

## **Mark 1:29-34: Jesus' Authority Over the Physical and Spiritual** <sup>1</sup> **By Paul Hudson (Feb. 2, 2020).**

We're continuing the series this morning on the life of Christ, diving into the depths of who Jesus was. Before we dive into the Scripture passage this morning, I want to share a personal story.

Do you see my teeth (picture)? I didn't always have relatively straight, white teeth like this. When I was a teenager, I had two crooked front teeth, one with a big cavity. A third had gone into decay, and I had a partially chipped bottom tooth. I sort of looked like this (picture)— or maybe something like this (picture). A toothy smile was not really the best thing for me. When I was about 19 years old, I was driving my old pickup truck into a large parking lot. As I was turning towards my spot, I happened to look down at my radio, and I didn't notice the oncoming car— the oncoming student driver car. I looked up just before I rammed into the student driver, and I said "oh sheeee"- in that instant, whamo! Metal on metal, my head lurched forward and my front teeth were shattered by the steering wheel. Nobody else was seriously hurt. The student driver and her instructor had airbags, I did not. But I want to tell you, I have never experienced the pain I felt that day. The nerve pulp of all 6 of my front teeth were totally exposed— the pain was almost unbearable. If that wasn't enough, I had to go through 6 emergency root canals in one sitting that same day. After that, I walked around with broken shards of front teeth for a month until my gums were healed enough to fix them. The whole ordeal until I got my real caps about 2 months later was an insufferable living hell. I will finish the rest of this story at the end of my sermon, it ends well.

To begin, let's read Mark 1:29-34:

The story found in Mark 1:29-34 is a snapshot of a day in the life of Jesus. For context, this story was somewhat early in Jesus' ministry while He was going around Galilee preaching, "the kingdom of God is near, repent and believe in the good news!!"

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At this time, Jesus was teaching in the synagogue and performing miracles. As all of this was happening, news about Jesus had spread out and He was becoming the talk of the town. Large crowds would gather wherever He went and people began to wonder who He was, where He came from, and how he could possess such an authority in His words and deeds. Mark uses this story to show the power, authority, and purpose of Jesus' coming and to teach us about the kingdom of God, how it relates to our present suffering.

\*Indeed, through the ministry of healings and exorcisms, Jesus revealed his divine power and authority over both the physical and spiritual boundaries of humankind. In so doing, He foreshadowed His coming victory over the forces of evil, and brought a taste of the blissful, restored nature that awaits us in His kingdom. This story is about hope in an all powerful Savior who has the means and will to bring an absolute end to our pain and suffering forever!

### **Jesus the healer (Mk. 1:30-31; 34a)**

Back to the Scripture, let's read Mk. 1:30-31.

So on the Sabbath day (we know that from vs. 21), Jesus goes to Peter's sick mother-in-law, simply lifts her hand, and she's instantly healed. Through this miracle and many other spectacular healings, Jesus becomes widely known as a healer, and questions about His authority become a common theme. Now let's pause the story for a moment and explore some facts about Jesus the miracle-worker.

Scholars universally agree that Jesus was recognized as a healer and an exorcist by His contemporaries (Strauss 458). First and second century sources outside of the Bible have identified Jesus as a miracle worker and, albeit derogatorily in some cases, as one who practiced magic (Strauss 458). However, Jesus' ability to heal was different than the first-century magicians, divine men, and charismatic holy men who were known to

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perform miracles of sorts. First, Jesus was never shown to rely on the magical arts, coercion of deities, rituals, spells, charms, talismans, potions and such (Strauss 458) that were so commonly associated with first-century magicians and divine men. Rather, Jesus healed people on account of His own authority as the Son of God (Stein 117) through simply speaking a word or touching the person. Furthermore, Jesus never tried to dazzle the crowds or make Himself famous but He healed people because of His love and compassion for them and in response to their faith in Him. Beyond that, Jesus' healing ministry fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah. Matthew 8:17 says that Jesus healed the sick and cast out demons to fulfill the prophecy from Isaiah 53:4, "He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases." Additionally, Isaiah prophesies about Jesus and the nature of His kingdom in 35:5-6 "Then (meaning when the Messiah comes), will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert." Amen!!

So what did this mean for the world 2,000 years ago and for us today? I'll tell you: Jesus demonstrated that He has a unique, divine authority over this world. His arrival along with His miracles showed that He was bringing the Kingdom of heaven to earth—that is why He was saying "hey, believe the good news, repent, the kingdom of heaven is here!"

Jesus' authority to heal is the evidence of the kingdom of God in our midst. It gives us the hope of our restoration, the reversal of the effects of sin. Can we respond by saying this together?  
"Jesus has all authority to make me physically whole."

My friends, let none of us turn to good-luck charms, shamans, superstitious beliefs, or any other substitutes when our health turns for the worst. Come to Jesus who is the true authority over

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all things physical. He created you and I, He knows us inside and out, and He has already healed us, and we will be healed!! In this, our healing is never a matter of if... it is always a matter of already, even if we carry an illness to our grave!! Our physical suffering is temporary, it will not last forever. Can you say that with me? "My physical suffering is temporary, it will not last forever."

We have the promise from Jesus that our suffering is temporary, our sorrow will soon be turned to joy. In the mean time, God uses our suffering for purposes that have our best interests in mind! Do not lose heart. We have the future hope of entering into the rest that Jesus has promised us, and that brings me to the second part of this: Jesus' action of healing on the Sabbath signals the coming of God's rest for His creation.

We shouldn't overlook the note that these particular healings and exorcisms took place on the Sabbath. With this, we need to understand a little bit about Sabbath theology. By the time Jesus came, the Sabbath had come to symbolize the end-times rest that the Pharisees sought with the arrival of the Messiah and His kingdom (Witherington). Simply speaking, the final Sabbath rest was essentially the coming of God's final dominion here on earth, as ushered in by the Messiah (Witherington). So then, what does Jesus healing and casting out demons on the Sabbath mean? It means that Jesus has initiated the final rest for His creation, where the powers of darkness, sin, and evil are wiped out, and we will be set free from the clutches of death and decay. Jesus connected the Sabbath day of rest to his healing ministry to specifically announce that the Lord of the Sabbath has come! (Stein 119). All of creation is invited to come, be healed, be made whole, and find rest. In simple terms, Jesus healed on the Sabbath to say this, "I am the God of rest, come and find rest from your pain! Come and find rest from your sickness! Come

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and find rest for your weary body— I am the God of rest and you will be restored and made whole again!”

To summarize this part, the ways that Jesus healed and the authority that He claimed in healing on the Sabbath was a clear statement of who He was in relation to all other charismatic leaders. He was separating Himself from all of the prophets, miracle-workers, and other mighty men of great renown by demonstrating that He had complete divine authority over this world. In addition, He demonstrated that He was the Lord of the Sabbath, and His healings and exorcisms on the Sabbath day were a foreshadow of God's coming rest — a rest that frees us from all the turmoil, pain, and suffering of this world. No wonder why He was preaching out “Good news! Good news!!”

**Jesus the exorcist (Mk. 1:32-34; Mk. 1:21-28)**

Now let's talk about Jesus the exorcist. (Read Mk. 1:32-34). In Jesus' ministry, healing is often paired with exorcism. And before we continue, let me lay some groundwork here.

Healing and exorcisms were linked together in the NT because people in that time thought of the human being as psychosomatic wholes (Witherington), meaning, the spiritual and physical aspects of the human being are intimately connected to each other. So a person's physical, emotional, or mental states could be affected by their spiritual condition, or any of these states could affect the others (Witherington). Moreover, the NT writers were quite clear about the existence of supernatural evil, that it was not merely a nebulous force but it had a face, intentions, a will, and could be characterized as an actual being (Witherington). Now, when you hear “exorcist,” you might have traumatic images in your mind of an unpredictable, demon-possessed girl levitating over her bed. Or, you might be one who dismisses demon possession altogether, believing that there's a

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chemical imbalance or brain problem instead. Whatever you might think about demon possession, the fact is that in the Bible, many people who were believed to be demon possessed were brought to Jesus, and He instantly freed them with just a command.

With that groundwork laid, let's get back to this passage (Mark 1:32-34 & display Mk. 1:23-24).

First, notice the demons' reactions to Jesus. Mark 1:24 states that the demons said "what do you want with us, Jesus? Have you come to destroy us before our time? We know you are the Son of God!" There are multiple layers to this, but the scholar Robert Gundry says that the demons were reacting to Jesus in self-defense (157) and Jesus silenced them to prevent their schemes of defending their territory. I love this explanation. Essentially, the demons saw Jesus, they knew He was the son of God, and they went on the defensive. In other words, they were kind of saying, "this is our territory, what are you doing here? You're not supposed to be here. We belong here, this is our place, this is our world, we own this place, we know who you are and you don't belong here, it's not the time for us to leave yet" and they attempted to manipulate the crowds into a chaotic frenzy by declaring His divine sonship. To this, Jesus commanded them with a word to shut their mouths, which they did immediately— an ultimate display of authority— and then He further demonstrated His ownership over their spiritual territory by casting them out. What is the spiritual territory that the demons were defending? The hearts and minds of people.

So, Jesus *the healer* demonstrated His authority over the physical, and Jesus *the exorcist* demonstrated His authority over the spiritual. There is nothing in this world or our lives that is too much for Jesus, He is truly our victorious Savior. Can we say this

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together? “Jesus has all authority to make me physically and spiritually whole.”

My friends, how often have we sided with demons in our own thought-life or in the dark areas of our own lives, saying to God, “this is my area, this my own little secret, don’t touch this, you’re not allowed in here, this has nothing to do with you Lord, this is my own personal space Lord, stay out. We’ll deal with this later Lord, but not right now.” Those places will wear your soul down and lead you no where. Or maybe you hear the constant chatter of the enemy barking away in your ear, dominating your thoughts and bringing you to a breaking point. If this is you, come to Jesus and rest. He has all authority to immediately silence the voice of the enemy and give you His rest and peace. His healing hand is here, come to Him now!

### **Conclusion**

At the beginning I shared my personal story about my teeth. Even though my teeth experience was, up to this point, the single most painful, humiliating time in my life, God turned it for my good in so many ways. I told Yam about this story and about how my front teeth were on the verge of rotting out of my mouth until that accident, and she said “God really helped you, because I don’t know if I would’ve liked you with rotten teeth.” ([show picture](#)). So, I’ll take that temporary pain any time if it means I get to have her — and she gets to have this (next picture). Still, this fix is temporary and it doesn’t even begin to address the real problem of decay... was that a pun?

No, there is something much deeper at work here concerning our physical, emotional, or spiritual ailments and how it relates to Jesus’ absolute authority to heal. Our faith can prompt Jesus to heal right now, that is certainly true, but not all who have faith in Jesus are healed. The Apostle Paul asked for healing and all he

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got was grace, but that grace came with a declaration from God that His power is made perfect, meaning fully manifested, in weakness. Jesus definitely has the power to heal any of us right now in this very moment and that could be powerful and meaningful for us right now. But a healing touch right now is just a temporary relief from the real problems that plague all of humanity— that is sin and evil, decay and death (Witherington).

So the real beauty in Jesus as the healer and exorcist is not the healing miracles themselves; that is only a foreshadow of what is to come. Rather, through this ministry, Jesus was proclaiming the good news of His coming Kingdom, the breaking in of God's dominion (Witherington). The end-game of Jesus' authority over the physical and spiritual was on full display at the empty tomb.... and the good news He was talking about? The good news is the promise of our resurrection into a new creation where the old human condition of suffering, pain, sin, decay, and death are no more and the evil enemy of our souls is silenced forever! Amen!!

And that, my friends, is Jesus' authority over the physical and spiritual.

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