

# His Authoritative Word

Luke 4:31-44

## 1. Introduction.

- a. Jesus despised hypocrites. It's easy to talk big, but much harder to live. This passage shows why Jesus was no hypocrite.
- b. Jesus Word possessed power, and His actions proved it. His miracles didn't give His Word authority, but His Word is what gave His miracles power. In other words, the signs and wonders simply confirmed the inherent authority of His Word.
- c. The main idea of the passage is that since Jesus' Word carried such tremendous authority, it is, therefore, going to be the central priority for the rest of His ministry (c.f., 4:43-44).

## 2. His Authority Over Truth (31-32).

- a. Jesus now returns to Capernaum for a second time (c.f., John 2:12).
  - i. He enters the synagogue to teach; for teaching is what He does.
  - ii. Jesus is an itinerate, traveling preacher at this point.
  - iii. Likely, He's traveling around to the various synagogues in Galilee and preaching the Isaiah 61 sermon (c.f., Lk. 4:16-21).
- b. The key phrase to observe is that "His message was with authority (32)."
  - i. Whenever rabbis would teach, they never taught from their own interpretation and authority. Rather, they always taught the interpretations and traditions that were formally established by the ancient Jewish rabbis (e.g., Talmud, Tosephta, etc.). These were Jewish commentaries on the Scriptures, and rabbis were forbidden to teach otherwise.
  - ii. Jesus shows up and completely ignores the previous Jewish interpretations and teachings. Rather, He interprets the Scriptures Himself, and then teaches that interpretation (c.f., Mk. 1:22). As such, the people perceived His teaching to be coming from a self-derived authority. He would not regurgitate the familiar teachings of the previous rabbis, but

teach His own interpretation. He was giving a fresh exposition (and meaning) to the Scriptures. This was certainly true with Isaiah 61.

- iii. The people respond in shock.
- iv. Likely, the people's reaction would have been similar to the response in Nazareth at this point. However, some critical events begin to unfold that confirm His authority.

### 3. His Authority over the Spiritual Realm (33-37).

- a. In the middle of Jesus' teaching a man begins to scream (34). He's filled with the spirit of an unclean demon.
- b. For a full demonology, watch for the upcoming episodes in our podcast (Faith & Fable). However, I must say something, here.
  - i. A quick overview.
    - 1. Their number is likely in the millions. They don't die. They're always present. Their function is to deceive and create unbelief in the Gospel. They hate God, and serve at the pleasure of the devil.
    - 2. They mostly work behind the scenes, and seek to influence minds, hearts, and values. They work at both an individual and corporate level. Their greatest realm of work is within the structures of society, and the institutions that influence culture (i.e., government, administrations, educational systems, religion, etc.).
    - 3. Just like the devil, they work in half-truths. Manipulation is their game. The more truth they can present, the greater their deception. As a result, the more they're able to conceal themselves, the greater their influence.
    - 4. Demons are created beings. While we're physical creatures and inhabit the physical aspect of creation, demons are spiritual creatures, and inhabit the spiritual aspect of creation. However, while we can't inhabit the spiritual realm, demons are able to inhabit the physical realm. As such, they live among us, but we're rarely aware of their presence.
  - ii. On demon possession.

1. While demonic influence is everywhere, demon possession is an extreme form of demonic influence. However, it is extremely rare.
  2. Possession is never recorded in the Old Testament. Apart from some future events recorded in the book of Revelation, there is no mention of possession in the later parts of the New Testament. Rather, there's a heightened level of activity during the earthy ministry of Jesus. And this is key to understand.
    - a. Demonic possession was done mostly out of desperation and panic.
    - b. The New Testament evidence indicates that demonic influence is mostly relegated to moral categories. In other words, demonic influence is made manifest in things such as false doctrine, false worship, immorality, spirits of jealousy, division, etc. And there is ample evidence of this in the New Testament.
    - c. The popular idea of demonic possession being primarily evidenced in mental illness today, has little support in the New Testament. There may be a psychological (or physiological) component to demon possession, but whenever a demon possessed person speaks in the New Testament, they are always rational and logical.
    - d. Demon possession is a supernatural phenomenon. Therefore, it is not explicable by any pattern of physical symptoms.
  3. Again, demonic possession was a desperate, panicked manifestation of demonic activity, primarily taking place during the earthly ministry of Jesus.
    - a. The reason for this is seen in 1John 3:8—Jesus has come to destroy the works of the devil.
    - b. The demons understand exactly who Jesus is. Therefore, they begin to surface in the form of possessions. Possessions are a panicked reaction to their God and Creator becoming flesh.
- iii. The demon's response (34).

1. The phrase “let us alone” is the Greek particle ἔα. Some transliterate it as “Ha!” Likely, it comes from the Greek verb ἐάω, which is a panicked outburst. It’s a command, in which a person commands someone away, but because they sense great fear.
  - a. In other words, this demon knows exactly who Jesus is. Therefore, he fears. Remember, Jesus is preaching on Isaiah 61, and presumably identifies Himself as the Christ. This is why the demon shrieks in the midst of Jesus’ teaching. He can’t help it. He was not expecting the Christ to be anywhere near Him in this moment. This is a terrifying realization for this demon.
  - b. As a result, knowing that one of the roles of Christ was to destroy the works of the devil, this demon now wonders if Jesus has come to destroy him.
  - c. Demons live in the state of constant terror (James 2:19).
  - d. In the case of demonic possession, just preach the Gospel. Exorcism is a fanciful notion that has little biblical warrant. In fact, this a lesson learned by the seven sons of Sceva (c.f., Acts 19).
  - e. Just preach the Gospel. And this is exactly what Jesus was doing from Isaiah 61.

iv. Jesus’ Response (35).

1. Jesus rebukes and the demon obeys.
2. He comes out of the man without harming him—something rare. Demons typically hurt their victims.
3. This is a commentary on Jesus’ authority. There is no battle. The demon simply obeys.

4. His Authority over the Physical Realm (38-41).

- a. We’re introduced to Peter, who’s mother-in-law is sick. A high fever would have been fatal. Jesus simply rebukes the sickness and it disappears. Peter’s mother-in-law immediately gets up to serve.

- i. It's important to notice that Luke records demon possessions and sickness as two separate categories. Many, today, think sickness is the result of demonic possession. Yet Luke reveals this is not the case.
    - ii. The point to understand is just like Jesus commands the demon with His Word, He also commands the sickness with His Word. In other words, it is His Word that possesses authority.
    - iii. Jesus has come to reverse the devastating consequences of sin, Satan, and death. The greatest of which being death. Death is our enemy and Jesus has come to reverse its power (c.f., Heb. 2:14).
  - b. In vs. 40-41 we have a summary statement of Jesus performing these wonders until evening.
    - i. The demons flee, confessing Jesus as the Son of God.
    - ii. Jesus rebukes them, as the confession of Jesus as the Son of God is a privilege that would soon belong to the disciples alone. He doesn't want His name on their lips.

#### 5. His Central Mission (42-44).

- a. Jesus seeks to leave, but the people don't want Him to leave—a stark contrast from Nazareth.
- b. This is also a vivid commentary on how people love what Jesus can do for them now, but have little time for His message regarding eternity.

#### 6. Conclusion.

- a. The singular point of the entire passage is to communicate that Jesus possesses complete authority over all of creation (both physical and spiritual), but His authority is bound up with His Word.
  - i. It is His Word that saves, delivers, frees, and liberates (c.f., 4:18-19).
  - ii. This is powerfully demonstrated from Genesis to Revelation.
  - iii. As a result, Jesus' passion is to preach His Word (43-44). This is what is necessary.

- b. A final observation is to understand that Jesus does all of this on the Sabbath. It will happen four more times in Luke, but the point is to communicate that Jesus is our great Sabbath rest. Law won't save; only Jesus can save.
- c. So cast your burdens upon Him and He will give you rest (c.f., Matt. 11).