

CHRIST'S AUTHORITY OVER DEMONS

The demons knew WHO Jesus was, and they were fearful of coming torment. In Matthew 8:29, they asked Jesus, "Have You come here to torment us before the time?" And here is what happened:

Matthew 8:30 (NKJV)

30 Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding.

The fact that there was a great herd of swine here is further evidence that this was essentially Gentile territory. Mark 5:13 puts the number at about 2000.

The Mosaic Law forbade the Jews from either eating or touching swine (cf. Lev. 11:7-8; 27). Only in Gentile territory, such as Decapolis, would you find large herds of swine.

Matthew 8:31 (NKJV)

31 So the demons begged Him, saying, "If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine."

The large herd of swine suggests that the number of demons was large. In Mark 5:9, the responding demon said, "***My name is Legion; for we are many.***" In the Roman army, a "Legion" denoted 6000 soldiers. It is thought that "Legion" generally came to denote a very large number, numbering in the thousands. It is amazing how many demons can possess a person.

Note Christ's authority here. The demons, realizing Christ is about to cast them out of the men, request permission to enter into the herd of swine. They realized they could only operate according to Christ's permission. Again, the issue is one of power and authority!

Luke 8:31 (NKJV)

31 And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss.

Again, this evidently refers to the underworld prison currently occupied by especially wicked demons as they await final judgment.

Jude 6 (NKJV)

6 And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day;

Jesus had the power and authority to cast them into this holding pit. He had done it before, and they knew it.

It would appear that demons desire to inhabit a body of some kind – especially humans. Evidently, they find some sort of morbid satisfaction in residing in a body.

Luke 11:24 (NKJV)

24 “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.’

However, in this case, if the possession of a human body was no longer allowed, they begged for permission to possess these pigs.

Footnote: The word for “*demons*” here is translated as “*gods*” in Acts 17:18. In Jude 8 and 2 Pet. 2:10, they are referenced as “*dignitaries*”. Thus, they are recognized as powerful supernatural beings. Yet, Christ is over them, showing superior power and authority.

Colossians 1:16 (NKJV)

16 For by Him [Christ] all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

Christ is the Creator of all and has sovereignty over all – including all the forces of evil – including all evil spirits.

Matthew 8:32 (NKJV)

32 And He said to them, “Go.” So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water.

Christ granted permission, and when they came out of the men they immediately went and possessed this herd of 2000 pigs. Demons have an effect on those they possess, and it is always negative. It is always destructive. These pigs couldn’t handle it, and suddenly the entire herd ran violently over the cliff into the sea and perished.

“In more advanced societies, a person who is seriously deranged by demons is likely to be considered insane and placed in a mental institution, and it seems certain that many people who are diagnosed as mentally ill are actually demonized.” – **John MacArthur**

You see, the world has a “medical model” and tries to see everything through that lens, but in truth, there is also a “spiritual model,” and the only cure for demons is Jesus.

“One should not go to the extreme either of explaining all demon possession as mental illness or concluding that all mental illness is demon possession.” – **Howard Vos**

Sometimes it is hard to know whether it is a situation involving demonic activity or some other factor. It is sometimes hard to know whether this is a medical problem or a purely spiritual problem. So, we need to be careful!

But we do want to say that Christ is the answer for all our spiritual problems. When it comes to salvation and sanctification, Jesus Christ ALONE is the full answer.

Footnote: Some say this is the only recorded miracle by Jesus that was destructive. But I beg to differ. Jesus delivered the men from these demons. That is positive and constructive. And Jesus did not force these demons to possess the pigs; He simply allowed it. God is not responsible for what He allows.

We often say that under the umbrella of God’s sovereignty, He promotes some things, He prevents some things, and He PERMITS some things! But in the case of God permitting things (like sin), we cannot hold God accountable for what free-will agents do. There is a difference between what God permits and what He promotes. Here we see Christ permitting the demons to possess this herd of swine, but He didn’t cause it. He didn’t directly bring about the death of this herd of hogs. The demons did!

Again, as I have noted, Christ, in presenting His kingdom credentials as King, as seen in His kingdom miracles, always did miracles that were positive – always a blessing in keeping with kingdom blessings. Thus, He gave a little sample, a little preview of the coming kingdom in His deliverance ministry while He was here on earth, showing that indeed He was the true Messiah.