

# MATTHEW: THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

## LESSON 23 –JESUS EXORCISES DEMONS INTO SOME PIGS – MATTHEW 8:28-34

### MATTHEW 8:28-34

And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way. And behold, they cried out, “What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?” Now a herd of many pigs was feeding at some distance from them. And the demons begged him, saying, “If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs.” And he said to them, “Go.” So they came out and went into the pigs, and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters. The herdsmen fled, and going into the city they told everything, especially what had happened to the demon-possessed men. And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their region.

Jesus has an encounter with two demon-possessed men. The territory he is in is a Gentile area. Jesus shows power over Satan even in a region that is not filled with the people of Israel.

1. What are some of the ways that Matthew shows the contrast between the demon-possessed men and Jesus?
2. The power and terror of demon possession is emphasized in this reading. Where are the men living and how does this share the contrasts between what God has designed and what these men have become (Leviticus 21:11, 22:4-6; Numbers 19:16-18)?
3. The opening words of the men show that they have some grasp of Jesus’ true identity. They call Jesus, “Son of God,” which is likely a recognition that Jesus is truly God. They know but they shudder (James 2:19). How do these words from the demons show there is a difference between knowledge and faith?
4. The demons comment on the presence of Jesus in this world, “Have you come here to torment us before the time?” What time are they talking about?
5. What does Jesus do on the day of reckoning?

6. Jesus does not answer the two questions, “What have you to do with us” nor “Have you come here to torment us before the time?” They also ask, “If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs.” Jesus answers them with one word, “Go.” How is this similar to Matthew 8:16?

There are no certain answers why the demons wanted into the pigs nor why Jesus answered their request. We can figure out this was not sympathetic by Jesus. According to Leviticus 11:7 and Deut. 14:8, pigs were unclean animals. The earliest Jewish hearers of this story understood that pigs are unclean and was a suitable destination for demons. There are other OT passages that clearly speak negatively about pigs, Is 65:4; 66:3, 17; Proverbs 11:22. The combination of tombs and swine herds produces a strong understanding by Matthew’s readers that Jesus has power even in the midst of ritual and personal defilement. The demons did not escape from Jesus’ authority. They went where Jesus commanded. Then the herd drove themselves to death.

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Matthew records lepers, a centurion, tax collectors, and sinners all believing in Jesus. But here are herdsmen and a city that know what power Jesus has to accomplish his works. They reject Jesus. Whether Jesus comes in the authority of his Word, miracles, or mighty works only some are granted faith to see and truly to see, to hear, and truly to believe. This is not explained but is evident.

### *DEMON POSSESSION*

In the Old Testament there are few mentions of possession and outside of the synoptic gospels there is little reference to possession. John’s gospel makes no accounts of demonic possession. There is unprecedented activity of demon possession during the time when the Son of God was bringing God’s reign near in Jesus.

7. What power does Satan have in God’s creation? (Matthew 12:22-29; Revelation 20:2)?
8. Toward the end of this age Satan will be let loose for a short time (Revelation 20:3). What else does Revelation say about Satan’s limits at the end? (Luke 10:18; John 12:31; Col. 2:15; Revelation 12:5-10)

9. Jesus has come to drive back Satan and his forces, so it is not unlikely that demonic possession is more rare in our world and in our experiences. Yet still we are cautious. (1 Peter 5:6-11) How can we be sure of our eternal glory with Satan prowling around?
  
10. God's children will be subject to temptations and attacks from Satan. Do we need to fear Satanic possession? (1 John 4:4)?
  
11. What has Jesus given to us in our Baptism that gives us personal confidence? (Matthew 28:19-20; Ephesians 1:13-14)