

International Sunday School Lesson
Study Notes
April 17, 2016

Lesson Text: Luke 8:26-36
Lesson Title: Spiritual Deliverance

Introduction

Our world is a violent, unpredictable, dangerous place to live. Nearly every day we hear of unspeakable acts committed by humanity. The world was not always this way. In the beginning God created the world as a wonderful place to live. He created man and provided everything he needed to enjoy his Creator and creation. Then, man sinned through disobedience and everything changed.

Because of Adam and Eve's fall in the garden (Genesis 3), we live under the curse of sin, which subjects humanity to disease, disasters, death, and decay. God could have left us in the mess we made or condemned the whole of humanity into eternal damnation. Instead, He made the problem of sin His own by becoming one of us in the person of God's Son, Jesus Christ. He came to this world to deliver sinful men from the wages of sin.

In this week's lesson, Luke gives us a glimpse of the power of spiritual deliverance. This story is clearly an extraordinary event. It is not every day a man is delivered from a host of demons. So Luke records this story to draw our attention to changeless truths about spiritual deliverance.

A Soul Needing Deliverance (Luke 8:26-29)

Verse 26-27

“And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee. 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.”

The story of the deliverance of the man from Gadara takes place “in the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee.” Jesus and His disciples have crossed the Sea of Galilee which puts them outside the bounds of Galilee and outside the bound of Israel over into Gentile territory. It is clear they are in Gentile territory because they find a “herd of swine” (verse 33). Where this deliverance takes place is important because it proves Jesus' ministry is touching Jews and Gentiles.

The “country of the Gadarenes” refers to a region also known as the Decapolis (Mark 5:20). After crossing the Sea of Galilee and arriving in “the country of the Gadarenes, Jesus “went forth to land.” Stepping out of the ship he encountered “a certain man, which had devils long time...” Matthew tells us there were two men (Matthew 8:28). But in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the one man becomes the focus of the story, so we do not know what happened to the second man.

Some Bible translations use words like “possessed,” “victim,” and “obsessed” in relation to this story. These words are never used in the context of demonic activity. The original language reads simply, “which had devils long time.” That is sufficient. No one has enough information from the Bible to know exactly how a demon works on, or within, a person. We do know this, anybody without Jesus Christ is a child of Satan and vulnerable to anything Satan or his demons can do (John 8:44; Colossians 1:13).

The text indicates the demon compelled the man to do unnatural things such as wearing no clothing and living where corpses were buried rather than in houses among the living. Matthew tells us the man was violent (Matthew 8:28). Nakedness is a sign of shamelessness and sexual perversion (Genesis 9:22-23; Habakkuk 2:15; Acts 19:16; Revelation 3:18). This poor man had been naked and living in the tombs “a long time.” Obviously the man could not live in a “house” or among normal society. He lived “in the tombs” among the dead. He was more at home with the dead than he was with the living.

Verse 28

“When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not.”

When the man with devils “saw Jesus, he cried out...” “Cried” means “screamed.” He also “fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee Jesus, thou Son of God most high?” The “Son of God most high” means “God the sovereign one, God the sovereign Lord.” The demon is saying Jesus Christ is “Son of the sovereign Lord.” The Mormon’s, Jehovah Witnesses, and followers of Islamic teaching might not know who Jesus is, but the demons do! They know their judge. They know their executioner. They know who is in control.

Ironically, the Lord’s disciples asked, “What manner of man is this...” when Jesus calmed the storm (Luke 8:25), while one of the demons inside the man had no difficulty recognizing Jesus as “Son of God most high.” The demon’s fear, however, was not worshipful amazement but a selfish fear of Jesus’ power to cast him out of the man and send him back to hell, as indicated in the words “torment me not” (Luke 4:33-34).

Verse 29

“(For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)”

Jesus “commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man.” Jesus addresses his “command” to one particular “unclean spirit” who was acting as the spokesman for all of the demons. Only Jesus has the authority and power to order the demons to leave this man. It is a mark of His deity.

Note: Some professing believers teach they have the power to bind Satan and cast out demons. There is no scriptural command to bind Satan, nor is there any biblical example of the practice. The disciples were given power to “cast out devils” (Mark 16:17). That power and authority continued in Acts but no believer living today has the power to cast out demons. Satan remains at large as the “prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2) until he is chained during the millennial reign of Christ (Revelation 20:1-3).

The unclean spirit had “oftentimes caught” or seized the man causing him to be a threat to himself and others. The only way the populace could control the man was to “bind him with fetters and chains.” There were no mental institutions or medication to control his body so they restrained him the only way they could to protect everyone. But the “chains” and “shackles” were no match for the demonic power within his body. Society could not protect him or restrain him. Mark says, “...neither could any man tame him” (Mark 5:4).

The power of the devil inside the man would literally “drive” him “into the wilderness.” The word “driven” means “pushed by a strong wind.” It also carries the idea of “oars” pushing a boat in the water. The evil demon spirit within the man forced him in the “wilderness.” “Wilderness” refers to “a waste land.” It is a lonely, solitary, isolated place, absent of life.

A Savior Providing Deliverance (Luke 8:30-33)

Verse 30

“And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him.”

When Jesus questioned the demon, “What is thy name,” the spokesman answered, “Legion: because many devils were entered into him.” At the time of Caesar Augustus, a Roman “legion” numbered 6,826 soldiers, including support personnel. Luke does not tell us exactly how many demons the man

had within him, but obviously, there were many! The word “Legion” means the man was completely conquered by and given over to Satan and the forces of darkness.

Note: This man had a name given to him at birth. But now, he is so possessed by demons that he cannot even remember his own name. He is only known by what possesses him.

Note: No demonic force can take control of a human life and make you sin unless you allow it. But once the door is open, as you see in this story, what can happen is terrifying. This man was completely in the grip of sin. He was incapable of changing his circumstances. He was totally dominated by these demonic forces. We do not find demons under every pew and under every rock. That is not Luke’s purpose for recording this story. Luke is telling you this because he wants you to see the amazing power of Jesus Christ, even over demons. He wants you to know Christ can deliver you from sin.

Verse 31

“And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.”

The demons “besought” or “implored” Jesus not to send them “out into the deep.” “Besought” implies the demons repeated their plea over and over, like a parent having to stand firm when a child is slow to obey. Many so-called “intelligent people” say there is no hell or eternal torment, but these demons knew better (James 2:19).

Note: There are no unbelievers in hell! They are all believers once they get there. The problem is it is too late!

“Deep” is the Greek word *abyssos* {ab-us-sos} meaning “bottomless.” Revelation describes “the abyss” as the place where the unrighteous dead await final judgment (Revelation 9:1-2, 11; 11:7; 17:8). Satan and his demons will be thrown into the abyss for a thousand years after the Great Tribulation. Their final end will be eternal suffering in “*the lake of fire*” (Revelation 20:10).

Verse 32

“And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them.”

Remember, this is Gentile territory, so “an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain” would not be uncommon. The demons “besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them.” The demons want to work in people but

if that is not possible then they want to work in the world. They do not want to go back to hell so they plead with Jesus to let them enter into the pigs. “And he suffered them” means Jesus gave them permission. He had already commanded them to come out of the man. Now He gives them permission to go into the pigs. We can only guess why Jesus allowed the demons to enter the pigs (two thousand, according to Mark 5:13) instead of sending them to hell.

Verse 33

“Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked.”

When the demons left “out of the man, and entered into the swine,” the destructive power became too much for the pigs to handle. “The herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked.” This scene may be somewhat comical for us but in reality it was a gruesome sight to behold. Two thousand screaming, terrorized pigs, plunging down an embankment into the lake and drowning. The sights and sounds must have been terrifying!

A Society Responding to Deliverance (Luke 8:34-36)

Verse 34-35

“When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country. Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.”

The response of the pig caretakers to the destruction of their pigs compelled them to immediately report the events “in the city and in the country.” Everywhere these eyewitnesses went they told this remarkable story. They cannot stop talking about it. Their story must have sounded insane, so the owners of the pigs, the town officials, and others came to see for themselves. They came to see what had happened. The eyewitnesses had told them about the pigs, the man, and especially about Jesus. They wanted to know what kind of man would do what these witnesses said. What they found were drowned pigs, a delivered man, and Jesus!

While Jesus had condemned the demons to a bottomless pit, He had gloriously delivered the tormented man to a new life of freedom and forgiveness. The “devils were departed” and a new life was received. The man was no longer naked, but “clothed.” He was no longer tormented, but “in his right mind.”

“Right mind” means the man had all the characteristics and marks of sanity. Instead of screaming, cutting himself, and running wildly, he is “sitting at the

feet of Jesus.” That is what disciples do! There is no more chaos or unpredictability. He is no longer among the dead. He is now among the living. This is a beautiful picture of spiritual deliverance and God’s merciful saving grace! Jesus changes lives!

Originally, Luke referred to the man in this story as “a certain man, which had devils long time” (verse 27). When Jesus asked the man his name, he answered, “Legion” (verse 30). Luke now refers to the man as “the man, out of whom the devils were departed.” He now had a new nature and a new name to go along with it.

When the people see this, they respond with “fear.” “Afraid” is the Greek word *phobeo* {fob-eh-o}. They were literally “terrified.” People who realize they are in the presence of the power of God are always terrified, scared, or shaken. That is how people responded to God’s presence and power in scripture.

Verse 36

“They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed.”

The eyewitnesses who “saw” all of this happen “told” the people who came to see “by what means” this man “was healed.” “Healed” is the Greek word *sozo* {sode-zo} which means “saved or delivered.” They told the full story of how this man with the devils had been “delivered” by Jesus. They left out no details. They witnessed it all and were terrified to be in Jesus’ presence while it was happening, yet not one of the eyewitnesses, the town people, or the country people asked Jesus to deliver them. In fact, Luke tells us, “*Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them...*” (Luke 8:37). The whole town and the whole region wanted Jesus to go away because they were terrified of His holiness.

Note: The world is comfortable with demons, maniacs, and pigs, but it is uncomfortable with Jesus!

Conclusion

Deliverance from spiritual bondage and sin is serious business. The world in which we live is filled with demonic activity, all designed to control the lives of sinful men. We do not need to spend time trying to identify every evil spirit behind any particular problem. Rather than obsessing over the presence and power of evil, we should look to the delivering power of the Lord Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:1-2).

There is a message in this story for all of us and it is simply this, we may not be possessed by demons, but if we are possessed by what we want or by what

we have and if what we want or what we have is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ, then we are no less in the “fettters and chains of sin” just like the man in Luke’s story. The only power to deliver us from such bondage is the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16).

Amen.