

# Luke 4:33-37

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/luke/luke-4/luke-433-37/>

*While Jesus is teaching in a Capernaum synagogue, a man with an unclean demon begins crying out and identifying Jesus as the Holy One of God. Jesus swiftly rebukes the demon to keep quiet and come out of the man. It does. The crowd's amazement at Jesus's authority increases because He not only teaches with authority, He even commands unclean demons and they obey Him. News of this amazing event spread all throughout the district of Galilee. This is the first specific miracle performed by Jesus that is explained in Luke's gospel.*

The parallel gospel account for this passage is Mark 1:23-28.

The previous verses (Luke 1:21-22) serve as Luke's introduction to this event. The Gospel writer tells us that on the Sabbath, *Jesus* taught in the *synagogue* of Capernaum and the Jews in attendance were amazed at the authority with which *He* taught.

As *Jesus* was teaching and the people were amazed, Luke explains a startling disturbance:

*In the synagogue there was a man possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice* (v 33).

A person with an unclean demon would be a disturbing sight to behold at any time and any place. But for Jews seeing such a possessed *man* in their *synagogue* on the Sabbath likely brought on an extra level of distress. Many Jews at that time believed that some places and/or times were more or less prone to the presence of *unclean spirits*.

The Sabbath was believed to offer some protection from demons. So would a *synagogue*. And yet here was a man in their *synagogue* on the Sabbath who was clearly disturbed by *an unclean demon*. If *a man* could be plagued by *an unclean demon* in a synagogue, *he* presumably could be plagued by one just about anywhere or any time. Troubling indeed.

Either as *Jesus* was teaching, or just as *He* finished teaching, *a man with an unclean demon cried out with a loud voice*. This *man* was demon-possessed. The things *he cried out* were from his mouth, but it does not appear that it was the *man* who was speaking, but rather it was *the unclean demon* who was speaking through his body. The demon-possessed *man cried out*:

*"Let us alone! What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us?"* (v 34a).

The *man with an unclean demon cried out* two questions and one declaration.

The first question was: *What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth?*

The evil *spirit* also referred to *Jesus* by His human title: *Jesus of Nazareth*. It is not exactly clear why the *unclean demon* addressed *Jesus* this way. It may have been trying to minimize, or insult, or blaspheme *God* by speaking to *Him* as *Jesus of Nazareth*, a mortal human instead of almighty and eternal *God*. In any case the *unclean demon* was clearly speaking to *Jesus*.

The question *he* asked appears to be rhetorical. The expected response was that *Jesus* and the *unclean demon* have nothing to do with each other. *God* is holy. The *unclean demon* was evil. This *demon* instantly (and correctly) perceived the total contrast of *Jesus*'s righteousness and its own unrighteousness.

Consequently, this *unclean demon* immediately recognized *Jesus* for who *He* was—the *Holy One of God*. The *unclean demon* was a member of the kingdom of darkness and was probably a fallen angel who rebelled with Satan before the earth was formed. As *God*, *Jesus* “is light and in *Him* there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). The *unclean demon*'s first question highlighted the contrast between it and *Jesus*.

The *unclean demon*'s first question also appears to have a sense of fear and surprise. *What business do we have with each other* could be a way of saying: “What are YOU doing here?”

The *demon*'s fear and surprise carry over to his second question. The *unclean spirit*'s second question was: *Have You come to destroy us?* (v 34).

This question appears to be genuine (and not rhetorical). The *unclean demon* recognized the power and purity of *Jesus*. The *demon* appears to have been startled to see the *Holy One of God* on earth.

Since Adam's disobedience in the Garden of Eden, when he abdicated his divinely assigned authority over creation, the physical world has been under the usurped rule of Satan and his legions (Psalm 8). That is why the devil and his demons are described as the rulers of this age (John 12:31; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2). Satan's rule as a usurping tyrant will one day come to an end. When the *Holy One of God* returns and destroys him and his demons (Revelation 19:11-21).

This *unclean demon* may have understood this. And the *unclean demon* may have been terrified that the *Holy One of God* had come now to destroy him.

The *Holy One of God* had indeed come. And the *unclean demon* correctly recognized *Jesus* for who *He* was as *God*'s *Holy One*. But *Jesus* did not come to earth the first time to destroy Satan once and for all. *God* sent His Son to reclaim and redeem His creation (John 3:16-17). The *business* *He* came to do was to first defeat sin and death and to invite all mankind unto Himself (John 12:31).

Had the Jews recognized *Jesus* as the *Holy One of God* and accepted *Him* and His kingdom when *He* first came, perhaps *Jesus* would also have come to destroy the *unclean demon* and its ilk. However, *Jesus* was rejected by His own (Matthew 27:22-25; John 1:11) and *He* did not fully inaugurate His kingdom at the end of His first coming.

The next time *Jesus* comes, His *business* will be to *destroy* Satan and his legions (Revelation 20:10). This *unclean demon* now seems to fear that this is that time.

After asking these two questions, *the unclean demon* made a bold declaration: *I know who You are—the Holy One of God!* (v 34).

Once again, the demon instantly recognized *Jesus*'s identity as the Messiah and *God*, even if men were slow or unable to see this truth.

After the *demon possessed man* cried out with a loud voice in the synagogue, Luke reports how *Jesus* responded.

When *the unclean demon* said this, *Jesus rebuked the demon* by saying, “*Be quiet and come out of him!*” (v 35).

There were two parts to *Jesus*'s stern *rebuke* of *the unclean demon*.

The first part of His *rebuke* was: *Be quiet*.

*Jesus* did not want *the unclean demon* revealing His identity to others for several reasons. *He* wanted to give people the opportunity to come to *Him* and know *Him* by faith. *Jesus* also likely did not want evil *spirits* vouching for *Him* because it falsely gave the impression that they were working together. They were absolute enemies. They had NO *business with each other*. If *Jesus* allowed the demons to speak for *Him* people might draw the wrong conclusions.

The second part of *Jesus*'s *rebuke* of *the unclean demon* was: *and come out of him!* This part of the *rebuke* was to command *the unclean demon* to leave and depart the troubled *man* he was controlling.

*The spirit of the unclean demon* instantly obeyed *Jesus*'s command:

*And when the demon had thrown him down in the midst of the people, he came out of him without doing him any harm* (v 35b).

The demon left *him* violently. It was “throwing him into convulsions” (Mark 1:26). But with a physician's concern, Luke adds how *the unclean demon came out of him without doing him any harm*.

The *man* was healed and free.

The casting out of *unclean spirits* at that time was typically left for religious professionals who specialized in exorcisms. Jewish exorcists used elaborate rituals and formulaic incantations to offer protections against evil *spirits* and exorcize demons.

*Jesus*, remarkably, neither performs a ritual nor speaks an incantation in this case. *He* simply issues a command and *the unclean demon* instantly surrenders. Such *authority and power* impressed *all* who witnessed this astounding scene unfold:

*And amazement came upon them all, and they began talking with one another saying, “What is this message? For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits and they come out”* (v 36).

The people in the *synagogue* were all amazed at His *authority* again.

First, *they* were *all* “amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Mark 1:22; see also Luke 4:32).

Now *they* were *all* in amazement over the *authority and power* with which *He* commands *the unclean spirits* who “obey Him” (Mark 1:27).

Luke tells us that after *they* witnessed this amazing sight, *they began talking with one another* about what they just seen. Luke also points out how *all* who were in attendance that day in *the synagogue* connected the *message* of *Jesus’s* authoritative teaching (Luke 4:32) with the authoritative *power* *He* displayed as *Jesus* commanded *the unclean spirit* to *come out of the man*.

Luke concludes his record of this amazing encounter about the rapid and immediate response it had among the people of that area.

The people who witnessed this event were so amazed that they continued *talking* about it after they left *the synagogue*. Word spread fast throughout not only the city of Capernaum, but also throughout the wider *district*.

*And the report about Him was spreading into every locality in the surrounding district* (v 37).

*The surrounding district* was the Roman *district* of Galilee, located in the northern portion of Rome’s province of Judea. All the towns within *the district* of Galilee—*every locality*—quickly heard reports of this amazing event. ([See map.](#))

Though Luke has already told us that *Jesus* has been performing miracles, *Jesus’s* exorcism of the *demon in the Capernaum synagogue* is the first specific miracle that Luke records in his Gospel account.

### **Biblical Text**

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him any harm. 36 And amazement came upon them all, and they began talking with one another saying, "What is this message? For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits and they come out." 37 And the report about Him was spreading into every locality in the surrounding district.