

The Miracles of Jesus
Miracle # 13

***Jesus Delivers the Demon Possessed Man
of Gedara!***

(Matthew 8:28-34, Mark 5:1-20, Luke 8: 26-39)

The day had begun with Jesus teaching the crowds from on board a boat, anchored along the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. At the end of the teaching that day, Jesus had instructed his disciples to set out for the other side of the lake (Mark 4:33-36). The disciples then passed through a life-threatening experience on the Sea of Galilee. A terrible storm had almost taken their lives, and in a moment of weakness, they thought that Jesus had forsaken them. Awakening Him in a panic, they cried out, "Save us or we perish!" The Lord spoke to the murderous winds, and said, "Be Muzzled," and the winds were stilled. The Lord rebuked the disciples for their lack of faith in Him and all that He had taught them. They responded with humble hearts and were in awe of their Lord, as the boats drew close to the shore. Perhaps the disciples sighed with relief, "**Safe at last.**" Probably none of the disciples realized that they had landed in a "no man's land."

This day would not end without another miracle taking place in the fading light of day. Suddenly, the quiet lapping of the water on the shore was interrupted by a piercing scream. Seemingly, out of nowhere, a wounded, naked man - hair matted, eyes wild, broken chains rattling from wrist and ankles, ran up to them on the shore and threw himself down at the feet of Jesus. Nothing that they had experienced prepared them for this.

THE BACKGROUND OF THE MIRACLE

(Luke 8: 26-28, 29b)

The Demon Possessed Man Ran to Jesus and Knelt At His Feet (vv. 26-27)

"Then they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. (27) And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time."

Matthew, Mark and Luke all record this story. Although Matthew refers to **two** men; whereas in Mark and Luke only **one** man recorded. The natural explanation is that Mark and Luke chose to concentrate on the one who was the most outspoken and the most prominent of the two men.

Luke goes on to tell us that us that this man "had demons for a long time" the KJV says that, "he had devils for a long time" but in reality there is only one "**devil**" but there are many "**demons**." When the Bible says that "he had many demons," it means that he was "demon possessed" or literally "demonized," that is "under the influence of one or more evil spirits."

Insanity, epilepsy, blindness, the inability to hear or speak, frequently accompanied and were symptoms of demon possession (Matt 12:22, 9:32, Mark 9:17,25, Luke 11:14-16) but this by no means indicates that all persons with such diseases were demon possessed.

Demon Possession Is Real

The Bible speaks of demon possession rather matter-of-factly, without apology or excuse. There are some today who find it distasteful to accept this account because of the mention of the Supernatural, and they try to say that this man was merely **insane** and not actually controlled by anything other than his own twisted mind. Others say that each time Jesus encountered such insanity, He just accommodated His terminology to their crude level of understanding. In other words, He just **called** such cases demon possession, all the while knowing that such was just a primitive superstition. The problem with that answer is that it makes Jesus a deceiver.

C.S Lewis wrote about the confusion about demon possession when he wrote, "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about demons (devils). One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased with both errors ...with the same delight." [C.S. Lewis. The Screwtape Letters. (New York: MacMillan. 1971) p. 3

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Our world plays with spiritual forces rather than taking them seriously. Every day we see psychics advertise on television, and the newspaper carries your daily horoscope. We tend to see these things as **harmless** and they are not. We need to be careful not to allow the forces of spiritual darkness to get a foot in the door of our minds through occult books, movies or even games such as "Dungeons and Dragons". Much of what is called "Occult Research" today is clearly an abomination to the Lord.

This is serious business, according to Ephesians 6:12 there is a very real spiritual battle being waged between the God and Satan over the lives and souls of men and women. It was going on during the ministry of Jesus, it was seen in the early days of the church, and it will continue in every generation until the Lord comes again and Satan and all of his demons are forever cast into the bottomless pit (Rev. 20:10). The power of the Devil is real and I believe we are seeing increased evidence of it today.

I think that one other word of explanation is necessary here because there is still a lot of confusion about "demon possession" within the ranks of Bible believing Christians. Some maintain that even Christians can be possessed by a Demon. Let me try to explain why this can not be **true!** Charles Ryrie defines the problem by saying "Demon possession means a demon residing in a person., exerting direct control and influence over that person, with certain derangement of mind and body. Demon possession is to be distinguished from demon influence and demon activity in relation to a person. The work of the demon in the latter is from the outside in demon possession it is from within. By this, **a Christian cannot be possessed by a demon since he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit.** However, a Christian can be the target of demonic activity to such an extent that he may give the appearance of demon possession." [as quoted by Ron R. Ritchie. Do You Believe in the Devil. Unpublished data file. Palo Alto, Calif.: Discovery Publishing. (www.pbc.org/dp/Ritchie/4319.html). p.3.]

The Bible is clear that there is a Demonic power at work in the world and that the Satan exercises his power in a three-fold way. First Satan power is exercised by himself, but he is not God and cannot be everywhere at the same time. Secondly, this power is exercised by demons on behalf of their prince. And thirdly, it is exercised through human beings who he has possessed and controls. [Herbert Lockyer. All the Miracles of the Bible. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1961) p. 187]

One of the problems concerning demon possession is that no where in the New Testament are we told **how** any one came to be demon possessed. Christians can place themselves in a position to **vulnerable** to the forces of evil any time they surrender to either fleshly appetites (anger, lust, passion etc) or some form of self-emptying such as

eastern mediation. The situation we encounter in our text today may not, at first glance, seem to apply to any of us. After all, we encounter a man here who is obviously fully demon possessed. **He lives in a cemetery, for crying out loud!!** He is a raving madman who cannot be bound by shackles and chains. He cries out in shrieks and wails all night long, as he cuts his body with stones. How could this apply to us? He is a reminder of the dilemma that is faced by every human that has not come under the influence of the saving power of Jesus Christ. Paul describes the condition of all believers prior to salvation in Ephesians 2:1-2, **"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience."**

The story of the demon possessed man illustrates how a person can be so inwardly bound that he suffers inner pain and confusion. While he may throw off all outward restraint, he is unable to control what is going on within him. Sometimes, this bondage is caused by our human frailty. Other times, it is caused by the direct oppression of demonic activity. But behind an outward facade of apparent wholeness, there is nonetheless, brokenness inside. This inward bondage may vary in degree and differ in appearance, but the struggle is the same. As a matter of fact, the person sitting in front of you, or beside you may have struggles that you know nothing about. You may even be saying, "I don't have to look around, that person is me!" The good news is that you can be set free!

The Demon Possessed Man Was Abandoned and Without Hope (Luke 8:27b) **"... And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs..."**

The townspeople in the past had subdued this man but he had broken his bonds and escaped taken up residence in the cemetery, the townspeople now have decided that the safest thing to do is to leave this man alone. The man who resides in the tombs had gotten so bad that he was abandoned by other human beings. At this point in his life he no longer had any sense of modesty or shame, the text tells that **"he was naked."**

The Demon Possession Was Manifested in Self-Destructive Tendencies (Luke 8:29b) **"...For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness."**

He appeared to be a raving lunatic who was extremely violent to himself and to anyone he chanced to meet. He had become his own worst enemy. Sin does that, sin is always self-destructive. The alcoholic, the drug dependant, the promiscuous (today we our world calls it "the sexual active"), are all in degrees destroying the life given to them by God This man had become little more than an animal, he was both **frightening** to others and at times **himself** afraid. In his lucid moments he no doubt realized how repulsive, unloved and unwelcome he was. It's all a matter of control. This man was completely controlled by the demons within him. While a person today may not be at the extreme of demon possession, it is still an issue of control. Whether they admit or not; a person who hasn't been freed from sin by the Lord is a slave to sin. Paul said in his letter to the Romans (6:16), **"Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are the one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death or of obedience leading to righteousness?"** The New Living Translation puts it this way, **"Don't you realize that whatever you choose to obey becomes your master? You can choose sin, which leads to death or you can choose to obey God and receive His approval."**

Sometimes, the inward suffering can be so great that even outward physical pain can itself seem a relief. Our desire to find relief can lead us to do something equally as foolish. Any kind of escapism will do, alcohol, drugs, television, because we just cannot seem to be alone with ourselves.

The Demon's Recognize the Power of Jesus

(LK 8: 28) "When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!"

It is reassuring to note that when Christ and Satan meet head to head that it is not a clash of titans with the outcome uncertain, Satan and his demons do not stand a chance when they come into contact with the full force of God's power.

When all other avenues of escape are exhausted and we are forced to face reality, we become desperate as this man was. Hopefully, our desperation will lead us to the same place it lead the demon possessed man. Hopefully, it will lead us to Jesus.

When our text says that he "fell down before Him" it does not necessarily imply "**worship**" as we understand the term, in fact in Mark's account where this word is translated "worshipped" it means to bow down and pay homage to but not in the sense of true worship. Philippians 3:10 foretells of a time when "every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord," but neither is this worship, it forces homage to the truth. In confrontation with the demons there is no **repentance**, only **regret** for the consequences of their sin. Much like the many that you will find in our prison system today, they regret being caught and punished but not truly repentant for what they had done.

The demons that control this man proclaim, "Jesus, the son of the most High God." Unlike the religious rulers of the day the demons immediately recognized that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. This recognition did not however, change their desire to continue their destructive ways. Like an army that knows it is defeated, they want to inflict as much damage as possible before going down.

The demons ask Jesus in verse twenty-eight, "do not torment us" and Matthew records that they said, "Why have you come to torment us before the time?" (Matthew 8:28). Before what time? Before the time of **judgment**. The word "torment" tells us that the demons believe in Hell even if men and women of today do not. The fate of the demons is sealed. The fate of men and women is still unsettled as long as they are alive. Oh how tragic to hear, people say such things as "A literal hell I don't believe that stuff." or "Heaven won't have me and Hell is afraid I will take over." or "Well if I go to hell at least all my friends will be there." These are the words of very deceived people who are in for a very rude awakening! The truth is that demons realized that Hell is not funny.

THE ELEMENTS OF THE MIRACLE (Luke 8:29-33)

"For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. ... (30) Jesus asked him, saying, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," because many demons had entered him. (31) And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss."

When Jesus asked the demon for his name he was not simply requesting information. He asked in order that all could see how pitiful this man's condition was. The demon responds that his name is "Legion." A Roman legion consisted of **6,000** foot

soldiers as well as 120 horsemen and other personnel. To the Jewish mind "legion" suggest great **numbers**; efficient and organized and relentless in strength.

Luke's account in verse twenty-nine says that Jesus "... **commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man.**" Jesus did not seek to calm the man but rather he confronted the demons that were abusing the man. In verse thirty-one the demons make a request of Jesus, "**And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss. (32) Now a herd of many swine was feeding there on the mountain. So they begged Him that He would permit them to enter them. And He permitted them. (33) Then the demons went out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned.**"

The demon(s) begged to not be sent to the "**abyss.**" The abyss is a place in which some of the angels who fell with Satan are currently **confined**, awaiting God's final judgment (2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6).

When the demons are allowed to enter the herd of swine as requested, the swine unexpectedly stampeded, much to the shock of everyone. The shock of suddenly being occupied by the demon spirits, caused the hogs to blindly charge down the hillside into the lake to rid themselves of their unwanted guests. These pigs preferred suicide to demon possession.

Some have questioned why Jesus would allow the demons to go into the pigs and destroy the livelihood of the swine owners. There are several possible answers. First, as the sovereign ruler of the universe He does not need anyone's permission. Secondly, it was also possible that these swine herders were Jews, in which case they were guilty of breaking the law of Moses. If so we have not only a miracle but a case of divine judgment. Technically speaking he did not send the demons into the swine he only allowed it. It is worth noting that if they could not enter into pigs without permission, how likely is it they can enter into the Lord's sheep?

THE EFFECT OF THE MIRACLE

(Luke 8:34-36, 38-39)

The Demon Possessed Man is Freed

"When those who fed them saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country."

The word spreads fast when those tending the pigs fled into the city to report what had happened. When the people came out they found a completely different man than they had known. There is a word of hope here for those who have descended so far into sin, and have so many scars that they have given up on ever being made whole. In the life of the Demon possessed man when the deliverer comes there is new **life**. His encounter with Christ has changed him completely in both his look and his outlook. In verse thirty-five we find that when the townspeople arrived they "... **found the man from whom the demons had departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind.**" Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 5:17, that when we really commit our selves to Christ we are changed, "**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new.**"

In verse thirty-eight we see that he also has a new **heart**, for he "... **begged Him that he might be with Him.**" The healed man wanted to join Jesus' band of disciples, but Jesus had a different calling in mind. Someone must be left behind to be a light in a dark world. Not everyone is called into full time ministry. Not everyone is called to a foreign land as a missionary. Some must go, but some must stay. For some, what Jesus wants,

is for those who have experienced deliverance, to tell those in their own **hometown** about him.

Jesus gave this man's life a new **purpose**, (vv. 38b-39) "... but Jesus sent him away, saying, (39) 'Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you.' And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him." Jesus told him to "return to your own house" his testimony was to begin with those who knew him best and could see the change that Jesus had made in his life. Luke uses the aorist tense to tell the reader that what Jesus had done was complete. He was to testify of "what great things God has done for you."

The Townspeople Were Afraid (v. 37)

Mark, in his account, tells us that the result of this man's testimony was that "all marveled" (5:20).

The townspeople, however, did not respond as the demon possessed man did. Verse thirty-seven reveals that "Then the whole multitude of the surrounding region of the Gadarenes asked Him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear...".

Following Jesus is now and always has been a choice. The townspeople chose to ask Jesus to leave. Sadly they would rather push Jesus away than risk Him changing their lives too. Far more people than we can imagine turn their backs on Christ or ask him to go away because they fear he will disrupt their lives.

Be careful about asking Jesus to leave you alone. The text tells us that "...And He got into the boat and returned." Did you know that as far as we know Jesus never returned to the land of Gadarenes? Never! This was their only chance. We have to wonder just how different it might have been in their lives had these people invited Jesus to come into their city and into their lives, instead of asking Him to leave.

Statistics today tell us that **85%** of all people who do not accept Christ before they are **18** never will. So Jesus left. He simply got into the boat and departed. He didn't beg. He didn't plead. He didn't threaten. He didn't come back. Jesus takes charge only in the lives of those freely offered to him.

Conclusion

Martin Luther penned these words in his great hymn of faith "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God."

***"And though this world with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim,
We tremble not for him –
His rage we can endure,
For lo, his doom is sure:
One little word shall fell him."
And that word my friend is "Jesus"***

[Martin Luther. "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," in Praise: Our Songs and Hymns. (Nashville, Tenn.: Singspiration Associates, 1977) no. 333.]