

STANDARD A: WHO IS JESUS AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FOLLOW HIM?

Lesson 8: How Does Jesus Rule over the Powers of Evil Today?

Introduction

The resurrection of Jesus reveals the power of God over all powers of the world – including evil powers. In Jesus' own ministry He cast out demons. He proved His power over all evil forces. He shows us that we do not need to fear demons or evil forces. Jesus is Master of them. He has defeated them all, and He will defeat them in our lives.

A. Jesus Cast Out Demons.

Jesus sailed with His disciples across a lake. While they were on the lake, Jesus took a nap. Meanwhile, a great storm came. Jesus continued to sleep. The disciples were afraid. They woke Jesus: "Master, Master," they told Him, "we're going to drown!" Jesus was disappointed they did not have more faith in Him. He got up and rebuked the wind and the water, and the storm stopped. "Where is your faith?" He asked the disciples. (Luke 8:22-25).

They were amazed that Jesus had so much power. Even the winds and the water obeyed Him! (Luke 8:25). If He was strong enough to do this, who was He?

Soon Jesus and the disciples reached the other side of the lake. As soon as Jesus stepped off the boat, a demon-possessed man met Him. A demon is an evil spirit. Demons work for the cause of evil and for the devil. They oppose the good purposes of God. They oppose the ministry of Jesus. Demon possession is the control of people by demons.

The demon-possessed man was naked. Many times the evil spirit had seized him. The people put chains on the man – both on his hands and his feet. But the demon-possessed man had broken his chains. The demons forced him to go to remote places, where the man was alone. For a long time he had not lived in a house. Instead, he lived among the tombs (Luke 8:26-29).

The demons had almost destroyed this man's life. His life was ruined. He could not live with other people. He could not control himself. He could not control his actions. There was nothing he could do about his condition. Other people could not control him. There was nothing they could do. The demons controlled everything about him. We do not know how the demons took control of this man's life.

The evil spirit inside the man knew who Jesus was. “What do you want with me, Jesus, son of the Most High God?” the demon-possessed man shouted. When Jesus spoke, He did so with the authority of God. Jesus commanded the evil spirits to come out of the man. “Don’t torture me!,” the man said. Perhaps he was afraid that Jesus would harm him (Luke 8:28).

Jesus asked the man, “What is your name?” The man replied “Many,” because many demons had gone into the man. The demons begged Jesus not to send them into a deep pit. (Maybe if Jesus had sent them there they would have been able to get inside some other person!) So Jesus sent them into a herd of pigs on the hillside. When the demons got into the pigs, the herd rushed down a steep hill into the lake. They drowned (Luke 8:30-33).

Jesus showed He was Master over demons and evil spirits. He did not fear them. Jesus freed people who were controlled by demons. His power over demons was a sign that the Kingdom of God had come – in Him. It showed that the devil was a defeated enemy.

The owners of the pigs were not happy when their pigs ran into the lake! They told the people in town. Many people came to see what had happened. When they came, they saw the man. He was sitting at Jesus’ feet. He had clothes on. He was in his right mind. The demons were gone. He was cured. This made the people afraid. They thought that Jesus must be very powerful. If Jesus could do this, who was He? He was even more powerful than the demons that had possessed the man for so long. The people asked Jesus to leave them. So Jesus got into the boat to leave (Luke 8:34-37).

The man whom Jesus healed wanted to go with Jesus. He begged Jesus to allow him to go along. But Jesus wanted him to stay. He wanted the man to tell the people how much God had done for him. So, wherever the man went, he told the people what Jesus had done for him (Luke 8:38-39).

(Other places in Luke where it is mentioned that Jesus cast out demons are Luke 4:31-37 and Luke 9:37-43.)

Question:How did Jesus show power over evil spirits?

Question:What did the man do after Jesus cast out the demons?

B. Jesus Defeated the Devil.

Demons follow and serve evil purposes. A demon is an evil spirit. Demons work for the cause of evil and Satan. They oppose the good purpose of God. They especially opposed the ministry of Jesus. But He showed that He was Master over them.

The devil is the chief of demons. He is the enemy of God. He opposes everything that God does. He slanders God and falsely accuses His followers. In the Bible the devil is called Satan. In the Hebrew language, Satan means "the accuser." Satan is an evil creature. Some illnesses are due to him. But he is limited in his knowledge and power. He is not supreme. Only God is supreme and all-powerful. Jesus Christ showed His authority over Satan in all His ministry. Jesus defeated Satan on the Cross and in the Resurrection. He will completely destroy Satan when He completes His Kingdom. Satan cannot force people to obey him and disobey God. But he tries to persuade them to disobey God. He tempts them to do evil.

Satan even tempted Jesus (Luke 4:1-13). At the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus went into the desert. The devil tempted Him for 40 days. When Jesus became hungry, the devil tempted Him to change a stone into bread. Jesus refused. Every time the devil tempted Him, Jesus answered with a Bible verse. "Man does not live on bread alone," Jesus told the devil. (It was taken from Deuteronomy 8:3). Then the devil led Jesus to a high place and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world. All these could be Jesus' to rule – if Jesus would worship him, the devil promised. Jesus answered, "Worship the Lord God and serve him only" (from Deuteronomy 6:13). Then the devil took Him to Jerusalem and put Him on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," the devil said, "throw yourself down." The devil even quoted a Bible verse: "He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully" (Psalm 91:11-12). Jesus answered, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test" (Deuteronomy 6:16).

If Jesus was tempted, certainly we also will be tempted. One of the reasons for knowing Scripture well is to be able to answer the devil. (But the devil also knows the Scripture!) Jesus did not yield to temptation. The devil did not give up. He only waited for other moments to tempt Jesus (Luke 4:13).

Instead of yielding to temptation, Jesus was obedient to God His Heavenly Father. In everything, Jesus was obedient. Because He was obedient, He defeated the devil again and again. Because Jesus was obedient, the Heavenly Father raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus also gives His power to His followers.

One time, Jesus sent out 72 of His followers. (See Luke 10:1-20.) "Go," He said. "I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. He gave them clear instructions. They went from town to town and house to house. Sometimes they were rejected. But they saw many miracles take place. When they returned, they reported: "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name" (Luke 10:17). Just as in that time, today Christ gives His followers power over the demons. In that way, Jesus and His followers defeat the demons and Satan. Jesus said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18). That happens because, when Jesus' followers rely on His power and on His Word, they are more powerful than the forces of Satan. We have nothing to fear as long as we are faithful followers of Jesus.

One of Jesus' disciples was not faithful. Judas disagreed with things that Jesus did. He was the treasurer of the group of disciples. He was tempted by money. He was willing to betray Jesus for money. Because of his unfaithfulness, Satan entered Judas (Luke 22:3). Judas showed the temple guard where Jesus was so that they could capture him. That led to Jesus' trial and, finally, to His crucifixion (see Luke 22:1-6, 47-48).

It seemed that Satan had won. Jesus was dead and buried. It seemed like evil had triumphed. But it did not. God raised Jesus from the grave. Jesus was victorious over sin, death, and Satan. Though Satan still is present in this world, though there are still demons, we can conquer them. This is "resurrection power."

There is no reason for us to fall to temptation like Judas did. Paul wrote to Jesus' disciples living in Rome they were "more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Romans 8:37). Christians need not be fearful about anything that threatens God's care for them: "neither death nor life, neither angels or demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:39).

Similarly, Paul told the followers of Jesus at Ephesus: "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power." They should be spiritually prepared. "Put on the full armor of God," he told them, "so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes" (Ephesians 6:10-11).

Question:How did Jesus defeat the devil?

Question:How can you defeat the devil in your life?

Question:What do you think the full armor of God is?

C. Jesus Gives Victory over all Evil Powers.

One of the devil's schemes is for us to be fearful about demons and evil spirits. We must remember that God alone is the Creator and the Redeemer. Through His power in us, we need not be afraid. God (not Satan) has created mountains, trees, rivers, animals – all that is. He, not Satan, is the absolute ruler of this world and Lord over all creation. None of these things are evil in themselves.

If we are following Jesus, "greater is he who is in us than he who is in the world." By Jesus' life and by His death and resurrection, Jesus is Lord of all. Satan and all of his demons and spirits are defeated foes. They have power only when we ascribe it to them. They have power only when we yield it to them.

We must claim the victory now. By being faithful and obedient followers of Jesus, everyday we are defeating Satan and his demons. Every time we say “no” to evil and temptation, we defeat Satan and his demons. Every time we worship God, we defeat Satan and his demons. Every time we pray, we defeat Satan and his demons. Every time we do good to others in Jesus’ name, we defeat Satan and his demons.

Followers of Jesus reject any form of witchcraft that attempts to use spiritual powers to manipulate either God or other people. Witchcraft uses sorcery and magic. Because witchcraft deals with the spirit world apart from Jesus, it is evil. It is wrong to use it to bring injury or for protection. All that Jesus’ disciples need for protection is faith in Jesus and obedience to Him. Witchcraft is part of the old life. It has no place in the new community that Jesus is building. (See Exodus 22:18; Deuteronomy 18:10; 1 Samuel 15:23, 28:3-14; 2 Kings 9:22; Micah 5:12; Nahum 3:4; Galatians 5:20.)

Many times across the centuries, Christians have faced demons in the countries in which they have lived. They have taken the power of God in Christ Jesus with them. Followers of Jesus have defeated witch doctors, spirits in trees and termite mound hills, and spirits in the crows that kept farmers from their fields. As a result, Christians around the world have prospered. Their neighbors are enslaved to fear. But followers of Christ are conquerors. Jesus is victorious. Through Him, so are His followers.

Question:Why should followers of Christ reject all types of witchcraft?

Question:Jesus is victorious. How can you be victorious as a Christian?

Conclusion

The Bible tells us God created the world, and He provides life for all living creatures. But the Bible also tells us that, surprisingly, even in God’s creation some of God’s creatures reject their Creator. They don’t want God to be God in His own creation. So they rebel against God’s righteous and merciful rule. They try foolishly to challenge God’s power. And they make a lot of noise by doing so. The Bible contains many stories about this rebellion.

In the crucifixion of Jesus, the foolish powers of darkness tried to silence Jesus Christ, the very Son of God. They tried to defeat and destroy Him. For three days, as Jesus lay in the tomb, many thought the powers of evil had conquered the Heavenly Father and His only begotten Son.

Then on the third day, Easter morning, the eternal Creator removed all doubts by bringing His Son from death to life. The powers of evil had done all they could do. They were totally defeated and routed. Jesus Christ alone is the resurrected and reigning Lord. He has the first and the last word. And it is a word of light, not darkness; a word

of joy, not sorrow; a word of hope, not despair. No Christian should ever live in fear of the powers of evil that claim to have control.

Jesus Christ has forever shown just how empty God's opponents really are. He did this by putting all evil powers to flight when He healed the sick, cured the blind, and raised the dead. All of these were signs that the Kingdom of God had come. Christ has nailed to the Cross all of our sins. He has done the same with the guilt that binds us. Christians live confidently and victoriously, not in their own strength, but in the resurrection power of Jesus Christ. They live victoriously and triumphantly over the powers of darkness because Christians are grounded in the resurrected and coming Christ. He makes all things new. He exposes darkness, evil, and fear for what they are. They are defeated in Jesus' name. And Christ's victory is made triumphantly available to all His sisters and brothers who are in Him by faith. In the Christian walk there is no place for fear. Instead, there is plenty of place for joy and victory.

Activity: Pray that the evil power of Satan will be defeated in your life and community.

Activity: Talk with you pastor or teacher about how Satan's power can be defeated in your community.