

## Chapter Four (4:1-44)

### TESTING THE SON OF MAN

#### IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. What was the point in Jesus going forty days and nights without food (4:1-2)?
2. Since Jesus was Divine; perhaps temptation was not really a problem for Him (4:1-13)?
3. Isn't it too simplistic to deal with temptation by only quoting scripture (4:1-13)?
4. Why did the people of Nazareth become enraged enough to kill Jesus over a couple of stories about old prophets (4:16-30)?
5. How did Jesus get away from this enraged mob (4:30)?
6. Isn't it possible that "demon possession" was just mental illness (4:31-43)?
7. Why didn't Jesus let the demons continue to say who He was (4:41)?

### SECTION 1

#### Victory of the Son of Man over Temptation (4:1-13)

**4** And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit <sup>2</sup>for forty days in the wilderness, tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing in those days; and when they were ended, he was hungry. <sup>3</sup>The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." <sup>4</sup>And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'" <sup>5</sup>And the devil took him up, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, <sup>6</sup>and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory; for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. <sup>7</sup>If you, then, will worship me, it shall all be yours." <sup>8</sup>And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'"

<sup>9</sup>And he took him to Jerusalem, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here; <sup>10</sup>for it is written,

'He will give his angels charge of you, to guard you,'

<sup>11</sup>and

‘On their hands they will bear you up,  
lest you strike your foot against a stone.’”

<sup>12</sup>And Jesus answered him, ‘It is said, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’” <sup>13</sup>And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

**4:1-8 Over Appetite and Ambition:** The Son of Man came to defeat the devil. He came to do so in a fleshly body, subject to the tests and trials all men know. He not only defeated the devil in the flesh, He also established forever the strategy that will enable mankind to defeat the devil. First, one must realize the devil is a real being. The devil is not a creation of man’s imagination. We must trust only what the Bible says about the devil. To trust any other data about him is to risk being deceived by the very one we are trying to escape:

- a. He fell from heaven (Lk. 10:18).
- b. He pretends to rule the world (II Cor. 4:4).
- c. He rules a kingdom of rebellious demons (II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6).
- d. He is called tempter, adversary, accuser.
- e. He may fashion himself into an angel of light (II Cor. 11:14).
- f. He is able to work lying signs and wonders through human helpers (II Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:13-14).
- g. He is bound to some limitations by God and Christ (Job 1:12; 2:6; Mt. 12:29).
- h. He is feared by angels of God (Jude 6).
- i. He seeks to destroy the church of Christ (Rev. 12:13-17).
- j. Pride was his snare (I Tim. 3:6).
- k. He is the father of liars and murderers (Jn. 8:44).
- l. He prowls around like a roaring lion seeking those who will stray so that he may devour them (I Pet. 5:8).

This is some of the biblical data which keeps us from being “ignorant of his devices” (II Cor. 2:11). Here in the temptations of Jesus we have an exposé of the devil’s basic strategems. There are three fundamental vulnerabilities of man which Satan attacks. Man was created by God to have these vulnerabilities. If man had no vulnerability between right and wrong, he could not believe, love, enjoy or be in the image of his Creator. The first of these is human appetite. All men need food, clothing, shelter, sex, rest, work, life and health. Satan takes advantage of these needs and tries to get men to make these human needs first in priority.

Jesus had a human body. His body needed food. He had fasted for forty days and nights. Fasting was not dieting—it was for the specific purpose of clearing the mind and concentrating it wholly on spiritual

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matters. Jesus had His priorities right. Food was secondary to His communion with the Father. But the devil attacked the physical part of Him which undoubtedly cried out for satisfaction after forty days of deprivation. But Jesus trusted in the Father's word: "Man shall not live by bread alone." In other words, a man's life does not consist in the things he possesses (cf. Lk. 12:15). There is a food which perishes (cf. Jn. 6:27); those who trust God are to labor for the food which does not perish. Jesus was tempted to distrust the Father's promise to provide everything necessary. Jesus had the power to provide for Himself. Why didn't He? Had He done so He would have provided no way for victory for us—we do not have such power. We may think we do, but we don't. We *must* trust God. It is through trust in His very great promises that we escape the corruption in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature (II Pet. 1:4). There is no other escape than to *trust* God's Word; which means to put it to practice in our daily living. Temptations must come (Mt. 18:7; Lk. 17:1); they come through man's own desires (James 1:14); God will not allow any man to be tested beyond his strength to overcome (I Cor. 10:13); God provides the way of escape (I Cor. 10:13; II Pet. 2:9); self-control helps guard against temptation (I Cor. 7:5) and so does prayer (Mt. 6:13; 26:41; Mk. 14:38; Lk. 11:4; 22:40, 46). Remember, the next time you are tempted to satisfy a God-given physical appetite above and beyond the guidelines of the Scriptures that you do not have to. God's Word has given man principles and precepts within which he may satisfy his physical nature to its greatest potential and most profitable use. The body is a means to an end. Man should use it to glorify God for in glorifying God man lives! Jesus proved the flesh did not have to have first priority! Jesus proved there was something higher. Jesus proved that by trusting God's Word, the flesh need not be vulnerable to Satan's attempts to control it. The life of the Christian does not consist in making provisions to gratify the desires of the flesh (Romans 13:14).

The next attack of the devil was upon ambition or the vulnerability of the human ego. Now human ego is God-given but it is intended to be held in check. Man needs an ego to give the initiative, creativity, correct amounts of ambition and the drive to find satisfaction in a job well done. Without the drive to do and be man would be a listless, lethargic drifter—totally passive. The crucial issue is whether man will surrender that God-given ego or ambition to divinely revealed goals. God has a purpose for all the drives and aspirations of the human ego. That purpose is to aspire to goodness, righteousness, truth, faithfulness and love. God's great ambition for all men is that they be conformed to the image of His Son (cf. Rom. 8:28-30; II Cor. 3:18; Phil. 3:8-16). He wants us to have the drive and ambition to seek after that. But the devil will attack us

at this point and try to convince us that our ambitions should be for ourselves and not for God. The devil will tempt us with human fame and human power to get us to direct our loyalty toward him and away from God. The devil will try to convince us that we can be "kings" of certain areas or portions of that which God created. He tempts us into believing that we can actually usurp God's sovereignty in some areas where we seem to have special expertise or charisma. What the devil really means is that he will help us deceive ourselves that we can be "kings" if we will follow his way and do obeisance to him. Of course, it was a great temptation to Jesus. He knew He was a king, but He knew most of His subjects would not acknowledge His kingship because they were looking for a king of power, fame and political-mindedness. The devil was tempting Jesus to establish God's kingdom on the same basis as worldly kingdoms. The enticement was to conduct God's business like the world conducts its business. This is still a strong temptation for leaders in the church today. The way of God's kingdom is servanthood, suffering and persuasion—not in being served in ease and comfort and worldly fame. Once again, Jesus overcame the temptation by trusting in God's Word. The greatest of all must be servant of all. If we are faithful and suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him. For the glory that was set before Him, Jesus endured defamation, persecutions, misunderstanding and the cross. There is nothing physical, incomprehensible, emotional, esoteric or impossible in Jesus' parry of the devil's thrust. He simply said, "It is written. . . ." Only total commitment to God's Word will furnish the power to survive the deceitful power of the devil.

**4:9-13 Over Audacity:** The devil's final attack was upon the tendency of man to be audacious. Audacity is a daring that shows contempt for restraints of common sense and law; it is effrontery. It is the tendency to be proud and arrogant. The devil took Jesus to the "pinnacle" of the temple and dared Him to throw Himself down. The devil even quoted Scripture to Jesus (see Psa. 91:11). Satan is urging Jesus to do what seems to be the quickest, most spectacular way to accomplish His purpose. Jesus wants to be recognized as the Messiah. Jewish tradition said the Messiah would come "suddenly" in a spectacular way, to the temple. This would seem to be a plausible (at least spectacular) way to get the attention of the masses. Furthermore, says the devil, God's word says, ". . . He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Psa. 91:11-12). But Satan *misquoted* Scripture by omitting one very important phrase, ". . . to keep thee *in all thy ways.*" Jesus' way was God's way. To have done what Satan suggested would have put Him out of the *Messiah's* way into the devil's way. The Messiah's way was the humble, serving, slow, painstaking way. For Jesus to have cast Himself down from the temple would

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have been to show contempt for the will of God concerning His mission. This was the old "end justifies the means" temptation. To do as Satan suggested would have been to audaciously go beyond the guidelines of God's way and put Him on trial. The way of the Messiah was to be suffering (Isa. 53).

Human beings are still vulnerable to such a suggestion by the devil today. Man is constantly enticed with the idea that he can fulfill God's purpose in his life by doing it his own way. Men still do not want the humble, serving, painstakingly slow way of God. Jesus warned that His kingdom must be built slowly and gradually like the planting of a seed and bringing it painstakingly to fruition first through the "blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear" (Mk. 4:28). The devil tempted Jesus to audaciously circumvent the way of the Cross and take matters into His own hands and gain His following by the quick, spectacular, showy way. Followers of Christ are vulnerable to the same temptation. The only defense against it is to know what God has revealed about His way, trust God that His way is the only way to life, and walk in it. To walk any other way is to go beyond the patience of God. Luke quotes Jesus' reply to the devil and uses the Greek word *ekpeiraseis* which literally means, "overtempt." This is the same Greek word used in the Septuagint version of Deut. 6:16. God wants us to trust His goodness, but He does not want us to "overtempt" Him and go beyond His goodness. God's patience is not inexhaustible (cf. I Cor. 10:6-13; Heb. 3:7-19, etc.). Because God is patient and long-suffering, not wishing that any should perish (II Pet. 3:9), man grows audacious and arrogant. Jesus, in the flesh, tempted strongly to dare God's way, resisted. We can resist that temptation too!

Jesus' temptations were strong. They were stronger than any other human will know. A shrewd man once said: "The man who has no problems with temptations is the man who always yields!" Temptation in the Lord's case was strengthened from the very fact that He possessed the supernatural powers the devil tried to get Him to misuse. Having failed to seduce Jesus into sinning against God, the devil left Him. Luke notes that the devil's intention was to resume his attack. The Greek word *kairou* means literally "season" but is translated in the RSV, "an opportune time." "In season" means "opportune time." Jesus was constantly tempted throughout His human existence. One of the most crucial hours of temptation came in the Garden of Gethsemane (cf. Mt. 26:39; Mk. 14:35; Lk. 22:41). His own disciples became channels through which the devil tempted Him (cf. Mt. 16:23).

The devil is malicious, hateful, evil and murderous. He will use our emotions, our physical nature, our friends, even our sub-consciousness to tempt us to disobey or distrust God. The only protection we have is

to deeply engrave the word of God on our thresholds (our conscious minds), so that he cannot slip inside our houses (our hearts, our subconscious minds) and rob us of our souls.

## SECTION 2

**Visitation of the Son of Man in Time (4:14-30)**

14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and a report concerning him went out through all the surrounding country. 15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day. And he stood up to read; 17 and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written,

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives

and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,

19 to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

20 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.

21 And he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." 22 And all spoke well of him, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth; and they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" 23 And he said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself; what we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here also in your own country.' " 24 And he said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his own country. 25 But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a great famine over all the land; 26 and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. 27 And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." 28 When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. 29 And they rose up and put him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw him down headlong. 30 But passing through the midst of them he went away.

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**4:14-20 Text:** The victory Jesus won over the flesh and the devil gave Him great spiritual power. He left Judea and returned to Galilee where He went from village to village teaching in the synagogues. His wisdom and holiness were recognized by all who heard and observed Him and He became increasingly famous throughout Galilee. His name was on the lips of people wherever they gathered.

The Jewish Synagogue probably originated during the Babylonian Exile (606-536 B.C.). It was never really intended as a substitute for their Temple, but it did provide every Jewish community in exile a place to meet, hear their scriptures read, and pray. The Synagogue remains today as the strongest factor in the preservation of Jewish culture and religion. Synagogues could be found in Jesus' day in every city of the world where there were enough Jews to support them. The chief purpose of the synagogue was not public worship but instruction in the scriptures and the regulation of Jewish social and civil life (insofar as the country in which they lived might allow civil control by the synagogue). In Jesus' day the Temple in Jerusalem was the chief place of worship. The Pharisees and the Scribes controlled the synagogues in the first century A.D. Each synagogue was ruled by the elders of the community but they usually appointed a "president" or chief ruler in each one who was responsible for its properties and services, and presided at its meetings. A "minister" or "attendant" was also appointed to carry out the rulings of the "president" and acted as his subordinate. The "attendant" handled the scrolls, instructed the children, administered the scourgings, sounded the trumpet on Sabbath, etc.

Services were held every Sabbath. The congregation filed in and the men seated themselves on one side of the building while the women took seats on the other side. Prominent members of the community, especially the elders, took seats at the front of the building facing the audience. Jesus characterized the Pharisees as hypocrites who competed with one another for the best seats in the synagogues in order to be seen of men (Mt. 23:6). The best historical information available indicates the synagogue service probably went as follows:

- a. Service began with a congregational recitation of the "Shema" (*shema* means, "hear" or "obey") which was the Jewish confession of faith quoted from Deut. 6:4-5.
- b. This was followed by a congregational prayer called the Tefillah.
- c. A scripture lesson from the Law (the Pentateuch) was read. (Any member or visitor could be called upon, even a lad of 12 or more, to read the Law.)
- d. Next a scripture lesson from the Prophets was read (again any Jewish male could be asked to do so). The lesson from the Prophets was always restricted to less verses than the one from the Law.

- e. A sermon was preached on the scriptures read. Again any adult Jewish male could give the sermon although that was usually reserved for the elders, rabbis or rulers of the synagogue. Visiting rabbis were often invited to preach.
- f. A blessing was pronounced or a prayer was recited and the service was concluded.
- g. The congregation gave alms for the poor as they filed out of the meeting house.

Attendance at synagogue was not legislated in the Law of Moses. It was custom and tradition. It was a good custom and Jesus made it His "custom" to attend synagogue on the Sabbath. It afforded Jesus (and later the apostles) ready audiences assembled for the very purpose of religious pursuits. Jesus observed the customary ritual of the synagogue in standing to read and sitting down to preach.

Jesus took the scroll of Isaiah from the "attendant" and began to read. His text was Isaiah 61:1-2. He rolled up the scroll and returned it to the "attendant" and sat down. To understand why there was such expectation and anticipation by the audience as they stared at Jesus, one should read the entire 61st chapter of Isaiah. Undoubtedly most of the adult men present knew the whole context from which Jesus had read only two verses. The whole 61st chapter of Isaiah is gloriously messianic. It predicts the messianic era as one of freedom, fortune and fame for the messianic people (cf. comments in Isaiah, Vol. III, by Butler, College Press). The intent of Isaiah 61 is *spiritual*, as Jesus plainly indicates, but it is replete with highly figurative language describing the victorious vengeance, superfluity of wealth, subjugation of "aliens," and national renown God's messianic people are to have. For centuries Jewish rabbis in their apocryphal writings and traditions had been interpreting the messianic prophecies literally and physically. This Sabbath-day audience anticipated some such literal and materialistic rendering from Jesus, the widely acclaimed hometown boy.

**4:21-30 Teaching:** They heard more than they expected. Rather than give the usual rabbinical interpretation of this passage, Jesus made a startling claim, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." The Greek text makes it emphatic—*this* day, *this* scripture. The Greek word *peplerotai*, translated "fulfilled," is in the perfect tense. Greek perfect tense denotes an action accomplished with a continuing result. A good translation would be, "This day this scripture *stands fulfilled* in your presence."

Jesus was the Servant of Jehovah (Isa. 61) anointed by the Holy Spirit to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to those bound. The Hebrew word used in Isaiah 61 for liberty is *deror* and is also used in



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connection with the Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:10; Ezek. 46:17) when bond-slaves were set free and land taken in payment for debts was returned to its original owners. The Mosaic Year of Jubilee was intended to typify the messianic liberation. Christ came to bind our jailor (the devil) and free us (cf. Mt. 12:25-30; Heb. 2:14-15; I Jn. 3:8-9; Rev. 20:1-6).

Jesus was also anointed to bring recovery of sight to the blind. He did physically heal a few blind people, but that was not the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy from Isaiah. He came to give all who believe in Him the recovery of spiritual sight! (cf. Jn. 9:39-41).

He came to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. In Isaiah 61, the Hebrew word *ratzah* is translated *favorable* or *acceptable*. It means literally, delightful, pleasurable, gracious. The Servant (Jesus) came to announce the precise time God chose in His divine schedule of redemption to accomplish His *graciousness* toward man. God, through Jesus Christ, summoned all men to His pleasurable, conciliating time. The messianic age is the age of God's grace. *Now* is the acceptable time, today is the day of salvation (cf. II Cor. 6:1-2). (See our comments, *Isaiah*, Vol. III, College Press, pgs. 409-413).

The Jews in this synagogue at Nazareth expected Jesus to interpret Isaiah 61 physically and materially. When Jesus talked of "food" the Jews wanted bread and fish; when He talked of "wholeness" (peace) they wanted limbs restored; when He talked of "freedom" they wanted foreign rulers driven from their land. But physical circumstances are not what constitute the kingdom of God—it is character which does (Rom. 13:14; 14:17). Jesus intended the prophecy to be understood as having a spiritual fulfillment. His audience was momentarily caught up in dreams and reveries of a physical fulfillment. They all complimented Jesus on His masterful exposition of the prophet Isaiah. He aroused the feelings of national pride and eagerness for the messianic age in their hearts. Emotion welled up inside the listeners. Suddenly someone said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" Abruptly it dawned on them they had known this young man for thirty years as he grew up in Nazareth and he had not done one great thing there.

Jesus anticipated their reasoning. He knew they wanted to shout at him the proverbial, "Physician, heal yourself." They were reasoning, "If this son of Joseph is the Messiah, charity begins at home!" He speaks eloquently to us, they thought, but he does his great beneficent miracles in other places; his own home town folks should come first. Their reaction graphically exposes the unbelief of their hearts. Jesus was offering them Himself; they clamored for things! They also betray themselves as greedy, jealous and prejudiced. They should have rejoiced that Jesus had done miracles and helped needy people in other places, but they were envious.

The Lord had a proverb of His own. It is a truth proven by history that one generation persecutes and slays its prophets, and the next builds monuments to them. Their forefathers killed the prophets of old and these people of Nazareth adorned their tombs (cf. Mt. 23:29-36). It is the tragedy of one generation after another that so many wilfully reject opportunities to know God through His messengers. Now these faithless people are rejecting the One of whom all the other prophets spoke. They do not see and would not see even if a miracle were worked in their midst.

Thank God, there are those who will receive God's messengers and trust their word in spite of unpleasant circumstances. Jesus cites two cases from the sacred history of Israel itself to bring the people of Nazareth to their senses. Israel rejected Elijah, but a woman of Sidon who suffered through the same three and one-half years of drought, and was about to starve, believed the prophet, took him in and fed him and received a great blessing (cf. I Kings 17:9ff). The lepers of Israel did not believe Elisha, but a Syrian army captain named Naaman did and was cleansed (cf. II Kings 5:1ff).

Jesus got His point across. God is no respecter of persons, but men and women of every race, culture, generation or social level who trust God and receive His messengers will, in turn, receive His approval. But the people of Nazareth would have none of this doctrine! Jewish apocryphal traditions held that God had created the Gentiles to be "fuel for the fires of hell." Here this son of Joseph, a local boy who does nothing for his own home town, spouting messianic promises and claiming their fulfillment in Him, has the audacity to infer that God might favor Gentiles above Jews. Their reaction simply proves the people did not believe the prophet Isaiah either. Isaiah predicts in many places in his writings that God is going to bless men of all nations in the messianic age. In addition to the doctrine of the cross, the doctrine of the universality of the gospel was a stumbling-block to the Jews.

The people became violent. They rose up as one mob and took Jesus bodily and put Him out of the town. Outside the village they took Him to the brow of a steep hill upon which Nazareth was built and there tried to push Him off a cliff to His death. Jesus escaped. We are not told exactly how this was accomplished. John records similar escapes in Jerusalem (cf. Jn. 7:30; 10:39). Some think He simply walked through the crowd by the very power of His righteous personality. Others think something miraculous happened to allow Him to escape. Whatever the case, it was not His hour to die. He had full control of His destiny. He would lay down His life at the precise time appointed by God and He would take it up again — none would take it from Him!

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### SECTION 3

#### **Validation of the Son of Man's Authority (4:31-44)**

31 And he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them on the sabbath; <sup>32</sup>and they were astonished at his teaching; for his word was with authority. <sup>33</sup>And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon; and he cried out with a loud voice, <sup>34</sup>“Ah! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” <sup>35</sup>But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” And when the demon had thrown him down in the midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm. <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.” <sup>37</sup>And reports of him went out into every place in the surrounding region.

38 And he arose and left the synagogue, and entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they besought him for her. <sup>39</sup>And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her; and immediately she rose and served them.

40 Now when the sun was setting all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to him; and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them. <sup>41</sup>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.

42 And when it was day he departed and went into a lonely place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them; <sup>43</sup>but he said to them, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose.” <sup>44</sup>And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

**4:31 Pronouncements:** Luke has a different chronology of this early Galilean ministry than that of Matthew and Mark. Matthew and Mark list the healing of the demoniac, Peter's mother-in-law, and the masses *after* the miracle of the fishes and the call to discipleship of the fishermen (cf. Mt. 4:13-22; Mk. 1:14-20). Luke places the healing ministry *before* the call of the fishermen (cf. Lk. 5:1-11). We believe Luke had some reason for varying from the chronological order. Perhaps Luke did so to offer an explanation for the basis of such ready acceptance of Jesus' call by the fishermen. Whatever the case, after leaving the unbelieving,

murderous mob at the hills of Nazareth Jesus went down to the coast of the Sea of Galilee and the city of Capernaum. Jesus followed His custom of going to synagogue services on the Sabbath and finding opportunities there to teach. People were astounded at His teaching. The Greek participle *exeplessonto* is from the verb *plesso* which means "to be struck." The people were exceedingly mentally stricken with His teaching!

In both manner and content Jesus continually astounded people by His teaching (cf. Lk. 2:48; Jn. 4:29; 7:14-15; 7:46; Mt. 7:29). Mark 1:21, parallel to Luke 4:31, adds, ". . . for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes." Prophets said, "Thus saith the Lord." Rabbis and scribes said, "Thus saith the Rabbis and the traditions." Jesus said, "I say unto you!" The endless human traditions and officious pronouncements of the rabbis, which they elevated above the Scripture (cf. Mt. 15:1-20; Mk. 7:1-23), were monotonously and wearily repeated. But rather than bring men the mercy and forgiveness of God such teaching bound on them a burden they were unable to bear. The practical heart-searching words of Jesus were in direct contrast with the pointless minutiae and hair-splitting arguments of the rabbis. When men listened to Jesus, they said: Yes, He is right, that is so! The truth Jesus uttered was authoritative and men knew it. This is still true! Even though this period of the ministry of Jesus is marked by the working of many miracles, it does not seem that His *ordinary* preaching and teaching needed any such supernatural testimony to enable it to stand on its own merits as being authoritative. Today, take any teaching of Jesus and proclaim it anywhere in the world, and the common consciousness of humanity knows the teaching is true. That is because the teachings of Jesus are absolute truth.

**4:32-41 Powers:** This is the first confrontation of Jesus and demons in the record of Luke. There are interesting things to learn from this event. First, it is significant that Luke, the physician, does not question the reality of demon possession. Next, we observe some interesting things about the demon: (a) he was attending synagogue service; (b) he was called an *akathartou* ("unclean") demon which means religiously unclean or unholy—demons are beings who wish to have nothing to do with holiness, purity, goodness or righteousness but whose sole desire is evil and hurtfulness; (c) he was compelled to acknowledge the fact that Jesus was God's "Holy One"; (d) he was terrified of Jesus—the Greek expletive *ea* ("Ah!") is an oath or shriek of fear; (e) he convulsed the man he possessed—Greek, *rhipto*, meaning, "throw with a sudden jerking motion" (Mark 1:26, Gr. has *sparaxan*, from which we get the English words spasm and spastic); (f) the demon obeyed Jesus immediately.

Jesus' actions toward the demon manifest His complete sovereignty over evil spiritual beings: (a) Jesus charged (Gr. *epetimesen*, meaning

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literally, exercised His "honorship" upon) the demon to come out of the man; (b) Jesus forced the demon to be silent (Gr. *phimotheti*, "be muzzled"); (c) The people testified that with authority (*exousia*) and power (*dunamei*) Jesus commanded (*epitassei*—the same Greek word which may also be translated, subjected or subordinated) the evil spirit; Mark (1:27) adds testimony that the evil spirit *obeyed* Jesus. Reports (Greek, *echos*) of Jesus' fame echoed throughout all the surrounding region. The people said, This is a new teaching! (Mk. 1:27). Jesus' absolute authority over demons was so superior to the ineffectual superstitions of the exorcists it was totally unique.

Exorcists of that day believed the air was populated by evil spirits, and that on certain occasions they entered into men through food and drink. The Egyptians held that there were thirty-six parts of the human body, any of which might be entered and controlled by evil spirits. Some of the rabbis believed that since demons were invisible if one put sifted ashes on the threshold of the house, their footprints might be seen in the morning, prints like those that a chicken might leave. One rabbi, in order to protect himself against demons, always took a lamb with him every time he went to the bathroom since they attacked animals as well as human beings. Such superstitions are used by modern critics to attack the credibility of the biblical record of demon possession. They say Jesus was a victim of these superstitions of His day.

One of the following conclusions must be true concerning the reality of demons as mentioned in the Gospel accounts. No other possibilities exist, and only one of these may be true: Either,

- a. Jesus did cast out real demons as the texts represent, or,
- b. Jesus did no such thing and the accounts are entirely false, or,
- c. Jesus did go through the motions and the pretense of casting demons out, while He knew there were no real demons—He was a charlatan, or,
- d. Jesus was as ignorant and superstitious on this subject as the people and honestly thought He cast out spirits in healing sicknesses.

Which of these views fits the facts and the testimony? Jesus never made a statement in connection with demons which has been discredited by the progress of human knowledge. Modern thought is now not so certain that demon-possession is a mere superstition. There is no apparent organic reason for many illnesses (as attested by psychiatry and psychosomatic medicine). We know far too little about the relationship between the spiritual and physical realms to arbitrarily deny the historicity of the Gospel accounts of demon possession.

The New Testament discusses demons under the following headings: (a) Demons are Satan's messengers (angels), Mt. 25:41; I Cor. 6:3; II Cor. 12:7;

II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 9:11; 12:7; (b) Demons are "unclean spirits" Mt. 8:16; Mt. 8:28; 12:45; 10:1; Mk. 5:1, 2, 13; Mk. 1:23-28; 3:11-30; 6:7; 7:25; 9:14-20; Lk. 8:27-30; 4:33-36; 10:17-20; Mk. 9:17-25 (dumb spirit); Acts 16:16 (spirit of divination). Demons have these personality traits:

- a. They are knowledgeable; Mt. 8:29; Mk. 1:34; Jas. 2:19.
- b. They can speak; Lk. 4:33-41; Mk. 3:11-12; 5:7.
- c. They are fierce; Mt. 8:28; Mt. 17:14-21; Mk. 9:14-29; Lk. 9:37-43.
- d. They did great harm to people; Mt. 12:27ff; Mt. 9:32; Mk. 9:14-29.
- e. They did no good at all; Jn. 10:21.
- f. They need a body to inhabit; Mt. 8:28ff; Mt. 17:14-21; Mk. 9:14-29; Lk. 9:37-43.
- g. They may be many in number; Mk. 5:9.
- h. They fear Christ; Mk. 1:24; Lk. 4:34; Mt. 8:28-33; Mk. 5:1-20; Lk. 8:26-39.
- i. They often lead men to indulge in speculations about demons and inspire division within Christianity; I Tim. 4:1; Jas. 3:13-18; I Jn. 4:1-3; I Cor. 10:19-22; Rev. 16:14, etc.

We know from the divine record that demons abide:

- a. In heavenly places (Eph. 6:12).
- b. In the air (Eph. 2:2).
- c. In the earth (Job 1:7).
- d. In the sea (Mt. 8:32).
- e. In bodies of men (Mt. 12:43; Eph. 2:2).
- f. In kings and potentates of the world (Dan. 10:13-20; Rev. 16:14).
- g. In bodies of animals (Mk. 5:13).
- h. In waterless places (Lk. 11:24).
- i. Reserved in chains under darkness (II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6).
- j. In the abyss (Lk. 8:31).

Where does the Christian stand in relation to demons? First, Satan and his demons have been conquered by Christ (Lk. 10:18; Jn. 12:31; 16:11; Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14; I Jn. 3:8; Mt. 12:29). Satan and his angels have been bound and limited by Christ who brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. But, like an insane army general who is defeated but will not quit until he is slain, Satan and his messengers are still active in the lives of men who love darkness (Acts 10:38; Eph. 4:27; 6:11, II Tim. 2:26; Jas. 4:7; I Pet. 5:8; I Jn. 3:8; 2:13-16; I Cor. 7:5; II Cor. 4:4; I Tim. 5:15; I Jn. 4:1; I Tim. 4:1; Jas. 3:15; Acts 5:16; 8:7; 16:16; Rom. 8:15; II Tim. 1:7; I Cor. 2:12; Eph. 6:12; 3:10; Rom. 8:38). Demons do exist! They cannot live in Christians because the *Holy Spirit* dwells in them. Christians are engaged in a cosmic struggle with the hosts of wickedness and the kingdom of darkness from which they have been transferred. Christians need

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the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:10ff; II Cor. 10:3-5). Greater is He that is in Christians than he that is in the world (I Jn. 4:4; 5:18-19; 2:14).

The New Testament is quite clear—demon possession was a reality. Ignorance on this matter is not in the mind of God or Christ but in ours.

Immediately after the incident with the demon-possessed man Jesus left the synagogue and went to Peter's home in Capernaum. Peter's mother-in-law lay sick with a "great fever" (Greek, *megalo pureto*—*pureto* is the word from which we have the English, pyre or pyrotechnic, and means "fire"). Ancient physicians (including Galen, 130 A.D.) divided fevers into two classes—little and great. Considering the total lack of insecticides and poor hygienic methods, becoming infected with some "great" fever (such as malaria, typhus, pneumonia, etc.) was an every day possibility. Luke's use of the imperfect Greek verb *sunechomene* (lit., "was being seized with") may indicate that her fever had seized her for a long time—perhaps a chronic malady. Doctor Luke watches Jesus through the eyes of a physician and describes Jesus as going in, standing over the patient and taking her by the hand. But there the normal "bedside manner" ends. Jesus "rebukes" the fever. He "charged" the fever (*epetimesen*, as with the demon) exercising His "honorship" upon the fever and it left her. Immediately (with no time necessary to recuperate or regain strength) she arose and began to serve the house guests of her son-in-law. It was a miraculous healing.

That evening, as the sun began to set toward the Mediterranean Sea, literally hundreds of people (so many it appeared to be the whole city of Capernaum) gathered outside the door of Peter's house with people ill from all kinds of diseases and those possessed of demons. They wanted Jesus to heal them. Luke uses the Greek adjective *hekasto* ("each") to qualify the noun *hen* ("one"). He means to say that Jesus healed *each and every single one* there who had an illness or was demon-possessed. Christ's healings contrasted with modern pseudo-healers reveals the following:

- a. Jesus did not heal for notoriety; Mt. 8:1-4; 9:27-31; Mk. 3:7-12; 7:31-37; 8:22-26, etc.
- b. Jesus healed all sorts of afflictions. One so-called "faith-healer" is known to have selected through screening only forty out of seven hundred who came to him for "healing."
- c. Jesus never indicated healing was to be universal. Four times He healed "many"; once He healed ten; three times He healed two at once; twenty-three times He healed one person; often He healed only one of many present who were ill.

- d. Jesus did not use auto-suggestion or hypnotism in His cures.
- e. Jesus did not indicate healing was to be appropriated by all who appropriate the atonement provided by His death.
- f. Jesus healed only Jews with two possible exceptions (Mt. 15:21-28; Jn. 4:46-54).
- g. Jesus never discouraged the use of physicians and medicines.
- h. There was never a question about the affliction of anyone Jesus healed.
- i. There was never any question, even from enemies of Jesus, whether the afflicted were healed or not.
- j. There was never a case of relapse when Jesus healed a person.
- k. Jesus performed no "partial" healings.
- l. Jesus did not make faith a uniform condition for healing.
- m. There were never any failures by Jesus to heal anyone He intended to heal.
- n. Jesus specialized in extreme cases (even death).
- o. No one ever found Jesus guilty of fraud in His healings.
- p. Jesus never asked patients to ignore their symptoms.
- q. Jesus never failed to heal all in a group when He proposed to heal a group.
- r. Christ's healings were invariably instantaneous.
- s. Compassion was not the ruling motive with the Lord.

Jesus refused to let the demons cry out that He was the Son of God. He did not want and did not need verification from demons that He was God's Holy Son. The Greek text portrays Jesus being very emphatic in silencing the demons. All too soon the enemies of Jesus would be accusing Him of working miracles by the power of the devil.

**4:42-44 Purposes:** Mark tells us that after the crowds dwindled away from Peter's door, Jesus slipped away in the very early morning hours (while it was still dark) (Mk. 1:35) to a lonely place to pray. He is probably driven to seek solitude and prayer to resist the temptations that would come with such popularity. The crowds kept on seeking (*epezetoun*, Greek imperfect tense) and kept on trying to detain Him (*kateichon*, imperfect). It is evident that attending to people's physical necessities made Jesus extremely popular. He could have been crowned king had He exploited His miraculous power for this end (cf. Jn. 6:14-15). But Christ's primary purpose is not to heal and feed physical bodies which are ultimately doomed to dissolution and death. The primary purpose of His ministry and kingdom is the regeneration of the spiritual man. He makes that plain when He says, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose."

Luke's note, "And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea," (4:44) seems to disagree with Matthew (4:23) and Mark (1:39) who say



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Jesus "went throughout Galilee." This disagreement may be due to scribal error. While the Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Ephraemi and Old Syriac manuscripts have "Judea," the Alexandrinus, Bezae, Vulgate, and Peshitto Syriac (and others) have "Galilee," for Luke 4:44.

### STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. Do you think of the devil as a real person? What do you think of the powers he is said to possess? How much time do you think we should devote to studying about him?
2. Why did God create the human body with certain vulnerabilities?
3. What was the first vulnerability the devil attacked in Jesus? How did Jesus overcome the temptation? May we overcome the same way?
4. What human vulnerability did the devil attack next in Jesus? Are you subject to the same vulnerability? Have you ever been tempted in this? How did you overcome?
5. What human vulnerability did the devil attack last? Have you ever succumbed to the philosophy that "the end justifies the means"?
6. Why did Jesus seek out synagogues to proclaim His mission and message? What kind of service would be conducted in a synagogue?
7. How did Jesus interpret Isaiah 61:1-2 to the people of Nazareth? What kind of interpretation did they expect?
8. What did Jesus mean by the proverb, "Physician, heal yourself."
9. How is Jesus' authority demonstrated in His teaching?
10. Do you believe demons are real? Why?
11. Why can't demons possess Christians?
12. What are some significant differences between the miraculous healings performed by Jesus and those of pseudo "faith-healers" today?
13. Was Jesus' primary purpose that of compassion in His healings? If not, why did He heal?