

## Jesus Heals a Demon-Possessed Man

Luke 8:26-39

Key Verse: 8:30a

In this passage Jesus meets a man possessed by demons. In our times, many people deny the existence of demons. Many want to claim that science explains everything. They think that demons belong to the ancient world of myths and fairy tales and dragon tales. Other people are overly enthusiastic about the existence of demons. They think demons are cute or cool, and they name their mascot the "Blue Demons" or the "Sun Devils." Still others, such as New Age practitioners, think they can manipulate spiritual forces for their own benefit. However, the demons in this passage tortured a man terribly and drove him to debasing and destructive behavior. No one could help this man. But Jesus set him free. Let's learn more about Jesus today.

### I. Jesus commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man (26-29)

After Jesus had calmed the storm, he and his disciples sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee (26). This region was known as the Decapolis, the "ten cities." Dominated by Greek and Roman culture, it was Gentile territory. In chapter 2, Simeon called Jesus "a light for revelation to the Gentiles" (2:32). In this event, Jesus landed on Gentile territory to plant the gospel among the Gentiles.

When Jesus stepped ashore, the first person he met was not a cute Gentile freshman boy at Gerasa U. Luke says it was "a demon-possessed man from the town" (27a). Demons "owned" this man. A legion of demons, that is, about 6,000 demons, had entered him. They "seized him" and "drove him into solitary places" (29). He was not in control; demons ruled over him.

What, then, is characteristic of demons? Demons are minions of the devil, Satan, the evil spirit. Revelation 12:7-9 tell that the devil rebelled against God. But he was not strong enough. So he was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. The devil is God's enemy. He hates God. He wants to harm or defame God in any way possible. Since God made people in his own image, the devil hates people. In John 8:44 Jesus described the devil: "He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." The devil wants to murder human beings. He tells many seductive lies in order to do so. The devil promised the first couple, Adam

and Eve, that they would be like God if they disobeyed God. But when they did so, they experienced failure, sorrow and death, which has affected all people ever since. Whether we like it or not, we have an enemy--the devil--who wants to destroy us. Peter warns, "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour" (1 Pe 5:8b).

Once the demons had control of this man, they began to defile the image of God in him. Verse 27b says, "For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs." Clothes are a God-given grace to cover our shame as sinners. This man did not wear clothes; he had no sense of shame. He did whatever the demons drove him to do, without any consideration for the consequences. So no one could stand to be around him. His rude and destructive behavior led to the breach of all of his relationships. Finally, he left home and went to live in the tombs. The demons cut him off from other human beings. He prowled around in the isolated, dark and gruesome graveyard by himself. Normal people feared him, and wanted to protect society from him. So they tried to bind him with chains and keep him under guard. Modern people would use tasers, electric shock, or strong drugs. However, the man broke the chains with the power of demons and escaped. No one could control the demons in him.

What happened when this man met Jesus? Look at verse 28. "When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, 'What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!'" The first thing this man did was to cry out and fall at Jesus' feet. He immediately expressed submission to Jesus. Though the demons in him shouted in demonstration, they had no choice but to bow down before Jesus. The demons knew exactly who Jesus is: Jesus is the Son of the Most High God. Since they were enemies of Jesus, they were in for terrible punishment. So they desperately tried to make the man afraid of Jesus, and cut him off from Jesus. It is surprising that these sneaky demons were so clever that the man did not realize that he was demon-possessed. He thought he was speaking to Jesus, but it was, in fact, the demons.

What did Jesus do when he saw this man? Look at verse 29. "For Jesus had commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man." Jesus did not waste any time, but immediately commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man. Jesus did not ask the man if he wanted to be healed. Jesus initiated this healing by his one-sided grace. Usually, Jesus healed those who came to him by faith. However, Jesus treated this man differently. Knowing that this man

could not help himself, Jesus took the initiative. Jesus is the God of mercy who sets men free from demons. Jesus said in Luke 4:19, "He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners...to release the oppressed...."

Not many people have experienced demon possession to the degree that this man did. Still, there are many young people who are driven by demons. Instead of 6,000, they may have 600, 60, or just six demons. Even one demon can ruin a person's life. Biblically speaking, anyone who is not led by the Holy Spirit is under the influence of the evil spirit. Ephesians 2:1-2 say, "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient." 1 John 5:19b says, "...the whole world is under the control of the evil one." Revelation 12:9 says that the devil, "...leads the whole world astray." Many young people have left home, cut relationships with their families, and are sitting alone in dark and dirty rooms, interacting only with their computers. They feel depressed, isolated, and sorrowful. Some are so miserable that they commit suicide. When they hear about Christ or Bible study, they become extremely irritated for no reason. They are under the influence of the evil spirit, even though they may not realize it. They need Jesus, and only Jesus, even though they may react strangely to his word.

As God's servants, we must see the real spiritual problem of people. The development of the social sciences, such as sociology and psychology, have helped mankind. But they stop short of explaining the spiritual world. For this, we need the help of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can give us a discerning heart to recognize the work of demons (1 Cor 12:10). Only Jesus can drive out demons. Atomic bombs do not affect demons. Neither do drugs or lasers or hand guns. We must have faith in the power of Jesus' word. And we must pray. Then Jesus can drive out evil spirits through us.

One young shepherd was being harassed by his roommate on a daily basis. He thought it was merely human competition and tried to endure it. But as he prayed, the Holy Spirit revealed that it was an evil spirit at work in his roommate. Later, he learned that his roommate had yielded to his lustful desires, and a demon had come into his heart. Knowing that he could do nothing, the young shepherd prayed with his senior shepherd. Then the Holy Spirit worked in his roommate's heart and set him free from the demon. Later that young man became a Christian, and a good roommate.

## II. Jesus asked the man, "What is your name?" (30-37)

Though Jesus had commanded the evil spirit to come out, it did not happen at once. Before the demons could be driven out, the man had to differentiate himself from them. So Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" Why did Jesus ask him this question?

Jesus wanted to help this man restore his true identity. In the Bible, a person's name represents his true identity or being. God made each person in his own image with a unique personality. God knows each person and can name each person accordingly. Jesus is the good shepherd, who knows his sheep by name (Jn 10:3b). In Genesis, there is Jacob. His name means "deceiver." At Peniel, God asked him, "What is your name?" When he answered, "Jacob," it was a true confession of his inner self. Then God changed his name to "Israel," which means "struggles with God." "Israel" is the person God made him to be. The man in this passage had a God-given identity and a proper name. However, when he lived according to his sinful nature, demons channelled into him one by one, until he was filled with 6,000 demons. They had driven and tormented him to the point that he lost his true identity and became a mere tool of the demons. However, he did not know his real problem. By asking, "What is your name?" Jesus wanted him to recognize his true inner condition and confess it honestly. Jesus' words were the words of God to this man that demanded a truthful answer. Hebrews 4:12-13 states: "For the word of God is living and active...it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare...."

How did the man answer? Look at verse 30b. "'Legion,' he replied, because many demons had gone into him." Jesus' words opened this man's spiritual eyes to his true condition. He realized that he was full of demons. He also believed that Jesus wanted to help him, and Jesus had the power to help him. So he answered Jesus honestly, "Legion." Admitting his true spiritual condition was the first step for him to be freed from the demons. Jesus accepted his confession and continued to help him.

Look at verse 31. The demons begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss. "Abyss" literally means a bottomless pit. It refers to the sensation of falling deeper and deeper into misery and anguish with no end in sight. Demons who go there must submit to the cruel power of the king of the demons (Rev 9:1-2,11). To avoid this, the demons begged Jesus to send

them into a herd of pigs feeding on the nearby hillside. Jesus gave them permission. Why? It was not because Jesus is merciful to demons. It was not because Jesus needed to negotiate a compromise. It was to teach a lesson to the man, the town, and all mankind.

When the demons entered the pigs, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. According to Mark, there were about 2,000 pigs. If the market value of each pig was a conservative \$500, that would mean that \$1,000,000 was lost. That would be devastating, not only to the owners of the pigs, but to the entire economy of the region. Jesus was willing to sacrifice this much to save one seemingly useless man from demon possession. Jesus teaches us that human life, made in the image of God, is more valuable than material things. Material things perish and fade away. But man has the breath of God's life in him. No matter how terrible a person becomes, Jesus can set him free and restore him to be a child of God. The man needed to realize his value. The townspeople needed to realize his value. Jesus' disciples needed to realize his value. We need to realize the value of human life made in the image of God. One person's life has great value to God. That is why, when we struggle to help one person to be healed and restored in Jesus, it is very precious to God. In order to save and restore us as his children, Jesus went to the cross and shed his precious blood. As Jesus' disciples, let's learn to sacrifice for the sake of saving one lost soul.

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. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind (34-35). This man was no longer violent and unstable. He was peaceful and gentle, like a lamb at Jesus' feet. His mind was working properly once again. He could ask bright questions and make clear conversation, and probably had unusual spiritual insight. Most likely, he was having Bible study with Jesus and fellowship with the disciples. Furthermore, he was dressed. He was ready to live a normal life among people. He was completely healed from demon possession. When people saw him, they should have praised God. How did they respond? They were afraid. They did not understand what had happened. They simply knew that Jesus had overpowered a man who had tormented them for a long time. And they became afraid of Jesus. In truth, their fear was evidence of the influence of

demons in their own lives, and in their community. Fear made them foolish, and they asked Jesus to leave them. Jesus simply got into the boat and left.

### III. Jesus said, "Tell how much God has done for you" (38-39)

The man who had been freed from the demons begged Jesus to go with Jesus. Jesus had liberated him from the awful torment of demons and given him peace. Jesus was willing to sacrifice his life for him. The man wanted to be with his good shepherd Jesus wherever he went. But Jesus did not let him. Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return home and tell how much God has done for you." In the past, this man was rebellious. He only did what he wanted to do. But here, when Jesus refused his request and gave him a different direction, he accepted it from his heart. He went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him. This reveals that his relationship with Jesus has been restored. Out of love for Jesus he obeyed Jesus' words. In fact, Jesus commissioned him as an evangelist to his town. It began with his home. He went to his mother and father and shared how Jesus had healed him. His parent's broken hearts were healed and they had a joyful reunion with many tears. The man did not stop there. He told all over town how much Jesus had done for him. The more he shared Jesus' grace, the more he appreciated Jesus' grace to him. Joy welled up in his heart and he overflowed with thankfulness to Jesus. When people heard his testimony, they could understand the spiritual reality. They realized that demons are the real enemies of mankind, and that Jesus is the Savior of the world. They opened their hearts to Jesus. This man who had been a source of trouble to many, had now become an instrument of God's grace to the whole region. Mark chapter 7 tell us that when Jesus went into this region again, many people came to him for healing. It was the fruit of the changed life of the former demon-possessed man. Jesus' light began to shine among Gentiles.

In this passage we have learned how Jesus healed a demon possessed man. Essentially, through his question, "What is your name?" Jesus helped this man acknowledge his true spiritual condition and confess it to Jesus. Then Jesus could heal him. How would you answer Jesus' question, "What is your name?" I was once a demon-possessed man. I did not run around without clothes or break chains, but I was tormented by demons after giving in to my lustful desires as a young man. During one worship service, the word of God touched my heart. Suddenly I realized that a demon was dwelling in me. The demon wanted to damage and destroy God's work and God's servants. But through Dr. Abraham Kim's clear rebuke with the word of Jesus, the demon

was driven out. My heart opened and I could realize the spiritual world and receive Jesus' deep grace of healing. Since then the word of God has been my life source. Jesus has been with me as my Shepherd and Friend. He has guided me through many difficulties and trials and stood me as a servant of his word. Praise the Lord Jesus Christ, who has done great things for me. What about you? How would you answer Jesus when he asks, "What is your name?" Let's answer honestly from our hearts and allow Jesus to come in and heal us. Let's also pray for the young souls of our land who are helpless in the grip of demons. Let's share the word of God with them and help them come to Jesus, who can heal them and raise them as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. We have great hope in Jesus.