

In the next section (Luke 8:22-56), Luke lines up four miracles that display Christ's power; when Jesus wills something to happen, nothing can resist Him.

The miracles demonstrate:

- (1) His power over nature (8:22-25).
- (2) His authority over the demonic/spirit world (8:26-39).
- (3) His power over disease (8:40-48).
- (4) His power over death (8:49-56).

Each of these miracles stirs a similar reaction in the people who see them. When Jesus calmed the storm it says that the disciples "were fearful and amazed, saying to one another, 'Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?'" (8:25). When Jesus cast the demons out of the Gerasene demoniac, the people "became frightened" (8:35) and "all the people of the country of the Gerasenes and the surrounding district . . . were gripped with great fear" (8:37). When a woman was healed she came trembling and fell down before Him (8:47). And when a girl was raised from the dead her parents "were amazed" (8:56).

In all these stories the emphasis is on Jesus' authority and power in rolling back the effects of the fall as the great and glorious messianic king.

THE CALMING OF THE STORM - Luke 8:22-25; Matthew 13:53; 8:18; 23-27; Mark 4:35-41

In order to appreciate Jesus' calming of the sea more fully it must be remembered that:

1. God's purposes for the world include both delivering man from his sin and delivering the planet from sin's effects. Romans 8 tells us that because sin entered the world, the creation was subjected to futility (Ro. 8:20), and that it groans and suffers (Ro. 8:22). But according to Romans 8:21, creation will be set free from its slavery to corruption. Jesus is the One who sets it free. We see glimmers of this when He calmed the storm.

As Storms says,

The eschatological hope of the Christian is inescapably earthly in nature. God's ultimate aim in the redemption of his people has always included the restoration of the natural creation. As we noted above, the "kingdom of God" refers primarily to the reign or rule of God over his people. Thus to believe and receive the kingdom is to submit to the yoke of God's sovereignty.

On the other hand, God's rule manifests itself and is realized in a specific historical and earthly realm. Therefore, we cannot speak meaningfully of the kingdom of God apart from the promise of the land originally given to the Patriarchs (The Restoration of All Things, 21).

2. Only God can control weather. He is Lord of the natural world. The Jewish people had this so ingrained in their thinking that instead of saying, "it rains," they would say, "the LORD sends rain on the face of the earth" (1 Ki. 17:14) or, "He thunders with His majestic voice, and He does not restrain the lightnings when His voice is heard" (Job 37:4).

Psalms 107:23-31 says,

23 Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters;
24 they saw the deeds of the LORD, His wondrous works in the deep.
25 For He commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea.
26 They mounted up to heaven; they went down to the depths; their courage melted away in their evil plight;
27 they reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at their wits' end.
28 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and He delivered them from their distress.
29 He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed.
30 Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and He brought them to their desired haven.
31 Let them thank the LORD for His steadfast love, for His wondrous works to the children of men!

Psalms 89:9: "You rule the swelling of the sea. When its waves rise, You still them."

8:22 Now on one of those days Jesus and His disciples got into a boat, and He said to them, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." So they launched out.

8:23 But as they were sailing along He fell asleep; and a fierce gale of wind descended on the lake, and they began to be swamped and to be in danger.

Jesus had been teaching a crowd that was so big that He needed to get into a boat to do His teaching. In both Mark and Luke He had just taught the Parable of the Sower. At the end of that day He was exhausted and decided to get some respite from the intensity of the crowd. He and His disciples got into a boat to go to the eastern side of the lake. A boat that could hold so many disciples and possibly the women of 8:1-3 would be substantial in size. In Greek, the word for boat is commonly used of a sailboat (see 8:26). Mark mentions that there were other boats with them (Mark 4:36), and that Jesus took His place in the stern, falling asleep on the cushion there (Mark 4:38).

Lake Chinnereth in Galilee is usually referred to in the Bible as the Sea of Galilee. It is thirteen miles long from north to south and seven or eight miles wide. It is the lowest freshwater lake in the world at 682 feet *below* sea level. It is only thirty miles east of the Mediterranean Sea and is situated in a harp-shaped valley (thus the name Chinnereth, which means lyre or harp).

The lake is about 150 feet deep at its deepest spots. At a depth of 50 ft. the temperature is about 60 degrees. At 100 ft. the temperature drops another 10 degrees. The varying temperatures contribute to

surface turbulence somewhat. Because of the freshness of the water and the agitation of the lake, algae and fish flourish, but the lake was also used for transportation.

To the **north** of the lake the narrow Hula Valley leads to the headwaters of the Jordan River at the base of Mount Hermon – a 9,232 ft. mountain that dominates the landscape. Beyond this, the mountains of southern Lebanon rise 10,000 ft. above the surface of the water. As the snow from these mountains melts, clean, clear water flows down the Jordan River and it fills up the lake. MacArthur comments that “Because the water is so pure, 50 percent of all drinking water in Israel . . .” **East** of the Sea of Galilee is a plateau known today as the Golan Heights that leads to the desert. The Golan Heights rise to an elevation of 3,000 ft. The drop to the Sea of Galilee is sheer in some places and sloped in others. The hills of Galilee, to the **west** of the lake, rise to a height of about 1,500 ft., making them about 2,182 ft. above the surface of the lake. The Jordan River flows out of the Sea of Galilee to the **south** and into the Dead Sea. Thus three sides of the lake are surrounded with mountains ranging from 1,500 to 10,000 ft.

Due to the uniqueness of the lake there is a mix of wind and water that occurs like no other place in the world. Cool winds from the Mediterranean Sea blow from the west over the hills of Galilee. In the winter even colder winds come off the snow-capped Lebanese mountains. As they descend into the ravines along the shoreline, they compress and accelerate, blasting out upon the lake. From the east are the hot sirocco winds of the desert that blow over the Golan Heights.

When the cold winds come down from the mountains they generate what is known as katabatic winds. A katabatic wind is simply a generic term for a wind that carries high density air from a higher elevation down a slope under the force of gravity. They blow down the mountains at night when the highlands radiate heat and are cooled. It is when these winds hit the warm air that they create what scientists call shear stress on the surface of the lake. This shear stress greatly agitates the water and can be almost hurricane force. Five to six ft. waves aren't unusual. In 1992 ten ft. waves crashed over the sea wall into downtown Tiberias causing significant damage.

The area is known for its rapid changes in weather. Barclay writes of the work of Dr. Christie, who spent years in Galilee. Christie said, "That during these storms the winds would blow sometimes from all directions because once they hit the pocket and the bowl, then they would begin to spin and to whirl." He further writes, "A company of visitors was standing on the shore at Tiberias, and, noting the glassy surface of the water and the smallness of the lake, they expressed doubts as to the possibility of such storms as those described in the gospels. Almost immediately the wind sprang up. In twenty minutes the sea was white with foam-crested waves. Great billows broke over the towers at the corners of the city walls, and the visitors were compelled to seek shelter from the blinding spray, though now two hundred yards from the lakeside." (Barclay, *Gospel of Matthew*, 323).

So Jesus decides to go across the lake. Dusk settles in as they begin their trip (Mk. 4:36) and soon darkness falls. As the air cools and the heat radiates from the land, things begin to happen; as aforementioned, on Lake Galilee they happen fast. The fury of a storm begins to build as cold air begins

plummeting down the mountains (Luke accurately says "a fierce gale of wind *descended*" – 8:23), hitting the surface of the lake in the darkness of night. Immediately, the calm waters turn into a mass of surging whitecaps with waves battering the boat with spray perhaps blowing hundreds of feet into the air.

Luke describes the wind as a "fierce gale;" in Greek the word is used for a hurricane. Matthew 8:24 says, "behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves." Literally, Matthew describes the event as a σεισμός μέγας (*seismos megas*), translated as "a great storm." In commenting on Matthew's account MacArthur says, "*Seismos* is the word for quake. *Mega* is the word for big, or massive. Matthew says it was a water-quake, which is a way of describing the violent, shaking agitation, and the massive waves generated by hurricane force winds" (Also see Block, 761 for the same observation).

Their boat is in a frothing, foaming caldron of water that was too much for it to handle; water begins filling the boat as they are tossed like a ragdoll in a washing machine. A number of the disciples were professional fisherman who had spent their whole lives on the sea, and even they saw this as a life-threatening event.

8:24(a) They came to Jesus and woke Him up, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!"

8:24(b) And He got up and rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm.

In their panic, the disciples go to Jesus and wake Him. Over the howl of the wind they say, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" The present tense verb indicates continuous action: It is happening! It is upon us! We are perishing!

Jesus rose from His sleep and rebuked the winds and the waves; instantly they stopped. Mark 4:39 says that Jesus said to the sea, "'Hush, be still.' And the wind died down and it became *perfectly* calm." In Greek, Mark's choice of words means, "keep silent, say nothing, make no sound, stop speaking, be or become quiet" (BAGD, 752). When God created the world He said, "Let there be light and there was light" (Gen. 1:3). At His spoken word light came into existence. In a similar way, when Jesus spoke, nature obeyed His voice. "The wind and the sea recognized the voice of their Creator and they responded, the same way disease responded when He rebuked it, the same way demons responded when He rebuked them, the same way death responded when it yielded up its victim, the same way fish responded when He commanded them to go to a certain place" (MacArthur).

Luke records, "the storm subsided, and all was calm." The Greek Aorist tense used here indicates that the storm and waves ceased immediately. A great calm settled set in.

8:25 And He said to them, "Where is your faith?" They were fearful and amazed, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?"

Jesus says four words: "Where is your faith?"

The disciples had seen Jesus heal the sick and cast out demons, but when their own lives were at risk they suddenly forgot Jesus' power and who He seemed to be. The disciples should have rested in Christ's care. They had saving faith, but the faith they needed was an applied faith that functions in the midst of pressure. They needed the faith that has a depth of understanding that can be drawn upon in difficult times (Block, 763). But more than this; they should have had a sense and perception of who He was.

The surface of the lake was glassy; the air was dead. The water was no longer flooding the boat; in fact, the boat wasn't moving at all in the placid water. They were completely safe. Yet, the Bible says they were *fearful*. Their fear was no longer the fear of the loss of life; it was fear due to the power they had seen displayed. Jesus transcended the capacity of a man. When the wind and the waves obeyed His voice, the disciples knew He had done something that only God can do. One question now consumed their thoughts: "Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?"

Luke deliberately leaves the question unanswered. It is for the reader to ponder.

Luke had begun his account by saying that he wrote his gospel so that Theophilus (and, by extension, all who read his account) would "know the exact truth" (Lk. 1:4). If this is the exact truth, then who is Jesus? Can a mere man command the wind and waves to obey him?

THE HEALING OF THE GERASENE DEMONIAC - Luke 8:26-39; Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20

8:26 Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee.

Jesus had just calmed the storm. They then finished their trip across the northern part of the Sea of Galilee and arrived in the Gerasenes, a Gentile district on the eastern shore of the lake. The specific city they went to is not mentioned.

8:27 And when He came out onto the land, He was met by a man from the city who was possessed with demons; and who had not put on any clothing for a long time, and was not living in a house, but in the tombs.

8:28 Seeing Jesus, he cried out and fell before Him, and said in a loud voice, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me."

8:29 For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had seized him many times; and he was bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard, and yet he would break his bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.

Immediately, they were met by a man possessed with demons. Matthew 8:28 says there were two men, but in all the accounts, the one man becomes the focus.

Literally, the man is said to "have a demon." This is the most common expression, used 16 times in the NT. Other expressions for the same phenomena are "being demonized," "possessing an unclean spirit," and "being afflicted with unclean spirits." This is not simply a primitive way of describing some sort of mental illness. Demons are living, personal, rational, spiritual beings that are capable of controlling someone's mind and body. They can talk through the person's vocal cords, create thoughts, and produce physical ailments. When someone is oppressed by a demon, the demon takes over and the person's mind becomes passive in various degrees.

This case was severe. The man exhibited extreme symptoms of abnormal and psychotic behavior.

- He was living in tombs.
- Mark 5:5 says he was suicidal: "Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and gashing himself with stones."
- In Matthew it says he was so exceedingly violent that no one could pass by the road (Matt. 8:28).
- Nobody could control him: Mark 4 says, "And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles."
- They attempted to keep him under guard.
- He was naked for a long time, which is not only a state of shamelessness, but also resulted in exposure to the elements.
- He had multiple demons and was often driven into the desert by them.

One might speculate that he first approached Jesus and those who were with Him with violent intent. The demonized man had no idea who Jesus was, but the demons did and instantaneously fell down before Him. When they fell the man fell.

The demons panic and say, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me." "Most High God" is El Elyon in Hebrew and means "Sovereign Lord." Often in the Old Testament, "the Most High God" is followed by the statement, "possessor of heaven and earth." Suddenly being face-to-face with Christ was terrifying for them. They knew that the Lord of heaven and earth stood before them in human form. They knew that He has the power and authority to sentence them to hell. They had feared that He had come to judge them before the time they had expected (Matthew 8:29 says, "Have You come here to torment us before the time?").

8:30 And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him.

8:31 They were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the abyss.

This man, controlled by the indwelling demons had lost his ability to speak, think, talk, and act. Jesus spoke to the man but knew He would be answered by the dominant personalities in him. The voice that was the spokesman for the demons said, "Legion." Legion is not a name, rather it describes a group of

Roman soldiers that could number in the thousands. Since the number was imprecise, the expression was used to state that there were many. In fact, Mark 5:9 says just that. He records the demon saying, "My name is Legion; for we are many." Mark 5:13 states that they entered 2,000 pigs, so one can surmise that there were at least 2,000 (Bock, 774).

Despite the demons' number and power it is clear who had the authority. In 8:28 the demon begged Jesus not to torment him. Now the whole group was "imploring Him not to command them to go away into the abyss." They knew that whatever He commanded they must do. They had no choice but to obey.

Originally, in the OT, the abyss referred to the depths of the earth, but it also could refer to the dwelling place of the dead. In Luke, it is seen as a place where demons are restrained.

8:32 Now there was a herd of many swine feeding there on the mountain; and the demons implored Him to permit them to enter the swine. And He gave them permission.

8:33 And the demons came out of the man and entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

The demons implored Jesus not to cast them into the abyss, but to send them into swine instead. When they entered the swine, the pigs acted in the same self-destruction that characterized the man; they rushed down the bank into the Sea of Galilee and drowned.

This incident demonstrated a number of things. It provided visual proof of the number of demons, revealed their murderous intent, and that they had left the man as Jesus had commanded them to do. It most importantly demonstrated Jesus' divine power over the spirit world.

8:34 When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they ran away and reported it in the city and out in the country.

The herdsmen were eyewitnesses and reported the event to those in the city and countryside.

8:35 The people went out to see what had happened; and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they became frightened.

8:36 Those who had seen it reported to them how the man who was demon-possessed had been made well.

8:37 And all the people of the country of the Gerasenes and the surrounding district asked Him to leave them, for they were gripped with great fear; and He got into a boat and returned.

The townspeople found immediate confirmation of the herdsmen's report. The demoniac was totally transformed. He was sitting down where he was once roaming, clothed when he was previously naked, and in his right mind, where he had formerly shown symptoms of insanity.

Knowing that Jesus had done this resulted in fear, which led the people to ask Jesus to leave. Some speculate that this was because Jesus had just ruined their livelihood when the pigs destroyed themselves, but there is no mention of this at all. It seems more probable that they feared the power He possessed though it had been used for good.

8:38 But the man from whom the demons had gone out was begging Him that he might accompany Him; but He sent him away, saying,

8:39 "Return to your house and describe what great things God has done for you." So he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

The man who had been delivered begged to go with Jesus. The reason why is not mentioned. Some think that he wanted further protection, but it is equally possible that he was full of gratitude and joy and wanted to be with the one who had so graciously delivered him from the constant torment he had experienced. But Jesus had a task for the man. He wanted him to testify about what God had done for him. So the man went back to his house and city and proclaimed (preached - κηρύσσω *kerusso*) what had happened to him. In his preaching he tied the work of God to Christ; that is, he told "what great things Jesus had done for him."

Bock summarizes with some interesting observations:

Some see the execution of his power, are afraid, and want nothing to do with him. This reaction comes despite the thorough transformation of the demon possessed man by Jesus, which was witnessed by all. Unbelief can be hard to understand sometimes. Those who reject Jesus should contemplate why they are refusing to respond. Nonetheless, unbelief often flees from an encounter with God. The opportunity to draw near to God produces distance instead.

. . . A note of assurance also exists in that Jesus controls vast numbers of spiritual forces allied against him. The man is transformed, despite the efforts of evil to overwhelm him. Jesus' authority comes through clearly. God is working through Jesus and is allied with him. Luke again shows that Jesus can be trusted. Such is His power. Confronted with Jesus, some draw near and others want distance. For Luke, the preference is not found in the opinion of the multitudes, but in one radically transformed man.

1 John 3:8 says, "The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil." Hebrews 2:14-15 says of Christ, "Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives." In Luke 11:20 Jesus said, "If I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you." The Bible often uses the *arm* of God as a metaphor for God's power; Jesus can conquer the powers of darkness with a finger.

"Jesus came into the world not only to save us from sin, but to save us from Satan. He came to eliminate our guilt and to eliminate our enemy. The Bible makes this very clear, starting in Genesis 3:15. Right

after the fall, God said, "There will come one, the seed of a woman who will crush the serpent's head." And while, for the time, Satan has freedom within the parameters of God's design to work his evil intentions in the world, along with all the demons who are equally free to assist him, the day will come when Satan will be crushed . . ." (MacArthur). The story of the Gerasene demoniac demonstrates this plainly; Jesus by His very presence exposes demons and engages them in a way that demonstrates His absolute authority and power over them. The text before us from verse 26 to 39 is the greatest of all deliverances that Jesus did, at least those recorded in the gospels.

By delivering the demoniac, Jesus gives a visible display of His messianic work. In Isaiah 61:1 it says that the Messiah was sent "to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to open the prison to those who are bound."