

## A DEMON IN THE SYNAGOGUE

Jesus now received an invitation to speak in the Capernaum synagogue. But as he was in the midst of his discourse, Mark's Gospel records that "a man in their synagogue with an evil spirit shouted `What do you have to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Did you come to destroy us? I know who you are, holy one of God!' " (1:23, 24) The alarmed worshipers were probably ready to bolt for the door! The evil and mocking demonic voice sent chills up their spines.

Jesus responded instantly to the challenge. "Be quiet! Come out of him," Jesus commanded, and the evil spirit shook the man and exited with a blood curdling shriek (vv. 25,26).

The people were amazed and frightened. Who was this man Jesus, that demon-possessed people were beginning to draw a bead on him? Where did he get such absolute authority over these demons? Others went through endless incantations and magical rites in uncertain attempts to cast out demons. Jesus did it in five words!

[Many] have ridiculed such tales of demon possession, claiming these people were all psychotic. But horrifying movies like *The Exorcist*, plus similar unnerving case histories, have now given second thoughts. The Gospels soberly tell us Jesus encountered real demon possession.

Ancient peoples, in contrast to, the secular westerners, lived in daily fear of demon possession. They believed that thousands of demons populated the air about them, waiting to attack travelers, women in child birth, children, newly married couples, and any unwary -person. They believed demons could enter the body through food, and they scattered amulets and charms all over their houses to ward off demons.

Such people did not ridicule the Gospel record of Jesus casting out demons; it gave them peace. They were thankful to learn Jesus was more powerful than Satan, and that they could rely on him instead of superstitious charms and formulas. Secular scholars have concluded that these Gospel stories did far more to set the western world free from superstition than the brilliant discourses of Greek philosophers. Unfortunately, under the influence of occult movements many are now returning again to the slavery from which Jesus freed us.

From Bill Counts, *The Incredible Christ* (pp. 28-29)