

Disturbing the Peace

Luke 4

Introduction

Today, we will look at Luke chapter 4, as we continue to study on the theme we began in our last discussion of the battle between the Prince of Heaven and the Prince of Hell.

We often maximize the ministry of Jesus Christ, in that He was the Prince of Peace. Yet, I think we fail to observe, at the very outset of His ministry; at the very beginning, He was a disturber of peace. He came in and, with a sword in His words and in His testimony, He began to tell the truth to a nation that really did not want to hear the truth. He created all kinds of trouble. From that beginning; that announcement of His Messiahship, until they finally crucified Him, the nation had one mission – to silence this disturber of the peace.

I think the reason for this will become clearer as we continue our study through the gospels. Today, however, we are going to more intently address the subject of demonology, or the ministry of Christ and how it confronted and conquered the kingdom of Satan.

The Ministry of Jesus Is Initiated

Let us begin by taking a look at Luke chapter 4, and the initiation of Jesus Christ's public ministry.

In Galilee

Look at Luke 4:14, which tells us that Jesus' ministry began in Galilee.

And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit; and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district.

Let us first set the context as Jesus began His ministry in Galilee. The name "Galilee" comes from a Hebrew word that literally means, "circle". Galilee was encircled by non-Jewish nations.

Galilee was also the commercial center of Palestine. It was the place where commerce was flourishing, primarily because of its water supply and beautiful climate.

However, Galilee was far from the temple. Because of this, the phrase had arisen long before the

time of Christ, "If you desire to be spiritual, live in Jerusalem where the temple is. If you desire to be rich, live in Galilee."

This phrase represented the attitude between the Jews who lived in Galilee and those who lived in Jerusalem. So it is interesting to think that when Jesus began His ministry, He began it in Galilee rather than the religious center of the known world of the time.

In a synagogue

Look at Luke 4:15, which tells us that Jesus also began His ministry in the synagogue.

And He [Jesus] began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all.

The synagogue was the center of the religious life in Palestine. The law said that where there were ten Jewish families, there must be the creation of a synagogue.

It is interesting to note that by the time of Jesus Christ, there were at least one million Jews, but only 450 synagogues. That means there was only one synagogue for every 2,000 Jewish families.

This says a mouthful. Even though the law declared one synagogue for every ten families, obviously, by the time of Jesus Christ, the synagogues were losing their place in that society. They had lost their relevance. In the synagogue, the Jews simply talked about the Bible and quoted the scribes. They were meaningless.

I calculated how well we are fulfilling this law in our own community by the number of churches today. Let us say that in our town alone, there are ten evangelical, Bible preaching churches. According to the current population, that is only one for every 6,000 people.

Our churches are also losing relevance today. In fact, every year the number of churches that preach and believe the gospel is decreasing when compared to the population of our country.

Jesus begins ministering in a place that, by this time, people care very little. However, I have no doubt that on this particular day, the synagogue was

filled to capacity, with standing room only. Luke 4:16a tells us the reason.

And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; . . .

The people would all come to hear the hometown boy; this person who grew up in Nazareth and had come back to speak.

Jesus returns to His hometown to speak. We could think of Galilee like our own county and Nazareth like our town within the county.

Look at Luke 4:16b, which tells us,

. . . and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, . . .

This is interesting, as well, because Jesus was living in a day when the synagogue was a place without relevance; a place that did not meet needs; a place that only talked about the word that He so loved. Yet, His habit was to go and worship in the synagogue.

I could not help myself, I just kind of leaned back in my chair and thought about the fact that we have the perfect remedy for the individual, relative, or friend who says, “Well, I don’t go to church because it’s a place full of hypocrites.” Or, “I don’t go to church because it doesn’t meet my needs.” Or, “I don’t go to church because ‘So-and-So’ goes there and you don’t know him, but I know all about ‘So-and-So,’ and that’s why I don’t go.”

A perfect remedy that we can use is to go to the person and say, “You’re right, but did you realize that during the time of Jesus, the synagogue was filled with hypocrites? So you have a perfect opportunity to act just like Jesus. Isn’t that marvelous?”

How many want to use this remedy in the coming week? Please do not quote me!

Jesus was in the synagogue worshipping. Notice what happens, in Luke 4:16, as He begins to teach.

And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read.

Now there were three parts to a synagogue service. It was very traditional; very ritualistic.

- First, there was a time of prayer.
- Secondly, there was a time of reading scripture from the Pentateuch.

The custom was that seven men from the congregation could volunteer to read the scriptures. After the reading of the Pentateuch, they would read from the prophet Isaiah.

- The third part of the service, after the reading, would be an exposition or an explanation of the passage.

We know that Jesus was speaking at this particular time because of what we read in Luke 4:17. Look at that verse.

And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written,

Now after the reading of this, the “kasan” would put away the roll and the person who had read would give one of two types of sermons.

- One type of sermon was called the “darash”.

This was a sermon whispered into the ear of the “amora,” who was a man on the “bema,” or the platform. He would not literally preach, he would whisper into the “amora’s” ear what he wanted said and the “amora” would speak. This sounds exciting, does it not?

- The second kind of sermon would be a “meamar”.

This was a sermon that expounded the passage that had just been read. This is the kind of sermon that Jesus is about to preach.

The Authority of Jesus Is Illustrated

Now Luke does not tell all that Jesus said. In fact, the tenses indicate that He said an awful lot. However, Luke does tell the main theme; the main idea of Jesus’ first sermon in Nazareth.

Jesus’ authority in teaching

Look at Luke 4:18-20, where first, we read the text that Jesus read.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed,

“to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.”

And He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him.

As was the custom of that day, after reading the scripture, the one who would speak would sit down and occupy the teacher's chair. We have this same cultural theme in our world today, when we talk about a professor who occupies the chair of Science, or English, or whatever. This title goes back to this time when the speaker would stand to read and sit to teach. Jesus, after reading, hands the scroll back to the "kasan" and takes His seat in the chair.

Catch the drama of this moment. Jesus has just read a passage of scripture that speaks directly about Himself. We read the basic idea of His "meamar" in Luke 4:21.

And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

This is like an angel coming from heaven, – a source with credibility that we would believe – sitting down and saying, "You have heard about the rapture – it's going to happen in sixty seconds."

How would you respond?

There may be someone who would turn to their spouse and say, "I'm sorry about this morning or this past week or my whole life . . ."

Someone might try to get their accounts right; do things that need to be done. Perhaps someone would pray and accept Christ as their Savior; invite Him into their life.

If this messenger said, "You have forty-five seconds and counting down . . .," imagine the effect it would have on us.

Think of this as Jesus speaks these words. The people have heard, "The kingdom is coming." They have been awaiting the Messiah. Now, Jesus reads this passage and says, "*I am here!*"

The people were sitting on the edge of their seats. In fact, Mark 1:22 says that they were, as Barclay translates, "thunderstruck". It was as if someone had just hit them when Jesus says, "*I'm the One.*"

An interesting word in Jesus' "meamar" is the word "today," in Luke 4:21. Underline that word in your text. Look at Luke 4:18-21 again with that in mind.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me [today], because He anointed Me to preach the gospel [today] to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim [today] release to the captives, and recovery of sight [today] to the blind, . . . [and so forth]

The idea, in the Jewish mind, was that God was going to move "someday"; He was going work in the future tense.

Jesus Christ was saying, "He is at work right now."

Jesus was saying this in a synagogue that did not have relevant theology or practical living. He was saying, "God is working *today!*"

This message needs to be declared in our churches, "God is at work *today!*" We do not need to wait for tomorrow – He is alive and at work *today!*

The people's response is interesting. Look at Luke 4:22a.

And all were speaking well of Him, . . .

Perhaps in the margin of your text, it says, "They were all attesting to Him".

In other words, the people could not deny this. It does not mean they were saying, "Oh boy, what a wonderful preacher He is."

Continue to Luke 4:22b.

. . . and [all were] wondering at the gracious words . . .

The word, "gracious," could be translated, "attractive".

Evidently this "meamar" was filled with a little bit of life and the people were not used to that from the "amora," or whoever stood. So they were saying, "Boy, this is kind of interesting."

The people were not necessarily falling in love with Him. We know this because of the next phrase, in Luke 4:22c,

. . . and they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?"

This is a rhetorical question that demands an answer of "Yes"; that is, "Yes, He is Joseph's son. No, He can't be the Messiah." This was the thought.

The hometown boy is just getting up to preach His first sermon, and the people are saying, "Now wait a second! Isn't this the guy that fixed Mrs. Cohen's cupboards? Isn't this the fellow who worked with Mr. Josiah on building the barn? Isn't this the fellow who

fixed the gate for the Jeremiah's and spent all day getting the goats back in the pen? *Him – the Messiah?! That can't be.*"

This question is laced with cynicism and disbelief.

I want to pause long enough to give a principle that can be seen in this and can still be seen today.

We are more ready to see greatness; to see quality; to see value in those we do not know than in those we know well.

We could broaden this principle to say,

We tend to undervalue the things that are common to us.

The people could not hurdle the fact that they had seen this man grow up as a little boy. I could just see one of them sitting in the back, saying, "I knew Him when He was seven years old." Or, "I knew Him when He was thirteen. I was at His Bar-Mitzvah." Or, "This isn't the Messiah, this is a carpenter."

The problem with these people is that they had known Jesus too well. The problem with us today, is that we so often overlook the value in others or in God's word or in worship because it is so common to us.

Look at Jesus' response to the people, in Luke 4:23.

And He said to them, "No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.'"

In other words, "Okay, if You're more than a carpenter, let's have a little bit of fireworks here. Give us a sign. Do something miraculous. Prove it."

Jesus says, "I know you're thinking that."

He continues in Luke 4:24-26.

And He said, "Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown.

"But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land;

"and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow."

Jesus is saying, "Elijah came as a prophet from God and you rejected him. Then the famine came

because the skies dried up and there was no rain. During that time, there were many widows in Israel, but who did God send the prophet to? He sent Elijah to a Gentile widow."

Now there is murmuring among the people hearing this. They are scooting around. They are looking down.

Jesus is not finished. Look at Luke 4:27.

"And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian."

In other words, Israel rejected the prophet Elisha. Because of this, of all the lepers in Israel, God allowed this prophet to heal which leper? He allowed Elisha to heal a Gentile leper.

Jesus was giving the people a message of grace that they did not like. He was saying that God considers the Gentile and the Jew to be on equal territory. To get into the kingdom, they both come the same way – not by genealogy, but by grace.

Now in this day, there was a phrase that was just filled with compassion that said, "God created the Gentiles to fuel the fires of hell."

The Jews believed this. Yet, Jesus was saying, "Because you rejected the prophets, God showed more grace to the Gentile than He did to you."

The implication of Jesus' words was, "God will do the same again, if you reject Me, the prophet from Him."

At this time, Jesus calls for an invitation and the people all came forward, right? Look at Luke 4:28.

And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things;

Continue to Luke 4:29. Evidently, the people were running forward and grabbing Jesus.

and they got up and cast Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff.

What a response to Jesus' first sermon!

I can remember my first sermon. People were compassionate to me – saying nice things; lying through their teeth!

Jesus preaches His first sermon and the people all rush forward with furry. They are thinking, "How dare He equate us with the Gentile nations! Who does

this home boy think He is? Let's take His life. He has blasphemed."

The people take Him to the edge of a cliff. We do not know what happened. In the commentaries, there are fifty different explanations. However, somehow Jesus supernaturally, whether by evaporating, or simply by His aura the people were falling back, or by just mingling in and looking like the rest of them, according to Luke 4:30,

But passing through their midst, He went His way.

Now, if we were Jesus and had just had this kind of response, we would probably cool our heels a little bit. I would probably change my methods; figure out another way to go about this thing. However, look at the next verses in Luke 4:31-32. What was Jesus doing?

And He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and He was teaching them on the Sabbath;

and they were amazed at His teaching, for His message was with authority.

In other words, Jesus taught again and received a similar response.

Note the word "authority". Jesus was teaching with authority. Let us take some time to look at this word. Let me give two points about Jesus' preaching.

1. First, Jesus preached with unusual authority. Turn to Mark 1:22-23, which says the same thing.

And they went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and began to teach.

They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority and not as the scribes.

It would be hard to figure out what the phrase, "He was teaching them as one having authority" means, if it were not for the next phrase, "and not as the scribes." That is a key phrase. The people compared Jesus with the scribes and decided that Jesus spoke with authority.

Now, if we peeled back the layers of time and listened to a scribe preaching, we would hear them preach by constantly alluding to other scribes. I have had the thrill of reading some of their stuff and they never taught the word. They would read a phrase and then say, "Rabbi Hillel believes this. On the other

hand, the scribe Eleazar teaches this. But Shimai, on the other hand, believes this."

This was the way the scribes would give their "meamar". It was a constant allusion to someone else.

However, Jesus spoke even unlike the prophets. The prophets would stand and say, "Thus saith the Lord." The scribes would say, "'So-and-So' other scribe says this." But what did Jesus do? He said, "You have heard it written. You have heard it said. But I say to you . . ."

In other words, Jesus is placing Himself as inerrantly authoritative. So we know He preached with unusual authority in that He turned the focus on Himself. Although the people did not know it, He was the written Word.

2. Secondly, Jesus taught with unusual clarity.

In other words, Jesus was easy to understand. To Him, the important thing was not necessarily saying something, as much as that the one listening understood what He was saying. The same should be true for any of us who teach the scriptures. Whether we teach in a class, our own children, a relative, a home Bible study, or whatever, the important thing is not just saying something, but saying it in a way that those who hear can understand. This is essential.

The scribes were boring. There was no spontaneity. There was no joy. All they did was repeat "So-and-So" – and who cares about what "So-and-So" said.

In graduate school, in the two seminaries I attended, I was privileged to receive a great education. However, I can still remember one bomb of a class and in fact, will never forget it. I would think, "What is the problem? Let's light a fire. Let's do something to stir this up."

I only recently learned what the problem was. It was discovered that the instructor was teaching verbatim from another man's notes; from the notes of a man he had sat under. Now that is exciting. There was no passion. There was no joy. There was simply a repetition of what had been heard.

Jesus never did that. He was so unusual. He taught so that the people could understand. This was unlike the scribes who could care less about the people.

Unfortunately, this takes place today. We have all been bored by teachers who display no life; no passion. We want to light a fire.

I read about a pastor who dreamed he was preaching and then, woke up and he was!

Jesus incorporated so many things in His teaching that we will study as we go through the gospels. He was a master storyteller. He did something so unusual in the fact that His entire sermon could be a story.

Jesus would take some of the most difficult things to understand – like the kingdom – and He would say, “Do you know what the kingdom is like? It’s like a man who bought a field and found buried treasure in it.”

People could listen to this and say, “And then what happened?”

Jesus talked to people about how to love, saying, “That’s the greatest commandment. Do you want to know how to love? Well, let Me tell the story of a man who was walking down a road and was jumped by thieves and left for dead.”

“Well, what happened next?”

Jesus wanted them to understand.

Jesus had great authority in His teaching. We will learn more about this as we study the gospels.

Jesus’ authority over the demon world

Now, let us go back to Luke chapter 4 and I want to get into what will become the basis of our study for the next couple of discussions. Look at Luke 4:33, where Jesus’ authority over the demon world will be demonstrated.

In the synagogue there was man possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice,

Now, in our last discussion, I revealed an interesting paradox. Jesus was in the Spirit and in the wilderness at the same time. We would think that being in the Spirit would mean not having to face the tempter’s most powerful hour. Yet, Jesus was in the Spirit and in the wilderness.

In this verse, we read of a man possessed by a spirit and yet, he is in the synagogue worshipping. This was a man who was part of the Jewish nation and was in the synagogue worshipping, yet did not belong to God because he was possessed by a demon. This is a paradox. He was a member and perhaps sang in the choir (although I am not saying choir members are possessed by a spirit of an unclean demon).

Now the belief in the demonic world was rampant among Jews, but it was superstition and I need to lay

that as a basis. They believed in that day that the ancient world was thickly populated; the air was populated by demons that could enter a person by eating or drinking.

The Egyptians, prior to the time of Christ, believed that the body had thirty-six parts and a demon could enter and control any one of these thirty-six parts. They believed that all illnesses were caused by demons, so they were constantly configuring incantations to exorcise the demon of deafness; the demon of dumbness; the demon of paralysis; the demon of this and that.

When I uncovered this, I thought of the movement in our world today that is constantly following the same pattern that is superstitious at best. They are casting out the demons of cancer; the demons of lying; the demons of this and that. That movement today, finds its roots all the way back in Egypt. We will learn, as we observe Jesus casting out demons, that there was a different class; a different way.

The people believed that spirits could take a man’s sanity. There was a documentary on a public station recently, talking about skulls that were discovered, dating prior to the time of Christ, that had holes in them that had been drilled. In the documentary, they were talking about how clear this was that medicine had exceeded our wildest imaginations.

While I am sure that there were experiments taking place, we must remember that the people of this time believed the sure cure to exorcise a demon was to bore a hole in someone’s skull. So the world, during the time of Christ, was filled with a superstitious belief and fear and they would constantly cower before the thought of a demon.

Jesus comes into this scene and is confronted by a real life case – a man who was demonized. Were there exorcisms? We will discover in a moment, the way Jesus did it.

However, let me tell that in that time, the *Talmud* had writings that exposed the way the Jew supposedly exorcised demons. It was so filled with ridiculous superstitions.

The one I read said, “Take a knife and a strand of hair from the person who is demonized. Tie the hair to the end of the knife and tie the other end of the hair to a thorn bush. Then, say a particular incantation. Then, cut the hair. The knife falls to the ground, and as the knife falls, the spirit leaves the body.”

Jesus will accomplish this so differently.

Three truths about demonic activity

Let us look back and give some thought to this scene, however. I want to give several truths about demonic activity.

1. The first truth is that the demon was completely in control of the man.

Look at Luke 4:33 again.

In the synagogue there was man possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice,

We read “he cried out”. The antecedent to “he” is the “demon”; that is, the demon “cried out with a loud voice”.

Let us talk about this in terms of the demon. The demon completely controlled the personality of this man. The demon spoke; that is, he was in control of the vocal chords. This was the demon speaking.

2. The second truth is that the demon was completely aware of the deity of Jesus Christ.

Look at the next verse, Luke 4:34.

“Let us alone! What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are – the Holy One of God!”

This is interesting in itself. The Jewish nation said, “That man’s a carpenter,” while a demon said, “He’s deity.”

The Jewish people said, “He can’t be the Messiah,” while the demon said, “He’s the Holy One of Israel.”

This leads to an interesting thought,

That which a human can reject as fable, the demon world knows as fact.

Demons know a lot. It is possible for people to reject Christ, while the knowledge of Christ’s identity is known by a demon.

This man is in the synagogue and Jesus has probably just finished His meamar – and this makes two sermons in a row. After Jesus finishes, a man stands up and says, in a demonic voice,

. . . “What business do we have with . . . You . . . Holy One of God”

Can you imagine being there at that moment? I am sure you could have heard a pin drop. The people

must have been struck. They waited to see what would happen.

3. The third truth is that the demon was completely bound by the will of Jesus; totally under the power of Christ.

Look at Luke 4:35a.

But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet and come out of him!” . . .

Jesus used the same word in this verse that He used when He stilled the storm. He said, literally, “Be muzzled and come out.”

Jesus did not want the demon declaring His Messiahship.

Continue to Luke 4:35b-37.

. . . And when the demon had thrown him down in the midst of the people, he came out of him without doing him any harm.

And amazement came upon them all, and they began talking with one another...

I will bet they did!

. . . “What is this message? For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.”

And the report about Him was spreading into every locality in the surrounding district.

The demon was completely bound by the will of Jesus.

Did you notice the incantation that Jesus used? There was none. Was there a formula? There was none. Was there standing and declaring authority over the demon world and all of that stuff? Absolutely not.

Jesus, the authority over the demonic world, simply said, as we read in Luke 4:35,

. . . “Be quiet and come out of him!” . . .

Then, in the time it takes to snap our fingers,

. . . he [the demon] came out . . .

Application

What does this teach about the authority of Jesus Christ? Let me give three brief thoughts.

1. Number one, it is possible to ignore the authority of Christ and reject Him, as the Jewish people did.

2. Number two, it is possible to recognize the authority of Christ and reject Him.
3. Number three, it is possible to recognize the authority of God through Christ and receive Him.

If we could travel back in time, ladies and gentlemen, and be a part of the Jewish covenant people sitting in that synagogue, what would our response have been?

We can make this question easier. What is our response now, to the authority of Jesus Christ?

Is Jesus the authority in your life and mine? Do we recognize who He is and give Him preeminence and priority in life? Do we recognize Jesus for who He is – the Prince of Heaven? Having received Him, do we give Him the authority of life that He deserves?

I pray that you and I do.