

JESUS AND THE DEMONIC LUKE 8:22-39

There are two big elephants in the room with this story.

The first is the pigs. It seems really cruel to the pigs. It also seems really unfair to the owners of the pigs. They would have lost their livelihoods through no fault of their own. While the whole pigs rushing to their destruction is a powerful illustration of the evil destructive power of the demonic and the ultimate fate of the demonic, I have no easy answers to this problem with the pigs. So we just have to park this in the too hard basket of questions that we do not have answers to.

The second big elephant in the room is demons. To many people in our community today to talk about demons puts you in the lunacy fringe category. And yet, over the last 20 years, there is a huge rise in movies that deal with spiritual beings or forces of some kind. Also a surprising number of people have had strange experiences of a spiritual kind.

While many in the community would rubbish the idea of the demonic, most would recognize some actions as evil. We also recognize that some people's behaviour is self-destructive. When we see a loved one in the grip of an addiction that is tearing their life apart as well as those around them. we understand they are in the grip of something that seems more powerful than they are.

So this elephant in the room. If we are familiar with the Bible, we know about the demonic. We see the impact of evil. However, my guess is the most of us here have had little first-hand experience with the demonic. In addition, for many it seems extreme and fringy. Therefore, it is a barrier to dealing with this story. We skip over it as irrelevant and too hard.

At a theological level, the point of the story is simple. It is that God alone has power of the demonic. We cannot deal with the demonic in human strength. The people had tried to restrain the man but had no success. However, despite seeing evil running rampant at times, God's is all-powerful, can, and will defeat evil. That is the key message of the story.

This leads us overall issue of spiritual warfare and the unseen realm. What does the Bible say about this?

1. We are told very little in the Bible about the unseen evil spiritual realm. Therefore, we need to be very careful on this subject because Scripture does not support much of what is written. We know there is an unseen spiritual realm, angels and demons. We know there is a being called Satan or the devil and war between two realms. However, it seems clear that we are deliberately not told much.

2. The Bible tells us to focus on God, not the demonic. Some Christians see demonic spiritual forces everywhere and blame them for everything. The continual call of Scripture is to focus on God, not Satan. The reality is that everything has three sources. It can be from God, it can be from the enemy in some way, or it can be from ourselves. Much that is wrong in the world comes from our own desires. James 1:14. Some Christians seem more fascinated in Satan than they do in God.

3. While we are not to focus on Satan, we should expect opposition. We are not to be naïve. We are in a spiritual battle. We see hints in the Old Testament. We have the devil tempting Adam and Eve and inspiring David to take up a census. (Gen 3:1, 1 Chron 21:1), we have the story of Job, (Job 1:6, 2:1). We see Saul tormented by a spirit. We see Daniel's prayers being held up by a battle in the spiritual realm. Dan 12:1, 10:13) We see Jesus being tempted by the Devil. Luke 4:2 So we get these little glimpses. And then we see Jesus dealing a lot with the demonic. Also see Luke 10:18 The clearest passage we have is Paul in Eph 6:10-18

I think we are lulled in the West into a false sense of security. We do not encounter much obvious in your face spiritual force. Some would say that Satan does not need to do that because if most people do not believe in the spiritual realm, then why would he advertise it.

Some would say that we make passages like this too much about us, and focus on personal demons, rather than see the demonic as structures and ideas and influences. Ie Some would say the biggest demonic influence in the West is materialism.

4. We are to actively live out our faith. This is our best defence in the battle. Paul gives a list of spiritual armour that he encourages us to put on. We don't do this by prayer so much as living out our lives as Christians. Paul is using the armour of a Roman soldier to make his analogy. **Belt of Truth:** You don't pray on truth. You can meditate on truth ie that you are Loved by God, and you can Live in truth by telling the truth to yourself and others. When you live in truth, the enemy cannot accuse you.



Body armour (breast plate of Righteousness)

There are two types of righteousness. (rightness)
There is a rightness that can only come from God.
We are never good enough to be in the presence of a perfect God. However, God has come to earth in the form of a human, Jesus, lived a perfect life and given Jesus rightness to us. The second type of righteousness is how we live. If we are obedient to God in how we live, then this protects us from the enemy. The enemy has no foothold on our lives as Christians unless we do something that gives us opening. As Christians if we start, dabbling in the occult and getting our palms read at gypsy fairs, and then we are giving Satan an opening. If we commit sexual sin, we are giving Satan a doorway. Right living is a spiritual weapon. Aside. If you have been involved in the occult in any way, then I encourage you to pray confessing this, renouncing all involvement and asking to be set free from any influence from them.

Shoes of peace that comes from the good news. Some translations - readiness to share the good news. When we are committed to God's kingdom and purposes, then we are in a far safer place than when we are following our own agenda.

Shield of faith I live in faith when I refuse to worry about things. I live in faith when I am generous. I live in faith when I do not believe the enemies lies. Faith is about actively trusting in a faithful God.

Salvation as your helmet If you are not a Christian, then you very vulnerable to the schemes of the enemy. However, when we make a commitment to trust in Jesus and remind ourselves of what he has done for us, then we have a great security.

Sword of spirit word of God You cannot pray on the word of God. You have to read it. Study it. Memorize it. Then it becomes a weapon we can use when we feel tempted or are struggling.

Prayer is the last weapon. We come to God with all our requests, knowing that he is more powerful than any spiritual force. The last line of the Lord's Prayer is Protect us from evil. Ask God each day to protect you from every evil scheme of the enemy that wants to come against you and your family and this church and this city and this country.

Living out our faith in this way is the primary way we resist the enemy. There is a place to speak out prophetically into the spiritual realm. There is a place to take authority over spiritual forces. However, the predominate way we are to wage spiritual warfare is to focus on God, and to actively live out our faith.

5. We are on the winning side. Satan is defeated. We can live with confidence. Yes we can be wounded in battle. There will be setbacks. How-

ever, if we understand what Jesus did on the cross, we know that Satan has been defeated.

Revelation is a book written to the early Christians reassuring them of this. Evil and the demonic are pictured using the imagery of Babylon. Revelation show that Babylon will be defeated. This was hugely encouraging to the early Christians who saw clearly that Rome, who was persecuting Christians was their Babylon. In their circumstances, it looked like evil was winning. However, John assures them that God's purposes would prevail and Gods kingdom would come about. We live with confidence because we are on the winning side.

Application

1. If there are areas of your life, blatantly sinning, you are opening a window for oppression and influence. Put it right, though confession will free you.
2. Do not waste time energy speculating on what the Bible does not tell us. Focus on getting to know God better, not studying and speculating on demonic.
3. Your best defence to the spiritual battle we are in is to live as God intended you to live.
4. Do not be surprised at opposition but do not despair when you get persecuted or ridiculed or you see evil flourishing or affecting you because you are on the winning side.

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REFLECTION + DISCUSSION

1. *What do you make of this passage? What are your reactions and feelings upon reading it.*
2. *Have you had any encounters with "evil" or demonic forces?*
3. *Have you been guilty at times of either focusing too much on the demonic, of ignoring Satan altogether? How do we find the balance?*
4. *What is both helpful and unhelpful in Christians seeing themselves being in a spiritual war zone?*
5. *Where do we most clearly see "spiritual powers" at work in our city and nation at the moment? How does this impact on our everyday lives?*
6. *In what way do Christians treat spiritual warfare like some kind of magic? i.e. if we say these words something will happen. What is the danger in this?*



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