

# Jesus Heals Two Demon Possessed Men

## Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39

**DIG:** After the legion left him, how did the man feel? What question do you think bothered the people of the town the most? Why did they want Christ to leave them alone? Why did Jesus want the healed man to return to his home?

**REFLECT:** If you could just be free of one thing, what would it be? Encountering the living Messiah can be unsettling. Yet, with the uneasiness can come healing and restoration in His Name. Would you rather ask Yeshua to leave you alone because you don't want to deal with your problems, or do you need Him more than anything?

After setting sail from Capernaum, the wonders did not end after sundown. For the first time we have a detailed description of the demonic state. This is the second of four separate occasions we see Jesus ministering to Gentiles in the Gospels. Jesus will show that He is not subservient to Satan, but much stronger than the devil. The Lord healed two demonized men before dawn following the storm on the Lake. These miracles performed by Jesus in the presence of His talmidim would help to strengthen their faith.

They sailed across the lake to the region of the Gadarenes, which is across the Sea from Galilee (Mark 5:1; Luke 8:26). The region of Gadarenes was a little north of the river Jabbok (see my commentary on Genesis 32 - Jacob Prepares to Meet Esau). Matthew tells us that He arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes (Mattityahu 8:28a). The Greek side of Lake Kinneret was divided into three regions - Gerasa, Gadara, and Gergesa - so that the same region might reasonably have been named for all three. While the Bible does not specifically name the exact town, it was probably the small town of Gerasa for just south of it there are steep cliffs that fit the geographical setting here. A herd of terrified pigs running toward this cliff could not have been able to stop quickly enough, and would have inevitably been hurled down into the Lake below.

The whole country around where Jesus and His apostles landed is lined with limestone caves used as tombs for the dead. This story becomes even more bizarre and frightening when it is seen as happening in the shadows of the night. The rabbis taught that the evil spirits particularly lived in lonely, desolate places, and also among the tombs. They also believed that it was primarily at night that the demons haunted the burying places.

When the Lord and His apostles left Capernaum in the evening by boat to the other side, their destination was the small town of Gerasa that was on the northeast shore of the

Sea of Galilee. But even allowing for the delay by the storm, the passage was only six miles away and could not have taken the whole **night** to get there. So if we suppose that **the Savior** and **His talmidim** landed at Gerasa before sunrise, when perhaps the silvery moon was shedding her pale light on the weird scene, it would be early in the morning after sunrise when **all the people of Gerasa began to plead with Jesus to leave them (Matthew 8:34; Mark 5:17; Luke 8:37a)**. It would also allow sufficient time for the miracles that took place on that same day back in Capernaum after **His** return. Therefore, all the circumstances lead us to conclude that the healing of **the demoniac** took place at **night**.<sup>736</sup>

**They** had scarcely landed when the blood-curdling cries of raging lunacy and human distress sounded from **the tombs** nearby. In the dim light of the moon they saw **two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs to meet Jesus**. **Matthew** tells us that **two men came out from the tombs (Mattityahu 8:28b)**, but **Mark** and **Luke** chose to focus on the more dominant of **the two men (Luke 8:27a; Mark 5:2-3a)**. It is important to note that **Yeshua** never blamed anyone for having a disease or by being controlled by a **demon**. **He** recognized that they were victims of powers beyond their control and needed deliverance, not encouragement or condemnation.

**They were so violent that no one could pass that way. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs.** It is clear that the foul and polluted nature of such tombs, with all their grisly and terrifying associations, would tend to aggravate the nature of his condition. Known for his violent behavior, **no one was strong enough to subdue him anymore. For he had often been chained hand and foot, but with seeming supernatural power, he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet (Matthew 8:28b; Mark 5:3b-4; Luke 8:27b)**. This man, who had long been afflicted, was beyond any help that mere human beings could afford him. This was a spiritual battle.<sup>737</sup>

**Night and day among the graves and in the hills he would cry out with a loud shriek and cut himself with stones so his whole body was covered with scars (Mark 5:5)**. While the power of the evil one is real, **demonic** activity seems to vary at different times in biblical history. It would come as no surprise that, with the coming of Christ, the appearance of **demons** would increase as the Adversary opposed all that **ADONAI** is trying to accomplish through **the Lord**.

With irresistible power **the demonized** were drawn to **Yeshua** as **He** reached the shore. **When the demon saw Christ from a distance, the man he possessed ran and fell on his knees at the feet of the Lord (Mark 5:6; Luke 8:28a)**. At first it might have seemed like **he** had hostile intentions. The onrush of the screaming maniac must have tried the newly recovered confidence of **the Twelve**. We can only imagine **their** surprise when, approaching, **he** threw himself at the feet of **Yeshua**. The fact that **the man** saw **Jesus** from a distance

would not lead him to worship **Him**. But as **he** drew closer the spiritual dynamic changed. **The demons** inside the man recognized **the Messiah as the Son of God!** So **the demoniac**, being in a hopeless position, destined to be damned for all eternity, one of the allies of the Destroyer of Souls, bent **his knee to the Son of God**. Some today don't believe that **Yeshua ha-Meshiach is the Son of God**, but **the demons** do!

This is that which Rabbi Sha'ul was speaking when he referred to the universal worship of our **Lord Jesus**, including **the demons**. **That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth (Philippians 2:10)**. Even now they are bending **the knee to Him**. In the last analysis, it was not **the demoniac** who fell on **his knees** at the feet of **the Deliverer**. **He** was under the control of many **demons**, which were the source of the reverence paid to **the Son of God**.

Being controlled by **them** he shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with us, **Jesus, Son of the Most High God?**" By their question: **Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time (Mattityahu 8:29; Mark 5:7; Luke 8:28b)?** They acknowledged that **they** knew there was a divinely appointed **time**, not yet come, when **He** would indeed judge them and punish **them** with eternal damnation after the thousand-year millennial Kingdom. But it was too early for that **appointed time**, and yet **they** sensed that **Messiah** was not going to allow **their** current evil work to continue.

It is clear that **Jesus** made more than one attempt to heal this **man**. **He** had used the usual method - an authoritative order to **the demon** to come out. On this occasion it was not successful. **For Jesus had commanded the [demons] to come out of the man! Many times the demons 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 demons into solitary places (Mark 5:8; Luke 8:29)**.

Next, **Jesus** asked him: **What is your name (Mark 5:9a; Luke 8:30)?** The verb is imperfect, meaning *He kept on asking him*. **Christ** used the standard approach by merely asking **the demon's name**. The implication here is that **the demon** only responded after repeated questioning. This is the only incident in the Gospels in which **Jesus** communicated with a **demon**.

The evidence of how completely possessed this **man** felt is seen by the way **he** spoke. Sometimes **he** used the singular, as if **he himself** were speaking; sometimes **he** used the plural, as if all **the demons** in **him** were speaking. **He** was so convinced that **the demons** were in **him**, that **he** felt **they** were speaking through **him**. When asked **his name**, one of **the demons** replied, "My name is **Legion**," because so many **demons** had gone into **him (Mark 5:9b; Luke 8:30)**.<sup>738</sup> The word **legion** is the name for a company of Roman soldiers

consisting of about 6,000 men. The word **legion** was used like the word *mob*. It seems that not only had one **demon** taken up residence in that unfortunate man, but also a *mob* had done so.<sup>739</sup> This shows just how much stronger **Jesus** is than Satan.

**They** knew very well that **they** were about to be ordered out of the men whose bodies they had taken up residence, so **they** came up with a solution themselves. **And they begged Yeshua repeatedly not to order them out of the area and into the Abyss (Mark 5:10; Luke 8:31).** The **Abyss** is mentioned prominently in the book of **Revelation** (see my commentary on **Revelation Fb - Satan Bound for a Thousand Years**).

In desperation the **demons** looked around for a way of escape and saw a large herd of about two thousand pigs feeding there on the nearby hillside (Matthew 8:30; Mark 5:11; Luke 8:32a). This shows that the number of **demons** was very large. These Gentiles raised pigs for the meat markets in the **Decapolis**, or ten Gentile cities, in that region.

The **demons** begged **Jesus** to let them go into the pigs, and He gave them permission. He said to them: **Go!** They were powerless to resist His command so the evil spirits came out of the man and went into the pigs (Mattityahu 8:31-32a; Mark 5:12-13a; Luke 8:32b-33a). Unable to destroy the man, they destroyed the pigs. This is the deviled ham story!

And the whole herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the **Sea of Galilee** and were drowned in the water (Matthew 8:32b; Mark 5:13b; Luke 8:33b). Some have raised a moral question regarding **Yeshua** because He allowed the **demons** to enter the pigs, destroying the harmless animals together with their owner's property. But **God** has permitted demonic expression with its evil consequences since the garden of Eden. **Job** asked why, and **ADONAI** indicated that His dealings with Satanic powers are not to be understood fully by us at this time (**Job 40-41**). The pigs mass suicide proved that the **demons** truly left the man as well as his condition described below.<sup>740</sup>

Having witnessed such an amazing event, those tending the pigs ran off and reported everything in the town and countryside, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. With such an astounding testimony, it was not surprising that the whole town went out to see what had happened (Matthew 8:33; Mark 5:14; Luke 8:34).

There was a great stir in the town. When the people went out to see what had happened, they could hardly believe their eyes. They saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting at **Jesus'** feet. He was dressed and in his right mind. Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured, and told them about the pigs as well (Mark 5:15a-5:16; Luke 8:35a-36).

Doctor **Luke** added the word **cured** to his account. The Greek word *esothe*, or *saved*, is a favorite word of **Luke's** to describe the healing-salvation that **Messiah** brings. **The man** had not simply been **cured** of his demon-possession but of everything that separated **him** from **God**. **A wild man** became a docile, quiet, self-assured person.<sup>741</sup> There is no indication here that suggests that the response of **the people** was due to **their** financial concern over the loss of so many **pigs**. Though **they** were probably present, the owners of **the pigs** are never mentioned. The issue was not **the demons, the pigs, or the two men**. The issue was **Jesus Christ**.

We would suppose that the sight of the transformed **demoniacs** would have filled **the people** with joy and gratitude to **Yeshua**. But quite the contrary, **the people** of Gerasa didn't even give **Messiah** the reluctant reverence shown by **the demons**.<sup>742</sup> They didn't seem the least bit interested in finding out who **He** was, or why **He** had come to **their** town. **They** wanted nothing to do with **Him** and **all the people of the region of Gerasa began to plead with Jesus to leave them (Mattityahu 8:34; Mark 5:17; Luke 8:37a)**. At first **they went out to see what had happened**, but when **they** came to the **Lord** and observed **the man in his right mind, they were overcome with fear (Mark 5:15b; Luke 8:35b)**. Not angry, not resentful - but scared.

**The unholy people** had come face-to-face with the holy **God** and **they** were terrified. Sinners who know **they** are in the presence of **ADONAI** can only see **their** sin (see my commentary on **Isaiah Bq - I Am a Man of Unclean Lips**), which results in **fear**.

We are not told exactly what **the people** from the town thought of **Messiah**. We only know that **they** had a peek at the supernatural and it caused them to panic. They saw **the One** who could control **demons**, who could control animals, and who could restore shattered minds to sanity - and **they** wanted nothing to do with **Him**. Here we see the first opposition to **Jesus** in the gospels. **The people** did not ridicule or attempt to persecute this **Stranger** in **their** midst; **they** simply wanted nothing to do with **Him**. **The Lord's** return to Galilee was the only course left to **Him**.

In great contrast to the attitude of those **people**, the worst of **the two men** who had been demon-possessed wanted to become a disciple of **the Lord**. **As Jesus was getting back into the boat to return to Capernaum, the man who had been demon-possessed begged and kept on begging to go with Him (Mark 5:18; Luke 8:37b-38a)**. **He** was so grateful for his deliverance and so drawn to **Christ** that **he** could not bear to be separated from **Him** - a perfectly natural reaction. But **the Prince of Life** had other plans for that **man**.

**Yeshua** did not let him, but sent him away because **He** was not accepting Gentile disciples at that time (**Luke 8:38b**). **He** said: **Go home to your own people and tell them**

**how the Lord has had mercy on you.** The verbs are in the perfect tense, indicating a completed action with continuing results. After **the Meshiach's** official rejection by the Sanhedrin, **He** changed the focus of **His** ministry (see **En - Four Drastic Changes in Christ's Ministry**) and said: **Go and tell them how much the Lord has done for you** (Mark 5:19; Luke 8:39a) because the prohibition against telling anyone did not apply to Gentiles.

The former **demoniac** was to become an evangelist and missionary to **his own people**, a living testimony that **the One** whom they had rejected nonetheless loved and sought to redeem them. **So the man went away and began to tell everyone in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed** (Mark 5:20; Luke 8:39b). Later, we will see the results of this **man's** ministry in the feeding of the four thousand (see **Fu - Jesus Heals a Deaf Mute and Feeds the Four Thousand**).

When **all the people** of Gerasa **pleaded with Jesus to leave them**, their attitude may puzzle us at first until we realize that sometimes we have the same reaction. **ADONAI** has shown **His** power and love in our lives many times, yet there are times when we still respond by turning our hearts away from **Him**. In these times, we too are asking **Yeshua** to leave.

**The Lord** wants us to experience cleansing and freedom from sins such as anger, lust, deception and self-centeredness. Through **His** love, **God** will bring these areas to light in our lives and show us more clearly our need to change these areas and be healed. As our eyes are opened, we can then decide whether we will allow **Christ** to make us whole or whether we will resist **His** work in our hearts. The same **Son** that hardens clay . . . melts wax.

**Fear** is the single most important factor that causes us to turn our hearts away from **God**; **fear** of change or **fear** of the unknown can paralyze us. We can become so comfortable with our lives just as they are, with all their sins and problems, that we forget **God's** desire that we become one with **Him** in **Jesus Christ**. **The Savior of sinners** died on the cross to release us from our **fears**. **He** wants to bring us to the fullness of the relationship that we should have with **Him**. Let us hold on to the truth that **God** has a great plan for our lives.

*Lord Jesus, You have destroyed the power of darkness and all the chains that hold us in bondage. Send Your Holy Spirit to enlighten my mind and show me the fullness of life that You offer to all of Your children. Amen. He is faithful.<sup>743</sup>*