

Legions of Demons

The war between Jesus and Satan has been raging since the beginning of time. Satan, filled with pride, desired to be like God (Isa. 14:14), but failed in his attempt to establish himself as the ruler of the universe. As a result he and one-third of the angels of heaven were thrown out of heaven (Isa. 14:12 Rev. 12:4) and denied the right to live there. However, Satan has continued causing trouble. Now he encourages people to disobey, doubt, and deny God. Jesus encountered Satan many times during His earthly ministry, starting with His initial temptation (Matt. 4:1-11). Satan lost every battle while Jesus was here on earth. Even the last battle - Jesus' death on the cross - was actually a victory for God (Heb. 2:14; 1 Cor. 15:54-57). During Jesus' ministry many demons were cast out. On one occasion Jesus expelled a demon and the people started wondering if He was the Messiah promised by the prophets (Matt. 12:23). The religious leaders could not explain away Jesus' miraculous exorcism, and so they claimed that He was demon possessed (Mark 3:22). Jesus responded by warning the people and the wicked leaders that His ministry was divine in nature, and not demonic. The events that followed and those that we will examine in this study are further proof that He spoke the truth.

BACKGROUND. In our last study, we saw that Jesus and the disciples had escaped the crowd in a boat, only to encounter a horrible storm later in the dark of the evening that probably made the disciples wish they were back on land. These fearful, struggling disciples finally asked Jesus to rescue them from the raging sea storm, only to become more afraid - afraid

of the One who stopped the storm. The disciples had not yet understood who Jesus truly was.

When we come to this study (Matt. 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39), Jesus and the disciples have arrived at the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

When He came to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes . . . (NASB) Matt. 8:28a

The gospel of Luke tells us that the country of the Gadarenes



Gaderene Region: Yarmuk Valley with the Sea of Galilee

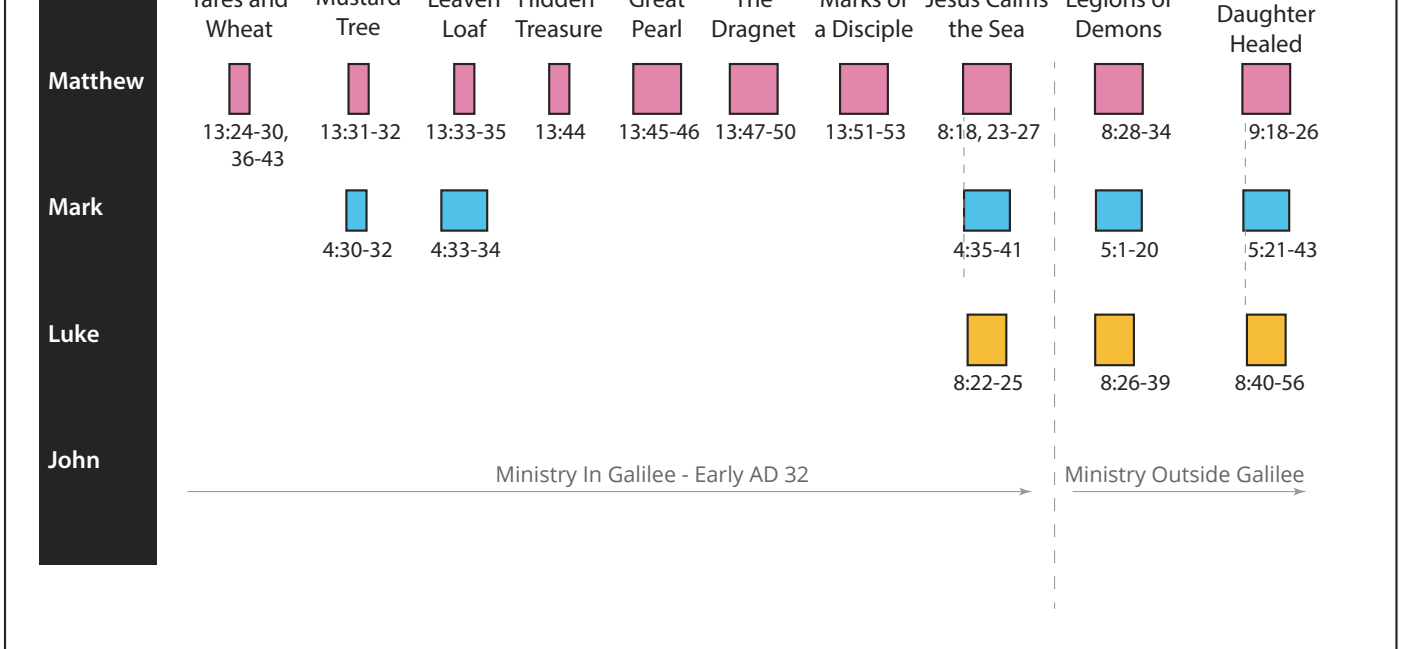
was also called the country of the Gerasenes. In fact the region was known as the Gadarenes-Gerasenes region. It was opposite Galilee. The region was known also as the Decapolis because ten Greek cities were located in the region. The capital of the region was Gerasa, and the largest city in the region was Gadera. The region was not poor or economically

depressed. From the ruins that are left, it is obvious that the inhabitants were at least middle-class. They were not poor; that is for sure.

Gadara is identified today as Muqeis, or Umm Qeis, overlooking the southern valley of the Yarmuk river. The ruins are extensive, including remnants of two amphitheatres, a basilica, a temple, colonnades, large residence, and an aqueduct, all showing the size, beauty, and importance of the city.¹

1. Merrill C. Tenny, The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible. Zondervan.

Life and Heart of Jesus



When Jesus and the disciples arrived at the other side of the Sea of Galilee and stepped out of the boat onto the shore, it must have been in the early morning as the sun just glinted over the horizon. As they did, two demon-possessed men met Jesus and the disciples as they were passing by some tombs.

... two men who were demon-possessed met Him as they were coming out of the tombs. (NASB) Matt. 8:28b

Most likely they landed near the ancient town of Gergesa which now appears to be called Kursi. Today, visitors can view a number of limestone caves along the seashore.² Gergesa

1977, vol. 2, p. 623.

2. http://dqhall59.com/kursi_caves.htm

should not be confused with Gerasa or Gadera. Gadera is about 6 miles (9.6 km) southeast of the Sea of Galilee and Gerasa is another 35 miles (56 km) southeast. Gergesa is midway along the eastern coast of the Sea of Galilee.

POSSESSED MEN. The two demon-possessed men who came out of the tombs apparently attacked anyone who came near them. They were extremely violent.

They were so extremely violent that no one could pass by that way. (NASB) Matt. 8:28c

The gospels of Mark and Luke refer only to one man, the leader, who was naked.

And when He came out onto the land, He was met by a man from the city who was possessed with



demons; and who had not put on any clothing for a long time, and was not living in a house, but in the tombs. (NASB) Luke 8:27

We are told that these supernaturally empowered men would scream and cut themselves throughout the day.

And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him. Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and gashing himself with stones. (NASB) Mark 5:3-5

Today some might say these men had psychological issues and have them admitted to a psychiatric ward for treatment. But these men did not have psychological problems. They had a spiritual problem. They were demon possessed, and Jesus knew it. The gospels tell us that the lead man ran up to Jesus, bowed down, and loudly shouting asked why Jesus had come. What a scene! I wish I had been there to see this man run up to Jesus, bow down, make demands of Jesus, and all the time Jesus is commanding the demon to leave.

Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him; and shouting with a loud voice, he said, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!" For He had been saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" (NASB)



Gadara Basilica

Mark 5:6-8

Did you notice what the demon called Jesus? He called him "Son of the Most High God." The phrase meant that he considered Jesus to be God (see John 10:36). The demons knew more than the religious leaders, the people, and the disciples. They understood even if the religious leaders did not. Just imagine how the disciples reacted as they

watched these events.

LEGION. Matthew tells us that the demon had asked another question that neither Mark or Luke records,

Have You come here to torment us before the time? (NASB) Matt. 8:29

Earlier the demons had also pleaded that Jesus would not torment them.

... I beg You, do not torment me." (NASB) Luke 8:28

Why did he ask not to be tormented? The answer is hinted at by the gospel of Luke, where we are told the demon's name was Legion and that he asked not to be sent to the abyss.



Gerasa Oval Plaza Columns

And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. They were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the abyss. (NASB) Luke 8:30-31

The demon was speaking for many other demons. Some have claimed that there were over 6,000 demons inside the

man who said that his name was Legion. This conclusion is reached because Roman legions were composed of about 6,826 men. But that seems unlikely. Rather, it appears that the demon only wanted to communicate the thought that there were many demons living in the man. This man had real troubles. We may think that we have real trouble on occasions, but most of us do not have problems like this man had. It was Jesus against many demons and not just one-on-one. Yet, Jesus had the advantage, and the evil spirits knew it and were afraid. It did not matter how many demons were in the man. When you fight with God, you will lose. Just one Jesus was all that was required.

Did you notice that they asked Jesus not to send them into the abyss? This is a reference to a place where some evil angels are already dwelling because they had sinned in the days of Noah (Gen. 6:1-2). 1 Peter 3:18-20 and 2 Peter 2:4-5 tell us that some evil spirits or evil angels sinned in the days of Noah and Jude 6-7 says that they went after strange flesh. That is, the angels cohabited with the human women in some way. As a result they were confined to a prison called the abyss. Revelation 9:1-2, 11 reveals that they will be allowed to escape in the final moments of the world before it is destroyed. Eventually, all of the evil angels will be confined to the abyss (Rev. 20:1-2) before the universe is destroyed and men and women are sentenced to an eternity in the Lake of Fire or to an eternity in heaven. For more information, the reader should visit the study [Angels - Good & Evil](#). So these demons were afraid of Jesus - our God.

But the most startling part about their request is that they knew Jesus had the power to send them into the abyss. The abyss exists in a spiritual world and not in our world. Jesus had power in both the spiritual and non-spiritual worlds. Wouldn't the Jewish leaders have been surprised!

WE WANT THE PIGS. Next we are told that the demons asked to remain in the Gadarenes-Gerasenes region. Why? We do not know. Indeed they asked to be sent into a nearby herd of 2,000 pigs.

And he began to implore Him earnestly not to send them out of the country. Now there was a large herd of swine feeding nearby on the mountain. The demons implored Him, saying, "Send us into the swine so that we may enter them." Jesus gave them permission. And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand of them; and they were drowned in the sea. (NASB) Mark 5:10-13



Jesus gave them permission; and as soon as the demons entered into the pigs, they ran into the Sea of Galilee and drowned. The pigs were smarter than the two demon-possessed men. The pigs would rather die than live with those supernatural creatures living inside them. These pigs were smart!

THE REPORT. When the herdsmen of the pigs saw this, they ran and told those in the city (probably Gergesa) that they had lost the 2,000 pigs.

When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they ran away and reported it in the city and out in the country. The people went out to see what had happened; and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they became frightened. Those who had seen it reported to them how the man who was demon-possessed had been made well. And all the people of the country of the Gerasenes and the surrounding district asked Him to leave them, for they were gripped with great fear; and He got into a boat and returned. (NASB) Luke 8:34-37

So the people responded like most curious people do. They went to see if there were dead pigs floating on the Sea of Galilee and to see the men who were once demon possessed. These people soon realized that the report of the herdsmen was true, and they became very fearful. In fact, they were so afraid that they asked Jesus to leave their region. This is truly amazing. Rather than being thankful and finding protection and comfort in Jesus, they became fearful. They were afraid of Jesus because He had rescued the men. They were so afraid that they were begging Him to leave.

And they began to implore Him to leave their region. (NASB) Mark 5:17

How would you have felt if someone had asked you to leave after serving God in such a great way? Would you have remained and ignored them? Would you become angry? What did Jesus do? Jesus did not remain. Instead, He planned to leave just as they had asked.

As He was getting into the boat, the demon possessed man repeatedly asked to join Jesus. The demon possessed man was not afraid. But Jesus encouraged him to go home and tell others what had been done for him. The Greek language indicates that the man asked again and again. He did not want to accept Jesus' refusal, but finally he did.

As He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was imploring Him that he might accompany Him. And He did not let him, but He said to him, "Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you." And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed. (NASB) Mark 5:18-20

So the man did just that. He told folks throughout the Decapolis. Those who heard responded differently than the people in nearby cities. They were amazed at the report.

CONCLUSION. Why did God include this account of the rescue of a demon possessed man? Why did God include the previous reports of Jesus calming the storm and record the parables of the kingdom of heaven? The parables of the kingdom told us that most people would reject God's message and end up in eternal judgment. When Jesus calmed the sea, the miracle revealed that He was more than just a man. He was and is our God and the Creator of this world. The testimony of the demons called Legion was that Jesus was God.

Why were these events recorded for us after the religious leaders announced to the crowd that Jesus was demon-possessed? The answer is that this event was not a tutorial



Gerasa Triumphal Arch of Hadrian 2

on demons. Nor was this account a story about a crazy man. We were not told that Jesus calmed the waves and stopped the winds so that we might be thrilled with a miracle event. We were not told about the parables so that we could have sermons to preach, stories to tell our children, or something to write in a book. The historical account of the man possessed by a demon was not

about a spectacular fight between good and evil. All of these events were recorded so that we might know and understand what the religious leaders who claimed that Jesus was demon possessed did not understand. They were recorded so that we can know and believe that Jesus was and is God.

Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name. (NASB) John 20:30-31