**The Gospel of Luke**

**Lesson 10** Luke 4:31-44 Jesus’ Power Revealed!

**Questions:**

1. What important truth did you learn from the lecture and how does it apply to your life?
2. Read Wiersbe page 56.
   1. What three ways does Jesus demonstrate his power and authority?
   2. According to Jesus, for what purpose had He come?
3. Read Luke 4:31-36.

Luke 4:31-41 describes “A Busy Day in Capernaum.” The first scene takes place in the synagogue, the second and third at Simon Peter’s house.

Verses 31 and 32. *He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching the people on the sabbath. They were astonished at his teaching because his message was (presented) with authority.*

Luke does not indicate any time connection between the preceding story (Christ’s rejection at Nazareth) and this one. He does not begin his paragraph with “Afterward” or even with “Then.” He simply uses the word *kai*, which, in this instance, can either be left untranslated or rendered “And.”

Luke has “he” where Mark has “they.” Both are correct, for Luke’s “he” refers to Jesus as the Leader of the group. From Mark’s Gospel—1:16-20, 29—this group consisted of (at least) of Simon Peter and Andrew, James, and John.

Note also “went down to Capernaum,” *down* being appropriate because of the location of this place on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, this sea itself being more than 200 meters (about 700 feet) below the level of the Mediterranean. The city has completely disappeared. The modern *Tell Hum* is by many regarded as its probable site.

For the sake of Theophilus and other readers unacquainted with the detailed geography   
of the Holy Land Luke adds “a city of Galilee.”

It was on the sabbath that Jesus was teaching (or began to teach) the people. Luke’s interest in the sabbath appears from the fact that he records no less then five healing miracles performed by the Savior on the day of rest and worship (4:31-37, 38-41; 6:6-11; 13:10-17; 14:1-6). We should add, however, that Luke, in turn, reveals Christ’s own special concern about proper sabbath observance, in harmony with Isaiah 58, and his stand in opposition to the legalistic views and practices advocated by the scribes and Pharisees and their followers.

Clearly this sabbath teaching took place in the synagogue (see verses 33, 38; see also 15,16; and compare Mark 1:21). That those in charge would ask Jesus to read and to preach was to be expected.

So impressive was his presentation that the audience was “astonished” (compare 4:22a). The people were dumbfounded, literally “struck out of themselves,” that is, as it were, “out their senses” in amazement and wonder. It was a state that did not leave them immediately but lasted for a while.

* 1. What are the some of the reasons for this reaction on the part of the audience? One of them may well have been that he, a carpenter (Mark 6:3), revealed such wisdom. But especially there was this, that his “word” or “message” was presented “with authority.” Compare Matthew 7:28b, 29; Mark 1:22b.

Consider the following points of contrast between Christ’s teaching and that of scribes:

* *He* spoke the truth (John 14:6; 18:37). Corrupt and evasive reasoning marked the sermons of many of *the scribes* (Matt. 5:21ff.).
* *He* presented matters of great significance, matters of life, death, and eternity. *They* often wasted their time on trivialities (Matt. 23:23; Luke 11:42).
* There was system in *his* preaching. As their Talmud proves, *they* often rambled on and on.
* *He* excited curiosity by making generous use of illustrations (many of them reported in Luke’s Gospel; see 5:36-39; 6:39-49; 7:31-35, 40-47; etc.). *Their* speeches were often dry as dust.
* *He* spoke as the Lover of men, as One concerned with the everlasting welfare of his listeners and pointed to the Father and his love. *Their* lack of love is clear from such passages as Luke 20:46-47.
* Finally, and this is the most important, for it is specifically stated here, *he* spoke “with authority,” for his message came straight from the very heart and mind of the Father (John 8:26), hence also from his own inner being, and from Scripture. *They* were constantly borrowing from fallible sources, one scribe quoting another scribe. They even prided themselves on never saying anything that was original! They were trying to draw water from broken cisterns. He drew from himself, being “the Fountain of living waters” (Jer. 2:13).[[1]](#endnote-1)

In verse 32 (NIV), Luke writes, “They were amazed at his teaching because his message had authority” (Gk. exousia: power of authority; the power of one whose will, and commands must be carried out)! Verse 32 (ESV) states, “and they were astonished at his teaching, for his word possessed authority.”

* 1. What difference did the people see between Jesus’ teaching/preaching and the Jewish religious leaders (Pharisees and scribes)? Describe the teaching of both (Matt. 7:29).
  2. Using the following verses give three reasons how and why Jesus spoke with such power and authority.

Matthew 3:15-17; Zechariah 4:6; Isaiah 61:1

Romans 1:16-17; Matthew 4:23; 9:35; Luke 4:43; 8:1; Hebrews 1:3; 4:12

Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; James 5:16

The four Gospels reveal that Jesus amazed people during His earthly ministry in two main ways. First, the signs and wonders He performed were unlike anything they had ever seen (Mark 4:35–41; John 11:38–45). Second, people were awestruck by our Lord's teaching, both by the insight of His interpretation of the Old Testament (Matt. 22:23–33) and by His evident authority.

Mark tells us that people were astonished at the authority of Jesus when He taught at the synagogue in Capernaum (Mark 1:21–22). This important Galilean city was located on the main trade route between Damascus and the Mediterranean coastal plain, making it an ideal home base of sorts for our Lord's ministry. In Capernaum, Jesus could teach local Jews and those who were passing through on their way elsewhere. With respect to authority, the Jews paid heed to the teaching of the scribes, who occupied an important place in first-century Jewish society. Scribes were experts in the Old Testament law, and the people regarded their Scriptural interpretations as binding. Because of this, and because scribes took care of the scrolls on which the Bible was written, scribes held seats of honor in the synagogues. One had to be a scribe to sit on the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of Jews, and the scribes also served as civil lawyers. In any case, the scribes taught by citing the opinions of various rabbis on different matters, appealing not to their own authority but to the authority of others.

Christ, on the other hand, did not appeal to the authority of various rabbis when He instructed the people. Rather, as Matthew Henry comments, Jesus taught "as one that knew the mind of God and was commissioned to declare it." Mark does not record as much of Jesus' instruction as the other gospels do, so let us consider passages such as Matthew 5:21–48 in order to get an idea of what it meant for Jesus to teach with authority. There, we read how Jesus contrasted His understanding of the old covenant Scriptures with the understanding of the scribes. He did not quote the teachings of the scribes and rabbis as binding, but He expected others to see His teaching as superseding theirs. In fact, He taught with the authority of God Himself. The Greek word *exousia,* translated "authority" in Mark 1:22, is typically used in the Bible for God's own authority. Jesus did not rely on the expertise of others. He spoke the very words of our Creator (see John 12:49–50).[[2]](#endnote-2)

1. Peter and John before the Sanhedrin (The Sanhedrin was the supreme council of Jews which controlled civil and religious law. It had 71 members and was made up of Pharisees and Sadducees. The head of the council was Caiaphas, the high priest at the time of Jesus' trial.) Read Acts 4:1-31.
   1. What were Peter and John preaching to the people (verses 2 and 12)?
   2. Who gave them their power and authority (verse 8; Acts 1: 4-8)?
   3. Give three observations that the religious leaders made about Peter and John   
      (verse 13).
   4. What did Peter and John do after they were released (verses 23, 24, and 31)?
   5. What do you learn from this?
2. What (Who) do we, as believers have available to us as we share the gospel with others?
3. What should others see in us as we live our lives out in obedience to Christ (Remember what they saw in Peter and John)?
4. Have you experienced God’s power in your life? If yes, explain.

The power of the Holy Spirit is the power of God. The Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, has appeared throughout Scripture as a Being through and by whom great works of power are made manifest. His power was first seen in the act of creation, for it was by His power the world came into being (Gen. 1:1–2; Job 26:13). The Holy Spirit also empowered men in the Old Testament to bring about God’s will: “So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power” (1 Sam. 16:13; see also Ex. 31:2–5; Num. 27:18). Although the Spirit did not permanently indwell God’s people in the Old Testament, He worked through them and gave them power to achieve things they would not have been able to accomplish on their own. All of Samson’s feats of strength are directly attributed to the Spirit coming upon him (Judg. 14:6, 19; 15:14).

Jesus promised the Spirit as a permanent guide, teacher, seal of salvation, and comforter for believers (John 14:16-18). He also promised that the Holy Spirit’s power would help His followers to spread the message of the gospel around the world: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The salvation of souls is a supernatural work only made possible by the Holy Spirit’s power at work in the world.  
  
When the Holy Spirit descended upon believers at Pentecost, it was not a quiet event, but a powerful one. “When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts 2:1-4). Immediately afterward, the disciples spoke to the crowds gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. These people hailed from a variety of nations and therefore spoke many different languages. Imagine their surprise and wonder when the disciples spoke to them in their own tongues (verses 5-12)! Clearly, this was not something the disciples could have accomplished on their own without many months—or even years—of study. The Holy Spirit’s power was made manifest to a great number of people that day, resulting in the conversion of about 3,000 (verse 41).

During His earthly ministry, Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1), led by the Spirit (Luke 4:14), and empowered by the Spirit to perform miracles (Matt. 12:28). After Jesus had ascended to heaven, the Spirit equipped the apostles to perform miracles, too (2 Cor. 2:12; Acts 2:43; 3:1-7; 9:39-41). The power of the Holy Spirit was manifest among all the believers of the early church through the dispensation of spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues, prophesying, teaching, wisdom, and more.

All those who put their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately and permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:11). And, although some of the spiritual gifts have ceased (e.g., speaking in tongues and prophecy), the Holy Spirit still works in and through believers to accomplish His will. His power leads us, convicts us, teaches us, and equips us to do His work and spread the gospel. The Holy Spirit’s powerful indwelling is an amazing gift we should never take lightly.[[3]](#endnote-3)

1. Read verses 33-35 again. Not only did Jesus speak with authority, but he acted with supernatural power.
2. In casting out demons, what does this reveal about Jesus (See Matt 8:28-34)?

**Why did Jesus allow the demons to enter the herd of pigs?**

**ANSWER:**   
The story of Jesus casting the legion of demons into a herd of pigs is found in Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; and Luke 8:26-39. Only Matthew mentions the more prominent of the two demoniacs involved. Demoniacs were persons whose minds came under the control of an evil spirit or spirits. That such phenomena were especially prominent during the days of Christ’s earthly ministry is consistent with Satan’s efforts to counteract God’s program. It also allows us to witness the spiritual warfare in which our Savior was constantly engaged. Demons knew exactly who Jesus was—"Son of God"—and were aware of their ultimate doom (Matt 8:28-29).

As Jesus was traveling in the hilly region east of the Jordan River, the path of this man who was controlled by demons and lived among the tombs crossed that of Jesus. Because of the physical strength the demons gave the man, he was able to break and throw off the chains with which people tried to bind him. When the demons begged Jesus to let them go into a herd of pigs, He gave them permission. They entered the pigs, rushed down the steep bank into the lake, and were drowned. Jesus thereby made known His authority and thwarted whatever evil purpose the demons had.

Why the demons begged to be allowed to enter the swine is unclear from the account. It could be because they didn’t want to leave the area where they had been successful in doing their mischief among the people. Perhaps they were drawn to the unclean animals because of their own filthiness. The demons may have made this strange request because it was their last chance to avoid confinement in the Abyss, the place of confinement to which evil spirits are doomed (Rev. 9:1-6). Whatever their reasoning, it is clear from the account that demons had little power of their own and were unable to do anything without Jesus’ permission. As Christians, we can take comfort in the knowledge that the forces of the enemy of our souls are under the complete control of God and can only act in ways He allows.

The Bible doesn’t explain to us Jesus’ reasoning but **displaying His sovereign power over demons** could be one reason why Jesus sent them into the pigs. If the pigs’ owners were Jews, Jesus could have been rebuking them for violating Mosaic law which forbids Jews from eating or keeping unclean animals such as swine (Lev. 11:7). If the swineherds were Gentiles, perhaps Jesus was using this miraculous event to show them the malice of evil spirits under whose influence they lived, as well as displaying His own power and authority over creation. In any case, the owners were so terrified to be in the presence of such spiritual power that they made no demand for restitution for the loss of their property and begged Jesus to leave the region. The people were awe-struck but unrepentant—they wanted no more of Jesus Christ. This shows the hardness of their hearts and their desire to remain in sin. The healed demoniac, on the other hand, demonstrated the true faith and repentance of a changed heart and begged to be allowed to follow Jesus. Perhaps the unmistakable difference between the saved and the unsaved was an object lesson for the disciples and all who witnessed the event. Jesus sent the healed man away, giving him a commission that he joyfully obeyed: "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you" (Mark 5:17-20).[[4]](#endnote-4)

1. How did this evil spirit (demon) respond to Jesus?
2. Read James 2:19. What do you learn from this verse?
3. Read verses 38-44 along with Isaiah 35:1-10; Matthew 11:1-6, 9:1-8, 18-19, 32-33, 35.

**Jesus Heals Many!**

1. In Isaiah 35:5-6, the prophet speaks of the day of salvation this way: “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.” How did Jesus fulfill this prophecy?
2. What was Jesus’ main purpose in coming into this world according to verse 43   
   (other than dying for the sins of the world)?
3. Read Revelation 3:14-21. (Author’s note: I believe the church of Laodicea accurately describes the majority of mainline churches in America today!)
   1. How do the following words apply to many churches in America?

* Wretched
* Pitiful
* Poor
* Blind
* Naked
  1. What does Jesus recommend the members of these churches do, and why?
  2. How do the following words describe true believers?
* Rich (1 Peter 1:18-19; Matthew 13:44-46)
* White clothes (Is. 61:10; Rev. 19:14)
* See (sight; 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:4)
  1. Read Luke 4:14-21. Was Jesus’ primary mission to give physical sight the physically blind or to give spiritual sight to the spiritually blind? How does the gospel make one ‘rich,’ and serve as ‘salve’ for blind eyes?

1. What is the most important truth you have learned about Jesus from this lesson?

1. William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), 262-264. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/teaching-authority [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.gotquestions.org/power-Holy-Spirit.html [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. https://www.gotquestions.org/Jesus-demons-pigs.html [↑](#endnote-ref-4)