

# Luke 4:38-39

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/luke/luke-4/luke-438-39/>

*Luke records Jesus's first miracle of physical healing in his Gospel. Jesus heals Simon's (Peter's) mother-in-law of a fever.*

The parallel gospel accounts for this passage are Matthew 8:14-15 and Mark 1:29-31.

Luke also tells us what Jesus immediately did following His miracle of exorcising the unclean spirit from the man in the Capernaum synagogue on the Sabbath (Luke 4:31-37).

*Then He got up and left the synagogue, and entered Simon's home (v 38a).*

*Simon*, along with James and John, will become one of Jesus's closest disciples over the course of His earthly ministry.

From John's Gospel, it appears as though Jesus and *Simon* had previously met one another. Their acquaintance was made when Andrew, who was *Simon's* brother and a disciple of John the Baptist, brought *Simon* to meet Jesus, whom John identified and Andrew believed to be the Messiah (John 1:35-41). When Andrew brought *Simon* to Jesus, "Jesus looked at him and said, 'You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas' (which is translated as Peter)" (John 1:42). Their previous encounter apparently took place outside of the district of Galilee (John 1:43), probably near the place where John the Baptist was camped. It most likely occurred shortly during His return to Galilee (Luke 4:14) after Jesus came out of the wilderness where *He* fasted for forty days and was tempted by the devil (Luke 4:1-13).

This explains how Jesus and *Simon* knew each other and how Jesus came to be in *Simon's home* before Jesus called him to be His disciple on the shore of Galilee (Luke 5:1-11). Perhaps it was at this meeting that, *Simon* invited Jesus to stay in his *home* when *He* came to Capernaum.

*Simon's* nickname is Peter, and it is by this moniker that he is most often spoken of. "Peter" is the Anglicized version of the Greek word for "rock" or "stone" which is "Petros." It seems that Jesus's nickname had not fully caught on at this time because Luke is using *Simon's* given, Hebrew name instead of the name of Peter, the name by which *Simon* would be more widely known. As Luke's Gospel progresses the author will use the nickname of Peter more frequently (and *Simon* less frequently) in his general references about this disciple.

The Hebrew name *Simon* means "listen" or "hear."

"Rock" is an appropriate nickname for *Simon*. Rocks are hard. Petros (Peter) was hard-headed. Sometimes for good, sometimes not. For example, just after confessing Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, Peter takes Jesus aside and rebukes *Him* for saying *He* is going to die (Matthew 16:16, 22). *Simon's* personality appears to be outgoing and impulsive—which leads to some spectacular failures on his behalf. But *Simon* Peter is also used by God in inspiring ways (Acts

2:14-40). Despite his hard-headedness and his failures, Jesus loves Peter and will lead this fisherman from Galilee to do great things for His Kingdom. Peter's fearlessness will be a strong asset put to good purposes by God.

Jesus *got up and left the synagogue* after the encounter with the demon-possessed man and *He entered Simon's home*. Mark tells us this was also the family home of Simon and his brother Andrew, and that James and his brother John came into the house with Jesus (Mark 1:29). All four men—Simon, Andrew, James and John were fisherman who lived in Capernaum.

*Now when they came into the house, Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Him to help her* (v 38b).

As a physician, Luke describes the severity and inherent danger of the *high fever* that *Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from*. Matthew and Mark's accounts simply state that *she* had "a fever" (Matthew 8:14; Mark 1:30).

After witnessing or hearing of Jesus's power and authority over the demon, (and prior miracles) Peter and others *asked Him to help her*. Clearly, *they* believed that this new Teacher was capable of things they had not seen before (Luke 4:36-37).

*And standing over her, He (Jesus) rebuked the fever, and it left her; and she immediately got up and waited on them* (v 39).

Luke states that Jesus *rebuked the fever and it left her*. Interestingly, this is the same description that Luke gives for how Jesus cured the demon-possessed man (Luke 4:35). The Greek word translated as "rebuke" in both of these verses is ἐπιτιμάω (G2008—pronounced "ep-ee-tee-mah'-o"). It means "to admonish or charge sharply." Luke shows that Jesus not only has authority over the spiritual realm but also the physical realm as well.

Luke's remark: *and she immediately got up and waited on them* in combination with the way Jesus healed *her* by simply rebuking the *high fever* shows that Jesus did not heal *Simon's mother-in-law* by using any methods conventional (physician's) or unconventional (spirit doctor's) practiced at that time. Jesus's miraculous power and authority over *the high fever* healed *her*, just as His authority over the unclean spirit cast out the demon of the possessed man (Luke 4:35-36).

All three of the Gospels which describe this miracle do so according to their own theme:

- Matthew's Gospel which presents Jesus as the Messianic King, says that Jesus "touched her hand" (as a royal king might do) and *she* was healed (Matthew 8:15).
- Mark's Gospel which presents Jesus as a Servant, says that Jesus "raised her up, taking her by the hand" (as a servant might do) and *she* was healed (Mark 1:31).
- Luke's Gospel which presents Jesus as the perfect, ideal man, says that Jesus was *standing over* her (as a knowledgeable physician might do) and *she* was healed. After investigating "everything carefully from the beginning" (Luke 1:3), Luke likely thought it

important to include Jesus' verbal rebuke to display *His* ultimate power over the created order.

After she felt better, *Simon's mother-in-law immediately got up from her bed and waited on Jesus and the others in the home. She might have served Him a meal or gave Him something to drink after a long day of teaching, interacting with the crowds, and healing others. After Jesus had served her, Simon's mother-in-law was now reciprocating the service back to Him.*

One final thing to note about this passage is where it falls in the order of events between Luke and Matthew. Luke presents the healing of *Simon's mother-in-law* as occurring before Jesus calls *Simon* to be his disciple along the shore of Galilee (Luke 5:1-11). The order of these events in Matthew's Gospel is the opposite. Matthew describes Jesus's calling of *Simon* in Galilee (Matthew 4:18-20) before he narrates the healing of *Simon's mother-in-law* (Matthew 8:14-17). This difference in timing is likely due to Luke's original purpose of his Gospel account which was "to write [everything] out for you in consecutive order" (Luke 1:3). Luke's Gospel account appears to present events in chronological order while Matthew probably sequenced the events in his Gospel thematically.

### **Biblical Text**

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