

THE KING OF KINGS: A STUDY OF MATTHEW

The King's Kingdom: A Study of Matthew 8–13

STUDY FOUR

Dealing with Demons

Matthew 8:28–34

When we are in the presence of evil forces that we cannot otherwise explain, we must stand in faith and pray in the Spirit. Don't underestimate the power of prayer.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

JESUS has cleansed a leprous man, restored the centurion's paralyzed servant, cooled the fever of Peter's mother-in-law, and healed those gathered at His door (Matthew 8:1–17). In some ways, Jesus' ministry resembled that of the prophets—people whom God had empowered at times to perform miracles. But then Jesus calmed the raging sea, displaying divine authority like no other (8:23–27).

“Who is this man?” the astonished disciples wondered after Jesus rebuked the wind and waves like a parent might scold an unruly child (8:27). In time, the disciples' eyes would open, and they would see Jesus as sovereign ruler of creation.¹ For now, they were still trying to reconcile Jesus' humanity *and* His divinity.

While the disciples wrestled with their question, the answer flowed freely from the most loathsome and unexpected source, as we'll discover in Matthew 8:28–34. Demons that had taken residence in two pitiful men from Gadarene immediately recognized Jesus as the “Son of God” (8:29) when they encountered Him.

Let's pick up our study as the disciples put ashore on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee and follow Jesus as He shines heaven's light into the realm of demonic darkness.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

Dealing with Demons

Matthew 8:28–34



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Demons are real but invisible creatures; devious, insidious servants of Satan that intend us harm. Their existence sends chills down our spines, but Christ's authority over them gives us the backbone to stand against them in Jesus' name. Open your study in prayer, inviting the Lord to illumine your mind through His Word, fill you with wonder at Christ's power, and give you courage to stand firm in His power.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

As you read *Matthew 8:28–34*, notice the flow of the passage as Matthew describes the *setting* (Matthew 8:28), Jesus' *dialogue* with the demons (8:29–31), the *deliverance* of the men from demonic control (8:32), and the *results* when the townspeople realize what Jesus can do (8:33–34).



Observation: The Setting, Dialogue, Deliverance, and Results

Observation in *Searching the Scriptures* lays the foundation on which we build our interpretation.² Look closely at the action words, the descriptions, contrast and comparison, cause and effect, and any surprising elements in this account—such as the unexpected ending.

Matthew identifies the *setting* as “the region of the Gadarenes” (Matthew 8:28). Locate the possible site in your Bible map or atlas. A map is included on page 159 of Pastor Chuck Swindoll's commentary, *Insights on Matthew 1–15* and online, “*Ministry of Jesus*.” For a brief history of this Gentile region, consult your resources or the online *Encyclopedia of the Bible*. What did you find out?



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The two men were *demonized*, as the Greek term literally states, meaning they were under the control of demonic powers. What about these men and how they lived would have repulsed and terrified Matthew's Jewish readers (*Matthew 8:28*)?

In their *dialogue* with Jesus, the demons' questions reveal their understanding of two facts. What do even demons know (*8:29*, see also *James 2:19*)?

The villagers feared being attacked by the demonized men. The demons, however, were *far more* afraid of Jesus. What sent waves of terror through the demons? What did they beg Jesus to do instead (*8:30–31*)?



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In Matthew's account of the *deliverance*, Jesus said one word: "Go!" (Matthew 8:32 NASB). What does this word and the demons' instant response convey about the nature of Jesus and the nature of demons (8:32)?

Every demon knows the Son of God, and every demon knows that its days are numbered. Satan will ultimately be cast into the lake of fire, which has been prepared for the devil and his angels. They know they are living on borrowed time. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The *results* of Jesus casting out the demons and the pigs plunging off the hillside draws a poignant and tragic comparison and contrast between the townspeople and the demons. What did the people beg Jesus to do (8:33–34)?

Jesus came to the land of the Gadarenes to display His divine authority and offer Himself to anyone in need. We would expect the townspeople to embrace Jesus after He rid the demonic blight from their community. But how did the people respond? They cast out Jesus!



Interpretation: The Supernatural Power of Jesus

Let's examine what Matthew intended his readers to learn about the person of Jesus, the nature of demons, and the choice for people.



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The Person of Jesus

It's not an accident that Jesus' encounter with these demons comes on the heels of His encounter with the stormy sea. What do we learn about the lordship of Jesus in these natural and supernatural settings?

What do the sea's tempestuous waves and demoniacs' tormented souls illustrate about our condition apart from Jesus? What can He do for us?

The Nature of Demons

Read the brief article, "Excursus: Demonology 101," on page 161 in Pastor Chuck's commentary, *Insights on Matthew 1–15*. Write down a few Bible facts about what demons are and what they can and can't do.



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What facts about demons does Matthew's account of the Gadarene demoniacs confirm?

Demons are actively engaged in evil objectives. They are aggressive and relentless. They have supernatural power, but they are not all-powerful. They operate under the permissive will of God. They must bow to His authority and obey His commands.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The Choice for People

The Gentile Gadarenes could have displayed the same faith as the Gentile centurion, who bowed to the authority of Jesus. But they sent Him away. Perhaps Jesus' show of authority over the demonic world was too much evidence of a power the people didn't care to reckon with. Sadly, they would rather push Jesus away than risk Him changing their lives too.

What message does Matthew teach his readers regarding the Gadarenes' rejection of Jesus?

The people gave not one word of gratitude that the men who were demonized were restored. Not one word of gratitude that they are now safe because Jesus cast out the demons.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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 **Correlation: Added Details from Mark's Account**

Mark 5:1–20 and Luke 8:26–39 present longer accounts of Jesus' casting out the demons in Gadara. Use the following chart to summarize details from *Mark's account* that add deeper insight. Mark featured one of the two demoniacs from Matthew's account. Only through this man, the demons spoke to Jesus.

Matthew 8:28–34	Mark 5:1–20
<p>The Setting—8:28</p> <p><i>When Jesus arrived on the other side of the lake, in the region of the Gadarenes, two men who were possessed by demons met him. They came out of the tombs and were so violent that no one could go through that area.</i></p>	<p>The Setting—5:1–5</p>
<p>The Dialogue—8:29–31</p> <p><i>They began screaming at him, “Why are you interfering with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torture us before God’s appointed time?” There happened to be a large herd of pigs feeding in the distance. So the demons begged, “If you cast us out, send us into that herd of pigs.”</i></p>	<p>The Dialogue—5:6–12</p>
<p>The Deliverance—8:32</p> <p><i>“All right, go!” Jesus commanded them. So the demons came out of the men and entered the pigs, and the whole herd plunged down the steep hillside into the lake and drowned in the water.</i></p>	<p>The Deliverance—5:13</p>
<p>The Results—8:33–34</p> <p><i>The herdsmen fled to the nearby town, telling everyone what happened to the demon-possessed men. Then the entire town came out to meet Jesus, but they begged him to go away and leave them alone.</i></p>	<p>The Results—5:14–20</p>



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Both Mark and Luke's account include the postscript of the formerly demonized man traveling through the Decapolis, proclaiming "the great things Jesus had done for him" (Mark 1:20). What a transformation Jesus brought this man—from being a prisoner of darkness to becoming an ambassador of the light of Christ!

Jesus said to the man, "Go and let people know what happened to you," which is the central message of a great testimony. We who know the Lord Jesus have a story to tell!

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Vital Principles Worth Remembering

This study has demonstrated the reality of demons and our need to know how to deal with them. Here are four words of counsel from Pastor Chuck.

First, *expect struggles with unseen forces*. Remember that "we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but . . . against evil spirits in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12).

Second, *stand firm in the full armor of God*. If we're going to fight with confidence, we must wear the armor God provided: the "belt of truth," "body armor of God's righteousness," shoes [of] peace," "shield of faith," "helmet [of] salvation," and "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (6:14–17).

Third, *hold up the shield of faith and pray in the Spirit*. Have faith in Jesus and surround yourself by His Spirit through prayer.

Fourth, *never forget you are on the winning side*. No one knows better than the devil and his demons that in the end, God wins, and we with Him!

In light of this study, how will you handle those spine-tingling brushes with the forces of darkness that we all sense from time to time?



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What encouragement can you take from our study about the Savior's power over spiritual darkness in this world (1 John 4:4)?

It takes keen spiritual discernment to know whether an evil spirit is loose in our lives or if we're suffering the fallout of living in a sinful world. Demons are not responsible for every emotional crisis or physical illness. However, we must be wary. If Jesus' example teaches us anything, it's that we are to be ready for spiritual battle . . . to be fully equipped to engage the enemy in Jesus' most powerful name. *He alone is the Son of God!*



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for not leaving me alone in this world but providing Your Spirit and Your power, which are made possible through Jesus Christ. Deliver me from the fear of spiritual darkness. Remind me that Your Spirit in me is greater than any spirit in the world. I trust You to guide me as I follow Christ and live in His armor of protection. In His name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. When the disciples saw Jesus walk on the water, they fully understood who He was. They worshiped Him, declaring, "You really are the Son of God!" (Matthew 14:33)
2. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."

