

The Miracles Of Jesus Christ: Two Demon-Possessed Men Healed (Part Three)

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In this miracle, (Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; and Luke 8:26-39), Jesus Christ commands unclean spirits to come out of two men. Demons must obey Jesus even if people do not. Even so, the demons do not obey Christ's command immediately. They object, unwilling to abandon their victims. Christ could have compelled them to come out of the men immediately if He had wished, but the men may not have been able to survive the exorcism on their own strength.

In a separate incident, Mark 9:26-27 informs us, "Then the spirit [*one* demon] cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, 'He is dead.' But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose." Here, the exorcism had induced convulsions in the man as a single demon left him. Both exorcisms were under Christ's control; He used His great power but with wise, gentle, and cautious concern.

Jesus addresses the men as if they are possessed by a single spirit, but the demon's answer, giving his name as "Legion," shows that he led a company of demons. Mark records that the swine that the demons entered after their exorcism numbered about two thousand (Mark 5:13). If this was the number inhabiting the two men—each with its own personality, all under the power of one will, animated by one purpose and united in operation—then the plight of the two men must have been horrific in the extreme.

1. Why does Jesus accept the demons' request to enter the swine? Matthew 8:31; Mark 5:12; Luke 8:32.

Comment: Actually, Christ does not send the demons into the swine but merely out of the men, nor does He drive the pigs into the sea through a divine miracle, but the demons themselves do it by divine consent.

There may be an element of judgment here on the owners for raising the swine as food (Leviticus 11:4-8). While Jews do not eat pork, Roman soldiers did, and providing unclean meat for others does not seem to have bothered the Jews' consciences. Thus, the destruction of their swine is deserved punishment for violating God's law.

The Bible tells us of demonic powers entering into only two species of animals: the serpent—a symbol of deception and shrewdness—and the swine—a symbol of uncleanness. What more appropriate place is there for unclean spirits to be contained than in swine?

2. What changes take place in the men? Mark 5:15; Luke 8:35.

Comment: At least five significant changes occur:

First, the exorcism left the men with a new posture, that of sitting and resting, in direct contrast to the constant roaming and wandering about the tombs and mountains and wilderness day and night. Christ says in Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all you that labor and are heavy burdened, and I will give you rest." A problem of sin is discontentment, the lack of peace and rest (Isaiah 57:20-21). However, that all changed when Christ entered the lives of the demon-possessed men to deliver them from the evil adversary.

Second, before the exorcism, the possessed men want nothing to do with Christ, but afterward a tremendous change in attitude occurs: The delivered men want to go with Christ out of reverence and respect for their "Savior." Jesus, though, has something else in mind: It is more important that they witness to others of what happened. Jesus instructs His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23). The man wants to follow Jesus physically, but Jesus wants him to take up his cause for Him.

Third, before their deliverance they wear no clothes, yet afterwards they are clothed (Luke 8:27, 35). Sin makes people shameless and immodest, a natural development due to their separation from the righteous God. The men's spiritual cleanness is indicated by visible changes; modesty, cleanliness, and appearance improve, as it does when anyone is delivered by Christ. Wherever God's truth is received, people's morals improve, reflected in modest clothing.

Fourth, they regain their sanity. Fools, not wise men, reject God (Psalm 14:1), and sin invites Satan into a person's mind. Ultimately, his influence causes madness. Jesus explains: "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order" (Luke 11:24-25). When a demon is removed, a person's mind is cleaned of chaos and made orderly. To avoid being possessed again, he needs to replace what was swept out with God's Spirit and truth.

Fifth, the words "right mind" (Mark 5:15; Luke 8:35) suggest the controlling of thoughts and actions, so it indicates, not only sanity, but also self-control. The demons in the men are uncontrollable ("neither could anyone tame him," Mark 5:4), but when Jesus comes, they recognize God's authority over them. Evil people cannot control their desires, and society cannot control them, so crime rages on. Living God's way of life as revealed in the life of Christ is the answer. God provides the right mind to produce the fruit of the Spirit, including self-control (Galatians 5:23).

Jesus instructs the healed man to tell people about his deliverance, particularly those who were familiar and intimate with him. He wants him to be an example of God's grace, first among his own family and friends, so that they can come to repentance. A Christian is first responsible for witnessing to those closest to him, who will see the greatest difference in him as he lives God's way of life.