



Encounters with Jesus

"Who is this man?"

Written by Denny Brogan

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ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

“Who is this man?”

Luke 4:31-41

Introduction: From the very beginning of Jesus’ earthly life and ministry, His words and actions caused people to wonder (and sometimes want to know) who He really was. Angels knew who He was, and had already announced this to Jesus’ mother, Mary, and the shepherds who visited Him at His birth (Luke 1:26-38; 2:8-20). Demons, too, knew who he was, as we will see in our first study today (Luke 4:33-34; 41) and in some of the studies that will follow. However, people for the most part didn’t really know Him—at least at first. Those that did may have only known Him as “Joseph’s son” (Luke 4:22), a boy born the son of a carpenter and raised in the little town of Nazareth. However, as Jesus grew to be an adult and as He went about His earthly ministry—and especially as people personally “encountered” Him (or as He “encountered” them)—some came to know Him to be much more.

This Bible study series is taken from the first few chapters of Luke’s account of Jesus’ life and ministry. Each study will focus on particular individuals who at first may or may not have had some understanding of who Jesus was, but who—through their encounters with Him—came to know Him better. And this will be the aim of our studies as well: to “encounter Jesus” and grow in our understanding of who He really is.

Opening Questions

- What/who has formed and shaped your understanding of who Jesus is?
- How well do you think you know who Jesus really is?

Read [Luke 4:31-41](#)

[Note: Jesus’ early ministry (as recorded in Luke 4:14-9:50) centered in and around the area of Galilee. Immediately preceding the passage we just read, Jesus had moved from His hometown of Nazareth to Capernaum, which eventually became a kind-of “home base” for his early travels and ministry.]

Discussion Questions

1. In verses 31-32, Jesus was teaching in the synagogue. What was the response of the people? Why?

“They were amazed”—not only because “His message had authority,” but maybe more importantly because He had authority. (Note what Mark records is his parallel account: “The people were amazed at His teaching because He taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the Law.” (Mk 1:22))

2. Starting in v. 33, what happened?

A demon possessed man (who was in the synagogue) cried out to Jesus, identifying who Jesus was and questioning Jesus about what He might do.

How did Jesus respond?

He commanded the demon to be quiet and then to come out of the man. The demon obeyed, coming out of the man in the presence of all who were there.

How did the people respond? Why?

“All the people were amazed” because Jesus had authority and power to drive out evil spirits with His very words.

[Note: The question by the people recorded in Luke 4:36a is “What is this teaching?” but implied here is the underlying question, “Who is this man?” Why? Because the emphasis is clearly on what Jesus was able to do, as seen in what they say in v. 36b: “With authority and power He gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!”]

3. In verses 38-41, what was Jesus doing?

*He was healing the sick (some who He went to and some who were brought to Him).
He was driving out demons.*

Why did Jesus spend this long day in ministry to so many people?

Because He genuinely cared for peoples' needs, but also because He wanted to demonstrate His authority and power to arouse interest in people to want to know who He really was.

Why did Jesus not allow the demons to speak?

Not because He didn't want people to know who He was, but rather because He first wanted to show by word and action the kind of Messiah He was (in contrast to popular notions of the time) before His true identity was fully declared. And therefore, He did not want the demons to frustrate this intent.

4. Verse 37 provides a summary for what resulted from this full day of ministry for Jesus. What do you suppose this "news about Him" included?

*Testimonies of what people heard, saw, experienced, etc.
Expressions of amazement regarding Jesus' authority and power.
Questions about who He was.*

Summary

Here in the early part of His ministry—during a long day of ministry in Capernaum—Jesus demonstrates His authority both in how He taught and in what He did. These things not only amazed the people but caused them to wonder who He really was—which was exactly what Jesus wanted them to know.

Application Questions

- What do we learn about Jesus in this passage?
- Do any of these things raise questions in your mind regarding who Jesus is or cause you to want to know Him better?
- Is there anything that you want to bring to Jesus (like the sick and demon possessed that were brought to Him in our study today) in order for Him to show His authority and power in your life?

ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

A Fisherman

Luke 5:1-11

Introduction: In the passage we'll be looking at today, a person—who was a confident person and a professional—has an encounter with Jesus in the context of his profession, and through it learns some amazing things about Jesus that radically changes his life.

Opening Question: In what areas of your life do you have a good bit of knowledge and/or experience and therefore feel quite confident in?

Read [Luke 5:1-11](#)

Discussion Questions

1. Look at verses 1-2. Where does this take place? Who is there? What is going on?

[Note: The Lake of Gennesaret is another name for the Sea of Galilee, a harp-shaped lake, 13 miles long and 6-7 miles across, circled by gently rolling hills.]

2. Simon was one of the fishermen who was there. From our last study, what did he already know about Jesus?

In Luke 4:38-39 we saw that Jesus had been in Simon's home and had healed Simon's mother-in-law. Simon must have also seen or at least heard about the many demonstrations of care and power that Jesus had shown to other people as well while He was in Capernaum.

[Note: Simon=Simon Peter =Peter]

3. In verse 3, why did Jesus get into Simon's boat and ask him to take him out from the shore?

Jesus was teaching to a large number of people and He wanted them to be able to hear. Open water, with the hills surrounding it, would have been a natural amplifier for sound.

How do you think Simon felt about this?

It would have been an interruption to what he was doing. He also was probably tired from fishing all night and wanting to finish up cleaning the nets and go home.

Why do you think he did what Jesus asked?

Out of appreciation, indebtedness, and/or respect

4. Note how the scene changes in verses 4-5. Who is at the center of attention now? Why?

This, it seems, was the real reason that Jesus got into Simon's boat. He purposefully wanted to encounter Simon.

What did Jesus ask Simon to do? How do you think Simon felt about this? What difficulties would an experienced fisherman have had with this request?

Most likely he felt skeptical because night was the best time for catching fish and shallow areas were the best places to find them. He also most likely felt hesitant because they had fished all night and caught nothing; they were tired; their nets were clean; etc.

Why did He end up doing what Jesus asked (v.5)?

Again, most likely out of appreciation, indebtedness and/or respect.

5. Look at verses 6-7. What happened? Why was the size of the catch significant?

Jesus encountered Simon in a way that spoke powerfully to him. He demonstrated His authority and power—in an undeniable way—in an area that Simon thought that he didn't need Jesus because he was "the professional."

6. What is Simon's reaction in verse 8? What does his response communicate about his perception of who Jesus was?

Peter realized that Jesus was more than a just teacher who did good to others. And because only God could do what he witnessed, he realized that he was standing in the presence of deity. This realization struck fear within him because of his unbelief (sin).

7. Notice how Jesus responded to Simon in verse 10. What did He mean that "from now on you will catch men"?

Jesus was calling Simon to a different work. He wanted Simon to leave his fishing profession to join Him in His ministry to people. He was calling Simon to follow Him.

8. How did Simon (and his partners who had witnessed what had happened) respond (v.11)?

They "left everything and followed Him."

Why do you think he (they) was willing to leave everything and follow Jesus?

Jesus had revealed his authority and had proven Himself able to lead Simon's life—even in the areas in which Simon had felt confident enough without Him.

Summary

Before this encounter, Simon knew some things about Jesus and had positive feelings about Him. However, Jesus didn't really have a part in his everyday life—especially in the areas in which Simon felt confident and in control. When Jesus encounters him and asks Simon to trust Him, Simon, though skeptical, does what Jesus says. And when he does, Jesus reveals something about Himself and proves Himself to be more than adequate to lead in Simon's life. In response, Simon repents and moves into a deeper, more trusting relationship with Jesus.

Application Questions

- What do we learn about Jesus in this passage?
- What might Jesus be saying to you about your life—especially about those areas of your life where He is absent because you feel confident—and about what it means to trust in Him fully and allow Him to be Lord in every area of your life?
- What kind of "encounter" with Jesus might it take for you to be willing to "leave everything" in order to follow Jesus wherever He may lead?

ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

A Paralyzed Man

Luke 5:17-26

Introduction: In this account, a man makes a great effort (through the help of some friends) to encounter Jesus. And when he does, he receives from Jesus far more than what he asked for. He, along with others who witnessed this encounter, also learned some important things about Jesus.

Opening Question: Has there been a time in your life when you've asked someone for something and received from them more than you asked for?

Read [Luke 5:17-26](#)

[*Note: The setting of this account is Capernaum (Mark 2:1; c.f. parallel account in Mark 2:1-12)*]

Discussion Questions

1. In the opening verse (v.17), who was there? What was going on?

[Note: Unlike a different time in Capernaum (4:40-41), here, in this crowd of people, Jesus is teaching, not healing. Never-the less, "the power of the Lord (God) was with Jesus to heal."]

[Note: Although Mark's emphasis is on the size of the crowd gathered around Jesus, Luke's is on the number of religious leaders (Pharisees and teachers of the law) that were there ("from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem"). There is a reason for this, as we will see.]

2. Explain in detail what happened in verses 18-19. What were these men trying to do? Why?

They wanted to get the paralyzed man to Jesus in order for him to be healed by Him.

3. What did Jesus recognize in their actions (v.20a)?

He recognized their faith that He could heal the paralyzed man.

[Note: "Their faith" included the faith of the paralyzed man that Jesus could heal him.]

4. Note what Jesus says to the paralyzed man in verse 20b. What might the man thought/felt about this?

The man might have thought it strange and confusing because there is no mention that he recognized his need for forgiveness of his sins, and he certainly hadn't asked for this. He also may have felt disappointed because his felt need was to be healed.

What did the Pharisees and teachers of the law think/feel about it (v.21)?

They were very upset because out of their understanding that only God could forgive sins—and their belief that Jesus wasn't God or had this authority from God—Jesus had spoken blasphemy.

5. Why then do you think Jesus said to the paralyzed man "your sins are forgiven," along with healing him? For what purpose? For whose benefit?

Key: "But that you (the Pharisees and teachers of the law) may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." (v.24)

Although forgiveness of sins was a free gift to the paralyzed man (and one that he hadn't even asked for!), it was said and done for the sake of all gathered around Jesus—especially the Pharisees and teachers of the law.

6. What did the fact that Jesus both healed the man and forgave his sins reveal about who He was and what authority He had?

Note verse 21b. The people knew that only God could forgive sins. God must have given Jesus authority to forgive sins—as well as to heal.

7. What were the responses to these actions by the paralyzed man (v.25)?

He “went home praising God.”

What were the responses to these actions by the crowd of people gathered (v.26)?

“They were amazed and gave praise to God...they were filled with awe” c.f. Matt 9:8, “...and they praised God, who had given such authority to men (in this case, Jesus)”

What were the responses to these actions by the Pharisees and teachers of the law?

Although we are not told in this account what the Pharisees’ response was, it is helpful to note that this is the first of several “conflicts” that Jesus had with them recorded in Luke 5:17-6:11, which ends by saying that they “began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus” (6:11). c.f. Mark 3:6, “they began to plot... how they might kill Jesus.”

Summary

The paralyzed man was able (with the help of his friends) to get to Jesus for healing. Jesus recognized their faith and not only healed the man, but freely and graciously forgave his sins as well. These two things demonstrated His authority—authority that only could have come from God.

Application Questions

- What do we learn about Jesus in this passage?
- What are some “barriers” that you might have that prevent you from coming to Jesus for His help? What help might you need from others to get to Him?
- How might you be like the paralyzed man, recognizing your need and asking for Jesus’ help with certain “felt” needs that you might have, but not recognizing your need and asking for His forgiveness of your sins?
- In what areas of your life do you recognize Jesus’ authority? In what areas do you not? What might you do to grow in your faith and to allow Him to exercise His authority in all areas of your life?

ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

A Roman Centurion

Luke 7:1-10

Introduction: In this account, a man who never actually sees Jesus has an encounter with Him. And it is in this encounter that the man receives something good from Jesus—even though he knew he was unworthy and undeserving.

Opening Question: In what circumstances and ways do you sometimes believe that you deserve something good because of things that you have done or not done?

Read [Luke 7:1-10](#)

[*Note: This incident took place again in Capernaum, Jesus' home base for His ministry in Galilee.*]

Discussion Questions

1. Who was there? Who were the main characters?

Jesus, the centurion (an officer in the Roman army who had authority over 100 men), the centurion's servant, elders of the Jews (leaders in Jewish community), friends of the centurion, and the crowd.

Review the facts of verses 2-3:

*The centurion's servant (who the centurion cared much about) was sick and about to die.
The centurion had heard of Jesus.
The centurion sent elders of the Jews to ask Jesus to come and heal his servant.*

2. Leading up to this incident, what might the centurion have heard about Jesus that would have prompted him to seek Him out?

Review what we saw in Luke 4:31-4 and Luke 5:17-26.

Having heard about these things, what might the centurion have thought about Jesus?

Jesus was compassionate and capable of healing his servant.

3. Why didn't the centurion go to Jesus himself? (Note verses 6b-7a)

*He didn't feel deserving to have Jesus come under his roof.
He didn't consider himself worthy of going to Jesus.*

Why do you think he felt that way?

*Because he was a Gentile and not a religious man.
Because he was a part of the occupying army that ruled over the Jews.*

4. Why did the centurion send some elders of the Jews to ask Jesus to come and heal his servant?

Some may think that it was because he knew that they would put in a good word for him to show that he was deserving of Jesus' help. However, as we have seen, this was not the case. Their view of the centurion (and why Jesus should come) was quite different from that of the centurion's view of himself and his unworthiness of having Jesus respond to his request.

So why did the centurion send the Jewish elders?

Maybe it was because they were respected Jews and therefore may have had a better chance of getting Jesus to hear of his need and to come.

Why do you think Jesus went with them?

Definitely out of His compassion, but it might also be because He desired to have another intentional “encounter,” like that with Simon Peter.

5. What happened in verses 6b-8?

Note how the centurion changed his request.

Why did the centurion change what he had originally asked?

He had come to realize something about Jesus and His authority.

What did he come to realize about Jesus and His authority?

Jesus’ words had authority over sickness and disease (which he had most likely “heard” about from Jesus’ earlier time in Capernaum). Therefore, out of his own understanding of authority, all Jesus needed to do was to “say the word” and his servant would be healed.

6. What did Jesus perceive in the centurion from what He had heard from him?

The centurion had “great faith” in Him.

What do we see here about the nature of true biblical faith? Why was his faith “great”?

True biblical faith is trust in Jesus for who he is and what He has done and/or is capable of doing. The centurion trusted Jesus even though he had never met him or seen him.

How did Jesus respond to the centurion’s faith in Him?

*He honored him before others.
He answered his request (i.e. healed his servant).*

Summary

The centurion took the truths he had heard about Jesus and acted on them in faith in his situation of need, realizing that it was who Jesus was and what He could do—and not his own worth or merits—that he needed to trust.

Application Questions

- Do you sometimes think that you deserve something good from Jesus/God because of things that you have done or not done?
- What is the difference between the centurion and the person who says, “Everyone should have faith in something, but it doesn’t matter what”?
- What do we learn about Jesus through this encounter?

ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

A Widow

Luke 7:11-17

Introduction: In the account we looked at earlier about Simon Peter, Jesus *intentionally* sought him out and “encountered” him. In contrast, however, in the accounts about the paralyzed man and the Roman centurion, these men both *intentionally* sought Jesus out and “encountered” Him. In our passage today, we will see Jesus *coincidentally* “encountering” a woman who was in great need. And without her even asking, Jesus shows her compassion, performs a great miracle, and meets her need.

Opening Question: Have you ever been in a situation of great need in which you were helped by someone without even asking? How did it feel?

Read [Luke 7:11-17](#)

[*Note: There are three incidences recorded in the Gospels where Jesus raises someone from the dead. Only Luke records this one. The other two are about Jairus’ daughter (Luke 8:40-56, Matt 9: 18-26; Mark 5:22-43) and Lazarus (John 11:38-44).*]

Discussion Questions

1. In verses 11-12, when did this occur, where is Jesus and why did He go there?

We’re not told when this incident took place.

We’re also not told why Jesus went there.

We are, however, told where. (Nain was a few miles SE of Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth.)

2. Who is with Jesus and what’s going on?

Jesus’ disciples and a large crowd were with Him when they meet another large crowd— a burial processional—coming out of the town gate.

3. Why is the death of her son a serious as well as a sad situation for the woman?

The woman was a widow and this young man was her only son. Without a man in her family, the woman would probably become destitute, being unable in that society to earn a living.

4. What is Jesus’ response to the woman’s situation (verses 13-14)?

First, Jesus had compassion for her: “When (He) saw her, His heart went out to her.” (v.13)

Second, Jesus did something that would have made Him religiously “unclean” in the eyes of many (and maybe in the eyes of the woman as well): “He touched the coffin.” (v.14)

[*Note: An earlier story in Luke (that we have not studied) shows a similar response of Jesus. In Luke 5:12-13 He had compassion on a man with leprosy, touched him (which would have made Jesus “unclean”) and healed him.*]

Third, Jesus did what would have seemed useless to the woman and all who were with her: He spoke to her dead son, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” (v.14)

5. What happened through the power of Jesus’ words?

“The dead man sat up and began to talk” (v.15); i.e. the dead man was raised to life.

[*Note: The coffin must have been some sort of open, stretcher-type carrier.*]

6. What do you think the woman must have felt and how she might have responded to Jesus for what He did?

There is no indication that the woman knew who Jesus was, no indication of her having faith in Jesus, nor no indication of her asking for Jesus' help. His response to her came simply out of His compassion for her.

7. How did the people who saw the miracle respond?

"They were all filled with awe and praised God" (v.16) and they spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country this news about Jesus (v.17).

They also recognized that this was a work of God and called Jesus "a great prophet" (v.16).

8. Why did the people think that Jesus was a "great prophet" (v.16)?

This incident might naturally have caused the people to remember other incidences of the resurrection to life of other sons to their mothers through miracles performed by great OT prophets: Elijah (1 Kings 17:17-24) and Elisha (2 Kings 4:18-37). In fact, Nain was near the place where one of them took place. This association with the miraculous workings of raising the dead by other great prophets most likely brought forth their pronouncement that, in Jesus, "A great prophet has appeared among us."

Summary

Although we are not told why Jesus went to the town of Nain or if He even expected to have an "encounter" there that would reveal more of who He was—while there, He sees a woman (a widow whose only son has died) in great need. Without her or anyone else asking, Jesus, out of His compassion for the woman, raises her son to life. This revelation of His power over death brought about a dual response from the people who witnessed it: praise to God, and a connection with the past that gave them a new 'category' in which they could think about Jesus.

Application Questions

- What do we learn about Jesus in this passage and how does this change your understanding of who He is?
- Have there been times in your life where Jesus might have helped you without you even asking (and maybe without you even realizing at the time that it was Jesus who helped)? Take some time to give Him thanks for these things.
- What encouragement does this "encounter" (and demonstration of Jesus' compassion) give you about approaching Jesus in times of need?

ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

A “Sinful Woman” and a “Religious Leader”

Luke 7:36-50

Introduction: In this account, there are actually two people who encounter Jesus—a “religious leader” and a “sinful woman.” Their different actions and responses toward Jesus reveal some very important things about themselves—and their understanding of Him.

Opening Question: How have you responded when someone has done something good for you that you couldn’t have done for yourself—especially if you knew that you didn’t deserve it?

Read [Luke 7:36-50](#)

[*Note: This account is somewhat similar to another incident recorded in the other three gospels (Matt 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9, and John 12:1-8), which happened later in Jesus’ life and ministry. However, the significant differences in the two make it clear that it is a different incident.*]

Discussion Questions

1. Who was Simon? What did he know/think about Jesus? Why did he invite Jesus to dinner?

Simon was a Pharisee, i.e. a “religious leader” of the Jews. He refers to Jesus as “teacher” in v.40, but most likely questioned whether He really was a “prophet” (v.39). His motive for inviting Jesus into his home may have been to trap Him (cf. Luke 6:11), but most likely it was because he wanted to look good in the eyes of others.

[*Note: The fact that they were reclining rather than sitting at the table indicated that this was most likely a banquet, not a private dinner.*]

2. Who was this woman? What did it mean that she was a “sinner”? What did she know/think about Jesus? Why do you think she went to Jesus?

We’re not told who she was, but most likely she was a prostitute. It seems that she had come to an understanding of her sinful ways (how we’re not told), and so she went to Jesus—in faith—longing for His acceptance and forgiveness. Note: Maybe she had heard of Jesus forgiving the sins of the paralyzed man in Luke 5:17-26 and therefore believed that He, too, could forgive her of her sins.

[*Note: The woman took advantage of the social custom of that time that permitted needy people to come into a dinner like this one to receive some of the leftovers. They were to remain quiet and behind the guests, not disturbing what was going on.*]

3. In what sense was it gutsy for this woman to show up at a dinner party hosted by a Pharisee? At the dinner, why did she weep and why did she do what she did?

Showing up at a Pharisee’s house meant that she would be judged and looked down upon. But this did not stop her from coming to Jesus. Initially, her tears probably came from sorrow for her sins, i.e. tears of repentance. Her actions (wetting Jesus’ feet with her tears, wiping His feet with her hair, kissing them, and pouring perfume on them), however, became acts of love and gratitude to Jesus for His forgiveness, and her tears therefore turned into tears of joy.

4. What do you think the atmosphere of the room was like? What was Jesus’ response to the woman while she wiped His feet with her tears? What did this communicate?

As an uninvited guest, this woman was to remain quiet, and stay in the background. The room was most likely full of tension not only because of who this woman was and what she was doing, but also because Jesus did not tell her to stop or to go away. However, Jesus most likely

remained silent and didn't do anything (allowing the woman to do what she did) to communicate to her His forgiveness.

5. In v. 39, how did Simon respond to what had happened? What did this reveal about his view of the woman? of Jesus?

Simon had an internal response to what had happened, revealing his disdain for the woman and his disbelief in Jesus as a prophet—or someone more than just a teacher.

6. Look at the story that Jesus tells Simon in verses 40-42. What was the point of the story? Why did Jesus tell it?

Jesus uses it to teach Simon—to show him what the right response ought to be to someone who does something good for you that you couldn't do for yourself and that you didn't deserve.

7. Note in verses 44-46 what Jesus says about the differences in how He was treated by Simon and the woman. Why the differences (v.47)?

Common hospitality of this time included providing water for washing the feet, oil for the head and a kiss when greeted. Note: Jesus says 3 times that "you did not... but she/the woman did..."

The woman had loved much because she knew that she has been forgiven much. Here—in keeping with the point of the story and with what Jesus says at the end of the verse—is a clearer reading of the first part of v.47 "her many sins have been forgiven, as her great love has shown"

8. What is significant about Jesus saying to the woman in v.48, "Your sins are forgiven" and then in v.50, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace"? How would this have shaped her new life as a recovering prostitute?

First, Jesus verbalizes and confirms what she already knows—her sins were forgiven! The woman's acts of love were the evidence of her forgiveness, not the basis for it. Jesus makes it clear here that it was her faith—i.e. her trust in who He was and His ability to forgive her of her sins—that had brought about His forgiveness of her sins and her salvation. Jesus affirms her, which enables her to begin healing and to live a new life.

Summary

A "religious leader," who doesn't believe that Jesus is who He really is and who doesn't recognize his need for forgiveness, shows little love to Jesus. However, a "sinful woman," who does recognize her sin comes to Jesus in repentance and faith, is accepted by Him and receives forgiveness from Him, and in turn, expresses much love to Him in return.

Application Questions

- What do we learn about Jesus in this passage?
- What do we learn from this story about approaching Jesus? What might this mean for you?
- What might be keeping you from understanding who Jesus really is, and from putting your faith in Him and receiving His forgiveness?
- What would it mean for you to love Jesus the way the woman did as expressions of loving gratitude for His forgiveness of your sins?

ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

The Twelve Disciples

Luke 8:22-25

Introduction: Early in Jesus' ministry, He called out twelve men to be with Him and to be His disciples (Luke 6:12-16). All twelve of these men were with Jesus during at least three of the "encounters" that we've looked at so far in Luke (the healing of the Roman centurion's servant - 7:1-10, the raising of the dead son to life - 7:11-17 and the forgiving of the "sinful woman" - 7:36-50) and some would have been with Him for more. These first-hand experiences, *one might think*, would have helped these men to know who Jesus was.

Today we will be looking at a situation in which Jesus, while alone with the Twelve, "encountered" them. This "encounter" not only revealed things to them about Jesus, but also revealed how well (or in their case, how not so well) they *really* knew who He was.

Opening Question: Have you ever thought that you knew someone fairly well, but then were surprised to find out something about them that you didn't know before?

Read [Luke 8:22-25](#)

[Note: Mark's parallel account, found in Mark 4:35-41, will be referred to often in this study because of the additional insight that it gives us into this account.]

Discussion Questions

1. Describe the scene in verses 22-23. Where are Jesus and His disciples? Where were they headed?

They were on the Sea of Galilee. Having left the territory of Galilee, they were headed for the region of the Gerasenes.

What was Jesus doing? What was happening while He slept?

Jesus was sleeping. Mark tells us that "when evening came" they "left the crowd behind" and got into the boat (Mark 4:35-36). Jesus was probably exhausted from another long day of teaching and ministry to many people.

Mark 4:37 tells us that "a furious squall came up."

[Note: Situated in a basin surrounded by mountains, the Sea of Galilee was particularly susceptible to sudden, violent storms. Cool air from the Mediterranean would be drawn down through the narrow mountain passes and would clash with the hot, humid air lying over the lake, causing these storms.]

2. What was the reaction of the disciples to their situation? What did they do? (v.24a)

They were afraid of dying because they were in "great danger."

This must have been a particularly violent storm because those who were fisherman (Peter, James, and John) would have most likely encountered many storms in their fishing experiences, and thus would have been skilled to know how to handle them.

The disciples woke Jesus from His sleep, crying out to Him in their fear.

3. What did Jesus do in response? (v.24b)

He rebuked the wind and the waves, and completely calmed the storm.

What did this reveal about Him?

His authority and power over nature and natural forces.

4. In v. 25, why did Jesus ask His disciples “Where is your faith?” What might this have revealed about where Jesus thought they should be in their understanding of who He was?

The disciples had been with Jesus when He had healed the sick and disabled, when He had cast out demons and evil spirits and when He had raised a dead boy to life—all of which revealed His authority and power over these things. Some (at least Simon Peter, James, and John) had also already seen Him demonstrate His authority and power over nature when He caused the great catch of fish that had almost sunk their fishing boats. Because of these experiences, it seems that Jesus thought that they should have known enough to have faith in Him that the situation that they were in was not out of His control. Therefore, they had no reason to fear.

5. How did the disciples respond (v.25b) and what did this reveal about themselves?

They responded in “fear” (of Jesus?) and “amazement” (because of His authority and power over nature and natural forces), and talked among each other asking, “Who is this?” (which revealed that they were still uncertain about who Jesus really was).

Summary

Before this account, the disciples certainly did know some things about Jesus from being with Him, and from what they saw and experienced vicariously through Jesus’ “encounters” with other people. However, when Jesus “encountered” them directly in the boat during the storm at sea, He revealed something about Himself that they really didn’t know (or at least didn’t believe was true for them)—this being that He had authority and power over nature and natural forces. He also revealed some-thing about them that they might not have known about themselves—that being that they were still uncertain about who Jesus really was.

Application Questions

- What do we learn about Jesus in this passage?
- Have any of these things—or anything else that you’ve learned about Jesus in any of our Bible studies—been a surprise to you, revealing something about Him that you didn’t know before?
- Are you content to “know what you know” about Jesus or do you want to know Him better?
- If you want to know Him better, what do you need to do to pursue this?

ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

A Demon-Possessed Man

Luke 8:26-39

Introduction: In this account, a man—who was in a hopeless and helpless situation apart from Jesus and without knowledge of Him—experiences Jesus coming to him and “encountering” him. This “encounter” radically changed his life and caused him to want to follow Jesus.

Opening Question: Have you ever been in a hopeless and helpless situation in which you needed someone else to intervene and do something for you to bring change to your situation?

Read [Luke 8:26-39](#)

Discussion Questions

1. Verse 26 says that “they” sailed to the region of the Gerasenes which was across the lake from Galilee.” Who were the “they” and where had they come from?

The “they” were Jesus and His disciples. In the previous section (8:22-25), as they were sailing from the other side of the lake, they were met by a fierce storm. Jesus demonstrated His power over the forces of nature by calming the storm, stilling both the wind and waves.

[Note: The region of the Gerasenes was largely a Gentile region and a place where Jesus hadn’t been before.]

2. Describe the man who met Jesus when He stepped ashore (vv.27-30).

Possessed/controlled by many demons (in mind, action, and speech), lived in the tombs/separated from society, extraordinarily strong/wild/unable to be subdued, naked, crazy/out of his mind.

[Note: Although a legion consisted of over 6000 soldiers, the man may not have had that many demons in him—but he did have a large number of them, thus the use of “many” v.30.]

3. Look at verses 28-31. Who was speaking to Jesus? What was being asked? Why?

It was the demons who were speaking—and they were afraid because they knew that they were in the presence of one who threatened their very existence. Therefore, they repeatedly begged Jesus not to order them into the Abyss, the future holding place for Satan and his demons before their eventual final judgment (Rev 20:1-3, 10)

Note the irony of their request not to be tortured, since this is exactly what they were doing to the man they possessed!

4. What happened in verses 32-33?

The demons were bent on destroying. Not having been able to yet destroy the man (which eventually they would have done), they destroyed the pigs.

Why did Jesus allow the demons to enter the pigs, an act that ultimately resulted in the destruction of the entire herd?

A possible answer is that Jesus wanted to give tangible evidence to the man and to the people that the demons had actually left the man and that their purpose had been to destroy him, even as they destroyed the pigs.

5. As a result of this demonstration of power, those tending the pigs “ran off and reported what had happened in the town and countryside” (v.34). When people came to the sight to see what had happened, what did they find (vv.35b-36)?

The man from whom the demons had come out was sitting at the feet of Jesus, dressed, in his right mind and fully cured.

Why were the people afraid? Why did they ask Jesus to leave (v.37)?

The power that Jesus demonstrated over the forces of evil was something that the people didn't understand and hadn't seen before. And since they didn't know Jesus, they didn't know what else He might do that might have had an even more serious consequence for them. Fear and ignorance (and probably selfishness as well) led them to send Jesus away.

6. The man, however, begged to go with Jesus (v.38). What was Jesus' response? What did He tell the man to do (v.39a)?

“Return home and tell how much God has done for you.”

What did the man do (v.39b)?

“He went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.”

7. A final note: This encounter with the demon-possessed man is the only activity recorded in the region of the Gerasenes. So why did Jesus go there and what did it reveal about Himself?

Jesus purposely “encountered” the demon-possessed man to not only demonstrate His love and compassion toward him, but also to demonstrate His power over the forces of evil.

Summary

A demon-possessed man is encountered by Jesus and is miraculously freed from the forces of evil that had control over him. The result was that the man not only was restored to his true self again, but also became a witness to Jesus' love and power to many others.

Application Questions

- What do we learn about Jesus in this passage?
- In what ways/areas of your life do you feel hopeless and helpless—like the man in this account—and need Jesus to ‘come across the lake’ and show you His love and power?
- What typically happens when Jesus does something good in your life? Do you—like the man in this account—tell others about it, giving credit and glory to Jesus?
- In what ways might you be afraid—like the townspeople in this account—of what Jesus might want to do and what it might cost you if He ‘sticks around’ and continues to do things in your life and life's situations?

ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

A Synagogue Ruler and a Bleeding Woman

Luke 8:40-56

Introduction: In this account, two people—who have two very different needs and places in society—“encounter” Jesus. In both cases, Jesus shows love and compassion for them as individuals, demonstrates His power and meets their needs.

Opening Question: Have you ever been in situation where someone—who though very busy and/or involved in something very important—took time to show you love and compassion?

Read [Luke 8:40-56](#)

[*Note: In the previous verses, Jesus—who had just healed a demon-possessed man in the region of the Gerasenes (a Gentile region on the east side of the lake)—had been asked to leave. In v.40 we see that He and His disciples had returned to the west side of the lake.*]

Discussion Questions

1. What happened as soon as Jesus returned? (vv.40-42)

A large crowd had formed (v.42 tells us that “the crowds almost crushed Him (Jesus)”).

Jairus came to Jesus and pleaded with him to come to his home and heal his dying daughter.

[*Note: A ruler of the synagogue was a layman whose responsibilities were administrative and included such things as looking after the building and supervising the worship. Therefore, it was a position of high honor and importance.*]

Jairus’ actions show how important this was to him: He fought through the crowd to get to Jesus, He humbled himself by falling at Jesus’ feet and he pleaded with Jesus to come.

Jesus, along with the large crowd, began moving toward Jairus’ house.

2. Look at verses 43-44. Who was this woman? What was her need?

We’re not told who this woman was. We also don’t know what she had heard or knew about Jesus. It seems however, that she believed that Jesus could heal her.

She had been “subject to bleeding for twelve years,” and no one had been able to cure her. The precise nature of the bleeding is not mentioned, but it is believed that it was a gynecological problem. This most likely had given her much discomfort and caused her much embarrassment. She also would have been considered “unclean” by Jewish law and custom (Lev 15:25-33), and therefore shunned by most Jewish people.

What did she do? What happened as a result?

She came up behind Jesus and touched the edge of his cloak. Why? Because she was considered “unclean” she most likely didn’t want to be noticed, and therefore cast away.

Although she may not have known much about Jesus, and although her faith may have been mixed with a measure of superstition (the common belief of that time was that the power of a person was transmitted through his clothing), the power of Jesus healed her immediately.

3. In verse 45, why did Jesus ask, “Who touched me?”

Jesus wanted the miracle that had just happened to be known—for the woman’s sake and for the sake of those in the crowd, including Jairus and Jesus’ disciples.

4. In v.47b, the woman “In the presence of all the people...told why she had touched Him and how she had been instantly healed.” With this truth made public, what did it reveal about Jesus?

His love and compassion for the woman and His power over sickness/long-term illness

Why did Jesus say to the woman (v.48), “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.”?

Jesus wanted her to be clear that it was her faith (and not any superstitious act) that had healed her. He also wanted her to be assured that she was permanently healed.

5. What do you think might have been going on in Jairus’ heart and mind all of this time?

He most likely was growing anxious because precious time was passing by.

How might he have responded to the news that came in v.49? What did Jesus say to him? (v.50)

He probably was very disappointed and sad, but Jesus tells him not to be afraid and to believe that his daughter will be healed.

How might what Jairus had just experienced between Jesus and the bleeding woman have encouraged him to continue to have faith and believe that his daughter would be “healed”?

He saw that Jesus does care about individual people and He does have power to heal.

6. Look at verses 51-53. What was going on at Jairus’ house when Jesus arrived? How did Jesus respond?

[Note: It was customary to use “professional mourners” at the time of death. Because of Jairus’ prominent position, the number of professional mourners at his house was very large.]

7. What did Jesus do in v.54? What did it reveal about Him?

He brought the dead girl back to life, revealing His power over death.

8. What was Jairus’ (and his wife’s) response to what Jesus did?

They reacted with astonishment.

Summary

In this account, Jesus—out of His love and compassion for all people—demonstrates His power and meets the needs of two very different individuals. One person wasn’t more important to Him than the other; nor was one need greater than the other. He had time—and took time—for both.

Application Questions

- What do we learn about Jesus in this passage?
- Do you believe that Jesus cares about you and your needs as an individual—no matter what those needs may be or who you may be?
- Do you believe that Jesus has the power to meet your needs, no matter what those needs may be?

ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

“Who do you say I am?”

Luke 9:18-26

Introduction: Throughout this Bible study series we’ve been looking at various “encounters” that people had with Jesus. In our final study today, Jesus asks a very important question to His disciples—and to us—based on what has been learned about Him through these “encounters.” The answer to this question had important implications for their lives—as our answer should have for ours.

Review: Let’s take some time to review what we’ve learned in the “encounters” that we’ve looked at in this Bible study series by answering the following questions for each one:

- 1) What was the need that each person had and how did Jesus meet this need?
- 2) What did it reveal about Himself—especially about His authority and power?
- 3) How did the person (and/or others) respond to what Jesus did and revealed?

<u>Jesus’ encounter with</u>	<u>Jesus’ authority over</u>	<u>Peoples’ response</u>
A fisherman (5:1-11)	Nature/Human lives	Followed Jesus
A paralyzed man (5:17-26)	Physical disablement/Sin	Praised God
A Roman centurion (7:1-10)	Sickness	-----
A widow (7:11-17)	Death	Praised God
A “sinful woman” and a “religious leader” (7:36-50)	Sin	Showed much love to Jesus
The twelve disciples (8:22-25)	Forces of nature	Were amazed
A demon-possessed man (8:26-39)	Forces of evil	Told many what Jesus had done
A synagogue ruler and a bleeding woman (8:40-56)	Death Sickness	Was astonished -----

Turn to [Luke 9:18-26](#). Read verses 18-20.

[*Note: This account takes place sometime after all of the above “encounters,” at a time when Jesus was alone with His disciples.*]

Discussion Questions

1. In this time alone with His disciples, Jesus asked them, “Who do the crowds say I am?” How did they answer Him?

“John the Baptist, Elijah, one of the prophets of long ago”...These were the same things that Herod had heard others saying (9:7-8) because they were the common thoughts of the day.

Why might people have thought these things?

Jesus’ display of power and authority was like no other person people had known. However, many in “the crowd” had not encountered Jesus first-hand or experienced personally the encounters of Peter, the Roman centurion, etc. Therefore, rumors spread about who He might be. But all of these “possibilities” reflected inadequate views of who Jesus really was.

2. In verse 20, Jesus turned the question to His disciples: “But what about you? Who do you say I am?” Why do you think He asked this question to them?

The disciples had been with Jesus for some time now and had experienced first-hand many of the ‘encounters’ that others had with Him. They, too, had experienced things that others hadn’t (e.g.

Jesus calming the storm (Luke 8:22-25). Therefore, He wanted to know if their view of Him was any different than “the crowd” and/or had changed over the time that they had been with Him.

3. How did Peter (the “spokesperson” for the disciples) answer? Was he right?

“The Christ of God” = the Messiah. This answer revealed insight into who Jesus was but was far from being correct because of the common notions about the Messiah (the predicted deliverer of the Jewish people), which were largely political and national. Peter, and the other disciples, had much more to learn about what the true Messiah was like, why He had come, what would happen to Him and what He would accomplish through His death and resurrection. [And how do we know that this is true? See Peter’s response to Jesus in Matt 16:22-23 when He tells them (in v.21 of that account and here in v. 22) about what His true Messiahship would entail.]

4. Why did Jesus warn them not to tell their answer to anyone (v.21)?

Jesus’ injunction arose out of His knowledge of the disciples’ defective understanding. They needed to grow further in their understanding of who He really was before they would be commanded to proclaim it without restraint (which happened after His death and resurrection; see Acts 1:8).

Jesus went on to tell them what the implications of His true identity should mean for their lives (read vv. 23-26).

5. What is the meaning of what He said?

To follow Jesus requires self-denial, complete dedication to Him and willingness to obey Him.

- *“Deny yourself” (cease to make self the object of one’s life and actions)*
- *“Take up your cross daily” (be completely devoted to Him each and every day)*
- *“Follow me” (obey His words and do what He says)*

6. What does He say will happen to those who don’t acknowledge who He is and who don’t respond to Him as He says?

*He will “be ashamed of them” (they will be judged for their decision).
They will “lose their lives” (eternal life will be forfeited).*

Summary

Jesus wants people (including us) to know who He really is. Especially in the early part of His ministry, He revealed many things about Himself through His “encounters” with people—just as we have seen in the accounts that we have looked at in this Bible study series. He did this in order that people might know who He really was. However, Jesus isn’t just interested in people gaining “head knowledge” of who He is, but rather that their understanding of who He is should affect the way they live and relate to Him.

Application Questions

Jesus is asking each one of us to also answer the question, “Who do you say I am?”

- Who would you have said Jesus was before we started these bible studies?
- After having seen all of the things we have about Jesus in our bible studies (His authority over nature, sickness, death, etc.), who do you now say Jesus is?
- If your understanding of Jesus has changed, how do you think this new understanding of who Jesus is should practically change the way you live and relate to Him?
- How can we help each other to make these changes?