

Lord Over All

Matthew 8:28-34

Following his miraculous act of calming a storm on the Sea of Galilee Jesus and his disciples traveled southeast to the “country of the Gadarenes.” Both Gadara and Gerasa were cities of the region which explains the reference to the “Gerasenes” by Mark and Luke.



Matthew, a likely eyewitness to the event, records the appearance of two demon possessed men. Mark and Luke record the presence of one demoniac. The explanation is rather simple. Matthew, who was there, had full and separate knowledge of a second man. There were two demon possessed men. But one of them spoke to Jesus; and Mark and Luke simply report what they had been told—the conversation between Jesus and the demon-possessed man. Their focus on one man was sufficient for their purpose.

Main Idea: Jesus, the Son of God, has all authority over all things including demons.

1. The conflict due to Jesus' Lordship

- The Gospels are in one respect records of conflict. Jesus portrayed regularly as being conflict with the Jewish religious leaders, the crowds, his disciples, Rome, and demonic powers. The conflict is understandable considering that Jesus presence was a constant reminder that his lordship challenged all others.

a) We live in a world of spiritual conflict.

- [Genesis 3](#) introduces us to the conflict between the seed of the woman (humans, and ultimately Jesus) and the seed of the serpent, demons. [Revelation 12:7-9](#) further identifies this Serpent and his angels. [Jude 8-10](#) is another window on the spiritual struggle in the spirit world, as indeed [Daniel 10:13](#) mentions with the spirit power behind Persia. [Ezekiel 28:11-19](#), a prophecy addressed to the king of Tyre, identifies the spirit power behind him, and is one of the biblical hints to the history of Satan. And [1 Peter 3:19](#) seems to be referring to evil spirits who have been imprisoned since the flood. The present passage highlights the conflict over Jesus' lordship with the powers of darkness.

b) Humans are impacted by demonic activity.

Vs. 28 – “...two demon-possessed men...”

- While not common, the Bible makes clear that humans may be possessed by demons to the extent that they lose power over their own words and actions. But far more common are the ways in which men and women are tempted and influenced by demons. Jesus said that “the thief [a reference to Satan] comes only to steal, kill, and destroy” (John 10:10). We never want to fall into the trap of blaming our sin on demons as though “the devil made me do it.” The twisted desires that come from our own hearts are reason enough. But we must not be naïve about the project of our enemy.
- Human evil is spurred on by and gains strength through the influence of the demonic. We don't know precisely *how* the Devil exercises his influence but we know that he does. The two Gadarene men became subject to the Devil's power because they were, at a fundamental level, receptive to his influence. Jesus used to tell those who hated him and opposed him that they were doing the will of their Father, the Devil. So too is every unbelieving man or woman.
- C. S. Lewis' caution is helpful. People make two mistakes in considering demons and demonic activity: either they discount it and think nothing of it, or they become too fascinated and too pre-occupied with it.

Demonic activity is real, and more or less active in certain historical and cultural contexts. Christians need not live in fear of demons for Christ has won the victory over all such evil forces.

c) Jesus' Lordship is not questioned by demons.

Vs. 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?’”

- Here Jesus is clearly identified as the Son of God. The demons had a better, fuller grasp on the identity, authority and mission of Jesus than did his own disciples.

2. The Potency of Jesus' Lordship

Vs. 32 – “And he said to them, ‘Go.’ 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.”

- A typical feature of Jesus' miracles is the lack of sensationalism or dramatic flourish. Jesus was not a magician working tricks to impress a crowd. His miracles demonstrate the potency of his lordship. There is no need for him to plead with storms or sickness or demons. In this case a simple “go” is sufficient to banish a thousand demons.

3. The Resistance to Jesus' Lordship

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

- Far more common than demon-possession is ordinary self-interest. The townspeople, seeing that Jesus represented a threat to their economic prosperity pleaded with him to leave. The demonstration of his power and the public recognition of his divine status was not enough to change their hearts. Like so many in our own day, the power of self-interest often made the power of demons superfluous.
- Demon possession is very rare, if it occurs at all in the Old Testament and there are few examples of it after the Gospels. “In the Bible [an outbreak of] demon possession [seems rather to be] part of the upsurge of evil opposing Jesus in the time of his incarnation” (Morris, 208). It makes sense that the coming of the Messiah into the world would be met with frequent opposition from Satan. Jesus' encounter with demons was an important element in his ministry because of what those encounters revealed about God's kingdom, the kingdom of this world, and the nature of Jesus' mission.
- In his encounter with the Gadarene demoniacs Jesus demonstrated his comprehensive authority. There was nothing the demons could do to manipulate Jesus or curtail his power over them. It is also clear that demons are aware that a time is coming when Jesus will judge them once and for all. It was the cross and resurrection which finally sealed the fate of the demonic powers of sin and darkness. The Apostle Paul states that through his death on the cross Jesus “disarmed the rulers and authorities [a reference to all opposition to Christ] and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them” (Col. 2:15).
- All humanity is naturally bound over to Satan. Mankind is born with a preference for sin. But all those who believe in Jesus; those who turn away from sin and look in faith to Christ share in his victory of sin and Satan: “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:13-14).

Can Christians be demon-possessed? It seems to me that the Bible makes plain that Christians cannot be subject to demon possession. Christians are tempted, harassed, and caused a great deal of trouble in the spiritual battles of life; but since the Holy Spirit is indwelling the Christian, then demons cannot. The Bible tells Christians to resist the devil and he will flee from them; how they resist the devil is by submitting to God ([James 4:7](#)). There are too many easier places for demons to lodge than in a Christian who is aware of Satan's devices and resists them.