

## Chasing Down a Hopeless Case

Luke 8:26-39

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Summary: There certainly is no worse condition for a person than having their body taken over by a legion of demons. It is hard to imagine a demon-possessed man being of any use to Jesus during His earthly ministry. But as Jesus sails toward a deranged, demon-possessed man, He will reveal not only His total power over the spiritual realm, but also His ability to use anyone, regardless of their past, for His purposes.

Talk to any number of people about demons and demon possession and you will probably come away with several different viewpoints—most of which will land somewhere between fiction and fear.

People typically make one of two errors regarding the devil and demons: one error is to disregard them; the other error is to become obsessed with them.

What we are given in Scripture is the directive to focus our attention not on the devil, but on Christ—keeping our eyes on Him. (**Hebrews 12:1-2**).

We are specifically told to resist the devil, how? By drawing near to God; not by coming up with some special prayer or incantation or holy water.

We're told to be aware of his devices and his schemes (**Ephesians 6:11**) and his

false teachers and false doctrines (**1 Timothy 6:3**) and to draw our minds and our hearts close to God and then, James 4:7 says that when we draw near to God, the devil will flee from us (**James 4:7**).

We are also told in the Bible that the real battle is spiritual; it's between the error of darkness and the truth of the gospel.

We're told to dress daily in the armor of God (Ephesians 6); but if you look carefully at what the apostle Paul writes, he tells you to get all dressed up in that armor and then do what? Pray.

So, we don't *underestimate* Satan and his kingdom, but let's not *overestimate* him either.

In fact, we're about to watch an encounter where the truth of what the apostle John wrote in 1 John 4:4 comes

true. It's a demonstration and an encouragement to every believer to this day that **greater is He who is in us, than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4).**

Let's watch it unfold in Luke's Gospel, at **chapter 8; we're told in verse 26:**

*Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. When Jesus had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons.*

*Luke 8:26-27a*

Now Matthew records this event as well but gives us a fuller detail that there were two demonized men who came running up to Jesus and His disciples.

Mark's Gospel account and Luke's focus only on one of these men, perhaps because he was the most demonized, or perhaps because he was the one who would end up becoming a disciple of Christ.

Luke simply focuses on this one man and tells us here that he had demons.

What does that mean: he had demons?

Well, a simple definition of demon possession—or demonization—is when an unbeliever comes under the mastery of a demon; their thinking is under the demon's control; their emotions respond to the demon's impulses; their body is uniquely empowered by demonic power; and his will is dominated by the demon.

Adapted from G. Campbell Morgan, *The Great Physician* (Revell, 1938), p. 156

What Satan is doing, by the way, is using someone to become a counterfeit temple of an unholy spirit. He's counterfeiting the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Demon possession is the devil playing God.

A Christian can become obsessed by a demon, but they cannot be possessed, as it were, since we are inhabited by the Holy Spirit. **Our bodies have become the temple of the living God (1 Corinthians 3:16).**

Now frankly, we don't have very much information in the Bible to know exactly how a demon works within a person.

Adapted from Swindoll, p. 207

And by the way, the New Testament letters to the church never give us any kind of special commission or some tool kit with special water and incantations to deal with demonized individuals.



**What do you know of the demonic world and demon possession? Are you regularly aware of the spiritual warfare going on all around you?**

We have been given, however, the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the redeeming, liberating power of God (**Romans 1:16**).

Every unbeliever isn't going to evidence demonic control, but every unbeliever is, in fact, a member of the kingdom of darkness, from which they can be liberated by the power of Jesus Christ.

Now, as we work through this encounter, let me make some observations about this demonized man.

### **He was mentally deranged.**

***Back here in Luke 8:27 again, we're told:***

*For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs.*

*Luke 8:27b*

He was a wild man; we call him to this day, the Madman of Gadera. But it wasn't mental imbalance in this case; demons had caused this man to violate all forms of sensibility and live this wild, deranged lifestyle, literally running around naked.

### **He was financially destitute.**

Luke tells us that:

*He had not lived in a house but among the tombs.*

*Luke 8:27b*

We don't know anything about his family, but he's essentially homeless. The only place he finds shelter is in the local cemetery.

Cemeteries in the first century were commonly areas where tombs could be

carved into the soft limestone hillsides, making cave-like mausoleums.

The mausoleums of wealthy families would have included more than one chamber for extended family members to be buried and these empty chambers would have provided shelter.

Bruce B. Barton, [Life Application Bible: Luke](#) (Tyndale, 1997), p. 212

So somewhere in a cemetery at the edge of town, in one of these mausoleums, a wild, deranged, naked man is living.

I can imagine this would ruin a lot of funerals. I mean, you would want to get in and out of there before the Madman of Gadara showed up.

### **He was physically dangerous.**

Skip down to the middle part of **verse 29**. ***Luke adds this parenthesis:***

*(For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.)*

*Luke 8:29b*

Just as the Holy Spirit empowered Samson to perform amazing physical exploits, so Satan counterfeits the Spirit by using whatever delegated authority God has allowed him to empower those under his control to demonstrate amazing physical strength.

So now, and don't miss this, what you have here is a man whose life is self-destructing and wasting away. He has no connection with his family, or a job or purpose for living. He's literally moved into a mausoleum chamber and was more than likely surviving by robbing travelers from nearby and even those who might have unsuspectingly visited the cemetery.

He's what you would call a hopeless case.

And everybody knew about this Madman of Gadara.

Verse 28 tells us:

*When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?"*

*Luke 8:28a*

He sees Jesus and the disciples rowing ashore. He comes racing down the hill toward them, no doubt to rob them or attack them.

As he's running toward them, the other disciples are probably swimming back out to sea; Peter's saying, "Lord we missed a turn somewhere."

But as he's running toward them—naked, demented, his hair wild, his body filthy—he suddenly recognizes, by means of demonic influence, that this is none other than Jesus.

And he cries out and falls at the feet of Jesus and get this, without any announcement, the demon spokesman speaking through him said,

*"What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?"*

*Luke 8:28b*

This statement is staggering to me. Look what it reveals not just about the demonic world, but about Jesus.

**Demons believe in the reality of the incarnation.**

*"What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?"*

*Luke 8:28b*

God became flesh; Jesus is God the Son, now in human flesh.

But then again, think about it: the demonic world knew all about it; they had heard to their utter horror and doom the angels chanting in the sky to the shepherds below, **"Today, in the city of David, there has been born for you a Savior, who Christ the Lord (Luke 2:10).**

The promise to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15, that one day the seed of the woman would one day come to crush the head of the serpent, to some degree, they knew that day had arrived.

These demons were there to look with terror and disdain at the swaddled infant in that feed trough; they had watched

Him grow up; they had seen the Spirit descending at His baptism; they had witnessed their leader Satan humiliated by Jesus in the wilderness temptation; they had heard His claims of power over sin and death; they had watched Him defeat death by His resurrection power over the widow's son in the village of Nain.



What does it mean for the demons to know all this information about Jesus? If the demons know who Jesus is, what kind of urgency does that give us to help unbelievers come to know Jesus as their Savior?

They weren't denying who Jesus was. They knew!

### **Demons believe in the deity of Jesus Christ.**

*"What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?"*

*Luke 8:28b*

This demonic spokesman didn't say, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, the great prophet, the moral example, great teacher, the Rabbi".

Listen to the admission of Jesus Christ's greatest enemies: ***You are the Son of the Most High God.***

This demon wasn't falling at the feet of a Jewish Rabbi or just another prophet, but Deity incarnate!

### **Demons believe in future prophetic events.**

***He says to Jesus here at the end of verse 28:***

*"I beg You, do not torment me."*

*Luke 8:28*

The demons didn't know exactly why Jesus had rowed ashore. They assumed He was after them, and that for some reason He was going to judge them ahead of time; that is, before the final judgment recorded in ***Revelation 20 and Matthew 25 where the demons are cast into Hell forever.***

So, while they recognized the person of Christ, they had no idea about the immediate plans of Christ.

Which clearly reveals to us that demons only know of the future what they've been told.

They are created beings with limited, finite understanding and delegated power from God for the time being.

Along this same line of judgment, let me add this observation:

## **Demons believe in the certainty of their future judgment.**

The very fact that they reference the coming day of judgment indicates they don't doubt their ultimate end.

In fact, look down at **verse 31, where we're told:**

*And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss.*

*Luke 8:31*

The word **abyss** literally means **without bottom**.

It's a reference to their final place of torment following the Millennial Kingdom.

They're terrified that Jesus would judge them early, send them to the abyss early, which indicates that demons have not one shred of unbelief about their future doom.

They don't debate it; they don't doubt it.

Even today they are terrified of the reality of their final judgement and coming torment in hell.

Listen, beloved, the idea that unbelievers will go to hell and have a big party—a big reunion—is nothing but foolish bravado.

Nobody's living it up down there.

Furthermore, the idea that the demons oversee Hell and will enjoy running hell like it's some kind of haunted house, that also is utterly wrong.

Demons won't terrorize and inflict punishment on humans; according to the Bible, they're not running hell, they are inmates in hell.

As terrifying as it sounds, let me deepen your theology here: hell will be managed not by Satan and his demons, but by our eternal, righteous, sovereign, omnipresent God.

And the demons hate hell all the more because God will be their eternal Warden, their eternal Judge.

Adapted from David E. Garland, [Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Luke](#) (Zondervan, 2011), p. 358

No wonder they're begging Jesus here; in fact, here in **verse 31**, they're pleading with Jesus.

The imperfect tense of the verb **to beg** indicates they pled over and over and over and over again.

Swindoll, p. 208

What a scene here on the seashore, get this scene straight in your mind beloved: the demons are not attacking Jesus here; Jesus is effectively attacking them.

John MacArthur, [Luke 6-10](#) (Moody Publishers, 2011), p. 217

Jesus is not on defense here; He's on offense. He isn't trembling here; the demons are.



How can you be on the offensive during spiritual warfare, and not defensive?

Just one word from Jesus and they are in the abyss forever.

But Jesus has some things He wants to teach His disciples about this unseen enemy.

So, Jesus now asks a question. **Notice verse 30:**

*Jesus then asked him,  
“What is your name?”*

*Luke 8:30a*

Jesus isn't asking because He doesn't know. Jesus is omniscient; he will say in Luke 19, “Zacchaeus come down out of that tree, I'm going to your house today.”

It's possible that this question was used to provoke this man to begin remembering that he too had a name.

Although this man is tragically subjugated by demons, he is still a person, he still had a name, he is still a person, he still has an eternal soul, he still matters, he is not a hopeless case.

Ivor Powell, [Luke's Thrilling Gospel](#) (Kregel, 1965), p. 197

But the man isn't given the opportunity to answer, as Luke reveals in **verse 30**, the demonic spokesman controlling him answers, **“Legion.” Our name is Legion.**

That's a chilling answer.

A Roman legion was a regiment of up to 5,000 soldiers.

Garland, p. 358

There's more than one.

This demon isn't giving a proper name to Jesus; he's simply saying that there are thousands of demons mysteriously controlling this man's body and mind.

This man is literally swimming with demons—inundated by demonic spirits who now control him.

It's quite possible that the reason Jesus asked for a name was to educate His disciples with what they were dealing with here.

Adapted from R.C.H. Lenski, [The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel](#) (Augsburg Publishing House, 1946), p. 471

One more observation here on the demonic world:

**Demons are under the ultimate authority of Jesus Christ.**

**Notice verse 32:**

*Now a large herd of pigs  
was feeding there on the  
hillside, and they begged  
him to let them enter these.  
So he gave them  
permission. Then the  
demons came out of the  
man and entered the pigs,  
and the herd rushed down  
the steep bank into the lake  
and drowned.*

*Luke 8:32-33*

Marks' Gospel informs us that there were right around 2,000 pigs in this herd. 2,000 pigs.

That's a lot of bacon.

I'm teasing, but I'm also hinting as to why Jesus would have allowed these demons to effectively destroy 2,000 hogs.

This was a Gentile region; some Bible scholars believe they were running a black-market for not-so-faithful Jews. Other scholars believe these farmers were actually Jews running a booming business providing it for that region, which is more than likely the case.

Powell, p. 201

Hughes, p. 307

Keep in mind we're still in the Old Testament economy; pigs are considered unclean animals according to God's Old Testament law, so unclean animals are the perfect hosts for unclean spirits.

It's quite possible that in one command, Jesus cleaned up a defiant industry, and then sent the demons to abyss after all.

We're simply not told.

***But here's what we are told—verse 34:***

*When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and*

*found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. And those who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed. Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked Him to depart from them.*

*Luke 8:34-37a*

Here's this insane man whose life has been redeemed by the power of Jesus, and the people want Jesus to leave.

*That's insanity! They are out of their minds!*

***Luke records here:***

*They were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned.*

*Luke 8:37b*

Why were they so afraid? We're not told exactly.

Maybe it's because they recognized He had authority over the demonic world, and He just might have authority over them too. Maybe it was because they knew Jesus had judged their industry and cost them dearly; maybe if He stuck around He would cost them more.

This was an expensive miracle of Messianic power.



In their minds, Jesus had messed everything up!

If this happened today, PETA would bring a lawsuit on behalf of the town. Jesus had orchestrated the death of 2,000 pigs.

And while I would agree that animals are to be treated humanely—even animals raised to be eaten—death should be as painless and quick as possible, and it was definitely quick for this herd.

But the city is about to make a tragic evaluation: they will miss the point that **one man's life is more valuable than 2,000 pigs.**

Now don't misunderstand me here: I love animals—almost all of them.

But what troubles me is that the agenda today of *our* world loves animals more than people.

The satanic agenda always places more value on the life of an animal than the life of a human being.

Which is why it's illegal to crush the egg of an unborn eaglet and legal to crush the life of an unborn child.

That's Satan's value system.

And these people are just as blind. They can't see the value of a life miraculously restored. The Maniac of Gadara has been redeemed; he's clothed and in his right mind, but we'd rather have our pigs back.

Here's the real tragedy unfolding: these townspeople might not have been

running around naked living in a cemetery, but they were just as much in the grip of Satan's deceptive power as that man had been. He is now free, and they are still bound.

But does Jesus care about them? Sure He does. He doesn't send them into the lake to perish. No, He's about to appoint the first missionary in this ten-city (this Decapolis) region.

**Verse 38:**

*The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.*

*Luke 8:38-39*

That was his message—his testimony. It wasn't complicated. Just tell them what happened to you.

We will meet this man one day, and a host of people redeemed out of darkness by this ambassador of the kingdom of light.

Before we wrap up our study, let me provide one final principle that comes to mind; it is as true today as it was here outside this cemetery.

**Jesus can do His best in someone's life even after Satan has done his worst.**

This man was a hopeless case.

Here's the lingering principle of grace; no one descends so deeply into sin and captivity and bondage that Jesus Christ cannot deliver them.

As Corrie ten Boom used to say, "There is no pit so deep, that God is not deeper still."

Let's get the record straight here: when Jesus rowed ashore—let me tell you—this man wasn't chasing Jesus down; Jesus was chasing him down.

Can you imagine Jesus telling His disciples, "Listen, men, I want to pull ashore here near this cemetery up there on a hill; there's someone I want to appoint as a new missionary to deliver the gospel to this region; there's an

ambassador of the gospel that I want to commission."

And here comes this naked man, screaming and running down the hillside toward them.

And Jesus says, "Well, there he comes now!"

Who would have imagined it! This man who had been a trophy in the hand of Satan has now become a trophy in the hand of Christ, and he's now given a special commission.

We've been given the same one: let's begin at home, and spread out throughout our city and beyond.

Let's tell everyone of the Savior who came to earth—that He is the Son of the Most High God.

Tell others that Jesus reached into your pit of despair—that *you* were a hopeless case—and Jesus delivered you and set you free.

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