

Focus Text

“And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way. 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?” Now a herd of many pigs was feeding at some distance from them. And the demons begged him, saying, “If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs.” 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. The herdsmen fled, and going into the city they told everything, especially what had happened to the demon-possessed men. And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their region.” **(Matthew 8:28–34, ESV)**

“They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. And crying out with a loud voice, he said, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.” For he was saying to him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!” And Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” He replied, “My name is Legion, for we are many.” And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him, saying, “Send us to the pigs; let us enter them.” So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea. The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid.” **(Mark 5:1–15, ESV)**



1. Demons Declared Defeated

“And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way. 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?” **(Matthew 8:28–29, ESV)**

As Jesus arrives on the shoreline of the Palestinian town of Gadarenes, He is greeted by two men who are possessed by demons or unclean spirits. There is no doubt that the spiritual realm impacts the physical realm. In the same way that the Holy Spirit of God indwells the believer in Jesus, people in their idolatry can allow unclean or demonic spirits to indwell within them. Jesus is met with such individuals who are being controlled by demonic spirits that grant them great physical strength, but they are a terror to the people in this town. Once again, we see the spiritual realm recognize Jesus for His Kingly status. The final question on the Galilee was “Who is this man that calms the wind and waves?” Matthew continues to showcase Jesus’ Kingly authority because the speakers are the demons, not the men. They recognize the day of their judgment and being cast into the lake of fire. The unclean spirits show both respect to Christ and fear, knowing implicitly that He has the ability and authority to torment them. The tone here is one of submission and fear, quite different from the oppression and control they demonstrate over their hosts.

“It was believed that evil demons could enter into human beings and dominate their personality. They could also be expelled by magic. Josephus speaks of one Eleazer whom he had seen curing demoniacs by holding a magical ring to the nose of the patient. He then drew the demon out through his nostrils (Ant. viii. 46, 47). The demons have power to afflict mankind until the day of judgment, when they will be punished, Enoch 15–16. Cf”¹

“and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” **(Revelation 20:10, ESV)**

¹ Allen, Willoughby C. 1907. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Matthew. International Critical Commentary. New York: C. Scribner’s Sons.

2. All is Right in the World

“Now a herd of many pigs was feeding at some distance from them. And the demons begged him, saying, “If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs.” **(Matthew 8:30–31, ESV)**

One thing to notice in Matthew’s stories is that they contain elements of both absurdity and elements that would be offensive to the original audience. In this Jewish settlement, pigs are unclean and should not be raised here. Rome and other pagan religions influenced this town. When Matthew shows us pigs here in a Jewish village, this is a “no-no” and could be the reason these demonic spirits have authority here because the people are not walking in the ways of the Lord. The unclean spirits beg, another sign of submission, for Jesus to allow them to enter into the unclean animals. This is an interesting metaphor. The pigs and spirits are unclean, and neither is where they belong. Jesus is ordering the world rightly by placing the unclean spirits in the unclean animals. In doing so, these men would regain their right minds and be restored to wholeness. In the Kingdom of God, everything and everyone will be in their right place, and nothing will be by mistake or accident. Unclean will be with unclean, and Holy will be with Holy. Even the demons know who the King is, and that they are not welcome in His Kingdom.

“They request that in that eventuality Jesus would send them into the pigs. There is no indication in the narrative as to what that meant for either the demons or the pigs, or as to why the demons should make such a request. But we may reflect that unclean animals would be suitable dwellings for unclean spirits.”²

² Morris, Leon. 1992. *The Gospel according to Matthew. The Pillar New Testament Commentary.* Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

3. Liberation Accomplished

“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.”

(Matthew 8:32, ESV)

The word “Go” from Jesus is a command to “Go forth.” The unclean spirits enter the unclean animals, causing them to rush down the bank and drown. The pigs rushing to their doom show the men that the spirits that have consumed them are gone, and they have received healing and wholeness by King Jesus. Also, both the spirits and pigs should not be here; now, all things are as God would have them in this Jewish town. It’s at this point in the story when we should say, “All is right in the world, and things are as they should be.” These men who have been oppressed are free, their tyranny over this town is over, and the unclean animals are gone. In a perfect world, we conclude this story as complete...but...

“The destruction of the herd of swine also convinces those men of the decisiveness of their liberation.

Readers concerned about the destruction of animal life and the loss of the farmers’ livelihood exhibit a contemporary sentimentality not shared by a Jewish audience who knew these pig farmers should not have been raising animals whose meat was forbidden to eat.⁵⁰ Human sanity and salvation, moreover, must always take priority over financial prosperity.”³

4. Fearful Response

“The herdsmen fled, and going into the city they told everything, especially what had happened to the demon-possessed men. And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their region.” **(Matthew 8:33–34, ESV)**

Bringing these two men back to their right minds and restoring their lives would be a welcome outcome after Jesus had just displayed a level of spiritual authority that had been unmatched. Also, while it may be painful and a financial loss, these farmers should acknowledge their sinfulness and begin to look for an acceptable crop or livestock to raise. They have been given the chance to be restored. However, the town seems more concerned with the financial loss than the restoration of their fellow townsmen. So, instead of welcoming Jesus as they did in Capernaum, the village of Gadarenes rejects Him and they beg Him to leave this place.

³ 50 Beare (Matthew, 219) notes that a typical Jewish audience would not have seen this as a calamity but as an occasion for merriment.

9.21.2025 Behold the Kingdom “Demonic” Matthew 8:28-34

Sadly, this has always been the response to the good news Jesus brings. Some are curious for more and desire to leave their sinful lives in the past, and some talk a big game but choose to reject Christ, His Kingship, and His Kingdom. Jesus offers wholeness and puts all things in their proper place, yet this village is more upset with their losses than with their wholeness.

“For the third time in this story and the fifth time in this chapter Matthew has his vivid And look. It is a good story, and he does not let his readers miss its dramatic force. The whole town was impressed with the story, and all the people came out to meet Jesus. It might have been expected that they would want to welcome the man who had power over the demons and who had brought such spectacular and unexpected deliverance to the demon possessed in their own area. But this was not the case. They were evidently more concerned with their economic loss.”⁴

Application

Jesus desires to remove any unclean attitude, attribute, or action from the life of His people.

This week, be in prayer and ask God to reveal any unclean thing in you. And if you ask King Jesus, He will remove it because He desires your life to be in right order. Amen.

⁴ Morris, Leon. 1992. *The Gospel according to Matthew. The Pillar New Testament Commentary.* Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.