

Commanding Demons

Luke 4:31-37

Introduction:

Luke is providing Theophilus with reasons to believe and a way to explain Christianity.

So far in Luke we've seen:

- a) The birth of Jesus
- b) The genealogy of Jesus
- c) The temptation of Jesus
- d) The gospel according to Jesus

In Galilee, Jesus has already performed miracles –

4:14 – And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country.

But in this passage, Luke gives us the first details about Jesus's miraculous ministry. In many ways, it is a preview of Jesus's claim that "*all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me*" (Matt 28:18). Is it? Let's see.

First: Jesus returned to Capernaum in Galilee. 31a

Luke now changes the scene from Nazareth back to Capernaum and he interjects us into a normal week and day for Jesus; going to the synagogue to share God's word.

- a) Capernaum is about 16 miles north of Nazareth in Judea.

Question: How do we reconcile that Nazareth is south of Galilee but Luke 4:31 says that Jesus went "down" to Capernaum? He must be speaking topographically, not geographically.

- b) Its name means, "city of Nahum." (named after the OT prophet?)
- c) It is in the county of Galilee, on the Sea of Galilee.
- d) It is a fishing village in a very busy region, having about 240 towns and villages in it.
- e) It becomes the base of Jesus's ministry.
- f) It was influential enough to have a centurion stationed there (Matt 8:5)

- g) A royal official also lived there (John 4:46)
- h) Capernaums evidently thought highly of themselves and their city.

Luke 10:15 - *And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades.*

Second: Jesus taught in the synagogue 31b-32

- a) 33 – At least one week has passed from Jesus's Sabbath reading in the synagogue in Nazareth

Note: Some of you have stood in the ruins of this synagogue there and seen Peter's house.

Luke 4:43 – *"I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose."*

Luke 8:1 - *Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God.*

This impresses on us the nature of preaching. Jesus did not serve people apart from teaching/preaching. His miracles set the stage for his preaching/teaching. But he did it differently than anyone before or since him.

- b) *"authority"* = competency, mastery

After years of listening to rabbis suppose what the Bible said and add Jewish tradition to the Scripture, Jesus was making the Bible make sense.

This was because Jesus didn't quote other authorities. He spoke by his own authority as the incarnate Word of God.

This is the voice that spoke creation into existence, called Abraham out of Ur, talked to Jacob in a dream, met Moses at the burning bush and walked through fire with Daniel's friends.

No wonder Mark, in a parallel passage, wrote, *And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. (Mark 1:22).*

Third: A Demon Possessed Man Opposed Jesus. 33-34

This is important. v 33 – *“And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon”* implies the man was a regular in the synagogue.

And yet, nothing any rabbi had ever said previously had angered or attacked the demon.

Billy Sunday – *“If you never run into the devil, it’s probably because you are going in the same direction.”*

a) Demons are fallen angels

1 – Luke 10:18 - *“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.”*

Isaiah 14:12 - *How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground,*

2 – It may be that one-third of all the angels fell with Lucifer –

Revelation 12:7-9 - *Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, ⁸ but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. ⁹ And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.*

3 – The faithful angels are called *“holy angels”* (Mark 8:38) while the fallen angels are called *“demons.”*

4 – These demons are now engaged in spiritual warfare on the earth

- Generally - 1 John 5:19 - *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.*
- Individually - Ephesians 6:11-12 - *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*

IMP: Demons can often be hard to detect and separate from our fallen-world struggles. For instance, it's become popular to claim to have a demon of gluttony, anger, or pride, etc., but we shouldn't blame the devil for our sinful natures.

Note: Why don't we hear as much about demon possession as we used to?

- The number of demons is finite, and the world's population has grown from about 300 million in Jesus's time to almost 8 billion people.
- It appears Satan threw the weight of his infernal army against Israel, looking for Jesus.

5 – But make no mistake about it. Satan is a defeated foe, already cast out of Heaven, awaiting judgement.

But, just as there is a hierarchy in Heavenly angels – Gabriel is a messenger; Michael is a warrior - there is also a hierarchy in fallen angels.

- b) 33 – This particular demon is "Unclean" = He could be ceremonially or morally unclean but it doesn't appear he drove the man to any easily seen vices.
- IN the NT, 16 times people are said to have a demon or evil spirit.
 - 13 times people are "demon possessed."

The phrases "*entered him*" (Luke 8:30) and "*cast out*" (Matt 8:16) indicate demon possession, demonic indwelling.

- 3 times the NT speaks about an "unclean spirit."
- Acts 5:16 – speaks do demon affliction but not possession.

IMP: Can Christians be possessed by demons? No. Christians are indwelt (Ro 8:9-11; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19) and sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13).

We have been "*delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son*" (Col 1:13).

But Christians can be oppressed by demons. This is why we're told to resist the devil (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9), primarily by seeking God.

- c) 33 - "*...he cried out with a loud voice*" - He is disturbed by Jesus' teaching.

This isn't the man speaking but the demons inside him who control and react to Jesus.

"It was a cry of terror. The foul fiend that possessed the wretched man saw the yawning mouth of the Abyss before him."

– John Phillips

Note: The demon cries, "What have you to do with us..." Does he mean "us" in general or "us" in particular? We do know that multiple demons can possess a single person.

- Matthew 12:43-45 – The danger of self-reformation.
- Mark 5:1-13 – A Roman 'legion.' is comprised of about 6,000 soldiers.

ILL: The Roman legion was the largest military unit of the Roman army. A legion was roughly of brigade size, composed of 4,200 infantry and 300 cavalry soldiers in the Republican period, extended to 5,200 infantry and 120 auxilia in the imperial period. But it did not always denote the same number. In the time of Christ, it consisted of 6,000-to-3,000-foot soldiers and 3,000 horsemen.

d) 34 - He does not call him, "Lord," but...

1- He knows that Jesus has the power to destroy him.

Note: Demon possession in the NT is never confused with insanity. All NT demons are rational beings.

34 - "destroy" = *to abolish, to end*.

This, friends, is the ultimate purpose of Jesus's incarnation –

1 John 3:8 - *The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.*

2 – He knows Jesus is "the Holy One of God." (8:28; Mk 1:31; 3:11)

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

Basically, the demon cries out because he recognizes Jesus and knows that his day of doom has come.

Fourth: Jesus Commands the Demon. 35

a) Jesus commands him to be silent.

Why does Jesus silence the demon?

- 1 – Just to hush him?
- 2 – It's Jesus's turn to talk?
- 3 – To keep him from revealing Jesus's identity?

4:41 - *And demons also came out of many, crying, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ.*

4 - Jesus does not need Satanic acclamation. This demon is telling the truth but not out of love or loyalty. This is the church's business!

Revelation 5:9-10 - *"Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."*

Revelation 7:9-12 - *After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" ¹¹ And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."*

- b) He commands him to "come out of him."
- c) The demon throws the man down to the ground.
- d) And comes out of the man, causing him no harm.

How can Jesus do this? He has already bound the strongman (4:1-13) and is now ridding the world of his minions.

John 12:31 - *Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.*

Satan has already been judged. He's just waiting for the sentence to be carried out.

Revelation 20:10 - ...and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Isaiah 14:16-17 - Those who see you will stare at you and ponder over you: 'Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, ¹⁷ who made the world like a desert and overthrew its cities, who did not let his prisoners go home?'

Note: This is a good article on the devil: <https://www.gotquestions.org/when-will-Satan-be-defeated.html>

Fifth: The People are Amazed and Jesus's Fame Grows 36-37

Conclusion:

Different people exercise authority in different ways:

- A General gives orders.
- A teacher gives grades.
- A traffic guard stops cars.

How did Jesus exercise authority? In a word, just by saying the word.

It will be 1500 years before Martin Luther is born and writes,

*And though this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us:
The Prince of Darkness grim,
We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure,
For lo! his doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him.
- Martin Luther*

Jesus does have “all authority” and we can rest in that.

Community Groups:

- 1 – Why did Luke write his gospel?
- 2 – What has most impressed you so far in Luke?
- 3 – Look at a map to see where Nazareth and Capernaum are located.
- 4 – What is wrong with the man who yells at Jesus?
- 5 – Can Christians be oppressed by the devil?
- 6 – Can Christians be possessed by the devil? Demonstrate this from Scripture.
- 7 – What is the danger of self-reformation according to Matt 12:43-35?
- 8 – What does this demon know about Jesus?
- 9 – Why might Jesus command the demon to be quiet?
- 10 – What does Jesus do with the demon?
- 12 – What ultimately happens to the devil?
- 13 – What do you learn about demons from this passage?
- 14 – What do you learn about Jesus from this passage?

Daily Devotion:

Mon, Mar 25th. Read Lk 4:31-32 & Hb 10:23-25. Throughout his life, Jesus was in the synagogue every Sabbath. The writer of Hebrews encourages his readers to “meet together” with others and surrounds the command (v 25) with benefits of doing so. Read v 23 and find one benefit. What benefit is listed in v 24? Why does he say believers should gather in v 25? In other words, going to church is not a self-indulgent exercise but one in which you serve others. Whom did you encourage last Sunday? Who encouraged you?

Tues, Mar 26th. Read Lk 4:33-34 & Eph 2:2-3a. In the Ephesians passage, Paul lists the flesh, the world, and the devil as your three spiritual enemies. What habits/disciplines do you employ to combat your fallen nature? What safeguards do you have in place to protect yourself from the world’s influence? Think about it this weeks. Then create the habits and build the hedges that can cooperate with the Holy Spirit in your ongoing sanctification.

Wed, Mar 27th. Read Lk 4:35, Mk 5:1-13 & Rev 20:10. What power does Jesus have over demons? What will ultimately happen to the devil? With this in mind, why do you think anyone would serve Satan? Yet, anytime we choose to disobey God, we are serving the flesh, the world, or the devil. This places obedience and disobedience in stark terms. Are

there any areas of your life that are not under Jesus's lordship? Will you confess this to Jesus now, repent and create a plan of obedience today?

Thur, Mar 28th. Read Lk 4:36, Rev 5:9-10 & 7:9-12. The (super)natural response to seeing Jesus is worship, which means, 'to kiss toward' as in reverence and devotion. What about you? Does reading this passage result in worship? Take a moment right now to see Jesus, to think on him and respond in spoken words, songs, etc. Then keep that image of Jesus before you daily so that you Carpe Diem, Coram Deo (seize the day before the face of God). Then live every day before the face of Jesus in reverence and devotion.

Fri, Mar 29th. Read Lk 4:37 & Acts 1:8. Luke wrote both these verses, telling Theophilus that is only natural for Christians to tell others what they know about Jesus. After all, how could you keep the best news in the world all to yourself. Are you regularly talking to others about Jesus? Who will you talk to today about Jesus? And remember that Easter is coming. Use Easter Sunday as a natural conversation starter to invite someone to church. After all, the news is just too good to keep to yourself.