Paope

- 2026-10-18: 2nd Sunday of Paope - The Creation Obeys Its Creator
- 2026-10-25: 3rd Sunday of Paope - Overcoming the Devil [St Mark - Ft Myers, FL]

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Introduction

During the Coptic Month of Paope, we learn on the four Sundays about Christ's Authority.

1. Week 1: Authority over Illness (Healing of the Paralytic)
2. Week 2: Authority over Creation (Catching the Multitude of Fish)
3. Week 3: Authority over Evil Spirits (Casting the Demon out of the Blind, Mute, Possessed Man)
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Why does the creation obey Christ? What does that reveal about Him?

In the Beginning

Creation is made to serve humanity (Genesis 1-2)

- God created the heavens and the earth and declares His creation is good. He created light on the 1st day, then the sky and waters on the 2nd day, then the land with all its vegetation on the 3rd day.
- Then, He created the Sun, Moon and Stars to reflect the light of day 1, then populated the sky and waters of day 2 with birds and fish, then populated the land of day 3 with all of the animals
- Finally, God created man
  - Man is different from the other animals
  - Sometimes in school, we are taught that we are animals... we are different. We are made in the Image and Likeness of God, we receive the breath of God. We can reason. We have freedom. We have dominion.
- God gave man some commandments:
  - "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Genesis 1:28)
- Man is the CROWN of God's creation. And when He sees His creation after making man, He says "It was very good"
- God brings the animals to Adam one by one to see what he would call them - Adam gives each animal its name. He gives Adam his first task to exercise his authority and dominion over nature

Humanity was meant to live in communion with God and exercise their dominion over creation under God's authority. But there's a condition - obedience to God.

Fall of Man

Instead of man having dominion and authority over the creation, being submissive to God, man submitted to the creation and put himself under it

- He submitted to the words of the serpent - an animal
- He submitted to the desires of the eyes and of the flesh and ate the fruit of the tree
- He forsook his trust of God, leaning, instead, on his own understanding

Thus, entered into the world: sin, death, and corruption

God's response:

- “Cursed *is* the ground for your sake;
  In toil you shall eat *of* it
  All the days of your life.
  Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,
  And you shall eat the herb of the field.
  In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread
  Till you return to the ground,
  For out of it you were taken;
  For dust you *are,*
  And to dust you shall return.” (Genesis 3:17-19)
- Now, instead of man having authority over the Creation, there is a separation between man and Creation. Now, man will struggle with the creation and labor to produce from the creation. Instead of the creation serving man, man has to struggle with the creation

There is a separation from Man and the Creation

- "For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now." (Romans 8:19-22)

OT: God's Authority over Creation

1. Ten Plagues
   - Water turned into Blood
   - Frogs
   - Lice
   - Death of the Cattle
   - Hail
   - Locusts

    - Thick Darkness
2. Splitting the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21-28)
3. Sun Standing Still (Joshua 10:12-14)
    - Joshua prayed to the Lord and commanded the sun and moon to stand still and it stood still for a full day as they were fighting the Amorites
4. Elijah and the Rain
    - Elijah told King Ahab that it would not rain and for Three and a half years it did not rain until Elijah prayed.
5. Psalm 148 (Fourth Canticle)

> Praise Him, all His angels;
> Praise Him, all His hosts!
> Praise Him, sun and moon;
> Praise Him, all you stars of light!
> Praise Him, you heavens of heavens,
> And you waters above the heavens!
>
> Praise the Lord from the earth,
> You great sea creatures and all the depths;
> Fire and hail, snow and clouds;
> Stormy wind, fulfilling His word;
> Mountains and all hills;
> Fruitful trees and all cedars;
> Beasts and all cattle;
> Creeping things and flying fowl

Today's Psalm: "Make a joyful shout to God, all the earth! Sing out the honor of His name; Make His praise glorious. All the earth shall worship You." (Psalm 65:1, 2)

NT: Christ's Authority over Creation

In the New Testament, we see Christ - born of a Virgin. Born in Bethlehem, grew up in Nazareth. The son of a carpenter. He looks ordinary by all accounts - he grows up and gets older.

He begins His ministry, and as He preaches, He performs great miracles and wonders. Things that have never been seen before. And we see in these miracles that He has authority over creation!

- Catching the Fish
- Calming the Storm
- Walking on Water
- Water into Wine
- Feeding the Multitude

Why does the creation obey Christ? Because the One commanding it, is the One who created it! Because He is God! When He says "Peace, be still!" to the sea and the wind, it is still.

Me: Submit my life

I am part of God's Creation. I am part of the Natural World. Does God have authority over me?

Where Adam failed, by God's grace and the work of the Holy Spirit in us, we can succeed.

St Paul reflects this in today's Pauline Epistle: "For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6)

How do I submit my life to the Lord's authority?

Fulfilling His Word

- "Fire and hail, snow and clouds, stormy wind, **fulfilling His word**"
- Adam fulfilled the word of the serpent instead of the word of God. What about me?
  - He commands us to forgive, but we hold on to resentment
  - He commands us to love our enemies, but we hold on to anger
  - He commands us to purity, but we entertain impurity - of our senses, of our thoughts
  - He commands us to humility, but we insist on being right
- The wind does not argue with Christ, the sea does not negotiate with Christ, the fish don't tell Him that His request is unreasonable. They just obey His commands. They fulfill His word.
- Story of Jonah? The sea obeyed, the wind obeyed, the great fish obeyed, the tree obeyed, the worm obeyed... it was only the prophet of God who did not obey. Why? Because He didn't agree with God's command.
- When Christ's word challenges my preference, my comfort, my feelings, my experiences, my desires - will I obey Him?

Governing My Desire

- Adam was supposed to exercise dominion over creation, but he could not even govern himself (his own passions).
- The fruit was "pleasing to the eyes and desireable for wisdom" (Genesis 3:6)
- Will I rule over my desires? Or will they rule over me?
  - I cannot control the wind... but (by God's grace), I can control my thoughts, my temper, my anger
  - I cannot command the sea... but (by God's grace), I can control my senses - my eyes and my tongue and my ears
  - I cannot command the fish... but (by God's grace), I can control my body... where I go and what I do

Trusting God's Will

- Adam did not trust God's will. He leaned on his own understanding.
- This is the opposite of St Peter in today's Gospel
  - Although he used his own understanding and experience to fish all night, when it came time for it, "Nevertheless at Your word I will let down my net." (Luke 5:5)
- I am not in control
- "Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?" (Matthew 6:27)
  - We cannot command the wind to stop, we cannot guarantee our health, our future, the success of our plans, or the decisions of other people.
  - But we know the One who commands the wind
- "Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
  And lean not on your own understanding;" (Proverbs 3:5)

Conclusion

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. He gave man dominion over creation, but man rejected the authority of God. Instead of submitting to the Creator, he listened to a creature. Sin entered the world and all the creation was subject to corruption.

But God's Authority didn't go anywhere. The wind obeyed Him, the sea obeyed Him, the fish obeyed Him, and all of the natural world obeyed Him. And when Christ was Incarnate and became man and came into the world, the creation recognized its Creator.

Do I recognize my Creator? Does He have authority over me? Do I submit my life to His authority?

We took three points:

- Fulfilling His Word
- Governing Our Desires
- Trusting His Will

May God's grace work in us, that we may submit our life to His authority.

2026-10-25: 3rd Sunday of Paope - Overcoming the Devil [St Mark - Ft Myers, FL]

Background

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These four things, humanity does not have authority over - even until today with all of the science and technology, we don't have authority over illness, over nature, over evil spirits or over death. We read a beautiful story in the Synaxarion about St Pantalemon who was a physician. And yet, when someone came to him with blindness, an illness that medicine could do nothing for, he signed him with the Cross, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the name that has authority over illness, and the blindness was healed.

It's a beautiful example of how - although we, humanity, do not have authority over these things, by the power of Christ, we can overcome! And that is the message of today's readings that focus on the Lord's authority over evil spirits.

Introduction

We read in the Catholic Epistle: "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

It sounds so simple… resist the devil and he will flee from you. But how do we resist?

St Peter says the same in his epistle: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world." (1 Peter 5:8-9)

If the devil is really roaming the earth, seeking whom he may devour, how can I resist him?

We need to know his tricks, and we need to know some remedies for them, and by God's grace and His authority, we will be able to resist.

How the Devil Tempts

1. He deceives
2. He tempts
3. He accuses

That’s why he is called the Deceiver, the Tempter and the Accuser

Deceiver

How does he deceive?

- By Twisting the Truth
  - When he told Eve in the garden: “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?“ - that’s not what God said! God said “Of every tree of the garden, you may freely eat… but of the tree of knowledge of Good and Evil, you may not eat.” - do you see the difference? He is twisting God’s words!
  - ”God wants you to be happy, so do what makes you happy” - is it true that God wants us to be happy? Of course! But He wants us to have an everlasting joy, not a fleeting joy!
  - “You only live once! So enjoy it while it lasts!” - is it true that we only live once? Yes… but we have an upcoming eternal life! Lasts forever… and actually what we do in this temporal life affects the eternal one!
- By Lying
  - God said: ”For in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die.” Devil said: “You shall not surely die”
  - He is called the Liar!
  - “Sin now and repent later” - lie! How do you know how long the opportunity to repent will last? And what if it comes, but I have hardened my heart?!
  - Someone will spend time with bad company and say “I want to help change them” or even just “I can hang out with them and I won’t be affected” - the devil is lying to you. The Scripture is clear… “Do not be deceived. Evil company corrupts good morals.”
  - A youth will get involved in a relationship he is not ready for, and he will say “well we read the Bible together” or “we pray the Agpeya together” - the devil is lying to you.
- By Wrong Interpretation of the Truth
  - When the devil tried to tempt the Lord, he used Scripture! He said “It is written ‘He shall give His angels charge over you”
  - Although it is written, his interpretation of it is wrong!
  - The Bible said we shouldn’t “judge others” - but now many Christians think that means we shouldn’t call out evil! That we shouldn’t call someone to repentance! This is a wrong interpretation of the truth!
- By giving new names to sin
  - “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isaiah 5:20, NKJV)
  - It’s not abortion, it is “pro-choice”

    - It’s not homosexuality, it is “love is love”
    - It’s not gambling, it is “harmless fun”
    - It’s not drinking, it is “social gathering”
- Warning about the current deception in AI
    - Targeting the elderly
    - Videos that you think are a real person speaking, and it’s not

What is the remedy for his deception? The Truth!

- The Holy Scripture
    - ”You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free”
    - Abide in the truth
    - Fill yourself with the truth
    - “Your words were found, and I ate them,” (Jeremiah 15)

- The Sound Interpretation of the Scripture
    - The Tradition of the Church gives us the correct meaning of the verses and stories of the Scripture
    - What Christ taught, the Disciples preached, the Fathers kept and now we receive it from the Church
    - Read commentary on Scripture - like in the Coptic Commentary app
    - Listen to Bible Studies from HE Metropolitan Youssef or Abouna Daoud Lamei
    - Attend the Bible Study in your church
    - Fill yourself with the Holy Scripture and the sound interpretation of Scripture and you will protect yourself from the deception of the devil

- Ask Questions and Seek Guidance
    - Church Servants
    - Abouna
    - Diocese Website

Tempter

Makes something seem appealing

- He does this in three ways
    - “For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.” (1 John 2:16)
- This is what happened to Eve:
    - ”When she saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate.” (Genesis 3:6)
    - ”Good for food” - Lust of the Flesh
    - ”Pleasant to the eyes” - Lust of the eyes
    - ”Desirable to make one wise” - Pride of Life
- This is what Christ was tempted with:
    - ”Turn these stones to bread and eat” - Lust of the Flesh

    - ”Look at all these kingdoms I will give you” - Lust of the Eyes
    - ”Throw yourself down and the angels will carry you” - Pride of Life
- All temptations that we face can fall into one of these three categories

What is the remedy for this temptation?

- Prayer and Fasting
    - “This kind cannot come out except by prayer and fasting”
    - When I bring my body to subjection in prayer and fasting, I will be able to more easily overcome the lusts of the flesh and the lusts of the eyes
    - I need prayer because, like we said in the beginning, the authority over the devil is not mine but it is through Christ! So I need to communicate with Him and to be connected with Him

- Flee from Evil
    - Lot was tempted in Sodom - torturing himself day and night. But he did not run from Sodom until the two angels came and told him “run for your life”
    - If Joseph had tried to reason with Potiphar’s wife, maybe he would not have overcome the temptation. But he ran away; he fled from evil.
    - Once I see something, or feel something, let me flee from evil
    - The desert fathers and saints were known to flee from praise! Because it could lead to pride!
    - Christ, Himself, fled to Egypt from the evil of King Herod
    - Cut off the means of temptation
        - ”if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out” - “if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off”
        - What does that mean?
        - If I see that an app on my phone is causing me to sin… it’s not enough to swipe to the next video… it’s not enough to close the app… let me remove the app from my phone!
        - If I see that a device in my house is causing me to sin… let me establish some boundaries. Maybe my phone doesn’t go to my room, or my laptop doesn’t enter the bedroom.
        - If I know that a certain friend causes me to sin… let me set boundaries on where we go, how much time we spend with each other, etc.

Accuser

The last tactic that the devil uses on us is to accuse us.

- I feel shame. I feel guilt. I feel hopeless. I feel that I cannot be helped. I feel that I will never overcome. I feel like how can God love me? Why would He want to? How can He even look at me?
- How will I even tell Abouna about this?
- And maybe I told him before… How can I go to Abouna with the same sin AGAIN?

- The devil wants you to stay in your shame and in your guilt. He wants you to reach a point of despair.
- This is what he did with Judas
  - Judas and St Peter both betrayed Christ. The sin was the same.
  - But the difference in them is that Judas fell into despair - he isolated himself, fell into despair and then met his end of his own will.
  - But St Peter didn't do that. St Peter went to the disciples… he went to the Church.

This is the remedy to Satan's accusation. Go to the Church. Go to the Sacraments.

- The Sacrament of Repentance and Confession
  - You know, the Lord is not counting how many times you fell.
  - He will only ask us about how many times we got back up
  - How we struggled and strived and persevered and tried very hard
  - In the Sacrament of Repentance and Confession
    - You turn your shame or guilt into "godly sorrow"
    - "For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death." (2 Corinthians 7:10)
    - Then you expose your thoughts, liberating you from this thought
    - Then you receive guidance
    - Then you receive the absolution, absolving you of this sin
    - Then, having confidence in the Lord's love and forgiveness, you leave strengthened, ready to strive even more.
  - Goha's Nail
    - Exposing your thoughts will liberate you from this thought

Conclusion

The Devil is the deceiver, tempter and accuser. But we know his tricks. And we know our remedies.

1. The Holy Scripture and the Sound Interpretation of the Scripture
2. Ask Questions and Seek Guidance
3. Fasting and Prayer
4. Flee from Evil
5. Sacrament of Repentance and Confession

May the Lord grant us to resist the devil, and to overcome him by the authority that we saw in our Lord Jesus Christ today.