

International Bible Lessons Commentary

Luke 8:26-36 + 37-39

New Revised Standard Bible

International Bible Lessons

Sunday, April 17, 2016

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The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, April 17, 2016**, is from **Luke 8:26-36 [+37-39]**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** discusses *Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further* to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. If you are a Bible student or teacher, you can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Luke 8:26-39

(Luke 8:26) Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee.

Jesus traveled from town to town proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God (Luke 8:1). Before He left with His disciples to cross the Sea of Galilee in a boat to proclaim the kingdom of God there, Jesus told the parable of the sower (Luke 8:4-18). Except for one person that we learn about from the account of Jesus' visit to the Gerasenes, the people Jesus met in the region were like the "road soil" (or soil beside the path) in the parable of the sower: the devil came and took away the word from their hearts (Luke 8:5, 12). On the way to the Gerasenes, Jesus quieted a storm on the sea, and the disciples expressed their amazement and fear at the display of Jesus' power (Luke 8:25).

(Luke 8:27) As he stepped out on land, a man of the city who had demons met him. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he did not live in a house but in the tombs.

Jesus knew in advance where He was going, why He was going, who He would see and what He would do. Previously, Jesus had cast out seven demons from Mary Magdalene, and Jesus would soon show His disciples that just as He could still a storm no matter how powerful, so He would cast out any number of demons from anyone. Jesus was and is the King over the kingdom of God, and He would soon prove that God's kingdom

ruled supreme over Satan's domain. Luke described three outward problems for the man who lived with demons inside him: he lived among the dead with no clothes and no house. As a home for demons, his inner suffering must have been indescribable.

(Luke 8:28) When he saw Jesus, he fell down before him and shouted at the top of his voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me"—

Jesus crossed the sea and went to the region of the Gerasenes to cure this demon possessed man, which is a demonstration of the value Jesus puts on every person no matter their problems. When in the storm on the sea, Jesus expected His disciples to have faith in Him and not be afraid of the storm. The man possessed by demons could not exercise faith in Jesus when he first saw Him. The man himself did not speak to Jesus, for he was not in his right mind. Just as Jesus' power and authority alone could still the storm, so Jesus' power and authority as God and King could cast out the man's demons without the man first needing to exercise verbally his faith in Jesus. Jesus is not dependent upon the faith of anyone to accomplish God's work. Jesus has complete control over the natural realm and the spiritual realm (over all of creation) to do His Father's will. The demons knew who Jesus was, and the demons proclaimed His power over them. Jesus had the authority and power to bring God's just judgment on the demons, and the demons may have known they deserved God's punishment because they knew God and God's moral laws over the universe. They called the just punishment they deserved from God "torture," which they did not want to suffer in spite of the fact that they had tortured for years the man they possessed. Similar to these demons, many unbelievers think God's justice and His promised just penalty or just punishment or just suffering for those who rebel against God and disobey God's laws is unjust "torture."

(Luke 8:29) for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many times 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 wilds.)

The demon spoke aloud through the man because Jesus had previously commanded it to come out of him and the demon wanted to save itself. Though the demon had revealed the truth about Jesus as a Person, he misrepresented the character of Jesus by implying that Jesus would torture anyone; therefore, because of their lying nature, Jesus never wanted anyone to listen to demons. An impure spirit cannot be trusted to always tell the truth or reveal all the facts when it can use the truth in a way that spreads a lie. For example, Jesus did not come into the world to torture demons or sinners but rather to save the world and sinners. Casting out demons was a part of Jesus' saving the world (John 3:16, 17; John 12:47; 1 Timothy 1:15). Obviously, the demon(s) had great power over the man they possessed. Guards and chains could not restrain these demons from harming this man, and he could not save himself, but Jesus showed forth greater authority and power and freed the man from these demons with only a few words.

(Luke 8:30) Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" He said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him.

Jesus knew exactly what He was dealing with and what He would do. Just as He had prayed aloud to the Father before raising Lazarus from the dead so those who heard Him would believe that the Father had sent Him, so Jesus asked the demon its name for others to hear before casting them out, which would also show that the Father had sent Him (see John 11:41-42). Others needed to know what and how many demons Jesus was going to cast out the man. Others needed to know that Jesus had more authority and power on earth than thousands of demons. Apparently, an untold number of demons have the ability to live inside a person and control their thoughts, words, deeds, and steal the word of God from them, but Jesus has power over them all and can free anyone from demons. Believers do not need to know the names of demons to cast them out, Jesus said demons could be cast out through prayer and faith in Him (Mark 9:29).

(Luke 8:31) They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss.

The demons recognized the fact that Jesus had the authority and power to order them to go into the Abyss. The Abyss is the abode or dwelling place of demons. In the Book of Revelation, John the Apostle wrote about demons and the Abyss: "They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek is Apollyon (that is, Destroyer)" (Revelation 9:11). The demons knew that Jesus was a greater King than their king; therefore, they had to obey Jesus. Jesus described the Abyss is a place prepared by God for the devil and his angels, a place where those who are cursed will be sent: "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels'" (Matthew 25:41). The Abyss must be so horrible and so painful a place that it is beyond our human comprehension, because Jesus barely describes it. Jesus did say, "There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out" (Luke 13:28). When Jesus graciously healed the man possessed and tormented by these demons, He must have shown real mercy to these demons when He granted their request and sent them into a herd of pigs. Though delayed, someday all demons will receive the just punishment of God that they deserve and they will never be allowed to afflict a follower of Jesus in the kingdom of God.

(Luke 8:32) Now there on the hillside a large herd of swine was feeding; and the demons begged Jesus to let them enter these. So he gave them permission.

According to the law of Moses, pigs were unclean animals and were not to be eaten by the Jews before the coming of Jesus the Messiah: "For it doesn't go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body' (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)" (Mark 7:19). In Jesus' parable, the prodigal son was reduced to feeding pigs, and wished he could eat what pigs ate. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into these ritually unclean animals, and Jesus gave them permission. Notice: these demons did not repent of the evil and harm they had done previously. They thought only of themselves and remaining on this earth where they thought they would escape God's punishment.

(Luke 8:33) Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

Jesus' actions showed that one man, even one who had previously been demon possessed, is more valuable than a whole herd of pigs irrespective of the local economy or animal rights. We do not know if the demons entered the man because of his sins or as a result of his pagan worship of idols, for it is unlikely that he had been a practicing Jew among the townspeople and farmers who raised pigs. On the other hand, he may have been a true to life example of the prodigal son; therefore, Jesus wanted him to go back to his family (see Luke 15:11-32 and Luke 8:39). Whatever the cause, the man was possessed by demons and Jesus came to save people from their sins, free people from demons, heal the sick, raise the dead, proclaim the kingdom of God, and die a sacrificial death to save sinners from eternal punishment. After Jesus freed the man from demons, he came to himself and believed in Jesus. Note: the demons, not Jesus, destroyed the pigs, which demonstrated again the demonic destructiveness that leads to death. Some think the demons were destroyed by the water along with the pigs; consequently, by their decision to destroy the pigs, the demons destroyed themselves and went into the Abyss. Whatever this case, the event showed that they could never harm this man again.

(Luke 8:34) When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country.

The keepers of the pigs fled and reported what they saw. Their fear of the man who had been possessed by demons, the destruction of the pigs they kept, their amazement at what they saw Jesus do, their conclusion that Jesus had destroyed their pigs, may have influenced the accuracy of their reports. Maybe what they saw filled them with fear of Jesus, for they probably did not stay around to see the complete healing and restoration of the man who had been possessed by demons — but only saw the tragic (to them) death of the owners' precious pigs and their responsibility for them as herdsmen. They may have wanted to tell those who had hired them that there was nothing they could do when Jesus killed their pigs! They had fear and no faith. They fled in dread of what Jesus might do next. On the Sea of Galilee, the disciples had faith and fear after Jesus quieted the storm, and Jesus' power over the wind and waves increased their faith. Imagine how both their faith and fear was impacted by this new revelation of Jesus' power over a host of demons!

(Luke 8:35) Then people came out to see what had happened, and when they came to Jesus, they 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.

Based on the reports of eyewitnesses, the people went out and saw the pigs were gone (sunk to the bottom of the sea, where they could not be reclaimed), and they saw the man they knew well who had been filled with demons. They also saw Jesus and mistakenly believed from what they had heard that Jesus had killed their pigs! Their pigs were their most valuable possessions. They saw the man healed, clothed, and most importantly "in his right mind" sitting at Jesus' feet, but this did not lead them to think

of Jesus being a compassionate healer sent by God or lead them to praise God for the man's healing. Fear of further loss consumed them instead of thanking and praising God and Jesus for this man's salvation irrespective of the financial cost to them.

(Luke 8:36) Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been possessed by demons had been healed.

Those who saw what Jesus had done included the disciples; therefore, the disciples would have given a correct interpretation about and explained what Jesus had done. Jesus had gone to many towns to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God: so Jesus would have used this opportunity to try to teach them about the true God and proclaim the kingdom of God to them too. But these people refused to listen to the truths they heard from Jesus and His disciples; and they pushed Jesus away.

(Luke 8:37) Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them; for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned.

In this situation, their fear was so great they would not come to faith, which may also reveal the influence of many demons in that land and/or their sinful self-centered concern for their financial well-being more than the healing of the man who had been possessed by demons. Their fear overcame them; it overpowered them and kept them from faith in Jesus. Just as Jesus granted the demons their request, so Jesus granted these townspeople their request, and there were consequences (though unstated) after Jesus left them. Those who saw the evidence of Jesus' love and power, and heard the word that Jesus and the disciples sowed, but asked Jesus to leave them anyway, illustrates Jesus' parable of the sower (which seems appropriate for that region): "This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved" (Luke 8:11-12). Not all of the townspeople were possessed by demons, but no doubt demons did possess some of them less dramatically. If not possessed, many of them may have been strongly influenced by demons to act and speak as they did, especially when sending Jesus away. If they had come to Jesus (as many others had come to Him for healing and the casting out of demons in previous instances, and as the freed man before them aptly demonstrated), then His perfect love would have cast out their fears, any demons, and led them to saving faith in Him.

(Luke 8:38) The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but Jesus sent him away, saying,

The man Jesus freed from slavery to the indwelling host of demons begged Jesus to let him go with Him. In this case, Jesus did not grant him his request because Jesus had more important work for him to do – Jesus wanted him to do God's work in his own home and hometown where Jesus had just been forbidden to go. Though he could not go with Jesus, he would soon discover that Jesus' Spirit could go with him. Perhaps this changed man could overcome the fears of those who rejected Jesus and bring some of them to faith in Jesus. He had come to faith in Jesus and wanted to spend the rest of his

life with Jesus, and Jesus would soon show him that He would be with him in the Spirit (similar to the Old Testament prophets). The Spirit of God could go with him and help him proclaim the truth about Jesus and show the results of Jesus' compassion. The man could describe his life before and after he met Jesus. The man did not need to fear that the demons would return, because he had seen them destroyed in the sea. Jesus must have taught him much after he was in his right mind before the townspeople came and asked Jesus to leave them. As he obeyed Jesus, and grew to trust more in Jesus as Jesus helped him, Jesus would teach him more and more through the Spirit. He could learn from what he heard about Jesus; and later, perhaps some of the disciples saw him again after God raised Jesus from the dead and sent them forth. By sending the man home, Jesus also saved him from many of the trials His disciples would soon face in Jerusalem.

(Luke 8:39) “Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.” So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.

Jesus wanted the man to return home and tell others about the true God. By experience, they would already have known much about the power of demons, but very little about Jesus and God and God's power and love. The man took this step of faith and obeyed Jesus. Perhaps the man had a family that he loved, or a family that had loved him and he had abandoned; Jesus knew that his family needed him and the good news he could bring them. Perhaps, as the Parable of the Prodigal Son illustrates, he had a loving father who had been praying for him and eagerly looking for him to return home, and Jesus' going to him to bring him to himself was God's answer to his father's prayers. He did not need to follow Jesus physically to serve Jesus spiritually, and God's Spirit would be with him as he served Him. His life was filled with the love and presence of Jesus' Spirit, so he could tell all over town what Jesus had done for him from the inside out and who Jesus was and what people could expect from Jesus if they trusted in Him. If they had eyes to see, they would experience the love of Jesus flowing forth from him. He could explain the unseen reality of what he had experienced and the Holy Spirit would help him proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God. His possibilities for ministry far surpass our ability to imagine or express in words!

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What truth did the demons proclaim about Jesus and why were they afraid of Him?
2. What falsehood did the demons proclaim about Jesus and what might that mean?
3. What are some reasons the Bible teaches people not to talk to the dead or to demons?
4. From this event, what makes you think the Abyss or hell will be a place of unpleasant surroundings and suffering?
5. In what ways did Jesus demonstrate His compassion?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

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