

Text: Luke 4:31-44

Title: Jesus's Ministry in Capernaum

Truth: Jesus demonstrated His authority in teaching and healing.

Date/Location: November 26, 2023 at FBC

Introduction

Jesus was frequently on the move. He gave Nazareth the slip. The synagogue-attenders there—the most religious people in the town—rejected and wanted to kill Him. They were murderers (Matt. 5:22). The less “religious” people in that town were probably kinder and of softer spirit. Their mindset might be, “What’s the big deal? Let him say what he wants to say.” They might think he is crazy in any case but would not necessarily develop a gut-level hatred for the man.

He arrived at Capernaum, which like Nazareth was in the Galilee region, and began again to attend synagogue on the Sabbath days. He had been there before (Luke 4:23) and had a reputation for his teaching and miracles. As His pattern was, Jesus taught. What did He teach? He taught like John taught: “Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand!” He preached the kingdom of God. Moreover, He taught the kinds of things that we read about in 4:18-27, touching His role as Messiah and redeemer.

I. The Reality of Demons

- A. The Bible does not make a whole lot of effort to prove the existence of demons or their leader, Satan. Jesus certainly did not question their existence—He knew about it firsthand as a human, and even more in depth as the Son of God. Demons are what they always have been since the Satan rebelled against God. He convinced certain other of his angelic brothers to follow him in rebellion against God, and they are what we now know as demons. They did not exist in eternity past; only the Triune God did that. Demons are powerful creatures because they are a type of angel. They do not have a bodily existence but are not infinite either.
- B. As beings without a body, they often seek to inhabit the body of another—a person (Matt. 12:45) or animal (Matt. 8:31). This is

somehow a preferable form of existence to the homeless wandering of a bodiless existence.

- C. When Jesus came to his public ministry, demons seemed to “come out of the woodwork.” Satan’s direct temptations were over for the time being, but he sent many of his demons to interrupt the Lord’s ministry and challenge his authority. They lost every time.
- D. One characteristic that is often found in the demonic activity of the gospels is that the demons cried out with a loud voice and challenged Jesus and tried to derail his ministry by identifying who He is. This was an expression of opposition and fear because the demon was coming face to face with the One who will ultimately judge them.
- E. Jesus simply spoke a word, and the demon was compelled to leave. No debate, no back-and-forth, no “reasoning” or negotiating with the demon. Where the demons went after being removed is almost never specified. Sometimes, as in this case, the demon left without hurting the individual. Sometimes, an attempt was made to further injure the individual. “Leaving” means that the demon did not any longer indwell the person.
- F. Note: a Christian is indwelled by the Spirit of God and cannot have a demon indwelling them. God’s Spirit does not like evil roommates!
- G. There are no Biblical diagnostic procedures for us to follow to diagnose demon possession ourselves and we are not taught to or how to cast out demons. Our place is to preach the Word, sharing God’s message in the power of God’s Spirit and leaving the results up to Him. We can only speculate whether a person is demon possessed or not. Strange behavior is hardly a sufficient qualification to diagnose demon possession because people act strangely on their own. Mental illness can be an explanation, but we probably lean on that a little bit too much in our day of emphasis on scientific, naturalistic explanations. I have heard of suspect cases in various parts of the world, including the United States, and it is my belief that demonic activity will become more prevalent in our society as we fall farther from our Judeo-Christian heritage. We see depictions of them in popular media and

computer games, and the ongoing of occult activity in many parts of our society. It is interesting that we do not see a massive expression of demonic activity during our age like happened with Jesus and the apostles. That is a mercy of God.

II. Teaching with Authority

- A. In verses 32 and 36, the text notes the crowds were amazed at the words of his teaching, endued as they were with authority and power even to command demonic spirits. Matthew 7:29 notes that Jesus's teaching was with authority, not like the scribes who were weak, uncertain, equivocating.
- B. This authoritative quality means that Jesus was not bound by tradition. He was not constrained by the fear of man. He did not have to leaf through the Talmud to know what to say. He did not have to be an expert in the text of the Mishnah or the commentary or analysis of centuries of rabbis in the Gemara so that he could draw from their varied opinions and use them as his own.
- C. He was not wishy-washy but rather unequivocal, direct, simple, to the point, without back-and-forth debate. His words were substantial, not empty, not platitudes, not words that could have any meaning you wanted to assign to them. He read and knew the Law of Moses and the prophets and the writings (the TaNaK). And He knew *God His Father*, which allowed Him to *truly* understand what He read in the Hebrew Bible. And his manner was direct and to the point.
- D. We desire to provide the same kind of authoritative teaching that Jesus gave 2,000 years ago. Review to the preface of our church's doctrinal statement to see this is nothing new for us:

This presentation of the doctrinal position of the Fellowship Bible Church is not an innovation. It represents, rather, a declaration of the stand which our fellowship has taken since its inception.

Those believers who first saw the need for the establishment of a Bible-believing ministry in Ann Arbor were aware of the failure of so many groups to "hold fast the form of sound words" (2 Tim. 1:13). Without flagging, those who have been the core of

this assembly have always sought to maintain a Biblical form of doctrine to the glory of God.

There is an unchanging emphasis upon doctrine in the Bible.

Indeed, it is referred to in the New Testament over forty (40) times. Of the first church assembly in Acts 2, it is recorded that their new converts "continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine..." (v. 42). Therefore, the primacy of what a man believes was given vital impetus right from the start in the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Today, unfortunately, there are great movements underway to thwart the emphasis upon strong doctrinal statements. Efforts are constantly being made to dilute specifics and strong appeals are made to soft-pedal any dogmatism. This is all a part of the modern trends toward pseudo-intellectualism which pleads for an open mind and a relative approach to everything. It is our firm belief that this sort of situation is entirely divorced from the Word of God. We place a high premium on what a man believes and find support for this contention in the Scriptures.

Paul, for example, in writing to Timothy exhorted him again and again about the matter of knowable and specific **doctrine**. Consider the fact that he was left in Ephesus that he "might charge some that they teach no other **doctrine**." (1 Tim. 1:3). Again, "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good **doctrine**, whereunto thou has attained." (1 Tim. 4:6). Twice over Paul exhorts Timothy to devote himself to **doctrine** (1 Tim. 4:13, 16). Indeed, his final appeal, shortly before his own death, was to "preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and **doctrine**. For the time will come when they will not endure sound **doctrine**; but after their own lusts shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." (2 Tim. 4:2, 3).

We believe the days are upon us when men desire to "heap to themselves" teachers who will tickle the ears of their hearers with words of little substance. The need of the hour is for strong

doctrine. The cry of the day is for clarity of statement. The yearning of the believing heart is for continuance with that which is explicit and implicit in the Word of the living God. We at Fellowship Bible affirm without equivocation what we believe to be the old fashion Gospel and the doctrine of the early church. Therefore, we take upon ourselves the responsibility to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." (Jude 3).

- E. This statement was written in the early 1980s and pointed back to a movement from the late 1940s and forward that did not care for specific, dogmatic requirements in a church's doctrine. Instead of certainty, dialogue and "room for variation" was a major feeling. But this was in fact not a *trend*. Instead, it is a long-standing *pattern* of human behavior. Clear statements of expectation, of punishments and of rewards stand against the desire of the flesh to do what it wants.
- F. Humans do not like to be told in no uncertain terms that they are sinful and can be certain of punishment unless they come to Jesus Christ for free cleansing. Furthermore, they do not like free gifts of the sort God offers in Jesus, but rather would work to achieve their standing before God, because this would mean that *they* get the credit, which appeals to their selfish nature. People do not like clear statements of "this is going to happen" and "that is wrong" and "there is only one way of salvation." The worldly mind views such statements as close-minded, mean-spirited, and exclusive. But the truth is just simply that way. Math does not care if you are open-minded, wishy-washy, and diverse. Math that operated like that would not get us to the moon and back, nor to have computational power like we have in our pockets today. Some things just are the way they are because God made them that way. Jesus simply reported that in the spiritual realm, there are laws just like there are in the natural realm. Gravity is gravity, and spiritual life is spiritual life. They operate as they were designed to operate, and no amount of hemming and hawing will change that. Making a statement like, "I do not believe that way" does not change the facts of the situation.

G. Things are true, or they are not. We desire to report, preach, teach, counsel those things that are true.

III. Jesus Also Healed the Sick

A. Peter's mother-in-law had a high fever. (Peter was married, 1 Cor. 9:5.) The text describes it as a great burning heat, a bad fever. What discomfort she was having at that moment. Today we have a pretty good idea of what causes a fever and how to temporarily reduce it with medicine. It is a complex mechanism.

"A part of the brain called the hypothalamus acts as the body's thermostat. When all is well in the body, the hypothalamus is set at the normal body temperature. Fever develops when the hypothalamus is set to a higher-than-normal temperature. This resetting of the hypothalamus is usually caused by small molecules called pyrogens in the blood."¹

B. We cannot solve the causes of all fevers—certain difficult bacteria, viruses of most sorts, cancers, and other things. Yet with a word again, Jesus rebuked the fever *as if* it were just another personal being like a demon. It is *not that*, but He removed the fever nonetheless. We are well justified to believe that Jesus removed or neutralized the cause of the fever all the way down to the bacteria or virus that was causing it. Peter's mother-in-law was so thoroughly healed and strengthened that she was able to serve as hostess!

C. After the Sabbath day was over that evening, people brought their sick ones to Jesus and He helped them, whether ill or demon possessed. The demons identified the Son of God aloud, but this was disruptive to Jesus's ministry. The publicity of it was not what He needed at this time. Also, this message was not to be carried about by unholy demons. Note that demon possession is distinguished from other kinds of illness. Not all illness is caused by demons, including mental illness.

D. To keep up this labor, Jesus needed rest and prayer. This is why he went into a deserted place (Mark 1:35). People found him and

¹ [https://www.health.harvard.edu/a to z/fever-a-to-z](https://www.health.harvard.edu/a-to-z/fever-a-to-z)

wanted him to stay longer. Despite the wonderful work being done, Jesus had to move on. He was limited in capacity and could not heal everyone or cast out every demon, because He had something more important to attend to: preaching the kingdom of God to all the other cities. This was His purpose. Therefore, He traveled to the other synagogues in Galilee.

Conclusion

We could wish for someone (or ourselves) to be able to have the power to cast out demons and heal the sick. Many so-called healers have fancied themselves to have this power but have proven to be fake.

This history is not recorded in the gospels so that we could lust after that capability. The history is recorded so that we can see that Jesus is truly the Son of God and that His message was from heaven. Indeed, He *is* able to heal the sick, so we can trust Him if He does or does not in any circumstance today. The Scriptures make it clear that it is not always God's will to heal sickness; but it is always His will that it is appointed unto people to die, and that often through some type of illness.

It is also recorded so that we can see how Jesus has the power to dismantle the kingdom of darkness, for He came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). He is well able to do that. So not only was Jesus's teaching with authority, that same authority extended over physical and spiritual affliction.

The more directly applicable part of this section is about Jesus's teaching. "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also..." Since He had to, we have to. As I have said oft before, we may not have all the same details he had, like the kingdom is immediately at hand. But we do have the same basic idea—unless one is born again by repentant faith, that one will *not* enter, experience, or enjoy the kingdom of God when it comes in the future.

Jesus has "all authority in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:19). He has delegated some of that to His church to carry on His work.