

Demonic to Disciple

Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39

“Jesus takes His disciples from the classroom to the laboratory. Having just taught that God’s power will cause His kingdom to grow to worldwide proportion and influence, Jesus now performs four miracles that demonstrate this divine might.” King James Study Bible p. 1501 1. Power over nature 2. Power over demons 3. Power over disease 4. Power over death

I. Setting

“And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes (“Gergesenes” Matthew 8:28/“which is over against Galilee.” Luke 8:26).” Mark 5:1 Everything I read discussed the variations within the Gospels about this location. We have to remember the many changes in ruling powers, territorial boundaries, and even the loss of knowledge of where some cities even were. One thing that hasn’t changed much over the millenniums is the topographical layout. So with the Scriptural truth, historical writings, and the hints of the land around the Sea of Galilee, scholars are confident of where this took place.

“country of the Gadarenes” – (Mark/Luke) Gadara was a city about 6 miles from the sea and was the ruling city of the territory known as Gadara. Though originally part of the land of the tribe of Gad, at the time of Christ, it was then part of Decapolis, a league of ten Gentile cities along the east side of the Jordan River.

“Gergesenes” – Gerasa was the city associated with Gergesenes. This was Matthew’s given location, and most believe this city was close to the coast where the herdsmen and citizens lived that later came to see Jesus. The name of the area today is Khersa. It also has rocky slopes with a sharp descent to the water, limestone caverns, and ancient hewed-out tombs that are consistent with the details of this event.

By letter of the law, this was a Jewish area, but at the time of Christ, the majority of residents would have been Gentiles.

II. Men Possessed

“And when he was come out of the ship (“And went forth to land” Luke 8:27), immediately there met him out of the tombs (“the city” Luke 8:27) a man (“two possessed with devils” Matthew 8:28) with an unclean spirit (“had devils long time, and wore no clothes, neither abode in any house” “and was driven of the devil into the wilderness” Luke 8:27, 29),³ Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: ⁴ Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him (“exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way” Matthew 8:28).⁵ And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.” Mark 5:2-5

“two possessed with devils” – It is Matthew who tells us there were two possessed men. It is obvious that Mark and Luke have zeroed in on the predominate man, the spokesman, the one possessed with a great number of demons, and the one with the desire to ultimately follow Jesus. This is not an isolated case of differences within the events of Christ. As the writers had different objectives, they highlighted only what was useful to their subject, leaving secondary details out. In this incident, keep in mind, that although there was one that seemed to do the talking and was tortured by so many demons, both were healed by Jesus!

Results of Demon Possession – I read several times that this was the worst case of demon possession reported in Scripture. You will not find a more awful example. Let’s review what the passages tell us about these poor men’s condition when they met Jesus: (HW#20 Q 1) 1) driven from all comforts and conveniences into unclean

surroundings – home, family, and friends 2) taken over of mind and body - strong, fierce, unruly, engaged in mayhem 3) robbed of sanity – no peace, lost the purpose for living 4) no self-control – naked, crying Gk – continual crying; self-hurt – “cutting himself” – intense verb of slashing himself to pieces; cut up himself

Realize, that society was powerless. They could not help them! In Greek, Mark 5:4 is full of vivid terms and tenses emphasizing the impossibility of controlling the demon-possessed men. Though they had often tried to restrain them, there was nothing they could do to tame or change these men. The citizens eventually had to leave the possessed alone and avoid them altogether!

III. Demons This is a very disturbing exchange; we see anger, hate, and struggle between these demons and the Son of God! **In Session 2 Review use HW#21 Q 2**

“But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, ⁷And (“behold,” Matthew 8:29) cried with a loud voice (“and fell down before him” Luke 8:28), and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure (“beseech” Lit. - pray Luke 8:28) thee by God, that thou torment me not (“art thou come hither to torment us before the time?” Matthew 8:29). ⁸ For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. ⁹And he (“Jesus” Luke 8:30) asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many (“because many devils were entered into him” Luke 8:30). ¹⁰And he besought him much that he would not send (“command” Luke 8:31) them away out of the country (“into the deep” Lit. - abyss – bottomless pit Luke 8:31). ¹¹ Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. ¹²And all the devils besought him, saying, (“If thou cast us out,” Gk - “When you cast us out,” Matthew 8:31) Send (“suffer” Luke 8:32) us into the swine, that we may enter into them.” Mark 5:6-12

General Facts about these Demons:

1. Recognized Jesus as the Son of God . All three Gospels recorded the fact that these demons knew the deity of Christ. They were drawn to Jesus in submission. The passage tells us they ran and “worshipped:” emphasis is a bowed down position of homage, not the worship of a devoted, lover of Christ. The phrase “Most High God” is both a Jewish and Gentile name for the God of Israel. It distinguishes Him from false idols throughout the Old and New Testament. Nebuchadnezzar calling the Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego out of the fiery furnace said, “ye servants of the most high God, come forth,” (Daniel 3:26) In Luke 1:32 we find the angel speaking with Mary concerning her Son and said, “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest.” - (Gk – “Most High”)” James 2:19
2. Feared their eventual fate . (Matthew 8:29; Mark 5:10) These demons knew of their eventual doom in the bottomless pit! Jude 6 The words used for the demons' intense pleading with Jesus have the idea of “prayer” and “begging.” (“besought” - Matthew/Mark/Luke; “adjure” – Mark; “beseech,” – Luke)
3. Knew Jesus would be their Judge . (Luke 8:31) These demons knew Jesus would one day cast them into the “pit,” – prison of bound demons 2 Peter 2:4
4. Realized Jesus’ authority over them. We see all three Gospel narratives revealing the demons asking Jesus for permission to enter the swine. They knew it was Jesus who would not only judge them in the future but also had the power to pronounce their destiny that day!
5. Obeyed Jesus completely and immediately. Again, all three Gospels record that when Jesus told the demons to leave, that is all they could do. They were not able to resist His power!

“Legion” – Largest Roman army battalion – 6000. The emphasis of this name is size. This man was possessed by a mob of demons. Why would Jesus ask this question? He certainly knew the answer already. Christ was bringing to light the severity of the situation! Mary Magdalene had seven demons – Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2

“great herd of swine” – There is some debate on whether this herd of pigs was owned by Jews or Gentiles. Most scholars who have studied the life and times of Christ are confident this would have been a Gentile herd. This is because the area was predominantly Gentile and because of the great number of animals. Pigs were unclean, and even a wayward Jew would probably not be that forward and open to raising that many pigs that close to Israel. The need for cheap meat because of the trade routes would have benefited from this type of industry.

Reality of Demons - Appendix

IV. Christ

“And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. (“And he said unto them, Go.” Matthew 8:32) And the unclean spirits went out (“of the man” Luke 8:33), and entered into the swine: and (“behold,” Matthew 8:32) the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.” Mark 5:13

Use HW#21 Q3 for discussion.

“he said unto them, Go.” – Jesus permitted the demons to go into the herd of swine. Jesus certainly knew that these animals would drown because of it. So why did He allow the demons to enter the pigs? **It became a very visual demonstration of His power!** Just a few hours before the disciples saw the power of Jesus, God in the flesh, over the storm, but now, every person in this region will realize the power and authority of Jesus, the Christ, over the most powerful band of demons ever displayed in man. Jesus had the authority to not only cast them out of the poor, afflicted men, (which would have been a wonderful sign of His power) but then He also commanded them to move elsewhere – and the destruction those demons caused to the pigs was extremely visual! Everyone in that region either observed it, heard about it, or saw pigs floating in the sea! Several commentaries compared this outward act of power to the parables Jesus had just taught. The rescuing of these men from the demons was the greatest show of Christ’s power, but the destruction of the pigs aided as another tool to show His authority!

I’ve often wondered why the pigs seemingly drowned themselves. As we begin to understand the destructive nature of demons and how they manifest themselves in humans, we can recognize those same influences on these pigs! My sister lives in Montana several miles from the largest known First Peoples Buffalo Jump. It’s a mile-long sandstone cliff. For centuries young warriors would dress in wolf skins and slowly push the herd over the plain toward the edges. The young braves would keep their distance but stay just close enough to make the bison uncomfortable and slowly move. In the meantime, another young warrior would lead the herd forward by making occasional calf distress bellows. The whole herd would follow these fake calls, looking for the calf in trouble. The whole process could take weeks. When the herd was relatively close to the edge, the warriors would jump from their positions running and yelling. The already tense herd would collectively run in a panic. The lead warrior would also begin to run but actually ran for the cliff edge. The animals would instinctively follow and by the time the animals were at the cliff edge, it was too late. This went on in this area for 1000s of years and even today there are over 18 feet of compacted buffalo remains at the foot of the cliff! Several commentaries and scholars felt this is in part what happened with the swine. This large number of demons entered the herd of swine causing fear and madness and frenzied them into an insane panic.

V. Citizens of the Area

“And they that fed the swine (“saw what was done, they” Luke 8:34) fled, and told (“everything”, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils.” Matthew 8:33) it in the city, and in the country. And

(“behold, the whole city” Matthew 8:34) they went out to see (“Jesus” Matthew 8:34) what it was that was done. ¹⁵And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. ¹⁶And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil (“was healed.” Luke 8”36), and also concerning the swine. ¹⁷And they (“the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about” Luke 8:37) began to pray him to depart out of their coasts (“for they were taken with great fear” Luke 8:37).”
Mark 5:14-17

News spread fast – The herdsmen were powerless to save their pigs. I’m sure they had to get out of the way, or they would have been trampled. Remember, the Bible said these pigs ran “violently” down the steep hill. All three Gospel passages tell us the herdsmen “fled.” In Greek, this emphasizes that they ran away in wild terror back to their city. And what was their message? They told the city and the country round about “everything” that had happened to **the possessed men**. According to the passage, it seems the curing of the demon-possessed and Jesus was the reason for this excitement – not the pigs! Keep this in mind!

Crowd gathered fast – The city quickly emptied to come and see, “what was done.” Don’t forget, the community was very aware of these possessed men living in the graveyard and had even attempted to tame them. They had invested in these poor men, and eventually given up; to them it was a hopeless case! And what did they find now? The formerly possessed man sitting at Jesus’ feet (a position of a disciple), “clothed, and in his right mind.”

Use HW#20 Q4 and HW#21 Q4 for discussion.

Fear held them fast – And their reaction was **fear**. Luke tells us, “for they were taken with great **fear**,” meaning terribly afraid. The Scripture says that more reports about how all this came to be were given as the people arrived on the scene. Many commentaries suggested that the disciples added to the details of the herdsmen, “And **they that saw** it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine.” v. 16 A few short hours before, **fear** was the same reaction of the disciples when Jesus displayed His power over the storm and sea. Matter of fact, the word “**fear**” found associated with the disciples in Mark 4:41, is the same Greek word here. The citizens of the area show the same response to Jesus’ power and authority - **Fear!** These pagan, superstitious townspeople were faced with the same question that came to the disciples, “What manner of man is this?” But **fear** held them fast.

Reaction to fear – Though Jesus had brought peace to these men and the community, the townspeople's reaction was ultimately the **rejection of Jesus**. Instead of desiring Him, they wanted Jesus gone! The Wycliffe Commentary said this, “Awestruck but unrepentant, they wanted no more of Christ.” p. 943 Keep in mind, that this was **not just** the attitude of the pig owners, the Bible said, “the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them.” They wanted nothing to do with Jesus! This pagan, superstitious people wanted Jesus and His powers to leave! I read a lot about how the area people loved their pigs and not these men, preferred swine over the Savior, loved their economy, their livelihood, and resented Jesus for the destruction of the swine. But this does not seem to be the leading cause or the emphasis of the Scripture. Luke 8:35, “and came to Jesus, and found the man, ...and they were afraid.” All three Gospel books have this same thought, their fear and desire for Jesus to leave wasn’t based on drowned pigs! It was about these **changed men**, and they all knew it was Jesus' power that restored them to sanity and relieved them of the demons. The pigs were another visual of Christ’s power, but the greatest example was the men sitting sanely at Jesus’ feet! Again, these townspeople were faced with the same question that had come to the disciples, “What manner of man is this?” And instead of confessing Jesus as God in the flesh, they begged Him to leave!
Job 21:14-15

VI. Changed Man

“And when he was come into the ship, (“and returned back again.” Luke 8:37) he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. ¹⁹Howbeit Jesus (“sent him away” Luke 8:38) suffered him not, but saith unto him, (“Return to thine own house,” Luke 8:39) Go home to thy friends, and shew them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion (Lit. - mercy) on thee. ²⁰And he departed, and began to publish (“throughout the whole city” Luke 8:39) in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.” Mark 5:18-20

“that he might be with him” – After the townspeople begged Jesus to leave, Christ got back into “the ship.” Without any discussion, Jesus was going to oblige them quietly. But the only desire of this man rescued from the mob of demons was to get in the boat with Jesus! The passage tells us he “prayed him,” begged him, to allow him to go along! Do you realize the devotion, gratitude, and love this man had for Jesus? Christ had delivered Him, given back his life, freed him from bondage, and now his heart desired to “be **with him.**” Wow!

“Go home” – But instead Jesus told this man to go home. What an unusual and strange reaction of Christ to a person who sincerely sought to follow Him. Realize, that Jesus did not challenge him with the realities of discipleship or test his resolve. So why send this man away?

1) First of all, most Bible scholars believe it is very likely this man was a Gentile. This was a predominantly Gentile area. And this reaction of Jesus may also hint at the fact this man was Gentile. Jesus did not have any Gentiles following Him at this time. If there were Gentiles in His band of followers His enemies would have scoffed at it. When claiming to be the Jewish Messiah and having Gentile followers would not have been accepted. Also, when we see Jesus interacting with Gentiles, it is usually mentioned in the passages, or like here, reactions are different.

2) Instead, Jesus gave this formerly demon-possessed man a wonderful mission! Jesus told him to go home to his friends and family and **tell of the great things God had done for him!** The highlight of his message was to be **God’s compassion** – the literal meaning is God’s mercy, but also includes God’s love, kindness, pity, sympathy, and goodness.

“throughout the whole city”/“Decapolis” – And that is what this man did! But I want to point out the insight this man had concerning the person of Jesus. In Mark 5:20, the KJV says this man “published,” which means not just tell, but proclaimed, declared, preached, and announced to everyone throughout the area concerning the deliverance Jesus gave him. See the connection! Remember, Jesus had told him to tell what God had done for Him, and that is exactly what he declared, “Jesus did this for me!” This man saw God and Jesus as the same! In this man’s mind, Jesus was God in the flesh! This former demon-possessed man got it right and spread it, not only in his town back by his family but actually the Scripture tells us, he went to Decapolis! Reminder, Decapolis was a loose alliance of ten cities along a trade route from Damascus in the north to the south near the Dead Sea! This man became a traveling evangelist telling of the deity of Christ!

This is a very disturbing event in the life of Christ and there are some very hard things to grasp. Many questions arise but realize Jesus’ power is always greater than the darkness of this world!

Believers Application:

1. As we saw the power of Christ over nature in the calming of the storm and now, His authority over demons, we should be comforted as we live seek to grow the kingdom in this world ruled by wickedness. **Use HW#20 Q 6 to begin the discussion.** We are all called to build the kingdom by going and giving the gospel, then teaching and making disciples. We must keep in mind the power we have in Christ. 1 John 4:4 tells us, “Ye are of God little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the

world.” Jesus told His disciples the kingdom would be built, and in these miracles displayed His great power. 1 John 3:8 tells us, “...For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” We have that power within us. Paul closed the book of Romans with this reminder, “And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly...” (Rom. 16:20) These truths should give us strength and courage. In 2 Timothy 1:6-14; 2:1, Paul is encouraging young Timothy with some of these same thoughts. Poor, dear Timothy, can you imagine traveling, preaching, and serving in the shadow of Paul the Apostle? But Paul knew, Timothy would soon need to take the lead in the next generation of believers! Let’s consider these words and apply to both him and us! Read - **2 Timothy 1:6-14; 2:1** Be brave dear friend. Give the gospel, spread the truth, encourage believers, and do it all in the power of Christ!

2. This man desired to follow Jesus but Christ’s plan for him was different. Jesus gave this want-to-be disciple a mission and an outline to accomplish it! We all have that same commission! 2 Corinthians 5:17-21
“**Go home** to thy friends, and **shew them** how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion (Lit. - mercy) on thee.” Mark 5:19

I can’t help but think of 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 and the similarities between us as believers and the formerly possessed man.

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

In Christ:

1. We have been made new . v. 17 What a wonderful change we saw in this formerly possessed man – from demonic to disciple! But if we know Jesus as our Savior, we too have been made new – headed to heaven, not hell; a child of God instead of a child of Satan; a friend of God instead of an enemy!
2. We have been reconciled to God. v. 18a We had been separated from God but now grafted in, “God in us the hope of glory.” Col. 1:27
3. We have been made ambassadors for Christ. v. 18b-20 We have been given a ministry to lead others to reconciliation. Just as this formerly demon-possessed man had a mission, so do we, a great commission!
4. We have been made righteous . v. 21 We went from darkness to light, from blindness to sight, from filthy to washed! We have been made righteous because of Jesus’ death for us!

In about six months, Jesus will again return to this area of the Decapolis. It will be a bit further north, but He will return to the east side of the Sea of Galilee. There the feeding of the 4000 will take place. Great crowds came to hear Jesus. The groundwork was laid, the people didn’t send Christ away any longer, but instead were willing to sit for days without food to hear Jesus the prophet of Galilee. But we should not be surprised, for we are told this man went to the cities of Decapolis and proclaimed what great things Jesus had done for Him. He preached the mercy of Jesus on his life. And this event of Christ finishes with the reaction of his listeners, “and all men did marvel.” Because of his testimony, the people’s attitude changed concerning Jesus. It moved from fear to wonder! He was an effective witness and prepared the way for Jesus to come again!

I am challenged by the next verse found in our passage from 2 Corinthians. “We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.” 2 Corinthians 6:1 Oh that we may be faithful followers of Jesus and not receive the “grace of God in vain.” We can also be an effective witness for Christ! Go fulfill your calling!

Reality of Demons

The demonic men of Gadara are the most extreme examples of possessed men found in the Scripture. Jesus, God in the flesh, showed compassion on these two and released them from the “legion” of demons. Let’s take a short look at the reality of demons.

1. Scripture teaches the reality of demons. (devils (KJV) = demons) The Bible has all we need to know about the occult. It is a truth of God’s Word, but one should be very cautious in spending time studying demons outside of the Bible.
 - There seem to be many demons. Not everything supernatural is of God.
 - They hate man and separate him from all conveniences and comforts. Solitude and withdrawn living have always been a sign of demon control. Self-destructive behaviors also are found among demon-possessed people. Mark 9:17-18, 22
 - Demons can cause superhuman strength and knowledge. They can be strong, fierce, unruly, have unearthly knowledge, and incapable of being restrained. Acts 16:16
 - They are enraged against the Lord yet have a dread and horror of Him. Don’t think the demonic men of Gadara came before Jesus to worship Him! They meet Jesus at the shoreline in anger; Christ had disturbed them and now they begged not to be sent to the pit of destruction before their appointed time. Jude 6
 - Demons are under the leadership of the Devil. Rev. 12:7-9 (cast out of heaven, last half of Tribulation)– He is their leader.
 - They are under the power of Christ. We always see that it’s Jesus’ command or in His name that drives out demons from man! Acts 16:18
2. Godless cultures have more evidence of demon possession. It is not unusual for missionaries to pagan lands to tell of incidences they have observed of demon possession. But as our cultures go farther from the truths of God the demonic world has become more and more emboldened.
3. Demons seek to indwell mankind but will take an animal. This event in the life of Christ is an example of this phenomenon. Every culture through the ages has folklore or myths of animals that seemly possessed by evil. Usually, they are already predators, but suddenly these beasts take on extraordinary fierceness, intelligence, strange destruction, and ability to escape death or capture. Lions, tigers, wolves, bears, alligators, elephants, and whales, have all been the subject of these types of stories. We see Biblical evidence of possessed animals in this event of Christ!
4. Demons cannot possess Christians. When we are born again, God gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit. We are indwelled by God! John 14:16-17, 23; I Cor. 3:16; 6:19

5. Demons know their final state - eternal confinement in the pit of hell Matthew 25:41 describes hell this way, “everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” 2 Peter 2:4
6. Demons cannot know Jesus’ plan . The demons were only aware of God’s revealed plan for them and could not read the mind or plan of Jesus. They could only “beg” for mercy. This should give us comfort. They are powerful but limited, our God and Savior, is all-powerful but also loving, merciful, and can protect us from all evil.

Don’t let demons and evil spirits scare you from doing God’s will for you! John the Apostle was probably the youngest of the disciples, but I’m sure he remembered this incident on the shore near Gadara until he died. Listen to what he wrote more than fifty years later. 1 John 4:1-4

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. ² Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: ³ And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. ⁴ Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”