

Announcing the Kingdom

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[0 : 00] Now, we've come to the last one in this little series in Luke chapter 3 and 4, which I've called Preparing the Way of the Lord. First of all, Jesus' coming is introduced by John the Baptist, and he's acknowledged a claim from heaven by the Holy Spirit.

He's the one to whom the scriptures point. He's met and defeated the devil himself. And he has preached his first sermon with such a spectacular effect that they want to throw him over a precipice.

Now we come to the final talk in this series, and we're looking at Luke chapter 4, verses 31 to 44, which is on page 860.

Page 860 and Luke chapter 4, verse 31. And Jesus went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and he was teaching them on the Sabbath.

And they were astonished at his teaching, for his word possessed authority. And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon. And he called out with a loud voice, Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?

[1 : 18] I know who you are, the Holy One of God. 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.

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.

And reports about him went out into every place in the surrounding region. And Jesus arose, left the synagogue, and entered Simon's house.

Now Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they appealed to him on her behalf. And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her.

And immediately she rose and began to serve him. Now, when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them.

[2 : 24] Demons also came out of many, crying, You are the Son of God. But he rebuked them, and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Christ.

And it was day he departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them. But he said to them, I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to other towns as well.

For I was sent for this purpose. And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea. Amen. And that is the word of the Lord. For many, many centuries, Christian people have prayed the prayer, Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

A prayer which has yet to be fully answered. It's very obvious as we look around the will of God is not being done on earth as it's being done in heaven, And that the kingdom has not come.

But what we have here in these verses is the coming of the king himself. Because he has come, the kingdom will certainly come.

[3 : 41] And what we've got here is a little snapshot of what the whole of creation will be like when he comes again and sets up his kingdom. The kingdom has already come in one sense.

Jesus still calls people to him. People still obey. People still believe. People still become his disciples. But he's obviously not come in the sense that the world is still full of violence, full of death, full of disease, full of unhappiness and sheer downright misery and selfishness.

So this is what we're going to look at for these moments. Jesus is announcing the kingdom. What's it going to be like? Well, here is a snapshot. This Luke is saying, look, come and join this crowd who watched him in the synagogue and then in Peter's house and then later in the deserted places.

Because this is what it will be like. Now, two things. First of all, the emphasis is on what the king says. In other words, his powerful words.

These are the kind of bookends of the section. Verse 31. He was teaching them and his word had authority. And at the other end of the chapter in verse 43, I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to other towns as well.

[5 : 06] I was sent for this purpose. In a sense, the other things that are happening are almost incidental. It's emphasis on his powerful words because people said he taught with authority.

Now, what does that mean? Does it mean he shouted? Does it mean he thumped the bookboard? Does it mean he's a particularly aggressive way of speaking?

It doesn't mean any of these things. It means that as people heard his words, they recognized they were listening to something that they didn't hear elsewhere. They were listening to the voice of God himself.

He spoke with authority. And at the end, he says, of the chapters, I must go and preach the good news of the kingdom in other towns. Luke is already telling us, as he's hinted at so often in the gospel up to now, this is good news for everyone.

It's very interesting. In Luke's second book, in Acts chapter 1, Jesus has died. He has risen again. He's about to ascend into heaven. And his disciples say, Lord, are you now going to restore the kingdom to Israel?

[6 : 20] Surely now we'll break off the Roman yoke. We'll get rid of all these time servers and all these tyrants. And you will reign on the throne of David.

Jesus doesn't actually say you're talking nonsense. What he says is something far bigger than that. He says, the father knows when this will happen, the times and seasons.

But you have a job. And that's to go and take this gospel, the gospel of the kingdom, first of all into Jerusalem where the events happened, then into Judea, the region around Jerusalem, then into the north, into Samaria, and then to the ends of the earth.

It's as big as that. The kingdom will come. The king has come. But it's not yet. And his words have power.

And his words still have power. The other thing is, this is a snapshot of what Jesus' ministry is going to be like from now on. He's becoming increasingly well known.

[7 : 22] Verse 37 reports about him went out into every place in the surrounding region. And these are going to be the marks of his ministry. Words of power and actions of power and love which authenticate them.

And the clash of the two kingdoms. Why is it that the two times he goes into the synagogue here, he has terrific and angry human opposition.

He's also got opposition from the devil. It's because since the king has come, the kingdom of darkness is roused up to do something about it. So with that in mind, there are two main themes in the passage.

First of all, Jesus' power over the unseen world, over the spirit world. First of all, the specific incident in verses 33 to 35, a man with the unclean demon.

Then more generally in verse 41, and demons also came out of many. Now, this is a further attack by Satan himself.

[8 : 30] You were here two weeks ago. You remember how we looked at that incident where the devil confronted Jesus in the desert, and he was defeated and humiliated. But the devil by no means has given up the attack.

And now the evidence of the devil's presence is shown in the demonic appearances here. Interesting.

If you read through the Bible, there aren't all that many incidents like this. Nearly all of them come in the Gospels. You get demon possessions elsewhere.

King Saul was possessed by an evil spirit and so on. You get it to some extent in the Acts and the amazing growth of the infant church. But they are concentrated here because the king has come, and the king is flushing out, if you like, the minions of the satanic kingdom.

The king came to, as we saw last week, to proclaim liberty to the captives. And in particular, demon possession is an extreme form of slavery to Satan.

[9 : 38] He's going to deliver those whom Satan has bound, deliver those whom Satan is keeping under his own power. Now, this may seem far distant from us.

It may seem something irrelevant. Remember that every unbeliever, without being demon possessed, is in a very real sense under the power of Satan, under his influence. The God of this world, says Paul in 2 Corinthians, meaning Satan has blinded the minds of those who do not believe, so that they don't believe the Gospel. And Paul in Ephesians calls Satan the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience. It's not just demon possession. That's an extreme form of it. As I say, to a great extent, everyone who has not been freed by the liberating Gospel is under the power of Satan.

[10:38] You see, not everything in the world can be explained by human sin. That's bad enough. But when you think of the inhuman acts, the dreadful murders that take place, the drug scene, the whole terrific and horrific events in Syria, for example, violence and war and so on.

Now these, of course, are partly due to human wickedness. But surely, they're far more than that. There is an evil power, the devil, who is working to cause these things to where people will not bow to the liberating Gospel of the king.

Now, demon possession is actually an extreme form of this. And it's a real parody of what God does. What God does when someone is saved, someone is converted, someone comes to Christ, what happens then? The Lord himself comes in and takes possession. He lives in us if we are his people. That's what the devil has always wanted to do. He wants to live in people as well. He wants to take over as many people as he possibly can. So, here, it's happening.

[12:05] This demon possession is particularly rife because the Lord of glory, the king of kings, is present. And we are told this was an unclean demon.

Verse 33. Probably this is moral rather than physical. There's no suggestion the man was dirty or untidy. Some cases that happens, like the man who lived in the cemetery and so on. But this is something that brings out the power of the devil. And notice what the evil spirit says. We know who you are, the Holy One of God. You see, the spirit, the demon recognizes, here is a power that he cannot control. He may control this poor individual, but here is a human being. Here is a man in whom the Holy Spirit dwells in his fullness. And that's, this is Jesus, the Son of God, the last Adam, coming to free this man and all who will believe in him.

[13:10] And notice how he frees the man. We are told he rebuked him, saying, verse 35, it's his powerful word. Now, remember, Satan is the father of lies. That's what he's called in the Bible. And when you think of the great lies that so often possess people, once again, it's not just human stupidity or human sinfulness. It's this sense that Satan, the father of lies, the father of propaganda, the father of deception. Jesus does not cast out the demon by having a seance, by dabbling in the occult. Jesus speaks the word of power. The one weapon that the devil cannot stand against. He proved that in the desert. Remember, the living word silenced him. And so it silences this demon. Come back to in a minute why he says, why Jesus tells the demon to be silent. So you see, Jesus' authority over the world of spirits, the world that people are terrified of.

[14:17] Why are we afraid of the dark? We're afraid of the dark because we sense that some of what there may be unclean things lurking there. Remember, darkness is not in itself evil. Read the creation story. There was evening, there was morning, there was the first day. But the sinfulness of humanity, bringing the curse into the whole of creation. And you'll notice, once again, in verse, in verse 30, 30, verse, sorry, 41, he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak. So his authority over, over the unknown and the unseen. That's what lies behind people dabbling in the occult, isn't it? Trying to manipulate, trying to control. At its lowest level, people read horoscopes because the idea if we know something of the future, we'll be able to control it. Well, this is not the way that Jesus operates.

[15:19] Nor is it, I mean, after all, how does he, how does he deal with the demon here? How does he deal with the demons when enthroned in glory in Acts?

He tells the apostles, to go and preach the same liberating gospel. Fill Jerusalem with your teaching. Now, if we filled Glasgow with this gospel, many demonic things would simply disappear and be destroyed.

That's the first thing, then, his power over the unseen and the unknown. But secondly, there's his power over disease. In this case, this is the seen and the tangible.

Verse 38 to 40, Now, disease is also a result of the fall. There was no disease in Eden. There will be no disease in the new creation.

It's part of the world under the curse. And just as in the new creation, there will be no disease, decay, and death. So, when Jesus comes, disease flees before him.

[16:23] And you'll notice, you'll notice two things. First of all, Jesus' healing is both specific and widespread. Of this little incident of Simon's, verse 38, Simon's mother-in-law, Simon or Peter, this is the first time he's mentioned in the gospel, incidentally.

He's going to become prominent from chapter 5 onwards. And notice, it says, she had a high fever, presumably meaning the disease she had was life-threatening.

This wasn't just something that she could have asleep and then wake up the next morning. This is life-threatening, almost certainly. And Jesus is called to help. What does he do?

He stood over her and, the same word, he rebuked the fever. Into this situation of imminent death, once again, he speaks the life-giving word.

He speaks and listening to his voice, new life, the dead receive. And you'll notice, again, in verse 40, the more general healing, you'll notice, first of all, it's comprehensive.

[17:30] Masses of, masses of nameless people. You'll notice that Jesus doesn't go with his gospel to the good and the great and the prominent. He goes to the unknown. The humble, the forgotten, and the forsaken.

So, his healing is comprehensive. It's also individual. A little detail in verse 40. He laid hands on every one of them. There's no kind of, he got in among them.

The touch here, which is, I mean, rather like, rather like touching an AIDS victim or something. He gets in and he touches and his healing word and his healing touch and his powerful words and there's another thing.

Verse 39, immediately she arose and began to serve them and verse 40, he healed them all.

Two things marked Jesus' healing. First of all, it was instantaneous and secondly, it was complete. Jesus doesn't say, come back in six months for a check.

[18:34] Check up. This was instantaneous and it was complete. That makes it unique. Imagine if a healer like Jesus were to turn up today.

Just imagine. Every news channel would be full of it. Planes from all over the world would be charters. Now, of course, that's not going to happen because this is unique to the incarnate Lord. I'm not denying for one minute, in case anyone misunderstands me, that God heals people wonderfully in answer to prayer. I'm not saying that at all. But this is not the kind of healing that's so often claimed.

This is unique. They'd never seen anything like it. Of course they hadn't. There'd never been the incarnation of the Son of God before. And this is pointing to the new creation. Remember, as I say, it's only a snapshot.

Many, presumably, who lived in other districts were not healed. The cemeteries didn't empty. But, the point is, this is what it's going to be like in the new creation.

[19:37] When all these things have gone, no demons, no disease, no death. And as I say, his authority, his authority is shown by his powerful words.

His identification and solidarity with humanity by his healing touch. And just two things as we finish. First of all, why did he tell the demon not to speak?

Verse 41. He rebuked him, not allowing him to speak. It's all about many so-called healers today. They're only too ready for everyone to know about it.

Come and, I mean, to say actually, to say, come to this meeting and be healed is rather like saying, come to this meeting and I'll guarantee you'll be converted. We have no control over the operations of the Holy Spirit.

And Jesus is determined that people are not going to be simply attracted by miracles. He wants them to listen to his word. And then he tells the evil spirit back in verse 35, be silent.

[20 : 40] You see, Jesus did not need endorsement from hell. After all, he had been endorsed from heaven by the word of God and by the chosen messenger of the Baptist.

He didn't need demons to say who he was. And the second thing is, Luke has invited us, hasn't he, into this story, standing by the Jordan, listening to John the Baptist, following him into the desert as he heals the crowds, being in the synagogue and forcing us to ask, who is he?

Now, heaven is in no doubt who he is. But the Holy Spirit come down from heaven, the voice of God from heaven, quoting scripture, says, this is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

We are in the same position as that crowd. We need to either join with heaven in acclaiming him as Lord and God, or join with hell in rejecting him.

That was the choice then, and that is the choice now. Amen. Let's pray. God our Father, how we thank you for this privilege of being with the crowds, with the Baptists, with the others who were there when the great events happened.

[21 : 59] We thank you the Holy Spirit inspired your servant, Luke, to write these down so that we too might come to know him and to love him. We pray indeed that you will bless this word to our hearts and that you will send us out into the world to carry that same life-changing, life-giving, life-transforming message.

We ask this in his name, the name above every name. Amen. Amen. Amen.