

**UNIT 9 LESSON 2****MARK 1:16 - 3:35****1. WHAT DID THE PEOPLE MAKE OF JESUS?**

- a) Read through the passage for the lesson - quickly and in one sitting. Then pause and think - what overall impression did it make on you? Did you notice the feverish activity of Jesus and His disciples? Did you notice how whatever Jesus said or did, there were two reactions to Him - either for, or against? Mark's Gospel recreates the drama of Jesus' early ministry and creates in our minds a response. John's Gospel sets out the same thing, but in a couple of verses, (Chap. 1:11,12).
- b) Have another look at 1:16-28. What word sums up the theme? See it in verse 22 and verse 27 - "authority". We can presume that Simon and Andrew (verses 16-18) and James and John (verses 19,20) must have had some prior knowledge of Jesus which is not referred to here, but this does not alter the fact that when Jesus called them, they recognised His authority without hesitation and joined Him.
- c) Next (verses 21,22) we have an illustration of how Jesus' authority is recognised by people who listen to His teaching. In the Synagogue, where it was the custom for any Jewish man to teach if he desired, Jesus showed up in marked contrast to the usual Jewish teachers. He caused a sensation, because He taught "with authority". It is obvious what impressed the people. Jesus used simple, forceful statements that anyone could follow. It was a breath of fresh air blowing through the oppressive atmosphere of 1st Century religious life where rabbis usually had no original thoughts and just quoted others.
- d) Jesus' authority was not limited to swaying men's lives and minds but could extend over the unseen, mysterious world of evil spirits as well (verses 21-27). There were many exorcists who claimed the ability to expel demons, but to judge by the elaborate ceremonies used many of them had little success and so multiplied their rituals in a vain search for success. But with a single command Jesus demonstrated his superior power in the middle of the synagogue service. No wonder the people were amazed (v.27) and no wonder Jesus' reputation spread rapidly (v.28).

2. WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF AUTHORITY?

- a) Jesus' authority and power is further demonstrated in the constant healings reported in verses 29-34, and the activities of verses 40-45 and Chapter 2. The clue to the meaning and purpose of the healing miracles is shown in verses 35-39. The disciples here stumble upon the basic driving power - "prayer", or "communication with God".
- b) Then, instead of continuing the healing ministry in that one place, as the disciples wished, Jesus answered that they must move on elsewhere. Mark carefully records the twin features of the activities of Jesus in the district of Galilee in Chapter 1 verse 39. They are preaching and casting out demons. They are not two separate items, a diversified ministry, but one and the same ministry expressed in different ways. You can see this clearly in the account of how Jesus heals the paralyzed man (Mark 2:1-12). The teachers of the law do not believe Jesus has any right or authority to forgive sins;



only God can do that. If Jesus merely says he forgives the sins, who is to know whether they are forgiven or not? So Jesus says he will demonstrate his authority. If Jesus tells the man to get up and walk and is successful it must prove that Jesus can also forgive sins.

- c) So the healing is not done for merely compassionate reasons (although see 1:41), but most of all as a sign, a proof, a demonstration, that God's personal rule has come to man in the person of Jesus, and that it is time for people to open their lives to Him (Mark 1:15) - to make response one way or another.

3. WHY DIDN'T EVERYONE BELIEVE JESUS? MARK 2:13 - 3:6.

- a) The stories following the healing of the paralyzed man all illustrate the opposite reaction - the ordinary people eagerly received Jesus' authority, but the religious leaders rejected it.
- b) We are prepared by the story of the leper (1:40-45) for contact with official authorities (verse 44). In this story Jesus wants the leper to receive official clearance for his return to society according to Leviticus 13:49 and 14:2-32, thereby showing us that Jesus is not a radical revolutionary at heart. It is not surprising that after the drama of the healing in Chapter 2, the religious leaders react negatively to Jesus' actions and teaching. After all, these leaders were only human and they were stung by the humiliation Jesus had inflicted upon them.

Some notes about these paragraphs:

Wineskins: In the Near East, animal skins are used for wine.

Sabbath: For the story about David and the bread, see 1 Samuel 21, and for the laws, Leviticus 24:9; Deuteronomy 5:14; 23:25.

4. ARE THERE ANY WHO ARE FAITHFUL?

The transition from the preceding clashes occurs in 3:7-12 and leads into the calling of the Twelve. It seems that as soon as possible Jesus directed His ministry away from the large crowds and made it an intensive one on a personal level with several selected men.

- a) The purposes and nature of Christian discipleship for all are similar to those of the original twelve, see verse 14,15. Note the word "authority" and the relationship of the two facets mentioned earlier, (preaching and driving out demons).

Although it is necessary to have leaders and officers, those called to Christian discipleship all share the responsibility of ministry; all alike hear the Master say, "I send you out!" All are strengthened and filled with confidence when they hear the Master say, "You did not choose me ... I appointed you to go and bear fruit, the fruit that will last so that the Father will give you whatever you ask of him in my name". (John 15:16). Even close relatives of Jesus could not follow the actions of the young



man from Nazareth. But in the last analysis, Jesus' family is composed of those who recognise His authority. They are the ones who make up the "company of the committed" (see Mark 3:20,21,31-35).

- b) It remains the ultimate error and catastrophe to be unresponsive to God himself. In 3:22-30 the religious leaders say that Jesus is possessed by an evil spirit (v.30) but Jesus replies that for that to be so, it would be a case of civil war, demons fighting each other. In verses 28 - 30 the point is that if we live in a constant attitude of rejecting God's purposes, then there is no hope. It is not that God is suddenly harsh and unjust. It is that we may cut ourselves off from him and so be unable to receive his word of grace. God only deals with people by the Holy Spirit. As long as a person says the goodness of God is the evil of Satan, he will not come to God, repent and receive God's forgiveness. He cuts himself off from the only avenue to God.

QUESTION 1:

How would you describe the source of Jesus' authority? Is it like that of a policeman or soldier? Or is it more like the authority of a man who has experienced much in life and so his advice can be trusted because we know he has been through it himself? What words does Mark use (in 1:18,20) to show us that these 4 men accepted Jesus' authority? How does a Christian share in Jesus' authority? (e.g. Mark 3:13-15, John 15:7,8).

QUESTION 2:

Think back over the events of the Sabbath (Mark 1:21-34). In verse 35 when, where and why does Jesus pray? With what temptation is he now faced? Why do the people seek him?

QUESTION 3:

Read through Mark 2:13 - 3:6. Write down in 2 columns the views of Jesus and the religious leaders upon which there was a clash. (2:16,17; 2:18; 2:24; 3:2).

QUESTION 4:

What are the Pharisees planning in Chapter 3:6? From your findings in Question 3 why do these plans seem inevitable?

QUESTION 5:

For what three purposes were the twelve appointed? (3:14,15). What advantages are there in personal contact with a few rather than a superficial influence over many? Does this principle have any relevance today?

QUESTION FOR GROUP STUDY:

Consider what happens to the paralytic (2:1-12), to Levi (2:13-15) and to the man with the withered hand (3:1-5) when they met Jesus. Why is their experience so different to that of the Pharisees? Mark 2:17 may be of help.