
8:28

And when He was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, Mark and Luke it describes one man, not two. And here's a possible reason: only Matthew speaks of two demoniacs, but he does not thereby contradict Mark and Luke. Neither of the other evangelists refers to the only one, they just refer to one. Perhaps one of the two dominated the conversation, but Matthew elsewhere includes two characters. For example, he gives both accounts where two blind men were healed, and Mark and Luke, when they cover them it's one blind man; in Matthew it's always two. Could be that he was particularly interested in two people bearing witness and establishing fact in a court of law, according to Mosaic requirement. But Mark and Luke don't say "only one man was possessed of the devils." It just says "one of them was," and so that's not a contradiction.

And then there's the question of, "Well, is it Gadara or Gergesa, or the place of the Gergesenes?" You see in chapter 8, verse 28, it says, "into the country of the Gergesenes," and some versions have "of Gadara." Regardless of version solutions, in Mark and in Luke it says it's Gadara. And so which is correct? What you need to know is that they're really close. And if you decide it's supposed to say "Gergesa" or "Gadara," I want you to notice that it says **they went to the country of the Gergesenes**. It doesn't actually say "they went to the town of Gergesa." Then you might notice in verse 34 that they are not in a city; rather that they go to a city. So they are in the country during this episode and there is a city nearby. So this is, I suppose, easily handled when you just consider the fact that they could be in the country of one and the city of the other is close by. You know, there are parts of Fayetteville that are not in Fayetteville proper, but they're called Fayetteville because they're so close, right?

I just wanted you to be aware of that because there's a chance that some numbskull is going to come up to you someplace, a workplace, place of education, and they're going to say, "Your Bible has mistakes in it." And you can say, "Well, like where?" And very rarely will someone come back to you and say, "Well, here's one." No, they usually don't. You understand, of course, that they've probably never read it. But you can say, "What's the contradiction?" And they can say, "Well, Mark and Luke say Gadara, and Matthew says Gergesene." And you can say, "Well you might notice it doesn't say they went into Gergesenes, but rather **to the country where the Gergesenes live**. That area there, verse 28."

there met Him "Why is Jesus here?" Why does He cross over? And I'm not really sure I get the idea exactly why He crossed over. I have a couple of ideas. It doesn't say, "And by the way, here's why Jesus crossed over." Did He really cross over for these two guys? I mean, think that through for just a moment, because we're left thinking, if we compare Matthew, Mark, and Luke, that He made the trip across the Sea of Galilee, at the end of a very busy day, when He was ill-rested and needed sleep. Do you think that He knew who He was going to see when He got off the boat? So there's a possibility that He crossed over only for these two men. Would Jesus come back? Does Jesus return to the place known as Decapolis, which is from two Greek words that mean "ten cities," "deca" and "polis." And so we find there are several questions we don't get answered if we just look at Matthew.

Now, I would be tempted to treat this in a manner of the harmony of the gospels, where I take Matthew, Mark, and Luke, like I've been keeping myself from doing all along, and give you a full picture of what's happening here. But the problem is that that wasn't the intent of Matthew. The intent of Matthew was to keep you questioning—asking questions that matter and looking for answers that are provided.

He just returned from calming the storm and now, listen, He's about to calm some men. The story is very simple. It's like this: Sometimes the Lord calms the storm and sometimes He calms me. That's not original; I got that from a song. But it sure is good. There are times when I want Him to take care of all the things that are external to me. Well these men, if everything was calmed externally to them, really they have nothing to do but hate their lives.

And they watched the storm that just took place over the Sea of Galilee, and little did they know that the reason the clouds parted and went away like little whipped dogs and the reason the waves rested their heads on some distant beach, is because the Master of the Seas controls, yes, even the demons of hell, is coming to their beach.

See, with these men, the great shaking wasn't on the sea, it was in their souls. That's the stuff that just crushes us. The stuff that we can't explain, we can't fix, and we can't make go away, we just have to sit and deal with it. And I guess the point of Matthew, along with showing us that Jesus is the God out of Whom life-giving words come, and that God is more than able to calm the storms in us. I don't want to act like these two demon possessed men were people that were good saints before the demons found them, they probably weren't. As a matter of fact, they were probably like me I was.

two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. 29. And, behold, they cried out, saying, "What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God? We suddenly realize that the demons know Jesus. Now how do they know Him? Maybe it's because in chapter 4 Jesus is casting out devils. Is it because they spoke with others from the preceding evening? I mean, it was the evening before you know.

Do you think these demons knew one another? Do you think they spoke? Eight miles away cohorts of the demons are being chucked out of people, and word is spreading. How do they know who this Jesus is? Well, because in chapter 4, old kingpin, the devil himself, figured it out. I don't know if there was an after action review after the temptation in the wilderness, but there's a strong possibility that Satan talked with his minions and identified the problem. You see, Satan said in Matthew 4, "Since You're the Son of God, would You command these...?" There was no denial. And you might say he was suggesting, "If You're the Son of God..." but the Greek is actually double emphatic, "Jesus, You are, You are the Son of God, so make these stones into bread."

There was no doubt in the devil's mind who Jesus was. All he had to do was listen at Jesus' baptism and God told you who Jesus was, "My beloved Son." So, these demons had better theology than most so-called Christians. They address Him, the One who Matthew has previously told us is the One who is the Son of David, the great king; the One known as the Son of Abraham, the great promise; the One known as the Son of Man, the great One at God's right hand. And He is now made known to us boldly as the "Son of God," publically for the first time. At the baptism it was just John the Baptist and Jesus that heard the Father.

Matthew told us in the first chapter that Jesus was the son of a virgin and we heard again from Hosea (quoted in Matthew 2) that Jesus was the Son of God ("Out of Egypt have I called My Son"). We heard from the record of the Father at Jesus' baptism, recorded by Matthew in chapter 3, that Jesus is the Son of God. But the first person who calls Him the Son of God is Satan himself, and the first person that heralds Jesus as the Son of God is a bunch of demons in a non-Jewish region known as Decapolis. We have no record of anyone calling Him the Son of God in Israel yet, but the demons. Mark her down, tonight they know who He is too. Oh, and they fear Him!

Are you troubled by the powers of darkness? Just for a moment sing about the one who is the lover of your soul. Is your soul rocked because of things you can't control? Just whisper the name of Jesus heavenward and get the attention of those who from Hell who fear; oh they quake before Him. Things I can't control, that's good. The demons don't fear me anyway. They didn't fear two Gadarenes, two Gergesenes. They not only know Him, but look what they know about Him: they know that there is coming a day when He is going to torture them. I don't know if I'm supposed to be happy about that, but I'm so happy about it.

*Revelation 20:10 And the devil which deceived the nations was cast into the lake burning with fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and **shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.***

Happy day! Good riddance! You say, "The devil's a lion!" I know he's a lion. Just let him roar! The day is coming when the Lion of the Tribe of Judah will hack his throat and throw him in the lake of fire forever!

Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time?" "Oh, Jesus, Son of God, You've come here to torment us before the time." "No, I'll give you another five minutes." I mean that's really all that happens.

I don't really know exactly why the pigs decided to run into the lake other than the devil loves murdering. John 8:44, the devil's a liar, he's a murderer, and a murderer from the beginning. So, he kills pigs too. And I don't really know what happens to the demons after the pigs drown. I guess that's one of the questions I don't need answered.

8:30

And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. 31. So the devils (or demons) besought Him, saying, "If Thou cast us out, suffer us (or allow us) to go away into the herd of swine." We find out from the book of Mark that there were two thousand, approximately. They said, "What is Your name?" You might remember from the other gospels. They said, "We are Legion." So, thousands of demons are in these two men. Off over there was a herd of swine, presumably enough for there to be one pig for each demon although that need not be since a 1 for 1 ratio was not the requirement when they were possessing human beings.

What are we to make of what Mark and Luke call 2,000 pigs? Aren't they important to God? Didn't He make those pigs? Sure He did. But I would say that if Psalm 50 is correct, and He owns the cattle on 1,000 hills, then He probably owns the thousand swine on one hill. And He's willing to sacrifice them, for two people. Stick that in your green-tree-hugging, fruit-loop pipe, and smoke it.

So we see in this episode not just the Lord's power over the storm, but His power over the demons, and this shows His deity because He does both with His words. His words! The same words that crafted every high hill and every deep valley. Those words that spoke life into the earth. Everything that's beautiful. Oh my goodness, the 38th chapter of Job makes me want to sing! It's just amazing. They just love Him, the Creator, and they don't even have any idea what they're doing. The trees of the field clap their hands! Everything bows before the Creator and so these pigs say, "Yeah, we'll die for two men." If that's not enough, He demonstrates ownership by sheer forbearance to worthless demons in allowing them to drown an entire herd. Why? Probably because God values swine less than people.

*Matthew 12:9 And when He was departed thence, He went into their synagoge: 10. And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked Him, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days?" that they might accuse Him. 11. And He said unto them, "What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? 12. **How much then is a man better than a sheep?** Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days."*

Well there you have it. Matthew said, "I'll comment on myself and record Jesus' words here." Even sheep, the clean animals, are not as important as man.

8:32-34

and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. 33. And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. 34. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw Him, they besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts. So here are the townspeople beseeching Jesus to go. Now consider what Matthew is doing here: We have an entire town of people asking Jesus to go, when in Matthew 8:5 we have one Gentile centurion beseeching Jesus to come. Clearly Matthew is showing us bookends to a great narrative. He puts things in comparison and contrast to one another, and he says, "Let me show you a man full of faith. Not like anyone in Israel. More faith than that, and he beseeches Jesus to come and heal his servant. But at the end of the chapter we have an entire town of unregenerate, faithless people that do not value people more than animals, and what do they want? They want Jesus to leave."

And that's what we're finding in our society, folks. That's why we act more like animals all the time. Because we serve the creature more than the Creator, Romans 1 says. And we debase the image of

the Creator like unto a four-footed beast, Romans 1 says. Why? Because we did not like to retain God in our knowledge, so God gave us over to reprobate minds.

Oh so, well here we go, our question here is revisited, "What could Jesus have done more? Could Jesus have done more?" Think through this with me. If they came out and gave Him a parade; if they came out and brought more demon possessed people; if they came out and brought their sick, like other cities did What would Jesus have done for them?

Now you say, "You're just introducing a meaningless scenario." Really?

Matthew 13:53 And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, He departed thence. 54. And when He was come into His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, "Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?"

Now listen, we can define what "His own country" was in verse 54 with this verse in 55:

"Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary?"

All right, what is His own country, His own city, in verse 54? What is it? Nazareth. The last verse of chapter 2 says so. They're identifying His family members. So we're talking about Nazareth. So, he said He came into Nazareth and He spoke parables, now listen, verse 56:

"And His sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?" 57. And they were offended in Him. But Jesus said unto them, "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house."

Look here, look:

*58. And He did not many mighty works there **because** of their unbelief.*

The implication is that He would have; He would have had "many mighty works."

I will not be so bold as to say He crossed the Sea of Galilee for just two men. Ultimately He was willing to do that, because that's what He did, and He knew what would happen. But I would say, humanly speaking, God was making a legitimate offer to a city on the east side of the Sea of Galilee and they would not have Him. He could have done more, and would have done more if the townspeople would have desired Him more than their precious economy.

Now, let me see if I can put this in our language. If we cared more about Jesus and souls than we did about our precious value of the dollar, I guarantee He would do mighty works in our midst. Isn't that what your Bible says? If we would care more about that than the news, we would see that He could do, and would do, many mighty works. But He doesn't because of our unbelief.

Now, I'm not pro "name it, claim it" but I'm also not anti-Matthew. There is a point in a Christian's life, not every point, not every time, not all the time, but there are times in our lives when Christ would do more. But we ask Him to leave. Matthew seems to be emphasizing not the response of the man who is healed of the demoniacs, because in Mark he talks. And he's not necessarily concentrating on the helplessness of a world of therapy or treatment, because in Mark it talks about they tried to bind him with chains but he broke them. So in Mark and Luke we have them emphasizing different parts of that account. Matthew is describing and emphasizing something completely different: The response of a people who found the souls of men less valuable than their luxury, their convenience, and their economy.

Often we'll think of our church, and we think of people who don't know how to flush toilets and it annoys us. They don't seem to respect pews enough to keep their shoes off of them and it ought to bother us, I suppose. I think it should. And what do we do? We get annoyed. They don't seem to respect signs that say, "No beverages but bottled water in the sanctuary," and it rightfully annoys those who appreciate

order and respect. But sometimes, I will not pick somebody up for fear that they will make my car smell like cigarettes. Other times I will not hug a man who looks like he has not bathed in some time.

Think about it. Swine carcasses floating everywhere. Two men breathing deeply, hugging their families for the first time. Jesus and His disciples talking among themselves. The sun is rising in the morning with the clouds in the sky. The disciples are still rubbing sleep out of their eyes because they just maybe caught a nap right before the boat hit the beach. The fresh air blowing in from the sea and a fishing vessel across the field, sitting on a beach. Can you see it?

Now turn around. Can you see a group of people coming out of the city? And they're not happy that two men that haven't been home in years are now able to go home. They're not happy that two men that haven't been able to hug their babies before bed are now able to do that. They're not happy that two men that have a right mind for the first time in a long while are able to think clearly. They're not happy that they're able to sit calmly. Oh they'll say, "We're happy about that." But, they cared more for hogs than human souls and that often happens today. I suppose what seems not so obvious is they wanted to be rid of the effects of demons but not at the cost of having a Savior to do it.

"What would it take for you to ask Jesus to leave?" Here's deliverance of people from their sins but there, there are pigs that brought me my comfort. Here are families reunited in the presence of Christ but there, there goes my livelihood, those pigs down there floating in the sea. "Here's the great Savior who could perhaps do more for the believer but there, there floats my old life. It really costs too much, it hurts too much, it keeps me awake too much. I know I see my Savior but I also see my future over there, dying, dead, and floating on the sea. I see the Lord, the Son of David, ready to be King, but I have friends in town who just lost too much, and what would they do; what would I do if they found out I was with the cause of their discomfort? What would they do if they found out I was with the One who allowed their retirement fund to go drown itself in the sea? I would no longer be invited to their beer pong games. I would no longer be thought of as a block party enthusiast. I would no longer be a "Yes" man at their little neighborhood watch meetings. Gergesa would no longer be voted "top ten places to raise a family" if Jesus was here. You see, when He cleans people up, sometimes He makes a mess. We need to affirm the pigs. We need to excuse the demons. We need to rename their madness as a disorder and continue in our idolatry because it costs too much to have Jesus around."

I wonder where would I be if Jesus did not cross the sea for me? I wonder how happy I am when Jesus makes an effect in someone's life? They don't say things exactly how I say them. They don't do things exactly how I do them. All they can say is, "I believe in Jesus. He's my Savior." I wonder how we would react if we had people that don't look churchy come right and sit on this front pew on Sunday morning? I wonder if we would be more upset about our self-respect being drowned in the sea? Or upset that we have people that could be affected by a demonic world? I often wonder when we get people that come to us from other churches what it would be like if we were churches that were passionate about finding people that didn't have a church. I often wonder what would happen if we decided to go after people that didn't already claim to be Christians. Oh listen, It would get messy.

You see, what's really clean is finding fish that are already clean. We want them to be tithers by the time they get here. We want them to carry a good Bible by the time they get here. We want them to listen to the right music before they get here. And all those things my dear friends, all those things are pigs floating in the sea. Here we have an entire population saying "No" to the work of Jesus because it brings people in who are just messy, and they have a past. Everyone in town knew where those men had been. Everyone in town knew what those men had been up to. But Jesus? They were worth a trip across the sea for Him, after a full day of ministry and sleeping in the rain.