

# The Authority of Jesus (Luke 4:31-44)

Each gospel narrative selects, arranges, and adapts the chronological ministry of Jesus according to a particular theme. For Luke, he has placed the account occurring in Nazareth as the “spiritual” capital of Israel. Nazareth summarizes His ministry to the nation of Israel: they were astonished, amazed, and spoke well of Him initially (v.22-24) but later wanted to kill Him (v.29). How do we make sense of the miracle in Capernaum (v.23)?

- A. The miracles in Capernaum before Jesus’ arrival in Nazareth are not recorded in any of the gospel accounts.
- B. The miracles in Capernaum (v.31-44) occurred before He visited Nazareth (paralleled with Mark 1:12-39).
- C. Jesus visited Nazareth at least twice (Mark 6:1-6; Luke 4:16-31): once at the beginning and the other towards the end of His earthly ministry.

**Main point:** Luke establishes the theme of Jesus’ teaching, preaching, and healing early to set the stage for His earthly ministry.

## 1. Jesus’ Authority over Demons (v.33-37)

- Thematically, Luke demonstrates that Jesus is “setting liberty to those who are oppressed” (v.18). While the primary ministry of Jesus was the preaching of repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation, His initial miracles were intended to warm the spiritually cold nation to His arrival.
- He enters Capernaum on the Sabbath to teach and is interrupted by a demon-possessed man (v.33-35). This demon-possessed man cries, “leave us (plural) alone.” Jesus’ cosmic battle began with His defeat of Satan in the wilderness, only now to face the “minions” of the kingdom of darkness (fallen angels). They “know Who Jesus is” (v.34). While demons are orthodox in their theology and eschatology and believe that God is one (James 2:19), they are not sure of the details of the incarnation and coming (comings) of Christ.
- During Jesus’ ministry, the evil and rampant wickedness in the heavenly is unleashed against Jesus and exposed by Jesus.
- He calls Jesus “Jesus of Nazareth” and “the Holy One of God.”

Demonic possession:

- is virtually absent in the OT (1 Sam. 16:14; 1 Kgs. 22:22) and mentioned a handful of times outside the gospels (Acts 16:16; 19:11-17) but will increase in frequency at the end of the age with the antichrist and his followers (2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:2).
- is when an unregenerate man/woman is tormented and dominated by at least one demon and is distinguished from ordinary cases of sicknesses, insanity (lunacy), convulsions, epilepsy, leprosy, blindness, lameness, deafness, and other defects and diseases.
- is not a mental state where people suffer from a subjective disturbance or delusion.
- is not depression, anxiety, worry, anger, or any other sin that is confused with modern psychology, which victimizes millions of men and women. Mental disorders, in many ways, have been the scapegoat for unbelief.
- in the NT is not necessarily the result of a sinful lifestyle, for no one who is liberated from demons is commanded to repent (though all must repent).

Why did Jesus silence the demon?

- A. To demonstrate His authority, even over the very words of the demon.
- B. In asserting the name of a deity, including the origin and name, the demon was attempting to control Jesus or have authority over Him.
- C. He does not want the demon to bring attention to Jesus prematurely: words like “Son of God,” “destroy us,” and “Christ” (Messiah) had political and cultural

overtones in the first century (v.34, 41). The Romans and Jews may mistake Jesus as a political king, wrongfully asserting He would establish His physical kingdom.

- In demonstrating His authority, He rebuked the demon, silencing and commanding him to come out of the man. Upon departing from the man, the demon “threw the man down,” demonstrating the violence and destructive nature of the demon (v.35).
- While the regenerate cannot be demon-possessed, they can be demon oppressed. We are engaged in constant spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:10-13).

## 2. Jesus’ Authority over Illness (v.38-41)

- Following His teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum, Jesus went to Simon’s (Peter) house, which began in the sixth hour (noon) according to Jewish tradition.
- Simon’s mother-in-law was ill with a high fever (possibly malaria), and “they” asked Jesus to heal her. Jesus rebuked the fever, as He did the demon, demonstrating His authority over the demons and disease (v. 18-19). This is the only healing miracle in which Jesus rebuked the disease itself.
- Unlike the liberated demon-possessed man, Simon’s mother-in-law served “them” (a precursor to those who will serve Jesus in gratitude).
- In one day, from the exorcism to the healing of Simon’s mother-in-law, reports were spread all around (v.36-37, 40), and all those who were sick were brought to Jesus.
- Jesus laid His hands on them and healed all of them (v.40), including those who were demon-possessed (v.41). This “laying of hands” is unique, as the laying of hands in the OT was symbolic of blessing, not healing. Luke is demonstrating the personal nature of God.
- Why did He heal?
  - to reveal His love and sympathy toward humanity
  - as proof of His divine credentials as the servant Messiah

The gift of healing ceased after the age of the apostles (end of the first century), as we have God’s complete revelation. While miracles rarely happen today, God, in His providence, can still “feed in” new activity to the natural order of His creation.

## 3. Jesus’ Authority in Preaching (v.31-32; 32-44)

- Jesus’ authority in preaching and teaching was distinct from the scribes and rabbis, who borrowed from second-hand Jewish sources and authors, as He spoke with clarity and conviction, which brought confrontation and exhortation.
- The next day, Jesus withdrew to a desolate place (6 am on Sunday). The people found Him and tried to keep Him from leaving Capernaum (v.42-43), but Jesus reminded them of His mission: *to preach the good news of the kingdom of God.*
  - The “good news of the kingdom of God” is mentioned almost 40 times in Luke-Acts yet never mentioned in the OT. The “kingdom” is mentioned several times in the OT (Ex. 15:18; 1 Sam. 12:12) but is never called the kingdom of God.
  - Jesus’ preaching ministry is not necessarily of God as King (though He is) but of people entering His kingdom, which is the kingdom of the Father, Spirit, and Son. Humanity enters this kingdom by receiving it, not by works. This kingdom is the redemption and recreation of fallen man through Trinitarian work inaugurated at the first coming of Jesus.
  - The ministry of God incarnate is to embody, proclaim, cultivate, and advance this kingdom.

We proclaim this message in the life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of the Savior of mankind. He will return to establish a physical kingdom.