

## ENGAGE

- As you approach the text you may find these questions and thoughts to be helpful?
  - What is the most miraculous or incredible thing you have witnessed first-hand?
  - Has anything happened to you or someone you know that cannot be logically explained?
  - In today's passage, we are going to learn about how Christ was performing many miracles and garnering attention from people throughout the region.
  - What experiences or understanding of demon passion have you had or learned?

## EXAMINE

### COMMENTARY NOTES:

4:31 on the Sabbath he taught the people. On the nature of synagogue worship on the Sabbath, see "Understanding the Text" on 4: 14– 30. The invitation to teach after the readings from the Scriptures would indicate that Jesus must already have gained some reputation in his adopted home.

4:32 They were amazed. Compare 9:43; 2:48; 4:22. This reaction is external in nature and does not imply a change of heart. His message had authority. This refers not so much to the manner of Jesus' teaching, i.e., to his ability to elicit conviction and decision, but to his divine power to heal (4:39) and cast out demons (4:35–36, 41). (The term "authority" is used over twenty times in Luke-Acts and is not associated with teaching in any other instance.) Luke lacks the statement "not as the teachers of the law" found in the parallel in Mark 1:22 perhaps because Luke's Gentile audience had no contact with the rabbis or their influence in their teaching of the OT, or perhaps he simply shortened the account. The latter probably is the main reason.

4:33 a demon, an impure spirit. He cried out. As usual in an exorcism account, the words are attributed not to the "host" whose voice is used but rather to the possessing demon, and Jesus's response will be specifically to the demon.

4:34 Have you come to destroy us? The plural "us" is not likely to indicate that this is a case of multiple possession (as in 8: 2, 30; 11: 26), since the demon will go on to use the singular "I." More likely, this demon speaks on behalf of his whole class; with the coming of Jesus they are all under threat. the Holy One of God. In 1: 35 the promised "Son of God" has already been described as "the holy one," and in 4: 41 demons will recognize Jesus as the "Son of God" (cf. 8:

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28) and as the Messiah. As supernatural beings, they have an insight into Jesus's real nature that is not yet open to human observers, and they recognize him as their natural antagonist. The title "Holy One of God" suitably contrasts him with the "unclean" demon. In John 6: 69 it denotes Jesus's role as the Messiah.

4:35 came out without injuring him. Contrast 9: 42 and the more graphic description in Mark 9: 26. Demon possession was understood to have physical as well as mental effects, and the lack of any physical damage in this exorcism no doubt added to the favorable reaction from the synagogue congregation.

4:36 With authority and power he gives orders. Luke added "and power," which fits well Jesus' having received "power" through the Spirit (4:14). Luke apparently joined these two terms together, since the summaries in vv. 14, 32 use "power" and "authority." In so doing we have a chiasmus: power (4:14); authority (4:32); authority (4:36); power (4:36). Whether this was intentional on Luke's part is impossible to say.

4:37 The spread of Jesus' fame is reported; this fame would spread even more (5:15), and a greater audience is described in 5:17. This audience in turn would be surpassed in 6:17-18 and reach its climax in 7:17.

4:38 the home of Simon. Simon Peter will be introduced in 5: 1- 11 and 6: 13- 14 as Jesus's leading disciple, and it was probably in his house that Jesus lived when in Capernaum. The sequence of Luke's account here suggests that there was already a connection between Jesus and Simon before his dramatic "call" while fishing (as John 1: 40- 42 also indicates). The low-key domestic nature of this miracle, which contrasts with the spectacular and very public exorcism in the synagogue, is underlined by the delightfully down-to-earth observation that the immediate concern of Simon's mother-in-law upon being healed was to fulfill her duties as host.

4:39 So he ... rebuked the fever. This is the only account in Luke where Jesus addressed his healing words to the disease rather than the person. The fever was rebuked as the demon was in Luke 4:35, 41. Does this imply that Luke associated this illness with Satan (cf. 13:16)? Although Satan is often associated with illness (Acts 10:38; cf. Testament of Solomon 18:20, 23), we will see in the next two verses that Luke did differentiate between illness and demon possession.

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4:40 At sunset. The Sabbath finished at sunset. The legitimacy of healing on the Sabbath will be a matter of dispute in 6: 6– 11; 13: 9– 17; 14: 1– 6, but in this case the issue does not arise, for the people dutifully waited until the Sabbath was over before carrying others to Jesus for healing, thus avoiding a breach of current Sabbath restrictions.

4:41 he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak. Jesus's demand for silence after his miracles is not so prominent a theme in Luke as it is in Mark. Here (as in 4: 35) it is addressed to the demons rather than to human observers, and it is explicitly linked to their supernatural recognition of him as the Messiah. Compare the similar command to the disciples when Peter reached the same conclusion (9: 20– 21). This surprising caution is probably best explained by the likelihood that popular ideas of the messianic agenda would be at odds with Jesus's own understanding of his mission. He prefers to spell out his messianic role in his own terms, as we have seen in 4: 16– 30, and the adverse reaction on that occasion shows that his caution was justified. A further factor here is that demons are not the sort of witnesses Jesus would welcome, even if their perception was true.

4:42 Shifting quickly from dusk to dawn, Luke portrays Jesus in a sharply contrasting setting. He is alone. Surprisingly Luke, in view of his special attention to prayer (cf. 5:16), does not tell us that Jesus is praying, as Mark does (1:35). Luke, however, does express with greater force than does Mark the reason for Jesus' refusal to linger at Capernaum. The difference gives us a clue to one of the dominant themes in Luke.

4:43 I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also. Proclaiming good news is at the heart of Jesus's mission, as we have seen in 4: 18 (and see on 2: 10), but this is the first time its content has been spelled out as "the kingdom of God." It is a central theme of Jesus's teaching in the Synoptic Gospels that God's reign is being established through his own ministry. It was Israel's national hope that in the last days God would establish his kingship over all people, and that hope is now being fulfilled (cf. 4: 21). Such a message cannot be confined to Capernaum and must not be subordinated to the admittedly messianic work of healing and exorcism, which the local people clearly wanted to keep "in-house" for their own benefit. that is why I was sent. Many people are "sent" (apostellō) to do God's work, and the use of that Greek verb here need mean no more than that Jesus has a God-given mission (cf. "He has sent me" [4: 18]). Some interpreters suggest, however, that Gospel references to Jesus's "being sent" or "coming" for a given purpose may also express a belief in Jesus's preexistence before his "coming into the world."

4:44 in the synagogues of Judea. In Luke's narrative Jesus will not reach Judea proper (the southern province focused on Jerusalem) until chapter 19, but here he uses the term in the

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wider sense (familiar to his Gentile readers) of the whole area occupied by Jews (cf. 6: 17; 7: 17), thereby emphasizing the wide scope of Jesus's ministry.

A typical day in Jesus's ministry in Capernaum reveals his power over both spiritual and physical oppression.

Luke has characterized Jesus's Galilean ministry as one of teaching (4: 14–15), though his words in Nazareth presuppose that he has also been healing (4:23). Now, by setting out the events of a typical day in Capernaum, Luke fills out the picture. The result is a portrait of an authoritative exorcist and healer as well as an impressive teacher provides the backdrop for the following account of Jesus's ministry in Galilee. This section continues the general account of the Galilean ministry that began in 4:14–15, but has been interrupted by the striking episode at Nazareth that Luke has inserted. The location in Capernaum now takes us back to Jesus's regular base during this period, though 4:43–44 also emphasizes that his scope was to be much wider than just the one town. The overly enthusiastic response of the people of Capernaum to Jesus in 4:42 contrasts strikingly with his expulsion from Nazareth in 4:28–30.

#### **KEY POINTS:**

Demonic spirits recognize and submit to Jesus's authority as the Son of God.

He is able to heal all sorts of spiritual and physical ailments.

He has a strong and growing reputation as a healer.

He also has a ministry of proclaiming the good news, which he is unwilling to have sidelined by the popular demand for more healing.

His teaching, like his exorcism and healing, is marked by a unique authority.

#### **WHAT DOES IT SAY?**

READ Luke 4:31-44, as well as the following versions of the rejection of Jesus in Nazareth and answer the questions below: Also found in: Matthew 8:14-17; Mark 1:21-39

**Question**– What is similar about these three versions and how do they relate to the timeline of Jesus' ministry, as described in Luke? (You will need to look at the passage before and after to make this determination) What do they all say about Jesus' interaction with the people in Capernaum and their response to him?

**Question** – What is different about them and which one provides the most/least amount of information?

**Question**– This passage can be broken down into 4 incidents. What are they? How do they describe the ministry of Jesus?

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## WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The careful selection of traditions that make up this typical “day in the life” of the Messiah produces a wholesome balance of three elements: the supernatural (exorcism), the physical (healing), and the mental (teaching/ proclamation). This range of concern embodies well the manifesto declared at Nazareth in 4: 18–19. But the concluding cameo in 4: 42–44 tells us that within this integrated program the proclamation of good news takes precedence. Jesus is more than just a healer.

The encounter with Satan in 4:1–13 has signaled that there is to be a supernatural dimension to Jesus’s mission. His work of exorcism belongs to that dimension, and Luke makes clear from the beginning that Jesus, who has already “defeated” Satan in the wilderness, has authority also over all demonic forces. The people notice his parallel authority both in teaching and in exorcism. The Christological implications of this, which are already clear to the demons, will take longer to become clear to human observers, but already the raw material for that Christology is being set out. Note the contrast with 4:1–13. There, Satan tried unsuccessfully to get Jesus, as the “Son of God,” to misuse his power. Here, that power is deployed to good effect against spiritual evil, and the demons recognize his authority as the “Son of God” (4:41).

## Cultural/Historical Background

Capernaum was a more significant place than Nazareth. It was a lakeside town, with a flourishing fishing industry. Its location as the last town in Galilee on the road around the north side of the lake made it a border post where taxes were collected (5:27) from traders en route between the tetrarchies of Antipas and Philip (see 3:1), as well as from boats coming across the lake. The presence there of a detachment of Roman troops (7:1–2) testifies to its importance, as does the fact that it already had a purpose-built synagogue at this period (7:5). The synagogue shown to visitors in Capernaum today is, however, a later structure, probably built on the same site.

The Synoptic Gospels make it clear that Jesus not only healed physical illness and disability but also carried out exorcisms, and the two are normally clearly distinguished, even when, as here, they are mentioned together. Luke records three specific exorcisms in addition to this one (8:26–39; 9:37–43; 11:14), but his summary statements (6:18; 7:21; 8:2; 11:15–20) show that this was a central element in Jesus’s ministry, and one that he shared also with his disciples (9:1; 10:17) and even with one outsider (9:49–50). Modern Western society is generally uncomfortable with the idea of demonic possession and sometimes tries to dismiss it as a primitive explanation for mental illness, but in the society in which Jesus lived, as in most of the non-Western world today, the reality of malign spirits and their ability to take possession of people was not doubted, and exorcism was a valued ministry of deliverance, practiced also by

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Jews outside the Christian movement (Matt. 12:27; Acts 19:13–16) and by some pagans. Among all the surviving records, however, there is no individual figure credited with an exorcistic ministry on the scale of the one conducted by Jesus.

Use the information above and the commentary notes below to help discern responses to the questions below.

Although Jesus performed several miracles, Luke also points out that many were astonished at his teaching, “for his word possessed authority.” Why do you think Luke also focuses on his teaching in the synagogues during this passage?

Why do you think Luke felt is necessary to include the story of the man and the unclean demon in his account of Jesus’ ministry?

Why are these stories so important in proving the power and authority of Christ?

In v. 42, it says Jesus, “departed and went to a desolate place.” Why do think Luke added this in his narrative? What can we learn about his act?

### HOW DOES IT APPLY?

In our culture today, there are lots of evangelists and preachers who claim to have the power to heal people.

### QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think this is such a prominent and controversial issue?
2. Why do you think people want to see or experience these miraculous healings?
3. Do you think God performs the same types of miracles today?
4. What does this passage teach about Jesus and his love for other people, and how can you use this passage to communicate the Gospel to others?

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