

Matt. 8:28-34 - The Demons Obey Him

Written by Tim Black
Sunday, 08 March 2009 14:49 -

1.

Introduction

1.

Context

1.

As we come to the close of Matthew 8 we are at the halfway point between the Sermon on the Mount and Christ's second sermon in the book. In chapters 8 and 9 Christ shows us the works of His kingdom, by healing the sick and demonstrating His power over both the natural and the spiritual world. Last week we heard Jesus' disciples marvel "Even the wind and waves obey Him!" and today we see that even the demons obey Him.

2.

Jonathan Edwards' Tri-World Vision.

1.

Hell. Scripture commonly names two realms of creation in close connection to one another – heaven and earth. It does so especially to direct our attention to God in heaven, that we would heed His word, be reconciled to Him, and finally live with Him in heaven. But there is a third realm of creation, hell. Jonathan Edwards is well-known for what has been called his "Tri-World Vision," his explaining the truths of Christianity by tracing the interwoven histories of the three realms of heaven, earth, and hell.

[1](#)

Though Jesus cast out demons at many other times, the events recorded in this passage give us a special glimpse into the character of hell, as it wrought its evil influence upon the lives of men on earth.

2.

Heaven. Terrible though this influence is, this passage teaches there is a power greater than the wicked spirits who inhabit hell and earth. Jesus is God, come from heaven, to reign

Matt. 8:28-34 - The Demons Obey Him

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Sunday, 08 March 2009 14:49 -

in heaven and on earth, and even over the powers of hell! From this passage we should learn of the power of Satan, but also the greater power of Jesus Christ.

3.

Outline. We learn the power and character of Satan and his demons in the demons' request in vv. 28-31, and the power and character of Jesus Christ in Jesus' command in vv. 32-34.

1.

The Demons' Request vv. 28-31

2.

Jesus' Command vv. 32-34

3.

Body

1.

The Demons' Request

1.

Text

1.

28 And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two

Matt. 8:28-34 - The Demons Obey Him

Written by Tim Black

Sunday, 08 March 2009 14:49 -

demon-possessed men met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way.

2.

29 And behold, they cried out, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?"

3.

30 Now a herd of many pigs was feeding at some distance from them. 31 And the demons begged him, saying, "If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs."

4.

The Demons

1.

Christ's purpose in coming to the country of the Gadarenes was to heal these two demon-possessed men, who come to Him immediately upon His arrival. These men reveal the power and character of the demons within them.

-

Their power. Their power was very great. They made the men so fierce that no one could pass that way. Mark and Luke report these men had been bound with chains by the local citizens but the demoniacs broke the chains. The power of these demons is greater than any man. It is greater than the demoniacs themselves, who cannot resist the control of the demons, and who would not be able to break chains with only their human strength. It is greater than the power of the citizens of the whole region, as Mark testifies, "

No man could bind him.

" (

Mark 5:3

) The people of this region were afraid of these men because of the power of their demons. Are you afraid of their power? You should be because it is an instance of the evil power which also works in your own sin. You are not possessed by a demon, but you are not more powerful than your sin. "Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing."

Matt. 8:28-34 - The Demons Obey Him

Written by Tim Black
Sunday, 08 March 2009 14:49 -

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Their character. The demons reveal their character as well. They are destructive. They cause these men to live in the tombs, near the great evil of death, standing in the gateway to hell. Mark and Luke tell us they lived without clothes, cried out, and cut themselves with stones. Though your sins are not demons, I ask you, do you recognize the true evil of the actions and destination to which they lead? "

The gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many.

" (

Matt. 7:13

) "

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.

" (

Prov. 14:12

) Your sins lead you to the self-destructive hell on earth these two demoniacs lived, and to hell itself.

-

Their Taunts. The demons taunted Jesus.

1.

Deceit. Their question "What have you to do with us?" was an attempt to drive Him away. He is holy, they are unclean. He is neither their leader nor their Savior. What business does Jesus have with them? This subterfuge was an attempt to avoid the reason Jesus came to them this day. He came to them to demonstrate His power over them, His victory over sin and death and the powers of hell, and to guarantee He will finally judge and punish Satan and his demons.

2.

Ridicule. The demons call Jesus "Son of God." They know He is God the Son, come from God the Father to earth. They know Him, but by boasting of this knowledge they do not honor, but dishonor

Matt. 8:28-34 - The Demons Obey Him

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Sunday, 08 March 2009 14:49 -

Him.

3.

Delay. Understanding Jesus will not allow them to escape of their own power, their complaint that He might be about to torment them " before the time" of the final judgment already contains a request, not for mercy that would bring about reconciliation, but for permission to delay their punishment. Their words are not full of submission, but of rebellion. They are taunts, mocking the power and authority of Jesus Christ.

4.

Application. These demons sought to escape their Judge by deceit, ridicule, and delay. What do you do when you know you are guilty? Deceive, ridicule, or delay? When you do, you make a mockery of Jesus Christ, who will be your final Judge, if He is not your Savior today.

5.

Their Request

1.

The demons make a final request. "If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs." Knowing the day of final judgment is not yet here, the demons plead for a way of escape from Jesus' presence, an opportunity to destroy God's creatures, and as a further subterfuge, and more in line with their greatest desires, an opportunity to turn the pigherders and citizens against Jesus.

2.

Jesus' Command. Amazingly, Jesus grants their request!

Matt. 8:28-34 - The Demons Obey Him

Written by Tim Black
Sunday, 08 March 2009 14:49 -

1.

Text

1.

32 And he said to them, "Go."

2.

So they came out and went into the pigs, and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters.

3.

33 The herdsmen fled, and going into the city they told everything, especially what had happened to the demon-possessed men.

4.

34 And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their region.

5.

The Command

1.

The whole passage turns on this one little word from Jesus: "Go!" The demons can't leave Jesus' presence until He permits them. "

Go

" is an imperative verb, a command. So it is not even correct to say Jesus permits

them to leave. Jesus

commands

them to leave! The demons are no more able to control themselves than were the demoniacs!

Matt. 8:28-34 - The Demons Obey Him

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Sunday, 08 March 2009 14:49 -

You may fear the power of the demons, and rightly so. But rage as they might, they must stay, and go, only when

Jesus

says so. Their complaints prove they couldn't leave His presence when they no doubt wanted to, until He gave the word

.

2.

The demons—not just one; a whole legion!—obey Jesus Christ. The demons obey Him. We may even infer that "the whole of Satan's kingdom is subject to the authority of Christ."

[2](#)

By casting out these demons Christ showed

He

is the deliverer of men;

He

is the one who delivers from the power of Satan!

3.

You may wonder why the demons received Christ's permission. It was not as if Christ approved

of their prayer and

honored

their request. But He did

command

them to do what they requested. He did this to heal the two demoniacs, to punish the Gadarenes for their sin and irreligion, to prove outwardly that demons exist to the Sadducees of His day and antisupernaturalists of ours, and to test the citizens to see whether they would bless God for saving the demoniacs, or curse Him for killing their livestock.

4.

The Pigs - Destruction

1.

What happens next is a chain reaction that goes wrong, like the game called "Telephone," where as it is passed from person to person the sentence "Mr. Jones has a lawnmower"

Matt. 8:28-34 - The Demons Obey Him

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Sunday, 08 March 2009 14:49 -

becomes "My dog has fleas." The news that "Jesus cast out demons" quickly turns to "Jesus, leave, please!" We may laugh at how wrong these turns of events become, but you must see and not forget that this mischief which leads to death, loss, fear, confusion, and rejecting the Savior is the work of the devil! Jesus said "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.

I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

" (

John 10:10

) Destruction, fear, and rejecting the Savior is the work of the devil.

2.

Under the power of the demons the whole herd of pigs was destroyed. But this didn't destroy the demons, or their work.

3.

The Herdsmen – Fear

1.

The demons succeeded in frightening the herdsmen not only of themselves, but of Jesus. The herdsmen "fled." They told the whole story, including what happened to the demoniacs. The herdsmen should have thanked Jesus for ridding the demoniacs of the demons. The herdsmen should have thanked Jesus for killing their pigs in order for these demoniacs to be saved! But they didn't. They fled from Jesus. They fled to their people. They should have fled from their people to Jesus.

2.

Our missionary Tony Curto worked closely with a Ugandan pastor in Mbale named Pastor Morris. I stayed in Pastor Morris's house in Mbale. In an evangelistic meeting Pastor Morris said the witch doctors do have power, even power to heal, because God has given Satan real, even great power, as one of God's creatures. Peter says knowing this is part of what it means to "Be sober-minded; be watchful. [For] Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

" (

1 Pet. 5:8

) But, Pastor Morris said, Satan uses his power to tempt you to worship Satan, rather than

Matt. 8:28-34 - The Demons Obey Him

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Sunday, 08 March 2009 14:49 -

worship God. There's the rub. Jesus cast out the demons. Do you worship Jesus, or do you worship the demons? Do you run to your people, who can't bind the demons, or do you run to Jesus, from whom the demons can't run unless He permits? Satan is a lion, but Jesus has bound Satan with a chain. (

Rev. 20:2

) Satan wants you to fear and call out for help to the witch doctor, or the demons, but not to Jesus. Because he knows the only one who can loose you from Satan's grip is the Lord Jesus Christ! But if you belong to Jesus, He gives you the assurance, "

No one will snatch [you] out of my hand.

" (

John 10:28

) The apostle Paul declares "

I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

" (

Rom. 8:38-39

)

3.

The Citizens – Rejection of the Savior

1.

The demons drove the pigs to destruction, the herdsmen to fear, and the citizens to reject the Savior

. The whole city that could not bind the demoniacs now begs Jesus " to leave their region.

"

The demons who asked "

What do you have to do with us?

" now have convinced the citizens to ask Jesus to have nothing more to do with them! Matthew Henry sees the issue well, saying

"Thus the devil sows tares in God's field, does mischief in the Christian church, and then lays the blame upon Christianity, and incenses men against that."

[3](#)

The demons' goal is for you to cherish your sin and reject your Savior.

2.

Matt. 8:28-34 - The Demons Obey Him

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Sunday, 08 March 2009 14:49 -

I ask you to think of one of the sins you committed this past week which you confessed to the Lord earlier in this worship service. If you didn't confess a particular sin, you are as blind to the evil in your life as these citizens of the Gadarenes! Think of one of your sins. If you are not a Christian, Jesus can save you from that sin. If you are a Christian, Jesus is your Savior from that sin. Jesus calls you to repent of your sin, and believe in Him as your Savior. Will you stay with Jesus? Or will you stay with that sin? To those who in this life say to Jesus, "Depart from us" (Job

21:14; 22:17

), one day Christ will say "

Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

" But to those who in this life confess Jesus Christ is their Lord, Jesus will say, "

Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

" (

Matt. 25:41, 34)

These are the ones whose names He will confess "

before [His] Father and before his angels.

" (

Rev. 3:5

)

3.

Conclusion

1.

The demoniacs, the pig herders, and the Gadarenes feared the demons. But God says "Do not fear what they fear.

" (

Is. 8:12

) The demons obey Jesus Christ.

"

He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them

" (

Col. 2:15

), so that now "

angels, authorities, and powers [have] been subjected to him.

Matt. 8:28-34 - The Demons Obey Him

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Sunday, 08 March 2009 14:49 -

" (

1 Pet. 3:22

) Now all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him, and He holds the keys of Death and Hades. (

Rev. 1:18

) Therefore He commands you to "

Go and make disciples of all nations,

" trusting His promise that He will be with you always, even to the very end of the age. (

Matt. 28:18-20

)

[1](#) See, for example, Harry S. Stout, "Jonathan Edwards' Tri-World Vision," in *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards: American Religion and the Evangelical Tradition*, ed. D. G. Hart, Sean Michael Lucas, and Stephen J. Nichols (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003) pp. 27-46.

[2](#) Calvin, 430.

[3](#) Matthew Henry, 114.