

# WEEK 5: JESUS HEALS THE DEMON-POSSESSED

Luke 8:26–39



## The Place of the Passage

Our modern world has relegated the “spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12) to movies and make-believe. This makes it more difficult for Christians to grasp the significance of biblical texts that speak about demons.<sup>1</sup> The Bible reveals the truth about our world, about a Creator and his creatures—including those in the spiritual realm. Human nature is drawn to inquire of such spiritual beings, but Scripture does not allow us to dwell on the details. It does, however, make clear that “spiritual forces of evil” challenge God and his people, the church. Just as human creatures can be agents of sin and death, so can spiritual creatures. Every place and person in creation has been stricken with sin’s disease—even creatures in the heavenly places. This context is essential to grasping the encounter that takes place in Luke 8, wherein Jesus heals a man who “had demons” (Luke 8:27). In this powerful encounter the reader of Scripture is reminded that the sickness of sin extends deep into the spiritual realms of creation and that Jesus Christ alone has the authority to heal creation’s spiritual sickness. This is not only a miracle of healing but also an “old creation” miracle, which means it is a sign with operations fitting the current world. In this miracle Jesus reveals a crucial purpose of his ministry and how he intends to redeem his creation from the spiritual forces of evil.

**The Big Picture**

Jesus has authority and power over every spiritual force of evil and darkness, and he delivers his people from the enslaving bonds of demonic powers and unclean spirits.

**Reflection and Discussion**

Read through the complete passage for this study, Luke 8:26–39. Then review the following questions and record your responses. (For further background, see the *ESV Study Bible*, page 1969, or visit [esv.org](http://esv.org).)

**The Setting (Luke 8:26–29)**

What is the biblical text describing when it says that the man “had demons” (8:27) and an “unclean spirit” (8:29) that “had seized him” (8:29)?

---

---

---

---

---

Do you believe in demons? Why or why not? Have you ever known someone who experienced some kind of demonic activity? What was it like?

---

---

---

---

---

Why do the demons respond to Jesus in the way that they do, and what does that communicate to us about Jesus (8:28)?

---

---

---

---

---

### The Miracle (Luke 8:30–33)

Why does Jesus speak to the demons, and what does the demons' reaction to Jesus teach us about his authority over them?

---

---

---

---

---

What are the demons begging Jesus to do, and why do you think he grants their request (8:32)?

---

---

---

---

---

What does Jesus' authority over the demons mean for Christians today? How can we live with confidence that all demons are under the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ?

---

---

---

---

---

### The Conclusion (Luke 8:34–39)

The narrative twice mentions the intense “fear” (8:35, 37) that the miracle induces in the herdsmen and townspeople. What does this reaction by the witnesses teach us about the significance of Jesus' actions?

---

---

---

---

---

WEEK 5: JESUS HEALS THE DEMON-POSSESSED

Why does Jesus not allow the man he healed from demon possession to stay with him, and what is the significance of what Jesus tells him to do when he goes home (8:39)?

---

---

---

---

---

In light of the purpose of miracles what does this miracle teach Christians about the person of Jesus (who he is) or the work of Jesus (what he has done for us)?

---

---

---

---

---

Read through the following three sections on *Gospel Glimpses*, *Whole-Bible Connections*, and *Theological Soundings*. Then take time to consider the *Personal Implications* these sections have for you.

**Gospel Glimpses**

**EVERY TONGUE CONFESS.** The most honorific and theologically precise titles ascribed to Jesus in the Gospels are spoken not by the religious leaders of Israel or even his disciples but by demons! The demons know that Jesus, who is often addressed as “teacher” or “rabbi”—even by his disciples—should be properly addressed as “Son of the Most High God” (Luke 8:28). The demons address him with absolute reverence and submission, and their actions project what all creatures will someday do. After Jesus’ suffering service for us God has exalted him over us so that every knee should bow and “every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (Phil. 2:11). The message of the gospel includes both what Jesus has done but also who Jesus is. Jesus is indeed the Son of the Most High God!

**INTO THE ABYSS.** A remarkable insight is given to the reader when we hear the demons beg Jesus “not to command them to depart into the abyss” (Luke 8:31). In the larger context of Scripture the abyss is clearly the place of God’s judg-

ment.<sup>2</sup> In a culture in which hell and judgment have been muted or denied, we must take note that “even the demons believe—and shudder!” (James 2:19). Such an insight points us to the truth of the gospel, that “all have sinned” (Rom. 3:23) and that only through redemption in Christ is a person freed from God’s judgment. Let us, then, outdo the belief of the demons and confess and worship Christ!

## Whole-Bible Connections

**CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY.** It is likely that, when Christians hear the word “testimony,” they think about a person’s sharing his or her personal testimony, that is, the story of his or her conversion and faith in Christ. While that is a fine and good use, the Bible uses “testimony” more often and regularly in the sense of “witness,” a legal term that serves to point to, give evidence about, or simply proclaim someone or something. This is what Jesus asks the formerly demonized man to do: “Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you. And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him” (Luke 8:39). This theme is common in both Testaments (e.g., Ps. 71:15–18; John 15:27; 1 Pet. 3:15; 1 John 5:11). Jesus’ final words before his ascension are the command to “be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8), and the biblical story shows how the people of God—those who have experienced the healing work of Christ—proclaim him “to the end of the earth.”

**HE GAVE THEM PERMISSION.** There is no doubt that Jesus was the person in charge of this powerful encounter between himself and a man filled with many demons. The narrative magnifies this not only by the demons’ “begging” Jesus to treat them mercifully (Luke 8:31) but also by Luke’s description of Jesus’ giving them “permission” (8:32). The entire biblical story explains that the Creator reigns over his creation and all its creatures—humans and angels alike. The demons beg and need permission because they are speaking to the one “who was seated on the throne” (Rev. 5:1). The biblical theology of the kingship of Jesus is again supported in this miracle as Jesus displays his sovereign rule over heavenly beings.

## Theological Soundings

**NOT MERELY FLESH AND BLOOD.** From Genesis to Revelation the Bible describes the reality of such spiritual creatures as angels and demons, including Satan. In a modern culture in which demons are restricted to myths and movies, this account reminds us that we must believe in Scripture’s witness to the spiritual realities and creatures beyond what we can see or fully understand. As

WEEK 5: JESUS HEALS THE DEMON-POSSESSED

the apostle Paul explains, our spiritual conflicts are not only “against flesh and blood, but against . . . the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12). This truth does not shake us or embarrass us but directs us to rest fully and finally in the redeeming work and sovereign care of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**FEAR OF GOD.** The witnesses of Jesus’ power over the demons are “seized with great fear” (Luke 8:37). While the Bible is well-aware that humanity will have a fear of God, the Bible also explains that, when Christians are in right relationship to God as participants in the blessing of the new covenant, they will have a proper fear of God. Such passages as Exodus 20:18–20 and Jeremiah 32:39–40 suggest that a proper fear of God is one in which a person is truly and rightly committed to God, ordering one’s life under the sovereign and loving reign of God. This is a fear that induces not panic but piety and not dread but discipleship, for “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov. 9:10).

**Personal Implications**

Take some time to reflect on what you have learned from your study of Luke 8:26–39 and how it might apply to your own life today. Make notes below on the personal implications for your walk with the Lord of the (1) *Gospel Glimpses*, (2) *Whole-Bible Connections*, (3) *Theological Soundings*, and (4) this passage as a whole.

**1. Gospel Glimpses**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**2. Whole-Bible Connections**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### 3. Theological Soundings

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### 4. Luke 8:26–39

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### As You Finish This Unit . . .

**Jesus is Lord over all, including the spiritual forces of evil. In light of this truth take a moment to look back through this study and reflect on the ways in which the lordship of Jesus supports and strengthens your faith. Spend some time in prayer before the Lord, reflecting on this truth.**

### Definitions

<sup>1</sup> **Demon** – An evil spirit that can inhabit a human being and cause him or her to carry out its will. Demons (fallen and corrupted angels) were created by God and are always limited by God. Jesus and his followers cast out many demons, demonstrating Jesus' superiority over them. All demons will one day be defeated along with Satan (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10).

<sup>2</sup> **Judgment** – Any assessment of something or someone, especially a moral assessment. The Bible also speaks of a final day of judgment when Christ returns, when all those who have refused to repent will be judged (Rev. 20:12–15).