

## 21] JESUS' POWER OVER DEMONS AND DISEASE

(Sunday, March 6, 2022)

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**Scripture:** 2 Kings 20:1-11; Luke 4:23-30

### INTRODUCTION

The word worship comes from Old English and means worthiness, the acknowledgement of worth.<sup>1</sup>

Many people think worship is the part of the service where we sing.

I understand that idea, but truly our entire gathering should be worship.

We sing the praises of our great God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We read God's word and as it is proclaimed we also listen and respond as part of our worship.

And especially in our study now in Luke's gospel focused on our Lord Jesus Christ, how can we read or study these passages without being filled with amazement and awe at the power of our Lord?

With authority and power He spoke, cast out demons, and healed!

May our hearts be filled with praise even though we have heard these stories many times before.

We rejoice in the amazing power of our Lord to heal and restore.

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<sup>1</sup> Old English *weorthscipe* 'worthiness, acknowledgment of worth' (see worth, -ship). Apple Dictionary.

He is at work in our lives, but His power is not shown simply in our physical healing but in saving lost and ruined sinners from judgment and eternal wrath.

We will look at Luke 4:31-39 in two parts, verses 31-37 and verses 38-39.

### **1] JESUS CASTS OUT AN UNCLEAN SPIRIT, LUKE 4:31-37**

When I study the Bible, one thing that interests me is the numbers directly in the Bible or part of the context of the Bible.

I mentioned that Galilee was an area about 75% the size of Cook County and yet with a much smaller population.

Eckhard Schnabel in volume 1 of his massive work on Christian mission discusses the number of towns and population of Galilee.

There were at least 147 towns and villages in Galilee. Some estimate as many as 204.

The total population of Galilee in the time of Jesus is estimated to be about 200,000.<sup>2</sup>

These estimates come from looking at the archeological evidence that has been uncovered and estimating that about 100 people lived in an area the size of 2.5 acres or about 50 people living in an area the size of a football field.<sup>3</sup>

As a comparison, there are 24 cities in Cook County, 111 villages, and 1 town.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Schnabel, 182-184, 305.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.wolframalpha.com/input?i=football+field+area>

<sup>4</sup> [https://federalcos.com/blog/cook-county-il-cities/#List\\_of\\_Cities\\_in\\_Cook\\_County\\_Illinois](https://federalcos.com/blog/cook-county-il-cities/#List_of_Cities_in_Cook_County_Illinois)

Nazareth in the time of Jesus is estimated to have been a small village of about 400 people. Capernaum was a little larger with estimates ranging from 600 to 1500 inhabitants.<sup>5</sup>

Capernaum was located on the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee. It was the home base of Jesus as He ministered in the entire region of Galilee.

Look at the final verses of Luke 4, verses 43 and 44.

**Luke 4:43** but He said to them, “I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent.”

**Luke 4:44** And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee.

Clearly the intention of Jesus was to preach the gospel in as many cities of Galilee as He had the time and opportunity.

He would train His disciples to do likewise.

This is what Jesus did for the majority of what we call His public ministry.

As we know, the gospels do not try to cover all the details. Out of as many as 200 cities in Galilee, only seven are mentioned by name.

Verse 31 states that on one Sabbath day Jesus was teaching in a synagogue in Capernaum.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Schnabel, 184.

<sup>6</sup> Here ἐν τοῖς σάββασις links closely with the verb and has a qualitative force (“as one does on the sabbath”) and not merely a time reference (cf 6:2; 13:10).

John Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, vol. 35A of Word Biblical Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 205.

Luke does not record the subject of Jesus' message on that Sabbath day.

What we are told is the response to His preaching – **astonishment because of His authority**.

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew records a similar reaction of those who heard Jesus.

**Matt. 7:28** And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, **29** for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

The word authority has the meaning of the potential to command, control, or govern in a situation.<sup>7</sup>

If you have authority, you can tell other people what to do.

What does it mean here?

How were people astonished at the authority of Jesus as He taught in the synagogue?

Commentators give similar but not always identical answers.

Here is one understanding that brings together some of what the commentators stress.

Imagine studying some great work of literature be it *Pilgrim's Progress*, *War and Peace*, or *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

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<sup>7</sup> BDAG, s.v. "ἐξουσία," 352.

Would you rather hear some PhD in literature talk about these great works or would you rather hear from the author of these great works?

Who could explain the book better to you and what the author meant?

Jesus did not have to share His opinion on the meaning and application of God's Word.

I am sure you have all groaned in hearing people say, well, this is what it means to me...

Jesus did not speak in terms of opinion or feeling – He could speak, **this is exactly what this means!**

Would it not be so amazing to hear Jesus speak on Scripture?

Then pay attention to the passages where Jesus does do that exact thing as recorded in the gospels.

Let's consider again this amazing scene that Luke has recorded.

Jesus is speaking authoritatively. People are astonished.

And then that same day, at the same time comes the shriek of a demon, shouting out loud through a possessed man!

Verse 34 is translated as "let us alone..." It might be better to understand this was a loud cry of, Ahh!!!!!!!<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> BDAG, s.v. "ἔα," 267.

And then the demon said, “What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth?

Did You come to destroy us?

I know who You are – the Holy One of God!

R. C. Sproul wrote:

“There has probably never been a period in human history when the demonic world was more actively at work and more furiously engaged against the kingdom of God than in the first century, because the Son of God was walking the earth and all the power of hell was unleashed against Him. Virtually every miracle that we see Jesus performing in the New Testament was also performed in the Old Testament by prophets such as Elijah, Elisha, or Moses. What was radically new about the supernatural ministry of Jesus was His ministry of exorcising demons. The New Testament writers were keen to let us know that Jesus’ power over the demonic world is significant. It is a sign of His supernatural origin and supreme authority, that even the devils of this world tremble at His presence.”<sup>9</sup>

The word demon is used 22 times in Luke, though there are not 22 separate accounts involving demons.

One writer, Yeshuah Boyton, has assembled a helpful list of the miracles in Luke.<sup>10</sup>

Luke records:

- 14 healings
- 5 exorcisms
- 4 wondrous miracles
- 2 people raised from the dead

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<sup>9</sup> R. C. Sproul, *Luke*, 120.

<sup>10</sup> <https://yeshuahboyton.com/how-many-miracles-of-jesus-are-in-luke/>

We understand that demons are evil spirits or fallen angels connected with the rebellion of the devil.

The NT shows that demons can exert control over the people they inhabit – speaking through them as we see here, causing derangement, acts of violence, and keeping people from being able to speak.<sup>11</sup>

**Unclean** is a word frequently used with demons and spirits. See also verse 36.

About 20 times the word unclean is used with respect to a demon or spirit.

Getting back to verse 34, the demon in shrieking voice expressed terror and an understanding of Jesus and His mission.

It is interesting to see that this demon had an understanding of Jesus that the people of Nazareth did not have.

**James 2:19** You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe – and tremble!

Demons know the truth.

Their problem is that they hate the truth.

They hate Jesus.

And so, when Jesus appeared, they trembled, they resisted, they shrieked and cried.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Mac Arthur Study Bible

<sup>12</sup> Sproul, 121.

The ESVSB states that the demon naming Jesus as the Holy One of God might have been an attempt by the demon to try to exercise power over Jesus.<sup>13</sup>

Certainly, Jesus would not give any allowance for a demon to try to silence or control Him.

We read in verse 35 that Jesus exercised His power and **rebuked** the demon telling the demon to be quiet.<sup>14</sup>

Silencing the demon was just the start. Even more the demon was told to come out, to stop its power in terms of inhabiting and controlling the person it possessed.

The demon came out, violently, causing the person to fall down and yet without any injury.

We notice in this case, we are not told anything about the man - his feelings, his response afterward.

That is not the focus of Luke here.

It is all about the power of Jesus and the response of the people in the synagogue.

The people in Capernaum were blown away with the power and authority of Jesus in speaking and now in casting out this demon.

The demon shrieked.

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<sup>13</sup> ESV Study Bible, s.v. Luke 4:34.

<sup>14</sup> This verb used this way only 2x as a command.



Jesus silenced the demon and spoke with absolutely authority.

It was the voice of Jesus and what He did that as it were echoed into every place in the surrounding region!

The word report in Greek is where we get our word *echo*. It is something loud that spread in space.

I found an excellent article by Dr. Al Mohler on the subject of exorcism written in response to a gathering of Catholic leaders who met back in 2010 to discuss the rite of exorcism.

A closer look at the crucial passages involved reveals no rite of exorcism, however, just the name of Jesus and the proclamation of the Gospel. Likewise, there is no notion of a priestly ministry of ordained exorcists in the New Testament.

The weapons of our warfare are spiritual, and the powers that the forces of darkness most fear are the name of Jesus, the authority of the Bible, and the power of his Gospel.

**Evangelicals do not need a rite of exorcism, because to adopt such an invention would be to surrender the high ground of the Gospel.** We are engaged in spiritual warfare every minute of every day, whether we recognize it or not. There is nothing the demons fear or hate more than evangelism and missions, where the Gospel pushes back with supernatural power against their possessions, rendering them impotent and powerless. Every time a believer shares the Gospel and declares the name of Jesus, the demons and the Devil lose their power.

Furthermore, there is absolutely no New Testament evidence that a believer in Christ can be possessed by demons. Tormented and tempted? Sure. But never possessed.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> <https://theaquilareport.com/on-exorcism-and-exorcists-an-evangelical-view/>

Amen!

## 2] JESUS HEALS PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW, LUKE 4:38-39

Notice that up to this point in Luke we do not have any reference to Jesus calling any disciples.

Luke 5 is where Luke records the calling of the first four disciples – Simon Peter, Andrew who is not mentioned by name, and then James and John.

Here in Luke 4 we have the first reference to Simon or as we generally know him, Peter.

There are 9 different people in the NT named Simon, but this is the most prominent of all the Simons of the NT.

It is possible that archaeologists have found Peter's home in Capernaum.

Beneath the foundations of a Byzantine church in Capernaum, archaeologists discovered a simple, first-century home.

There are other details which indicate that this home was later remodeled to be used in a different way, like for church services.

So, although we can't be absolutely dogmatic, it is fascinating to think we might know the exact spot recorded in Luke 4:38.

The description of this ancient house is as follows:

“Although slightly larger than most, the house was simple, with coarse walls and a roof of earth and straw. Like most early Roman-period houses, it consisted of a few small rooms clustered around two open courtyards.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-sites-places/biblical-archaeology-sites/the-house-of-peter-the-home-of-jesus-in-capernaum/>

In Mark's gospel as we have here, Jesus went from the synagogue in Capernaum to the home of Simon Peter.

Likely Jesus was called there because Simon's mother-in-law was sick.

Luke alone mentions the fact that her fever was high.

Was she close to death? What exactly was her medical condition?

We are not told, but we can only guess that Simon and his wife believed it was serious.

They requested that Jesus do something.

What a perfect and beautiful thing to do.

Jesus came by this very sick woman. He stood over her.

And then we see from verse 39 that Jesus rebuked the fever.

This is the same verb used in verse 35 where Jesus rebuked the demon.

Does it make sense to rebuke a fever?

Well, obviously Luke wants us to connect these actions which is why he used the same verb.

Jesus rebuked the demon, ending its power over the man.

Jesus rebuked the fever, ending its physical influence over Peter's mother-in-law.

Then look at the last part of verse 39.

Immediately she arose and served them.

For many years I have thought about this phrase.

But it makes perfect sense, doesn't it?

This detail shows that she was healed in such a way that she felt better than she may ever had.

It was a full restoration that she enjoyed.

It is not that she continued to get better, like Jesus gave her an antibiotic and told her to rest for a few more days.

No, she was immediately restored.

And what should we do if we have the ability? We serve others.

**Mark 10:45** For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

We are going to deal more with the subject of miracles as we look at the final verses of Luke 4 next week.

R. C. Sproul in his commentary wrote how he does not believe in miracles today.

Really? Well, if you understand the tight definition of a miracle you will see his point.

The miracles were not just amazing signs of God's power, they testified that God had called Jesus and later the other apostles in a special way.

Sproul wrote:

... if a non- agent of revelation can perform a miracle, then a miracle cannot authenticate or certify a bona fide agent of revelation. That would mean that the New Testament's claim that miracles carry the authenticating authority of God Himself, as shown by Christ's and the Apostles' miracles, would be a false claim and a false argument.

What's at stake here is the authority, the authenticity, and the truthfulness of the Bible. That's why I have this tight definition and why I don't expect miracles, because I don't expect to find Apostles alive today. Miracles, in the narrow definition, stopped at the end of the Apostolic age. God is still alive, still working, and still answering prayers in an amazing way.<sup>17</sup>

## CONCLUSION

**We rejoice in the amazing power of our Lord to heal and restore. We trust in Him. He can work in our lives but His power is not based on our physical healing but in saving lost and ruined sinners from judgment and eternal wrath.**

I read recently from the VOM March magazine the amazing testimony of Sabina Wurmbrand when she was placed in the cruel Gulag system of Romania and like a slave forced to labor in building the Danube Canal.

Sabina was very sick and was carried by her fellow slave-workers to the work site where they thought she would die.

But then something that can only be understood as divine healing, she was given her strength and life back. And it was in this amazing work of God that God gave a special testimony to a Jewish woman to whom Sabina was witnessing.

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<sup>17</sup> Sproul, 127.

Sabina wrote that in the evening this Jewish woman said to her:

“Today I have seen the brightness of the stars. Your God will be my God and your Jesus will be my Savior forever.”<sup>18</sup>

We never restrict or control the power of our Lord even now ascended to the Father’s right hand.

He still works in ways that cause us astonishment -to heal, to hold, and to save!

Let us always respond with astonishment, praise, and trust!

**Prayer**

**Hymn 427**

#### **BENEDICTION – HEBREWS 13:20-21**

Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

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<sup>18</sup> VOM Magazine, March 2022, 15.