

Encounters With Jesus (2): Legion - A Demoniac Becomes A Disciple

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[0 : 00] And we can read at verse 34, although we're going to look at some of the verses around that as well. Look at verse 34. When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country.

Then people went out to see what had happened. And they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind.

And they were afraid. Now last week we looked at a passage in chapter 10 of Luke, where we looked at particularly Martha, although we refer to Mary as well, as we find that short passage at the end of the chapter, of chapter 10, about Mary and Martha.

And took some lessons from that. And from that, we're going to follow out now a number of other studies in the Gospels particularly, which we're going to call encounters with Jesus.

Encounters that people had with Jesus, as they recorded for us in these Gospels. Encounters that made such a significant and lasting difference to their lives in a positive way.

[1 : 11] Sometimes, perhaps, we'll find as well a number of incidents where people encountered Jesus and didn't actually benefit positively or spiritually, but maybe turned their back on him.

But mostly we're going to look at encounters with Jesus which left a changed life, which resulted in a changed life positively and for the better and for the good for these people.

Tonight, we're looking at this incident of the man that was named Legion, out of whom Jesus cast these demons and who came from that incident such a radically changed individual.

Although we'll come across, in this instance, extremes and in other instances as well, extremes.

Many of the principles and points that are made in these passages, and many of them involve Christ's miracles, they actually apply in principle to ourselves and to our spiritual needs and to the way that Jesus is able so successfully to meet with these and indeed that he is the only one who can do that in the way that he himself shows.

Now, there are links, obviously, here in the rest of the chapter with this passage. And as you go through the chapter, you'll see that as Jesus is spoken of, as one who, as we read there in chapter 22, dealt with, the storm in which was threatening the disciples in the boat, and then afterwards he heals a woman who had an issue or a hemorrhage of blood, and also Jairus' daughter that he took her back from the dead.

[2 : 51] Well, you find all of that, along with this passage to do with Legion, and what you really find from that is the ability that Jesus has to create change.

The ability that Jesus has to create the greatest change in circumstances or in a person's life. That, you could say, is a common thread that runs through these passages, and as we'll see, it's very much at the center of this passage that deals with the way Jesus dealt with Legion.

And Jesus, of course, is teaching the disciples in all of this. We mustn't forget that. This is not just something that shows us isolated incidents where Jesus deals with these individuals and helps them and cures them, but it's also something in which he is leading his disciples into these circumstances and through these circumstances, so that they learn that this is indeed the one who is able to create such changes as no one else can.

It's very interesting that when you then leave this chapter after all of this, and that common thread, as we've said, running through it, at the very beginning of chapter 9, he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.

In other words, the disciples went into that mission fully charged, if you like, with their knowledge of Jesus himself, so that as he empowered them, they realized from all these incidents, this is really where their sufficiency came from.

[4 : 31] This is what they had to depend upon and not their own abilities. So here we have Jesus meeting with evil, meeting with devilish power, with this man who is possessed by demons, and as he deals with them, so we're keyed in to the way that Luke, throughout his gospel, brings us to see that this, in fact, was one of the main purposes of Christ's mission into the world and in the world, Christ's ministry in the world, what Christ was doing was to deal with the powers of darkness and to overcome them.

You go back to chapter 4, where you remember that Jesus met the devil in the wilderness and overcame him, and overcame the temptations that the devil actually placed before him, and how he came in the power of the Spirit from that incident to continue or to lead his own ministry in the world. Then you go ahead to chapter 11, and you find some very important verses there on the same topic. In verses 21 and 22 of chapter 11, you can see that Jesus was accused of actually casting out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, the devil himself.

And he challenged those who saw him like that and accused him of that. If I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe. But when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil.

[6 : 19] Now that's a picture and imagery where Jesus is saying, this is actually why I'm here. I'm here to desire him the strong man who is Satan, who keeps people bound, and by what I am doing, not just by these miracles, but in a sense what these miracles represent, that which he was going to do by his death and resurrection from the dead, and overcoming death, and overcoming the powers of death, and the powers of evil, he is binding up Satan and spoiling his house, vandalizing his house, setting his prisoners free.

That's really what runs throughout all these great emphases that Jesus is drawing our minds to by these miracles, and that Luke is drawing our minds to by these miracles of Jesus.

That's such an important central feature of Christ's ministry to defeat the powers of darkness, to overcome Satan and his powers, and to actually bring us release and liberty and salvation from all that we brought on ourselves by listening to the devil in the first place, as you find in Genesis chapter 3.

Now that, of course, happened through Christ's death and resurrection, but one of the things that that carries with it is that the effects of our sin and our fallenness, as you find them represented in a way as we'll see in this passage, that is included by Jesus as Luke gives an account of it.

Our sinful condition, that's so much part of the darkness and the inability that we have because of our sinfulness, that's taken account of by Jesus as well.

[8 : 05] He deals with everything in our situation as lost human beings, and He has come to rescue us from that situation. For example, you see in this chapter itself, if you go to verse 2, very interestingly there, there's a reference to Mary Magdalene and how she and other women had become disciples of Jesus along with the twelve, and He mentions some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities.

Mary called Magdalene from whom seven demons had gone out. In other words, that's Jesus actually dealing with that person as well, similar to Legion.

He had actually saved her from that terrible condition and dilemma in which she was held. And you find in verse 12 as well, a reference to the way in which sowing the seed of the kingdom of God, the parable of the sower, one of the categories there is the seed that fell on the compacted pathway where the birds of the air quickly picked it up and it didn't even begin to grow.

Well, Jesus is saying that represents those who hear the word and actually it never actually lodges in their hearts at all. And Satan has an easy time of just picking it out.

That's an end of it. Satan and satanic influences and the kingdom of darkness, all of that features very largely in these passages and in the ministry of Jesus where, as we say, he had come to defeat.

[9 : 40] But let's look more closely at Legion himself. These verses 26 to 39 especially. First of all, let's look at Legion encountering Jesus. And then secondly, at Legion becoming a disciple of Jesus.

Notice the description that's given of the man's condition. We read that through the passage from verse 29. Sorry, from verse 26. He's described there as somebody who had had demons for a long time.

He had worn no clothes and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs. And then you also find that he was kept under guard and people had tried to control him, binding him with chains and shackles, but he would just break these bonds and then be driven by the demon or demons into the desert.

That was his condition. We must never conclude from that, that people who have psychological problems in their lives in some way or other are controlled by devilish powers.

That would be a very wrong conclusion to take from this passage. But it does also, nevertheless, it does mean that in these days that Jesus lived in, and you can understand something of why there were more people who were like this in the days of Jesus, so that Jesus could demonstrate his own power and his ability and his authority against the demonic world in doing this sort of thing as he did with Legion.

[11:13] But remember this as well, that when Paul wrote to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 4, he made it very clear that there is a link between a determined refusal to accept the gospel and the message of salvation and the work of Satan.

He says, if our gospel be hid, it is hid to those who are lost, in whom the God of this world, by which he meant Satan, has blinded the minds of those who believe not, lest the gospel of the glory of Christ should shine unto them.

Don't actually think that Satan has nothing to do with unbelief, that he has nothing to do with refusals against the gospel's overtures and Christ speaking to our souls.

So you be careful tonight that you don't think that there's any connection between unbelief and the temptations or the insinuations or the activity of Satan himself.

And that your mind is attuned to the gospel in a way that receives this, because the primary reason really for us looking at this series of studies, encounters with Jesus, is that you and I will know ourselves to benefit profitably, not just from studying these passages, but from encountering Jesus for ourselves.

[12:42] And that's one of the things we're convinced about. When we come to the gospel, when we come to accept the word of God as it is, as the word of God to our souls, we are encountering Jesus in that.

We're encountering Jesus and praying that by his Holy Spirit, that encounter with Jesus will leave you and I changed and changed radically and changed forevermore.

And that's what we hope every single person in here will know for themselves, young or old, that from such passages as these, you will meet with Jesus. You will encounter Jesus if you haven't already.

And if you already know him, that through this you will know him better and serve him more fully and be more persuaded of his ability to continue changing your life for the good.

So that's his condition. And as you find him asked by Jesus what his name is, he says, Legion, for many demons had entered him. The word Legion, of course, refers back to a Roman legion where many thousands of soldiers were actually included in what was known as a legion.

[13:50] So this man had many demons inhabiting him, controlling his life, making his life a misery and causing all sorts of havoc in his life.

You see, he's naked as well. He wore no clothes. Now as we'll see, that's really representative of our spiritual condition as well. Our lack of dignity, our need to have clothing applied by God spiritually to cover our spiritual nakedness and our offensiveness to God.

He lived, not in a home, in a house. He lived among the tombs. He lived in a graveyard. That's where he spent his life. You see, there's a significance symbolically in that as well, isn't there? This was through literally of this man, but it's also symbolically saying to us, this man's life was characterized through his demon possession by lack of dignity and by death and by living with death on a daily basis.

And finally, he was kept under guard. He was at least an attempt made to bind him, which constantly failed. Every attempt that was made to deal with this person, with this poor man, had come to failure.

[15:10] And really, in that sense, he is a sample. Though he is an extreme, though as we said, we're careful in not attributing demon possession beyond what the Bible warrants us to attribute,

nevertheless, he is, if you like, a picture of yourself and myself, of the wreckage that we are as fallen human beings.

So different to the philosophy of the world, so different to that world that says to you tonight, just be the best you can or be yourself. Don't listen to these Christians who really want you to think about inward change and radical change and change of your way of thinking and change of how you view life and change of how you see the Bible and change of how you see society.

You don't need to change. Just live your life the way you want it. Whatever people will say of it, even if people say it's an excessively sinful lifestyle, it's your lifestyle. Live it! That's not what you find here or elsewhere in the Bible at all, is it?

Here is lost humanity. Here is a wreckage of the human being that God created. Here is the result of the fall. Lack of dignity and spiritual clothing and approval by God and controlled by a sinful way of life.

Well, there is his condition. Secondly, look at the demon's conversation with Jesus. When Jesus dealt with the man, it was the man who was speaking but at the same time it was the demon who was speaking through him or the demons speaking through him.

[16:57] Sometimes it's plural, sometimes it's singular. In verse 28, when he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him. In other words, the voice was the voice of the man but actually deeper down it was the voice of the demons who possessed him.

What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me. You read later on that they had begged Jesus not to command them to enter or depart into the abyss. Now, you notice something remarkable there. The demons know who Jesus is and one of the purposes of Luke in actually bringing these two things together is that he's talking about many people who heard Jesus, who saw his miracles, who listened to what he had to say, who could say that he was a remarkable person, that they had never seen things like this before but they rejected him and we'll see at the close of our study that the people around here itself in these parts begged him to depart out of their region.

They didn't want anything more of Jesus or of his ability or of his influence in their own area. Devils know who Jesus is and in a sense that answers the question in verse 25 there which is frequently raised by Luke in different ways.

Who then is this that he commands even winds and water and they obey him? And if we did a study of Luke's gospel from beginning to end you would see that this was one of features of Luke's gospel is constantly referring to this question asked by different people and answered in different ways but it's a central question in the message that the gospel of Luke has to say to us who is Jesus?

[18:43] Who is this person who can actually calm a storm at sea in an instant just like that? Who is this person who can cast out demons when human ability has so obviously failed drastically to help this man?

Who is this man who comes along and is recognized by these demons as Jesus son of the most high God? Isn't that something that tonight resonates with yourself?

We live in a world that dismisses Jesus from so many minds and lives so many people just don't want to have anything to do with Jesus thinks this is just complete nonsense.

Devils know who he is. Human beings don't want him. Devils recognize him as the son of God. Human beings all too frequently say this is just a figment of you Christians imagination. This is just fairy tales. Yet the devils recognize and identify him accurately.

[19:49] And you see what they're saying there in verse 31 they were concerned that Jesus did not cast him into the abyss. Now that word appears in the likes of Revelation chapter 20 and the beginning of the chapter the abyss is the final abode of devils and of the lost and of the devil himself.

The pit the bottomless pit the abyss. Not just talking here about the lake in which the pigs eventually ran and were drowned. The abyss that he's referring to here the demons are referring to their destiny in eternity and for all eternity they know where they're going.

They know who Jesus is. They know what their future is. They know they are judged. They know they're condemned. They know they're going to be in the abyss forever and what he's saying to Jesus now is don't let that happen now.

Delay it for some time. Don't put us there right now. And isn't that a solemn thought? That the devils know what's in store for them.

That the devils know they're going to spend eternity in the abyss and human beings think that the idea of hell is a medieval relic. That is something really that has just carried on from previous generations and that the world in which we live has moved on from then and we don't really need to think in those terms today.

[21 : 16] Here is Jesus. He's the Son of God. Here's devils meeting him. Here's a real historical event. Here's something that you can take at face value because it really happened this way. Surely nobody in here tonight does not believe in hell because the devils do and they tremble at the prospect.

And here are these devils in this man begging Jesus pleading with Jesus please don't send us into the abyss. Have you ever come yourself to realize where you're destined if you're not saved? Do you want to keep the company of these demons for all eternity rather than be with Jesus? are you passing change away from yourself?

Because if you are that's what you have in prospect. That's what you're facing. It's a terrible situation. That's the state that exists in the abyss.

And here are devils and they know it and yet so many human beings choose not to accept it not to know to dismiss it from their mind.

[22 : 38] I know that's not true of you. You all believe in this abyss in this hell. Well here is Jesus dealing with that situation and the devils as they plead with him eventually end up not through Christ's appointment as such but through their own request to enter into these pigs who rush into the steep banks into the lake and are drowned.

Remember the text I mentioned in 2 Corinthians chapter 4 verses 3 to 4 people who dismiss these things as relics of medieval times or just figments of Christian imagination remember that verse if our gospel be hid hid it is hid to those who are lost in whom the God of this world has blinded the minds of those who believe not why lest the gospel of the glory of Christ should enter into them. Legion encountering Jesus Jesus dealing with the powers of darkness secondly Legion becomes a disciple now there's a wonderful contrast here as you come to see what Jesus did when these people went out to see what had happened they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone sitting at the feet of Jesus clothed in his right mind remember what we said of the description earlier this is a repeat of that but showing now the very opposite to where he was before Jesus met him he was naked he lived among the tombs he was under guard where is he now what's he like now well he is clothed he's sitting at the feet of Jesus and he's in his right mind that's what Jesus does when he changes lives that's what happens when an encounter with Jesus actually comes to know a change a turn around in your life take these three words just very briefly he was clothed instead of being lacking dignity and going around naked here's a man who now has dignity restored to him and you and I need dignity restored to us we need that our sin is covered from God's sight we need that the filth of our sin is covered from

God's sight we need that our iniquity is forgiven that we are clothed with righteousness that we have the righteousness of Jesus to cover us in the presence of God and in the judgment of God he was clothed and you are clothed when you come to know Christ as your redeemer when you come to know him and when you come to know his ability to change you and to create change he is at Jesus feet I remember last week we saw the contrast between Mary and Martha in chapter 10 and how Luke was commending Mary for sitting at the feet of Jesus and what all of that means in terms of being a disciple of Jesus and actually sitting at his feet means taking the attitude of a disciple and coming to give our mind to be taught by Jesus you can listen to it online if you have time and to catch up with it if you haven't heard it already but that's really what this man is like at the feet of Jesus he's gone from being a demoniac a demon possessed man to a disciple there's been a complete change in his life a complete turnaround Christ has created discipleship out of demon possession he's taken hold of this man's life and completely turned it around he's now a disciple of Jesus thirdly he's in his right mind he couldn't possibly have been in a right frame of mind when he was inhabited by demons they had taken over his mind as we said be careful how you apply that but with this man that's certainly what was true of him but now he is in his right mind and when you put these three things together this is what you find in the change that Jesus brings he is clothed he has sitting at the feet of Jesus he is a disciple he is receiving his teaching he is committed to his teaching and he is in his right mind

[27 : 19] Colossians chapter 1 verse 21 speaks about a hostile mind that God deals with when he changes us from what we are as sinful lost human beings to being his own saved people hostile in

your mind is how we are by nature hostile against God hostile to his truth hostile to his claim upon us a hostility that we harbour in our hearts due to our fallenness and sinfulness when Jesus comes and changes us like this man brings us into a right mind the hostility is no longer there there is acceptance there is peace with God there is an acknowledgement that God is right and has rights as no one else has rights like he has and one of the problems of our age is that people don't have this right mind it's true of us all but it's a characteristic of our age isn't it where the mind is hostile to God and to the claims of God to the gospel of God you leave my life alone don't tell me to change my way of life however offensive it is to you of course you need to deal with people in the utmost tact and patience and love and that's what we would always seek to do but that doesn't mean you accept a way of life that's hostile to God and to his truth as a valid way of life whatever kind of way of life it is whatever kind of behavior it is Romans chapter 8 and verses 5 to 8 speaks about the carnal mind the mind of the flesh it is enmity against God and the generation you and I belong to and the world in which you and I are set doesn't take you too long listening to the news or even in the streets of

Stornoway to come across hostility to God and insistence on the human mind as it is in going its own way and enmity against God and everything that represents God we pray for these people pity these people we want to see these lives changed we want them to come to know this Jesus to encounter this Jesus and that's in a sense what you bring to them when you bring your own Christian life alongside of theirs not to condemn them not to sit in judgment over them but just to show them look this Jesus can do things for you that you just have never imagined and your life will never be the same and it will be a change for good if you have him in your life where are you in relation to these three clothed at the feet of

Jesus in your right mind or are you still an unforgiven sinner are you still wallowing in the filth of your sin even though outwardly you and I may live a decent life it's not what people think of us that counts really dealing with God's opinion God's view of us God's judgment of our life and what it is are we at Jesus feet is that the mind that we have is that the direction of our life do we have this right mind this mind that comes to know life and peace as the mind of the spirit to go along with that verse in Romans the carnal mind the mind of the flesh is enmity against God not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be the mind of the spirit or the spiritual mind is life and peace they're opposites you see just the way that legion and now this disciple are opposites in the passage and it's interesting that and it's really sad that the people when they heard about this and saw what had happened they asked

Jesus to depart from them for they were seized with great fear imagine the person that's able to do this and they want to get rid of him the person that has this ability to change lives in this dramatic way they would never deny the fact that Jesus had made such a great change in the life of this man they knew what this man was like they knew what he had been they knew that nobody had been able to control him they knew that he was himself really in a sense of enmity with himself and liable to cause himself all kinds of harm and yet they want to deal with the person who changed this man for the good in a way that just wants to send him away well that's the spirit of our age too isn't it it's not that people don't know what Christians have had done to their lives by this Jesus it's evident from their way of life I hope it is isn't it it's not that people don't realize what the gospel is saying even if they may not know it all that much it's not that people don't know anything at all about the content of the

[33 : 08] Bible though there are some people sadly like that they know what this Jesus can do they hear about Christian testimony they read Christian blogs they read about Christian accounts of how Jesus has changed their lives but their conclusion send them away from me I don't want anything to do with him that's not for me isn't that solemn that these people knew of all that Jesus had done here and what they want to do is just depart from us get away from us leave our district they were seized with great fear you see there is an element there that we have to acknowledge and that is still true of some people as well we mustn't think that everybody who shows hostility to God is just showing that determined hostility because they've never really thought properly about things some people who show hostility to God have been thinking about things but they're afraid to commit their life to

God they're afraid of what God is able to do in their lives they're afraid of the consequences of becoming like one of these Christians that they already know and for yourself tonight there may very well be a voice in your ear that's saying tonight as this gospel is preached and as this passage

is looked at and we try and unfold what's in the passage there may very well be a voice even at your ear that says you know you don't need to go so far as to commit your whole life to Jesus we keep close enough to him and close to the church so that in case of emergency you know that he'll be there for you are you afraid tonight of giving your life to Christ why should you be that's illogical that's what the devil really holds you to isn't it or would want to hold you to that you don't want to get that close you'll suffer some losses irreparably what are your friends going to make of it what's going to happen at your work what's going to happen to your reputation what about these places that you won't want to go to anymore are you afraid of a person you need not be afraid of in the least afraid of giving your life to the savior of sinners don't be because if you listen to that voice you know what it could lead to and if you're hearing the voice of

Christ tonight to your soul as I'm sure you are saying you give me your life give me your heart let me into your heart let me change you for the good well the only adequate proper response to that as you well know is Lord here I am save me like the psalmist in psalm 116 when the cords of death gripped him then he says I called to the Lord Lord save me how can it possibly be wrong or something to be afraid of to give your life over to Jesus Christ and then there's finally mission there's the restoration of the man there's this emphasis on expulsion of Jesus from their district and from their lives and in a word in closing there's also mission because this man begged Jesus that he might remain with him so different you see such a contrast to the people that I mentioned there that wanted Jesus just to go away and leave them here's this man begging Jesus to stay with him let me stay with you let me go with you let me be part of your followers but Jesus sent him away and said return to your home and declare how much God has done for you you see if Jesus had really wanted just in a sort of proud way to say to people look this is what I can do to people look this is an example of what I'm able to do well he could have done that not of course that Jesus would exercise any sinful pride over the matter but it wasn't so that he would exhibit this man as a trophy that Jesus changed him Jesus changed him so that he could then go and tell the news to others if Jesus had just wanted to show him off well he could have acceded to his request and just taken him with him that's not what Jesus is about he sent him back to his own home and that can be one of the most difficult mission fields of all to tell the people you're nearest to what Jesus has done for you and he went away proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him and I want you to notice that as well that's all it says return to your home Jesus said and declare how much God has done for you it's not rocket science it's not the most enormous theological doctrine you've ever come across is it something everybody can do that's why it's for you and for me as well something that you and I should be committed to doing all that Jesus is asking of you is not to be a great theologian though if you are that then good and well it's not that you become a minister to preach the gospel if that's what God has in line for you of course good and well and Jesus is simply saying to you whatever sphere you can serve him go and tell what God has done for you go and tell others what an encounter with Jesus has done for you and you see who knows might well be then as it was for legion he went away proclaiming throughout the whole city how much

[39 : 40] Jesus had done for him it was an intriguing question how many people came to know an encounter with Jesus through the witness of legion who would have thought at the beginning of the day that this man would become a bright light a disciple of Jesus a witness to Jesus in his own locality God bless his word to us we're going to conclude now our service singing to God's praise and we'll sing from Psalm 31 Psalm 31 on page 36 verses 3 to 8 verses 3 to 8 on page 36 you are my fortress and my row while you didn't see if I should guide me return me from the trap of sin to other refuge where

I hide redeem me Lord O God of truth my spirit I commit to you I hate all those who trust false God I trust the Lord but he is true I will rejoice and take delight in all the love that you have shown for my affection you have seen to you my soul's

Christmas is known you have not left me to my fall or given me I to his hand but you have set my feet within a spacious place where I may stand I'll go to the main door after the benediction now may grace and mercy and peace from God the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit be your portion now and evermore Amen