

A SERMON SERIES ON THE UNSEEN REALM

SPIRITUAL BEINGS

WEEK 4

Demons & Unclean Spirits

What They Are · Where They Came From
Why They're Unclean · The King Who Casts Them Out

HOME STUDY & SERMON NOTES

Teaching Pastor Frank · with Pastor Sabas Jimenez

Anchor Text: 1 John 3:8 & Mark 5:1–20 (ESV)

A Note on Sources

The framework in these notes leans on the work of **Dr. Michael S. Heiser** — especially *The Unseen Realm* (Lexham Press, 2015) and his companion volume *Demons*. The central claim taught this week — that demons are the disembodied spirits of the dead Nephilim of Genesis 6 — is the **dominant Second Temple Jewish interpretation**, reflected in *1 Enoch*, *Jubilees*, and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Genesis itself never states this outright; Heiser's argument is that the Gospel writers appear to *assume* this worldview, because they never pause to define or correct it.

Those ancient writings are cited only as background to how first-century Jews read their Scriptures — never as Scripture itself, and never as a basis for doctrine. Our authority is the Word of God. Where an interpretive choice is debated, we flag it plainly so the church can see it. Scripture is quoted from the ESV unless otherwise noted, and any errors of application are our own.

Contents

How to Use These Notes

1. What Are Demons? — Origin in the Second Temple World
2. Why "Unclean Spirits"? — Holiness, Death & Corruption
3. Jesus' Authority Over Demons — The Kingdom Invades
4. The Victory of Christ — The Cross & the Believer's Confidence
5. Key Terms
6. Scripture Index
7. Reflection & Discussion Questions
8. Looking Ahead to Week 5

How to Use These Notes

These notes follow Sunday's teaching movement by movement, so you can review what we covered, study ahead, or walk a home group through the material with your Bible open. Where you see a Scripture block, look the passage up and read it in its own context — the goal is never to take our word for it, but to see it on the page yourself. The *In One Sentence* boxes gather each movement's main point in one place, and the discussion questions at the back are built for a table of friends, not an exam.

A word on method: we read Scripture *for* us, but it was not written directly *to* us. To hear it rightly, we first ask what it meant to its original, ancient audience — then we hold the interpretive details humbly while holding the main point firmly.

WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Weeks 1-3 built the frame: the elohim and the divine council, the three great rebellions, and then Satan and the territorial powers behind the nations. Those weeks showed us the *leadership* of the kingdom of darkness. Week 4 moves closer to the ground — to the foot soldiers the Gospels meet in nearly every town: the demons, the unclean spirits.

1. What Are Demons?

MOVEMENT I · ORIGIN IN THE SECOND TEMPLE WORLD

Here is a puzzle worth sitting with: the Old Testament rarely describes demons the way the New Testament does — yet the moment we open the Gospels, they are everywhere. They speak. They recognize Jesus. They possess people. They fear judgment. They obey Christ.

And notice what never happens: nobody stops to ask, “What is a demon?” Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John do not explain it — because their original audience already had a worldview for understanding these beings. To read the Gospels the way their first readers did, we have to step briefly into that world.

The World Between the Testaments

The stretch from the rebuilding of the Temple after the exile (around 516 BC) to its destruction in AD 70 is called the **Second Temple period**. It is the world Jesus lived in, the world of the apostles and the Pharisees, and the world in which the Gospels were written. During these centuries Jewish writers wrestled with hard Old Testament passages and developed traditions to explain them — writings such as *1 Enoch*, *Jubilees*, and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

INTEGRITY FLAG · BACKGROUND, NOT SCRIPTURE

Our authority is the Word of God, not *1 Enoch*. Heiser’s claim is not that these writings are inspired. It is narrower: the Gospel writers appear to assume the same general worldview about demons that was widespread in Second Temple Judaism — which is why they never stop to define them.

So Where Did They Think Demons Came From?

Many Christians answer quickly: “They’re fallen angels.” That has been a common teaching — but it is *not* how most Jews in Jesus’ day understood it. They traced the origin of demons back to Genesis 6.

“When man began to multiply... the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose... The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward... These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown.”

GENESIS 6:1–4 (ESV)

Pastor Frank walked through this passage back in Week 2, so we are not re-asking “who were the sons of God?” We are asking a different question — one Genesis never directly answers: *what happened after the Nephilim died?*

The Second Temple Answer

The dominant Jewish reading ran like this: the sons of God were heavenly beings; humans were earthly beings; the Nephilim were the unnatural offspring of that union. When the Flood came, their bodies perished — but their spirits belonged nowhere. Not to God’s heavenly family. Not to humanity. And so, in this understanding, they became wandering, disembodied spirits, seeking a body to inhabit and influence. Those spirits are what the New Testament calls demons, evil spirits, unclean spirits.

A PLACE IN GOD’S ORDER

- Angels — bodies suited to the heavenly realm
- Humans — bodies suited to the earthly realm

THE NEPHILIM SPIRITS

- An unlawful union of heaven and earth
- Bodies gone; spirits with no proper place
- Restless, hostile, seeking to inhabit a body

This is why the Gospels repeatedly show demons *seeking a body* rather than ruling territory the way the national powers of Week 3 did. It also ties several threads together: the rebellion of Genesis 6, and the **Rephaim** — the dead giant clans associated with the realm of the dead (Isaiah 14:9) — whose shadowy afterlife reinforced the link between the giants and roaming evil spirits.

INTEGRITY FLAG · ASSUMED, NOT STATED

Genesis 6 never explicitly says, “the spirits of the dead Nephilim became demons.” This is the interpretation that became dominant in Second Temple Judaism. Heiser argues the New Testament writers appear to assume it because they never redefine or correct it. Whether or not one accepts every detail, seeing this worldview helps us read the Gospels through the eyes of their first audience.

IN ONE SENTENCE

Demons are best understood as the disembodied spirits of the dead Nephilim — *not* fallen angels — a Second Temple framework the Gospel writers simply assume.

2. Why Are They Called “Unclean Spirits”?

MOVEMENT II · HOLINESS, DEATH & CORRUPTION

One of the quiet surprises of the Gospels is that Jesus and the Gospel writers rarely say “demon.” Far more often they use another phrase: **unclean spirit** — in Greek, *pneuma akatharton*. That word choice is not accidental.

What “Unclean” Actually Means

In the Bible, uncleanness is much more than physical dirt. It names anything incompatible with the holiness of God. The Law taught Israel to distinguish the holy, the common, the clean, and the unclean — constant reminders that sin, death, corruption, and idolatry cannot stand in God’s presence. Demons are called *unclean* because everything they represent stands opposed to God’s holiness.

- **They are associated with death.** Death is one of Scripture’s great sources of uncleanness — and the Second Temple view tied demons to the spirits of the dead Nephilim. That is why first-century Jews naturally linked them with impurity and corruption.
- **They corrupt what God made good.** Demons never create; they only distort — minds, bodies, worship, truth, relationships, nations. Satan’s kingdom always warps what God designed.
- **They oppose God’s presence.** As uncleanness once barred a person from the sanctuary, unclean spirits work to keep people in bondage rather than fellowship with God.

THE UNCLEAN SPIRIT

- Distorts what is good
- Spreads bondage and corruption

THE HOLINESS OF JESUS

- Restores what sin has broken
- Drives out impurity rather than catching it

Jesus Never Becomes Unclean

Under the Law, touching a leper or a corpse made a person ceremonially unclean. Yet Jesus repeatedly touched lepers, the dead, the sick, the demonized — and something astonishing kept happening. He never became unclean. Instead, the unclean became clean: the leper was healed, the dead were raised, the demonized were delivered. The direction of holiness had reversed. Instead of impurity spreading to Jesus, the holiness of Jesus overwhelmed impurity — a sign that the Kingdom of God had arrived.

“What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.” But Jesus rebuked him... “Be silent, and come out of him!” ... And they were all amazed... “He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.”

MARK 1:23–27 (ESV)

The religious leaders questioned who Jesus was; the crowds debated it; even the disciples came to it slowly. But the demon knew immediately — “the Holy One of God.” As James would later put it, “even the demons believe—and shudder” (James 2:19). Their problem was never ignorance; it was rebellion. And the fear in “Have you come to destroy us?” is telling — they know they are already defeated; their only uncertainty is the timing. Notice, too, that Jesus performs no ritual. Where Jewish and pagan exorcists relied on formulas, objects, and invoked higher names, Jesus simply says, “Be silent, and come out” — and it obeys. This is not borrowed power; it is His own divine authority as the Son of God.

IMPORTANT OBSERVATION

Our confidence is never found in studying demons — it is found in knowing Jesus. They cannot negotiate with Him, overpower Him, or resist His command. The Gospel’s focus is not the power of the darkness but the supreme authority of Christ over it.

IN ONE SENTENCE

“Unclean” means opposed to God’s holiness — and instead of the impurity spreading to Jesus, *His holiness cleanses the unclean at a word.*

3. Jesus' Authority Over Demons

MOVEMENT III · THE KINGDOM INVADES ENEMY TERRITORY

Jesus' deliverance ministry was never simply about helping individuals. Every encounter with a demon was a public declaration: the Kingdom of God has arrived, and the kingdom of darkness is being overthrown.

The Man Called Legion

Jesus crosses the Sea of Galilee, and the moment He steps out of the boat a man overwhelmed by many demons runs toward Him. No chain could hold this man; he lived among the tombs, his life completely dominated by the kingdom of darkness. When Jesus asks the spirit its name, the answer is chilling: *Legion* — the word for a Roman army division of several thousand — “for we are many.”

“What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me...” And Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” He replied, “My name is Legion, for we are many.”

MARK 5:6–10 (ESV)

Four Things This Teaches About Demons

- **They recognize authority.** No introductions, no debate — the King has arrived, and they know it instantly.
- **They fear judgment.** Matthew's account adds the tell: “Have you come here to torment us *before the time*?” (Matthew 8:29). They know there is an appointed day, that Jesus has authority to judge them, and that their defeat is certain. Their dread is only that it has come early.
- **They require permission.** They cannot simply do as they please — they must ask to enter the pigs, and Jesus grants it. Just as Satan could not touch Job apart from God's permission, neither can these spirits act on their own.
- **They desire embodiment.** They do not ask to vanish; they ask to enter another living host — exactly what the Second Temple worldview would expect of disembodied spirits, and why stories like Legion read so naturally through first-century eyes.

Why Cast Out So Many?

It is tempting to say Jesus simply felt compassion — and He did — but something larger is happening. Every exorcism is an announcement.

“But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

LUKE 11:20 (ESV)

Picture an invading king marching into occupied territory. Every city he liberates raises his banner; every fortress he takes announces that a new king now rules. That is what Jesus is doing. Every demon expelled proclaims the same thing: *the true King has arrived*.

IN ONE SENTENCE

Every exorcism is a public sign that God’s reign is invading enemy territory — and the demons’ “before the time?” is a confession that *the verdict is already settled*.

4. The Victory of Christ Over Demons

MOVEMENT IV · THE CROSS & THE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE

Christ did not only confront the darkness — He defeated it. Which means believers do not minister from fear, but from a finished work.

More Than Deliverance

Jesus cast out many demons, but He did not come merely to cast out demons — He came to establish the Kingdom of God. Every deliverance was a visible sign that Satan's kingdom was being overthrown, and more than that: Jesus was not simply removing demons from people, He was *reclaiming people for God*.

The Cross Disarmed the Powers

The cross was not only about forgiving sins; it was God's public triumph over every rebellious power — the very rulers and authorities we met in Week 3.

"He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him."

COLOSSIANS 2:15 (ESV)

The Greek word for *disarmed* pictures stripping the weapons and armor from a defeated army and marching its leaders through the streets. That is Paul's image of Calvary: the event Satan thought would destroy Jesus became the means of his own defeat.

WHAT THE CROSS WAS NOT

- Not Satan's victory
- Not the end of all opposition

WHAT THE CROSS WAS

- Christ's decisive triumph
- A battle whose outcome is already settled

He Shares the Authority — and Reorders the Joy

Jesus did not keep His authority to Himself; He entrusted His mission to His followers. When the seventy-two return thrilled that "even the demons are subject to us in your name," Jesus gently redirects them.

"Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

LUKE 10:20 (ESV)

The authority is real — but our relationship with Jesus is greater than any power over demons, and that ordering is a safeguard. It keeps the Church from becoming fascinated with power while neglecting the One who gives it.

PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES FOR DELIVERANCE

Deliverance always exalts Jesus, never magnifies darkness. It depends on Christ, not on volume — we minister in His name because we belong to Him. It is part of the gospel, not the whole gospel; our mission remains the Great Commission. And we never pursue power more than intimacy. Some churches never mention demons; others speak of almost nothing else — neither reflects Jesus, who never glorified them, never held long conversations with them, but simply commanded, and they obeyed.

Where It All Lands

Four weeks — the Divine Council, the Three Rebellions, Satan and the Powers, and now Demons and Unclean Spirits — and none of it was so that we would become experts on darkness or afraid of the enemy. It was so we would see one greater truth.

“Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name... that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

PHILIPPIANS 2:9–11 (ESV)

WHERE IT ALL LANDS

The kingdom of darkness is real — but it is not ultimate. Christ is. He is greater than Satan, greater than the territorial rulers, greater than every unclean spirit, principality, authority, and power.

IN ONE SENTENCE

The cross disarmed the powers and the risen Christ shares His authority with His people — so we fight *from* victory, not for it, with our joy anchored in belonging to Him.

5. Key Terms

- **Second Temple period** — roughly 516 BC to AD 70; the world of Jesus, the apostles, and the writing of the Gospels — and the interpretive world assumed behind them.
- **1 Enoch / Jubilees / Dead Sea Scrolls** — Second Temple Jewish writings that preserve the demon-origin tradition. Valuable background — never Scripture, never doctrine.
- **Nephilim** — the offspring of the “sons of God” and human women in Genesis 6; in the Second Temple view, their disembodied spirits became the demons of the Gospels.
- **Rephaim** — the dead giant clans associated with the realm of the dead (Isaiah 14:9); their shadowy afterlife reinforced the link between the giants and roaming evil spirits.
- **Unclean spirit (*pneuma akatharton*)** — the Gospels’ preferred term for a demon; “unclean” means opposed to God’s holiness, tied to death and corruption — not mere dirt.
- **Daimonion** — the Greek word “demon,” used far less often in the Gospel narratives than “unclean spirit.”
- **Legion** — the name the many demons give in Mark 5; a Roman legion numbered several thousand soldiers.
- **Disarmed (Colossians 2:15)** — the Greek pictures stripping weapons and armor from a defeated army; Paul’s image of what the cross did to the powers.

6. Scripture Index

The passages we handled this week, for study with your Bible open:

Genesis 6:1–4 — the sons of God & the Nephilim

Deuteronomy 32:17 — sacrificing to *shedim*

Isaiah 14:9 — the Rephaim in the realm of the dead

Mark 1:23–27 — the unclean spirit obeys

Mark 5:1–20 — the man called Legion

Matthew 8:29 — “torment us before the time?”

Luke 11:20 — the finger of God & the Kingdom

Luke 10:17–20 — delegated authority; names in heaven

Colossians 2:15 — the powers disarmed at the cross

James 2:19 — the demons believe & shudder

1 John 3:8 — to destroy the works of the devil

Philippians 2:9–11 — the name above every name

7. Reflection & Discussion Questions

1. The Gospel writers never stop to define “demon” — they assume their readers already know. How does understanding their first-century worldview change the way you read the Gospels?
2. Why does it matter to flag honestly that the Nephilim-spirit origin of demons is Second Temple *background* the New Testament assumes, rather than a verse Genesis states outright? What does that kind of care protect us from?
3. “Unclean” means opposed to God’s holiness, not merely dirty. Where do you see the enemy’s pattern of *corrupting* good things God made — in minds, worship, relationships — rather than creating anything new?
4. With lepers, the dead, and the demonized, holiness flowed *from* Jesus rather than impurity flowing to Him. Where do you need His cleansing to overwhelm something you thought was too far gone?
5. The demons of Legion knew exactly who Jesus was, yet stayed in rebellion. What is the difference between believing true things about Jesus and actually submitting to Him?
6. “Have you come to torment us before the time?” confesses that their defeat is already certain. How would this week look different if you lived as though the enemy is already a defeated foe?
7. The disciples were thrilled that demons obeyed them; Jesus redirected their joy to their names written in heaven. Why is it dangerous to be more fascinated with spiritual power than with belonging to Christ?
8. Jesus never glorified demons or held long conversations with them — He simply commanded them. What does that model teach us about a healthy, Christ-centered approach to spiritual warfare?
9. Colossians 2:15 says the cross *disarmed* the powers. What weapon — a fear, an accusation, a lie — is the enemy still waving at you that Christ has already stripped from his hand?
10. Four weeks in, the point was never to become experts on darkness but to see the greatness of Christ. What has this study changed about how big Jesus is to you?

8. Looking Ahead to Week 5

We have seen the King disarm the powers and share His authority with His people. Next week — **The Authority of the Believer** — we ask what that authority actually is: how deliverance clears the ground, why the house must not be left empty (Matthew 12:43-45), and how intimacy with Christ comes before any power over the darkness.

A NOTE BEFORE WE GET THERE

Getting the demon out is only half the work. The other half is who moves in. Come ready to talk about a house swept clean — and filled.