

# The Authority of Jesus

## Luke 4:31–44 (ESV)

**INTRODUCTION:** When studying a text of scripture one of the things to watch for is the repetition of a word or concept. Generally, the Biblical writers will stack or chunk things together in order to make a point.

For example, if you see 4 or 5 parables in a row, almost inevitably they will be making the same point in much the way a Pastor might use a series of illustration to drive home the same idea.

Well here in Luke 4, we see that sort of reputation.

1. Authoritative Teaching followed by Amazement
2. Rebukes followed by Obedience

### 1. Authoritative Teaching followed by Amazement

- A. **His teaching in Nazareth** Luke 4:22 (ESV) <sup>22</sup> And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?"
- B. **His teaching in Capernaum** - Luke 4:32 (ESV) <sup>32</sup> and they were astonished at his teaching, for his word possessed authority.
- C. **His Authority over Demons** - Luke 4:36 (ESV) <sup>36</sup> And they were all amazed and said to one another, "What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!"

### 2. Rebukes followed by Deliverance

- A. **Jesus Rebukes the Demon who possessed a man in the Synagogue** (Luke 4:31-37)
- B. **Jesus Rebukes the Sickness in Peter's Mother in Law** (Luke 4:38-39)
- C. **Jesus Rebukes the a demon possessed in the Crowd** (Luke 4: 40-41)

What is the point that Luke is making? Luke is driving home the Innate Authority that Jesus possessed. This is one of the things that is missed in many of the modern depictions of Jesus.

- **Ancient Art over emphasized the Divine Nature of Jesus** - if you weren't sure which one was Jesus, it's always the one whose head is glowing.
- **Modern Art over emphasizes the Human Nature of Jesus** - This is the Jesus is my Homeboy approach. We see this in shows like, "the chosen" that present Jesus as not substantively different than his followers. Or the, "he gets us" campaign that seems to communicate that Jesus is pretty much just like you.

Luke - in chapter 4, early in the narrative is going to great lengths to show that while Jesus was fully human, in some ways he was not like us at all...or as the synagogue official said in John's gospel said, **John 7:46 (ESV)** <sup>46</sup> The officers answered, "No one ever spoke like this man!"

So, when you read Luke or any narrative, you are supposed to use your sanctified imagination to envision what is happening... Luke, in this passage, desires to make sure that when you read the words of Jesus that you do so imagining an entirely different level of AUTHORITY.

**CONTEXT:** Remember, last week Jesus had been teaching in His hometown of Nazareth. This week, he has made the 20 mile journey back to his ministry headquarters in Capernaum. Be aware in the narrative of the difference in the way the two cities Nazareth and Capernaum, respond to Jesus.

Everything up to this point has been establishing the PERSON of Christ - WHO HE IS as the SON OF GOD.

This was the message of:

- Gabriel as he visited Zechariah then Mary
- Simeon and Anna as Jesus visited the Temple as an infant
- John the Baptist as he baptized our Lord
- Then God the Father as he proclaimed, “this is my beloved Son”
- It was the message of Jesus at Nazareth as He opened the scroll of Isaiah and declare that the prophets words had been fulfilled in their hearing



Verse 31 marks a transition from a focus on the PERSON of Christ to the POWER of Christ, His Authority.

**TEXT: Luke 4:31–44 (ESV)**

<sup>31</sup> And he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee.

**Nazareth** is 1,300 feet above sea level and **Capernaum**, lying on the Sea of Galilee, is 695 feet below sea level. In terms of direction one would go **UP** to Capernaum but in terms of elevation one would go **DOWN** to Capernaum. <sup>1</sup>

31b. And he was teaching them on the Sabbath, <sup>32</sup> and they were astonished at his teaching, for his word possessed authority.

First Century Judaism was divided in much the same way Modern Christianity is divided between more liberal and more conservative schools of thought. These camps were represented by two prominent Rabbi's - **Shammai** and **Hillel**. While these two men agreed on the core of Judaism, they differed on some of the specific implications of the Law.

Various camps or sects of Judaism developed of those who held various positions - such as the Pharisee, the Sadducees, the Essenes and the Herodians.

These various camps represented the spectrum of Jewish belief, each Jockeying for a place in the hearts of the people.

Teaching in the first century began to rely less on the actual text of scripture and more on what proponents of the various camps had said and taught.

<sup>1</sup> Robert H. Stein, Luke, vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 162.

JESUS is different. He wasn't looking to the rabbinic tradition to make His point, but rather he spoke AS THE AUTHORITY.

Imagine that - hearing this Rabbi Jesus teach one had the innate sense that while His words never contradicted Moses, they seemed to carry greater weight than Moses.

**My authority as a Preach begins and ends with the Bible.** I have ZERO authority in and of myself. But if I speak in concert with God's word I can in the words of **A.W. Tozer**, *"speak not as a diplomat but as a Prophet, and deliver my words not as compromise but as an ultimatum"*.

Every word Jesus spoke was the very utterances of God, it fell with Authority.

<sup>33</sup> And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon,

Note, there where this demon possessed man was at - **the synagogue**. Sometimes people will say, "all of the demon possession today is over seas, if it happened here we would just drug them up and put this in a psych ward". Well there may be some truth to that, but that all reveals that you have a narrow understanding of possession.

Demon Possession does not necessarily drive one away from the congregation of God's people. The synagogue in the first century was a place of genuine, faithful, worship. Jesus went to synagogue every Sabbath. But so does this man who is demon possessed. SO, if your concept of a person who is demon possessed immediately conjures images of a person convulsing, foaming at the mouth, speaking profanity - you need to broaden your understanding. It is possible to simultaneously be very INTO church, never miss a service, AND be under the control of demons.

NOW - biblically speaking every single person who has not been SPIRITUALLY REBORN is in the domain of Satan.

Jesus said **John 8:44** (ESV) <sup>44</sup> You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires.

THAT IS NOT TO SAY THAT EVERY LOST PERSON IS POSSESSED. A person may be oppressed, tempted, ect., but possession is a very specific circumstance in which the individual has lost all power to resist and is fully under the control of a Demon.

Satan and his Demons are limited in number. They cannot possess every lost person, they must be strategic. There are times when they will come and go, King Saul, Judas.

You don't see a lot of Possessions in the OT, nor much reference to it in the Epistles. You see a sharp increase in Israel during the ministry of Jesus.

Remember, Satan and Demons do not know the day nor the hour the Son of God will come and judge them. They know it's coming, in fact they live in complete and utter terror. From everything that had happened from the Star over Bethlehem, the virgin birth, the voice at the baptism, the battle in the wilderness... they knew the Son of God was on the planet - they did not fully understand why.

One of the primary reasons why is found in **1 John 3:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> ...The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

So here in the Synagogue a man is possessed by a demon, and Jesus begins to teach. Likely, he is preaching the same message from Isaiah He had preached in Nazareth.

33b. and he (the demon possessed man) cried out with a loud voice, <sup>34</sup> "Ha!"

First the demon cries out, "Ha!" The Hebrew signifies it was more of a loud groan or shriek. It is a word in the Greek that means he cried out in terror.

**ILLUSTRATION:** There was a church in Alabama that I was asked to preach at. I began to notice that a young lady in the congregation would vocalize every time I referred to the death of Jesus. It wasn't laugh, but it was like half a laugh. Once I recognized it happening I began to text the theory and sure enough it only happened when I said something about the cross of Jesus Christ.

34b. What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?

The Greek phrase is something like, what is there between, "me and thee"? Have you ever felt like the preacher was preaching directly to you? Well that is how this demon felt - he knew Jesus came to destroy the works of Satan... and he cries out in utter terror.

34c. Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God."

**ILLUSTRATION:** If you have read my book, "**Our Fight**" you are familiar with an occasion when I was witnessing on Jackson Square in New Orleans and a man on stilts began to cry out across the park, probably 50 yards away from us. The park filled with 100's of people. He came closer and closer to us called me by name and said, "**The book, it burns, leave**". I could tell you story after story like that.

<sup>35</sup> But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "**Be silent and come out of him!**" And when the demon had thrown him down in their midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm.

The rabbis in Jesus day did exorcisms, but they often didn't work. They often failed horribly. It looked more like a horror show exorcism. Jesus made no show about it. He spoke to the demon with authority and the demon obeyed like a scolded dog.

<sup>36</sup> And they were all amazed and said to one another, "What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!"

Again, if Jesus really is the PERSON he was declared to be in chapters 1-3, then one would expect Him to have such POWER now in chapter 4 and following.

<sup>37</sup> And reports about him went out into every place in the surrounding region.

There is no better form of marketing for a church than a changed life. A man or woman liberated from the domain of Satan. A marriage healed. A young person standing against the current of the age and speaking truth in Christ.

<sup>38</sup> And he (Jesus) arose and left the synagogue and entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they appealed to him on her behalf.

Mother in Law's are special. JOKE: There is a story about a man who died and went to heaven. When he arrived St. Peter met him at the gate and said, "Hello, and welcome to Heaven! In order to pass into the Pearly Gates there is one requirement that you must meet, and it's fairly simple. All you have to do is spell the word DOG. The man then replies, "oh, that's easy - D-O-G" St. Peter then responds, "That's great, You're granted access into heaven now, but I heard Jesus calling for me, so could you mind holding the fort down while i'm gone?" "Sure," the man replied. Some time later, the man's mother in law arrived at the pearly gate. He says, "Well hello there, I didn't expect to see you here... and welcome to Heaven! But in order to pass through these Pearly Gates, you'll have to spell a word for me." The Mother in Law replied, "Ok, that's fine, then what is the word I must spell?" After pausing for a moment, the he solemnly responds: "CZECHOSLOVAKIA!"

Well, Peter was nice enough to bring Jesus to his sick mother in law. Interestingly, Luke uses a very technical term for, "High Fever". Remember, Luke was a physician. He uses the word a Physician would use to describe a particular kind of fever.

<sup>39</sup> And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her, and immediately she rose and began to serve them.

So just as Jesus rebuked the demon and it obeyed, here Jesus rebukes the fever and it leaves.

<sup>40</sup> Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them.

Now why did they wait until sunset? Because it was Sabbath. In the Jewish culture, Sabbath ended at Sunset on Saturday. So as soon the day had ended everyone who had heard of the healing authority of Jesus began to come to Him.

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.

Interestingly, when Demons are speaking to Jesus, they never lie. They lie to men about Jesus. They lie to Jesus about men. But they never lie about Jesus to Jesus.

Theologically, demons know and believe correctly about who Jesus is. Never think that accurate theology is necessarily evidence of good motive.

42 And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place.

You will see this rhythm all throughout the ministry of Jesus. **A retreat into Solitude.** There seems to be a direct correlation between Jesus's **public power and His private retreats.**

We will see him slipping away early in the mornings before the sun rises. We will see him slipping away late into the night, like in Gethsemane.

BTW, do you do this?

**ILLUSTRATION:** TIME and TIME again I hear from Christians who tell me that there is an unusual closeness of the Holy Spirit after their love one passes. Part of that is simply the comforting ministry of the Spirit. But part of that is the fact that these is a special awareness and openness that occurs only in solitude.

I come to the garden.... **Alone.** While the dew is still on the roses. And the voice I hear falling on my ear, the Son of God discloses.

There are certain truths and benefits you will only receive in the gathering, in the midst of the fellowship of the saints. There are others you will only receive alone.

**Henri Nouwen** said it well - *"without solitude it is virtually impossible to live a spiritual life"*.

Let me encourage you to develop a habit of solitude. Find a regular time and place you are going to meet with God, open your bible and pray. If Jesus needed this time, how much more do you?

**Pastor Tom Nelson** said it this way, *"The secret to success in service to Christ is not OVERWORK, but OVERFLOW. If you would be significant for God, you must be much with God."* He also said, *"when you output exceeds your intake, your upkeep will become your downfall"*.

42b. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them.

Notice the radical difference between how Capernaum received Jesus versus how Nazareth received Him. Nazareth wanted to kill Jesus, Capernaum didn't want to lose Him. Same Jesus, totally different reactions.

<sup>43</sup> but he said to them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose." <sup>44</sup> And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

Now remember, what were the two things that we noticed throughout this passage?

1. Authoritative Teaching followed by Amazement
2. Rebukes followed by Obedience

**There seems to be a direct correlation between a recognition of the Authority of Jesus and how he responds to the need at hand. Why is that?**

- Remember in **Nazareth** - they viewed Jesus as a Cosmic Vending Machine and if they didn't get what they wanted they kicked it in protest.
- Here in **Capernaum**, they had a different perspective. They recognized and believed the AUTHORITY of Jesus and as a result He worked in their midst.

WHY? Why does Jesus respond differently on different occasions when it comes to healing? Ultimately it is because the healing is new earth spilling over...

The KINGDOM has come, the KING has dominion and authority. It is your responsibility to recognize that, to subject yourself to Jesus's authority, and to trust HIM for the results.

**CONCLUSION/INVITATION:**

**QUESTION - do you recognize the authority of Jesus?**

Are there things you do simply because Jesus is your King and He has commanded you to?  
Are there things you avoid simply because Jesus is your King and He has commanded you to?

Could it be that the difficulties in your life are there to cause you to reorient yourself to Lordship of Jesus Christ?

A proper view of the Lordship of Christ changes how we pray. There is a sense that we are to cast OUR CARES upon Him. So if we hurt, we has Him to relieve the hurt. If people we love are suffering we ask Him to relieve the suffering.

But there is another sense in which we recognize that our current circumstance came into our lives under the LORDSHIP of Jesus Christ. His Sovereignty and Purpose allowed this to happen... if that is the case and we trust Him... we aren't so quick to demand it leave. You see? We ask, "what is there for me to learn here?" Or "how might I glorify God in this situation?" If He changes it, great! We all want to avoid pain... but for the Christian the greatest pain is to be outside the will of our King.