

An Incredible Testimony (Luke 8:26-39)

1. The Condition of the Demoniac (v.26-29)

- The disciples reached the other side of the Sea of Galilee and landed in the Gerasenes region. This area had a cliff that overlooked the Sea of Galilee. On this cliff was a cemetery containing multiple graves.
- Luke informs the reader that the disciples encountered a man in serious trouble. He was demon-possessed.
 - He was naked for a long time (v.27): His nakedness may be related to his sexual perversion as he had no concern for hygiene, safety, or common decency. He had lost all sense of being human and acted like a wild animal. He didn't have any qualms about his nakedness.
 - Attempts were made to subdue him with metal chains and shackles (v. 29): Both before and perhaps after his demonic possession reached its height, he broke the chains and shackles with his strength (Mk. 5:4). The townspeople attempted to hinder his lunacy to no avail.
 - He cut himself (Mk. 5:5): We are unsure whether he was cut because of his nakedness or his attempt to rid himself of the demonic possession.
 - He cried out (v. 28; Mk 5:5): The "crying out" would be equivalent to a shriek, occurring all the time (night and day).
 - He lived among the tombs (v.27): He lived in a Gentile region among the tombs dedicated to the wealthy, located in the hill country. This man would have shared his home with other demon-possessed people and lepers.
- Matthew informs the reader that this man was "so fierce that no one could pass that way" (Matt. 8:28).
- This poor, wild, unkempt, ill, homeless, naked, bleeding man with lacerations, scabs, infections, and scar tissue is howling with masochistic displeasure, running toward Jesus and His disciples as they exited the boat (Mk. 5:6).

2. The Commanding Authority of Jesus, Son of the Most High (v.30-33)

- When the demon-possessed man saw Jesus (Mk. 5:6), he ran to Jesus and fell before Him (Mk. 5:6).
- The demon-possessed man asks Jesus what He wants from them and refers to Him as "Jesus, Son of the Most High" (v.28).
 - The "Most High God" is in the Greek superlative and a Jewish epithet emphasizing the transcendental exaltation of Jesus over pagan gods, goddesses, and rival powers.
 - This acknowledgment is a pagan attempt to access Jesus' hidden essence and gain some control, forcing Him to let them be. In Near Eastern pagan religions, they believed that by asking for the "name" and speaking of a name, one spiritual force could have control over another.
 - The demons may have assumed that His authority did not extend to the Gentile region. Regardless, He never provides His name, for they have no power over Him. Instead, He asks the demon-possessed man his name and addresses the demon(s).
- The speaker, who represents the supposed "Legion" of demons, addresses himself in the plural "we are many" (Mk. 5:10).
 - A legion is a Roman cohort that consists of up to 6,000 soldiers.
- The demonic representative knows he cannot get the upper hand, so poses a question, and then makes a request:

The question: "Have you come to judge us before the appointed time?" (Matt. 8:29). The demons are not only afraid of God (Jas. 2:19) but also know of their future lot.

The request: They begged Him not to "send *them* into the *abys*s" (v.31):

- This image of the abyss stems from the bottomless depths of the ocean in the ancient world that is too deep to be plumbed, which is often called the "great deep" (Ps. 42:7; Isa. 51:10). It became an idiom for the place of the dead (Ps. 63:9; 71:20) and then as where unclean spirits are "imprisoned and held in chains permanently" until the Final Judgment (Matt. 25:41; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 20:3).
- There are at least three *categories* of fallen angels (demons): (1) those permitted to wander and roam the earth; (2) those who went outside their bounds (Gen. 6) and are now kept in chains until the final judgment (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6); (3) those who will be released during the tribulation (Rev. 9:1-21).
- Jesus commands the demons to come out of the man and permits them to enter the pigs. They departed from the man, and a great herd (v.31) or 2,000 pigs (Mk. 5:13) rushed off the cliff and drowned in the sea.

Why did Jesus permit the demons to enter the pigs?

- A. To demonstrate the destructive, divisive, and evil nature of demons.
- B. The herdsmen may have been lucrative Jews selling pigs in a Gentile market against Mosaic prohibitions (Lev. 11:7). This may have been a judgment upon them.
- C. To demonstrate His ownership over all of creation, as creation exists for the glory of God.
- D. To reinforce that animals are made for man, not man made for animals.
- E. To demonstrate the exceeding worth of man over animals. The kingdom of God and the rescue and restoration of sinners supersedes the lives of animals and capital assets.

Their request is ironic because they have been tormenting this man and placing him in chains, yet they don't want to be in chains. Within hours, Jesus and His disciples experienced the evil forces that battered the boats on the Sea of Galilee and witnessed the destructive nature of demonic activity within a fellow image-bearer.

3. The Choices of Man in Response to Jesus' Authority (v.34-39)

- A. The Communication of the Herdsmen and Townspeople (v.34-37):
 - The herdsmen saw what happened and fled, telling people in the city and the country (v.34). Those curious followed them back to witness the events that transpired.
 - They saw the man they had previously known as sick, now healed (saved).
 - In fear (v.37), the herdsmen and townspeople asked Jesus to depart from the region. These people represent the hardpan soil (v.12).
- B. The Character and Commitment of the Saved Man (v.35-39):
 - The purpose of Jesus' ministry is carried out as another prisoner is set free (4:18).
 - Instead of being driven by the demon (8:29), he was "sitting" (8:35); instead of being without clothes (8:27), he was "dressed" (8:35); instead of being among the tombs (8:27), he was "at Jesus' feet" (8:25), and instead of being "chained hand and feet" (8:29), he was in "his right mind" (8:35).
 - This man is now sitting at Jesus' feet, ready to listen to Him teach, and is already in the process of being a disciple (v.38-39; Acts 22:3).
 - Though desiring to follow Jesus and be with Him, He told this man to be light (8:16-17) and he became the first commissioned apostle. He gave glory to God, attributing all the work to Jesus (v.39), and represents the good soil, bearing fruit (v.15).

There are only two kinds of people: those who ask Jesus to leave (v.37) and those who plead to follow Him (v.38).