

Scripture Lesson Text

MATT. 8:23 And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.

24 And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, inasmuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.

25 And his disciples came to *him*, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.

26 And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

27 But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!

28 And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.

29 And, behold, they cried out,

saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?

30 And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding.

31 So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.

32 And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.

33 And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils.

34 And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought *him* that he would depart out of their coasts.

NOTES

Jesus Heals Two Demoniacs

Lesson Text: Matthew 8:23-34

Related Scriptures: Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39

TIME: A.D. 28

PLACES: Sea of Galilee; country of the Gergesenes

GOLDEN TEXT—"And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" (Matthew 8:29).

Lesson Exposition

AUTHORITY OVER THE SEA— Matt. 8:23-27

Followers of Christ (Matt. 8:23). Between the events of last week's lesson and this week's text, quite a lot happened. Last week's lesson was drawn from Luke 7, but Matthew has the same event in 8:5-13. Right after that, Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law (vss. 14-15) and healed crowds who came (vs. 15). Soon, however, He decided to cross to the other side of the lake in a boat (vs. 18).

The ship into which Christ entered was likely one of the fishing boats owned by one of His disciples.

Frightening storm (Matt. 8:24-25). Since the Sea of Galilee is located almost seven hundred feet below sea level, cold air from the high ground in the north often collided with warm air blowing in from the Mediterranean Sea to the west. This made such sudden storms fairly common.

Although at least some of the Saviour's disciples were seasoned mariners, this particular storm was violent enough to frighten them. Probably as a last resort, the men awoke Jesus and pleaded with Him to secure their rescue.

Fearful disciples (Matt. 8:26-27). Jesus could sleep through this tempest because He had complete trust in His Heavenly Father to protect Him.

As we saw last week, the Roman centurion was commended for his "great faith" (Luke 7:9). The disciples, however, were often chided for their "little faith" (Matt. 8:26).

Rising from His position of repose, the Son of God "rebuked the winds and the sea." The result was that "there was a great calm."

Although the disciples had already witnessed Christ perform a variety of miracles, the calming of a raging storm greatly impressed them. The fact that "even the winds and the sea obey him" (vs. 27) revealed a level of authority that up to this point was apparently unnoticed by the Twelve.

AUTHORITY OVER SATAN— Matt. 8:28-34

Demonic possession (Matt. 8:28). Having crossed the Sea of Galilee, Jesus and His disciples came to "the country of the Gergesenes." In both Mark 5:1 and Luke 8:26, this is referred to as "the country of the Gadarenes." Both of these names re-

fer to the same general area.

In both Mark and Luke, only one man is mentioned. But Matthew states that there were actually two demoniacs, one of them likely more prominent than the other.

As Jesus and His disciples disembarked, they were met immediately by these demon-possessed men.

The demoniacs are described as living in tombs, certainly not the kind of place most people would want to reside in. They were “exceeding fierce.”

Demonic confession (Matt. 8:29-30). Luke 8:28 states that the demoniac “fell down before him,” recognizing Christ as his superior. They even confessed Him as the Son of God.

It is noteworthy that the demon-possessed men immediately recognized the Lord. They knew both His name and His title from before He came to earth.

The demons also knew what their ultimate fate would be, namely, to be cast “into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41).

Demonic request (Matt. 8:31-32). For whatever reason, demons prefer a host in which to live. If they cannot find a place of residence in a human being, they apparently will settle for an animal, in this case a herd of swine.

With permission granted by the eternal Son of God, the demons entered into the herd of pigs. The swine plunged over a precipice into the lake below. This resulted in the death of the herd. What then became of the demons is not stated.

Deliverance from demons (Matt. 8:33-34). The swineherders had never seen anything like this before. They reported what had happened to the pigs and also mentioned the miraculous deliverance of the demoniacs.

The people wanted Christ to leave their area. Perhaps afraid that He might endanger other people’s flocks and herds, they petitioned Him to depart.

As both Mark and Luke mention, the demon-possessed man (and we can assume both men) was restored to a state of normalcy. Also not mentioned in Matthew’s account was the desire of the man to accompany Jesus.

While we were not delivered from Satan in the same manner as were these men, we have all been rescued from his clutches by the power of the gospel.

—John Alva Owston.

QUESTIONS

1. Why were storms on the Sea of Galilee quite common?
2. Why do you think Jesus could sleep through a violent storm?
3. Because of their fear, what kind of faith did the Lord say the disciples had?
4. How was the miracle of stilling the storm different from some of Jesus’ other miracles?
5. What are some of the differences in the three Gospel accounts of the demon possession that Jesus and the disciples encountered?
6. How could the demons recognize Christ?
7. What else did the demons know besides Jesus’ identity?
8. Why did the demons want to go into the herd of swine?
9. Why do you think the people wanted Jesus to leave?
10. What did the former demoniac want to do?

—John Alva Owston.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Faith in Jesus does not mean that storms will not come; it gives you peace in the midst of the storm (Matt. 8:23-24).
2. There is no reason to fear as long as Jesus is with you (vss. 25-27).
3. Even the devil recognizes and is subject to the power of Jesus (vss. 28-29).
4. Jesus has authority over everything. We need not be influenced by the world (vss. 30-32).
5. Jesus is the embodiment of peace and deliverance (vs. 33).
6. People who are in distress should seek the Lord (vs. 34).

—Valante M. Grant.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. What assurances do we receive from trusting God's Word for every aspect of our lives (Matt. 8:23-24)?
2. How should Christians respond to turbulent times in life?
3. Why do you think that Jesus calms the storms in our lives instead of preventing them?
4. How can we recognize that a person is possessed by the devil?
5. Do Christians today have the authority to cast out demons?
6. Why is it important to tell people about the power of Jesus?
7. Do all Christians have a responsibility to tell others about Christ?

—Valante M. Grant.

Golden Text Illuminated

“And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?” (Matthew 8:29).

The demons in our text today emphatically show by their frantic words to Jesus that they know who is boss! They cry out in terror at His presence.

The demons recognize that they are addressing the “Son of God.” As James declares, “the devils also believe, and tremble” (Jas. 2:19). Verses such as these demonstrate that saving faith involves more than just head knowledge about Christ. Saving faith produces a heart that loves and depends on Christ.

The demons are also aware of the terrible fate that awaits them. They ask Jesus whether He is going to torment them. They recognize that He is more powerful than they are and that He can bring their just punishment at any time that He pleases.

The little phrase “before the time” points to big truths concerning the future. Satan and his companions realize that a day of final judgment will come when they will suffer eternal punishment for their evil and rebellious ways. Jesus Himself warned those who did not trust in Him about the looming prospect of “everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41). And Revelation 20:10 tells us that Satan (and by direct inference, all demons) will be “cast into the lake of fire . . . and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

—Stephen H. Barnhart.