

When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:

*"He Himself took our infirmities
And bore our sicknesses."*

Demands of Discipleship

Luke 9:57–62

And when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side. Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go."

And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay *His* head."

Then another of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."

But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

The Sea is Stilled

Mark 4:35–41; Luke 8:22–25

Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him. And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. Then His disciples came to *Him* and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!"

But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. So the men marveled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"

Demons are Cast into Swine

Mark 5:1–17; Luke 8:26–37

When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed *men*, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way. And suddenly they cried out, saying, "What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?"

Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. So the demons begged Him, saying, "If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine."

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.

Then those who kept *them* fled; and they went away into the city and told everything, including what *had happened* to the demon-possessed *men*. And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged *Him* to depart from their region.

The Word of the King

The Word of the King and Demons

Passage: Matthew 8:16-17; Mark 1:32-39

16 When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, **17** that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: *"He Himself took our infirmities And bore our sicknesses."*

8:16 — The people have come to have hope for the seriously sick. By "seriously" I mean those whose maladies went deeper than physical disease. Worse than a body that is broken is a temple that has been taken over and is being tyrannized by an unclean spirit. People in this condition are held hostage in their own tent; in fact, the body no-longer belongs to them but is possessed and controlled by a demon. The demon-possessed are not living but existing; their physical, social, and spiritual lives have been altered. What does that entail. Well, it varies. But when a person is demon possessed there are some things that are mentioned in the Scriptures:

- **Exceptional Strength and Durability** (Mark 5:1-5) - A side effect of demonic possession can be strength and ruggedness exceeding that of human beings. The demon-possessed man mentioned by Mark had often been bound with shackles and chains (Mark 5:3). However, the man pulled them apart and broke the shackles in pieces (Mark 5:4).
- **Unusual Insights Based On Monitoring and Sharing** (Acts 16:16-17) - Paul and his companions were followed by a demon-possessed girl who had insights into the mission and message of the team (Acts 16:16-17). Spirits are familiar with Jesus and certain saints; Christians that do damage to demonic realms become notorious among the principalities that are against the Lord (Acts 19:15). Fortune telling is actually the outworking of an evil spirit telling a person things that they have learned or observed as they travel to and fro throughout the earth seeking someone to devour (Job 1:6-7; 1 Peter 5:8); they monitor people (especially saints) looking for opportunities to do damage.
- **Deranged Thinking** (Mark 5:5) - Under the influence of an evil spirit the man mentioned above was observed crying out and cutting himself with stones (Mark 5:5). This type of self-harm was the outworking of an unclean spirit that was not supposed to be there.
- **Loss of Faculties** (Matthew 9:32-33) - At times the manifestation of a demonic presence was a loss of a basic ability. One man loss the power of speech. When the demon was removed the man was no longer mute.
- **Contentious and Combative toward Community** (Matthew 8:28) - An unclean spirit works through the possessed persons and influences saints to disrupt community, create division, and create confusion (James 3:13-16).

Notice that the casting out of demons is distinguished from healing **all who were sick** (Matthew 8:16). It is wrong to say that what are called demons in the narrative should be regarded in modern times as mere medical issues. General sicknesses and demonic activity are separate in manifestation and treatment.

Failure to recognize the difference between general disease and demonic possession when trying to help can lead to further harm. *Why?* The difference is significant: (1) demons are sentient beings determined to deceive people and defy the will of God (John 10:10) and (2) diseases are defects in the body, the effects of pathogens, or other problems for which the explanation (if not the cause) is natural. Dealing with demons using modern medicine is like trying to handle a hostage situation with cough drops.

8:17 — To what end does Jesus do this? That is, why is He healing people and casting out demons? Matthew, more than any other gospel writer, explicitly mentions that an event or action taken by Jesus was in fulfillment of a prophecy. He does this between 20 to 25 times. In this case, the actions of the Man from Nazareth are to be seen as the realization of something **spoken** over 700 years prior **by Isaiah the prophet**.

Let us notice three things about what is taking place.

1. **The Simplicity** (Matthew 8:16) - Matthew would have his reader know that Jesus did not struggle to free people from demon-possession. In contrast with the exorcisms performed by the priests, there was no complicated ritual. He says that **He cast out the spirits with a word** (Matthew 8:16). The unusual authority of Jesus is hereby put on display; the spirits, says Matthew, are entirely subject to Him. If we are to regard the narrative as being both simple and accurate, Jesus did not use many words to exorcise the unclean spirits; he used **a [single] word** (λόγῳ - noun, dative, singular, masculine). Maybe He said, "Out!" And that, when the King is speaking, is all that is needed.
2. **The Silencing** (Luke 4:40-41) - The evil spirits recognize Jesus. But Jesus will not allow them to speak. *Why?* Insofar as they speak the truth about His identity they gain credibility that will be used for evil thereafter. Jesus will not allow the demons to give people the false impression that He (1) associates with them, (2) accepts their testimony, or (3) approves of their activities. This practice of distancing Himself from spirits of disobedience will be taken up by the apostle Paul (Acts 16:16-18).
3. **The Significance** (Isaiah 53:4) - In the physical and spiritual realm Jesus is delivering. People are being delivered from disease and demon-possession. *To what end?* The work is not merely a wonder. It is a sign. Recall the words of the angel to Jesus' earthly father: You shall call His name *Yeshua* for He shall *yoshia* His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). The passage in Isaiah also makes repeated mention of the healing ministry of the servant of God (Isaiah 53:4-6, 10-12); in that chapter it is a healing from the consequences of transgressions and indwelling sin (Isaiah 53:5,8,11-12).

Jesus delivered from diseases and, with a word, from demons to demonstrate that He was delivering from the destructive outworking of disobedience.

Failing to believe in the significance and sufficiency of His work leaves me still working to accomplish what I can't do. Believing this word leads to me receiving the medicine that is the Son of Man and His work to make me healthy. There is a balm in Gilead (Jeremiah 8:22); let us apply it.

Questions for Discussion

1. Have I seen activity in my life or around me that suggests that demons are at work causing problems?
2. Am I still trying to treat the symptoms and sickness of of sin with something other than the medicine provided by God (John 8:36)?
3. When I look at Matthew 4:1-11 and Matthew 8:16-17, what does it say about dealing with demons (1 John 4:4)?

The Word of the King and Discipleship

Passage: Matthew 8:18-22

18 And when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side. 19 Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go." 20 And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." 21 Then another of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." 22 But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

8:18-19 — Jesus was not trying to heal everyone. The healing ministry had drawn a crowd and would soon become all consuming. However, before His ministry could be transformed into a clinic for temporary improvements, the King gave the command to leave (Matthew 8:18). *Why?* In reading Mark's account we see that Jesus says His purpose was proclaiming or preaching the gospel of the kingdom so that there could be lasting health and life (Mark 1:35-38). Faith that saves comes from hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). It is through that faith that we are truly saved (Ephesians 2:8) and truly made well. The miracle of physical healing was a means to the end — *believing in Jesus*.

8:20 — With this response Jesus dispels several notions:

- False Notion of Christ Mean Physical Comfort — Jesus was making it clear that that being in His company does not equate to being comfortable or a life of luxury.
- False Notion that He Was Seeking Wealth — Jesus made it clear that he would be unattached to the things of this world. He did not own a house and was not working on getting a mortgage.

Jesus says, in effect, "You want to follow me? Great! But know this: mine is a life of living by being in my Father's will and my provisions are found in pursuing His righteousness (Matthew 6:33)." The word of the King

is clear:

My food is to do the will of Him who sent me (John 4:34) and my accommodations are made available in the midst of the ministry (Matthew 10:8-11).

8:21 — The second person is already a disciple and has been learning from and following Jesus. This man says to Jesus that he is willing to be on the road with Jesus. But he has a small matter to take care of: **let me me first go and bury my father** (Matthew 8:21). Seems reasonable. But that is because we do not see what he is really saying. He wanted to work with Jesus on his own terms - which meant his own timetable.

8:22 — Whether the man's father is dead or about to die is not the point. (Some commentators say that the man is wanting to collect his inheritance before joining the motley group in earnest.) Jesus says that the people is going to bury are spiritually dead and need real solutions; that is why He is here. In light of the work that He has come to do (John 3:16; Matthew 20:28), those who would be involved cannot merely fit Him into their schedule. The word of the King is clear:

What you are wanting to do is less important that what I am doing. In the light of gravity of the problem and who I am (John 8:59), nobody comes before Me (Luke 14:26). Considering the importance of My mission, those who would be involved in My ministry have to be willing to leave everything behind (Luke 14:33).

Questions for Discussion

1. Does my commitment to being a Jesus follower require comfort? In what ways does this undermine my availability?
2. It my willingness to work with Jesus based on a timetable that keeps Him waiting until I make everyone else happy first? What does it look like to leave it behind?

The Word of the King and Creation

Passage: Matthew 8:23-27

²³ Now when He got into a boat, His disciples followed Him. ²⁴ And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. ²⁵ Then His disciples came to *Him* and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" ²⁶ But He said to them, "**Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?**" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. ²⁷ So

the men marveled, saying, "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"

8:23 — The Master is on the move. He is being followed by the disciples. They have witnessed wonders at the word of the King. Now they are getting away from the fray with Jesus.

8:24 — The word **tempest** is from the Greek σεισμὸς from which we get words like seismic or seismology. It was an upheaval of the sea. What about Jesus in this moment? How is he handling the tempest. He is sleeping!

Further, says the physician, the boat they were in was filling with water. Mark says that the Lord was in the stern or back part of the ship, asleep on a pillow (Mark 4:38). Jesus' humanity is not a facade. The ministry has left him drained. Indeed, the Son of Man is so depleted that He is asleep on a boat being covered by waves. How did that happen? Luke tells us that Jesus fell asleep (Luke 8:23).

8:25 — When trying to assess the situation we do well to consult with an expert. On the boat we have experts in seafaring and men who are capable swimmers (John 21:7-8). In their view, based on their years of experience as fishermen, they are in the process of perishing. That would be their professional assessment. If Peter were asked what the outcome of their situation would be he would say, "We gonna die!"

8:26 — The Lord looks at the situation and the hearts of his men (1 Samuel 16:7). He then asks a question? **"Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?"** They were being called to consider all that had transpired recently. Jesus wants his followers to look at life through the lens of an informed faith. "You were a witness to what I did and are well aware of why you are with me. So then, how could you think that you are dying?"

My situations are to be seen through the lenses of (1) my relationship with Christ, (2) the calling on my life, and (3) His character of caring for His own.

What Jesus does next shows that He is operating on another level. We speak to people. We give commands to human beings and can expect a response. Jesus has conversations with Creation. And Creation, beloved, responds in immediate obedience to the voice of its Creator (John 1:1-3).

8:27 — The lesson is not lost on them. They were struck with awe and wonder (ἐθαύμασαν). And they are in the midst of questions arising out of this revelation of authority. They needed to receive this truth. And Jesus will teach it repeatedly (John 11).

This is an important part of being faithful. We are unable to concentrate on His commandments if we cannot believe we are cared for. Once we accept that our needs are being met we can cast all our care upon Him (1 Peter 5:7). We are unable to minister effectively if our minds are absorbed by the possibility of perishing. Jesus

has remedied this with His peace (John 14:27) and His presence (John 16:33).

Questions for Discussion

1. Demons have to obey the King. The wind and wave obey the King? How do I compare?
 2. What is my response to the tempests of life? Am I able to put the situations into perspective or am I quick to say, "I am perishing?" (Psalm 33:18-19)
 3. What difference would it make in my tribulation if I believed in God's love and care for me?
 4. What effect does obvious worry have on my witness? What should I be doing in the midst of a mess (1 Thessalonians 5:18; Acts 16:25)? What effect did this have?
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