

Yeshua Performs an Exorcism To Be Like Yeshua Means – To Serve Others

We continue our series "To Be Like Yeshua Means – To Serve Others." We have learned that we are called as Yeshua's talmidim to "serve others." We have seen Yeshua demonstrate His healing power with the leper, the Roman Officer's assistant and Kefa's mother-in-law and many more that were demon possessed or ill. Yeshua reminded us that we have to count the costs if we are to truly follow Him and we also learned that following Him may put us in harm's way. In this post, we will look at Yeshua's power over the supernatural or spiritual realm.

When Yeshua calmed the storm, He and His talmidim ***"arrived at the other side of the lake, in the Gadarenes' territory, there came out of the burial caves two men controlled by demons, so violent that no one dared travel on that road. They screamed, 'What do you want with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?' Now some distance from them a large herd of pigs was feeding. The demons begged him, 'If you are going to drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs.' 'All right, go!' He told them. So they came out and went into the pigs, whereupon the entire herd rushed down the hillside into the lake and drowned. The swineherders fled, went off to the town and told the whole story, including what had happened to the demonized men. At this, the whole town came out to meet Yeshua. When they saw him, they begged him to leave their district."*** ~ Matthew 8:28-34.

The ***Gadarenes territory*** is located southeast of the Sea of Galilee, near the town of Gadara, one of the most important cities of the region. Gadara was a member of the Decapolis, or Ten Cities. These ten cities with independent governments were largely inhabited by Gentiles and where Yeshua had planned to go. This was **Gentile** territory, revealing a new direction for His ministry.

Matthew says there were *two men controlled by demons*, while Mark and Luke refer to only one. According to Mark's account, the men were bloody, out of control, and apparently strong and frightening (Mark 5:4-5). ***"They were so violent that no one dared travel on that road."*** Demon-possessed people are controlled by one or more demons. Demons had entered these men's bodies and were controlling them, trying to destroy or distort God's image.

Demons are fallen angels who joined Satan in His rebellion against God and are now evil spirits under Satan's control. They help Satan tempt people to sin and have great destructive powers. These men were clearly hopeless without Yeshua. These men came ***out of the burial caves*** where they lived.

In those days it was common for cemeteries to have many tombs carved into the hillside, making cave-like mausoleums. There was enough room for a person to live in such tombs. Tombs were unclean places and regarded by the Jews as fit only for m'tsoraim and the demon-possessed. People with hopeless conditions, such as these men, could find shelter in the caves. These men *met* Yeshua as He landed. They may have rushed out to see who was coming ashore, or perhaps even to apply for mercy. Most likely, however, the demons wanted to confront Yeshua and scare him away, as they had already done to anyone else who had ventured into their territory.

Now think about this scenario for a minute. According to Jewish laws, the men Yeshua encountered were unclean in three ways:

1. They were Gentiles (non-Jews);
2. They were demon-possessed; and,
3. They lived in a graveyard.

Yet, Yeshua helped them anyway. We should not turn our backs on people who are “unclean” or repulsive to us, or who violate our moral standards and religious beliefs. Instead, we must realize that every human individual is a unique creation of God, needing to be touched by His love.

Though aware of who Yeshua was and of His power over them, the demons still attempted to defend themselves by **screaming** and by calling Yeshua by His divine name. The loud voice shows the demons’ fierce and violent nature. The demons’ first question, **“What do you want with us?”** is a request that Yeshua leave them alone.

A more literal translation would be *“What do we have in common?”* In other words, the demons asked Yeshua to leave them alone, for they had nothing to do with each other. Such a question shows the demons’ ultimate rebellion. Yeshua and the demons were as far separated as anything could be. Yeshua’s purpose was to heal and give life; the demons’, to kill and destroy. But Yeshua would not leave these men in such a condition. The demons tried using Yeshua’s divine name to control him.

At this time, people believed that to know an adversary’s full name was to be able to gain control over the person. The demons recognized Yeshua as God’s divine Son. How ironic that people in Yeshua’s day were so blind, while the demons were so clear about Yeshua’s true identity. The demons asked if Yeshua had come to **torture** them. The word for “torture” is graphic and correct. The Bible says that at the end of the world, the devil and His demons will be thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10). The demons’ question revealed that they knew their ultimate fate. The demons hoped that Yeshua would not send them to their fate **before the appointed time**. Jewish literature written between the time of the Old and New Testaments taught that demons have permission to oppose mankind only until the Judgment Day. This statement by the demons shows God’s power over Satan’s forces and they obviously already know their future damnation.

According to Leviticus 11:7, pigs are **“unclean”** animals. This meant that they could not be eaten or even touched by a Jew. Remember that Yeshua was now in Gentile territory so that explains how there could be a large **herd of pigs**.

The demons recognized their ultimate doom and they knew that Yeshua could seal their fate by returning them to the abyss (the place of their confinement) or sending them far away (Mark 5:10). They evidently wanted a “home.” On the hillside were enough pigs for all these demons to inhabit; so they provided a fitting habitation for the demons. So the demons asked to be sent into the herd of swine. Why we don’t know, but their action seems to portray their ultimate destructive intent.

Why didn’t Yeshua just destroy these demons - or send them away? Because the time for such work had not yet come. Yeshua healed many people of the destructive effects of demon possession, but He did not yet destroy demons. In this situation, Yeshua wanted to show Satan’s destructive power and intent. Many ask the same question today - why doesn’t Yeshua stop all the evil in the world? His time for that has not yet come. But it will come. The book of Revelation portrays the future victory of Yeshua over Satan, His demons, and all evil.

In every case when confronted by Yeshua, demons lost their power. Yeshua’s simple command, *Go!* showed the extent of His authority over the demons. One word was enough. He did not need to perform a lengthy exorcism. God limits what evil spirits can do; these demons could do nothing without Yeshua’s permission.

During Yeshua’s life on earth, confrontations with demons were frequent, demonstrating His power and authority over them. Yeshua did not command the demons to go into the swine; He gave them permission to *go* and do what they requested. When the demons entered the pigs, **the entire herd rushed down the hillside into the lake and drowned**. Perhaps Yeshua let the demons destroy the pigs to demonstrate His superiority over a very powerful yet destructive force.

Yeshua also taught a lesson by giving the demons permission to enter the pigs. He showed His talmidim, the townspeople, and even us who read these words today the absolute goal of Satan and His demons. They want total and complete destruction of their hosts. The sight must have been amazing. A rather peaceful herd of pigs suddenly became a stampeding horde that ran straight to its destruction.

When Yeshua performed this miracle, He again gained immediate publicity. ***"The swineherders fled, went off to the town and told the whole story, including what had happened to the demonized men."*** Their story seemed unbelievable. Multitudes of pigs floating on the edge of the lake would certainly be a sight, so ***the whole town came out to meet Yeshua.*** Among these would have been the owner of the herd who, doubtless, was not pleased at the loss of the livestock. The people could have responded in several ways. They could have been overjoyed to see Yeshua on their own shore. They also could have responded with joy that Yeshua had healed the demon-possessed men. They could have been thrilled to have seen a healing of such magnitude with their own eyes.

Instead, ***they begged him to leave their district.*** Mark tells us that they were afraid (Mark 5:14-20). What were they afraid of? Perhaps such supernatural power as Yeshua had displayed frightened them. Perhaps they thought that Yeshua would be bad for their economy (losing that many pigs in one day certainly cost someone). Perhaps they did not want Yeshua to change their status quo. Their fear caused them to make a terrible mistake in asking Yeshua to leave them. How foolish and yet how easy it is to value possessions, investments, and even animals above human life.

Unfortunately for them, Yeshua did as they asked. And there is no biblical record that He ever returned. Sometimes the worst that can happen to us is for Yeshua to answer one of our poorly considered requests.

Lessons from this passage:

1. The devil is a cruel master: make sure you put on the full armor of God every day and pray to be saved from His power.
2. The demoniacs came to Yeshua; the keepers of the swine fled from him. Oh that we learn to come and never leave him!
3. How awful to drive Yeshua away for the sake of worldly gain! Rather let us, like Sha'ul, count all things else as loss, that we may win Yeshua (Philippians 3:8).

In my next post, we will explore one of my favorite stories of healing in the Bible.