

CHAPTER 9



Casting Demons Into Swine Can Put You Over The Edge

We move now to one of the most famous “*Well what about....*” passages of the Apostolic Testimony. The story of Jesus casting demons into the swine is arguably the greatest case raised to try to prove demons exist. Just about everyone who is challenged with the concept that says there is no “satan” or “demons”, jumps to this account as their trump card on the issue. You or I might tell them the Old Testament facts of Satan not being real and they will go right to this story and say, “*Well what about when Jesus cast the demons into the swine?*” The ones who cling to this passage as proof that demons do exist will invariably pose the question of how the swine were driven into the sea after Yeshua cast the “demons” out of the Gadarene demoniac. The story I’m referring to is found in three of the four Gospels, Matthew 8:28-34 -Mark 5:1-20, and Luke 8:26-38, and the accounts differ in subtle ways, which we will mention briefly as we discuss what the heck this story is intending to express. I am not here to argue if this story happened as an incident demonstrating the power Jesus had to bring truth to people. There are some who look at this story and rail against the possibility of anything remotely similar to this occurring. By noting inconsistencies in the text, many attempt to discredit the story as providing any value at all in regard to the ministry of Yeshua. I am very certain this story could have happened, although not in the manner it is interpreted by today’s reader. I am also very certain that due to the non-existence of

“satan” and “demons,” as is taught in the Old Testament and subsequently taught by Yeshua, this account is using colloquial language and concepts. These concepts were known by the writer to refer to physical aspects of humanity but have wrongly been interpreted by the present day thinker to be referring to unseen spirit beings of malevolence. The thinker of today I am referring to is all but helpless to remove the Greek view of literal demons they have been taught since childhood. Do I dare claim to have the absolute precise and accurate interpretation of this account? Well I am not so bold to make such a claim. Facts are, I have yet to dogmatically set my feet in concrete and adhere to a single explanation for this story because there are a few conceivable explanations available. Each of these explanations I am about to iterate have room for revision, and therefore may be considered less credible by some. However, when faced with the Scriptural fact that there is no “Satan” and neither then are there any “demons” we are left to determine a more plausible explanation for this story.

It is dutiful to mention that the account presented before us in the Gospels also has its own flaws. Flaws can be noted in the inconsistencies in the story between the accounts as recorded in the Gospels. Difficulties with the syntax as regards who is speaking to whom, geography questions from the location of the swine in relation to their plunging into a sea and other issues that will come to light during this discussion. This means that we should be inclined to question the credibility of the available account. And more precisely, when confronted with flawed facts or storyline; we should question the traditional interpretation of these accounts.

Typically, this story is thought to be telling of a day when Jesus walked up near a cemetery and was confronted by one or two wild men believed to be filled with demons. The letters of Mark and Luke speak of only one man, while Matthew speaks of there being two men. In this we see our first inconsistency. Was there one man or two... perhaps there were many men? The men were so wildly filled with demonic forces that they could not be

contained by chains and all who passed would be fearful of any contact with these wild ones. The explanation goes that the men saw Jesus coming and because they were under the influence of the demons that possessed them, they cried out for Yeshua to not torment them. Jesus did not abate and the men or rather, the “demons” speaking from the men, begged to be sent into a heard of swine feeding in the distance. The common understanding explains that Yeshua granted their request and allowed the supposed demon spirits to go and enter the swine. The result of this transfer of demonic entities was the entire herd running wildly down a steep place and drowning into the sea.

Who Would Give A Demon Permission To Go Anywhere?

Even as I write this commonly accepted explanation of this story, I am marveling at the incredulity of such an event. Is it likely that Yeshua would give permission to a demon who is bent on destruction and opposing God the rights to enter into an innocent creature such as a pig? I understand that the pig is an unclean animal according to the Scripture but this attached uncleanness is not an inherent spiritual uncleanness that it was created with. Rather, this innocent lowly creature was affixed with a ceremonial uncleanness possibly due to the danger present from consumption of the meat that comes from the animal. This is coupled with the fact that the swine had been an animal of pagan sacrifice, which is abominable to Yahweh. The following commentary informs of the pig’s exalted pagan status, a characteristic connected to the prohibition against the swine by Yahweh.

Thus, Varro (De Re Rustic. ii. 4), says ‘The swine is called in Greek ὄζ *hus* (formerly θῦς *thus*), and was so called from the word which signifies to sacrifice (θύειν *thuein*), for the swine seem first to have been used in sacrifices. Of this custom we have vestiges in the fact, that the first sacrifices to Ceres are of the swine; and that

in the beginning of peace, when a treaty is made, a hog is sacrificed; and that in the beginning of marriage contracts in Etruria, the new wife and the new husband first sacrifice a hog. The primitive Latins, and also the Greeks in Italy, seem to have done the same thing.’ Spencer (De Leg. Heb i. 7) supposes that this was done often in caves and dark recesses, and that the prophet refers to this custom here. If this view be correct, then the offence consisted not merely in eating swine’s flesh, but in eating it in connection with sacrifices, or joining with the pagan in their idolatrous worship.²⁷

You Break It You Bought It According To God

Let me ask you this; according to the Word of God, is it acceptable to destroy another man’s property? When considering the idea that Jesus took to destroying a herd of swine, we must give thought to how a man could get away with destroying another man’s property. By agreeing to the request of the supposed legion of demons to go and enter into the swine, Jesus became one who willfully destroyed the property of another. True the swine were not to be eaten by those following Yeshua, true too that the swine were commonly used in pagan temple sacrifices; however, the swine did not choose to be an object representing uncleanness nor did it stand up on its four stubby legs and say “*Pick me, pick me for sacrificing to pagan Gods.*” Many who follow the biblical dietary laws find it is easy to have disdain for the swine because it is an unclean animal and the Scriptures clearly teach not to eat the flesh of the swine. Is our disdain misplaced to some disagree? Is the swine the only animal seen as unfit for consumption and deemed abominable in the Scriptures? If you are interested to see what foods were fit to be called food for a follower of the Messiah you can find the list in the book of Leviticus chapter 11 and Deuteronomy 14.

²⁷ From Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible, Isaiah 65:4 commentary, Albert Barnes (1798-1870)

So destroying swine is easy to understand for the devout follower of the Messiah, but what about the horse or the camel? The horse and camel are two beautiful animals that serve a great purpose under the dominion of a human master or owner. How about the eagle? Should we not also have a similar disdain for the eagle? This magnificent bird is listed in the Scriptures as an unclean animal yet it is even used as a metaphor for the Creator's might in mentioning the rescue of the Children of Israel from the clutches of the Egyptians.

*Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.
Exodus 19:4*

Without belaboring the point, I am not convinced that the swine is so disgusting and such an inherently abominable creature that Yeshua would have been justified in choosing to send the so-called demons into the swine to then be led over a cliff to their death. Remember that each day of creation, including the day the pig was created, was looked upon by Yahweh and He saw it as good.

*And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.
Genesis 1:25*

Is It Okay To Drown A Kitten?

Is it not objectionable to mercilessly kill animals that are harmlessly behaving the way they were created to behave? Pig or not, a merciless death for the creatures, amplifies the concept of callous destruction of innocent animals. Which of us would purposely send a group of living creatures, be they clean or unclean, such as perhaps a pack of sled dogs, or a sack of kittens over a steep cliff and into a body of water to die a cruel death by drowning? Drowning is not a kind way to put an animal to death.

The intense struggle to survive and the fight to clamor above the water to continue inhaling life-giving breath is not a fun way to go whether you are human or a pig. Had Yeshua truly caused these animals to perish in such a graphically distasteful manner, those who were considering His leadership and authority as a model to be emulated, would now be questioning his ways as a maniacal power monger. Honestly, even the most detestable of animals does not deserve to be singled out to a torturous death just to prove a point. Even in the biblical sacrificial system the slaughter of animals was always done in the most humane way possible. Killing animals savagely was not endorsed by the Creator.

Would A Worldwide Biblical Flood Be Any Different?

Another time the Creator of the Universe was said to destroy innocent animals was when He staged a world-wide flood in the days of Noah. If in fact, there was a flood as described in Genesis, then how is it any different when God drowned not only all humans but also all animals that were not aboard the Ark? There are a couple of notable differences here.

We note that Yahweh made restitution by repopulating the earth and the Creator was not putting any particular person or businessman out of business arbitrarily. Rather, He was extending His destruction to the entire business population, in fact the entire Earth. Not only those who may have owned herds as their means to generate an income were affected but every herd and individual animal on the face of the earth that was not sent to board the ark went down at that time. Who was left to judge Yahweh's act and declare the act unjust? There were only Noah and seven others who were raised up off the earth to be rescued from the flood.

Yahweh made complete restitution after the flood and a second difference from the act of mercilessly drowning swine is that prior to the global judgment by a flood, God did not leave the inhabitants of the earth without a chance to turn from their evil

and follow Him. Decades had passed with Yahweh watching and giving opportunity for a return to right living for the inhabitants of the Earth. When it was determined by acknowledging the depth of the wickedness that there was to be no turning, Yahweh announced that He was going to flood the earth. A repeated warning before destruction is meted out is the key. Even at that, the humans who were alive to witness the construction of Noah's ark still had almost 100 years to repent and then join Noah on the ark with all the animals. They passed up on the best cruise line ever to set sail and it cost them their lives.

It seems that the destruction of all the creatures of the world that did not make it on to the ark is quite different from what is believed to have been the destruction of a herd of unassuming swine by Yeshua. Had Yeshua truly destroyed the literal herd of swine, which was the property of another, He was then guilty of a crime against the nation through an infraction of a law in the nation he was residing. A citizen of the Roman empire was not allowed to simply destroy the property and perhaps the entire livelihood of another citizen without being seen as a lawbreaker. For Yeshua to oppose a national law with such a belligerent attitude does not fit the profile of the Messiah, regardless of the pig being an unclean animal. It was not illegal to breed swine in Rome and the Israelites, for thousands of years, had bred other unclean animals that served a purpose. For goodness sakes, the donkey Yeshua rode into Jerusalem on days before He was crucified was an unclean animal. Unclean in this instance speaks of an animal that is not fit for consumption. Certainly, the fact that a herd of swine existed in the area of the Gadarenes was not reason enough to precipitate the cruel death-by-drowning episode that is understood by many to have happened.

Was It Ok To Break Civil Laws And Biblical Laws?

Aside from the infraction of the local law, Yeshua would have been guilty of breaking Torah Law. These are the laws He said He

didn't intend to destroy but came to fulfill. By destroying the property of another without being at war with the person, and in the absence of a fair warning to amend wicked ways, Yeshua would then be obligated to make restitution to the owner of the destroyed property. Even if there were an absence of property law prescribing the repayment of damaged, stolen, or destroyed property, the Messiah did certainly not love His neighbor as himself. If he did in fact destroy a herd of livestock that belonged to another He was in strong violation of God's and man's rules for behavior towards a fellow human.

Agreeing to exist as a citizen in the Roman Empire, Yeshua did not overstep the Torah law that requires restitution be made if one destroys the property of another. The law of restitution for property destruction is not even burdened with legal complexities because it is so simple. If you destroy my pig, you owe me a pig. Do we see even a hint of Yeshua making restitution to the extent He was responsible for the destruction of 2000 swine? Now, as there are few specifics in the story, I suppose it is possible that Yeshua took responsibility for His alleged actions of allowing the "demons" to enter the swine and subsequently cause the swine to plummet to their watery grave. Maybe Jesus stopped by the owner's house and dished out a few hundred bucks to pay for the property He purposely destroyed. It is possible that He made restitution for His responsibility in the destruction of the "swine herd" but with the magnitude of the influence He was having on the people who were magnetized towards Him, it is very surprising there is no hint or indication that He did. In fact, we are told the whole city came out and bid Yeshua to leave the area. Obviously, the man Jesus did not pay-up for this crime of property destruction.

The response by those who heard about the deed could be seen as a fair indication that all present knew Yeshua was responsible for the destruction of what is said to be 2000 head of swine, and no effort or intent to make restitution was noted. If this is a true tale the merciless and callous Rabbi would hardly be seen as a godly man. Would a godly man destroy thousands of

dollars of another's property and not make restitution? Yeshua is the one who encouraged going above and beyond to save another's animal when He taught that it is good to help pull an ox or ass out of a pit if help were needed. Take note here, the ass is also an unclean animal according to the biblical law.

If this Rabbi had the power to kill 2000 swine because He wanted to make a profound spiritual point then one would be left to ponder what other radical behaviors and abuses of power would this leader attempt. Yeshua had already been tempted with power and declined the offer, so to display such a grotesque example of His limitless power would be counterproductive to His cause and mission.

Why Did Jesus Honor A Demon's Request?

Does it not seem odd that Yeshua would have complied with the request of a "legion" of "demons"? Would He have known the impending outcome of His transference of demons from man into swine? The demons asked to not be left without a host to inhabit, yet by allowing them to enter the swine and then have the swine perish in the sea, the "demons" would become free-agents anyway? They ended up without a host anyway because the swine died. It is certain that Yeshua would have known exactly what the outcome of the entry of "demons" into a swineherd would be. The outcome would be death of the herd and no place for the supposed "demons" to inhabit anyway. Seems odd to me that Yeshua would be responsible for the death of 2000 swine and have the demons roaming free anyway, when He could have rejected their request in the first place and the end result for their earthly existence would be the same. Unless one goes so far as to say that the "demons" perished with the swine in the sea, it is absolutely within the understanding of the typical demonological philosophy that the demons who entered the swine did not die when the swine died but were liberated to search out another host. Maybe the demons went back to Yeshua and said. "Sorry we destroyed

the host you sent us to run into the sea and drown, could we please go into that family of cats over there now, we promise to be more responsible with this host.” I digress and am becoming a little caddy. It is so ridiculous to actually accept this story as a literal account of real demons inhabiting real swine that we must test the logic of the concept. But I do see the need to critically examine such a tale.

In the presence of a belief in a metaphysical demonology, one resists even engaging in critical thinking about such a story. But when one chooses to allow him or herself to question the validity of the presently accepted demonology a different conclusion is arrived at. When a person sets out to investigate the validity of stories such as the demon cast into the swine, that person becomes increasingly able to dissect such a tale. He or she can then recognize it not as a literal account of demons and pigs, but as a story with meanings that can only be understood in some other way. It must then be understood in a way that more closely resembles how it may have been seen in the eyes of the original writers. This my friends, does not always lead us to the precise explanation of all of the events with specifics and exact descriptions of every situation in every story, by way of detailing perfectly the entire account. This does however lead us to the place where we can attempt to view this story aside from the traditional interpretation of literal demons and literal pigs. We are able to join the understanding of a demonless world, which would have been part of the Hebraic psyche and for certain part of the Messiah’s mindset, with other clues and aspects of the culture that would be present the day Yeshua had this encounter. Joining an explanation of such a tale with the Biblical teaching found in the Hebrew Scriptures that indicates there is no “Satan” or “Demons”, will lead to other possible understandings that do not do violence to the fact there is one God and none else. To restate that point a little differently; Because the Hebrew Scriptures show us Satan and demons are not real we can sensibly investigate the tale of demons into swine to better understand the situation.

Does Satan Fill Creatures with His Spirit Like God Does With The Holy Spirit?

Let's consider the ability to impart the Holy Spirit to people, which is supposedly an action of the Creator. Maybe you are familiar with it or maybe not, but it is taught in Christendom that God can fill a person with His spirit. This ability for the impartation of a Spirit of Holiness is an accepted feature of the one God. In current demonology thinking it is believed that Satan also has the ability to impart his spirit to those who open themselves to and submit to his nefarious ways. If there does exist "demonic" forces that have the ability to enter the human spirit and the animal spirit at will, or even at the command of the Creator, then those forces are "Like God." There then once again exists one like Yahweh. According to the God of the Bible it is only God who possesses the attribute to infuse His followers with His Spirit; His *Ruach Ha Kodesh*²⁸ as the Hebrew believers would term it.

If there is a Satan who can himself inhabit a human being or has demon minions who can inhabit a human being, then when Yeshua met these other God-like beings why didn't He destroy them? By way of meeting with a wild man in a mountainside cemetery, and not destroying the demons in the man, rather yielding to their request to remain in a position of comfort, Yeshua should be seen as a fool and no representative of God at all. A true God does not display mercy to His sworn enemy who is acting as a god when He has the opportunity to destroy them.

Only A Weak God Shows Mercy To An Evil God

²⁸ *Ruach ha Kodesh* is Hebrew for speaking of the set apart spirit of Yahweh and would be the correct term to describe the "Holy Spirit" in Biblical language.

The concept of the Supreme God allowing the rebellious lesser gods to continue to exist and to continue to inflict harm on the servants of the supreme God is not a biblical concept. Rather, it is a concept that was born in the confused thinking of pagan mythology. This confused thinking has eked its way into the most popular religions of today. Islam, Christianity, and Judaism all accept the notion that the One God, who is sovereign over all, allows lesser gods, demons according to Clement of Alexandria, to have their way with humanity. These lesser gods are given this right until the final battle takes place where the lesser gods are destroyed by the Supreme God. Clement of Alexandria is said to be the first major Christian writer to impose the thought that the demons in Satan's realm are really the gods of other nations.

*"The verdict of the prophets is that the gods of all the nations are images of demons."*²⁹

With that said, we need to address the petition of these demoniacs to not be tormented before the time. We first see this odd request by demons of Jesus in Matthew.

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

To mainstream Christianity and much of common culture, that passage gives a clear indication that there were real demons inhabiting these men. These fear stricken demons are said to be afraid of ultimate destruction being foisted upon them ahead of schedule by Yeshua? It may seem that way apart from understanding this encounter juxtaposed against an ancient practice that is not commonly known of today.

Do We Go At Lunch Or After Supper To Harass A Lunatic?

²⁹ Saint Clement, "Exorcism to the Greeks,"

The practice of many men in first century Jerusalem was to have supper together and then the men who had gathered to dine would seek entertainment after supper. If we think about this typical, Aramaic post-dinner entertainment, we are able to come to a better conclusion. The practice involved going to the cemetery after supper with friends and “tormenting” the lunatics who lived there. The group of lunatics who saw Jesus and his gang coming thought it was way too early in the day for the gang of bullies to torment them. Do we really think Jesus heeded the demon’s cries to not torment them before “the time” and therefore agree to save the demons until the Day of Judgment came? Yeshua was simply thought by the insane men to be the same as any other man with followers and friends walking through the tombs. He appeared to be a great leader to the insane men of the cemetery and these poor lunatics likely had suffered torment at the hands of leaders like Yeshua in the past. According to George Lamsa, the crazy men in the cemetery would have been very familiar with the practice in the ancient Aramaic/Hebrew culture. It was a common practice for pompous men to torment the lunatics in the cemetery for entertainment.

The time for tormenting graveside lunatics for entertainment was after dinner. These lunatics would have been familiar with the practice. When it was time, they would come out to the graveyard and torment the lunatics. Many men of status in Yeshua’s day were traveling exorcists who would go to the cemeteries and perform torturous exorcisms on the insane men and women who resided there. At any rate, it seems certain that for intellectual and elite men who came upon the lunatics in the cemetery, tormenting them would be quite a circus sideshow for them. These lunatics were not allowed to be part of the daily culture and society saw them as pariahs. Reprehensible treatment of these lunatics was not only common but it was accepted by society. But how did these men know about Jesus you might ask?

When Yeshua passed by that way in the daytime with His followers, the lunatics recognized Him, either from some previous

exposure to Him or by some way of recognition which is not disclosed in the account we are given. The simplest answer to how the lunatics recognized Yeshua is that He was traveling with a group of men in the same fashion a traveling exorcist or an upper society man who had hosted dinner guests would travel. Perhaps Jesus was recognized as an abusive socialite or perhaps the maniacal men perceived this was the Messiah coming to pass judgement. We cannot be certain which the case is. We are given the story from the Gospel writers' perspective and not from the perspective of the lunatic in the cemetery. It is possible that one in the group with Yeshua had gone ahead and tried to clear the way of these madmen by announcing that they were about to pass by with their Rabbi Yeshua. The madmen then expected the approaching party of men to engage in the practice of tormenting the cemetery lunatic just as other groups of men had done in the past. It is crucial we remember that these lunatics in the cemetery had been harassed and tormented by civilized groups of men before. The harassing always took place after the supper hour not in the early afternoon. This is why the "demoniacs" asked if they were going to be tormented "before the time." The time for the torment of the lunatics in the evening was hours away and Yeshua was in the cemetery in the daytime. Notice the plea of the two lunatics regarding the timing of the impending torment.

*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. 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 8:28-29

Recognizing that Yeshua was a man of renown, due to the entourage following Him, the madman or men as is put in one of the gospel accounts, recognized this notable person in the area. By coming to greet Yeshua, it appears this man was not possessed by

a spirit who was controlling him. If in fact there was a satanic force directing the path of this poor lunatic, then one would be naive to think that it would direct this man to come and fall before the feet of the Messiah. It being simply a human man with many mental problems due to a variety of reason, gives way to understand that this man was still able to act volitionally. Upon seeing the opportunity to be in the presence of Yeshua, the lunatic came and fell at His feet. Does a person have to be filled with demonic spirits to behave this way in front of a great teacher and leader? Perhaps not. In referring to this type of a man as “a devil” the writer is not thinking him to be a literal “devil”, nor is the writer implying that a literal “devil” is controlling that man. The Aramaic culture today will still refer to someone who is acting radical and appears to not be of a sound mind as having a devil, or in some cases say they are “a devil.” Messiah called Judas “a devil” in His statement that said of the betrayer of Yeshua while He was with His disciples at the Passover. Yeshua said, “One of you is a devil.” When the Messiah called a person “devil” He understood that person was metaphorically being said to be opposed to righteousness. To be a devil was to be acting without a sound mind.

When You’re Crazy Do You Only Do Crazy Things?

Sure the lunatics in the cemetery were certifiable but were they also able to make choices out of their rational mind just as many today with mental illness are able to make choices? Psychology has come a long way in the last 2000 years to explain the mental illnesses that were displayed with irrational behavior and unacceptable social conduct. Today when we come upon a person with a mental illness that predisposes the person to violence, we know the health-community is fully prepared to treat this person as one having a mental illness. We don’t say they have a demon or are a devil because we have better ways to describe their behavior. Yeshua’s period did not use medical terms to describe irrational

mental and emotional behavior, instead they simply said “he or she is a devil,” or “he or she has a devil.” In our present era, the treatment will often uncover some of the origins of the mental illness and how and why it is happening. No longer is this type of a person, whether they have Tourette's syndrome, schizophrenia, multi-personality disorder or Alzheimer's, considered to be possessed by demons. Rather, and much more civilized, we accept the science of mental illness explains the illness well. In an article by Dr. Roy Porter on the Genetic Futures News web page, he mentions the concept of mental illness in the past as being seen as something “satanic.”

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Madness is probably as old as the human race. Archaeologists have discovered skulls dating back at least to 3000 BC which have been trephined - small round holes have been bored in them with flint tools.

The likeliest explanation is that the person was thought to be possessed by devils - we would say they were mad or epileptic - and that the holes were to allow the demons to escape. In early times madness was usually interpreted as the work of evil spirits.

Amongst the Greeks, you were told to keep well away from crazy people in case the demons leapt out from them and got you too. And Christians thought the same. Madness might be the work of the Devil; Satan possessed his victims and caused

them to run wild, to talk nonsense or to blaspheme, swearing and cursing.³⁰

Porter concludes his article with a sentiment that was true in part in the first century. It wasn't that there were problems with mental hospitals and institutions closing as is the case today in many cities, but these kind of facilities didn't even exist. The tragically misunderstood mental patient had little recourse but to become an outcast who oft times was only able to find lodging in places such as cemeteries. Lack of understanding was the primary factor for this class of people becoming deranged inhabitants of places where most people did not spend a lot of time, places such as graveyards. Finding no help in the available medical system at the time, the condition only got worse. The travelling exorcists only proved to make things worse for the insane. Note Porter's statement in his article;

There have been breakthroughs recently. Better drug treatments have come about; brain scans can sometimes see the abnormalities in the brains of schizophrenics.

But people with psychiatric disorders are still feared, misunderstood and neglected, and with the closing down of many psychiatric hospitals they have often joined the ranks of the homeless and hungry.³¹

Why Did They Worship Yeshua?

In the story of the Gadarene demoniacs, we see the mention of this man or men worshipping Yeshua. This act gives credence to the fact that the mentally insane did possess the ability to still process thought rationally. As mentioned above, rational thought

³⁰ Article titled *A BRIEF HISTORY OF MADNESS* by Prof Roy Porter
<http://www.geneticfutures.com/cracked/info/sheet10.asp>

³¹ *ibid*

does not absent itself entirely from the sufferer of a mental illness. A note in Matthew alludes to the travelling exorcists of the day. The story mentions that others had tried to tame this man and none had success until this time. The men stayed crazy until Yeshua came into the picture. The number, variety, and diversity of those who claimed to be able to heal people in the period of Yeshua was not insignificant. Many would have attempted to heal the men who dwelt in the catacombs, but it was only upon an encounter with Yeshua that freedom from suffering with mental illness would be realized. In that encounter Yeshua brought the words of life while others would have brought some cheap counterfeit. Yeshua was able to reveal more of His divinity and divine purpose by the fruit of His ministry. Yeshua confronts the illness in the man, who is called “a devil”, by speaking truth to the man and inspiring him to turn to follow the ways of God.

How Do Healings Happen?

This is how a healing often will take place. By submitting to the truth, the renewing of the mind occurs and then the candidate receives the long sought after healing. Pretty simple in most cases, the mind gets well and the body follows. This is not a new concept by any stretch of the imagination.

Yet again we may not be seeing an instant miraculous healing here as is typically thought but it may be the process of a man submitting to the truth and changing his life; thus becoming the recipient of wholeness to large degree again. For some it is simpler to think of this episode as the exertion of power over a demonic spirit that was inside of the man, thus causing this demonic force to flee in fright and then enter a bunch of pigs. However, the incident of the “demons into swine” likely did not go down like that.

Many say this type of a “possession” is the result of the sin in a person’s life that opens their spirit to be inhabited by demonic forces. If it is the case that sin must precipitate the inhabitation by

demons for a host, then what sin did the swine commit to open themselves to the forces of demonic possession? Another technical point of how demons take possession of a host might need to be considered. If the demons had taken up residence in the lunatics without permission from Yeshua, then why would they need permission to enter a herd of swine? Sin in one's life does not foster mental stability but often causes the reverse effect and mental stability declines. The decline is often imperceptible, but make no mistake about it, sin will eventually lead to some effect on the mental and emotional status of an individual. I have seen mental stability restored in several people due to the renewing of the mind that came through submitting to the truth. Recall in the Psalms, David mentions the physical results of his sin quite poetically by acknowledging his weakness is the consequence of his iniquity.

For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed.

Psalms 31:10

Here Is One Possible Explanation For The Demons Into The Swine

In the absence of a literal Satan or demons there has to be another answer to the question of what was going on with the lunatics in the cemetery. But am I claiming my explanation for the story of the “demons into swine” is the only one or the irrefutably correct one? Maybe not... The possible explanations for every detail in this story are numerous. I would love to be able to spell out one explanation and say it is the absolutely correct explanation of this story. Admittedly, I am not able to do that at this time. However, based on the premise that this story is not what it appears to be, I present some options for seeing it another way. Some might say that one should not try to read into the text because the words of the text are abundantly clear. I agree, the words, if intended to be

received literally, are clear. Keep in mind, a person who is consistent in their method of interpretation of the Bible should use that same interpretive style then for common terminology. Let me give an example or two.

What do we conclude when a news report tells us, *“The President flew to Afghanistan today to give the American troops a shot in the arm for their work in the war torn country”*? Every hearer knows that the President did not flap his arms to get to Afghanistan and then inject a hypodermic needle into the arm of each soldier stationed there. It is clear that the President would have boarded a plane and enjoyed the flight to Afghanistan, then spoke to the troops with an encouraging and rousing speech to inspire them to stay strong and fight his fight. The interpretive style that insists on claiming one cannot alter the meaning of the text because the words representing the story are abundantly clear, ought then to hold to that same style when looking at other statements with clear words in the Apostolic Testimony.

Take for instance the words of the Messiah when He calls Peter “Satan.” The words written in the New Testament say that Peter is “Satan” but we should be able to perceive what is meant by the Messiah calling Peter “Satan.” If we hold onto the mindset that says we must adhere to the precise meaning of the words given for a story to then explain the story, then we are going to miss out on a whole bunch of truth that was given us through parables, idioms, metaphors, Hebraisms, and colloquialism. According to David Bivin, a Hebraism is a Hebraic term or concept that does not translate easily into the more common languages. Bivin says;

There are many expressions in the Greek texts of the Synoptic Gospels that seem to derive from Hebrew idioms. These are phrases that mean something different from the literal meaning of the words they use. Every language has its own idioms, many of which seem strange when translated literally out of their native setting.³²

³² Bivin, David. "Hebrew Idioms in the Gospels," *Jerusalem Perspective Online*.

The tale of the demons sent into the swine can be explained by knowing one or two simple facts about the meaning of the words satan and devil and the culture of the speaker. In an Aramaic/Hebraic culture, when one converts from one faith to another, he or she often does something to destroy that which was known to be associated with his or her previous faith stand. George Lamsa teaches about this Eastern practice as he has experience through the Aramaic culture and perspective. In Gospel Light, Lamsa says;

It is so today in the East. When people are converted to a different faith, they discontinue the practice considered unclean by the new faith. A Christian cannot become a Mohammedan and be admitted into fellowship unless he sells or kills his swine and repudiates all customs and practices that the Mohammedan faith declares unclean.³³

In the book of Acts, we see the destruction of thousands of dollars of magic books by converts who believe there is a need to demonstrate a clean break from their previous religion. With that in mind one other possible way to view the story of the lunatics in the cemetery is thus. It is possible we are shown men who previously were unable to receive healing for their mental illness from the local exorcists. When Yeshua shares the words of life with them and they choose to follow His way, they then become converts to the faith of Yeshua. As Yeshua is not into controlling the human will, He then allowed these men to go and attack the herd of swine grazing in the distance. These men would have been very passionate Middle Eastern individuals and when they received such a great gift from Yeshua, they really wanted to show their intention to live a changed lifestyle. They then begged Yeshua if they could go and attack a herd of swine.

³³ Gospel Light, A Revised Annotated Edition, By Dr. George Lamsa - Published by Aramaic Bible Society 1999. pages 105 and 106

Was This An Attack Or An Inhabitation?

When we read the word “entered” in the Gospels we typically believe that means a spirit being went into a person. However, according to George Lamsa, the Eastern version of this story uses the Aramaic word *al* which does not mean “to enter and inhabit” as comes off in the English wording but carries the meaning of “*to attack*.” For instance, how would an Aramaic speaker talk about a bar fight? In Aramaic culture, it is said of two men who become embroiled in a physical fight that they “*entered into each other*.” The Aramaic word *al* to refers to the act of attacking someone or fighting with someone is does not mean one man is actually inhabiting another. Hearing Lamsa’s insight as he applies an Eastern cultural context to the words is helpful.

The Aramaic word *al* means attack and it also means enter. Men enter into each other when they wrestle or fight and oxen enter into each other when they attack or chase each other. Assyrians say *la al beh*, which literally means do not enter into him that is, do not attack or bother him.³⁴

So too is the case of the healed and reformed men of the cemetery. They asked if they could attack the herd of swine in an effort to demonstrate their changed hearts and lives. The result of the lunatics encounter with Yeshua was a glaring contrast to the attempts made by other men of renown over the years that were known as exorcists, healers, or spiritual icons. After receiving truth from Yeshua, which brought about true change in these men’s lives, they did what many Easterners would have wanted to do. They showed the change in their lives through bold and concrete action; attacking a herd of swine. Claiming a change has taken place in the life of one healed is one thing but change is proven by action. (We will discuss the possibility later of this herd

³⁴ Gospel Light, A Revised Annotated Edition, By Dr. George Lamsa - Published by Aramaic Bible Society 1999. page 105

of swine actually being a regiment of Roman soldiers who patrolled the area)

Considering this, it is possible that the writer was telling about crazy men who turned to God and then wanted to attack a herd of swine in order to prove their changed heart. Even if this is a possibility, then Yeshua might still be held responsible for a great herd of swine dying and the men would have been prosecuted for destruction of property. Therefore, although many things in this explanation cause the story to fit with ancient understanding and with the teaching in the Hebrew Scriptures that shows there is no “Satan” or “demons”, I am inclined to think the term “swine” might have meant something else. Perhaps the swine were not swine at all and the writer was referring to a group of humans. If you had heard about the Nazi “pigs” killing innocent Jews, you would understand that further mention of the “pigs” would still be referring to the Nazis. Even within the context of Nazi Germany, one would understand reference to the “pigs” as meaning the Nazis, without even directly speaking the word “Nazi.” Consider this manner of hyperbole as we discuss another option for the devils into swine story. And consider that the term “cast out” held a very different meaning in the first century than it does today.

‘Cast out’ is an Aramaic phrase which means to restore to sanity, to remove the cause that produces insanity

We also hear from Lamsa that in the east, when a man is insane,...

... it is said he is under the influence of the devil and when he speaks, the devil speaks in him. It is often said, ‘He has turned into a devil,’ meaning, he has become violent with insanity.”³⁵

History Shows The Romans Marched Under The Banner Of The Boar

³⁵ ibid

Another option for understanding this story is to interpret the story as referring to the occupation by the Tenth Roman Legion. This is the regiment of soldiers said to have been under Titus at that period. It was the main legion functioning in the area near Galilee, Gadara, and the Gergesenes. We need to take a moment to look at a short reference to this notorious legion and how the boar was one of its symbols. A symbol that would have instantly connected the regiment to swine in the mind of a first century writer or citizen.

XV. Leg X Fretensis.[Tenth legion of the sea strait] The X Fretensis[Tenth legion of the sea strait] bears also the emblem of the legions of the Caesarian army ... it seems that in addition to the bull the legion had certain other distinctive emblems, which were bestowed on the legion on certain occasions. On brick-stamps of the legion from Jerusalem there often appears above the name of the legion *LEG X FR* a picture of a ship, under the ship a boar ...

To see in the picture of a boar, the animal so detested by Jews, only a deliberate mockery of the religious feeling of this people would hardly be satisfying, even less so if we know that other legions, for instance I Italica and XX Victrix, have a boar on their standards as well.

The oldest datable evidence for the province where the legion was garrisoned comes from the year 17 CE: ...

Then the X Fretensis was among others subordinated to the general Flavius Vespasianus (Tac. Hist. V 1), sent by Nero to forcefully deal with the insurgent Jews, and was still in 66 seconded by him to Ptolemais.³⁶

In considering the symbol of the boar we can explore other historical commentary on the Roman Army. We find the swine image to be readily used in Roman military standards for decades

³⁶ <http://www.romanarmy.com/cms/content/view/32/114/>

after the Tenth Roman Legion had moved on from patrolling the area of the Gadarenes.

Writing about the Twentieth Legion as it moved into Britain during the latter half of the first century, John Munro McNab tells of this legion's symbol. You will see the boar in the symbol is depicted as a running swine and this symbol has long been connected to Roman Regiments. Knowing this context, we find the story may be suggesting the attack on the swine by the lunatics was in fact an attack on the Roman Regiment patrolling the area.

Here for the first time we meet on their vexillary stones with the figure which ultimately became the symbol of the entire legion, - viz., the figure of a boar, represented as running away. Of five stones recovered pertaining to this vexillation, four contain this figure, and the fifth, evidently unfimslied (sic), has a space left, within its border in blank, in the space and of the size assigned to the figure in the other four.³⁷

Along with the connection that may be found to the Tenth Roman Legion and the boar symbol, we find notable discrepancies between the three accounts in the Gospels. The Gospel writers describe the location differently. In Matthew, it is Gergesenes and in Mark and Luke it is Gadarenes. Some claim that Gergesenes is the false reading of Gadarenes. Both may be correct because neither are stating the actual location of the cemetery encounter but are referencing the relative geographical location. Based on most maps of the period, Gadara and Gergesa are proximal enough that one's region could conceivably overlap part of the other one's region. The interesting feature of this issue is that some have said Gergesa would be at least 6 miles from the water and Gadara would be about 30 miles from the water. Either way it is unlikely swine could run that distance at great speed into the water which would be at the base of a steep slope. And if they did, it is unlikely the point of entry to the water could have been seen

³⁷ Symbol of the Twentieth Legion of the Roman Army. Page 403 - On The Origin And Significance Of The Legionary Symbol of The Twentieth Legion of the Roman Army in Britain. By John Munro Macnab F.S.A Soot. Published in Proceedings of The Society, June 11,1883

by onlookers who were with Yeshua. It would be inconceivable to accept that any who were present to witness Jesus sending the “demons” into the swine would be able to see far enough to physically witness the drowning of the herd. Stated another way; if the nearest body of water was 6 miles away, then how is it possible for witnesses to see such distances? How could witnesses see the stampeding herd going down a steep slope and drown in the water from so far away? The simple point is, someone said they saw the pigs run into the sea but the water was miles away and down a slope. How could anyone see that far?

These points leave room for exploration. So perhaps we can consider the idea of something being “driven into the sea”. What does it mean to be driven into the sea? Let’s look at this phrase from a perspective that infers a connection to a military conflict. Let’s see this as a conflict in this instance that involved the hasty retreat or defeat of a military regiment. Interesting to note on the topic of geography, is that where Matthew and Mark state the place of the pigs drowning as the “sea,” Luke identifies it as a “lake.” Was it a lake or was it a sea? This is another inconsistency that leads the reader away from a literal interpretation of this event and causes us to rethink our accepted explanation and possibly to arrive at a different conclusion. If the details between two tellers of this story are not consistent then it surely is not offensive to think other aspects of this story might not be literal as Christianity teaches.

In the style of writing we are given from the early part of the first Millennium of the CE period, it is common for small details of a story to differ when the writer is intending to keep the focus on the main instruction or message contained in the story. This is possibly the reason for the variance between the three accounts in the Apostolic Testimony. If the intent of the writers was to share the specifics about a bunch of swine getting inhabited by a bunch of demons, then it would be fair to expect the facts to be collaborative between the gospel writers. Details in both stories should reasonably be the same. However, the story was never

intended to teach about swine or armies or seas, rather it was focused on the healing of men with a serious mental affliction.

To Drive Someone Into The Sea Speaks Of The Defeat Of That Someone

To continue, we might want to ask the question; is it possible the phrase, “he drove them into the sea” is speaking of something other than a herd of animals running madly over miles of terrain until they were engulfed by the waters of the nearest sea? Is it possible this phrase could be connected to the oppressive control of a militaristic organization and it references that organization’s demise? Is it possible when the writer spoke of what might be a Roman regiment set to flight by a much smaller band of “lunatics”, he was recalling the historical destruction of the Pharaoh’s army pursuing the Hebrews in Exodus? To assist with understanding this possibility we can look at a verse from Exodus;

Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. Exodus 15:1

It seems the Pharaoh incident noted above may reference a literal engulfment in the sea for the army. However, when this phrase is set in a context of military engagement it is sensible to recognize that to be “driven into the sea” is to state that one side has suffered defeat or has decided to make a hasty retreat. Being thrown into the sea can be seen the same as being driven into the sea.

For the demons into swine story, culture and context suggests that the men who lived in the cemetery received life-giving words from the Messiah. These words brought healing from Yeshua. The men then asked if they could attack the group of soldiers, said to be 2000 for effect. Not being prohibited from attacking the regiment by the healer, the men then wildly went

after the Roman soldiers. Soldiers by the way, who had never encountered such an unusual and madly impassioned opposition. This model might just fit the metaphorical idea of “devils going into swine.” Remember that phrase could be understood as lunatics attacking the soldiers. One could perceive that the soldiers, who were the Tenth Roman Legion that marched under the sign of the swine, retreated hastily. After the dramatic and hasty retreat it was reported the regiment suffered defeat, which is to say they were driven into the sea and were choked. One should be able to see being chased by the ex-lunatics is a possible way to understand this difficult story.

Did They “Attack” The Swine Or “Enter” Them?

Don't get hung up on the statement in the English bible that says the demons entered the swine. Remember, to “enter into” the “swine” carries the meaning of attacking them or engaging in a fight of some nature. In an ancient Eastern culture, if a man is to have “entered into” another man, it is understood he has engaged in a fight with that man. Knowing that the 10th Roman Legion very likely could have been referred to as swine may indicate the attack was perpetrated on Roman soldiers.

"The Aramaic *al* means 'enter into,' 'attack,' 'chase'; but it has been exclusively translated 'enter into,' so as to imply...that the demons entered into the swine. According to the context and the style of Aramaic speech, the word *al* here means that, not the demons but the lunatics attacked the swine."³⁸

So, in keeping with the theme that there are no “demons” or “Satan,” we are able to find another and perhaps better explanation for this story of demons cast into swine. The explanation that these lunatic men wanted to attack the swine

³⁸ George M. Lamsa (translator), *The Four Gospels : According to the Eastern Version* A.J Holman Co 1933. p. xiv

soldiers who represented an oppositional force to the Hebrew followers of the Messiah is likely. This explanation is one that views the story through properly placed cultural, social, and historical glasses from the period of that story. This explanation does not impose a false demonology onto the story.

But Doesn't Jesus Talk To The Demon?

Another thing to consider that we find in this story is when Yeshua asks the man what his name is;

*For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.
Mark 5:8-9*

First off, we can determine an “unclean spirit” is not a spirit entity inside of a person rather it is referring to an unwanted adversarial physical aspect in a person’s body or mind. To have an unclean spirit means to have a wrong or adverse manner of thinking or condition that drives a person. The Messiah was calling the man an unclean person. The Greek word for spirit often refers to the rational human mind and thoughts. Thayer’s Greek definitions suggest one possible meaning is; *2a) the rational spirit, the power by which the human being feels, thinks, decides.*

Looking at the grammar and syntax of this statement, we find Yeshua is asking the man what his name is and it is the man who answers the question. Yeshua is not addressing a demon as some have presumed. The presumption, that Yeshua spoke to the demons here has had its effect on the ridiculous practice of exorcism. Thinking Christ spoke to demons, leads many to speak directly to what they think are demons when they are engaged in an “exorcism.” Demons were not being addressed rather the Messiah was confronting the mental illness and associated distorted beliefs, ideas, and behaviors of these madmen. And often, the address was directed to the individual himself.

When Yeshua met with the lunatics in the cemetery He and those with Him knew they were confronting men with serious mental illness, illness which became so profound that these men were relegated to inhabit a morbid place few would ever consider spending time in. Yeshua brought the words of life and truth to the situation and tapped into a willingness of the men to receive healing. The willingness is visible in the fact that the men worshipped Yeshua at His coming, as it says in the letter called Mark. The lunatics' plea for Yeshua to not hurt them does not indicate fear coming from a demon who was afraid to be destroyed by the God of the Universe, rather it represents the irrational thinking of persons who are suffering from mental illness. I have seen firsthand the fear a mentally ill person exhibits when he or she is being helped by a caregiver in an institution. Paranoia often goes hand in hand with mental illness. On numerous occasions in a past vocation where I was involved in administering care to a mentally ill patient, we as caregivers would approach the patient and from fear, they would whimper and cry for us not to hurt them. It was always sad and those I worked alongside with would always reassure the patient that we weren't going to hurt them, we just wanted to help. For some reason, the mentally ill patient was convinced they were about to be harmed by the very caregivers who were there to help. The caregiver recognized the irrationality of the statement and knew that mental illness was responsible for the error in thinking. It was this error in thinking that led to the statement "don't hurt me" and the caregiver would then reassure the patient that we were not going to hurt him. If you ever get the opportunity to spend some time volunteering in a mental health facility you might better see the manifestation of mental illness and how it was possible for the ancients to have believed it to be the result of a person who was inhabited by some negative, supernatural spirit force.

Some People Believed Demons Were Real And Others Knew Better

It is true that many in Yeshua's day had adopted the theory there were spirit beings that might inhabit a person but the idea was not typical of the Aramaic/Hebraic people in general. For a person of that ancient culture and mindset to "have a demon" meant the person had some mental problems or anger problems which manifested in some type of manic behavior. This behavior had no origin in Satanic evil; rather it had its origin in the human mind. The general view of the period was in agreement with Scripture and suggested that a man's lunacy was not from some external force entering into the human spirit. To "have a demon" was understood as a metaphor for describing the unwanted manifestations of a condition or of a choice to act or behave in an unusual or irrational manner.

When the leaders of the day said Yeshua had a demon, they were stating He was not practicing correct thinking about the theology that was being taught. They were not referring to Yeshua as being possessed by a satanic minion. The reference to Yeshua having a demon was a statement showing they thought Yeshua was himself believing and teaching a false doctrine. In the course of Yeshua's ministry, He taught an awful lot of theology opposing that of the first century Judaism. A person steeped in performing, adhering to, and teaching all of the tenets of the man-made religion of Judaism, was convinced that they were completely in the truth; therefore, when Yeshua taught differently and people began to follow Yeshua's teaching because He taught with authority, the leaders of Judaism believed Him to be teaching heresy and false doctrine. The manner in which they labeled this behavior was by saying He had a demon.

A "demon" then can also be the reference to a wrong teaching. Although a "demon" was referring to something that was disagreeable in a person's mind or body, some mystically minded believed it to be a spiritual being. It was thought by some that the spirit demon would then move a person to behave in ways that seemed contrary to godly, healthful, peaceable ways. As the term "*to have a demon*" was seen by some as referring to the

supernatural inhabitation of a person by a satanic ghost, so too was the term to “have an unclean spirit” seen. Both terms were thought to refer to the actual presence of a spirit entity and inhabitation of a person by an underworld minion. Just because there were certain Pharisaic sects, apocalyptic thinkers, and mystically minded groups in the first century who thought that demons exist, does not alter the teachings found in the Hebrew Scriptures that give no credence to such an idea.

Yeshua walked in a culture with these contrasting beliefs. As you see, some understood an “unclean spirit” meant a person had an illness or a disease of the mind or body; while others chose to believe that “demons” or “unclean spirits” were from “satan.” While in truth, the terms were idiomatic and were meant to describe the mental or physical condition of a person. The difference was found in whether a person had adopted a Greek worldview or a Hebraic worldview. The latter was the worldview that was modeled by those in Yeshua’s camp.

Can You Be Possessed By Chrohns In The Same Way A Demon Possess?

The metaphors of the bible are easily understood by considering the unchanging nature of the Creator and realizing that if demons did not exist in the “Old Testament” then they certainly don’t exist in the “New.” Using the same metaphorical style of describing a health condition or illness today, one could say of a patient with the type of transient memory loss mental illness, that “he has a demon”. The fact is though, that a person who suffers from symptoms such as memory loss could very well be an Alzheimer’s sufferer. If we spoke 2000 years ago of a person stricken with Alzheimer’s we would be heard to say a person is possessed by demons.

Of course we know Dr. Alois Alzheimer does not inhabit the patient but we would mean they are suffering from the most common form of dementia seen in the elderly today. Possessed by

Alzheimer's means one has a disease. So too could be stated of one who has Crohns. What is the difference in saying "she has demons" or "she has Crohns"? Are we to think even for a second that those with Crohns are possessed by Dr. Crohn? Of course not, but because we are familiar that these are names of men, which came to describe conditions of the human body, we think nothing of it. This is similar to what had occurred by the first century with the terms "he has a demon" and "he has an unclean spirit." Both are broad terms describing a condition and/or a position one chooses to take intellectually, such as if one ascribes to a doctrine oppositional to the truth.

It becomes quite simple when we consider how we describe many conditions and diseases today. Over a hundred years ago, Dr. Alois Alzheimer probably had several well-meaning folks tell him that the patients he was treating needed to be delivered from demons. Metaphorically they were right, but sadly too many have taken the illogical leap making that terminology change from a simple metaphor to become a literal term. This leap has caused many people who are acting irrationally or unusual, to be saddled with the label that claims they "have a demon." Those who believe that a "demon" is the cause of something like Alzheimer's or a mental illness as seen in the cemetery Yeshua visited, could be said to have a demon themselves. If they are believing something which is opposed to the truth. Although Alzheimer's may have been labeled as demon possession at one time by the vigilant religionists, Dr. Alzheimer's work has been extremely valuable to eradicating this wrong perspective. Here are a few statements of about Dr. Alois' work with Alzheimer's.

In 1901, Dr. Alois Alzheimer, a German psychiatrist, interviewed a patient named Mrs. Auguste D, age 51. He showed her several objects and later asked her what she had been shown. She could not remember. He would initially record her behavior as "amnesic writing disorder," but Mrs. Auguste D. would be the first patient to be identified with Alzheimer's disease.

Alzheimer would later work in the laboratory of the esteemed Emil Kraepelin in Heidleberg, Germany. Early in April 1906,

Auguste D died, and Alzheimer worked with two Italian physicians to examine her anatomy and neuropathology. On November 3, 1906, he presented Auguste D's case to the 37th Assembly of Southwest German Psychiatrists... Kraepelin would later write about this case and others in his *Textbook for Students and Doctors* and index them under Alzheimer's disease. By 1910, the name of the disease was well established among the specialist community.³⁹

What Do They Say Demons Can Do?

The group of followers walking with Yeshua was not likely to have seen the madmen in the cemetery as other than having a condition of the mind. It is doubtful that they understood the science of the condition and like any culture throughout history, things that could not be explained were often attributed to supernatural forces. Natural phenomenon has been said to be the activity of demons so has the persistent, unrelenting cry of a baby in the middle of the night by a frustrated and distraught parent. Color of skin, physical deformities, falling stars, rising tides, rebellious teens, autocratic governments, powerful wind and noises in the woods are just a few examples of things that have all been attributed to demons at times throughout history. Lack of understanding something is not a reason to claim demons are the cause. The entire demon and Satan terminology has become a scapegoat for humanity to label something unusual or unexplainable as being the result of “demons.”

The men in the cemetery, who received the healing word of the Messiah, took their change of life and gift of healing very seriously. They stated their desire to show it by requesting to go and attack the Roman regiment or the herd of pigs. Whichever it was, was their way of showing their conversion. Knowing the phrase “*enter into*” is the word *al* in Aramaic and means to engage in a physical conflict, or to attack another, we can see the healed

³⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alzheimer's_disease

men actually requested they attack the “herd of swine” that represented their old ways. The Romans were referred to as swine by many “Jews” in the first century and were an oppressive regime intent on keeping the “Jews” under their power and control.

Why Would The Whole City Care About A Herd Of Pigs?

The information that those who fed the swine went to the city and told others what had happened may help us see this incident as one involving a Roman legion instead of an actual herd of swine. What is the likelihood of those in the city heading out to the region of the incident after a bunch of swine had stampeded away? It seems more likely we would see a mass response, such as is reported in the Gospels, if a group of once crazy men were reported to have caused a group of Roman soldiers to beat a hasty retreat. We do not need to be thrown off by the metaphor “*driven into the sea.*” As I’ve stated, it is possibly a metaphor referring to a military regiment being overtaken by a band of passionate ex-lunatics.

Crazy Cemetery Dwellers Can be Strong ... Especially in Groups

The text has made us aware of the extraordinary strength of the madmen or at least madman because we are told of fetters and chains being broke off by these men in the past. The question must be asked; ***How many lunatics were there?*** It is not unreasonable to think that because one Gospel writer states there were two lunatics and the others state there was one lunatic that the writers were not interested in expressing the exact number of lunatics living in the cemetery. It was often a practice of ancient writers to increase or decrease the size of a number in a story for effect. Understanding ancient writers are not afraid to manipulate

numerical values that are not really important to the story, may show us that numbers in this account are not specific. Saying two may mean two but it just as easily could mean there was more than two. When the writer of the Gospel of Matthew indicates there are two lunatics he may have simply wanted to inform the reader that there were lunatics, plural, there in the cemetery. Notice the discrepancy between Matthew, Mark, and Luke in the following verses;

*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.*

Matthew 8:28

*And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs **a man with an unclean spirit**,*

Mark 5:2

*And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city **a certain man, which had devils long time**, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs.*

Luke 8:27

Just How Many Lunatics Were There Anyway?

This brings us to the place where we must consider how the lunatics broke the chains from themselves if this super-feat was not accomplished by demonic power. Knowing there were likely many lunatics living in the cemetery, the writer could be referring to a band of lunatics, meaning a significant number, which would add to the possibility for fetters and chains to be broken off. If for instance, one lunatic had been chained up, the others would assist in freeing him from the bonds. To say that the man had broken the chains off of himself does not have to mean that he himself reached down and snapped the iron links with his own demonically infused, human strength. I do concede it is possible

one with a deranged mind may at times perform amazing feats of strength. However, the statements that speak of a lunatic, coupled with the extraordinary feats that are represented to have happened at the hand of the lunatic, are more readily believable if we accept that the writer was seeing the lunatics as a collective body or group. It is probable in a cemetery asylum environment that the insane group would function similar to a gang. We might encounter a large group of maniacs having a similar cause and in some sense display a bonding and a radical team relationship. When one lunatic gets caught and chained up, the others come along and bust him loose. The phrase “man with the unclean spirit” does not have to refer to an individual. It may be a term referring to an entire group. Not unlike the reference in Ephesians 2:15 that identifies the body of believers as becoming one new man, “...that the two he might create in himself into one new man...” There is biblical support for the idea that “a man” can be a reference to an entire group unified in their thought and action.

Thinking of these lunatics in the cemetery as being an entire group, aids in understanding how the fetters and chains could be broken, how it was possible the swine might have been driven into the sea, or how a Roman regiment could be threatened enough to make a hasty retreat. If in fact there are many lunatics in the cemetery group then any or all of the above outcomes could be possible.

We ought not to be closed to acknowledge the magnitude of this incident in a Roman occupied region insofar as a group of deranged madmen may well have been a sizeable group of lunatics but represented in the text as a “man” or “two men.” It would be quite notable to the nearby townsfolk to have heard that these cemetery dwellers chased away the regiment of soldiers in the area. The tale of a Roman regiment being chased away would be so intriguing that the townsfolk came out and compelled Yeshua to move on for fear of unwanted repercussions from the Romans. After all, these embarrassed soldiers who were driven into the sea would not neglect the military duty to press back as soon as was viable.

An entire group of total loons who were brought into their right mind and subsequently desired to demonstrate their allegiance to a persuasive leader, would definitely cause fear in the minds of the locals. Locals would fear that other hostilities might be in the plans of this group. Therefore, those who came out from the city thought it best to eradicate this potentially rogue force from their area before a further uprising was to take place. This rogue force or what appeared to be a rogue force, was actually interested in a peaceful existence, following Yeshua. The locals however may have feared them becoming hostile and causing greater trouble in the area of the Gadarenes and Gergasenes. The story of the demon cast into the swine is not a story of demons which were cast into swine at all. Through a fair assessment of this story, by applying a proper context and teaching from the Hebrew Scriptures as would be understood socially, culturally, historically, and linguistically by the original hearers, we can observe the profoundness in Yeshua being responsible for the healing and restoration to a right-mind for at least one if not many lunatics in this case. Although the English version reads, the men were possessed with devils we can be certain that does not mean they had a spirit demon inhabiting them. But is there more we can figure out by exploring the phrase “possessed with a devil”?

CHAPTER 10



Being Possessed With A DEVIL Can Be A Struggle

Does the Greek Word for “Possessed with A Devil” Really Mean One is Inhabited By A Demon?

The English translation we have today translates the Greek word *daimonizomai*, as “possessed with a devil.” This phrase is perhaps not an accurate translation of the Greek word given in the manuscripts from which the “New Testament” are taken. There is another word for *possess* in the Greek language and there is another word that would better describe a supposed occupation by an evil spirit in a human. Another option for a Greek word to express someone is filled or inhabited with demons might be to use the Greek word for “inhabit.” The word *katoikeo*, which also occurs in the “New Testament”, may be a good fit here. It seems the Greek word for “inhabit” is a better way to speak that a person was under the controlling influence of a demon spirit. Would it not be more comprehensive to combine the word for “inhabit” or “possess” with the word *daimon*? It’s odd that the writer, if he were trying to make the point that the lunatics were possessed or inhabited by demons, would have not used a phrase which was