

17. Jesus Meets the Legion Demon

Luke 8:22-39

Luke: A Walk Through the Life of Jesus

Jesus' Control of the Wind and the Waves

²²One day Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." So they got into a boat and set out. ²³As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger. ²⁴The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. ²⁵"Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples. In fear and amazement they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him" (Luke 8:22-25).

The Sea of Galilee is more than six hundred feet below sea level and famous for its sudden squalls. While visiting Israel in 1978, I had the opportunity to work with the local fishermen on their diesel-powered fishing boat one evening on the Sea of Galilee. I am an ex-fisherman from the east coast of England, so I found this experience very interesting, and the fishermen were happy to have me come along. We drank Turkish coffee all night and compared our fishing methods. Even though they had modern electronic gadgets to find the fish, we caught little. The weather was fairly calm that night, but they did tell me that it can be a dangerous place when the weather worsens. Still, I am sure that the storms these men have witnessed in their lifetime was nothing compared to the storm that the disciples faced.

Question 1) There is Biblical evidence that five, possibly six, of the disciples were fishermen; why were they so scared? Do you think this storm was worse than they had seen before? Do you think it was of natural or supernatural origin?

It is possible that the storm was not natural in origin. Satan is called "the prince of the power of the air" in Ephesians 2:2, and in another place, he is called the "prince of this world" (John 12:31). Does he have power to manipulate the weather? When Satan tempted Job, God replied to Satan by saying, "Everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger" (Job 1:12). Being given permission, we read that the result was that fire came down from the sky, burning up the sheep and the servants, followed by a strong wind that struck the house where his sons and daughters were eating, causing the death of all. I don't know if this incident we are studying today was of satanic origin, but let us not underestimate our adversary. He does have power, but the Spirit who is in us has greater power than Satan. John the Apostle wrote that the One Who is in us is greater than the one who is in this world (1 John 4:4).

To back up my thought that maybe this storm was demonically inspired is the usage of the word translated "rebuked" in verse 24. Jesus *rebuked* the wind and the waters. Doesn't that sound strange to speak to the wind? The Greek word used is *epitimaō*. It can be translated "To blame, censure, chide, rebuke, warn or berate." It is an abrupt, curt, and biting charge pointedly expressing disapproval and connotes a sharp or harsh tone. In Mark 1:25, the same word is used

thus: ²⁵”Be quiet!’ said Jesus sternly. ‘Come out of him!’” (The context is of a demon being cast out of a person in the synagogue in Capernaum). The same Greek word is used in another place while Jesus was casting out a demon from a boy. The Word of God says: ¹⁸Jesus **rebuked the demon and it came out, and he was healed from that moment (Matthew 17:18)**. Jesus was not soft with demons. He spoke sternly, with authority, and with a strong command, and as strange as it may sound, this is the same way He spoke to the wind and the waves. A remarkable thing happened as He spoke curtly to the wind and waves, i.e. a complete calm came over the waves, and the wind absolutely stopped!

I can tell you, having been at Sea for many years, that is not natural. I have never seen a complete calm come over the sea and cause immediate effect to the waves. A strong wind takes time to slowly die down. Even if it was of natural origin, waves cannot become calm in seconds. The swell of the waves carries on for some time after the wind dies down. The hardened fishermen in the boat had never seen phenomena like this. Luke tells us that they were struck with fear and amazement (v. 25). The Lord was disappointed at their lack of faith (v. 25).

Question 2) If the disciples would have had more faith, what was Jesus expecting them to do in the midst of the storm? Why did He rebuke them for their lack of faith?

In the next passage, Jesus was on His way to confront Legion, a strong evil spirit that had control of a man and who had terrorized the Eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. It seems logical that the storm was a demonic attack on the evangelistic band that were on their way to break the hold of the demonic presence. Even the hardy professional fishermen in the boat were scared at the severity of the storm, and they were in fear for their lives.

The Lord had told them that they were going to the other side of the lake, and he didn’t say *under!* The way of Jesus is to take us through the storms of life rather than to find a way of escape.

Jesus Control over the Legion Demon

²⁶They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes,^b which is across the lake from Galilee.

²⁷When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs (Luke 8:26-27).

Not long after becoming a Christian, I met a man who had dabbled in séances; the outcome was that demons were manifesting themselves in his home. He thought it very normal until one night when all hell broke loose, and everything got very scary. His whole family was terrified. He made tracks to the pastor of one of the churches in my home town. On the way, the demons were audibly telling him that if he went to the home of Harry Hughes, the minister, they would kill him and his family. He went and received Christ into his life. Harry then went and prayed in his house and cast out every demonic influence. Brian is still a wonderful servant of God in my home town.

I would not think of moving into a new house without praying, pronouncing blessing, and asking God to spiritually cleanse the home into which we would live. Sometimes, due to previous occupants performing séances or other occult activities, an evil spirit can inhabit a place. One does not need to go looking for demons. If there is something there, it will manifest itself in some way. Often, it is when the kingdom of God is being advanced in some way. I have been in meetings where there has been a demonic reaction to the word of God. It is a clash of kingdoms! Our emphasis is to be in advancing God's kingdom and spreading His word, and in accomplishing that task, we will sometimes have to deal with demonic opposition. There are a couple of mistakes people make in response to the demonic. Some would deny that demons exist. They would say that such spirits are a figment of the imagination. Others would say that demons are everywhere. C.S. Lewis, the great theologian, in his book *The Screwtape Letters*, wrote:

One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. The demons themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.

We are in a Fight.

The New Testament teaches that this world is a battleground between the forces of God and the forces of the evil one, the devil. Part of the problem we have is that some Christians feel that they are on an ocean cruise liner instead of a battleship. Unless we become aware of the fight around us and for us, we will continue to feel at ease on our cruise liner. We are not to give an opportunity or foothold to our enemy (Ephesians 4:27); instead, we should be aware of the cosmic struggle going on in the world.

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹²**For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:10-12).**

The Word of God tells us that these spiritual evil forces are in the unseen realms about this world. Paul calls them "the heavenly realms." We fight against spiritual forces of evil that are outside the physical dimension. We do not fight with swords and guns. We can only fight with spiritual weapons. The fight is for the minds and hearts of precious people loved by God as well as for territory held under the sway of demonic control. Wherever the Gospel is received, that person becomes an outpost of the Kingdom of God.

If you allow Satan to enter the door of your life and he continues to gain ground, his foothold becomes a knee-hold, and unless it is brought under Christ's dominion, it will become a stronghold. When the enemy has gained a stronghold, it's usually the result of detrimental habits that have formed over time, i.e. alcoholism, drug addiction, sexual sin, cursing, lying, and a host of other things. It's important to know that only God can be in every place (omnipresent) at the same time. Satan uses an army of evil spirits. The enemy has structured his forces in a

hierarchical way to wage war against every believer. He has his generals, captains, and lieutenants, down to the demons that attack you and me.

Some evil spirits are more powerful and stronger than others. The Scripture above calls some of them rulers and authorities to indicate that they have rank. The demon inside this man called himself Legion, referring to a number being 6,000 in size. It is very possible that Legion was a high-ranking and powerful spirit that controlled the region of Gadara and Gerasa. We cannot be dogmatic about such things due to a lack of Scriptural evidence, but it is likely that in a hierarchical structure, the Legion demon controlled other evil spirits inhabiting the man, but also the fact that people from the nearby towns had tried to hold him down and chain him tells us that this spirit had terrorized the whole area.

Verse 27 uses the word *demon possessed* to translate what had happened to this man. The word *demonized* is a term preferable to *demon possessed*. Commentator C. Fred Dickason, in his book, *Demon Possession and the Christian*, writes about this topic:

Confusion has been introduced by translating this participle as ‘demon possessed.’ The word *possession* implies ownership. Actually demons own nothing. The New Testament regards them as squatters or invaders of territory that does not belong to them. In reality God owns *them*, for He is their Creator and their Judge. Such a faulty translation, then, misleads people regarding the state of the demonized person and causes undue consternation and terror in the hearts of the afflicted and those concerned for him.¹

Jesus landed the boat ashore near to where the demoniac was living out in the open. When the man saw Jesus, Mark’s Gospel tells us that he began to run to the Lord: “**When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him**” (Mark 5:6). I wish that all men would do this! Even though this is the worst case in the Scriptures of a man demonized, the man is still somewhat in control enough to run to Jesus. When he falls down in front of the Lord, it is the demon that speaks through his vocal chords. It is my belief that no-one is so fully under Satan’s control that he cannot run to Christ, be delivered of every form of evil, and turn his life around.

The Condition of the Man

²⁸When 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!” ²⁹For Jesus had commanded the impure spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places. ³⁰Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” “Legion,” he replied, because many demons had gone into him. ³¹And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss (Luke 8:28-31).

Question 3) What’s the picture you get in your mind when you think of the condition of this man? What effect do you think this may have had on the people of the town?

¹ C. Fred Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian*. (Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press, 1987), p.38.

In his Gospel, Mark adds some interesting things to our study. He says, “Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones” (Mark 5:5). Here is a man in terrible agony of soul. There is no relief to the torturous thoughts that are continually speaking to him to cut and kill himself. I am sure that, if he could have gotten hold of a knife, he would have killed himself. Instead, he is trying to cut his wrists with stones.

Often, when a demon gets access into a person’s life, it seeks to deceive him into believing that it is God that is speaking to him. In the case of the man who shot John Lennon and also the individual who attempted to kill President Reagan (John Hinckley, Jr.), both men said that God had told them to shoot. God gets the blame for many things that Satan does. The voices within, it seems, are so insistent and authoritative. Many times those that commit suicide, I feel sure, are driven to it by demons that are oppressing the depressed one, whispering constant thoughts and driving a person to self-destruction. Those afflicted in such a way are duped into believing that the voices are their own thoughts when, in reality, it is the enemy putting thoughts into their minds.

The Bible is clear that there are disembodied evil spirits that can gain entrance into people’s lives to oppress them, but there can also be mental and physical reasons as well. Although I am not a doctor, there is the condition of schizophrenia, for instance. It is possible that people have been given drugs to dull their senses when it could very well be a spiritual problem and not physical. The enemy loves to hide his actions and stay in the darkness. What is needed is the light of God’s Word opened to the reality of the spiritual realm and spiritual forces. The enemy loves to hide in the darkness. When God’s light come into a situation, the darkness will be exposed!

Day after day, night after night, this man is crying out. He has no bed in which to sleep, no home in which to live. He uses the tombs as a head rest, if and when he is able to sleep. To a Jew, the place where he lived was despicable, for contact with the tombs would have made any self-respecting Jew to be ceremonially unclean. Tombs were whitewashed so that they could be easily seen and avoided. To look at him would be to look on an animal. His nails would have been long, his hair and beard long and unkempt. He is obviously naked, too, for verse 35 makes a big deal of the fact that he was dressed after the spirit was cast out. He also had supernatural strength to break the chains that were put on him, thus causing fear in the locality of his strength and unpredictable nature.

In verse 29, we are told, “Many times it had seized him.” Perhaps, in the early days of his being oppressed, there were times when the man was not under the full control of the evil one. It could be that some of the nearest townfolk had once or twice tried to help him. After all, he was someone’s son and, maybe, brother and relative. In those times, it was possible to put the chains on him, but all the good that was done for him was gone as soon as the enemy “seized him” and broke the chains, taking him into solitary places. On occasion, I have had to deal with people that were demonized. When the demon takes over the person, it uses the person’s body to express itself, sometimes speaking through his vocal chords. When this happens, the person feels like he is in a dream or set to one side, almost as an observer.

When Jesus asked the man's name, the demon spoke giving the name whereby he called itself—Legion. It is believed by a number of people who are experienced in deliverance ministry that, under the authority of God, to command a demon to reveal its name is to weaken the hold on the person. Prayer in the name of Jesus is the only means for a person to be released from Satan's clutches.

The demons know exactly Who this is that is standing before them—the divine Son of God, and they recognize Him instantly. Spirit knows spirit. Demons have to give way to higher authority, and there is no higher authority on earth! When the man runs up to Jesus, the demons are terrified, such is their fear of Christ. They were shouting at the top of their voices (v.28), even though they are at His feet.

²⁸When 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!" ²⁹For Jesus had commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man (Luke 8:28-29).

The demon did not come out at first. The Greek tense tells us that he commanded the evil spirit to come out and kept on commanding it to come out. This is reflected in the English translation in verse 29. The demons pleaded not to be sent into the Abyss, the place prepared for Satan, along with the fallen angels and demons:

¹And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. ²He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. ³He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended (Revelation 20:1-3).

The abyss is a place inside the earth that is not physical. It is another dimension. The word is sometimes translated as *pit*. The King James version translates the word as *the bottomless pit*. It could be the same place where the rich man in Luke 16:19-31 is sent (the Greek word used in that passage is *Hades*). The Apostle Peter also talks about a place where fallen angels are kept. He says, ⁴"For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell..." (2 Peter 2:4). In this verse, the Greek word "Tartarus" is used by Peter, and it is translated as *hell*. It is described as a place of gloomy dungeons (some manuscripts say "into chains of darkness") to be held for judgment.

³²A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he gave them permission. ³³When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. ³⁴When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, ³⁵and 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; and they were afraid. ³⁶Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. ³⁷Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left. ³⁸The man from whom the

demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹“Return home and tell how much God has done for you.” So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him (Luke 8:32-39).

Question 4) Why would Jesus send the evil spirits into the pigs? Also, why did Christ not allow the man to follow Him?

There is the possibility that it helped the man in his healing process to see the demons go into something else. The evidence of sight gives powerful testimony to what Jesus did to deliver him. It is also a possibility that the Jews in the area were compromising God’s law for economic reasons. The Old Testament forbids Jews to eat pork. Mark 5:13 gives us the number of pigs: there were 2,000 that the demons went into – certainly a lot of bacon and worth a lot of money. The Jews of the area may not have been eating the pigs themselves but selling the pork to the Gentiles (non-Jews) in the area. The city of Damascus, the Syrian capital, was just a few miles north of where they were. It would have been a good reason as to why the people in the area did not want Jesus around and asked him to leave. They were afraid of more loss of revenue. Unfortunately, there are many that reject Christ because they care more about money than following Him.

Why would Jesus not allow the man to follow Him? He now had a great personal testimony, and the Lord used him to wake up the ten cities in the area where he went. It is Mark who tells us that “the man went away and began to proclaim throughout the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him” (Mark 5:20). Later on, Jesus followed up the man’s testimony by visiting the area of the Decapolis (Mark 7:31) where He astonished the people by healing and ministering. They said of Him, “He has done all things well! He makes even the deaf to hear and the mute to speak!” (Mark 7:37). A testimony of God’s power can be greatly used of God, so never underestimate the power of sharing what God has done in your life. You never know what the Lord will do to follow up your testimony! In this case, the Lord used the man’s story to turn hard hearts that initially rejected Christ into a powerful revival in the area of the Decapolis.

Things to Remember about Evil Spirits:

1. If you are a believer, Jesus has given you power over the enemy. ⁴“You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, **because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world**” (1 John 4:4). You need not fear him. You have been given authority over him.
2. Stand firm when the enemy attacks. James tells us: “**Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you**” (James 4:7). Just as Jesus used the Word of God against the devil, begin to memorize Scripture and remind the enemy that you do not belong to him but to Jesus. “**Trust in the LORD with all your heart**” (Proverbs 3:5).
3. Destroy anything in your home that has an occult or satanic association. A demon does have the ability to attach to objects or symbols of the kingdom of darkness.
4. Renounce all association with Satan and his works. Ask forgiveness of God and deliverance from evil. My advice is for you to go over in your mind every situation of occult activity or involvement in your past and ask forgiveness for each specific act. Renounce Satan and his

works, confessing your faith in Christ and declaring that you no longer wish to have anything to do with Satan's kingdom. Begin to serve God in a Bible-believing church.

5. Stand with others in prayer. When praying about a stronghold in a person's life, there are times when it is necessary to have others to pray with you. Jesus sent his disciples out two by two in ministry. There is strength when we agree together as touching anything!

Scripture: "Therefore take up the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you will be able to stand your ground, and having done everything, to stand" (Ephesians 6:13).

Keith Thomas

Email: keiththomas@groupbiblestudy.com

Website: www.groupbiblestudy.com