

“Lesson #2: Power over Demons”

January 19, 2020

Luke 8:26-39

I. Introduction

As you may remember from last week, it was after a long day of preaching and teaching that Jesus and His disciples had started across the Sea of Galilee. Most likely, the disciples assumed that they were going to a more remote area where they could get away from the pressure of the crowds. But on the way, a sudden storm had swept down Mount Hermon and its violence threatened the lives of those in the boats on the sea. [Luke 8:24](#) recorded that in the midst of that fierce storm, Jesus “got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm.” The intense storm had caused momentary panic and fear among the disciples, but the demonstration of Jesus’ omnipotence—His mighty power—produced even a greater fear. Mark wrote in [Mark 4:41](#), “They, i.e. the disciples, were terrified and asked each other, ‘Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!’”

Although the Sea of Galilee was calm the rest of the trip, the disciples were undoubtedly still in a state of shock and awe. Most likely the powerful storm had blown them off course, and as a result it was probably daybreak by the time they finally made it to shore—“They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee.” The disciples may have thought they had traveled across the lake to find some R & R, but Jesus had other plans. He had a divine appointment to keep—He was going to demonstrate “Power over Demons.” In today’s story, Luke recorded several encounters in the region of the Gerasenes. It all began with the encounter with a demon-possessed man—Mark’s account includes some more details. [Turn to Mark 5:1-20.](#)

II. The encounter with a demon-possessed man.

As soon as the disciples reached shore and docked their boats, a raging madman came racing down the slope to the edge of the lake to meet them. Matthew’s account in [Matthew 8:28-34](#) records that there were actually two men. Though Mark and Luke focus on the man with whom Jesus spoke, nothing in their stories contradicts Matthew’s account.

According to [Matthew 8:28](#), both of these men were “**demon-possessed.**” Generally, demons—fallen angels, work in society through the encouragement of error, lies, false religions, and even apostasy, i.e., they control through outside influences—[turn to 1 Timothy 4:1-3](#). Demon possession is an extreme form of control where one or more evil spirits control a person’s mind, body, and voice.

This entire scene in the Gerasenes seems very unreal to us who live in so-called “modern civilization,” but to many missionaries this is a regular occurrence. Considering the increase in violence in the US, some Bible teachers believe that demon possession as well as demon-influence is becoming more prevalent in today’s so-called “modern society.” These two men in the Gerasene graveyard were no doubt extreme examples of what Satan and demons can do to people. We aren’t told how the demons entered these men and took control of them. But what we do see is that Jesus had power over these spirits of darkness.

In describing this demon-possessed man, Luke wrote that “**for a long time this man had not ... lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs.**” The man’s home was in the tombs—the unclean place of the dead. Here, in a Gentile region, was a demon-possessed man who was more comfortable among the dead than among the living. As well as being tormented mentally, he suffered physical torment since he was constantly exposed to the elements—“**for a long time this man had not worn clothes.**” After their traumatic night on the lake, the disciples must have been shocked and alarmed by the sudden appearance of these dangerous lunatics that came racing towards them.

Because of the threat this man posed, those in the area had tried repeatedly to restrain him—but they were unsuccessful: “**Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.**” Mark added in [Mark 5:4-5](#), “**No one was strong enough to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.**” Under demonic control, the man was supernaturally strong and was a raging, self-mutilating madman. [Matthew 8:28](#) adds that the two demon-possessed men “**were so violent that no one could pass that way.**”

On this particular morning, the two demon-possessed men spotted some potential victims coming ashore—someone to terrify. I suspect that under demonic control, the naked madman and his companion had raced down the slope toward the shore, shrieking and howling like banshees. Here we see the 2nd encounter: the encounter with evil spirits.

III. The encounter with evil spirits.

“When he saw Jesus,” the evil spirits who indwelt this man recognized the presence of the King of the universe and screamed in terror and panic as “he cried out and fell at his, i.e., Jesus’, feet.” The word for “fell” means to “worship.” This worship wasn’t motivated by repentance—demons cannot repent; they will not repent, but they bowed in submission to their heavenly sovereign—James 2:19 says, “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-- and shudder.” No human being could tame them—even through the use of ropes and chains—but Jesus restrained them by just His presence.

Using the man’s voice, the demons addressed Jesus. They knew exactly who He was---He was “Jesus, Son of the Most High God.” Jesus possesses the same authority and nature as His Father—as Jesus said in John 10:30, “I and the Father are one.” Mark wrote that one of the demons, on the behalf of the whole host, cried out, “Swear to God that you won’t torture me!” Trembling in the presence of the Son of God, “they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss”—the bottomless pit where other fallen angels were imprisoned. As they groveled before Jesus, all they could do was plead for a little more time before being sentenced to the pit.

Addressing the “evil spirit” who was acting as the spokesman for all the demons, Jesus “said to him, ‘Come out of this man, you evil spirit!’” They had no option but to obey the Lord God Almighty. In the process of casting out the demon, “Jesus asked him, ‘What is your name?’ ‘Legion,’ he replied.” “Legion” wasn’t really a name, but the title taken by the demon forces which indwelt the man. *Legion* was a Roman military term designating a group of soldiers—at that time, a Roman legion consisted of 3000-6000 soldiers; 1000’s of demons had entered the man. Jesus demanded the name to demonstrate the

extent of His power over the realm and minions of Satan. *Jesus was outnumbered, but not overmatched!* He not only had the authority to cast out a single demon, but an entire legion of demons. Evil spirits or fallen angels, whether they are few or many are under the control of God's will and God's power.

“The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs.” Perhaps they thought they could cause problems through a herd of pigs—perhaps they thought they would return later to other human victims. Jesus could have sent them immediately to the Abyss, but he had another purpose for them to fulfill so He gave them permission to enter the pigs. “When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.” The dramatic scene provided undeniable proof that the evil spirits had left the man. Mark says that the herd numbered about 2000. The fact that about 2000 pigs were affected suggests that at least 2000 demons were cast out of the man and his companion. More importantly, it demonstrated the extent of Jesus' authority over them. They had to instantly submit to the omnipotent authority of the divine Son of God. The destructive power of the sea that almost sank the disciples' boats now swallowed up the pigs. The legion of demons fell victim to their own plans and were wiped out in one grand fell swoop.

IV. The encounter with the townspeople.

“When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened.” This led to the third encounter: the encounter with the townspeople. When the townspeople arrived, they saw that instead of running around naked and raging violently, the man was sitting there, dressed and in his right mind. A total transformation had taken place in his life. Undoubtedly, Jesus had explained the gospel to him so that he would be delivered not only from demons but also from sin and hell.

Given the miraculous change in the man—[Matthew 8:33](#) implies that his companion was also delivered—one might expect that the townspeople would beg Jesus to stay and teach them, too. But instead, the response of the people was immediate rejection: “All the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear.” They didn't rejoice at the

man's recovery, they were afraid. The community had tried to control the man with chains and ropes and had failed. Now Jesus freed him from the chains of demons with just a word. The astonishing miracle Jesus performed didn't lead the townspeople to faith in Him as Lord and Messiah. In fact, it did the direct opposite. No one could deny that He had displayed divine power. Yet, in spite of undeniable evidence, their hearts remained cold and immovable.

They wanted Jesus gone. The demons had begged Jesus to let them stay in the region; the townspeople now begged Jesus to leave the region. They were more comfortable with the demonic forces that took captive human beings and destroyed animals than they were with the One who can expel them. They could put up with the odd demon-possessed wild man who terrorized the neighborhood with random acts of violence, but they wanted to keep someone with Jesus' power on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. In their minds, Jesus was more dangerous than the demons. Like society today, they wanted nothing to do with Jesus Christ and His Gospel. Earlier, Jesus had honored the request of the terrified demons, allowing them to go into the pigs; now He yielded to the wishes of the terrified townspeople, granting their wish for Him to depart. But before He left Jesus gave instructions to the restored man.

V. Jesus' instructions to the restored man

“The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him.” But Jesus knew that the man's place was in his own home with his loved ones, where he could bear witness to the Savior. So, instead of bringing the man back to Capernaum, Jesus commissioned him to be one of the earliest missionaries to the Gentiles. With his life changed so dramatically, the former demoniac who was known throughout the region would be a shining testimony of the transforming power of Jesus and the Gospel.

Jesus reversed his usual demand of silence by telling the man to spread the good news about how God had mercy on him. The former demon-possessed man did just that. “So, the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.” When Jesus again visited this same region—the region of the Decapolis--[Mark 7:31-8:9](#) records that a massive crowd came to hear Him teach.

VI. Conclusion

One main point of this account, like *Lessons from a Storm* last week, was to emphasize the divine authority of Jesus Christ. As God Incarnate, He rules over both the natural and the supernatural worlds. This account, also, teaches a lesson about the requirements for being a faithful witness, i.e. to be an evangelist. The restored man didn't have any formal theological training, but he had everything he needed to carry out Christ's commission to him. He merely had to tell others about how the Savior had delivered him from the demons, from sin, and gave him eternal life. All he had to do was to tell his story. That's all anyone has to do—to be a witness: tell your story.

Finally, demons aren't just "something" that existed in Christ's day—there are here today—[turn to Ephesians 6:10-13](#). I suspect that some of the evil we see in the world today is caused by some who are controlled by demons, but as we read earlier from [1 Timothy 4:1-3](#), generally, evil spirits seek to deceive people. An old comedian used to say, "*The devil made me do it.*" But demon influence isn't the only source of temptation and sin—[turn to 1 John 2:15-16](#)--the King James Version calls these sources: "**the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.**" The sinful nature, the pride we were born with is also a source of temptation—probably the major source.

We need to be on guard against the temptations from within as well as those from without, i.e., from demons. But if you are a Christian, you can be victorious over all temptations—Paul wrote in [Philippians 4:13](#), "**I can do everything through him who gives me strength.**" Those who belong to Jesus Christ are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. There is no reason to fear demon possession because Christians are the temple of the Spirit of God, i.e., the Holy Spirit--[1 Corinthians 6:19-20](#) says, "**Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body.**" And as the Apostle John wrote in [1 John 4:4](#), "**You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, i.e. evil spirits, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.**" Because of the power of the Holy Spirit we can go out boldly and share the Gospel. Jesus said, "**Surely I am with you always to the very end of the age**" ([Matthew 28:20](#)).