

Casting the Demons into the Swine

Sermon by Andy Sochor

Text: Matthew 8:28-34

Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry, He performed various miracles to demonstrate His divine power. The miracle we are discussing here was Jesus healing a demon-possessed man by casting the demons into swine. As we study this miracle, as with every Bible passage, it is important to understand the context. This miracle teaches us certain things about Jesus and provides an important lesson for us.

The Context

- This is the third miracle we have studied from this chapter – Jesus healed the centurion's servant (Matthew 8:5-13), which was a lesson on recognizing the concept of authority; Jesus calmed the storm (Matthew 8:18-27), which was a lesson on Jesus' authority over the natural world (His creation)
- In this miracle, we see Jesus' authority over the demons – no power greater than Jesus; this reinforces the points He made in the Sermon on the Mount; we must obey Him (Matthew 7:21-27)
- This miracle took place in a new location – He crossed the Sea of Galilee to the country of the Gadarenes; likely a region inhabited by Jews and Gentiles
- Strangely, this miracle would cause the people to reject Jesus – they implored Him to leave (Matthew 8:34); He did not stay where He was not welcome; He would depart after this (Matthew 9:1)

The Miracle

- When Jesus arrived, He was met by two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs (Matthew 8:28) – Mark and Luke mention one man (Mark 5:1-2; Luke 8:26-27); not a contradiction (Mark and Luke did not say there was ONLY one); one of the men was likely more prominent/notorious/violent, so he was highlighted by Mark and Luke
- This was a contest between Jesus and the demons – yet the demons knew it was no contest (Matthew 8:29); the demons knew that Jesus had authority over them (cf. Ephesians 1:20-21; 1 John 4:4); the demons knew that they could not defy the authority of Jesus (cf. Matthew 8:9; James 2:19)
- The demons asked permission to be cast into the nearby herd of swine (Matthew 8:31) – Jesus granted their request (Matthew 8:32); they were unclean animals for the Jews (Leviticus 11:7); the property owners were likely Jews, which made their destruction an act of divine judgment, not meanness
- The herdsmen reported what happened (Matthew 8:33-34) – about the swine AND the demon-possessed men; the whole city came out and made a unified request imploring

Jesus to leave; to them, the loss of the swine (and whatever else might have been lost next) was worse than the bondage of the two men

The Lesson

- Why would they ask Jesus to leave? – a few possibilities... (1) they did not care about the demon-possessed men; (2) they valued material gain over all else, even though they had to disregard the law of God; (3) they preferred the status quo of prosperity, even though the devil had ruined these two men
- The lesson is that we must not accept the devil's will in exchange for material things – the love of money is the root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10); even when acquired legitimately, material things are temporary (1 Timothy 6:17; cf. Matthew 6:19-21); we need to put the well-being of others ahead of our own (Acts 4:32-35) and be willing to sacrifice for others (Ephesians 4:28; Galatians 6:10; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5)

Conclusion

- Jesus proved that He has power over the devil and those who are aligned with him – therefore, we must put our full faith and trust in the Lord; do His will in all things
- Do not allow the devil to use material things to persuade you to reject Jesus