

Erwin McManus... a frequent author for Christianity Today Magazine... once wrote an article about sending his son to summer camp.

*One summer Aaron went to a youth camp. He was just a little guy, and I was kind of glad because it was a church camp. I figured he wasn't going to hear all those ghost stories, because ghost stories can really cause a kid to have nightmares. But unfortunately, since it was a Christian camp and they didn't tell ghost stories, because we don't believe in ghosts, they told demon and Satan stories instead. And so when Aaron got home, he was terrified.*

*"Dad, don't turn off the light!" he said before going to bed. "No, Daddy, could you stay here with me? Daddy, I'm afraid. They told all these stories about demons."*

*And I wanted to say, "They're not real."*

*He goes, "Daddy, Daddy, would you pray for me that I would be safe?" I could feel it. I could feel warm-blanket Christianity beginning to wrap around him, a life of safety, safety, safety.*

*I said, "Aaron, I will not pray for you to be safe. I will pray that God will make you dangerous, so dangerous that demons will flee when you enter the room."*

*And he goes, "All right. But pray I would be really, really dangerous, Daddy."*

*Have you come to that place in your own life where you stop asking God to give you a safe life, and make you a dangerous follower of Jesus Christ?*

Wouldn't it be great if we were all dangerous followers of Christ...?

Demonic influences (which perhaps you see – as I do – that they seem to be on the rise) would not have their same destructive effects – would they?

The ministry of our church would be so much more powerful.

I want to pray **that** for us (right *now*)... before we open our passage of study. ... Because if we really want to be *dangerous followers* of Jesus Christ... we need to fully internalize (in the depths of our souls)... what our passage today teaches.

We must be fully convinced of *Jesus' authority in teaching* and *Jesus' authority in power*. ... Unless we are **certain** of these... we will never be dangerous followers of Jesus.

## - PRAY -

Last week (in our passage) we saw how Jesus' initial exercise of authority was murderously *rejected* by His hometown (Nazareth). ... Luke now describes another Sabbath in another town... (Capernaum)... and this time Jesus' authority was given full recognition.

Moving the base of His operations to Capernaum... the Lord commenced a series of teaching sessions on succeeding Sabbath days in the local synagogue. The people were astonished at both His doctrine and the authenticating power with which He taught them. Today's passage covers just one of those Sabbath days.

Luke 4:31–44 shows that Jesus' ministry is a mixture of authoritative teaching and healing. ... Jesus' *first miracle in Luke* is an exorcism of demons. ... Jesus (the Anointed One) has great authority and power! His power extends into the hidden world... and He rules cosmic forces. ... Such power can free a person from the evil forces that affect life.

Jesus is no mere moralist. ... Neither is He merely a great motivator or psychologist. ... He is One with authority to defeat the evil forces that can dominate humanity. ... [ P A U S E ] ...

You are perhaps familiar with the quote of C.S. Lewis (who was a professor at Cambridge University and former agnostic.) He wrote this about Jesus:

*“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on the level with a man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell.”*

Lewis further explained that Jesus claimed to be God... and that leaves only two alternatives; His claims were **false** OR His claims were **true**. If His claims were false... then (once again) we have only two alternatives; He knew that His claims were false (and therefore He was a **LIAR**) - OR He did **not** know that His claims were false (and that would make Him a sincerely deluded **LUNATIC**). If Jesus isn’t Who He claimed to be – then He can only be a LIAR - or a LUNATIC. ... But if He **is** Who He said He was – He MUST become our Lord. (Folks) We need to become dangerous followers of Jesus.

As we study our passage today... we will be put in the place of those in the synagogue who had to make a decision about Jesus’ power and authority. ... Will we become dangerous followers of His? (Better yet)... will we be **CONSISTENT** dangerous followers. Consistency (apparently) was a problem for the people of Capernaum. Here in Luke 4 they respond right – but not by the time of the events in chapter 10... in Luke’s Gospel.

### **Luke 10:13-15 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> *“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.* <sup>14</sup> *But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you.*

<sup>15</sup> *And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades.*

(Listen!) Light creates responsibility. ... [ P A U S E ] ... Perhaps we all have a tremendous amount of light (already). But beware - our passage will add to it...

### **Luke 4:31-44**

After departing His hostile hometown of Nazareth... Jesus resumed His successful ministry in Capernaum. ... The journey took Him (literally) from high to low. (Verse 31 says that He went DOWN to Capernaum.) Nazareth was 1150 feet above sea level (a little higher than our Mt. Bachelor)... and Capernaum was 680 feet below sea level. ... While He went “down” in elevation... His ministry soared.

Verses 31-32 emphasize Jesus’ teaching in the synagogue... just as He did in Nazareth. Christ did much more teaching than working miracles. Folk often fail to see this priority of Christ in His ministry. We need that priority today. Teaching and preaching the Word of God should be the main part of the ministry of every church. Other ministries may have their place and be a blessing, but teaching and preaching the Word of God must be front and center in the program of the church.

### **Luke 4:32**

Praise does not necessarily mean devotion. ... People often praise with their lips while their heart thinks otherwise.

**Matthew 15:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> *“This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me;*

So impressive was Jesus’ teaching that the audience was “*astonished*.” The people were dumbfounded (literally “*struck out of themselves*” or “*out of their senses*” in amazement and wonder.)

What were some of the reasons for this reaction on the part of the audience? ... One of them may well have been that Jesus (a mere carpenter’s son) revealed such wisdom. ... But Luke tells us that it was especially this: that His “word” or “message” was presented “with authority.”

Mark put it this way in Mark 1:22: “*because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law*”.

The common teaching of Jesus’ day was a chain of references. Sabbath after Sabbath... people heard the scribes drone on: “*According to Rabbi so-and-so ... But Rabbi what’s-his-name disagrees, saying ...*” ... It was secondhand theology — a labyrinth of petty... legalistic... joyless... boring... and weightless material.

But Jesus didn’t appeal to the traditions of men; He taught directly from the Scripture... speaking as the author of the texts in question... without any appeal to human authorities. ... He preached God’s Word... not just *about* God’s Word.

A commentary writer (Matt Woodley) tried to illustrate the kind of authority Jesus taught with... in this manner:

*A number of years ago, when I was playing in a friendly men's softball game, the umpire made a call that incensed our coach. My coach didn't agree with the ump's interpretation of a specific league*

*rule. The game stopped, and a heated discussion ensued. Finally, the ump sighed as he pulled a rulebook from his back pocket and proceeded to read page 27, paragraph 3b, section 1.*

*"As you can clearly see," he concluded, "this rule means that my call must stand." Unconvinced, my coach yelled, "But you're not interpreting that rule correctly." To which the ump replied, "Uh, excuse me, I think I should know: I wrote the rulebook." After an awkward silence, my coach walked back to the bench, shaking his head and pointing to the ref as he told us, "Get ahold of that guy. He wrote the rulebook!"*

Throughout his ministry, Jesus didn't just affirm and endorse the words of Scripture; He talked and acted like He had *authored* the Scriptures (because He **did!**) ... He taught and He lived with the authority of the One Who wrote the "rulebook."

The people were shocked... thunderstruck... out of their senses. Jesus' teaching was authoritative because He proclaimed God's Word clearly and with the kind of conviction that He interpreted it right (like that umpire who wrote the rulebook).

We dare not miss the point here. ... As Jesus went forth to war against the forces of evil... He staked everything on the authority of the written Word. (In our passage two weeks ago)... He defeated Satan and his temptations in the desert... by quoting God's Word... and in His ministry (at large) it became His mainstay.

If the church is to have any authority today... it must teach on the authority of God's holy Word. ... Paul's charge to Timothy comes to us all: "*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth*"

(2 Timothy 2:15). That is the key verse from which our AWANA Bible Clubs gets it's name (Approved Workmen Are Not Ashamed.) ... And I am so happy to pastor a church that lets me preach verse-by-verse through the Bible... and will not tolerate anything less than having our final authority as God's Holy Word! ... [ P A U S E ] ...

Next we come to the verses that show Christ's authority through His power. (His authority is in His teaching... and His authority is demonstrated in His power.)

### **Luke 4:33**

You would think that a Jewish synagogue (where God was worshiped) would be the last place a demon-possessed person would be. ... But many times... this is not the case. ... Everybody that comes to church is not a saint. ... Sometimes people come to church to cause trouble... not to worship.

Ungodly people may show up in the midst of a godly church. The reasons for their presence are many... but it does happen. ... Look at Judas. He was one of the twelve disciples who sat at Jesus' feet. ... Satan has people working in the midst of the Lord's work to disrupt it.

(Here) the trouble was started right after Christ did some great teaching. (Listen!) Satan **habitually** causes trouble where the Word of God is taught in truth and power. We may be in favor of God's Word being emphasized in our church... but let's not think that Satan will not (habitually) try to cause us trouble.

Now... I don't believe that every problem we have in our church is demon-related... and it would be wrong to try to look under every rock and stone to

find demons – but they do exist. ... Demons were working in the days of our Lord... and they are working now.

Thirty or forty years ago... most scholars thought this term (demons) was used to describe those suffering from epilepsy. ... We no longer believe that. ... Epilepsy is epilepsy.

Today even medical people do not dismiss the idea of demons entirely. There are documented cases that support the theory that sometimes strange beings inhabit us. The book *The Three Faces of Eve* (written by a psychiatrist) is the story of a woman inhabited by three different personalities.

The New Testament gives us so many accounts of Jesus casting out demons. ... In this very first healing miracle of Luke's Gospel... Jesus rebukes the demon and he comes out and the man is healed.

When we get on a mysterious... spooky topic like this... folks wonder about this issue of demon-possession. What are demons? Can demons possess people or animals? Can demons possess a Christian? Because our passage raised this subject... (I think) we need to pull over a minute and answer some of these questions.

Demons were former angelic beings who were kicked out of Heaven with Lucifer or Satan. The Bible indicates that 1/3 of Heaven's host followed Satan.

**Revelation 12:3-4 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> *And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems.*

<sup>4</sup> *His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to*



*the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it.*

As far as we can tell by the context of Revelation 12:3–4... the dragon is a reference to Satan... the stars of Heaven are a reference to angels... and the child is a reference to Jesus... who was under Satanic attack soon after His birth.

(A few short years ago... I chose this passage as my Christmas text... and my family has never forgiven me. Now - at every Christmas season since then - I hear pleas around the dinner table to not preach about the Dragon at the Manger Scene again. We don't know if the actual manger scene had sheep... cows... or camels... but Revelation 12 says there was a *figurative* dragon!)

OK.. Well... Scripture clearly shows that demonic spirits can inhabit a human or even an animal. (In chapter 8 we will see Jesus cast several out of a man and into pigs).

When a person is possessed... the demon or demons take control of the personality and body of the person. This evil personality or demon is able to speak through the mouth of the possessed individual... and to answer when addressed. The consequences of such possession can be insanity... blindness... deafness... speechlessness... fevers... epilepsy... and also feats of super-human strength.

The erratic behavior of some criminals and political leaders suggests demon-possession. Charles Manson may be a case-in-point. ... When I listen and see the old films of Adolph Hitler speaking... I believe demonic

activity was dominant. He was probably demon-possessed... especially when you look at the atrocities he committed.

You may ask: *“What about Christians? We know that demons can possess a person who does not know Jesus Christ as their Savior. Can demons indwell a person who is saved? Can they possess a person who has put their faith in Christ and is indwelt by the Holy Spirit?”*

When we examine the Scriptures... we find no clear example where a demon indwelt... possessed... or invaded a born-again believer in Jesus Christ. ... You will also find that there are no warnings to believers in the New Testament about any possibility of being demon-possessed.

When we look at the teachings of the New Testament... we find that demons cannot indwell a genuine Christian. A demon cannot inhabit the body of a person who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God has delivered us from this kind of situation. God has delivered us from Satanic possession.

### **2 Corinthians 6:15-16 (ESV)**

*<sup>15</sup> What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? <sup>16</sup> What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

### **Colossians 1:13 (ESV)**

*<sup>13</sup> He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,*

### **1 Peter 1:5 (ESV)**

*<sup>5</sup> who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

**1 John 5:18 (ESV)**

*<sup>18</sup> We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him.*

When a person puts their faith in Christ... they enjoy God's deliverance.

Our victory is in Christ.

**1 John 2:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father.

**1 John 4:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

With this background... we now look at Jesus' encounter with the man possessed by demons.

**Luke 4:34-35**

The presence of Christ was intrusive and irritating to these demons. "Go away, Jesus," was their sentiments. These devils openly admitted they knew the Lord. They recognized His deity as the holy one of God. ... They knew Him because they were in Heaven with Him before they were cast out of Heaven with Lucifer.

They at least had more respect for the Lord than the religious leaders in Jesus' day. These devils were cast out of Heaven because they would not bow to God's authority... but they did recognize His deity (a truth that many today will not acknowledge.)

The demons had correct theology! You can sign a wonderful statement of belief – and not be a godly person at all. Correct doctrine (alone) is not the evidence of a wonderful Christian life.

For all his blustering... the demon proved impotent before the authority of Christ. The Lord commanded and the demon obeyed. ... The demon departs... and the man is unharmed. ... The devil is defeated... and the man is protected. God's power overcomes evil. Round one goes to Jesus.

### **Luke 4:36-37**

The crowd's reaction to the exorcism is straightforward. The crowd noted that Jesus had authority and power over demons (cf. 9:1), and this caused His fame to spread. The amazement reflects the occurrence of a work of divine power. These are not everyday events. The crowd wonders, "What just happened here?"

### **Luke 4:38-39**

Demons fled from Him. Now Luke shows that disease (too) was under His control. ... The Lord left the synagogue and headed for Simon Peter's house. ... They found Peter's mother-in-law in the grip of a great fever. What Jesus did was extraordinary. He did not treat the fever as though it were a medical ailment needing treatment. He spoke to it and rebuked it! And it left her.

Did Jesus speak to the virus or to the bacteria? Had Satan caused this fever as he caused poor Job's boils (Job 2:1–7)? We do not know. We do know that the cure was instantaneous. The woman stood to her feet and bustled off to the kitchen to minister to the family with a meal.

The cure was not only sudden... it was also complete. Simon's mother-in-law did not even say: "*I'm rid of the fever, but completely exhausted.*"

Nothing of the kind.

On the contrary... one moment... just before Jesus had taken her by the hand and had rebuked the fever... there were still those flushed cheeks... that burning hot skin... profuse sweating... dryness in the throat — or else... depending on the kind of fever... there may have been violent shivering — the next moment every fever symptom had vanished completely. ... Not only was the woman's temperature normal but such a surge of new strength was coursing through her entire being that she herself insisted on getting up. In fact... she actually got up and started to perform the duties of a busy hostess.

#### **Luke 4:40-41**

The news about Jesus' authority over sickness spread quickly so that same night people began coming to Him for healing. They came when the sun was setting... when the Sabbath Day was ending. ... It would have been unlawful to carry the sick before then.

As the demons came out of many people... they were shouting: You are the Son of God! ... The reason for Jesus' rebuke was that He did not come to earth so that demons could acknowledge Him as the Christ. ... Instead... He came to be acknowledged by *people*.

#### **Luke 4:42-44**

There was hardly a sick person left in Capernaum... except perhaps the most hardened cynic. ... Many (no doubt) had spent the whole night relishing their newfound health... testing transformed fingers... toes... arms

and legs... running their hands over newly smooth skin... clutching a healthy infant - feeling good for the first time in years!

So we are not surprised at what we read next: “*At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them*”. ... There is no mention of force here... but some very likely were thinking of it. They probably envisioned their town... where everyone... (old and young alike)... is healthy — what a thought! (Who wouldn't want that!?)

Neither are we surprised at Jesus' response: “*But he said, 'I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.'* And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.”

Did you catch that? “*I must preach!*” His miracles had their place... but they were not the really important things. ... What mattered most was the preaching. ... So the Lord disengaged Himself from the crowd and continued on His way... preaching in the synagogues of Galilee.

(Do you know what this tells me?) ... The main emphasis in Jesus' ministry was on preaching - not healing. ... Though He had compassion on people... His healing ministry was not primary. It was secondary. ... (LISTEN!) Jesus' primary mission was to bring people to a place of decision to have faith in God... not merely to remove their pain.

... [ P A U S E ] ...

What motivates you in your walk with Christ? – Do you PRIMARILY seek pleasure and the avoidance of pain... or a deeper faith?

(Seek first His kingdom... acknowledge Jesus' authority... seek first His sovereign rule in your heart... and all these things will be added to you.)  
And do you know what else...? You will become a dangerous follower of Christ.