

JESUS: THE SERVANT AT WORK

VOLUME ONE

STUDY FOUR

Astonishing Authority

Mark 1:21–28

Being in the presence of Jesus Christ must have been an awesome experience. Watching Him in action and seeing Him as He ministered to people of all types with all kinds of needs. And hearing Him preach with such a magnificent mixture of authenticity and authority was surely breathtaking.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WE bow and curtsy in the presence of royalty. We show deference by calling them, “Your Majesty” or “Your Royal Highness.” Our formal attire reflects proper decorum and shows respect. Physical gestures, specific greetings, and pristine royal etiquette are often ways for us to acknowledge their power and authority.

In the presence of monarchs we bow, but in the presence of evil . . . we instinctively cower. Fear creeps over us when we sense the powers of darkness. It puts a chill up our spine like nothing we’ve ever experienced when we witness the demonic.

In our passage for this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, Mark showcases Christ’s great power over the demonic world. He never trembled before dark powers. He is the King of Kings, the divine monarch who rules all. One day, “every knee will bow” at the mention of His name and “every tongue will confess” that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:10–11 NASB). Demons cower in His presence because they know who He is.

Let’s travel to Capernaum with Mark as our guide to witness Christ’s great power and astonishing authority and learn how to live with confidence under it as we proclaim His name to the world.



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SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES
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PREPARE YOUR HEART

“You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.”
(Jeremiah 29:13 NASB)

Earnestly seek your heavenly Father. Intentionally turn your attention to His face. Let your eyes behold in amazement His greatness as you begin to study His Word. Express how your heart is lost in wonder, love, and praise!



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Mark brought us to Galilee where Jesus called His first disciples. Think of Christ’s commanding presence, His ability to capture attention, and His wisdom to win hearts. These men said yes! And they left *all* to follow Him (Mark 1:16–20).

Mark wasted no time taking us to the following Sabbath—the Jewish day of rest and worship on Saturday—when Jesus entered the synagogue of Capernaum.

According to Pastor Chuck, the first-century synagogue was “a place of instruction on the Sabbath. . . . a center of Jewish culture and literature. . . . [and] a civil meeting place much like a modern courthouse.”¹ Synagogue services consisted of prayer, reading a passage from the scrolls, and an exposition of the Scripture that was read.

Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John most likely had grown up in that synagogue. By this time, Jesus’ ministry in Galilee had generated a great following, so it’s no wonder that the synagogue ruler called upon Him to read from the scroll. What happened next was an astonishing display of Jesus’ power and confirmation that He was exactly who He claimed to be.



Observation: Jesus’ Ministry in Capernaum

Observation is the first step toward understanding the meaning of a Bible passage.² Read [Mark 1:21–28](#) carefully more than once in multiple translations. Then use your skills of observation to answer the following questions.

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Jesus Teaching the People—Mark 1:21–22

Mark did not record what Jesus said in the synagogue in Mark 1:21–22. However, how did he describe the people’s response? Why did they respond in such a manner?

Learn to notice the little words: and, as, for. Here’s one of those “fors.” In verse 22, they were amazed at His teaching; for . . . it’s the word because . . . because He was teaching as one having authority and not as the scribes.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Jesus Dealing with Demons—Mark 1:23–26

The adversary hates the proclamation of truth that stirs genuine and enthusiastic responses in those who hear. Observe the first two words in Mark 1:23–24 as you read the passage slowly. Then, below, record what each phrase teaches us about demonic spirits.

Four Observations About Demons Mark 1:23–26	
Phrase	Observation
<i>A man in the synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit.</i>	
<i>“Why are you interfering with us?”</i>	
<i>“Jesus of Nazareth? . . . I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”</i>	
<i>Jesus reprimanded him. “Be quiet! Come out of the man,” he ordered. At that, the evil spirit screamed, threw the man into a convulsion, and then came out of him.</i>	

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When Jesus cast out the demons, how did the people respond in Mark 1:27–28?

There again is that authority. That astonishing authority! They've never seen anything like it. Not only does He teach in a fresh way, but He commands even the unclean spirits. And they obey Him. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Jesus' Astonishing Authority

People were amazed at Jesus' teaching because He taught with authority, unlike the scribes. Read [Mark 1:21–22](#) again in the MSG translation. Create your own paraphrase of the two verses to explain the reason Jesus' preaching won their hearts.

Jesus had a message from God. And as He spoke, He spoke it with clarity, passion, enthusiasm, and depth. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

While Jesus was teaching, suddenly a shriek came from a demonized man. Read [1:23–26](#) in the MSG and the J. B. Phillips translations. Explore the articles “[What Does the Bible Say About Demons?](#)” and “[What Does the Bible Say About Demon Possession?](#)” at [gotquestions.org](#). What are demons? How would you explain this man's condition?

My lexicon says it is a shriek; it is a scream when this demon cries out. Demons have no voice. So inhabiting individuals gives them the ability to speak. In this case, the individual with the demons is now in his victimized state at the mercy of the voice of the demons. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Astonishing Authority

Mark 1:21–28

Mark highlighted not just the people's response to Jesus' authority but also the demons' response in Mark 1:23–27. What did Mark want his readers to know and believe about Jesus from these responses? What central truth did Mark want to establish at the outset of his gospel? Who is Jesus?

When He says, “Come out,” there ain’t no stayin’. They’re comin’ out. Isn’t it great to serve a Master like that? —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Operating Under God's Authority

In Matthew's gospel, Jesus said to His disciples that “all authority” has been given to Him and promised to be “with [them] always” as they go and make Him known (Matthew 28:18–20). See how Paul echoed Christ's authority ([Ephesians 1:19–21](#); [Colossians 1:15–20](#)). What astonishes you the most about Christ's authority?

Teaching is authoritative when it's sourced in the Scriptures, when it is empowered by the Spirit. When it gives witness to the authority of Christ. Christ is the preeminent One. He's the star of the show. He is the magnificent One. Teaching is authoritative when you're brought face-to-face with Christ.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

How do passages such as [Matthew 12:43–45](#); [James 2:19](#); and [1 John 5:19](#) corroborate the truth we found in Mark 1:23–25 that Satan and demons are real?

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As you compare *Mark 1:23–25* with *Ephesians 6:10–20*; *James 4:1–7*; *1 Peter 5:6–9*; and *1 John 4:4*, how can believers have protection and authority over demons?

For you to have protection and authority over demons, you need Christ. Why must we submit to God's authority? Because without it we are hopelessly at the mercy of evil forces. You are hopelessly bound for a life of depression, discouragement, disillusionment, brokenness. Operating under that authority, we live in hope. How great is that? —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Submit to Christ's Astonishing Authority

Three questions emerge from our passage to help us apply the principles we've discovered.

1. *What makes teaching authoritative?* Not the speaker's personality or talent but only its source—the Word of God. The divine Word at the center of Scripture is the person of Jesus Christ.
2. *Do Christians have authority over demons?* In our own power, no. Only in God's power can we resist the devil. Christ is the supreme authority, and through His name demons are defeated.
3. *Why must we submit to God's authority?* Only by operating under His authority will we have power to overcome evil.

How does knowing that Christ has astonishing authority over the demonic world strengthen your faith? Which line from our passage touched your heart the most?

Some of you will end this message with us and you will be frightened. If you have the Lord Jesus Christ, there is no reason to be. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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In what area of your life do you sense the Holy Spirit asking you to submit to Christ's authority? What steps can you take to express such submission? Why not thank God for the power of His Spirit at work in you as you submit to Christ's authority?

Jesus is the Holy One of God who has all authority in heaven and on earth. He is the King of Kings, the majestic One whom angels worship and demons fear. He is our Savior and Lord, and we bow humbly before Him and Him alone.



A FINAL PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your Word! I bow before Your awesome power! Help me to serve You in the power of Your might. May my heart remember that He who is in me is greater than Satan and the demons. Help me operate under Christ's authority every day. In His powerful and amazing name, I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Mark*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary, vol. 2 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 38–39.
2. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)" at insight.org.

For the 2026 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Mirlenda Noëlliste in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2010, 2026 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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