

The Son of God Most High

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[0 : 00] Jesus is who Luke has been saying, the very Son of God. It happened that Jesus and his disciples got into a boat and traveled to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

! It was a region called the Gerasenes, and what the disciples and the locals witnessed there with Jesus makes some thrillers seem tame.

You can bet that eyes were wide and that adrenaline was flowing. Let me read for us from Luke chapter 8, beginning in verse 26.

They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town.

For a long time this man had not worn clothes, or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?

[1 : 15] I beg you, don't torture me. For Jesus had commanded the impure spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.

Wow. One of the first things that we notice here is the condition of this man. Luke tells us that he was a demon-possessed man.

Quite literally, a man having demons. And that's demons plural. Luke tells us that this man was from the town. But he hadn't lived in the town among the people for a long time.

For a long time, this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. So he's completely naked.

He hasn't been wearing clothes for a long time. He hasn't been living in a house of any kind for a long time. His shelter is the tombs outside of town.

[2 : 36] Place where the dead are buried. If this were here and this were today, it'd be like somebody living out at the Davidson Cemetery. But back then in the land of Israel, their cemeteries usually consisted of tombs that were cut into the hillsides.

So it says this man for a long time had lived in the tombs. Can you imagine this? Sleeping among the remains of dead people.

Bodies, containers used to hold remains. And Luke tells us a little more about this man in verse 29. He says, Jesus had commanded the impure spirit to come out of him.

And so in this case, having demons meant that yes, these spirits were actually inside him. They were in his body, living in him. And Luke tells us about how this possession affected the man here in verse 29.

Many times, the spirit had seized him and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.

[3 : 59] So things have been really bleak for this man. He's not just under the influence of this evil spirit. We're following its suggestions.

He's being controlled by this demon. Many times, it seized him. It forcibly took hold of him and made him do things.

Many times, it had driven him into solitary places. He was driven by the demon. We see the control and the power that it had over him.

Forcing him to do things against his will. This man is a slave. He's a prisoner of this evil spirit inside him. I can't help but see the desperateness and the hopelessness of this man.

This is someone's son. Perhaps someone's brother. And look at what's happened to him. Imagine this happened to a person that you know and love.

[5 : 08] A person in your family. A person in your family. They're running around naked. Shouting and screaming loudly outside the town in the night.

We read in Mark's gospel. They're cutting themselves with stones. We read that in Mark's gospel as well.

It's like they've become an animal. And gone mad. Now think of this from the perspective of the townspeople.

We get the sense that this has been a huge problem. Many times, they have chained him. And not just a little pair of handcuffs, but chained him.

Hand and foot, it says. And kept him under guard on top of that as well. Yet every time, this evil spirit would seize the man.

[6 : 08] And the result was the same. He would break his chains. And escape. Listen to the same story from Mark's perspective. Mark 5 verse 3.

This man lived in the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore. Not even with a chain. For he had often been chained. Hand and foot. But he tore the chains apart.

And broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. And there's two things here. First, as we've been seeing.

There's the desperateness and hopelessness of this man. This man is powerless to do anything about this. Neither he nor anyone else can stop this evil spirit.

From having its way with him. If even the strongest men. And iron chains. Can't do anything. Then what hope is there for him? He's a slave.

[7 : 09] And the damage that this spirit. Is causing him to do. To his own body. We can only imagine the pain. That this spirit is causing. Physically in his body.

With the things that it's making him do. Emotionally. Relationally. We can only guess at how many in the town. Have lost hope for him.

He's beyond help. It seems. Is there even anything left. Of the man that he once was. Some probably wondered. He was likely seen more as a problem.

And a nuisance. Than as a man. The feelings towards him. Were probably more anger. And frustration.

And fear. Than compassion. And pity. So that's the first thing we see. Is the desperateness and hopelessness. Of this poor man.

[8 : 09] Caused by this evil spirit. The second thing we see here. Is the power. Of this evil spirit. I think Luke and Mark. Both emphasize this.

They want. Us to see this. There's a power. At work in this man. That has been challenged. Many times. And in many ways. But so far. Nothing has been able.

To overcome it. No one has been able. To overpower. This spirit. Or cure him. Of this. Thing inside him.

How is it. That this man. Can tear. Iron chains. Apart. How can he break. Irons. Shackles.

How can he overpower. The strongest. Of men. Groups of them. There is supernatural. Power at work here. Flesh and bone.

[9 : 08] Can do very little. To iron. Chains. And shackles. This is scary. This man. Is doing things. That are naturally. Impossible. For him.

Because of the power. Of this demon. Inside of him. And yet. What does Luke. Want us to see here. Luke. Wants us to see. How this evil spirit.

Reacts. To the presence. Of Jesus. Verse 28. When the man. Saw Jesus. He cried out. And fell at his feet.

Shouting at the top. Of his voice. What do you want. With me Jesus. Son of the most. High God. I beg you. Don't. Torture me. Wow.

That's utterly. Shocking. Isn't it? How does this man. Know. That the one. Standing in front of him. Whom he's never met before. Is the son.

[10 : 06] Of the most. High God. This isn't just. The man speaking. This is the demon. Inside of him.

Talking. And how is it. That this. Fearsome spirit. Who has been. Unrivaled. Up till now. Is. Is cowering. Before Jesus. And begging.

Jesus. Not to torture him. Isn't that surprising. This demon. Knows exactly.

Who Jesus is. He knows. Who God is. He knows. That there is a God. And that he is. All powerful. That he is the almighty. And he knows.

That Jesus. Is the son. Of almighty God. And this. Fearsome. And powerful. Fallen angel. Is terrified.

[11:05] And all Jesus. Did. To get this response. From the demon. Was to command. The impure spirit. To come out. Of the man. The power. Of this evil spirit.

Was great. But the power. Of Jesus. Words. Alone. Was far. Greater. Let's keep going. Verse 30. Jesus asked him.

What's your name? Legion. He replied. Because many demons. Had gone into him. And they begged.

Jesus. Repeatedly. Not to order them. To go into. The abyss. A large herd of pigs. Was feeding there. On the hillside. The demons.

Begged Jesus. To let them go. Into the pigs. And he gave them. Permission. When the demons. Came out of the man. They went. Into the pigs.

[11:59] And the herd. Rushed down. The steep bank. Into the lake. And was drowned. When those. Tending the pigs. Saw what had happened. They ran off. And reported this.

In the town. And countryside. And the people. Went out. To see. What had happened. When they came. To Jesus. They found the man. From whom the demons.

Had gone out. Sitting at Jesus feet. Dressed. And in his right mind. And they were afraid. Those who had seen it.

Told the people. How the demon possessed man. Had been cured. So Jesus asks. The name of the demon.

The name given. Is legion. It's the same word. Used to describe. A great multitude. Of soldiers. Usually numbering. In the thousands. Luke says.

[12:53] That this was his name. Because. Many demons. Had gone into him. And then we notice. From here on. Down. In this account. All the references.

To the demons. In this man. Are now plural. One thought. Is that there were. Many demons. In the man. And yet. All of them. Were sort of subject.

Or following. One powerful demon. Named legion. Who ruled over them all. And who spoke. For them all. Well this detail.

Brings. Greater depth. To all that we've. Talked about so far. No wonder this man. Has been so deeply afflicted. His body. Has been controlled. And inhabited.

Not just by one. But many. Evil spirits. This also explains. The power. And the strength. Of this man. To break his chains.

[13:48] And overpower. Groups of strong men. It also explains. The madness. Of this man. There's more than one. Wicked creature. In his body.

Each expressing. Its own individuality. At times. And yet again. Notice the reaction. Of these many demons. To Jesus.

In verse 31. They begged. Jesus. Repeatedly. Not to order them. To go into the abyss. So Jesus. Has already commanded them. To come out of the man. And they know. They must do that.

There's no defiance here. There's no arguing. About whether or not. They're going to come out. They have to come out.

Because Jesus. Has commanded it. But it seems. That on the way out. They make this attempt. To negotiate. With Jesus. About where to. Where they can go to.

[14:46] And. We hear this word. Begged. They begged. Jesus. Repeatedly. Not to order them. To go. Into the abyss.

These powerful spirits. Are at the mercy. Of Jesus. They plead. With Jesus. They seem powerless. And hopeless. Helpless. Before Jesus. They seem to know. Some things about Jesus. That many do not. And what do they beg for?

Notice. They beg for Jesus. Not to order them. To go into. The abyss. Not to order them.

I love the way. That Luke phrases this. It's not just. The abyss. That they fear. It's Jesus. Giving the order. That they fear.

[15:47] Because they know. That if he commands. Them to go there. They must. Obey. These demons. Powerful as they are. They cannot.

Defy. The command of Jesus. And they know it. They just can't. If he gives that authoritative order. They must come out.

They must go where he says. And they will. Now what's the abyss? This place they don't want to go. The abyss is mentioned only nine times.

In the New Testament. Seven of those mentions. Are in the book of Revelation. And the word means literally. Without. Without. Bottom. Or bottomless.

It refers to an immensely deep space. Or hole. The word could be used to describe a cavern. Or shaft. That appears to go down forever.

[16:47] Where no bottom can be seen. Just darkness. In some ancient writings. The abyss is contrasted with. The sky. Or the heavens. The sky is sort of an expanse.

Without a ceiling. The abyss is. An expanse in the opposite direction. Without. A bottom. Or a floor. According to one Greek lexicon. The word abyss was.

Used to describe a transcendent place. A place associated with the dead. And with hostile powers. The underworld. Or the netherworld.

The place. Or the prison. Of the devil. And of the demons. In the vision that John received.

Which he recorded in the book of Revelation. The abyss is the place where the beast. Comes up from at the end. It's the place where Abaddon. The destroying angel. Comes up from.

[17:45] It's the place where the devil is cast into. And locked up for a thousand years. While Christ reigns on earth. In Revelation chapter 20. And it may well be the place that Jude is referring to in his letter.

When he describes fallen angels. Who are being kept in darkness. Bound with everlasting chains. While they await judgment on the great day. Bringing these things together.

It would seem that the abyss is a sort of spiritual prison. For fallen angels. And if. What Jude describes here. Is what's happening in the abyss.

It may be. That fallen angels who are sent there. By God. Are imprisoned there forever. And forever lose their ability to prowl. And roam. On earth. With a few notable exceptions.

Of course. Some we see coming out in Revelation. A place of permanent confinement. Perhaps. For wicked angels. Who cross certain lines.

[18:47] Or perhaps. For angels that commit certain abominations. Before the final day. Of judgment. There's a lot of mystery here. And a lot we don't know. But if this is right.

Then it would explain why these demons. Are begging Jesus. So desperately. Not to order them to go into that place. It's like they sense that.

There's a moment here. And if we miss this. We're done for. Can we go into the pigs? Don't send us into the abyss. And surprisingly.

Jesus gives them permission. To go into the pigs. Notice here too. The language. They beg Jesus to.

Let them. Go into the pigs. To allow them. And he gave them. Permission. This multitude. Of powerful evil spirits.

[19:48] They must be allowed. By Jesus. To do this. They must have his permission. Again. It shows that they know. Who Jesus really is. They know that he is the son.

Of the almighty God. His authority. His power over them. Is real. Surprisingly. Jesus grants them permission.

To possess these pigs. On the herd nearby. And the demons run the pigs. Off the cliff. Into the lake. Where they drown. This is probably the strangest thing.

In this whole story. We wonder. Why did Jesus grant this request. To the demons. Why did he allow them. To go into the pigs. And kill the whole herd.

Why didn't Jesus. Just give these wicked demons. What they deserve. And send them into the abyss. And then after getting permission. To go into the pigs. Why did these demons.

[20:49] Run them off the cliff. To their death. What's the point. Of going into them. If you're just going to kill them. Seconds later. There's things going on here. That perhaps we just don't understand.

And none of these questions. Are answered by Matthew. Mark. Or Luke. This is just what happened. Strange as it is. Luke tells us.

That the death of these pigs. Caused. A sort of chain reaction. Of things. Those. Tending the pigs. Run off. To tell. What just happened. In town.

And then upon hearing. What happened. People come out. From the town. And the countryside. To where Jesus. And the formerly possessed man. Are. And then the moment. That really shocks. And surprises. These people. From the town. Arrive. And find the man. Who had been possessed. Sitting there. At Jesus feet. Dressed. And in his right mind.

[21 : 50] Can you imagine this? They all knew this man. They knew what had been going on with him. For a long time. They'd heard the stories.

Of him overpowering. The strong men in the village. Breaking his chains. They'd heard his mad shouts. And shrieks. Out at the tombs. Day and night. And now here he is. Sitting at Jesus feet. Dressed. Acting completely normal. He was cured. Then all the people. Of the region. Of the garrisons. Asked Jesus. To leave them. Because they were overcome. With fear. A whole herd. Of 2,000 pigs. Mark tells us.

Are now dead. Drowned in the lake. And this demon possessed man. With superhuman power. Is completely cured. Of what plagued him. Acting like a normal man again.

[22 : 48] Only someone more powerful. Than all these spirits. Could do this for the man. And they were overcome with fear. And they asked Jesus to leave.

And so Jesus got into the boat. And left. The man from whom the demons had gone out. Begged to go with Jesus. But Jesus sent him away. Saying. Return home. And tell how much God has done for you. So the man went away.

And told all over town. How much Jesus. Had done for him. From our perspective. It seems sad. Doesn't it? That Jesus turns down. The man's request. To join him.

In the boat. We might think about. How few friends he has. And how wonderful it would be. To go with Jesus now. But God has a great purpose.

[23 : 46] For this man. God is going to bring. Great glory. To his son Jesus. Through this man's testimony. Think of the impact. This man is going to have.

From here on. If he stays. Amongst the people. Who know how he was. He is a living. Breathing. Undeniable testimony. To the power of Jesus.

And the authority of Jesus. To the mercy. And grace. Of Jesus. I love this story. It touches us. In a few different ways. At first. This story might feel strange. And foreign to us. We wonder about demons. And possession. And all the supernatural stuff.

That goes on here. We might wonder. Why don't we see more people. Afflicted. Like this today. It seems from the gospels. Like Jesus was casting out demons.

[24 : 45] Everywhere. All over the place. Wherever he went. And if demon possession. Was so common back then. We wonder. Why don't we see it. Very often.

Or even at all. Today. Well here's a few. Possible reasons. For one. It may be that even back then. Many people didn't know.

Or understand. What was going on. With possessed people. Probably many thought. They were just deeply confused. Or sick. Or had gone insane. Something was wrong.

With their minds. It could be that. Like today. Demons often. Tried to keep a low profile. And to take their victims. In secret.

To cause. Confusion. And chaos. Through deception. Beneath the surface. It could be that. Many more people.

[25 : 41] Were possessed. Than we'd expect. But that the light. Of Jesus presence. So agitated. The demons. And exposed them. That we became. Even more aware.

Of their presence. While Jesus was here. Than we otherwise. Would have been. Another thing. To factor in. Is the cultural beliefs. Of the people. Many cultures.

Back then. Some even still today. Believe in the presence. Of spirits. And make. Attempts to interact. With them. Quite likely. Many of the false gods.

Worshipped in history. Were simply. Demons. Masquerading as gods. And among people. Who embrace. The idea of spirits. Why hide? Why not keep.

The deception going. With the occasional. Demonstration. Of supernatural power. One of the problems. That I believe. Satan and the demons.

[26 : 35] Have. Is that if they're too. Obvious. And visible. It may serve. As a powerful evidence. That God's word. Is true. It may serve. Even to drive people.

Away from them. And back to God. And so. I believe. That the devil. And demons. Strategically. Employ. Deception. And cunning. As the tactic.

Of first choice. Just as Jesus said. The devil. Is the father. Of lies. And when he lies. Said Jesus. He speaks his native language. And so. One of the big lies. That he has crafted. And offers. To us. In various places. In the world. Is that there is no God. That there's. No spiritual. Anything at all. There's only what we can see. And touch. And measure. There's only matter. [27 : 28] God didn't make the universe. The universe. Made itself. Or. It's all that there ever was. If he can convince us.

That matter. Is all there is. That there's no soul. No spirit. No angels. Well then we might. Doubt. Whether there can be a God. Because he is spirit. And so in cultures. And places. Where. Where the lie. Of naturalism. And materialism. Are embraced deeply. There's little reason. For demons. To show themselves. They can accomplish. Almost everything. They want. In the shadows. By hiding. Working. Out of the public view. They can maintain. The lie. That there is no God. Like a stealth mission. If we don't even know.

[28 : 22] Or see any sign. Of their activity. Or presence. They can get away. With all sorts of things. Why possess. A prime minister. Or a president. Or some very public figure.

When you can possess. Some seemingly. Insignificant. Man or woman. Who has the president's ear. Their aim. We have to remember. Is not popularity. Or fame. It's destruction. And division. And chaos. And distraction. And most of all. To do everything they can.

To get us. Away from God. And his word. And so that's. I think some reasons. Why I think we don't see. These kinds of things. Happen today. In our culture. In our corner of the world. At least not as often. But the demons are out there. And the devil is too. And many followers of Jesus. Have had run-ins.

[29 : 17] Over the centuries. Since Jesus first came. And because we have Jesus in us. The one they fear most. They may even.

For fear of being exposed. Stay away from us a little. And keep a low profile. I've heard some powerful testimonies. Of people who have. Experienced firsthand. Demonic possession. And by the grace of God. Have been freed of it. I witnessed a drastic change. In one of my own peers. When I was in college. I wasn't present in the room. The night. When he was set free. But the change in him. Was hard to miss. I've had another run-in. With another individual. And I'm not 100% sure. About that one. But there's some. Very strange. And disturbing things. That I witnessed. With that man as well. The devil is out there. And demons. Are out there.

[30 : 14] But. The good news is. That as Christians. We don't need to fear them. Look at what our king. Caused in them. Just by his presence.

Just by his words. And Jesus lives. In us. We can rest assured. They cannot do anything. To us. Without his permission. And Christ will never. Allow his people. To be overcome. By the devil. I take so much comfort. In those words. That the apostle John. Shared with the churches. In his letter. First John. Four. Verse four. He said. The one who is in you. Is greater. Than the one who is in the world. You. Dear children. Are from God. And have overcome them. Once we get past.

[31 : 14] These elements. Of the account. There's so much. Wonderful truth. And encouragement. That we can find here. Isn't it wonderful. To see. The full. Authority. And power.

Of Jesus. On display here. With this man. Powerful. Fallen angels. Cry out in fear. Before him. Afraid of what he will do. To them someday. They tremble. They shudder. In his presence. Because one day. Jesus will give them.

What they deserve. With a word. He can send them. Into the abyss. And they are powerless. To defy his command. And one day.

The Bible tells us. He will deal with them. Finally. And forever. But what encouragement. And what a delightful thing. The power. And authority. Of Jesus.

[32 : 10] He is. The son. Of God. Most high. But perhaps. The sweetest. And the most precious thing. In this whole account. Is how Jesus saved.

This dear brother of ours. Where others saw a monster. An animal. A hopeless.
And a lost cause. God saw. A desperate man. In great need. A man powerless. To do anything
about it. Utterly ravaged.
By the enemy. And God loved him. In his compassion. And his mercy. He sent his son. Across the
sea. To bring him salvation.
To set him free. From the slavery. And the bondage. What an awesome display. Of the mercy. And
of the kindness. And of the power.
[33 : 07] Of our God to save. If God in his mercy. Saw this man. And loved him. In his terrible
condition. Then we can be sure. That he hasn't overlooked us.
Whatever we're going through. He sees each one of us. With whatever brokenness. Struggle. Or
need we have. And he is mighty to save.
And his heart of compassion. Is for us. The full measure. Of Jesus' love.
We see later. In the story. Jesus will go on. To demonstrate. His authority. And power. In many
ways. To perform great. And awesome signs.
But then. Instead of using. That power and authority. To set up. An earthly throne. For himself. He
will instead. Lay down his life. And bring us. The greatest salvation. That there is.
[34 : 07] Like this man. All of us are slaves. Of a sort. Or have been. We are bound. We are
prisoners. And slaves.
To sin. Jesus said it. Himself. Like this. John 8. 34. Very truly. I tell you. Everyone who sins.
Is a slave. To sin. But. Said Jesus. If the son. Sets you free.
You will be free. Indeed. Sin is not just. The bad things we do. It's a condition. That we have. Where
like this man. We've lost control.
Of our own lives. We have a heart. To do. What we ought not to do. It compels us. To the wrong. It
makes us more and more. Corrupt. And guilty.
[35 : 04] But Jesus came. To set us free. From slavery. To sin. And from the guilt. That our sins.
Have brought us. Jesus explained.
To his disciples. That his death. His blood. Would make atonement. For our sins. It would wash
away. The guilt.
That we have. Jesus would go on. To take the punishment. That we deserve. From God. On
himself. So that we could be forgiven.
And set free. That's what Jesus death. On the cross. Was all about. What happened to Jesus. On
the cross. Is what we deserve.
Because of our sins. We deserve. But Jesus. Though he had never sinned. Chose to take our
place. He is.
[36 : 02] Great in mercy. And compassion. He saw. Our desperateness. Our helplessness. He saw
our powerlessness. To do anything about it. Our great need.
And he loved us. And that's what we cherish. And remember. Again and again. We remember the
blood of Jesus. And the body of Jesus.
Which he offered. On the cross for us. In just a minute. We'll have the elders come. And pass
around the bread. And the cup. This is a remembrance of Jesus.
And his love. For us. And if you've repented. Of your sins to God. And have put your faith. In Jesus
as your savior. If he has set you free.
And I want to invite you. To join with us. And remember again. To partake with us. Of the bread and
the cup. If not. Please just let the bread. And the cup pass you by.
[36 : 59] We're going to take a few minutes now. Just to pray. And to reflect. Quietly. And then
we'll have. Rod and Charles come. And serve the elements. And once you've received them.
Just hang on to them. Until everybody's been served. And then we'll eat and drink. All together.
Let's do that now. Let's do that now.