

**“Lessons from the Miracles of Christ”:
Healing the Man with an Unclean Spirit, in the Synagogue**

in *The Youth’s Instructor*, Vol. XLIX, Nos. 33, 34, 35
(Aug. 22, 1901; Aug. 29, 1901; Sept. 5, 1901)

by W. S. Sadler

© 2025 Matthew Block

**Sources for Healing the Man with an Unclean Spirit, in the Synagogue,
in the order in which they first appear**

- (1) Wm. Arnold Stevens and Ernest DeWitt Burton, *A Harmony of the Gospels for Historical Study: An Analytical Synopsis of the Four Gospels in the Version of 1881* (Boston: Silver, Burdett and Company, 1893)
- (2) Richard Chenevix Trench, D.D., *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord, Revised, with Additions* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1883)
- (3) Charles Haddon Spurgeon, “An Astounding Miracle” (1884)

Note: Spurgeon delivered this sermon in London on Feb. 10, 1884 and it was published in Vol. 30 of *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (1885). I have been unable to access this volume, so have used *The Treasury of Spurgeon on the Life and Work of Our Lord, Vol. IV, The Miracles of Our Lord, 1*, published by Baker Book House in 1979.

- (4) Mrs. E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Takoma Park, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Assn., 1898)
- (5) William M. Taylor, D.D., LL.D., *The Miracles of Our Saviour, Expounded and Illustrated* (New York: A.C. Armstrong & Son, 1891)

Key

- (a) **Green** indicates where a source author first appears, or where he/she reappears.
- (b) **Yellow** highlights most parallelisms.

- (c) **Tan** highlights parallelisms not occurring on the same row, or parallelisms separated by yellowed parallelisms.
- (d) An underlined word or words indicates where the source and the Sadlers pointedly differ from one another.
- (e) **Light blue** indicates a passage which anticipates something in the Urantia Book.
- (f) **Red** indicates an obvious mistake.

Work-in-progress Version 27 Jan. 2025
 © 2025 Matthew Block

HEALING THE MAN WITH AN UNCLEAN SPIRIT, IN THE SYNAGOGUE

INTRODUCTORY

0.1 *Preceding Events.*—The healing of the demoniac in the synagogue seems to be the next step in the Saviour’s work, immediately following the miraculous draft of fishes and the final calling of the four.

0.2 *Main Reference.*—Mark 1:23-26.

0.3 *Other References.*—Luke 4:33-36.

0.4 *Bible Story of the Miracle.*—

[Note: Luke is used as much as Mark.]

XII: CALL OF THE FOUR, AND THE FIRST PREACHING TOUR. (*A Harmony of the Gospels* 46)

§39. A DAY OF MIRACLES IN CAPERNAUM. Matt. 8:14-17. Mark 1:21-34. Luke 4:31-41.

Mark 1:21 And they go into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue and taught.

22 And they were astonished at his teaching; for he taught them as having authority, and not as the scribes.

Luke 4:[32] for his word was with authority.

Mark 1:[23] And straightway there was in their synagogue

Luke 4:[33] a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil [ERV. mg.: Gr. *demon*];

“And they go into Capernaum; and straightway on the Sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught:

and they were astonished at his teaching; for he taught them as having authority, and not as the scribes;

for his word was with authority.

And straightway there was in their synagogue

a man that had a spirit of an unclean demon;

SOURCE

and he cried out with a loud voice,

[Mark 1:[24] saying,]

34 Ah! what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth?

art thou come to destroy us?

I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

35 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.

And when the devil [ERV. mg.: Gr. *demon*] had thrown him down in the midst

[Mark 1:[26] tearing him and crying with a loud voice]

he came out of him, having done him no hurt.

Mark 1:[27] And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What is this? a new teaching!

Luke 4:[36] What is this word? for with authority and power he commandeth

Mark 1:[27] even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.

Luke 4:[36] and they come out.

Mark 1:28 And the report of him went out straightway everywhere into all the region of Galilee round about.

“ LESSONS FROM THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST”

and he cried out with a loud voice,

saying,

Ah, what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth?

Art thou come to destroy us?

I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.

And when the demon had thrown him down in the midst,

tearing him, and crying with a loud voice,

he came out of him, having done him no hurt.

And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What is this? a new teaching?

What is this word? for with authority and power he commandeth

even the unclean spirits, and they obey him,

and come out.

And the report of him went out straightway everywhere into all the region of Galilee round about.”

(The foregoing is an interwoven story of the miracle, gathered from Mark 1:23-26 and Luke 4:33-36, but told in the exact language of the Bible.)

0.5 *Place*.—Capernaum.

0.6 *Circumstances*.—This miracle was performed in the synagogue during the Sabbath service of teaching. The people were greatly astonished at Jesus’ doctrine, and even as he was speaking, the man possessed with an unclean spirit “cried out.” This miracle was worked without the request of the one who was benefited by it. On the other hand, he, or rather the spirit that possessed him, besought Christ, saying, “Let us alone.” It would seem that the miracle was performed without even the requisite of faith on the part of the unfortunate man. It made a profound impression on all who witnessed it; for the fame of Jesus “spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.”

0.7 *Great Lesson*.—God sometimes works great miracles for no other reason than that his heart of infinite pity and love is touched with the sorry plight of intelligent beings, wholly possessed with the evil spirits of impurity, jealousy, and bitterness. This miracle shows God’s willingness and power to deliver men from the grasp and bondage of the evil one.

STUDY OF THE MIRACLE

1.1 *Was in Their Synagogue*.—

12. THE DEMONIAK IN THE SYNAGOGUE OF CAPERNAUM. (Trench 244)

‘*There was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit;*’ or, as St. Luke describes it, ‘*with the spirit of an unclean devil;*’

This man, although possessed with an unclean devil,

SOURCE

but not therefore excluded from the **public worship** of God any more than another in like condition, of whom we have mention at Luke xiii. 16 ... (Tr 244-45).

“AN ASTOUNDING MIRACLE”
(**Spurgeon** 543)

One other matter makes the case still more terrible: *he was a man upon whom religious observances were lost....* The worst man of all

is one who can attend the means of grace,

and yet remain under the full power of evil (S 548).

“LESSONS FROM THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST”

was permitted to attend **public worship**.

Evidently he did not belong to the class that would be regarded as violently insane, whose behavior would disqualify them for admission into the public congregation. To-day, many who intrude their presence into the house of God are perhaps just as much under the influence of an evil spirit as was this poor creature.

This man is a type of one of the most hopeless class of sinners the **Christian worker** ever meets,—

those who have seen the light, who know the character of Christ,

who are often found at religious gatherings,

yet whose lives are still controlled by sin.

Though these are apparently the most hopeless cases, this miracle teaches that the power of God’s word and the light of his grace can reach even such.

[The godly] sang in the synagogue, but they could not sing the evil spirit out of him; ... they gave addresses from passages of Scripture, but they could not address the unclean spirit out of him; no doubt some of the godly prayed for him, but they could not pray the devil out of him.

Nothing can cast out Satan but the word of Jesus himself (S 548-49).

This poor man is a type of the sinner whom no amount of preaching, praying, and singing is likely to affect.

He must have a word spoken direct from the Master’s lips to the evil one within,

before he will be able to decide whether or not he will serve God.

W. S. SADLER.
(*To be continued*)

HEALING THE MAN WITH AN UNCLEAN SPIRIT (*Continued*)

2.1 *Man with an Unclean Spirit.*—

[Joseph Bryant Rotherham, *The Emphasised New Testament: A New Translation* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1897)]

Rotherham tells us that this demoniac healed in the synagogue had an “impure spirit.”

There are many to-day who are similarly afflicted. This man had become so dissipated, so evil, that he and the wicked spirit had almost become one. Some have so abandoned themselves to dissipation and vice that they become wholly possessed by the spirit of Satan. Their faculties are under his control.

XXVI: AT CAPERNAUM (White 252)

He had been fascinated by the pleasures of sin, and had thought to make his life a grand carnival. He

did not dream of becoming a terror to the world and a reproach to his family (W 256).

“AN ASTOUNDING MIRACLE”
(Spurgeon 543)

He had become like a devil in human form, and so was in a certain manner the opposite of our Lord Jesus. In Jesus dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily by an eternal union; in this man the devil dwelt for a while (S 545).

Satan, you know, is God’s ape; he is always trying to imitate him, to caricature him; so,

when God became incarnate, it occurred to Satan to become incarnate too;

and this man I may call, without any misuse of words, an incarnate devil; or, at any rate, the devil was incarnated in him (S 545).

Perhaps this poor man

when he first started out to have a gay time in life, to enjoy this world, to dabble in intemperance and vice,

little dreamed that he would soon become a disgrace to his family and a reproach to his Maker.

He did not intend such to be the result, but according to a man’s sowing, so shall be his reaping.

2.2 Christ’s life was one in which God dwelt in man,

completely controlling him.

Satan is a great counterfeiter; and,

as in other matters,

he seeks to counterfeit the incarnation.

He does this by trying to enter into and completely control human beings who have placed themselves under his influence. Such individuals are said to be possessed of the devil. This man's thoughts, actions, and entire life were so wicked that he is represented as being possessed by an impure spirit. He was undoubtedly a type of the worst, most degraded, and most hopeless cases that Christ or his co-workers are ever called upon to deal with.

Kindly look at the fourth chapter of Luke, verse thirty-three, and you will see that in this man there was “the spirit of an unclean devil” (S 547).

The ruling spirit in the man was not only a devil,

but an *unclean* devil.

Satan sometimes cleans himself up, and comes out quite bright and shining like an angel of light;

but do not mistake him; he is still a devil, for all his pretended purity.

There are glittering sins, and **respectable** sins, and these will ruin souls;

but this poor man had a disreputable demon in him, a spirit of the foulest, coarsest, and most abominable order. I suppose this foul spirit would incite its victim to filthy talk and obscene acts (S 547).

2.3 This man was possessed with an unclean devil.

It would seem to be enough simply to be possessed of a devil,

but he had an unclean devil.

Satan sometimes comes as an angel of light;

he sometimes seeks to possess men under the garb of **respectability**, culture, etc.;

but this poor man was under the influence of an evil spirit that led him into sins of the deepest dye.

It would seem that

SOURCE

*In this man there did not seem to be anything for the Lord to **begin** upon.... If a man has some point of character upon which you can rest your lever your work is comparatively easy.*

[*Compare:* Reformation is a good thing, but transformation is far better (W. S. Sadler, "Transformation Versus Reformation," in *The Youth's Instructor* (Nov. 1, 1900, p. 340).]

But [some people] seem so utterly gone that there is neither reason, no conscience, nor will, nor power of thought left in them. Of all this the possessed man in the synagogue is a striking emblem, for when the Lord comes into the synagogue the poor wretch does not begin to pray, "Lord, heal me."

No, his first cry is, "Let us alone."

"LESSONS FROM THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST"

there was nothing left in his character with which Christ could **begin**,

in order to better his condition.

There was no basis for reformation; the work must be one of transformation.

And so we meet with many to-day for whom reform will avail nothing; seeking to put new wine into old bottles will prove a dismal failure. They must be given new bodies, new minds, new hearts,—must be created anew in Christ Jesus.

2.4 And He Cried out, Saying, Let Us Alone.—

Literally possessed by the spirit of Satan,

this poor man did not offer a formal prayer.

The words he spoke were as the utterances of an evil one; yet his need was the prayer that touched the Saviour's heart, and led him to speak the loving words that set the poor man's soul at liberty. When he recognized Christ, instead of seeking for help, apparently he sought to repulse the Saviour,

saying, "Leave us alone."

This shows how completely he was under the power of Satan,—realizing, perhaps, to some extent, his own need, and yet at the same time so controlled by evil as to ignore the One who alone could supply this need. In this he is a type of many today,—those who know their need, yet who stubbornly refuse to receive that which alone can help their condition.

Is it not a horrible thing that Satan leads men to say,

“Do not trouble us with your gospel! Do not bother us with religion! Do not come here with your tracts! Let us alone!” (S 549)

Oh, my hearers, do not some of you say, “We do not want to be worried with thoughts of death, and judgment, and eternity; we do not desire to hear about repentance and faith in a Saviour; all we want of religious people is that they will let us alone” (S 549).

You would think it impossible for Jesus to do anything with a man while he is crying out, “Let us alone”; yet

it was the evil spirit in this man that our Lord met and overcame (S 549).

We often meet those who say,

“Trouble us not with your teaching.

We want nothing to do with your Christ.

Let us hear no more of your strange doctrine,” etc.

Yet God can help even these;

for it was such a one as this out of whom he drove the unclean spirit.

“Let us alone; what have we to do with thee?” were almost the first words spoken by this man to Jesus; and yet the Saviour, notwithstanding this rejection of his help by the demon that spoke through human lips, freed the man from the power that held him a prisoner.

W. S. SADLER.
(Concluded next week.)

HEALING THE MAN WITH AN UNCLEAN SPIRIT IN THE SYNAGOGUE (Concluded)

3.1 *What Have We to Do with Thee?*— The impure spirit that possessed this unfortunate man confessed to having nothing in common with Christ. He cried out, “What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth, . . . the Holy One of God?” To-day this is the cry of many when truth is brought to them. They say, “Away with it; what have we to do with things divine?” In rejecting truth to-day, we turn our backs upon Jesus, just as literally as if he were here in person. Evidently the evil spirit anticipated his future punishment in the question, “Art thou come to destroy us?” It would seem from this that the evil spirits expect some day to be brought into the destroying presence of the Prince of Life.

IV: THE HEALING OF THE DEMONIAC IN THE SYNAGOGUE. (Taylor 73)

Yea, how shall we explain the crouching terror which impelled the demon in the poor possessed one to cry out,

“What have I to do with thee, thou Holy One of God? art thou come to torment us before the time?” (T 83)

As mentioned in another place,¹

the evil one asks,

“Art thou come to destroy us before the time?”—

“the time” undoubtedly referring to the final end, to the destruction which awaits these hosts of evil, now held in chains of darkness. Jude 6.

3.2 *I Know Thee, Who Thou Art.*—The demons know of Christ,—his great power and his sinless character. It is written that they even **believe and tremble**. But this knowledge is not a saving knowledge. We must know God aright, in order to make this knowledge life-giving to us. They know him as their once-beloved Commander, against whom they rebelled. They know him as one who offered his life a ransom for their redemption, which they were deceived by Lucifer into rejecting. They know him as the one who afterward yielded his life for the saving of the guilty pair in Eden, and who, to carry out the purpose of his saving plan, is now come to earth to wrest from the hand of the arch-demon his usurped dominion, “to seek and to save that which was lost.”

3.3 *And Jesus Rebuked Him.*—

12. THE DEMONIAK IN THE
SYNAGOGUE OF CAPERNAUM.
(**Trench** 244)

Although evil spirits made confession of Christ,

Earth has not recognized her king,

the children of Israel did not recognize him,

disguised as He is like one of her own children;

because of the humble way in which he came.

but heaven has borne witness to Him
(Luke ii. 11; iii. 22; Matt. iii. 17),

The Holy Spirit and angels had
acknowledged him at his baptism;

and now hell must bear its witness too;

and now the spirits of demons offered the
same acknowledgment.

‘the devils **believe and tremble**’ (Tr 245).

[A] damsel possessed with a spirit of divination bears witness to Paul and his company, ‘These men are the servants of the most high God, which show us the way of salvation;’ and the servant there, as little as the Master here, endures that hell should bear witness to heaven, the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light,

and commands with power the evil spirit to come out (Tr 244).

IV: THE HEALING OF THE DEMONIAK IN THE SYNAGOGUE. (Taylor 73)

The Lord knew that no good could result even from the telling of the truth by an evil spirit, because it was told not to honor him, but rather with the view of bringing reproach upon him (T 80).

Yet though his testimony was true, it was immediately silenced by him to whom it was borne.

On a subsequent occasion

his enemies founded on a similar testimony to him from a demon, the allegation that he was himself in league with the prince of the demons ... (T 80).

So Satan is most to be feared when he is apparently speaking truth,

and is never so dangerous as when he disguises himself as “an angel of light” (T 85).

He is never so dangerous as when he is seeking to speak us fair, and giving commendation to our character (T 85).

But Christ did not propose to have the kingdom of darkness bear witness to the kingdom of light,

so he hushed the evil spirit that spoke within the man.

It was no doubt Satan’s purpose in leading this man into the synagogue to have him cast reproach upon Christ and his cause by this apparent acknowledgment of the divine mission of the Saviour.

Christ did not permit the evil spirit to tell the truth concerning him, lest,

as on another occasion,

the people should claim that he was in league with the prince of devils.

Satan is most to be feared when he seeks to speak the truth,

disguising himself as an angel of light,

and approaching one with words of flattery and commendation.

3.4 *Hold Thy Peace and Come Out of Him.*—Angels who once refused to yield willing obedience to heaven’s Commander must now obey his word, whether they will or not. Jesus spoke to the demon, saying, “Hold thy peace,” and the command of the Creator and Redeemer must be obeyed. The demon is silent. Not only has the Saviour authority to hush the insincere confessions of the spirit of devils, but he also has authority from the Father to command them to “come out.” This he did. He who is with us is greater than all they that are against us. By his life of unselfish devotion, by his death and matchless love, **he has won the right**, in the eyes of heaven and earth, to speak with authority to the spirits of demons who seek to possess the souls of sinful men and women.

3.5 *When the Unclean Spirit Had Torn Him.*—The evil spirit was commanded to be silent, and to depart out of the man; and, with another cry, tearing the man, he left. The spirit that possessed him sought to do as much damage as possible before he left.

When an evil-disposed **tenant** is compelled to leave the house in which he has dwelt, he frequently shows his spite by **doing damage to the premises**,

and so in this case, and in that of the demoniac boy at the foot of the Mountain of Transfiguration, the demon tore the victim from whom he was ejected (T 80).

But, as another lesson here, let us learn that when Satan is losing his hold on a sinner,

he does him all the harm he can (T 84).

Just as an ejected **tenant** will sometimes **tear up the premises** before he leaves the house,

we find the devil seeking in every way possible to destroy the soul he is about to lose.

When Satan is compelled to leave the sinner,

he seeks to do all the harm he can,

SOURCE

When the Israelites were seeking emancipation from Egypt, Pharaoh increased their burdens² (T 84).

“AN ASTOUNDING MIRACLE”
(Spurgeon 543)

If the Lord will speak with power to-day to any soul, however vicious, or depraved, or besotted, his reigning sins shall come out of him, and the poor sinner shall become a trophy of his sovereign grace (S 552).

“LESSONS FROM THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST”

as Pharaoh increased the burdens of the Israelites before they were delivered.

3.6 *He Came Out of Him.*—

After uttering one last cry of obstinate disobedience, the unclean spirit, who thought himself so securely intrenched within the soul of this unfortunate man, was compelled to come out of him,—to leave him

a new trophy to the power of God and the love of Christ.

I am so thankful that even the devils are subject to the word of the Captain of our salvation. Nothing is too hard for him, nor anything too great. When the evil spirits of impurity, deceit, or pride have begun to fasten themselves upon our experience, let us humbly lay ourselves at the foot of the cross, and beseech Jesus to cast forth the spirits of evil from our hearts. When we thus go in sincerity, with a willing mind, he will send them away.

W. S. SADDLER.

1. Matt. 8:29.

2. Taylor paraphrased from Trench here and elsewhere. In the preface of his book, Taylor acknowledges using Trench. Sadler, as he read both of these books, would have recognized the borrowings.