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The Miracles of Jesus Christ: Delivering the Maniac of Gadara

Harold Willmington

Liberty University, hwillmington@liberty.edu

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THE MIRACLES OF JESUS CHRIST

MIRACLE FOURTEEN: Delivering the Maniac of Gadara (Mt. 8:28-34; Mk. 5:1-20; Lk. 8:26-39)

SURVEY

Upon stepping ashore in the land of Gadara, Jesus is confronted by and speaks to the leader of a band of demons who were possessing a violent and uncontrollable maniac. The Savior orders them to leave the victim, and, at their request, permits them to enter a herd of nearby pigs, which results in the death of those animals by drowning as they plunge into the Sea of Galilee.

SIGNIFICANCE

- This is perhaps the most graphic and terrifying account of demon possession in all the Bible. Note the recorded facts regarding this man:
 1. His home— “. . . *Who had his dwelling among the tombs*” (Mk. 5:3)
 2. His helplessness
 - a. He was naked (Lk. 8:27).
 - b. He was "exceeding fierce" (Mt. 8:28).
 - c. He was totally unmanageable (Mk. 5:3-4).
 - d. He was constantly crying and cutting himself with stones (Mk. 5:5).
 - e. He was seized upon and driven about by a legion of demons (Lk. 8:29; Mk. 5:9). The usage of the word legion here may indicate the man was possessed by as many as 6,000 demons.
- This shows just how many fallen angels there may be if Satan could afford to spare 6,000 on a worthless madman!
- It is the only recorded extended conversation between Jesus and a demon.
- This is the first of two occasions on which Jesus performed a miracle in a way that had destructive results (the death of the pigs). The other miracle was the withering of the fig tree (Mt. 21:19).
- This is the only miracle where Jesus instructed the recipient as follows:

"Go home to thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee" (Mk. 5:19).

This is in stark contrast as seen in the other healing miracles where Jesus commanded the healed not to tell anyone!

SPIRITUAL TRUTHS

- What a contrast is seen in this wretched demoniac following his glorious conversion! He now is:
 1. Sitting, not screaming
 2. Praising, not cursing
 3. Dressed, not naked
 4. In his right mind, not insane
 5. A convert of Christ, not a captive of Satan
- This account might well be entitled, "How A Madman Became a Missionary." We have previously observed Jesus' instructions that he should tell others what had been done, which he did.

"And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel." (Mk. 5:20)

Decapolis (literally, "ten cities") was a league of ten cities characterized by high Greek culture, allied together for purposes of trading. All but one city (Scythopolis) were east of the Galilean Sea and Jordan River. This convert thus became the greatest missionary to Gentiles since the preacher to Nineveh, Jonah the prophet.

- Why did the demons desire the bodies of pigs? Several reasons have been suggested:
 1. To kill Jesus and His disciples. Few animals are more dangerous than angry wild pigs.
 2. To turn the community against Jesus by drowning the pigs. If this was the plan, they succeeded.

Note the tragic reaction of the crowd:

"Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind and they were afraid... Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again." (Lk. 8:35, 37)

- These people were more interested in money than in men. They preferred gold to God. They wanted their pigs more than they desired what Christ had to offer. John Oxenham has vividly captured their tragic philosophy in his poem:

Rabbi, begone!
 Thy powers bring loss to us and ours;
 Our ways are not as Thine
 Thou lovest men — we swine.
 O get Thee gone, O Holy One,
 And take these fools of Thine;
 Their souls? What care we for their souls?
 Since we have lost our swine.
 Then Christ went sadly,

He had wrought for them a sign
Of love and tenderness divine
They wanted swine.
Christ stands without your door and gently knocks,
But if your gold or swine the entrance blocks
He forces no man's hold, He will depart,
And leave you to the treasures of your heart.

—From "*Gadara, A.D. 31*"

- Note the terrible fear exhibited by this horde of demons in the presence of Jesus:
 1. They knew Him— "*And behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?*" (Mt. 8:29)
 2. They feared Him— "*Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?*" (Mt. 8:29)
"I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not." (Mk. 5:7b)
- They apparently knew about future judgment. Various New Testament writers attest to this judgment of fallen angels.
 1. Paul:
"Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life?" (1 Cor. 6:3)
 2. Peter:
"For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." (2 Pet. 2:4)
 3. Jude:
"And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." (Jude 6)

In fact, Jesus said that hell itself was originally created for the devil and his angels, all of which will eventually spend eternity there.

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." (Mt. 25:41)

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." (Rev. 20:10)
- The account in Matthew's gospel informs us there were actually two demon-possessed men on this occasion (Mt. 8:28). One wonders what happened to the other man. Was he also gloriously delivered? Or, tragically, would he be like the unrepentant thief on the cross? (See Lk. 24:39-43.)