

**6**

**Mark 1:29-39 Jesus Heals Many**

**Discussion:** What do you think might be the implications of Jesus' identity as the Messiah becoming widely known to the general public and authorities?

Mark 1	Matthew 8	Luke 4
<p><b>Jesus Heals Many</b>  <b>29</b> As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew.</p>	<p><b>Jesus Heals Many</b>  <b>14</b> When Jesus came into Peter's house,</p>	<p><b>Jesus heals many</b>  <b>38</b> Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon.</p>
<p><b>30</b> Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her.</p>	<p>he saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever.</p>	<p>Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her.</p>
<p><b>31</b> So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.</p>	<p><b>15</b> He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him.</p>	<p><b>39</b> So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them.</p>
<p><b>32</b> That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. <b>33</b> The whole town gathered at the door, <b>34</b> and Jesus healed many who had various diseases.</p>	<p><b>16</b> When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick.</p>	<p><b>40</b> At sunset, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of illness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them.</p>
	<p><b>17</b> This was to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases."</p>	
<p>He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.</p>		<p><b>41</b> Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, 'You are the Son of God!' But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Messiah.</p>

### Comparison

- By using the phrase “as [soon as] they [and Jesus] left the synagogue”, Mark and Luke locate the following verses (Mark 1:29-31, 32-34) as happening on the same day as the previous verses (Mark 1:21-28). The people were amazed at Jesus’ authority which was demonstrated by his teaching and by his power over the spiritual world.
- The disciples point out to Jesus that Peter’s mother-in-law is ill; she missed the events in the synagogue as she was at home in bed with a fever. In Luke they actually ask for his help. Luke’s use of “rebuking” the fever emphasizes she was *released* from the illness; this suggests an exorcism, even though no mention is made of demons.<sup>72</sup> However, touch is typically only mentioned in the NT for healings, not for exorcism.<sup>73</sup>
- All three accounts state that she began to wait on them straight away, indicating her healing was immediate and was a complete recovery. *Waiting* does not imply servitude; the same verb is used when the angels *attended* Jesus at the temptation (Mark 1:13).<sup>74</sup>
- All three synoptics describe what then happened after sunset. In the synagogue earlier that day, the population of Capernaum would have been convinced that they had a miracle-worker in their midst.<sup>75</sup> Jesus healed the sick and cast out demons (Matthew adds “with a word”, while Luke adds “by laying hands on them” when sick).
- Matthew adds the Isaiah prophesy (Is. 53:4) as further evidence of Messiahship, while Mark and Luke emphasise that Jesus wished his identity as Messiah to remain hidden.

#### Going Deeper: The Messianic Secret

Jesus insisted that his identity be kept secret until after his resurrection (Mark 9:9). His understanding of messiahship was radically different from that his audience, whose claims about him would have brought Jesus into direct conflict with Rome.<sup>76</sup> Popular hope rested in a long-awaited warrior king of the Jews and Son of David, a messiah who would deliver the Jews from the rule and bondage of Rome. Jesus brought the kingdom of God instead and his primary conflict would therefore be with the religious authorities.

**Discussion:** In Mark 1:32, why do you think people waited until the evening before bringing their sick to the home of Simon Peter? What relevance does the sunset have?

### Context

- In 1968, a house was discovered in Capernaum which can reasonably be identified as Simon Peter's House.<sup>77</sup> It is a "stone's throw" from the synagogue.<sup>78</sup>
- The Jews were not permitted to undertake any work on a Sabbath. While they could walk freely within a populated area, those outside the city were not permitted to walk further than about 1000 yards on that day, as that could be seen as work.

#### Going Deeper: End of the Sabbath – the times of the Jewish and Western day

Across most of the world, most countries perceive each new day as commencing at midnight; however, the Jewish day is measured from sunset to sunset. For example, on a Friday, the Jewish Sabbath (Shabbat) starts at sunset, and finishes at sunset on the Saturday evening; this marks the beginning of the first day of the new week.<sup>79</sup>

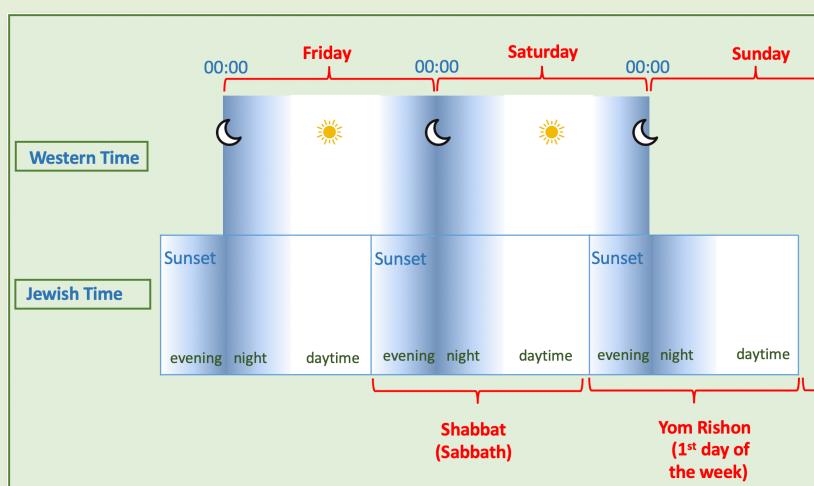
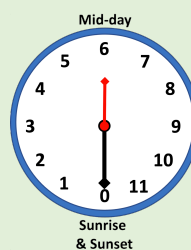


Figure 8: Jewish and Western time



- People in the villages surrounding Capernaum might have lived further away from Peter's House than is permitted for walking on the Sabbath! But at sundown, a new day begins and they were free from the Sabbath regulations, and could therefore visit Jesus.
- And once the Sabbath had ended, this new wave of people started arriving; the verb tense in Mark 1:33 implies that *they just kept coming*.<sup>80</sup>

**Discussion:** Can you think of other examples from scripture where the Sabbath played a large part in shaping the activities of those we read about?

### Key Points

- We learn that Peter was married! As his mother-in-law lived with him, we might assume that she might be a widow; but no mention is made of Peter's wife, so many commentators speculate that he too might be a widower. However, Peter is once again reported as being married at a later date in 1 Corinthians 9:5.
- "Laying on of hands" (Luke 4:40) implies that touch was quite an important component of Jesus' ministry.<sup>81</sup> There is also a clear distinction between general sicknesses and demonic possession.<sup>82,83</sup> But again, there is no specific method of healing being modelled here; the events of this day simply reveal Jesus' universal power to heal.<sup>84</sup>
- These verses are demonstrating once again the authority that Jesus has been given in his teaching, his power over the spiritual world, and now over every form of illness and disease.
- The use of the word "many" in verse 34 is interchangeable with "all", so does not carry any implication that some *were not* healed.<sup>85,86</sup>

#### Going Deeper: *Exousia* – the Divine Authority

The Greek word *exousia* is used by Mark to describe Jesus' authority; this word had been used elsewhere to reflect the idea of a supernatural authority, and specifically a Divine Authority given by God.

This was conferred upon Jesus by God (at his baptism by John the Baptist) when God spoke and said he was pleased with his Son.<sup>87</sup> Later, we will see Jesus confer this same authority on the apostles as sends them out (Mark 3:15).

## Bible Study of Mark's Gospel

**Discussion:** We can often find we are far too busy, forcing us to put some things as aside. Even when these are in the service of God, we are forced to “let go” of some because we simply can’t do everything. How do we know which to prioritise? And which to drop?

Mark 1	Luke 4
<p><b>Jesus Prays in a Solitary Place</b>  <b>35</b> Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.</p>	<p><b>Jesus Prays in a Solitary Place</b>  <b>42</b> At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place.</p>
<p><b>36</b> Simon and his companions went to look for him, <b>37</b> and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!”</p>	<p>The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them.</p>
<p><b>38</b> Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” <b>39</b> So he travelled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.</p>	<p><b>43</b> But he said, “I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.” <b>44</b> And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.</p>

### Comparison

- These are another few verses from Mark that do not appear in Matthew’s Gospel. At this point, Matthew remains focussed on the *teaching* of Jesus, in which Jesus tells us *how* to pray (Matt. 6:6).
- “Everyone” is hyperbole – what is meant is that *no one could find him*.<sup>88</sup>
- Mark suggests that Jesus’ primary intention is to take the gospel message to the rest of *Galilee*; Luke is writing to a different audience and his reference to *Judea* is probably meant to imply ‘the land of the Jews’ in general.<sup>89</sup>

### Context

- Jesus went to a “solitary place”, somewhere away from the crowds. Mark is careful to distinguish this place from the *wilderness*.<sup>90</sup> The fame of Jesus is spreading, making it difficult to find solitude for times of prayer or rest. But Jesus wishes to spend time with his Father.

### Key Points

- The previous day had been a very busy day in the life of Jesus. From sunset, he had spent the evening healing the crowds of people, until it would have become so late that the crowds dispersed. First thing on this new morning, it seems the crowds have started arriving again; but Jesus had already slipped away for prayer before the others awoke.
- Jesus must have been exhausted from that previous day's work. While he is 100% divine, he was also 100% human so he would have experienced fatigue, just like us. We hear later of another healing where Jesus "felt the power go out of him" (Mark 5:30). And yet, he found the energy to get up very early that morning in order to pray; he wanted to spend time with his Father, even though he must have been very tired.
- It is clear that Peter and the disciples wish to bring Jesus back as quickly as possible, to continue ministering to the crowds, and perhaps capitalise on his notoriety as a miracle worker.<sup>91</sup> Jesus is sure of his primary goal of spreading the gospel; it was not the healings although those were important. This must have been a shock to the disciples, and perhaps is one of the earliest examples of Simon Peter 'getting it wrong'; Jesus has to affirm to him "This is why I have come."

**Discussion:** What are your preferred ways of praying? Is it public prayer (such as that in church services) or private prayer? Do you have regular times (morning or last thing at night perhaps) or is it more random for you? Do you have preferred styles (Lectio Divina or Examen, structured or informal)? Do you have favourite places to pray (perhaps while out for a walk)?