

# The Demons, the Fever, and the Word of the King

by John Piper

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*This sermon emphasizes the sovereignty of Jesus over demons, disease, and death, highlighting the relevance of these biblical truths to our lives today. It explores the concept of Jesus' authority and power in delivering and healing, revealing the mystery of the kingdom and the significance of Christ's sacrifice for our forgiveness and freedom from guilt. The sermon encourages boldness, humility, and fearlessness in trusting Jesus' sovereignty and love in the face of spiritual battles and challenges.*

**Scripture:** Luke 4:41, Luke 4:35, Colossians 2:13, Romans 8:31, Revelation 2:10

**Topics:** "Sovereignty of Jesus", "Authority in Healing and Deliverance"

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## Description

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## Transcript

So Father, as we exalt the sovereignty of Jesus over demons and disease and death, even of a 25-year-old, come, help me to speak the truth in the power and the authority of your Word and by your Spirit. And would you do your delivering work and your healing work in this room. For the glory of Christ, we pray in his name.

Amen. Look at verse 41 with me. When we get there, in a few minutes at the end of the message, you're going to see that there's a worldview in verse 41 signaled that's totally directly relevant for your life in 2023.

Your relationship to demons, your relationship to disease and death and sin and the sovereignty of Christ. And I pointed out here, lest you be tempted to think these are interesting stories from a long time ago, but they don't have a lot of relevance to what I'm dealing with now or what this culture is dealing with now. That would be a big mistake.

Verse 41. Demons also came out of many, crying to Jesus. You are the Son of God.

But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak. Now, why is that? They had just said one of the most important truths in the world, right? You're the Son of God. Shut up! What's with that? They had come a lot closer than Satan.

I remember just a chapter earlier, he's in the wilderness, and he says, if you are the Son of God. They're not playing that game. There's no if here.

You are the Son of God. We know that. Why does he silence them? End of the verse gives the answer.

End of verse 41. Because they knew he was the Christ. Now, Christ became a proper name.

It's fine to say, Oh, Christ, I love you. Just like saying Jesus. Here, it's a title.

It's a title. The Christ. And you know why? Christ is the English word for the Greek Christos, and Christos is the translation of Hebrew mashiach, which means anointed one, which means Messiah.

The Christ is the Messiah. Right? The long expected Son of David, kingdom bringing, world conquering, enemy defeating Jewish Messiah. And Luke, at the end of verse 41, says precisely because they know that truth, they must be silent.

And my point here is that concealed in that silencing of that truth is a worldview directly relating to your life this afternoon. So that's where we're going. That's the end of the message, and I just wanted to give you a heads up, lest you think, well, this is all interesting, but not relevant.

It is relevant. So let's start at the beginning and get there by walking through the text. He has just preached in his hometown of Nazareth, and they tried to throw him off a cliff.

Verse 29. That did not happen. Why not? Because nobody takes my life from me.

John 10, 18, right? I lay it down. Nobody takes it from me. I'll choose when I die.

You won't. So he walks through this crowd, sovereign, and he walks 20 miles—or maybe he got on a donkey, I don't know—20 miles down to Capernaum. Down because Capernaum's on the sea, and it's 600 feet below sea level, and they're going downhill most of the way.

Capernaum is Peter's hometown. That's going to be relevant in verse 38. In a few minutes, verse 31.

What does he do when he gets there? He went to Capernaum, verse 31, the city of Galilee, and he was teaching them on the Sabbath, and they were astonished at his teaching, for his word possessed authority. What's authority? He had the right—he claimed the right—to tell them how they ought to believe about God. And we know that's the focus, because in verse 43, at the end, when he's ready to leave Capernaum to go to another place, it says, verse 43, I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to other towns as well, for I was sent for this purpose.

So when he says other towns as well, we know that's what he's preaching in Capernaum. So when it says he's teaching with authority, he's teaching about God, kingdom of God, how God rules the world, how we live under the rule of God, and he's doing it with authority, like, I have a right to do this. I can tell you how to live.

And this teaching, it says, came with authority, and they were astonished. You see that? Verse 32, they were astonished at his authority. The authority of Jesus is astonishing.

If you're not astonished at the authority of Jesus, you're not paying attention. Or your heart, owing to what, is so shriveled up and distorted in its capacity to be astonished at the astonishing, you need help, you need healing. The authority of is astonishing.

Let me illustrate. A chapter later, over in chapter 6, we get his first sermon. Here he's just saying he taught.

He's not saying what he taught in any detail. Let me read you an excerpt from his first sermon. This is chapter 6, verse 46.

Verse 46, why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I tell you? Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I'll show you what he's like. He's like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock, and when the flood arose, the stream broke against the house and could not shake it, because it had been built well. But the one who hears my words and does not do them, is like a man who built his house on the ground without a foundation, and when the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house is great.

Now, if I spoke to you like that, you would call me a nutcase. My words and your response to them determine whether your life is ruined in the last day of judgment. You would call me a nutcase, and they did.

They called him a nutcase. You're out of your mind, Mark 321. Worse, they called him demon-possessed, Mark 322.

But here in Capernaum, that's not going to be the effect. Nobody's going to call him demon-possessed here. The effect here is astonishment.

They're astonished at his authority. It's going to drive out a demon, this authority. And the reason I say that the authority of the teaching is going to expose the devil, the demon, is because Jesus doesn't do anything.

Nobody does anything here. He's just teaching with authority, and suddenly the next thing they hear is this loud voice. 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.

Verse 33 gets us ready for that outburst in verse 34. And the synagogue, in the synagogue, there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice. Why? This is demonic suicide.

You're the Son of God. You're the Holy One of God. Well, keep your head down, idiot! Well, what's with the exposure? Why would you jump in front of the cannon? I mean, seriously, what in the world? Demons are irrational.

Sin is irrational. I don't know why. I don't know.

I can't get in the head of a demon, thankfully. I don't know what makes them tick. But here's what I know, and you can see as well as I, the teaching of Jesus with authority provokes demonic exposure.

The teaching of Jesus with authority provokes demonic exposure. And then deliverance. That was true then.

It is true today. Let me give you just one pointer from the epistles of Paul. This is 2 Timothy chapter 2, verses 24 to 26, which I recommend that you memorize.

It says, I'm going to paraphrase it, if the Lord's servant, and that would be any of you in appropriate situations, if the Lord's servant would teach God's truth with clarity, authority, love, patience, boldness, two things may happen. I say may because Jesus is sovereign. You don't pull his cords.

Number one, God may grant that people repent and come to a knowledge of the truth. He may grant repentance when truth is being spoken with clarity to God's Word, authority, and love, and patience, and kindness. When the truth is spoken, he may grant repentance.

And secondly, that they may escape from the snare of the devil who had captured them to do his will. That's glorious. The steady-state, normal way in this church and in your life, the steady-state, normal way of exposing and ridding yourself of the devil and his influences, and his harassment, and his bondage, is truth spoken with love.

That steady-state, normal deliverance. Now, don't hear me denying the reality of exorcisms. I mean major confrontations with extraordinary demonic power.

I've been involved in one in my life. It is real. There have been others in this church.

It's not normal. Just face it, it isn't. All over the world.

I mean, it's much more common in some places than others. I grant that. It's never normal.

Normal is 24 hours every day, day after day, week after week, month after month, teaching, teaching, living, believing the truth. And the devil is a liar and a hater. Where truth holds sway and love holds sway, he cannot abide.

He can't. If your heart is full of truth, full of love, he is uncomfortable there. And if your mouth is open in your family with truth, and truth, and truth, and truth, and love, and love, and love, he's not going to like your family.

He will move out. And same as in the community of a church, he inhabits hate, he inhabits lies, and truth and love is the normal way to be free from the devil. So, point, the teaching of Jesus with authority provokes demonic exposure and leads to his, the man's deliverance.

Now, someone might say, I'm not sure it's safe to expose the devil. I'm not sure it's safe to provoke him to come out of darkness. That's true.

It's not safe unless Jesus is present and on your side. Look, if you want to play with the demonic, if you want to leave Jesus aside, just put him in the corner and go play with the demonic, like sorcery, or seances, or necromancy, or fortune-telling, or Ouija boards, like those 28 girls in Colombia that went to the hospital last week playing Ouija boards, or mediums, or crystal balls, or palm reading, or witchcraft, or astrology, or yoga, you may draw the demons out of the darkness. It will not go well.

It will not go well for you if you leave Jesus behind and toy with the demonic. Don't do it. If he's with you, here's what happens.

Verse 35, But Jesus rebuked him, the demon, 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 no harm. And they were all amazed.

They'd go from astonishment to amazement, and said to one another, What is this word? With authority and power, so they add power now to authority, with authority and power, he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out. Now surely this is the main thing Luke wants us to see in this text. Jesus is sovereign over demons.

That's the main thing he wants us to see. The people are astonished at the authority of the teaching, and now they are amazed at the authority and power that delivers this man, dispatches the demon, delivers them. Now let, just let the last half of verse 36 sink in and make you bold this week.

With authority and power, he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out of him. That's the way you should walk through your day. I belong to Jesus, and when Jesus wills authority and power come out of his mouth, and demons fly.

That's my king, that's my God, that's my friend, my older brother, my savior. Walk like that, walk like that through the world. You don't need to be afraid of demons.

Why do they obey when he says, come out of him? Why do they obey? I mean, the whole meaning of being a demon is you disobey God. That's the meaning. If you're a demon, you disobey.

You don't obey. Disciples obey. Demons disobey.

Why do you obey? That's an important question. Here's part of the answer. I think it's the main part of the answer.

God and Jesus have two kinds of wills. Call the first one the moral will of God. By moral will, I mean he reveals, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

That's the will of God. And demons don't give a hoot about obeying the Ten Commandments, right? They specialize in disobedience to the moral will of God. That's what they do by nature and definition.

They want to obey and get you—I mean, disobey and get you to disobey the will of God. But here's the second kind of will that God has. Let's call it the sovereign will.

So moral will, Ten Commandments, and other commands, sovereign will. Like, let there be light, and darkness obeys, and there's light. Or light obeys.

Whatever that is, that's power, that's sovereign authority. Or Lazarus, come out, and the dead man obeys. Or, demon, shut your mouth and come out.

He's out. He's out. He doesn't say, I'm a demon.

I don't obey you. So something else is going on here. So they say, the crowd says in verse 36, what is this word? Now, that's exactly the right question, right? The Ten Commandments are a word.

They're a word, and they get no obedience. They get no power to make people do what they say. This word is different from that word.

What is this? He just speaks it. It happens. Wow.

The closest thing we get to an answer, I think, is the last part of verse 36, where it says, with authority and power, he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out. The Ten Commandments have authority. They don't have power.

The law doesn't have power to produce itself in your life. We don't know how this works. I mean, I sat there on Friday just thinking, do I have any idea how this works, this power? Do I have any idea at all how it works? Like, is it electromagnetic? I mean, Bluetooth? Wi-Fi? Radio waves? It's just something here in Jesus' mind and mouth, and then something there.

What just happened? I don't have any idea how that works, and you don't either, nor do any scientists on the planet have any idea how this power works. But it's awesome. I mean, they're amazed, and they should be.

Now, Jesus and Luke want us to see that this sovereign will over demons also applies to nature. So we go to verse 38. And he arose and left the synagogue and entered Simon's house.

That's why I said Simon Peter lives in Capernaum. Now, Simon's mother-in-law, evidently she lived with him or was visiting, was ill with a high fever. And they appealed to him on her behalf.

And he stood over her. So evidently she's bedridden. And he rebuked the fever, and it left her.

And immediately, no convalescence whatsoever, she's up and serving. Now, surely it's not a coincidence that Luke reports the same word used to the fever as to the demon. Surely that's not an accident that he uses the word rebuke.

Verse 35, Jesus rebuked him, the demon. Verse 39, he stood over her and rebuked the fever. Now, this is significant in getting a handle on this power, because it's more mysterious now, isn't it? I mean, somebody might say, okay, demons have minds.

They process information that comes to them, they think about it, they make decisions, and they do stuff. And so maybe actually what Jesus did was to persuade them to leave, and they had good reasons, and they made up their minds, and they did it, and that's why it worked. He's talking to a fever.

That's weird. What's a rebuke? I mean, define rebuke. I would say a rebuke is when somebody's done something wrong, you tell them, that was, don't do that, that was a bad thing to do.

Or they went somewhere, don't go there, you shouldn't go there, that's a rebuke. Somebody's done something wrong, and you tell them it's wrong, and you try to get them to change. So here he is talking to a fever, and he says, fever, you should not be doing this, making her sick like this.

You should not do this. You don't belong here, fever. Now, this fever has no ears, this fever has no brain, this fever has no comprehension, this fever has no will, and it obeys him.

And that's the picture. I'm not making that up. He's talking to the fever, the fever does what he says.

That's weird. So you kids, you go home today, and at the dinner table say, Daddy, why does Jesus talk to fevers? Should I talk to a fever? Let's see what Daddy says. So now we've got Jesus sovereign over demons and over nature.

And somebody, as foolish as it may sound, might say, that's just a one-off, one demon, one fever, can't generalize from one-off about Jesus having that kind of power all the time. So in verses 40 and 41, it says this, Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he laid hands on every one of them and healed them. Verse 41, And demons also came out of many, crying, You are the Son of God.

So various diseases, many demons, whenever he speaks, whenever he touches, they go. His authority and power are absolute all the time. No demon, no disease can stand when Jesus exerts his sovereign will, which he does whenever he pleases, then and today.

Which brings us now to where we started. Verse 41, remember we said there's a pointer here to your life and the time in which you live and the way you relate to demons. So here we are in the second half of verse 41, and when the demons declare that you're the Son of God, it says he rebuked them.

That's the third instance of the word rebuke. He rebuked them and would not allow them to speak. And here he gives this reason, because they knew that he was the Christ, the Messiah.

They knew he was the Messiah, which he was, and so he won't let them speak. Why? What's the worldview coming into being in Jesus' life here? Very slowly, they didn't get it at first. He told his disciples over in chapter 9, verse 20 and 21, to do the same thing, that is to keep their mouths shut.

This is not just demons like, oh, you might say, well, he doesn't like when demons represent him. That's a bad emissary. No, no, no, that's not the issue at all.

He won't let the disciples talk about his Messiahship either, chapter 9. And here's the reason he gives why his disciples in 9.21 can't talk about him either. Here's the reason he gives. The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised.

The common conception, most of you know this, I hope, the common conception of the Messiahship who's coming into the world, long expected for centuries of hope for the Jewish people. The common understanding of his coming did not include crucifixion. Not in a thousand years is the Messiah going to be crucified according to the common conception.

There are real pointers to that in the Old Testament, but they missed it. I mean, they just missed it. He's going to come with supernatural power.

He's going to defeat the enemies of Israel. He's going to establish an earthly kingdom. That's what they expected was going to happen, and that's not going to happen until 2,000 years later or more at the second arrival of the Messiah.

And that's the worldview getting clarified here. Like, what? Twice? What's with this twice? What in the world is going on between these comings that we did not expect? That's what's getting revealed here. The

mystery of the kingdom, that's what Luke calls it in Luke 8.10. The mystery of the kingdom, the secret of the kingdom, was that the Messiah would come the first time, heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons, forgive sins, and thus provide many, many signs of what the final kingdom would be like.

It will be disease-free, it will be death-free, it will be demon-free, it will be sin-free, it will be guilt-free, and that's what I'm showing you—signs. The mystery is that there's this unspecified period of time between the inauguration of the kingdom with the first coming and the consummation of the kingdom with the second coming. So this worldview where you live right now, this afternoon, you're here in this space between the two comings, which has tremendous implications for your life if you realize this.

Here's the main one. The number one purpose of God in the first coming of his Son was that he should die. The number one purpose of God in sending his Son the first time is that he should die, bear the guilt and sin of all his people, all who would put their trust in him.

Trusting Jesus and his sacrifice for sin, he becomes mine. His victory becomes mine. His sacrifice becomes mine.

In this period, as you know well, he does not remove demons. He does not remove disease, as we heard painfully a few minutes ago. He does not remove death.

What does he remove? Absolutely. Absolutely. He removes your guilt.

Absolutely. He forgives sins. Absolutely.

There's no waiting on forgiveness till the second coming. We wait for death to be done. We wait for disease to be done.

We wait for demons to be done. You don't wait for guilt to be ended. You don't wait for forgiveness to be wrought.

He came, he died, he bought total forgiveness for his people. And he sends us into this demon-riddled, disease-infected, sin-attacking world with that confidence. I love Colossians 2. Think of it this way before I quote that text.

God's condemnation of sin, which is just, and Satan's accusation of you and your sin before God, which is legitimate, both of those are gone because of the death of Jesus. We usually think a lot about the first one. No condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Amen. That's why he came. Paid the debt, justified sinners, sins forgiven, guilt removed, totally.

Now, no waiting. But here's what happened with regard to the devil and the demons. When your sin was forgiven and your debt was paid and your guilt was taken away, the one damning weapon in the hand of Satan was stripped out of his hand.

The devil can only damn you one way. He can walk into the courtroom of heaven, lay his brief on the table with all your sins laid out, this record of your sins, and say, that's your child right there. Hell, that's what is just right here.

He can't do that anymore. That's where Colossians 2 says, this, this record of your debts, he set aside, nailing it to the cross. Oh, what a picture, right? Jesus takes this, this, this long list, rolls it up in his hand,

this piece of paper with all your debts and sins on it.

He stretches out his hands and says, drive, drive your nail through my hand because my hand has their debts in it. That's over, folks. I mean, this should be the most liberating news imaginable as you deal with demons and disease and death.

They can't destroy you. They can harass you. They can shoot flaming arrows at you.

They can take your life, according to Revelation 2.10. They can't damn you. Judgment is over, and it's in Jesus. So in this period, this worldview that Jesus pointed to in verse 41, in this period, there are demons, and there's disease, and there's death, and there's no guilt, and no condemnation, and no successful accusation for God's people.

We live free in this period. He didn't remove them. It'd be another sermon if I were to try to explain, why doesn't he remove Satan? Why doesn't he take the demons out and their answers? There are answers in the Gospel of Luke.

I'll save that for another time. He doesn't. But here's the two things you go home with.

Number one, in this period, Jesus is absolutely sovereign over demons and over disease and death. He is absolutely sovereign, and he is totally, 100 percent for you if you are in Christ Jesus. Those two things create a very bold, humble, fearless.

He is for me because he bore all my sins, and he is omnipotent over demons and over disease. Someone might say, if I quote Romans 8.31, if God is for you, who can be against you? And they might respond, demons can be against me. Disease can be against me.

And my answer to that is, no, they can't. Not really, because in his sovereignty and his love, he turns every demonic attack and every disease and every death of his loved ones for our good. Therefore, trust him.

He's for you. Be valiant for him in this age. Let's pray.

Father, as we crown you here at the end of this service with our voices and our hearts, as we crown you King of Kings and Lord of Lords and Lord over demons and Lord over disease, would you create that kind of confidence in this church? Would you deliver people across this audience right now from Satan and his demons, deliver them in every manner of touch? And would you heal? We want healing, Lord. We know you can heal, and so I pray for people to be healed. But we crown you as sovereign over disease and sovereign over demons.

And we crown you as the one who loved us and gave yourself for us so that there's no guilt and no condemnation in this age. I pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

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