

► **Read Luke 8:26–39.**

Jesus and his disciples have traveled at great peril across the width of the Sea of Galilee, around eight miles, to “the region of the Gerasenes” (v. 26). This is the only time Luke shows Jesus ministering in Gentile territory.¹ (To refresh your memory of their eventful crossing, review Luke 8:22–25.)

1. Immediately on arrival, Jesus “was met by a demon-possessed man” (v. 27).
 - a. What first impressions might the disciples have had of this man? (v. 27a)

- b. What else does Luke tell us about the suffering and torture he has experienced? (vv. 27b, 29)

2. Carefully review what happens in verse 28. What does this tell you about the relationship between Jesus and the demons? (📖* Col. 1:15–19; Jas. 2:19)

3. After Jesus calmed “the winds and the water,” the disciples asked, “Who is this?” (8:25).
 - a. What title does the demon-possessed man use to address Jesus? (v. 28)

*The Difference Between
Demon Possession and
Mental Illness*

“In vv. 27 and 29 we have a classic description of demon possession. The symptoms of such possession are like those of certain [mental] illnesses known today, but Luke does not confuse illness with demon possession.... Certain effects of demon possession cited in this passage are (1) disregard for personal dignity (nakedness), (2) social isolation, (3) retreat to the simplest kind of shelter (caves, often containing tombs, were also used for shelter by the very poor), (4) demons’ recognition of Jesus’ deity, (5) demonic control of speech, (6) shouting, and (7) extraordinary strength. The basic tragedy of the demoniac lay not in mental or physical symptoms; in his case a human being was controlled by powers totally antithetical to God, his kingdom, and the kingdom blessings of ‘righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit’ (Rom 14:17).”²

b. What is the significance of this title? (Gen. 14:18-20; Dan. 4:2-3; Lk. 1:32, 35)

The Abyss

is “[a] place of confinement for evil spirits and for Satan.”³

(📖 Revelation 20:1-3)

4. When Jesus asks the man his name, the spirits give their name instead, “Legion” (v. 30b). How does Luke explain this answer? (v. 30b)

Legion

“‘Legion’ was not normally used as a proper name. It refers to a Roman military unit consisting of thousands of soldiers.... Thus ‘Legion’ implies that there were many demons.”⁵

5. The nature of demons is to “work for destruction.”⁴ We have seen the destructive effect they have had on the man. What happens to this herd of about two thousand pigs (Mk. 5:13) when the legion of demons possesses them? (v. 33)

6. Those that have been tending the pigs run to tell everyone in the surrounding area the fate of their animals. When people hear what has happened, they come to see for themselves. What do the people find? (vv. 35-36)

7. How would you have expected the people of the region to respond to the man’s release from demon possession?

How do they respond instead? (vv. 35-37)

Why do you think they respond the way they do?

8. How is the man's response to Jesus different from that of the people? (v. 38)

What is Jesus' response to the man's request to follow him? (v. 39)

9. What might have made it hard for the man to return home?

Nevertheless, what does he do? (v. 39)

10. Jesus and his disciples come all the way over to the region of the Gerasenes and yet, because of the insistence of the people, are not there for long.
How might the disciples have evaluated this trip?

How does Luke 15:1-10 help us understand how Jesus sees this trip?

Jesus went out of his way - and across a violent, stormy sea - to show compassion and heal this one suffering, demon-possessed Gentile. As you think about the pursuing love of Jesus shown in the parable above, remember that you are precious and worthwhile to him who sought you out to heal and to save you. We too can respond like the man healed of his demons and tell all who will hear how much Jesus has done for us.

*📖 For further study

¹ Philip W. Comfort, Gen. Ed. *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*. Vol. 12 (The Gospel of Luke; Acts) (Carol Stream: Tyndale, 2006), 135.

² Frank E. Gaebelien, Gen. Ed. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary with the New International Version of the Holy Bible in Twelve Volumes*. Vol. 8 (Matthew, Mark, Luke) (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 913.

³ Kenneth Barker, Gen. Ed. *The NIV Study Bible, 10th Anniversary Edition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 1553 (footnote on Luke 8:31).

⁴ Norvel Geldenhuys. *The Gospel of Luke: The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), 255.

⁵ Gaebelien, 913.