

Jesus and Demons Part 2

Subtitle

Scripture: Matthew 8:28-34

Sermon Series: *Matthew*

Topic: Jesus, Demons, Satan

I. Introduction

- A. **Where we've been and where we're going.** Last week in our journey through Matthew, we considered the final paragraph in chapter eight. We followed Jesus across the Sea of Galilee to the eastern shore, as he landed in the country of the Gadarenes. When Jesus got out of the boat he met "*two men demon-possessed*" (v.28). This account is also told by both Mark (5:1-20) and Luke (8:26-39). Today we will consider the application of certain truths that result from that encounter.
- B. **The power, authority, and identity of Jesus.** Last week we also saw that Matthew's purpose is to demonstrate *the authority, power, and identity of Jesus*. The primary point of this passage (i.e. Mt 8:28-34) is to impress upon us the power of Jesus, not to impress us with the power of demons. After Jesus calmed the hurricane on the Sea of Galilee (8:23-27), the astonished disciples looked at him in amazement and said, "*Who is this man?*" When their boat arrived at the shore these two demon-possessed men ran over and immediately answered the question by saying, "*What have you to do with us, O Son of God?*" (v.29). The disciples did not yet know Jesus' true identity, but these demons did. Jesus proved that he was the Son of God by casting out from these men a whole herd of demons. Jesus possesses *all* power and *all* authority (Mt 28:18). He commands storms and they stop. He commands with entire herds of demons and they flee, i.e. they obey completely. Jesus is infinitely more powerful and authoritative than any and all demons. Jesus is the *Son of God*.
- C. **Demons fear Jesus.** Unclean spirits tremble in the presence of the *Son of God*. Humans may tremble in the presence of spiritual beings, but all spiritual beings, clean or unclean, tremble in the presence of the Son of God. Demons cowered before him¹ and obeyed his every command.

¹ Mark 5:6; Luke 8:28.

D. **This passage is about Jesus, not demons.** We must get this point first and foremost. Nevertheless, there is much we can learn about demons from it.

1. Last Sunday while I was preaching someone watching online messaged me and wrote, "I'm being attacked by the enemy right now." Later while reading this message, the thought occurred to me, "we don't talk much about demons. In light of this passage, should we pause and consider what God's word says about them?"
2. In a conversation over lunch with my sons I asked them this question and they said "Yes." I began to pray about this. Monday afternoon I received a phone call from a person who believed that he or she may have a demon. Tuesday the topic came up in two different meetings. Wednesday morning I spoke with a man who told me that one of his employees has a son whom he is convinced is being tormented by a demon. I shared all this with the elders and we all agreed that we should pause to consider the topic of demons, their activity in this world, and how Christians should respond to this fact.

II. What do we need to know about demons?

- A. **Demons are fallen angels and Satan is chief among them.** Demons are angels who have sinned, having rebelled against the authority of God.² They are created, spiritual beings who disobeyed God and were instantly and finally condemned.³ After they sinned, they were cast out of the kingdom of God. They have not ever nor will they ever receive any grace, but rather only justice.⁴ Their destiny has been determined and they are eternally doomed. Hell was created for *"the devil and his angels"* (Mt 25:41).
- B. **Demons are real.** Jesus confronted them. Jesus conversed with them. Jesus commanded them to leave—and they did exactly what he commanded. We must be cautious to avoid two extremes; 1) is thinking they **do not** exist and 2) is thinking **they everywhere exist**. If the Bible can be trusted to accurately describe the world, then we must believe that demons are real. They are found from the first book (Genesis) to the last (Revelation). They are recorded as having been active in the past and also they will be in the future. Since we are somewhere in the middle, if we are to be biblical in our thinking, then we must believe that they *do* exist in our world.
1. We must remember Paul's instruction.
 - a) **Ephesians 6:12** (ESV) For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.
 - b) We cannot forget that demons are real.

² Jude 1:6.

³ 2 Peter 2:4.

⁴ Hebrews 2:16.

2. ***Demons are present in places we might not expect.*** When Jesus first told his disciples that he was going to Jerusalem and that there he would be abused, rejected, killed, and after three days resurrected, Peter pulled him aside and said, "No way that will happen!" Jesus responded to him by saying, "*Get behind me Satan!*" (Mk 8:31-33). This is surprising, for we might think that this is just Peter being loyal to Jesus, but Jesus see behind those words a loyal friends, but rather the sneaky influence of an unseen enemy. Behind these words Jesus discerned the influence of Satan. Demons apparently show up in places we do not expect.
3. ***Demons are not everywhere present.*** Neither Satan nor demons are omnipresent. They are spiritual beings who can only be in one place at one time. There are many of them, but they are neither everywhere nor in every thing.
 - a) Some people mistakenly see a demon behind every tree and under every rock. The Bible does not. The consistent teaching of Scripture calls Christians to turn away from patterns of sin and to patterns of righteous living and never to a pattern of casting out the demons of every kind. Scripture calls us to believe in God, not to cast out the demon of doubt. If we find ourselves in disagreements, we are called to agree in the Lord, not to cast out the demon of disagreement. We must avoid the error of believing that demons are everywhere or over emphasizing supposed demonic activity.
 - b) *We cannot blame God, the devil, or demons for our sin.* The Bible always holds human individuals responsible for their own sins.
 - (1) "*But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it is conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death*" (James 1:14-15).
 - (2) It is ultimately our own fault when we sin. When we allow our desires to move into sinful places, and submit to those sinful desires, then sinful thoughts give birth to sinful actions and we are at fault. It is for this reason that Paul commands us to "*take captive every thought to the obedience of Christ*" (2 Cor 10:5). Unrestrained sinful desires and imaginations result in sinful deeds. Jesus teaches us that out of that which fills the heart flows the actions of the hands, such as murder, adultery, theft, sexual immorality, lies, and slander (Mt 15:18; cf. 12:34-5). Therefore, if we would keep ourselves from sin, then we must guard our hearts and minds with all vigilance.⁵ If we fail to do this, we put ourselves in spiritual danger.
- C. ***Patterns of sin gives some sort of foothold for demonic activity.*** It is possible, even for Christians, to be persistently plagued by demonic activity due to persistent patterns of willful sin.

⁵ Proverbs 4:23.

1. Ephesians 4:26-27 (ESV) ²⁶ *Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,* ²⁷ *and give no opportunity to the devil.* We know what Jesus says about unforgiveness, unresolved anger, and holding on the bitterness. Failing to deal rightly with anger gives the devil some sort of *"opportunity"* ("foothold" NIV) against us. Paul was writing this to *Christians* in Ephesus. *When we submit ourselves to sin, we are in some way welcoming the devil in.* In this case, by holding on to anger, we *"give opportunity to the devil."* The Christian who continually gives in to sin gives ground the the enemy whereby he is increasingly able to attack.
2. We have been provided protection against such an attack. In Eph 6:10-18 Paul addresses this. He describes *"the whole armor of God,"* which the Christian is to *"put on"* in order *"to be able to stand against the schemes of the devil"* (6:11). The first piece of armor that he mentions is *"the breastplate of righteousness."* The breastplate protects the heart, thus the first and most important point of his argument is that patterns of righteous behavior is of the highest importance. Righteous living is like spiritual kevlar to protect the Christian from *"the flaming darts of the evil one."* However, failing to embrace righteousness makes one more susceptible to some degree of demonic attack.
3. *The Christian's first defense against demonic influence is living a righteous life.* When patterns of righteous living is embraced, the devil has no opportunity to attack. However, where sin is embraced, he does. Continual patterns of sin exposes weaknesses in the Christian's defenses, and thus causes increased vulnerability to attack.
4. On the other hand, Jesus who never sinned, could say of Satan, *"He has no claim on me"* (Jn 14:30). Similarly John explains, *"We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him"* (1 Jn 5:18).
5. All of these passages suggest that where there are patterns of sin in the life of the Christian, that person is more vulnerable to attack by the enemy. Scripture always places the blame for sinful behavior on the person and never exclusively upon the devil or an evil spirit. However, willful rebellion can be made worse by demonic instigation. For example, the Christian who refuses to *"put away anger, wrath, and malice,"*⁶ *"gives opportunity to the devil"* and his demons to come in and stir up this sinful behavior and exacerbate the problem. Since this is true, Peter warns us saying,
 - a) *"Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul"* (1 Peter 2:11).
 - b) Abstaining from sinful passions is like putting on spiritual armor, while indulging in sinful passions is like running defenselessly and unprotected into war.

⁶ Colossians 3:8.

- c) Since it is possible for patterns sin to give the devil and his demons some ground from which to attack us, then let us obey the Lord's command to put off all sin and put on all righteousness.

D. **Demonic activity can be recognized.** How can we recognize when we are facing demonic activity?

1. **The tendency toward isolation.** In Mt 8 these demons drove these men into isolation through dwelling in a graveyard. Normal people do not dwell in graveyards. These two men lived among the tombs (Mt 8:28). Luke specifically tells us that these men were "***driven by the demon into the desert***" (Luke 8:29). In Mt 12:43 when Jesus describes what happens when a demon is cast out, he says it seeks waterless, barren, deserted places. Recall that Jesus was in the desert wilderness for forty days being attacked by the devil. Demons drive people into isolation. They tell you that you are alone and that it is better to be alone and that no one will miss you when you're gone. Consider the fact that almost no one commits suicide in a crowd, but rather almost all do such dreadful acts when they are alone.
2. **The tendency toward excessive violence.** These men were excessively violent. They erupted in violence when anyone attempted to subdue them. They were prone to shrieks and screams (i.e. "*night and day... he was always crying out...*" Mk 5:5,7 "*with a loud voice*" Lk 8:28, cf. Mt 8:29). There are other places in Scripture where people with demons shout out loudly.⁷ These two men were so violent that "*no one could pass*" by them or go near them (Mt 8:28).
3. **Supernatural strength.** These men had often been chained up and bound in shackles, but they broke the chains and wrenched the shackles apart. The seven Sons of Sceva were all beaten up by one man who had a demon (Acts 19:13-16). One demon oppressed man was stronger than seven non-demon oppressed man. Demonic activity is often manifested by supernatural strength.
4. **Self-destructive behavior.** Mark tells us that this man was continually cutting himself with stones. "*Night and day... he was always... cutting himself with stones*" (Mk 5:5). One father told of a demon in his son that often threw him to the ground and even "*often cast him into the fire and into the water to destroy him*" (Mk 9:17-22). Demonic activity is manifested in self-destructive behavior.
5. **The tendency toward sexual immorality.** These men "*for a long time had worn no clothes*" (Lk 8:27). Apparently demonic activity is manifested through diminished sexual inhibitions. In Revelation two, in Jesus' words to the church of Thyatira, he connects "the teaching of Satan" with those who were "teaching people to practice sexual immorality" (Rev. 2:20-24). Thus, where you find sexual sin being taught as

⁷ On the sabbath in the synagogue while Jesus was teaching "a man with an unclean spirit cried out..." But Jesus rebuked him saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit.. cried out with a loud voice and came out of him" (Mark 1:21-26).

normal, i.e. something that is not sin, there is evidence of "the doctrine of demons"⁸ whether this is known or not.

6. **The tendency to strongly oppose the gospel.** When Jesus was in Capernaum teaching in synagogue a man with a demon interrupted his teaching by shouting out causing a great disturbance (Mk 1:23-24). When Paul was in Corinth there were false teachers who claimed to be apostles but who opposed Paul and his ministry. He recognized them to be who they truly were, which is "servants of Satan" (2 Cor 11:13-15).
7. **An inward sense of being in the presence of evil.** One of the results of having the Holy Spirit dwell within the Christian is a very real inward response when one is in the presence of an unholy spirit. The ability to "discern the spirits" or "distinguish the spirits" comes from the Holy Spirit Himself (1 Cor 12:10). We are commanded to make such spiritual discernments. "*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God...*" (1 John 4:1).
8. **Sudden episodes of unexplained or irrational behavior.** When Jesus came down from Mount Transfiguration he met a man whose son had a demon. The man explained that the demon "*seizes him, throws him down, grinds his teeth, and becomes rigid*" and at other times he "*convulsed the boy, rolled about, and foamed at the mouth*" (Mk 9:18, 20). The episodes happened suddenly and for no reason. The man explained that this had been happening since childhood (Mk 9:21). These were unexplained and irrational behaviors, but they were manifest because of the presence of a demon.

III. How Should we Respond to Demonic Activity?

A. Understand that all Christians have authority over demons.

1. Not only the Twelve apostles had authority over demons (Mt 10:1), but also the seventy (Lk 10:17). When the Kingdom of God comes, it comes in power for all its inhabitants.
2. And to all his children who minister in his name, like Philip (Acts 8:7) he gave authority over demons.
3. Paul cast out a demon from a young girl (Acts 16:18).
4. James says to all Christians, "*Submit to God... resist the devil and he will flee from you*" (James 4:7) Submission to God results in retreat by the devil. Peter also commands similar resisting of the devil to believers in Asia Minor (1 Ptr 5:8-9). James and Peter were not writing to a select group of super-Christians. They were writing to average Joe-Christians like you and me. Submitting to God and resisting

⁸ Which Paul elaborates on in 1 Timothy 4:1-5.

the devil results in him fleeing from you. Humble submission to God, resistance to the chief demon causes him to run for his life.

B. Understand that the cross dealt a fatal blow to demonic power. At the crucifixion, a decisive blow was dealt against Satan. Satan is a defeated enemy. He may roar, but he has no teeth.

1. Jesus became human (i.e. "partook of flesh and blood") so that *"through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil..."* (Hebrews 2:14).
2. At the cross, God *"disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him"* (Col 2:15).
3. "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). Was he successful or not?
4. *"...the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down... And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony..."* (Revelation 12:10).
5. The blood of Jesus has atoned for the sins of the saints, therefore the accuser no longer has any valid claim on them. Satan is ruined because sins have been forgiven and washed away.

C. Understand that there is no need to fear demons.

1. Demons fear Jesus and if the Spirit of Jesus is within his children, then they need not fear demons. *"Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world"* (1 John 4:4).
2. Paul reminds the Ephesians, *"In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one"* (Ephesians 6:16). Do you hear the certainty of Paul? Take up faith and you can extinguish ALL Satan's darts. Not some of them, but all of them. Not 'you might extinguish,' but "you can extinguish" them. Remember what Jesus told his disciples, *"if you but had faith the size of a tiny mustard seed you could say to a mountain, 'jump into the ocean,' and it would obey you"* (Mt 17:20-21).
3. Ephesians 6:13 (ESV) Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

D. Speak directly to the demon in the name of Jesus and command it to leave.

1. When Jesus cast out the demons, he spoke directly to them and commanded them, "Go," and they obeyed. When Jesus cast out the demon from the child, Jesus said, *"...I command you, come out of him and never enter him again"* (Mk 9:25).
2. When Paul cast out the demon from the slave girl in Philippi, he said, *"I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her"* (Acts 16:18) and the demon obeyed.

3. Sometimes this simple command will be all that it takes, but other times it may be useful and needful to quote a Scripture passage or to pray Scripture. Remember it is the word of God that is "*the sword of the Spirit*,"⁹ thus the truth of God's word is the offensive weapon by which to engage the enemy.
 4. Such a command can be given by another who is praying for someone or if you, as a Christian, sense the presence of a demon in your own life, then you can speak directly to the demon and in the name of Jesus command it to leave. James instructs us to "*Submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee*" (Jam 4:7). The biblical pattern is that this should always be spoken out loud not silently prayed. Remember that when Jesus himself was attacked and tempted by Satan Jesus quoted Scripture out loud.
- E. **Is this real?** Can Christians really experience demonic strongholds in their lives? When faced with a demonic influence, can commanding the demon to leave really effect spiritual deliverance? I know personally several examples of Christians who have experienced such things and have been delivered from demonic strongholds in their lives. These people have given me permission to share this. They are believers and you would know them if I named them, however, I will not name them.
1. Example 1: Out of the six couples who were married this summer, one recounted a time when his mother asked him what he most feared about getting married. He said, "I am afraid that my past sexual sins of pornography and masturbation will follow me into my marriage. I don't want to fail in this way anymore." Mother responded saying, "Let's pray about this." Prayer began. During the prayer this young man was encouraged to confess and name this sin. He did. After praying he reported that during this prayer he sensed an inward release and a new kind of freedom was granted.
 2. Example 2 - A young man reported that from childhood while doing homework or writing essays or exams he would often be mentally paralyzed by an inability to think or form coherent thoughts. It would be kind of like writer's block on steroids. He would get entangled in this web of thoughts that he could not get out of and which would cause a downward spiral of greater and greater anxiety which would then result in an inward rage and fury such that he would want to hit things or destroy things. Recently this happened and he went to a friend for help. As he was fighting all these emotions he stopped and said, "This is so unusual." He wondered whether this was a demonic attack since it was so unusual and so irrational. They began to pray and he remembered Jesus named the demon (i.e. "Legion") before he cast it out. This young man did the same. He named this problem and in prayer in the name of Jesus he cast it out. He reported that there was an inward sense of release and freedom that immediately came. He reported, "Something real inside me changed."

⁹ Ephesians 6:17.

3. Example 3 - A young woman recently found herself struggling with depression. She thought that a few days alone would help her regain her footing and recover her sense of peace. This did not work. Being alone only made things worse. An inward emotional battle began and a deep downward spiral followed. Eventually her husband invited some friends to come and pray with them. During a season of prayer it began evident that perhaps a demonic influence was at work. Once again this problem was named and confessed and cast out in the name of Jesus and this woman reported that something real and inward and spiritual took place and that she has now experienced a new sense of spiritual freedom.

IV. Conclusion

- A. **Demons are real.** Demonic activity is likely more prevalent than you think. Not every problem or every struggle comes from a demonic influence, but some do. Be alert to this fact.
- B. **Demons can attack and plague Christians.** Patterns of sin in our lives gives some sort of foothold in our lives to the enemy. Examine your life. Are there any such footholds? If so, then confess your sins. Turn away from them and turn to Jesus. Accept and receive his amazing grace and renewable mercy. Renounce Satan and all evil.
- C. **Deliverance is possible through the mighty name of Jesus.** I believe there are some of you in this room who need such deliverance. We have been praying for you since Thursday. I have asked about 20 people to be available to pray with you if you sense that you need someone to pray with you about some particular sin or stronghold.
- D. **Through Jesus Christians have authority over Satan and his demons.** He is a toothless lion. He is defeated. We by faith are called to live in the freedom Christ has to offer and not in slavery to sin or to Satan. When you pray, name your sin. Confess your issue out loud and Jesus will deliver you.
- E. **Submission to Jesus is infinitely sweeter than slavery to Satan.** Go to Jesus in faith and he will set you free. The same God who delivered Israel from Egypt is the same God who can you from Satan. The same God who separated the Red Sea has the woe to separate you from demonic strongholds. Will we sing, go to anyone near you and we will pray with you.

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