounts of the Gospels, the way it happens in real life, the demons try to, I guess, do as much damage as they can on their way out the door.

And so it convulsed the man and did come out. Now we read the reaction of the people now, the same people. We saw their reaction in chapter, in verse 22, when they had just heard Jesus teach, but had seen no demonstration.

And when they heard him teach, it says they were astonished in verse 22. And it was because he taught them as if he was a person who had authority, but they didn't know whether he did or not. But now we see in verse 27, and they were all amazed so that they questioned among themselves saying, what is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority he commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him.

Now they say he's not talking as if he has authority. He does have authority. And it's demonstrated by the fact that even the demons submit to that authority.

So the casting out of the demon, although I'm sure the demon itself meant for this disturbance to cause a distraction and to interrupt and disturb the meeting that Jesus was teaching at, it actually served to give Jesus an opportunity to show that he didn't just talk as if he had authority. He could prove that he really did have authority and none less than the demons became the inadvertent testifiers to that fact. By their obedience to him, I mean, not by what they said.

And immediately his fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee. Verse 29. Now, as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John.

Now, Simon and Andrew were the brothers who were fishing together when Jesus called them and James and John were the other two brothers who were fishing together when Jesus called them. And I don't remember if I mentioned last time that James and John were actually related to Jesus by blood. They were first cousins of Jesus.

And I was recently asked, you know, on what basis I would say that at our Bible forum, someone wrote and asked the question about that. And so I recently looked up the scriptures about it too. In Mark and in Matthew, when it talks about the women who were at the cross when Jesus died, Mark and Matthew named three women.

They mentioned Mary Magdalene and they mentioned another woman named Mary, who was the wife of Clopas. And she's also said to be the mother of James the less and Jude, a couple of guys we don't know much about. But, so there's two Mary's there, Mary Magdalene and Mary, the wife of Clopas.

And then one of the gospels says, and Salome. And another one says, the mother of Zebedee's children. Now, Salome in the parallel accounts is apparently the mother of Zebedee's children.

And when you look at the parallel statements in John, and it's not very often that you really find parallel statements in John, parallel to the synoptic gospels. But when you find the reference to the women at the cross, it's in chapter 19 of John. And see, where's those women? There they are in verse 25.

Now, there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother. Now, she was not mentioned in the other gospels. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was not one mentioned.

So John tells us there were four women there. One was actually the mother of Jesus. And then there was another Mary, the wife of Clopas, who is mentioned in the other gospels, and Mary Magdalene.

And there's another one who's called his mother's sister. It says there was Jesus' mother and his mother's sister. And Mary, the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene.

There were three Mary's there and someone else who was his mother's sister. Now, the way it's punctuated here, you could get the impression that Mary, the wife of Clopas, was the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. But the likelihood that two siblings would both be named Mary is not very great.

You might find siblings named Christine and Christina, but that's a little different. Mary and Mary, not likely. Too confusing.

So it would appear that the one who is referred to as Jesus' mother's sister is another woman. And we know from the parallel accounts in Mark and Matthew that Salome, the mother of Zebedee's children, was that other woman. So from this we deduce that Salome was not only the mother of James and John, but she was the sister of Mary.

And that makes James and John Jesus' first cousins. Peter and Andrew, we don't know of any relationship that they bore to Jesus, though they were, of course, brothers of each other. And they lived together in a house.

Now, James and John probably didn't live in this house, though they went with Jesus and the others into the house on this occasion. It says he went into the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. Now, in those days, families, extended families, lived together.

Peter's a married man and his mother-in-law lives with him and with his wife and his brother lives with him. Now, his brother might have even had a wife. He later did.

Later on, we read in 1 Corinthians 9 that the apostles, apparently all of them, were married men. Now, whether Andrew at this point in time was a married man or not, we don't know. But it may be that two families lived there, plus the in-laws.

In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul is talking about himself and Barnabas and how they do not take upon themselves some of the privileges that an apostle might otherwise demand. And he says, Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord and Cephas, that's Peter, or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working? He's saying the other apostles refrain from working. They have wives.

They take their wives around. Barnabas and I don't do that. We can't refrain from working.

We make tents and we don't have wives. But he's saying that in that respect, we, Barnabas and Paul, are different than the other apostles. So, apparently, Paul seemed to indicate that they were the only ones of the apostles that didn't have wives.

So, it would appear that Andrew also was married. We know that Simon was married at this point in time because it says in verse 30 that Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever and they told him about her at once. In Luke's gospel it says, With a high fever.

Luke was a physician and he actually uses in Luke's parallel, which is in Luke chapter 4, he uses a Greek word that's actually from the Greek medical books. Actually, Luke being a physician used a lot of vocabulary that is known from the ancient Greek medical text. And Luke uses a term here, a technical term for a very dangerously high fever.

She wasn't just reading a few degrees above normal. She had a very severe fever. And they told Jesus about her at once.

So, he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up and immediately the fever left her and she served them. Now, I might just, before we pass this up, pause to note that it's a bit ironic that Peter is the devil's wife and that the Bible says he's married when in fact, according to the Roman Catholic tradition, the popes are the successors of Peter and they're not allowed to have wives. In fact, priests in the Catholic Church are not allowed to have wives.

Clergymen in general are not allowed to have wives. But Peter, who is said to be the first pope of the whole movement, he had a wife. To make matters worse for the Roman Catholic doctrine, it seems to me, in 1 Timothy 3 where Paul is giving the qualifications for bishops, the first thing he says, they must be the husband of one wife.

So, to qualify even for an overseer in the church, you have to have one wife. Peter, if he was the first pope, he set a precedent by having a wife. But for some reason, the Roman Catholic tradition does not allow the clergy to have a wife.

To be married. Now, Peter's wife got healed and she got up and started serving them immediately. The word immediately is common, of course, in Mark, frequently.

Verse 32, Now at the evening, when the sun had set, they brought to him all who were sick and those who were demon possessed, and the whole city was gathered together at the door. Then he healed many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons. And he did not allow the demons to speak because they knew him.

Now, this happened, it says, at sunset. Why did they wait till then? Well, it was the Sabbath. The Jews had a tradition that the rabbis had passed down that a physician should not heal on the Sabbath unless the sick person had a life-threatening condition that would not allow him to survive until the next day.

In other words, if at all possible, if a life could be spared without healing on the Sabbath, then a physician was not permitted to do so. Jesus was criticized in another synagogue in Mark chapter 2 because he healed a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. Jesus ignored the rules and he just healed whenever he wanted to heal.

But the people of the town were Jews and they knew the rules. And so they didn't bring their sick to Jesus to be healed until sundown because the Sabbath officially ends at six o'clock at sundown on Saturday. So that's when they came, when the sun was set.

Then they came out from everywhere, bringing their sick and their demon possessed to Jesus. Now you might say, but Jesus had cast that one demon out and healed Peter's mother-in-law on the Sabbath and it was daytime. True.

But my impression is that this is early enough in Jesus' ministry that there weren't all these critical rabbis and scribes from Jerusalem falling around looking to criticize him for everything he did. And also, the healing of the mother-in-law was a private matter in a bedroom that wasn't seen by other people, so he wouldn't get criticized for that. The casting of the demon out of the man in the synagogue was seen by many, but that was kind of spontaneous and unplanned.

I mean, the man was disrupting the service to tell the demon to go away isn't really something you can put off until the next day. So I think in a sense, Jesus would receive very little criticism for that. But people did not expect him to heal at leisure on the

Sabbath.

And so they waited until sundown and the whole town came out and brought all the sick. And apparently Jesus says he healed many who were sick. I believe in Matthew's Gospel, if I'm not mistaken, he healed all their sick that day.

And many who had demons. Now many demons, it makes it sound like commonplace in a small town like that. And again, if you go to the ruins of Capernaum, you'll be impressed at how small it is, how close the house is to the synagogue.

And it's all very close. It would be very crowded if there were very many people. I don't know how many, I don't know what the population of Capernaum was at that time.

It might have only been a couple thousand or less, I don't know. But the whole house was surrounded by these people and among them there were many demon possessed, which gives the impression that demon possession was relatively common. It's treated as matter of factly as sicknesses.

In fact, demon possession was encountered by Jesus just about everywhere he went. And often many cases of it. So we have to ask ourselves, why was demon possession so frequently encountered by Jesus, but not so much now? And there's several possible answers to that.

One is that it is encountered as much now, we just don't recognize it. Because we have different names for it. First of all, remember demons don't always manifest themselves.

The man in the synagogue, it's probable that no one knew he had a demon until that day when he manifested publicly. There may be others walking around who are demonized who don't manifest because the demons know better than to manifest and get themselves into trouble. We may see demons possess people more than we know.

In fact, even the ones who do manifest, we live in a society that doesn't believe in the supernatural, so they give it a natural explanation. And of course, they'll always refer to it as a mental illness and they'll give usually some kind of medication for them or put them away in an institution. And so we don't recognize demon possession when it's around us.

The case I just mentioned of a young girl who was demon possessed who got delivered in the last, just the past few months, known to some of us here in this room. There's at least four of us in the room who know this family that this happened to. Actually, five of us here.

This girl, they called for the elders of her church, which was a Baptist church, and the elders, well, at least the pastor, it seems like most pastors did not even believe that she had a demon. And they thought that she should be put on meds, they thought she

should be committed or taken to a psychiatrist at least. Because they didn't want to give it a supernatural explanation.

Well, it was supernatural. The manifestations were classic demonization and deliverance. Deliverance eventually came through prayer and fasting and the ordinary means that the Bible suggests.

But she was manifesting, but the leaders of her church didn't recognize it as a demon. So I would say that it's very possible that demonization is just as common now as it was in biblical times. But we call it something else, so we don't recognize it for what it is.

Now, there's another possibility, too, and that is that the demons came out of the woodwork when Jesus showed up. We don't read much about demon possession in the Old Testament, though it existed. An evil spirit came upon Saul, and there's a few other instances in the Old Testament of evil spirits coming upon people.

They're not very common. Then there's in the Old Testament the references to those who have a familiar spirit. These would be mediums, and they're regarded as having a spirit.

We would probably call them demon possessed. We don't get the impression that demon possession was all that commonly addressed in the Old Testament. Maybe because they didn't have any cures for it, so it just went unspoken of.

Maybe in the Old Testament stories there were demon possessed people all over the place. Maybe every village had its village idiot or its demon possessed, its village demon possessed person. But we don't read about it because no one around had the authority to fix it.

And so they were just like we don't read about people dying of cancer or other things because the stories are not worth telling. They didn't get fixed. Whereas in Jesus' ministry, they are worth telling because when demon possession manifests itself in His presence, He fixed it.

He cured it. He cast the demons out. Now, I don't suppose anyone in this room has any serious problems believing in demon possession, but you will find there are Christians, modern Christians, who think that demons probably aren't really the cause of these things.

There are people who have a lot of confidence in mental health professionals and believe that we now have scientific theories about what's wrong with people, including schizophrenia and manic depressive disorder. And ADD and things like that. We have labels for everything.

And they sound scientific. And many Christians have been seduced by it, just like many

Christians have been seduced by the theory of evolution. Many people are very impressed by what sounds scientific.

And if it seems to be in conflict with what the Bible says, they're often willing to write the Bible off as a pre-scientific account of things. And many Christians actually say that, you know, what is here described as demon possession was really just something like schizophrenia or some kind of just some kind of a mental illness. They didn't know about it in those days, and they thought it was demons.

But of course, if that's true, then Jesus seems to think it was demons also. And He would have been wrong if it wasn't. Or some people say, well, He knew it wasn't, but He accommodated them.

I was reading a commentary recently by William Barclay, who's kind of a liberal. He's on the borderline between evangelical and liberal. He does tend to explain away the miraculous.

And he talked about what the Jews believed about demons back then and so forth. And he says, now, what are we to make of this? He says, basically, he did not commit himself to believe there are demons. But he said, but even if it wasn't a demon, Jesus had to address it as if it was because the man believed it was.

And so Jesus just, you know, was accommodating the ignorance of the people. Well, but Jesus talked about demons in other situations as if they were real things. Like when He said in Matthew 12, when an unclean spirit goes out of a man, it wanders through dry places, seeking rest, and finding none.

It brings seven worse demons in itself and goes back into the same man again. So obviously, Jesus believed demons were real. And it certainly is not possible to write off all the biblical cases of demon possession, or the modern cases for that matter, as mental illness.

After all, how could a person mentally ill speak, for example, with multiple voices at the same moment, out of the same throat? Different voices of different personalities. How could a person who is mentally ill have clairvoyant powers and be able to tell things about people that no one knows except the person himself? That happens sometimes. Demons possess people sometimes levitate or have other kinds of strange supernatural abilities, supernatural strength, like the man who broke chains.

And these are not instances of, you know, a disordered brain. This is evidence of a supernaturally invaded personality. And the fact that the demons can be cast out of the victim into animals.

Now, if we said, well, the demons went out of this man into that man, someone might say, well, it's all the whole superstitious notion that the second man was simply

superstitious and he thought the demons went into him. But did pigs have that superstition also? I mean, who convinced them that the demons went into them? Obviously, the phenomena that are described do not fit the theory that this is a mental illness situation. It's more the biblical assumption, which by the way, all cultures until modern times have assumed, and that is that the world is haunted by evil spirits.

Where they came from, we're never told. The theory that people like the best these days seems to be that they fell with the devil sometime in ancient history. Another extremely popular view is that they are angels who fell in Genesis chapter six by being attracted to women.

There's also another view out there that some have held, and that is that there are the spirits of wicked people who have died, but during their lifetime they had bound themselves over to Satan through the occult. And now having died, they're still his slaves and forced even against their preferences to serve him and to do damage at his command. There's all these different views of who the demons are and where they came from.

The Bible doesn't tell us. It doesn't put a stamp of endorsement on any of those views. I don't know why, but I have to assume that means that God must think we don't need to know where they came from.

But we apparently need to know that they exist. We need to know the kind of damage they do, and we need to know what to do about it. And the Bible does tell us those things.

And Jesus is the first one in Scripture to model how to deal with those things when they occur. The apostles also and others later on also did the same thing. We're told that these signs shall follow those who believe.

Jesus said, In my name they shall cast out demons. So this is something that Christians are supposed to continue to do. Well, let's just read a few more verses and we're done.

Verse 35. Now, in the morning, having risen along while before daylight, he went out and departed to a solitary place. And there he prayed.

And Simon and those who were with him searched for him. When they found him, they said to him, Everyone is looking for you. But he said to them, Let us go into the next town that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.

And he was preaching in their synagogue throughout all Galilee and casting out demons. Now, Jesus was up late healing and casting out demons the night before on the night of the Sabbath. But he didn't sleep in.

He got up early, a long time before day actually, and went out to some place where he

thought he would not be found so he could pray undisturbed for a period of time. No doubt the apostles woke up a little later and found him gone and conducted a search and finally located him and said, Hey, Jesus, come on, come back. People are already gathering for your next meeting in Capernaum.

But Jesus didn't decide to exploit the crest of popularity that was beginning there. He wasn't into that. He wanted to reach more people.

These people had had their chance. They've been preached to. They've seen enough to convince them.

Now, someone else had to have a chance. Jesus could have set up a tent there and held revival meetings for weeks, probably got a big offering. But he wasn't into that.

He wanted to go out and make sure more people would have opportunity to hear the gospel. So they say, Everyone's looking for you. In other words, already in the morning, the people are gathering around Peter's house saying, Hey, where's Jesus? We're ready to see him do some more of that kind of stuff.

And instead of going back with them to the crowds, he said, Let's go somewhere else. Let's go to another town that I may preach there also. For this purpose, I have come forth.

Now, he came forth to preach. He didn't come forth to do miracles. You might say, Well, then why did he do so many miracles? So the Bible suggests that he did the miracles to back up the authority with which he preached.

In the next chapter, there's a case where he says to a man who's paralyzed, Arise, take up your bed and walk in order to show that he has the authority to forgive sins. That if he heals a lame man, not just because there's a lame man and Jesus can't help but heal him, but because the people question whether Jesus has the right to forgive sin. He says, Well, let me show you if I have authority or not.

And so that would appear to be his main reason for healing and casting out demons was as a demonstration of his authority. The disciples and the people of the town apparently wanted Jesus to come back into town and do some more miracles. He says, No, I'm going to go do some more preaching.

Preaching is what I came to do. That's what I was sent out for, to be a preacher. That's the purpose why I've come forth.

And he says in verse 39, and he was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee and casting out demons. Interesting that singles out casting out demons as the particular miracle dimension, because he probably was healing the sick and so forth too. But Mark is very emphatic on this matter of the demons, because casting out demons

was an evidence that the kingdom of God was breaking in.

Mark, of course, in verses 14 and 15 of this chapter is pointing out that Jesus went preaching the kingdom of God. And on another occasion, Jesus said in Matthew, he said, If I'm casting out demons by the spirit of God, it's because the kingdom of God has come upon you. The expulsion of demons from people wholesale was an evidence that the kingdom of God was breaking into what had been the devil's territory before.

And the demons were losing their grip and had to abandon their territory because the kingdom was displacing them. And so Jesus went around preaching and we know what he preached was the kingdom in all Galilee and he was casting out demons as probably the backup to show that this is true, the kingdom is coming and he has the authority to announce it and to be the king. Now, all of Galilee, you might say, well, he was on foot, how much ground could he cover? Israel is a small country.

Galilee itself is only about 45 miles or 60 kilometers from north to south. And it's only about 25 miles from east to west, like 40 kilometers, something like that, 25 miles. Anyway, it's really a small area.

You can walk 20 miles in a day. And, you know, so he could walk from east to west across the country in a day and from north to south the whole distance in two days. So if he made a trip for a few weeks or a week or so, he could hit a lot of villages and cover the whole of Galilee.

And we several times read of him going throughout all of Galilee and casting out demons. So this whole region had abundant opportunity to see what Jesus could do and to hear what he had to say. But still at the end of about a year of such Galilean ministry, he left there with about 12 followers.

At one time he had thousands following him, but he didn't have a lot of committed followers there. The people wanted to see the miracles. And that's why they came in large numbers.

And they wanted to be fed. Once they found out he could do that, they didn't come because of their interest in the kingdom of God. They came for all the wrong reasons.

And that's no doubt one of the main reasons Jesus told people not to broadcast the miracles, because that would just attract more people of the wrong type who just wanted to see a show. Don't tell anyone about this miracle, he'd say. Because he knew that that would just cause people to come who had a shallow interest.

He wanted his father to be revealing to people who he was and to build his kingdom that way, not by the spectacular. Which is, by the way, different than some charismatic churches would do it today if they could. I mean, a lot of them want to broadcast the miraculous that's going on in their meetings so that, I don't know, I guess they feel like

the kingdom will spread better that way.

Jesus' strategy was of another sort. Alright, well we're out of time, so we're going to take it there.