

Authority Over Demons Luke 4:31-37

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to **Luke 4:31-37**. Honor God's Word and stand as I read this passage.

Our text shows us four thoughts.

There is a convicting message

There is a confrontational man

There is a clear mandate

There is a confused membership

I. A CONVICTING MESSAGE – v. 31- 32

Who would you put as your top five or ten Bible teachers or preachers that you have either listened to or read? I'll prime the mental pump and name some.

Billy Graham

J.R. Rice

John MacArthur

Chuck Swindoll

Charles Stanley

Andy Stanley

Bill Hybels

Ravi Zacharias

H.A. Ironside

Charles Spurgeon

Warren Wiersbe

J.Vernon McGee

Allistair Begg

D.L. Moody

A.W. Towzer

Maybe you have some others not on that list. Luke describes for us two miracles of Jesus. One we will look at today, and one we will look at next week.

They both demonstrate the miraculous power of Jesus. The first shows us that Jesus has power and authority over the spiritual world, the world we cannot see. The second will show us that He has power over the physical world in the healing of Peter's mother-in-law. They are further claims to His being Messiah and the authority which He

possessed.

Our text begins by noting that Jesus went down to Capernaum. Capernaum was sizeable enough in population to be called a city. It was located on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee about 15 miles from Nazareth. After the town of Nazareth rejected Him as Messiah we learn from **Mark 2:1** that Jesus made Capernaum His home. **"A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that He had come home."**

Some believe that He lived in Peter's home.

Nazareth is where He grew up, but Capernaum was where He set up His ministry base. It had a customs station where taxes were paid. This was home to Matthew who sat at one of the tax booths. At some point Peter and Andrew, who were from Bethsaida, moved to Capernaum.

Something else we learn about Capernaum according to **Matthew 11:23** is that Jesus will pronounce a curse and condemn the city for its unbelief in the miracles He performed.

Capernaum had a garrison of Roman soldiers stationed there and the centurion over this cohort built a synagogue for the Jews. It is this synagogue where Jesus did much of His teaching and in this town where He did a number of miracles.

As we found Jesus last week, so we find Him again teaching in the synagogue. The KJV tells us that His teaching on the Sabbath was a regular practice. He had obviously established Himself in the city, in the synagogue and in the hearts of the people who worshipped there.

I suppose my curiosity would like to know what it was He taught. In modern society we have the ability to record messages for posterity. We started out on cassette tapes, then moved to VHS tapes and now we can stream messages live through the internet. If you like a particular speaker you can go

back to their sermon archives and listen to past messages. Books have been written that contain the messages of pastors who lived during an age when the only technology was pen and paper. I have the collective works of great preachers like Alexander MacLaren, Matthew Henry and the Charles Spurgeon.

There have always been many gifted preachers and teachers throughout history. Read through the gospels sometime and note how many times it states that when Jesus taught, the crowds were amazed. The Greek word used here is *ekplesso* (not *espresso*). It's a word that literally means to strike with panic or shock. Unfortunately we don't know what Jesus taught here, but we know that as Luke interviewed those who heard Him teach, they all agreed that what He said packed a wallop. He was straightforward in His message and left nothing unsaid. He didn't come to tickle itching ears and give people what they wanted to hear. He didn't come to be politically correct and send people away feeling really good about themselves. He spoke truth because He is truth and could teach nothing less. His hearers were left in utter shock at what He said, not because it was offensive, but because it was truth, it was with authoritative. **How do we know that?** Our text gives us the answer. Look at verse 2. **"They were amazed at His teaching, because His message had authority."**

The teachers of that day spoke about God, but it was often based on the authority of previous teachers. What they taught, they believed because some other great teacher said it. Now that's not necessarily wrong. When I study and then preach I will use quotes from other sources to get a point across because they have said what I want to say in a way that is better or clearer than I could say it and these sources are reputable and have stood the test of time in their research and through their godly example.

Now if in my message I made a point and quoted

Fred who I met last week at the gym while I was running and he said this particular passage means this, you would question my teaching and probably run me out on a rail.

The teachers of Jesus' day taught on what we would call second hand theology and from tradition. But when Jesus spoke, we read that His message had authority. **Why did it have authority? John 1:1, 14** gives us a clear answer. **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."** Jesus was not only God, He was the very Word itself. His authority in teaching came because He is its author.

When Jesus was done teaching, you knew exactly what you were supposed to do because He made it clear. There was no ambiguity or misunderstanding. It's no wonder people were amazed. He cut right to the heart of the issues and left people with the choice as to whether they would obey the truth of God's Word or the traditions of man.

At the close of a service a visitor greeted Henry Ironside by telling him that he enjoyed the service, but didn't think he was a great preacher. Ironside commented that he knew he wasn't a great preacher but asked what it was about his preaching that would bring the man to that conclusion. The man responded that he understood everything he said. Yet that is what made Ironside such a great preacher.

Jesus' preaching was clear and people were amazed. It is my prayer that my preaching and teaching will always be on the truth of God's Word through the insight of the Holy Spirit and that my authority begins and rests on the authority the Bible in all it says, not merely on the words of others.

We don't know the impact of the teaching of Jesus

in the synagogue but it was such that they continued to come out to hear Him teach week after week. His message was not only clear it was convicting. And because of His message there is a man who became confrontational.

II. A CONFRONTATIONAL MAN – v. 33-34

I have been fortunate to only experience one confrontation during my preaching. Years ago I had taken a group of teens to a downtown mission to conduct a service. The service was from 6-6:30. A meal always followed the service. If you wanted to eat you had to be in the doors by 6:00 after which they were locked and no one else could enter. If you left the service for any reason, you weren't allowed to come back in. Attendance for the entire service was enforced. I was just coming to my final thought and closing prayer when a man in the front row, raised his hand pointed to his watch and said "preacher it's 6:30." Now don't get any ideas.

Jesus is teaching, on what we do not know, but it was so convicting that a man hollered out at Him. It is my belief that the people at that point were startled that someone would interrupt Jesus, not understanding that the man had a significant spiritual problem being demon possessed. **What would we do in such a situation? Would the ushers come and escort him out? Would people tell him to quiet down and have a seat or tell him to leave?**

Several years ago you may remember an incident at a Saginaw Church that made the news when two women stood up during the service shouting pro-homosexual slogans. They came together in the front of the auditorium, kissed, and then threw propaganda as they raced down the aisles. Initially the congregation thought that it was all part of the message.

I wonder what people thought when this man shouted out at Jesus in the middle of His teaching.

Let's be clear about one thing that Luke notes. **"In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an evil spirit."** To the Greek mind, and the audience that Luke was writing a demon could either be good or bad and so Luke makes it abundantly clear that this demon was an evil spirit. Some believe that Jesus didn't believe in demons but just used terms that were prevalent in His day. Others believed in demons and that mental or physical illness was a result of demon possession. We see in the Gospels that there were instances where that was the case, but we also see where Jesus healed people of things like demon possession, epilepsy, blindness indicating that they were different from one another.

Now let's also understand something else. Demons do exist. They are living spirits. They are not the idea of an over imaginative Hollywood director or the pen of a fictional writer or brush of an artist. They are not the psyche's attempt to answer all the evil in the world we see or read or hear about. They are real and they are a force to be contended with.

While we're at it we need to mention that God did not create demons. **Genesis 1:31 "God saw all that He had made, and it was very good."**

Now we know from Scripture that God created everything in the heavens and on the earth. Some scholars believe that angels were created possibly on the first day when the earth was formless and empty. I'm going to tell you that I don't know when they were created. But I can say with confidence that God did not create demons. It would have been against His holy nature, and we just read that everything He created was very good and in what He created there was nothing evil.

So we need to understand that demons were at one time good angels. In their beginning they were just like the angels we read about who are around the throne giving praise to God.

At some point Satan, who was known in heaven as Lucifer, chose to rebel against God. Whether this occurred before or after the creation of Adam and Eve and their habitation of the Garden of Eden I don't know. He was created to reflect the glory of God, but one day woke up, looked in a mirror and declared that he was beautiful and his beauty was his own doing. Pride filled his heart and he declared that he would become like God and ascend to a place where everyone and everything would worship him. He was able to convince about one third of the angels to follow him in rebellion and God banished them from heaven. Those banished with him are the demons, his minions, who do his bidding. They are always opposing God and God's plans, but keep this clear in your mind; they will never, ever be able to circumvent God's plans. They will never be able to change God's will. They will never gain power or mastery over God. Satan thought he had done so at the death of Jesus, but Jesus' victory over the grave proved that all the sin of all the world past, present and future could not keep Jesus in the grips of death: **"where, oh death, is your sting; where, oh grave is your victory?"**

When Satan fell in pride, those angels who rebelled with him became part of the kingdom of darkness. They are real and they are opposed to God and anything that has to do with God, and that means you and me, and they will do what they can to keep others from becoming part of the kingdom of God. We see in Scripture that demon possession of individuals was evident in Jesus' day and Scripture tells us that this phenomenon will become more evident the closer to the return of Jesus.

Whether or not the young man who committed the heinous act of killing at the Connecticut school was demon possessed is unclear, but his own father said his son was "pure evil." While Satan and his minions can pretend to be an angel of light, make no mistake about it, their intent is always evil, their intent is always to get someone to do wrong.

Is there demon possession today? I believe there is, maybe not as evident in our western culture, but there is strong evidence from the mission field.

Can a Christian ever be demon possessed? To that I give a resounding and emphatic NO. When the Spirit of the Living God sets up residence in the heart of a person who trusts in Jesus Christ as Savior light and darkness cannot coexist. We may sin, and that may or may not be the influence of a demon, but we who have been sealed by the indwelling Spirit will not be possessed by a demon. It will never happen.

But you might say what about the story Jesus told about the guy who had a demon cast out and He said that the **"house was swept clean"** but later on he returned and brought seven more to possess the man? I believe that it is possible to cast out a demon and the person can become moral for a time without saving faith, but then fall victim to demon possession again. There is no example in Scripture of a demon ever possessing a believer and there is no example of a demon ever being cast out of a believer. **Colossians 1:13** says that God **"delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son."** Salvation brings deliverance and protection from Satan. That doesn't mean we can't be influenced by a demon, but we cannot be possessed by one.

Demons are real and they can enter and control a man's speech and actions. We see both in this passage. The first is in what he said.

The NIV uses a single word **"Ah"** to convey an exclamatory remark. The KJV reads **"Let us alone."** It's a scream of panic or terror, a diabolic screech. We also read that he said **"what have we to do with Thee."** And **"Have you come to destroy us?"**

Greek scholar A.T. Robertson calls it a “scream caused by the sudden contact of the demon with Jesus.”

He was asking Jesus why the attack on them. Fully aware of Jesus’ identity, the demon saw the immanency of his doom. He knew what his punishment would be and cried out in horror telling Jesus to leave him alone. He thought Jesus was there to judge him, condemn him, and carry out the sentence of punishment on him that is reserved for all demons. **Matthew 25:41** makes it clear that a place of punishment in everlasting fire has been prepared for Satan and his angels. This demon thought the time had come for his judgment.

Now there is some question as to whom the demon is referring when he speaks of “us.” **Were there multiple demons inhabiting the man?** Remember the man who had the demon cast out and later returned with seven others or the demon possessed man living in the tombs of the Gadarenes in whom legions of demons lived? But that doesn’t appear to be the case here. The “us” most likely is referring to both the demon and the man who was possessed. The demon wanted Jesus to believe that he and the man were intertwined, inseparable, that what happened to the one would happen to the other. So he cried out for Jesus to leave them alone.

The demon’s words are also a clear indication between the striking difference between their two very opposite natures: Jesus being pure and the demon being wicked. There couldn’t have been a sharper contrast in character between them. Jesus and this demon had nothing in common. One is light and holiness, the other is darkness.

That the demon knew who Jesus was is evident in how he referred to Jesus. He knew where He lived, He knew His name, He knew His character and He knew His divine relationship. He called the teacher **“Jesus of Nazareth, the Holy One of God.”** You can’t get any clearer than that. James tells us that

the demons know who Jesus is and they tremble in fear. Jesus had a confrontation with a man who was demon possessed and the demon knew who Jesus was and was terrified.

More alarming than what he said, is that a demon possessed man is in the service. That’s troubling to me. It says to me that at any given time that may occur in our service or at least that a demonic influence may be present. That’s a frightening and disturbing thought. What also is troubling is that the man had probably been in the synagogue before and had never been under conviction, never troubled by what he heard from the other teachers until that day in the hearing of Jesus. If they aren’t afraid of us, we need to wonder how close to Jesus we are because Scripture says if we resist them they will flee.

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III.A CLEAR MANDATE – v. 35

“Be quiet!’ Jesus said sternly. ‘Come out of him!’ Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him.”

Whether you like the KJV term **“rebuke”** or NIV word **“sternly”** it comes from the root word to be stiff or to stare and means severe or unyielding, to be rigid or firm or strict. Jesus wasn’t just pointing his finger at the demon possessed man giving him a scolding, He was firmly commanding the demon to leave the man and gave the demon no room to argue or debate or stubbornly rebel and say no.

Jesus gave two commands. The first command was for the demon to hold his peace or be quiet. It literally means to be muzzled or to be gagged. It’s the same word used by Paul when referring to the Old Testament law that an ox was not to be muzzled

when treading out the wheat. **(I Corinthians 9:9)**
The demon was told not to say another word.

The first pastor I served under had an experience with a man he was counseling who claimed to be demon possessed. The pastor rallied some prayer warriors of the church to pray while he was counseling in his office. As I was told the story by the pastor, the demon wanted to speak, but the pastor forbid the demon from speaking in the name and power of Jesus. Jesus said "Be quiet."

Jesus gave a second command. **"Come out of him!"** Not only was the demon to stop talking, he was also to leave the man. When Jesus speaks they must obey. I said earlier that demons not only can control what is said, they can also control actions. In this case, before leaving the demon wanted to inflict harm on the man. He threw the man to the ground. Mark describes the same scene by noting that the evil spirit convulsed him. Remember that while they can appear as an angel of light, their intent is always destruction. In a way, the demon was saying that if he couldn't have the man, Jesus couldn't have him either. Once again he wanted Jesus to believe that they were inseparable and that to destroy one meant to destroy the other, that somehow there was a symbiotic relationship that existed. But where the demon wanted to harm the man, Jesus wanted to help him. He had compassion for the man, but he had condemnation for the demon. Luke, the physician/historian notes that the demon left the man **"without injuring him."** Again we see the power of Jesus.

Why did Jesus not want the demon to bear witness of His identity? The demon was clearly right in what he said about Jesus. **So why silence him?** I think the answer is found in the question. Jesus did not want something that was evil bearing witness about Him. It was the same in Acts when the demon possessed girl followed Paul telling people to listen to him because he spoke the truth. Paul likewise rebuked the demon and cast it out of the girl

because he didn't want his ministry associated with something that was evil. It's the same with Jesus. It would be like us asking an atheist or a Buddhist monk to advertise our church. *As the saying goes, you are guilty by association.* People would think that we hold the same beliefs. That's why Jesus silenced the demon.

In this passage I see the grace of our Lord extended to those He came to seek and save. Let's be thankful that Jesus has such power and authority.

In what Jesus said to the demon we need to see both His absolute power and authority over them. They have no alternative but to obey the command of Jesus, because He has absolute power over them. They must obey and this demon's obedience was instantaneous.

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IV. CONFUSED MEMBERSHIP – v. 36-37

What they heard and saw, what they were witness to that day was amazing and the news about Jesus spread. The tense of the verse indicates that news about Him went continuously out. What I find amazing is this: the demon had just declared who Jesus was, Jesus had not only by His power and authority silenced the demon and cast it out, but they still wondered who Jesus was. **What better proof did the people need to convince them that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, yet read again the verse? "What is this teaching? With authority and power He gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!"**

It's along the same line of thinking by the disciples when they are out on the stormy seas about to drown and Jesus rebuked the winds and the waves telling them to stop. It left them amazed.

The people who saw Jesus that day were really asking “who is this guy?” Clearly there was confusion on their part about Him. The demon’s response was fear and trembling. Their response was nothing of the sort. They clearly missed Him.

As we conclude our message, let’s remember that this event shows the kind of Messiah Jesus is. He did not come to oppose tyrannical political rulers or governments and overthrow them. He came to overthrow the spiritual forces of darkness. He came to defeat Satan and bondage to sin. In the week prior to His crucifixion He spoke of His impending death and through it how Satan would be driven out. This miracle shows us that He came to free mankind from bondage to sin and Satan. Because Christ has victory over these forces as a child of God, one who by faith is in Christ Jesus, we too have this same power and while death may come, it will not have the final mastery over us when the trumpet blast sounds and the resurrection of the living and the dead call us to an everlasting presence with Christ. His victory is ours. His work on the cross is the ultimate victory over Satan. The cross is the decisive defeat.

“Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: ‘Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.’”

Christ’s death on the cross is where our sins are completely forgiven and Satan has no more authority over us. We can stand against the wiles of the devil and his demons because of being in Christ and adorning ourselves with the armor of God. We are victorious because greater is He that is in us than He that is in the world.

Even if we are faced with oppression from demonic forces we can claim the power of Jesus to bring victory. John MacArthur tells a story of when he was in junior high he had a friend who was always being bullied. They would get beat up. One day the bully pushed him into the lockers in gym class. That was the last straw and he stood up and in a squeaky voice said “that’s enough.”

He went home and told his big brother about the bully beating him up all the time. The big brother happened to be the tight end on the college football team. The next day on their way into class, the bully and his minions started in on them. From around the corner of the building came his big football brother. He asked who the bully was. MacArthur’s friend pointed to the bully; his big brother went over punched him, picked him up off the ground, told him never to pick on his brother again and literally threw him over the hedge.

Whenever we are faced with the spirit of oppression by one of Satan’s demons, never try to address the problem in our own power. Remember the story in Acts when the seven sons of Sciva attempted to cast out the demon from a man? The demon responded, “Jesus I know and Paul I know, but I don’t know you” and the demon beat them up.

Always stand in the power and authority of Christ and His Word. If you are facing some oppression just pray a little prayer. If you are fearful, you can say “Spirit of fear, in the name and power of Jesus I command you to go away and not return.” It could be anything, anger, temptation, bitterness, gossip.

If your kids or grandkids are living in rebellion or anger, rebuke it in the name of Jesus. Claim the belt of truth and the Sword of the Lord. And when you experience victory don’t become proud. After the disciples returned one day from ministry, they excitedly told Jesus about the miracles they performed and the demons that were cast out. Jesus told them not to be excited about that but to be

excited that their names were written down in heaven. Live in the power and authority of Jesus' name. Jesus is not only the sweetest name, it is a powerful name. Martin Luther's oft sung hymn "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" supports this.

And tho' this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph thro' 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.

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That word is the name Jesus.

Today thank the Lord that He has authority and power over demons. **In what are you battling today that you need to claim the power and authority of Christ?** He will give you victory.