



Mark 1:21-45

An OCF Bible Study

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There are two unique perspectives about the Gospel of Mark:

1. While John emphasized the deity of Jesus, Mark's main purpose was to underscore the Son of God's full, true humanity, who suffered unlike any other person ever. Mark's gospel emphasizes Jesus as God's Servant.
2. Mark emphasized what Jesus did versus what He said. Mark is an action-oriented gospel, painting a picture of Jesus on the go. Each one of the four events in this passage occurs in a different location. One of this gospel's key words is "immediately," occurring more than 40 times.

What did Jesus do on the Sabbath (v. 21)? He entered the synagogue and taught. Typically, the synagogue had no pastors/rabbis/set teachers assigned. As a matter of custom, visiting teachers would be invited by the local Jewish leaders to speak to the gathered synagogue worshippers, usually on the Scripture reading for that day. Jesus was given the opportunity to teach the people.

How did the crowd react to His teaching (v. 22)? They were amazed at his teaching. The Greek word here is *exeplessonto*, meaning astounded or overwhelmed. They had never before heard anyone teach quite like this.

What was the difference between Jesus' teaching and that of the scribes/teachers of the law? Jesus taught with boldness, something the scribes of Jesus' day rarely did. They would simply quote and then interpret a variety of rabbis. Jesus taught with authority because He really had authority. Jesus proclaimed revelation directly from God rather than just interpreting others.

Why did Jesus tell the demon-possessed man to be quiet (v. 25, also v. 34 and 3:12)? After all, the demon was just telling the truth about who Jesus was. Jesus was determined to maintain control of when, how, and to whom He revealed His identity. It was a timing issue to reveal to the world just who He was. A timing issue on a three year journey to the cross. If the Jews realized exactly who Jesus was, then the wave of popularity that Jesus had experienced the day before could have possibly crested and carried Him into a political leadership role that might have washed out the Cross.

At the same time, the Romans could have suspected that he was organizing a rebellion to depose the ruling leaders which in turn could have led to the premature arrest of Jesus. Jesus doesn't want His identity announced prematurely – and certainly not by Satan or his agents.

What was the result of the exorcism miracle Jesus performs (vv. 27-28)? The crowd was amazed. People all over that part of Galilee heard about Jesus. Word spread like wildfire.

What is the crowd's view of Jesus at this point? What is their impression of Him (vv. 29-34)? The crowd sees Him as a miracle worker. They're bringing their sick to be healed. There is no curiosity about His Messiahship. They still don't "get it" which is really not that surprising. In Jesus' day, the Jews were looking for a messiah who would throw off the Roman oppression and set up His kingdom on Earth. Jesus doesn't fit their Messianic expectations.

After preaching and healing in one town, and before heading for another, what did Jesus do (v. 35)? Got up early, got alone with God, and prayed. Spent some time in solitude.

He was the Son of God. If anyone didn't need to pray, it was Jesus. Why did He pray? First, Jesus prayed as an example to his followers. He never did anything independent of His Father. Jesus was totally submissive to Him, doing everything to honor and glorify the Father. Second, when Jesus became man, He took on both divine and human natures: became 100% God and 100% man. From His human nature, He needed communion with the Father. He was consciously dependent on His Father for strength and direction for what lay ahead of Him. This passage is in keeping with Mark's emphasis on the true humanity of Jesus.

Is there a message or application for us? If the Son of God needed to be alone with the Father, how much more do we? Like Jesus modeled, we must carve out of our busy lives a place of solitude to pray/listen/meditate.

What does the encounter between Jesus and the disciples tell us about the disciples' attitude (vv. 36-38)? Simon and his companions were clueless; they did not understand that Jesus needed to spend time in prayer. They considered His healing ministry to be the highest priority. Their words were an indication of their annoyance as if to say, "There is a great need and opportunity here to heal. Quit wasting your time praying."

When will the disciples finally "get it"? When will the light bulb start to come on? At Pentecost when the Holy Spirit will come upon them (Acts 2).

Jesus viewed His miracles as only a small part of His larger mission which was what (v. 38) ? Preach/teach, proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God.

How would you describe the mental condition of the leper (v. 40)? He was desperate. The leper had no doubt about Jesus' power. This shows great faith and great awareness. *If you will, you can make me clean* expresses the leper's confidence in Jesus.

One of the many examples of the human side of Jesus that Mark describes is this: *Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean."* (Mark 1:41). We are often moved with compassion when we meet sick people, but lepers usually did not arouse compassion. Their whole appearance was too repulsive, and they usually made people feel disgust instead of compassion. But Jesus felt compassion toward the man.

Why did Jesus tell the leper to go show himself to the priests and perform the cleansing ritual (v. 44)? Jesus did this to honor the existing law of God but also to serve as a testimony to the priests that an incurable disease had been cured.

Since lepers were never healed, these priests had never conducted this ceremony. They had to look it up in Leviticus, the instruction manual for this ceremony, because they didn't know how to do it. When they carried it out for the first time, it would be a strong witness to them that the Messiah was among them, which is exactly what miracles are designed to do – point to/glorify God.

What were the results of the leper's disobedience (v. 45)? His disobedience to Jesus' word frustrated Jesus' work rather than advanced it. Jesus needed to minister to people, but the leper's action forced Him to now spend more time in uninhabited, solitary places. Jesus could no longer openly enter a town. By his disobedience, the leper did not ruin God's plan, but he did make things more complicated. And yet the Galileans still kept seeking out Jesus (v. 45).

"We should learn some important spiritual lessons from this chapter. To begin with, if the Son of God came as a servant as Mark presents him, then being a servant is the highest of all callings. We are never more like the Lord Jesus than when we are serving others."¹ Jesus served them by doing what He could for them. In His case He could heal. **Who can I serve today and how?**

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¹ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Mark, 2015 Edition (published by Sonic Light, www.soniclight.com), pp. 40