



# Getting to know Christ Jesus from some questions asked in the Gospel of Mark

## INTRODUCTION

In our previous study we looked at questions between Satan (through the evil spirits – READ MARK 1:24) and Christ. We learned from this study, through its context, that

- Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God, who has power over the devil and his servants
- The spiritual leaders of the time in Galilee apparently lost their vision of the Sovereignty of God
- The ministry of Jesus Christ introduced a complete new era “*The Kingdom of God is at hand*” (Mark 1:15)

## BY WHAT AUTHORITY?

Not only was the *content* and *purpose*<sup>1</sup> of Christ’s ministry new, He also did what He did with a completely different authority.

The reaction of people to his ministry shows this very clearly. For the purpose of this study we group together their reaction (in a form of questions) as we find them in different parts of Mark’s gospel.

In the study tonight we will deal with different groups of people and how they reacted to the authority of the Christ as seen in his preaching and his miracles.

- a. Christ’s authority in his dealing with Satan and his servants, the evil spirits
- b. Christ’s authority in his dealings with what we may call those “on the fringe” of the religious community
- c. Christ’s authority in his dealings with those very close to Him
- d. Christ’s authority in his dealings with the “religious elite” of Jerusalem

## CHRIST’S AUTHORITY WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF CHRIST’S AUTHORITY OVER SATAN

READ MARK 1:21-28.

First, describe the onlookers’ *reaction* in verse 27.

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The questioning amongst themselves means that what Christ did sparked some sort of debate. Keep in mind these people were gathered in the synagogue and came to worship God. Something happened there which made an impact on their perceived view of who God is, and who Christ is.

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<sup>1</sup> The *purpose* of the ministry of Christ is set by Himself: “That I may preach ... for this purpose have I come.” (Mark 1:38)

What in the rest of this verse gives us the indication that they thought that even their traditional view on who God is was suddenly challenged?

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What is the reaction of students if a new teacher teaches what seems to be a new doctrine? Look at the last part of the verse.

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What would our reaction be if we found ourselves in their shoes?

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Is it possible that longstanding members of a church, if they are put in the same situation, may ask the same questions? Why?

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What was the most amazing aspect of the authority with which Jesus preached?

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Would this reaction imply that they either did not know who Satan really was, or that they gave up on the hope of victory over his authority? What does it say about the authority of the religious leaders of the day?

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### WHO CAN FORGIVE SINS BUT GOD ALONE? (THOSE ON THE RELIGIOUS FRINGE)

READ MARK 2:1-10.

What was Jesus doing in the house where the people were gathered? READ VERSE 2.

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How does this tie in with Jesus' stated purpose of his mission? READ MARK 1:38.

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With this in mind, for what reason did the people go to that house in the first place?

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The people brought the paralytic to Jesus to be healed. What was the first thing he got from Jesus? READ VERSE 5.

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What was the reason for the discontent amongst the scribes who were present? Was it the miracle of healing or the teaching (doctrine/theology/preaching) of Jesus? See also VERSE 9.

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How do you understand the words of the people present, witnessing the words and miracle of the Lord Jesus Christ? READ VERSE 12.

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What then, is the main teaching of this paragraph?

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### WHO CAN TEACH WITH SUCH AUTHORITY? (THOSE CLOSE TO CHRIST)

READ MARK 6:1-6.

Jesus went to Nazareth where He had grown up. His disciples followed Him.

Where do we find Jesus on the Sabbath Day?

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What was He doing? Refer to MARK 1:38 AND 2:3 (Also refer to LUKE 4:32 AND 5:1)

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What were the people astonished by? READ MARK 6:2

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We see a difference in opinion in the reaction of the people. Some were positive, others were negative. What were the positive and what were the negative things about Jesus? READ VERSE 2 AND 3 (Keeping in mind that the text of the Bible was not originally divided into sentences, verses or chapters.)

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The positive and the negative things said about Jesus are divided into two major categories. Can you see the difference?

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(A bit on a side-track: The Roman Church's teaching concerning the doctrine of Perpetual Virginity of Mary is in trouble in the light of MARK 6:3. It might call for some mental gymnastics on their side to get out this problem!)

Two of the brothers of Jesus later became prominent people in the New Testament era. Who are they?

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Do you think they were under those who originally did not believe in Jesus as the Son of God? SEE JOHN 7:5.

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How can we summarise the response of the people at Jesus' teaching? SEE END OF VERSES 3-6.

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How does this compare with the reactions of the evil spirits in MARK 1:27?

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I don't have an answer (not at this point!) to the question why people *seem* (no conclusive evidence here!) to sometimes find it harder to submit to the authority of Christ and his teachings than the evil spirits. What are your views on it?

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## BY WHAT AUTHORITY, AND FROM WHOM? (THE RELIGIOUS ELITE)

It seems as if Luke 11 marks the beginning of the final chapter of the ministry of Jesus outside of Jerusalem (as a matter of fact, Mark describes most of the ministry of Jesus as happening outside the main religious activity of Judea and Jerusalem and the temple.)

READ MARK 11.

At Bethpage Jesus commanded two of his disciples to go into the village and bring a colt to Him. What did He say, how should they answer the owner of the colt, who is in need of it? VERSE 3

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The crowd, following Jesus on the colt, sang words coming from the Psalms. What was their interpretation of the significance of the moment? VERSES 9-10

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Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple, but because it was already late, He took his disciples back to Bethany and spent the night there. What He saw in the city and in the temple, as well as the reason why He came to Jerusalem (see MARK 10:33), must have played very heavily on his mind during that night. It would be inconceivable that He did not spend much time in prayer before his Father *for, over* and on *behalf* of the city.

On his way into the city the next day Jesus passed the fruitless fig tree and cursed it in the hearing of his disciples. This incident most probably was symbolic of the Jewish nation who was expected to show signs of budding fruit of faith after three years of the public ministry of our Lord, and yet there was none to be seen.

Jesus then went into the city and observed the state of practiced worship in the House of God (perhaps in a double sense: the *people* as the house of God and the *temple* as the house of God).

The reaction of Jesus on the worship was very drastic. List what He did that day. See MARK 11:15-17

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In Jesus' teaching which followed his cleansing of the temple, He quoted ISA 56:7 and JER 7:11. Unlike John's version of this account, Mark wants us to understand who Jesus really was.

READ MARK 11:17 AND JOHN 2:16. Scholars think that what John and what Mark describe are two different events; this might be true, but a comparison of the two records helps us to understand Mark's emphasis on the Person of Christ. What is it?

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I find it significant that Jesus chose not to stay in the city after this episode!

The next day Jesus and his disciples went back to Jerusalem and the temple – a dangerous, but necessary in the plan of God. He now faces the religious leaders. (One can only find it intriguing that they later in the trail of our Lord almost pretended they don't know much of Him and his ministry.)

READ MARK 11:28. What do you think did the chief priests, the scribes and the elders mean by the phrase "these things" in their question about the authority of Jesus?

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Why would they ask such a question of Jesus? Keep in mind they were the religious leaders, overseers over the temple.

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Let's say anyone else did what Jesus did in the temple, would it not be fairly normal to just command the temple guard to arrest the person involved? In this case it was not done. Before Jesus was arrested He was interrogated about his authority? Why?

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Jesus did not answer their question directly, but counter-questioned them. "Was the baptism of John from heaven (God) or from men?" Why would Jesus ask them this question?

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How did they respond to the question of Jesus? READ MARK 11:31-33.

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Why would Jesus then not give them a direct answer about his authority (VERSE 33)?

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## SUMMARY

- The devil and his servants, the evil spirits understood very clearly who Jesus was – the submitted to his authority.
- Those on the fringe of the religious society (the "blue collar" Jews) heard the Word preached by Jesus and saw Him perform a miracle – they submitted to his authority and praised God in heaven.
- Those close to Jesus were hard in their unbelief, they heard his authoritative preaching of the Word, but were offended by his person and Him rejected his heavenly authority. God did allow our Lord to do more in that region because of their unbelief. They did not have the authority to send Jesus away empty-handed; God held authority over them by denying them the privilege to bow before the authority of Jesus and know Him as Saviour.
- The religious elite (priests, scribes and elders) saw and heard "these things" and experienced firsthand the condemnation of God upon them (fig tree), they were most probably inwardly convicted, and were left lying and speechless in the presence of Christ's authority.

Can you think of any similarity of these groups in our present day society and their reaction to the message of Jesus Christ?

The evil: .....

The "undeserved" of society: .....

Those "close" to the Lord: .....

The "religious elite": .....