



12: ALL THESE DEMONS IN MY BRAIN (Luke 4:31-37)

Before I was a follower of Jesus I visually saw demons.

People can say it was psychological, psychosomatic, fabricated, or a work of the imagination. Obviously much of the work of science would point to those conclusions.

But I saw demons. Many times. I was possessed and harassed by them on multiple occasions and saw the same thing happen to my friends.

Why did this happen to me? Because of a lot of drugs.

In 1995 I began smoking marijuana regularly. From 1998 to 1999 I did LSD and psilocybin mushrooms regularly and often, I easily tripped close to one hundred times in that period.

And the psychedelic drugs especially caused me to see and experience demons.

At first, I just saw trails and things distorting and molding together.

But after multiple doses, I started to see spiritual beings made of darkness that roamed the earth, harassed, tormented, and possessed people. At times I experienced it first hand. During the first bad trip that I ever had on LSD, I was seeing these beings all over the floor of my house, and had this unshakable feeling that I was about to spend eternity being tormented. Again y'all- I experienced this and had zero belief in Jesus or God, and zero bible knowledge or upbringing!

One time I saw the shape of a face in the ground that looked like a skull. I was tripping on acid at the time. I asked my friend Chris, who was also tripping with me, if he saw the skull. He verified that he did. In the exact same place. To the point where he could even perfectly match my description.

And again- all this happened despite the fact that I grew up totally agnostic, with no biblical knowledge, belief in a spiritual realm, or even any sort of belief in God, satan, demons, or even the tangible existence of good and evil for that matter.

In fact, early in my journey out of addiction and into sobriety, my first Jesus following friend, Chip, dared me to pray and ask God if Jesus was really His Son. This was before I had any belief in anything biblical whatsoever.

I had been sober from psychedelics for many months, but was sitting in my room, having a flashback, and seeing demons. Terrified, I took my friend Chip up on his dare. I prayed, "God, if You're real, and if Jesus is really Your Son, show me now!" There may have been a swear word or two in the prayer.

I watched as right after that prayer, a sense of great, overwhelming peace filled my body and calmed my fear, and I saw sparkles of white light fall out of the sky. The demons reacted to the sparkles of light in absolute horror and disappeared, being sucked into the ground, leaving me to not be able to see them anymore.

So when I read passages like Luke 4:31-37 and see the power of Jesus over demons. It hits **home!**

Like Sarah Brightman's beautiful song "Deliver Me" eloquently alludes to, Jesus delivers people. Jesus is the answer to Brightman's cries. He loves to cast darkness out of people and let His light penetrate, heal, and transform them!

Deliver me, out of my sadness.

Deliver me, from all of the madness.

Deliver me, courage to guide me.

*Deliver me, strength from inside me.
All of my life I've been in hiding.
Wishing there was someone just like you.
Now that you're here, now that I've found you,
I know that you're the one to pull me through.*

Whether we're crazy acid heads or every day functional people, we all need Jesus' deliverance from demonic power! Take a look at Luke 4:31;

31 Then (Jesus) went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbath. (Luke 4:31)

Fleeing from his hometown of Nazareth, where some of his hometown homies tried to throw Him off a cliff for saying He was Messiah and wouldn't do any miracles in their midst, Jesus went down to Capernaum.

And just to give a little context...

Capernaum was a fishing town with both Jewish and Gentile (non-Jewish) inhabitants, Its position on a trade route made it more cosmopolitan and diverse than other towns of similar size. Jesus performed many of His signs in Capernaum and made a special example out of its residents' unbelief (Matt 11:23). Although much of Galilee was ruled by Herod Antipas, it is possible that Capernaum was considered part of Philip's territory since it was close to the assumed border and since he ruled over the smaller enclaves northeast of the Sea of Galilee.¹

Situated on the Sea of Galilee, Capernaum was larger than Nazareth; some estimate 1000 – 2000 residents in the city proper. By Greco-Roman standards it was a small and obscure town and, like Nazareth, not a location for Jesus that anyone would conceivably have fabricated. Archaeologists have found the site of Capernaum's synagogue, and later rabbis attest that by the second century, Capernaum was a known center for Jewish Christianity.² This city was some 680 feet below sea level. It was a major Jewish center in the region, with trade centering in fishing and agriculture (Josephus, Life 72 § 403; Jewish War 3.10.8 § 519).³

¹ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). Faithlife Study Bible (Lk 4:31). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

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Capernaum was also the ancient city where Jesus set up his base for operation.⁴ He later made Capernaum His home since His own hometown, Nazareth, had rejected Him. Capernaum was also the home of Peter and Andrew (v. 38).⁵

Now that we have some background on Capernaum, let's dig into the text.

First, notice that Luke 4:31 states that Jesus went into the synagogue to worship with God's people. He was "teaching them on the Sabbath". And it's right after the section in Luke 4:16-30, which began with Jesus, you guessed it, entering the synagogue to worship with God's people, where he was also teaching them on the Sabbath.

As a pastor, it's easy for people to write me off when I tell them that God wants them to "attend Church", because they think I'm only saying it for self-interested reasons- because I want our attendance to be strong, because I want a bigger following, or a bigger crowd to lead worship for or speak to.

I'd be lying if I didn't admit that I want solid, consistent attendance from people, a following of people who want to hear me speak and lead, and bigger crowds. I constantly repent of the desire for those things, though I know they're fleshly desires and as I grow in Christ, I desire them less and less.

Because the Spirit compels me also to reach as many people as I can, and call as many people to committed discipleship as I can! And these are good and biblical things! You can imagine the conflict within me and every other pastoral leader out there! Spiritual leaders who genuinely desire to follow and honor Jesus simply want as many people as possible to grow in depth of faith, and to spread that mission out and reach others with the message! We seek to faithfully do all we can by the power of Christ in us, and the results are up to God!

What if we decided to "attend Church" because Jesus "attended Church"? And again, we can see clearly that synagogue was an Israelite expression of what later became "the Church". And no doubt, New Testament Christ followers for centuries since Christ's resurrection have been "attending Church" faithfully. When we "attend Church" faithfully we're simply following the example of Jesus!

And of course, we're not meant to only attend Church, but to **be** the Church!

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⁵ Martin, J. A. (1985). Luke. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 215). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

32 (The people) were astonished at (Jesus's) teaching because his message had authority. (Luke 4:32)

If the rabbinic works of a few centuries after Jesus' time were any indication, most rabbinic arguments took on an anthological approach to teaching, where each rabbi's opinion on a matter was set out in a kind of listing and where truth was often a matter of establishing a precedent for an idea. Jesus did not teach this way. He declared God's will directly, even keeping his direct use of Scripture to a few limited situations. The crowds recognized his distinct approach to teaching and were astonished by it.⁶ He did not need any authority beyond His own. He expounded on the words and ideals of the Hebrew Scriptures without consulting others.⁷

When I was a kid, I loved fried clams. I would order them up in a Fisherman's Platter or at Red Lobster any day. I grew up in Northeast Ohio and ate whatever clams were put in front of me. Whenever I ate Ohio frozen clams I said to myself, "these are good clams!" "Legit!" "Fresh!"

I lived in Portsmouth, New Hampshire in 2013. All up and down the Seacoast of Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine, there were these little shacks that sold fresh, fried clams. These clams were for real. They pulled them right out of the ocean in traps, shucked them, covered them in batter, fried them, and served them in baskets with delicious sauce to dip them in. I had never had **clams** until I ate **these** clams.

The teaching of the religious leaders of Jesus' day was like frozen, store bought Ohio clams. Jesus' teaching was the clam of New England! The real deal, fresh out of the ocean, shucked, battered, fried and served clam! These people hadn't heard the real deal yet. Jesus was **it!**

And any teacher who is tethered to Christ simply wants to proclaim Christ! We want to proclaim what He said and did! It's not about us! Man, if pulpits were just soaking with Jesus everywhere lives would be transformed! Why peddle the frozen, store bought garbage when we can give people the real clams?

As Tony Evans notes: Jesus wasn't merely conveying information. He was proclaiming the kingdom of God and the effect of God's kingdom agenda on every area of life. One couldn't be indifferent to Jesus's authoritative message. It had to be believed and obeyed—or rejected and defied.⁸

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⁷ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Lk 4:32). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

⁸CSB Tony Evans Study Bible Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers.

Jesus's message carries the same authority today that it did then. Will we believe it? Will we obey it? Or will we reject it? Will we defy it? Oh dearly beloved sons and daughters of God, may we be found faithful!!!

The scene in this Sabbath was about to get wild, as Jesus was about to palpably prove His authority!

33 In the synagogue there was a man with an unclean demonic spirit who cried out with a loud voice, 34 "Leave us alone! What do you have to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!" 35 But Jesus rebuked him and said, "Be silent and come out of him!" And throwing him down before them, the demon came out of him without hurting him at all. (Luke 4:33-35)

Demons are noted twenty-three times in this Gospel, with fourteen of those references occurring between here and Luke 9:50 in the Galilean ministry section.⁹ Jesus obviously sprung into ministry in the power of the Spirit, pummeling evil forces right out of the gate!

And there's a man with an unclean demonic spirit that caused an absolute scene in this synagogue! Just like someone tweaked out on months of a meth binge, he yelled out with a loud voice and said some wildly spiritual stuff that only a demon would know.

In Greek the question in verse 34 was an idiomatic way of asking, "Why do you want to bother us?" The remark was revealing, since it indicated both the inherent authority Jesus possessed and the demon's awareness of that power.¹⁰

The demon begged Jesus to leave "it" or "us" alone. The plural "us" makes us wonder—were there multiple demons in the man?

And these demons hated Jesus! They begged Jesus to leave them alone because He had so much dang power and authority over them!

When I was five years old in kindergarten at Montessori School, they did an experiment with my class that I was unaware of.

This was a very "New Age" school that believed in the inherent good of kids. So they set up one of those interrogation pieces of glass in the classroom, and had a group of

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teachers and behavioral experts observing our class. We didn't know they were there because we couldn't see them from our side of the glass. They could see us. We couldn't see them.

At one point, as an intentional part of the experiment, our teacher left the classroom and said she would be back in five minutes. When she departed, I yelled out to everyone in the class, "the teacher's gone, let's partyyyyyyyyy!!!!" Maybe via my leadership, maybe via their own decision, kids started tearing up the room. I grabbed a broom and started playing air guitar on it, and dropped my pants down to reveal my Snoopy underpants, bragging to my classmates about the red and white Peanuts undergarments.

My teacher stormed in, with only a few minutes having passed, and reprimanded the whole class, sending me, who had been observed all along, to the principal's office. Super bummed and defeated in my five year old mind, I was like, "Oh man, this teacher has authority! I'm done for!"

I'm sure this demon or these demons were having a field day in this man, ripping up his mind and soul, flexing their kiddie tighty-whities, and then Jesus, full of authority, who could see through all they had been doing all along, shows up and puts them in their place, and they're BUSTED!

These demons also knew where Jesus was from, "Nazareth".

Satan and his demons are not all powerful, all knowing, and omnipresent like our God is, **but they do know things**. They know things about us. They like to use the things they know about us to exploit us. Think about it. Jesus had just been in Nazareth, and had been rejected by people He may have known His whole life while there, to the point where they almost drove Him off of a cliff to His bloody death. And what does this demon do? He calls Jesus "Jesus of Nazareth", connecting Him to the very place that He had just been completely rejected and hurt.

And demons know how to exploit you. They'll use your trauma, your pain, your weaknesses, your vices, your addiction, and your triggers to try and exploit you too. Be aware! Remember!

Be sober-minded, be alert. Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour. Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (1 Peter 5:8; James 4:7)

Remember that Christ went through the pain and hurt of being exploited and triggered by demonic words of death. He went through that for you. He overcame it so that He could speak words of life and truth into your mind and heart when those demonic, destructive lies of death and deceit enter your mind or are spoken hatefully by someone out to hurt you!

In addition, the demon makes a confession: Jesus is “the Holy One of God”. It recognizes him as uniquely set apart for service to God. The title recalls figures like Aaron (Ps. 106:16), Samson (Judg. 13:7), and Elisha (2 Kings 4:9).¹¹

You believe that God is one. Good! Even the demons believe—and they shudder. (James 2:19) Anyone can recognize that God is God. Do we really believe that God is who He says He is in Christ? That He is a God of love, forgiveness, mercy, holiness, goodness, and power? Or like a demon, do we shudder when we think of God?

I used to shudder when I thought of roller coasters.

I wouldn't ride a single one, ever. I was always hanging with my Mom going into gift shops while my Dad rode the coasters on his own.

And then one day I was fifteen years old, and a group of my friends from a Catholic Church were going on a day trip to Cedar Point in Sandusky, Ohio. Now mind you, I had nothing to do with the Catholic church or any church in any way, but they really pushed and convinced me to join them on the trip.

I went. On the bus ride there I was in total trepidation about riding roller coasters. I talked with my friends about it, telling them that I had never ridden one and always been afraid to as a kid. They told me again and again that I just had to try one out. I fought with them about it as they continued to try and convince me to just go for it.

And then we entered the park, and everyone got in line for “The Raptor”. I joined them. I was shuddering, I was trembling, I was afraid. But I waited in line until the end, and got on the thing. The Raptor is a big old green metal roller coaster. It's the kind of roller coaster where you're sitting in a seat with a harness over your shoulders and your feet hanging down. I remember riding up that first hill, feeling absolutely terrified!

Then we went down the hill, and a feeling of total exhilaration and enjoyment burst open inside of me for the first time. I had finally conquered my fears and was loving being on a roller coaster!

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And that day, I rode every roller coaster in the park with my friends! I was a new man! I was free! I had a new joy in my heart!

Some of y'all think God is a terrifying roller coaster, and you're afraid to give your life fully over to Him. You're afraid of giving an area of your life over to Him. You stand at a distance from Him watching other people experience Him, and you don't wanna set a foot near Him. Like a demon, you shudder at the thought of Him. You have a demonic stronghold in your life that you refuse to give to Him, even though you see others flourishing and having more joy than you in that area!

I'm inviting you now to hop on the ride! Taste and see that He is good! God will fill your life with adventure, with joy, with exuberance, and with freedom! Don't shudder like the demon at the thought of Him! Don't shudder like a demon at the thought of His Word! Don't shudder like a demon over the thing you know He's asking you to change! Let Him take you on the wildest ride of your life in fully following Him! Guess what? ***You... won't... regret it!***

Jesus shut this demon up, rebuked the evil spirit, and immediately the man was restored. He also silenced it. Apparently Jesus wanted nothing to do with the demonic confession of him in public.¹²

Some of you have demons in you. All of us have demons harassing us. Jesus wants to loosen you from the torment, the lies, the anguish, the pain, and the bondage that demons have you in! He wants to free you! He wants to break your addiction, He wants to break your anger, He wants to break your selfishness, He wants to break your jealousy, He wants to break your despair, He wants to break your nervousness, He wants to breathe hope, breathe life, breathe truth, breathe peace, breathe freedom, breathe forgiveness, breathe salvation, breathe sanctification, breathe holiness, breathe confidence, breathe power, and breathe boldness into you!!!!!! Surrender your whole life to Him! Surrender your flesh to Him! Surrender your soul to Him! Surrender your spirit to Him!!!!!!

Even the demon's attempt to harm the man by throwing him to the ground failed to have results. The destructive tendencies of evil are overcome by the authority that Jesus possesses to deliver humanity from the clutches of the demons.¹³

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Demons want to hurt you. They want to keep you miserable, negative, addicted, depressed, despairing, suicidal, crazy, selfish, greedy, immoral, perverted, confused, bitter and envious of others.

But Jesus will prevent the hurt that they want to cause in you! Demons think they can inflict pain, steal, kill and destroy you. Jesus has something to say about that. Jesus will take away the harm that the enemy of your soul wished to inflict on you. Trust Him! Trust Him! Trust Him!

All Jesus' miracles in some way reflected a visual representation of some significant spiritual reality — often the depth of the cosmic struggle associated with his ministry. Since his work represented the powerful arrival of the force of righteousness into God's world, is it any wonder that Jesus engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the forces of evil? In a real sense, the miracles pulled back a veil on the cosmic forces at work within creation.¹⁴

Luke 4:36 goes on;

36 Amazement came over them all, and they were saying to one another, "What is this message? For he commands the unclean spirits with authority and power, and they come out!" 37 And news about him began to go out to every place in the vicinity. (Luke 4:31-37)

The amazing event and its lesson were not lost on the crowd, who immediately began asking the basic question: "What is this message?" The people recognized that demonic forces had been subdued by Jesus' word. He had both authority and power. Luke's reader was left pondering the question the crowd had raised. News of the event spread throughout the region.¹⁵ To add to the juicy viral information, villages of this time and area were often close together and rumors spread rapidly.¹⁶

It is right to **be** amazed at the work of Jesus! When we see Him move, and when we see how His hand in the life of a person transforms and heals we can't HELP but be amazed!

It is right to **stay** amazed at the work of Jesus! If we've seen Him move in the past we can continue to know that He'll move in the future, and He'll definitely move for eternity!

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Just because we're struggling now, or lacking in hope now, doesn't mean that we'll lack hope forever! Just because we haven't seen Him move in a while doesn't mean that we won't see Him move again! WE... CAN... TRUST... HIM!!!!

I started seriously writing songs when I was thirteen years old. It was something I was crazy passionate about. During that year, using my TASCAM Porta One Ministudio 4-Track Cassette Recorder, I wrote and recorded five albums worth of material- about forty songs. I only played guitar and bass, and I wrote and sang the lyrics and melodies.

By the time I was fourteen, I was playing drums also, and during my year of being fourteen, I wrote about four albums worth of material- probably thirty five songs.

This pattern repeated in my life up until the spring and summer of being sixteen, where I hit a massive writers block. It's as if I stopped being creative and just couldn't come up with anything. Something was missing. Was my life of being a creative musical artist over? Would I ever be able to create and make music again? I felt lost! My love and passion dwindled!

Some of y'all had a power encounter with God at some point in your life and immediately you were like, "God must be real. It's time to get sober. It's time to change. It's time to get responsible. It's time to get honest. It's time to be generous. It's time to take a risk. It's time to get these people outta my life that are jacking me up!" And some of you were even like, "I'm gonna read my bible every day, I'm gonna pray, I'm gonna be part of the Church, I'm gonna get disciplined, I'm gonna listen to worship music, I'm gonna share Jesus with people, I'm gonna give stuff away and be generous!!!!"

And then somewhere along the line you hit a roadblock, and all your passion, joy, commitment, and love for Jesus shut down. Now you're wondering if He's even real, if He even loves you, if He even forgave you, if He's even listening.

I'm here today to remind you to **renew your amazement!** Our Lord and King Jesus **is** real! He **does** love you! He **did** forgive you! He **is** listening! He is standing with arms open wide beckoning to you and saying, "My child, come on back into my arms today! Live for me! Live for me again! I got you! I will carry you through! I will protect you! I will love you! I will deliver you!!!!!!!!!!!!"