
PREPARED FOR THE DIFFICULTY

WEEK 3



Week 3 - Prepared for Difficulty

Research

Week 3! You have made it this far. I know that the title might scare you, but it is truth that walking with God is difficult. But we can be PREPARED!

Our passage today, out of Mark 1:21-45, takes place in a synagogue. Often, we read words in the Bible without knowing the depth of the meaning. Today, we will look at the synagogue setting which is the setting for many stories in the book of Mark.

Synagogue is the transliteration of the Greek word *synagōgē* meaning assembly. It is being used in the New Testament in place of the Hebrew word *‘edah* for congregation. Originally, it probably referred to the gathered people and over time came to refer to the place of assembly similar to how even today the term church refers to a building and a people.



The New Testament records more than 10 occasions on which the ministry of Jesus took place in the synagogue. **Matthew 4:23** *And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.*

Jewish historian, Ray Vander Laan gives us some insight as to the purpose of the synagogue. “While the synagogue building functioned as a community center, school, court, and place of study during the week, on the Sabbath it served as the place where the assembly met for prayer. Inside the synagogue, important people sat on benches, called chief seats, which lined three sides of the room (Matt. 23:6). Common people sat on the floor, which was usually made of dirt or flagstones (or elaborate mosaics in later synagogues). Speakers and readers would stand on a small platform, the bema. And a small menorah, like the one in the temple, probably stood there as well.”

The service in the synagogue began with several blessings offered to God. The congregation recited the Shema: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the Lord is one"(Deut. 6:4). The Torah scrolls would be brought out by the hazzan and would be read in several portions, sometimes as many as seven. Different people were scheduled to read a portion each week. The readings were determined according to a set schedule, so the reader would have no choice of the passage read.

Following the Torah portion, a section from the prophets (called the Haphtarah) would be read by the same or another reader. After all readings, a short sermon would be offered, often by the reader of the Torah or Haftarah. Any adult member of the community was eligible to speak the sermon called the *derashah*. The sermon was frequently quite short (Jesus spoke only a few words, Luke 4:21). The service ended with a benediction using the Aaronic blessing found in the Torah (Num. 6:24-26), if a priest was present to offer it.

Synagogues were very important for the Aron Hakodesh, where the Torah scroll is kept. Copies of the Old Testament were not available to the normal Jewish family. The synagogue was the only place to hear the truth of God's word. Synagogues were vital to the religious life of the Jewish family and a place that Jesus taught with authority.

Jesus spent much time in synagogues (Matt. 4:23). He taught in them (Matt. 13:54), healed in them (Luke 4:33-35; Mark 3:1-5), and debated the interpretation of Torah in them (John 6:28-59). Clearly, he belonged to the community of the synagogue, because when he visited Nazareth, he was scheduled to read the Haphtarah (Luke 4:16-30) and may have read the Torah as well as he concludes with a provocative *derashah*. This is a remarkable example of God's preparation, as the passage Jesus read was exactly the passage that he used to explain his ministry.

Interesting Fact:

Christians describe the church activity of formal interaction with God as "worship." Jews describe the same activity in synagogues (or, in Bible times, in the Temple) as "prayer." In Jesus' parable, the tax collector and Pharisee go to the Temple to pray (Luke 18:10). Their activity certainly included prayer, for going to the Temple to pray meant going at the time of worship and sacrifice. The Temple is called the House of Prayer (Isa. 56:7; Luke 19:46), meaning "the place of worship."

A special thanks to Ray Vander Laan and That the World May Know for their insight and historical wisdom. Looks like it is time to make a plan.

Making a Plan

Today, we discuss how to face difficulties in our life through the eyes of Jesus. Jesus is walking into the synagogue to teach the scriptures like any other Saturday and look what happens.

Mark 1:21–45 *And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. [22] And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. [23] And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, [24] “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.” [25] But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” [26] And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. [27] And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” [28] And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.*

What do you think the mood was in the synagogue that day?

At the Start: _____

In the Middle: _____

At the End: _____

Interesting Facts:

The demon speaking uses the plural form “us.” More than one demon?

Demons seem to testify to about Jesus’ divinity more than anyone.

James 2:19 You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!

What word best describes Jesus in the passage above?

The word authority came to mind for me and it showed up often in the above passage.

- Jesus taught with authority. **Matthew 22:32–33** *‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.” And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.*

Jesus’ wisdom and teaching were different. It was not just the signs He performed. His authority is mentioned before the demon possessed man reveals himself.

- But Jesus also showed His authority through healing. All of the encounters in our next section of scripture show the power of God over disease and demons. Look for any patterns you can find throughout the stories?

[29] And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. [30] Now Simon’s mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. [31] And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

[32] That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. [33] And the whole city was gathered together at the door. [34] And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

[35] And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. [36] And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, [37] and they found him and said to him, “Everyone is looking for you.” [38] And he said to them, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.” [39] And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

[40] And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, “If you will, you can make me clean.” [41] Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, “I will; be clean.” [42] And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. [43] And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once, [44] and said to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to them.” [45] But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter.

What patterns did you find?

Pattern:

Jesus would show His power over disease and darkness.

- People: Amazed and wanted more
- Demons: Praise or declaration of who Jesus was?

Jesus did not want the praise. He would not permit the demons so speak. He told the leper to tell no one. Have you ever wondered why?

What affect did this display of power have on His ministry?

That brings us to a section I call:



Two Rabbits to Chase



#1 Why did Jesus tell the demons to be silent if they were referencing His Godhood?

Even though the demons were speaking the truth about demons is that the testimony that Jesus is looking for. Remember **John 8:44** *You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.* satan is the father of lies and his demons are not trustworthy. Remember they will be accusing Jesus of working with satan **Mark 3:22** *And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "by the prince of demons he casts out the demons."*

What are your thoughts on this rabbit?

#2 Is Jesus insensitive for leaving the sick behind in verses 35-39?

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The answer is no. How can we know?

Jesus knows us and He knows God's plan for our lives better than we do. We have to trust that Jesus knew that preaching the gospel was more important than physical healing. If Jesus stays, his reach to the next town and next town will be hindered. Should Jesus ever leave, because people will get sick again and again. We simply trust that Jesus knew how to have ultimate impact for the kingdom of God which is obvious to us because we are reading about it today. We trust that Jesus loves and knows what is best for His kingdom work.



Little Rabbit:

You cannot minister to everyone. We have to be like Jesus, raising and training up disciples, to carry on the work for the kingdom of God. Living for Jesus is not about us. Remember John the Baptist. Jesus must increase and we must decrease.

What are your thoughts on the topics above?

Checking the List



Trouble always interrupts our plans

How can we best handle trouble when it comes?

- *John 14:1 "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me."*



Turn to Jesus

What does it mean to turn to Jesus?

- *Matthew 11:28-30 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*



God calls us to serve others

What purpose does serving God play in our lives?

- *1 Peter 4:10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:*

Jesus showed His power through healing the sick and setting people free from the demonic influences in and around them. Read and discuss the verse below.

- **Jeremiah 17:14** *Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for you are my praise.*
- **1 Peter 2:24** *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.*
- **3 John 1:2** *Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul.*
- **James 5:16** *Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*

Which of these verses is most impactful in your current life situation?

Sometimes, people hijack the healing of God to try and make a profit off of it. The true healing is in our souls from sin. Physical healing is amazing in this world, but we have eternal life in Christ Jesus. Living free of sin and in the fruit of the spirit, love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and self control can improve our health.

Have you ever seen Proverbs 17:22 played out in your life or others?

- **Proverbs 17:22** *A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.*

It is time to reflect on the healing of our souls and pack up.

What do we need to pack into our bags for the adventure that lies before us?

REPENTANCE

JOYFUL HEART

HEALING

CONFESSION

SERVICE

TURNING TO JESUS

If you could only pick 2 of these phrases above to put into your heart and mind, which would you choose and why?

Choice 1: _____

Why?

Choice 2: _____

Why?

Finish your time together with a time of prayer. Pray for God to help us confess our sins for healing and to repent and turn back to Jesus in all areas of our life.
