

Text: Luke 8:26-40

Title: The Demon-Possessed Man from Gadara...and Baptism

Truth: We ought to tell others about what Jesus has done for us.

Date/Location: March 3, 2024 at FBC

Introduction

Jesus continues his ministry: teaching, explaining, illustrating, and doing miracles over nature, health, death, and here, the realm of fallen angels.

I. Jesus Removes Many Demons from a Person, v. 26-37

- A. Matthew 8:28-34 and Mark 5:1-20 are the other passages that describe this amazing encounter. In Matthew, two men are mentioned, but Mark and Luke only mention one. It is likely that the one became the focal point. Perhaps this is because he was more violent, or the leader amongst the two, or he was the one that asked to stay with Jesus after he was healed.
- B. The prior paragraph shows Jesus's supernatural power over the *natural* realm. This account shows His supernatural power over the *supernatural* realm, even numerous and powerful forces in that realm. The account is a straightforward report of the Lord's speaking and demons obeying His command. I still cannot get over the fact that demons obey Jesus, but people do not!
- C. Demon-possession was and still today is real. It leads to violence and mental illness as in this case, although those behaviors can also arise from plain-old depravity. I do not look around for evidence of demons, but I have heard accounts from people that demon possession and devil worship exist in our culture as well as many around the globe. The sick things that go on in the world are largely explainable by human depravity itself, but there are just some things that are so systemic, so deep, so debauched, and so wicked, that demonization is a factor.
- D. This is a straightforward report about the Lord's miraculous work. Jesus faces a host of demons inside of two men. He demanded the demons leave the men, but He permitted them to enter a herd of pigs. Mark 5:13 (5:2-20) tells us there were 2,000 swine in the

herd, perhaps indicating 2,000 demons. Their name was Legion, for they were many. A Roman legion numbered 6,000 soldiers. Afterward, the men were restored to normal health and mental function. Notice that you have here a Man, Christ Jesus, taking on thousands of demons in one swoop, with no apparent effort. This is powerful.

- E. The demons somehow preferred the death of the swine by drowning to being cast into judgment which they knew Jesus could command them and they would be forced to obey. They indicated that the timing was premature for that, meaning that they knew that a time was coming in which they would be judged severely for their rebellion against God (as in Jude 6). Meanwhile they preferred a measure of freedom. Perhaps by killing the pigs, the demons could be freed from the bodies of those pigs and could go back to their own normal realm or find another bodily host. Fallen angels enjoy participating in sin with their human host.
- F. The residents of that region were not friendly to Jesus. They may well have been upset at suffering the loss of a huge herd of swine and the associated profit. But the text reports that they were fearful of a Man who had this kind of authority and did not want to be accountable to Him. The herd of swine indicates that there were many Gentiles in this region, or Jews who were not keeping to the dietary laws of Moses.
- G. Christians should not at all be fearful that demons can indwell or overpower them. Christ has so much more authority that not even 2,000 demons can keep you from Christ!
- H. The demon-possessed man initially wore no clothing. I mused during preparation of this message that public nudity is probably related somehow to demon possession! I speak *tongue-in-cheek* again—but not entirely. Today, such immodesty is rampant. We should also be discerning enough to understand that nudity does not necessarily equate to complete nakedness. The outfits that some women wear in public today are so revealing as to constitute nudity or nearly so. I will speak at another time more in detail about Christian modesty. Demonic influence in this area of society should be obvious.

II. Jesus Wants the Man to Testify to Others, v. 38-49

- A. One of the men healed from demon possession *really* was thankful and I believe trusted in the Lord. He wanted to travel with Him as a tangible expression of becoming a disciple.
- B. Jesus had a better plan for him: go and tell others about the wonderful things God has done for you. He was to do with the Psalmist did in Psalm 66:16 and what Israel said in 126:3. Or what Nebuchadnezzar wrote (Daniel 4:1-3). And Psalm 71:19.
- Psalm 107:8 – Oh that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men.
- 1 Samuel 2:24 – Only fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you.
- C. To be *with* Jesus...and to tell others about Jesus. Isn't that what *you* want to do and know you need to do? Don't you want to be *with* Jesus, and know that you need to tell others about Him? Those are great ways to show love for God and others.
- D. Verse 40 tells us the result of the man's obedience: when the Lord returned, people welcomed Him eagerly because they had heard from the man himself the great things God had done.

III. Baptism Service: What Prevents me from being Baptized?

We are talking here about a truly Christian baptism. I acknowledge that there are variations on the Biblical practice, but I deny that they are fully valid. Since baptism does not save, practicing a variant form of baptism does not condemn you either. Yet as in all we do, we really desire to honor God by faithful obedience to His entire word, including what it says about baptism.

You are prevented from being baptized if...

1. **You are dead.** Although, 1 Cor. 15:24 does mention baptism for dead people. The passage most likely refers to people who were baptized because of the testimony of Christians who have since departed this life.
2. **You are a baby.** Babies do not have the capacity for faith, or the ability to understand the significance of the symbolism of baptism,

or the faculties to confess Jesus as Lord and admit that God has raised Him from the dead. No disrespect whatsoever is meant toward people who were baptized as infants in a denominational ritual, but *that* is not Scriptural Christian baptism.

3. **If you are demon-possessed.** You first trust Christ and experience the Holy Spirit of God taking up residence in your life, thus kicking out the squatter demons that are there. That may well happen at the time you believe in Jesus and realize the need to follow him, or it may happen before. It cannot happen *after* that point because by then, the Spirit of God has already begun to dwell in you, and He does not like roommates, especially wicked ones.
4. **If you think that being baptized saves you or removes sin.** Water cannot remove spiritual dirtiness. Water is a solvent that removes physical dirt. Christ's blood is the solvent that removes spiritual dirt, and it is the *only* such solvent that does so. That is, His substitutionary death for your sin provides for the removal of sin and its guilt.
5. **If you have not repented.** Acts 2:38. To repent means to really change your mind about sin—all kinds of sin whether your self-aggrandizement; your belief that you are the judge of what is right and wrong; your viewpoint about God; your lack of trust in Jesus, etc. It is connected to an admission of wrongdoing but goes farther. "I know I am wrong" is important. It is a further step to say, "I have changed my thinking about this to match what God says." A true change in thinking then will naturally flow into a change in action. Be aware that perfection in behavior is not what repentance is about. It leads in that direction but is not perfection.
6. **If you have not trusted in Christ.** Baptism is not going to change your mind or convince God to change His mind about your state before Him! Repentance is like one side of a coin and trusting confidence in Christ the other side. First you believe in the Lord, and then you are baptized, like a guy named Crispus in Acts 18:8, or a corrections officer in Acts 16:31-33.
7. **If you have not been baptized into Christ** (Gal. 3:27). So, am I saying that you cannot be baptized until you have been baptized? Sort of. What I mean is that you cannot be *water* baptized until you

have been *Spirit* baptized! What happens when a person becomes a Christian is that “behind the scenes” our Lord directs the Holy Spirit to do whatever He needs to do to place you into Christ’s body, into Christ Himself. It is not exactly ‘paperwork,’ but it does unite you to a group of people who are also united to Jesus. It “immerses” you into the family of God.

8. **If you do not understand the way to do it, by water immersion** with a church family present. But for rare exceptions, baptisms are public services because Christians are telling others and the world that they are Christ-followers. To verb *baptize* means to dip or immerse.
9. **If you do not grasp the symbolism of baptism as a spiritual reality**, that also prevents you from being properly baptized. We baptize to symbolize that a Christian is vitally connected to Jesus’s death, to His burial, and to His resurrection. Going down into the water pictures that your old self went to the cross with Jesus. Being *in* the water pictures that your old self died. And coming up out of the water is a symbol of how you rose from the dead with Jesus as a new person! Therefore, baptism is a picture of what Jesus did, and how you are connected with what He did.
10. **If you hold divided loyalties**, like to two different religions. You cannot be one foot in the Christian faith and the other foot in another religion, or one foot in Christianity and the other foot in the world. Before you take baptism, you have made a fundamental life decision: I am a Christian, and that is what I am, and that is it! I do not follow another faith, I do not live like the world wants me to live, I am following Jesus.
11. **If you are driven by the fear of people**. Someone who fears people will not genuinely follow Jesus or be baptized as an expression of their new life. People of the world do not want you to do that. They want you to be like them, to conform to their ways, not to imply or explicitly say that their life of unbelief is wrong. If peer pressure is holding you back—“What would my friends think?”—please place greater weight on “What does God think?”

This fear drives you to not want to be baptized. But we are baptized because Jesus commands us to do so. We must obey the Lord of the universe, not the men of His creation. And we are baptized to tell others about the WONDERFUL thing that has happened to us in salvation. Like the man rescued from demon possession in Luke 8: he proclaimed what great things God had done for him. Baptism is part of doing that!

Conclusion

Once you are baptized, and if you are truly *serious* about being a Christian, your spiritual life will grow and grow. You will accelerate and take off. This is not because some magic happened while you were in the water. Progress follows because you have made a serious-minded decision to be obedient to Christ. After all He did for you and all He gave for you through a simple transaction of faith, the *least* you can do for Him is to show Him your love by obeying His command to be baptized and to tell others the great things that God has done for you. And when you do *that*, God is pleased; others are happy for you; and you know you are doing God's will. Nothing energizes our service for God more than that!

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