

# Luke 4:31-37

## “The Holy One of God”

June 2, 2024

### 1. Intro

- a. Three weeks ago, we saw at the beginning of Luke chapter 4 how the Spirit of God led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan
  - i. We saw how Satan repeatedly attempted to cause Jesus to sin
  - ii. And we saw how Jesus repeatedly defended Satan’s attacks by wielding the sword of the Word of God
    1. As I’ve said before, I am a huge fan of epic movies like Lord of the Rings, and Braveheart
      - a. I love the massive battle scenes that are portrayed in movies like these, as the forces of evil rage against the forces of good, with the good emerging triumphantly in the end
        - i. I know that when we’re in the New Jerusalem our desires are going to be different, but there is honestly a part of me that hopes there is a HUGE epic movie that shows us this battle between Jesus and our great adversary!
          1. Probably not very likely, but who knows?!
      2. At the end of those forty days, Satan left Jesus until an opportune time...
        - a. And Jesus, full of the power of the Spirit, emerged VICTORIOUS from the battle
          - i. And, what we see in the rest of the Gospel storyline is this:
            1. Jesus is now taking the fight to Satan
            2. Beginning in verse 31, Jesus launches his campaign against the demonic forces of the devil
              - a. And the fight ISN’T EVEN CLOSE!

### 2. Luke 4:31-37

- a. *<sup>31</sup>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 possessed 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>“Ha! 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 their 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 about him went out into every place in the surrounding region.*
  - i. That’s incredible, isn’t it?
    1. Jesus entered into the synagogue in Capernaum, as was his custom, and he began teaching
      - a. As he taught the Word of God to the people, Luke makes sure that we know that Jesus didn’t just teach like any other scribe or rabbi
        - i. Jesus taught with an authority that left his hearers completely astonished at what they heard
          1. The word Luke uses to describe their astonishment is the idea of one being utterly dumbfounded, gaping in amazement, and at a loss for words

- b. And as he taught with this incredible authority, there was one in the room who realized who this MUST be
  - 2. It's interesting, because as we read this encounter, we're left with the impression that no one realized this man had a demon in him
    - a. He was simply THERE in the synagogue
      - i. We have no record that, before Jesus started teaching, this demon-possessed man was yelling or screaming, or laying on the floor convulsing, or doing ANYTHING out of the ordinary
        - 1. He was just THERE
          - a. Hang onto that thought for later...
3. But as Jesus started teaching, the demon inside this man, for lack of better words, shouted out an expletive in a very loud voice
  - a. This word that's translated as "Ha!" in the ESV, or "Let us alone!" in the King James, is an interjection that is only found in this one verse in the Scriptures
    - i. It as a word that is packed full with fear and surprise and indignation
      - 1. In other words, this demon had no idea who he was going to encounter on that day!
  - b. But the demon knew in that moment, without a shadow of a doubt, who Jesus was, as he said to him, *"Ha! 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."*
    - i. Now, Jesus had already spent 40 days in the wilderness with the prince of demons, so clearly he was not threatened in the least by one of Satan's minions
      - 1. So Jesus rebukes the demon
        - a. He shuts him up with a simple command
        - b. And he calls the demon to come out of the man
    - ii. In an attempt to get the last word in, the demon throws the man to the ground
      - 1. But Luke tells us that the man was not harmed at all
        - a. And again, the people were left with their jaws on the floor
        - b. "Who IS this guy???"
          - i. He not only teaches the Word with authority, but he also commands the unclean spirits, and they OBEY?!?!
4. Well, as we'll see in our study of the Gospel of Luke, and really on throughout the rest of the New Testament...
  - a. The demonic forces of Satan are indeed VERY powerful in comparison to our weak and mortal bodies of flesh
    - i. But when these forces encounter CHRIST, the battle is over before it even begins!
  - ii. Even so, demons are a reality of the world in which we live
    - 1. Look again at the passage in your worship guide that Ross read for us this morning
      - a. In the verses preceding verse 7, we see this graphic imagery of Satan as a giant red dragon who tries to devour the Christ
        - i. But after he is unsuccessful in his attack, Michael and the angels defeat Satan and his angels, and they are all thrown down to the earth

- ii. And later in verse 17, John tells us that they have come to make war on all who *“keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus”*
  - 1. They have come to make war... ON US
- 2. So the demonic forces are very real... and they are VERY dangerous
  - a. And so we need to know our enemy
    - i. We need to be aware of their schemes and their tactics and their abilities
      - 1. But we must be VERY cautious that we look to what THE SCRIPTURES say about Satan and his demons
        - a. For Hollywood and a whole host of fiction authors have given us a fairly incorrect view of how demons actually operate
        - b. And to be honest, the church hasn't done a great job of clarifying things either
- 3. So the first thing question we need to ask is, “What are demons?”
  - a. Well, again, as we just talked about... demons are angels
    - i. Angels who, at some point in time before the fall, unfathomably CHOSE to follow Satan – a created being – rather than their Creator
      - 1. That's crazy, right?
        - a. The angels dwell in heaven, WITH GOD, and yet some decided that God was not worthy of their worship
          - i. Some REJECTED the authority of God Most High, and chose to surrender to one of His creatures instead?
            - 1. To our finite minds, this is absolutely unexplainable
              - a. But Paul, in 1 Timothy 5:21, reminds us that even THIS rebellion is under the sovereign hand of God, as he tells Timothy,
                - i. *“In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of THE ELECT angels, I charge you to keep these rules...”*
            - 2. Friends, the mystery of God's sovereign election over His creation IS NOT limited to us as human beings
              - a. Satan and his angels wailfully rebelled against God, for that is what they were DESTINED to do!
  - b. So what do these demons look like?
    - i. Are they giant beasts, with big horns coming out of their heads, and big wings on their backs, clothed in fire and darkness?
      - 1. Well, it's POSSIBLE that in the spiritual realms they look something like that
        - a. But the reality is that we don't KNOW what they look like
          - i. One of the few images we have of them is in Revelation 16, when we're told that the three unclean spirits that come out of the mouths of the dragon and the beast and the false prophet all look like frogs
            - 1. I don't know about you, but I personally think frogs are pretty gross
              - a. They're slimy
              - b. They're bodies are shaped really weird
              - c. And you never know which direction they're going to jump in!

- ii. I don't think that John intends for us to think that these demons look like overgrown frogs though
      - 1. I think he wants us to see how ugly they have become, in light of what they once were
        - a. But again, this is in the spiritual realm
    - iii. So can we see demons in OUR world?
      - 1. And if so, what do they look like?
    - b. The Bible gives us no indication that we can see the demons themselves
      - i. But we can certainly see both images of demons, as well as the work of demons
  - c. So first, how do we see the images of demons?
    - i. In Deuteronomy 32, as Moses sang his great song at the end of his life, he prophetically spoke about the rebellion of Israel that would happen in the Promised Land
      - 1. As Moses foresaw that Israel, or Jeshurun, would turn to the idols of the nations, he sang these words...
        - a. *<sup>15</sup>But Jeshurun grew fat, and kicked; you grew fat, stout, and sleek; then he forsook God who made him and scoffed at the Rock of his salvation. <sup>16</sup>They stirred him to jealousy with strange gods; with abominations they provoked him to anger. <sup>17</sup>They sacrificed to demons that were no gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come recently, whom your fathers had never dreaded. <sup>18</sup>You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you, and you forgot the God who gave you birth.*
      - 2. SO what do demons look like?
        - a. Well, they look like the false gods we give our worship to
          - i. They look like the little Buddhist statues you might see over in Asia
          - ii. They look like the giant statues of Shiva you might see in India
          - iii. They look like the big images of Kim Jong Un that are all over North Korea
            - 1. Behind all the false gods of our day, there are demons who are basking in worship
              - a. This was the case for Israel and their idolatry in the Promised Land
              - b. And this is the case for our day today
        - b. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:20-21,
          - i. *<sup>20</sup>... what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. <sup>21</sup>You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.*
            - 1. Wherever you see pagans worshiping pagan gods, you are seeing demons in their earthly manifestations
              - a. But that doesn't mean that these are the ONLY ways that demons manifest themselves
              - b. We see demons in the images that man has made, but we also see demons in their work amongst mankind
    - 2. Now, before we get into the work of demons, we need to make an absolutely critical distinction
      - a. While demons are given MUCH freedom when it comes to afflicting the nonbelievers in this world...

- i. They have ZERO ability to possess, control, or manipulate those who are indwelt by the Spirit of God
  - 1. 1 John 4:2-4 says this...
    - a. *<sup>2</sup>By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, <sup>3</sup>and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. <sup>4</sup>Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for HE WHO IS IN YOU IS GREATER THAN HE WHO IS IN THE WORLD.*
  - 2. If you are truly a follower of Christ, then you are FILLED with the Spirit of God
    - a. And he who is in you is INFINITELY greater than any of Satan's demonic forces
      - i. What fellowship has light with darkness?
      - ii. The answer is NONE WHATSOEVER
  - 4. So Satan and his demons cannot do anything even close to possessing the true follower of Jesus, but as we'll see in a few minutes, they can certainly affect our OUTWARD circumstances
- 4. But first, let's look at what these demons can do to nonbelievers...
  - a. The most obvious way that we see in the Scriptures that demons possess people is with loud cries of rage and anguish, often accompanied with great power
    - i. We see this in Luke 8:26-33 with the demon possessed man in the country of the Gerasenes
      - 1. Luke tells us that this man was full of so much rage and anger that he could break apart the chains and shackles people tried to bind him with
      - 2. In Mark's account of this story, he says that the man was also continually crying out night and day, as well as cutting himself with stones
        - a. He was full of rage, and also full of power
    - ii. We see this as well in Acts 19:11-17, in the story of the seven sons of Sceva
      - 1. These seven men, sons of a Jewish high priest, had seen Paul casting out demons, so they wanted to try it to
        - a. But when they made their attempt to follow Paul's example, the demon said to them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?"
          - i. And then he proceeded to give all seven men such a beating that they left the house naked and bloody
        - b. When a demon possesses a person, it can fill that person with great anger, and SUPERNATURAL power
  - b. But in contrast to that, we have our passage for today, in Luke 4
    - i. Again, as we saw at the beginning of the sermon, this demon-possessed man was standing there in the synagogue right alongside everyone else
      - 1. And it was as if NO ONE new the man's awful condition
        - a. In a way, this is almost more frightening than the demonic activity of those filled with rage and power
        - b. How many people do we pass by in our busy lives...
          - i. People who we write of as just "depressed," or "withdrawn," or "disengaged with life"
            - 1. And yet they could very possibly be going through a dark, and completely hidden, demonic oppression

2. How might it change the way we reach out to people if we believed that this was possible?
- c. We also see in the Scriptures that demons are very capable of inflicting very real physical harm to non-believers
- i. In Mark 9:14-29, we find a father pleading to Jesus to heal his demon possessed son, for this demon causes the boy to suffer MASSIVE seizures, writhing on the ground and foaming at the mouth
  - ii. In Luke 11:14-23, we find Jesus casting a demon out of a man
    1. What's interesting is that Luke says that THE DEMON was mute, which apparently caused the man to be mute as well
      - a. It makes you wonder if many of the physical ailments that happen with demon-possessed people are actually the physical ailments of the fallen angels themselves
      - b. This passage certainly opens that up as a possibility
  - iii. And in Luke 13:10-17, we find a woman who appeared to have a VERY severe case of scoliosis, that had disabled her for 18 years
    1. And Luke tells us that this was caused by a disabling spirit
    2. Jesus would agree with this diagnosis, as he said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham WHOM SATAN BOUND for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?"
  - iv. We see from these examples that demons can afflict the bodies of unbelievers with much sickness and physical suffering
    1. But again, we need to be careful here and say that this DOES NOT mean that EVERY sickness has a demon behind it
      - a. There are multiple passages where the Bible speaks of Jesus casting out demons, AND ALSO healing the sick
        - i. Making it clear that these are two distinct conditions
    2. CAN sickness or disease or disability have a demonic root?
      - a. The Bible would say yes
        - i. But we must not go to the extreme of saying EVERY sickness is the result of a demon
          1. Sadly, there are certain factions in the church who would teach this
            - a. But they would be very much in error
- d. One of the more difficult things we see regarding demons in the Scriptures is that they can not only possess grown men and women, but also young children as well
- i. We saw this with the young boy who suffered the violent seizures in Mark 9
    1. And we also see it in Mark 7:24-30
      - a. In this passage, we find a Gentile woman begging to Jesus to heal her little daughter, who was bound by an unclean spirit
      - b. Filled with compassion, Jesus answered her cries, and the little girl was delivered
    2. It is hard to accept the fact that little boys and girls can fall under the harsh yoke of Satan's demons...
      - a. But the Bible does not shy away from the reality that it CAN happen
- e. We also see that for some people, it is not just one demon who enters into their bodies, but its possible to have MULTIPLE demons in one person
- i. When Jesus asked the name of the demon of the man in the Gerasenes, the demon answered him, "Legion, for we are MANY"

- ii. In Luke 8:2, as Luke reminds us that there were MANY women who played important roles in supporting Jesus' ministry, he writes that, among them was...
  - 1. "Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out."
- iii. And in Matthew 12:43-45, Jesus says that
  - 1. *<sup>43</sup>When [an] unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. <sup>44</sup>Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. <sup>45</sup>Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first.*
    - a. This is a reminder that a person can be possessed by multiple demons
    - b. But it is also a sobering reminder that just because a person is delivered from a demon, it does not mean that they have Christ in them
      - i. It's not enough to simply clean the house
      - ii. Our hearts must be FILLED with the Spirit of God
- f. But we also see that there is very much a spiritual aspect to the work of Satan and his demons in the hearts and minds of unbelievers
  - i. In 2 Corinthians 4:4, Paul writes that it is the "god of this world" who has blinded the minds of unbelievers, keeping them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ
  - ii. And in Matthew 13:19, in the Parable of the Sower, Jesus tells us that Satan is actively at work "snatching away" the word that is sown in peoples' hearts
    - 1. And if that doesn't work, then he throws tribulation or persecution their way
    - 2. And if those don't work, then he simply puts a bunch of shiny trinkets in front of their faces
      - a. Satan and his fallen angels are CONSTANTLY at work blinding the hearts of unbelievers, and striving to KEEP them blind
    - 3. And maybe one of his most mischievous tactics in this arena is the sowing of false doctrine into the churches of Jesus
      - a. In 1 Timothy 4:1-3, Paul gives us this warning...
        - i. *<sup>1</sup>Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, <sup>2</sup>through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, <sup>3</sup>who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.*
      - b. The false teachers who distort the Word of God are not simply teaching unbiblical doctrines
        - i. They are teaching the doctrines of demons
          - 1. And we must be ever vigilant in keeping the church free from these things
- g. And finally, the Scriptures warn us that Satan and his demons are also capable of performing signs and wonders upon the earth that will leave the people in awe
  - i. We see this at a small scale in Acts 16:16, when Paul and Silas encounter the slave girl who was possessed by a spirit of divination
    - 1. This demon had given her the ability to be a fortune-teller
      - a. And she made her owners MUCH profit through her visions
  - ii. But we see this at a far greater scale, again in Revelation 16, when the three demons who appear on the earth perform many signs and wonders
    - 1. And as a result, the kings of the earth are convinced to assemble in battle against Christ and his army

- a. These are not simple magic tricks that Satan and his demons can do
        - i. They are signs and wonders that will lead countless MILLIONS of people to their destruction
    - iii. So these are just a handful of the things we see demons doing to unbelievers in the Scriptures
      - 1. But what about the Christians?
        - a. Can Satan and his demons have any affect upon us who are being transformed into the glory of Christ?
          - i. Let me again remind you that it is ultimately WE who Satan is most at war with, for we are the ones who hold fast to the commands of God and the testimony of Jesus
5. So how do demons attack BELIEVERS?
- a. We see in Luke 22:31, that Satan can receive permission from the Lord to sift the followers of Christ like wheat
    - i. Much like he shook Job's whole world to the core, he also asked to sift Peter and the rest of the disciples at the time of Jesus' death and burial
      - 1. Jesus did not tell Peter that he would not allow such a thing
        - a. Instead, Jesus told Peter that he had prayed for him, that his faith might not fail in the sifting
          - i. And, that when Peter came back, he would strengthen the others
    - ii. So God will allow Satan to sift and test His children
      - 1. To strengthen their own faith, and to strengthen the faith of others
  - b. We also see in Paul's thorn in his flesh that Satan can receive permission from the Lord to harass the followers of Christ
    - i. Why in the world would God allow that?
      - 1. Well, in 2 Corinthians 12:7, Paul says that God allowed this messenger from Satan, this demon, to harass him IN ORDER TO keep him from becoming conceited
        - a. God knows our hearts, doesn't he?
          - i. He knows that as we grow in our knowledge of His Word, which we are commanded to do, that we will often have a tendency to get prideful along the way
            - 1. And so God lets Satan send his demons to harass us, all the while conforming us more and more into the image of Christ
      - ii. So we see in both of these examples that Satan, as much as he is seeking to destroy us with all of his sifting and harassing, ultimately is helping God to refine away our impurities
        - 1. God indeed works ALL things together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to HIS purpose!
    - c. Satan will do all he can to hinder us from advancing the Gospel, as Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 2:18
      - i. He will harass us
      - ii. He will sift us
      - iii. He will keep the minds of unbelievers blinded to the glory of Christ
    - d. But in the end, Satan and all of his demons, are a DEFEATED enemy
      - i. This is what the demon in the synagogue realized on that day
        - 1. My guess is that he did not know who Jesus was when Jesus first walked through the doors
          - a. But when Jesus OPENED THE WORD OF GOD, and taught it WITH AUTHORITY, the demon knew that he was DONE
            - i. For the Holy One of God was standing before him



- ii. He who had been FULLY victorious over Satan – the demon’s master – now stood before a comparatively weak thug
      - 1. And Jesus cast him out with a word
  - ii. Christians, ALL authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus
    - 1. And he is WITH US ALWAYS, to the end of the age
      - a. So how do we defeat the Great Dragon and his army of fallen angels?
        - i. Do we walk around holding a big crucifix like they do in the movies?
        - ii. Do we memorize a bunch of chants and incantations to ward off the evil spirits like they do in the fiction books?
        - iii. Do we form a bunch of “deliverance ministries” within the church that specialize in exorcisms and demonic encounters?
      - b. No...
        - i. We advance the Kingdom of God across this earth by doing what Jesus said to do
          - 1. Make disciples of all nations
          - 2. Baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit
          - 3. Teach them to observe all that Jesus has commanded
            - a. Proclaim the Gospel
              - i. For the Gospel is the ONLY message with the power to save
        - c. And as the Gospel does its work, keep your own heart ready for war
          - i. Keep the commandments of God
          - ii. Hold fast to the testimony of Jesus
            - 1. Many false prophets will arise and lead many astray through the doctrines of demons
              - a. Lawlessness will increase
              - b. The love of many will grow cold
            - 2. But the one who endures TO THE END will be saved
              - a. And this gospel of the Kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations...
                - i. And then the end will come!!