

We Can Believe

Part 7

Text – Mark 9 : 14 - 27

Intro – Jesus, along with Peter, James, & John had just come down from the Mount of Transfiguration. Upon coming down the mountain, Jesus is confronted with a large and animated crowd of people.

Jesus asks His disciples, “What are you discussing with them?” Out of the crowd came a man, a father of a son who was possessed by a demon. The demon had possessed the boy since childhood. The demon was vicious, throwing the boy into fire and water and convulsing him at will.

The father had asked Jesus’ disciples to cast the demon out, but they were unable to do so. The father, in a spirit of desperation, begs Jesus, “... if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!”

Jesus responds to the father’s request: “If You can? All things are possible to him who believes.”

The father cries out, “I believe. Help my unbelief.”

Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, telling him, “You deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again.”

At that, the demon convulses the boy and leaves him. The boy is motionless, and many believe dead, but Jesus tenderly takes the boy by the hand and helps him to his feet, demon free!

We’ve been looking at Jesus. Is He who He says He is? Is the Jesus of the Bible to be embraced and trusted as God?

Last week we looked at three titles of Jesus: Christ, Son of God, and Son of Man and how these titles all pointed to the deity of Jesus.

Today we conclude our discussion of Jesus by looking at...

I. Jesus’ Actions –

- We want to look at four areas where Jesus claims to possess authority that properly belongs to God:

1. Authority to Forgive Sin – Mark 2 : 1 – 12 –

- In this account, Jesus is in Capernaum teaching.
- A man, who was a paralytic, was brought to the house where Jesus was teaching by four men.
 - The numbers of people are so great that the friends can’t get the paralytic in by the doorway.

- They carry him on top of the roof, tear away the roof tiles and lower the man down before Jesus.
 - Mark tells us that when Jesus saw the men's faith that he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven."
- Some of the teachers of the law were there and grumbled among themselves, "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"
 - This raises some interesting questions:
 - Who has the right to forgive sin? According to Jewish law and theology, only God does.
- Jesus picks up on their thoughts and mumbling and engages them.
 - "Which is easier to say, 'Your sins be forgiven or rise up and walk?'"
 - So, Jesus turns to the paralytic and says, "Take up your mat and go home."
 - Guess what? That's what the man did!
- This account demonstrates the fact that Jesus claimed divine authority for Himself and then acted on it.
 - Not only could He forgive sin, which no one can truly verify, but He can also tell paralyzed legs to work, and they begin working.
- In this account, Jesus is demonstrating His authority to not just heal physically, but most importantly, spiritually.
 - The question the skeptic must wrestle with is, "Why would God heal through a blasphemer?"

2. Authority to Determine People's Eternal Destiny –

- Jesus not only claimed to have power and authority to forgive sin but also the authority to determine where people will spend eternity.
- Two passages demonstrate this power:
 - A. **Luke 12:8-9** - "And I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man will confess him also before the angels of God; but he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God."
 - Jesus claims here, that He, as the Son of Man, will have authority to determine who stands before Him after their death or who is unable to stand.
 - The person who confesses and follows Him will stand in the judgment.

B. John 10:24-28 – “The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, “How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.” Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father’s name, these testify of Me. But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.”

- Jesus’ audience is curious about His identity. They want to know if He is the long-awaited Messiah.
 - Jesus does not mince words, “I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father’s name, these testify of Me.”
 - It’s not a matter of not understanding, it’s a matter of believing.
- Jesus clearly states this about His sheep, those who faithfully follow Him, “I give eternal life to them.”
 - For a first-century Jew who affirms resurrection and life after death, who is the one who both promises and delivers that eternal life?
 - The answer is clear, **Yahweh** – the Lord, the God of Israel.
 - Jesus declares He is the One who gives His followers life.

3. Authority to Teach Divine Truth in His Own Name – **Matthew 5-7** –

- In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus claims to teach divine truth in His own name and in His own authority.
- Listen to **Matthew 5:17** – “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.”
 - Here, Jesus claims to be the fulfillment of the O.T. Word.
- Beginning in **Matthew 5:21**, Jesus shares six hard teachings, with each one being introduced by, “**You have heard, but I say to you.**”
 - What Jesus is doing is fascinating. He takes an O.T. law or rabbinical interpretation of an O.T. law and turns it upside down. He deepens the teachings and challenges the interpretations of the Pharisees and He does it in His own authority.
 - Jesus takes upon Himself the teaching and guiding authority of God Almighty.
 - This is a radical departure from Jewish rabbinical tradition.

- A “good Jewish rabbi” would teach in accordance with a long line of Jewish rabbinic tradition.
- Jesus does an end run around this tradition, claiming to have authority to teach and instruct as God.
- Listen to this **writer**: “It is insufficient to compare it to ‘thus says the Lord’... Jesus is not merely speaking for Yahweh, but for himself and on his own authority... This strongly suggests that He considered himself to be a person of authority above and beyond what prophets claimed to be. He could attest to his own truthfulness and speak on his own behalf, and yet his words were to be taken as having the same or greater authority than the divine words of the prophets. Here was someone who thought he possessed not only divine inspiration ... but also divine authority and the power of direct divine utterance.”

4. Authority to Heal and Exorcise –

- Throughout the N.T. Gospels, we see Jesus claiming and exercising authority over disease, infirmity, disability, death, and even demons.
 - Again, from a first-century Jewish perspective, the only one who could do this is God.
- Let’s briefly consider **six examples** of Jesus’ authority:
 - A. He healed Leprosy –**
 - Leprosy was a death sentence in Jesus’ day. Medicine had not reached the point to effectively treat that disease.
 - We see this account in **Luke 5:12-13**: “While He was in one of the cities, behold, *there was* a man covered with leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.” And He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” And immediately the leprosy left him.”
 - B. He cured Blindness –**
 - **John 9** records the account of the man who had been born blind and whom Jesus healed.
 - Jesus made mud with His saliva and placed it on the man’s blinded eyes.
 - Jesus instructs him to go to the Pool of Siloam and wash.
 - After doing so, the man is able to see for the first time in his life.

C. He cast out the unclean Spirits –

- We've looked at this account in **Mark 9** already.
 - Jesus is approached by the father of a son who is possessed by an evil and vicious spirit.
 - The disciples Jesus left behind, while he, Peter, James, & John, had gone up to the Mt. of Transfiguration, were unable to cast this demon out.
 - The desperate father appeals to Jesus and Jesus responds by teaching this father and the other listeners an invaluable lesson about faith and surrender.
 - He casts the demon out and commands it to never inhabit that boy's body again.
 - As James reminds us: "You believe that God is one. You do well; **the demons also believe, and shudder.**" (James 2:19)

D. Long-distance Healing –

- While back in Cana of Galilee, Jesus is approached by an official with a sick child.
- This man begs Jesus to come heal his son.
- **John 4:46-53** tells us that Jesus does not agree to go with the official to his home to heal his son, but that He chooses to heal the son from a long distance.

E. Making many Well –

- **Mark 1:29-34** tells us that Jesus healed those with fevers, those with all varieties of sickness; and drove out demons.
- Only God could and can do that!

F. Raising the Dead –

- Only God has the power to raise the dead!
- His authority over death is seen in the wonderful story of **Lazarus**.
 - Jesus is summoned to Bethany by Lazarus' sisters, **Martha & Mary**.
 - Their brother is sick, but their hope is that Jesus can come and heal him before it's too late.
 - Jesus does not immediately go to Bethany, and in waiting, declares this is to God's glory.
 - When Jesus does make it to Bethany, Lazarus has died and been entombed for 4 days.
 - Jesus cries out "Lazarus, come forth." Lazarus walks out of the tomb, being alive.

- One of the most interesting things you see in Jesus' earthly ministry is His presence.
 - He is with people, ministering to them, listening to them, talking to them, and healing them.
 - Jesus would often become ritualistically unclean to connect with those who came to Him.

INVITATION – As we close, I'd like for us to think about our Jesus.

Jesus is Who He says He is and Who the Word of God declares Him to be. Jesus is not just the all-powerful God. Nor is He just a doctrine.

Jesus is the God who is not afraid to meet people where they are – whether we talk about sin, disease, infirmity, or sinfulness. Jesus was not afraid to get His hands dirty.

Beloved, if we are going to be a healing presence in a hurting world, we must be people of God who are not afraid to get our hands dirty. We must get in the trenches and meet people where they are so that we can introduce them to our Jesus!