

## Luke 8:26-39

Sermon: **Be fools before the world**

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### THE DRAMA AND ACTION CONTINUE

1. After calming the storm, Jesus set out toward the Gentile region of Israel. I'm not sure if this was the first time Jesus intended to preach the Good News to non-Jews — perhaps it was. In any case, when they arrived on the shore of the country of the Gerasenes, they certainly didn't expect what was about to happen next. In other words, the drama and action continue immediately after the storm.

1.1 **(Luke 8:26–27)** They sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when Jesus stepped ashore, a man from the city met Him who was possessed with demons.

1.2 Let's briefly revisit some history. The Gospel writers called this region the country of the Gerasenes. Why that name? Most likely because of the nearby city called Gerasa.

1.3 Gerasa was one of the cities belonging to the region known as the Decapolis. The Decapolis was a term used for a group of cities along the eastern frontier of the Roman Empire in Judea and Syria. They did not represent a formal alliance or an administrative unit, but they shared a common culture, location, and political status. In other words, the cities of the Decapolis were centers of Greco-Roman civilization.

1.4 All right, back to the story. As I said at the beginning, I believe Jesus intended to proclaim the Good News to the Gentiles — the Greeks and Romans. Yet His purpose was immediately interrupted by a man possessed with demons.

1.5 In Matthew's account, two men came to meet Jesus.<sup>1</sup> Why do the other two Synoptic Gospels mention only one? I assume it's because the focus was on the louder of the two. By "louder," I mean

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 8:28

the man who was more violently possessed than the other — the one who drew all attention by his terrifying outburst before Jesus.

1.6 All three Gospels describe the possessed men differently, yet together they give us a fuller picture of their condition. They write that the possessed man had not lived in a house for a long time and did not wear clothes — in other words, he was naked.

1.7 They write that he lived among the tombs, and that he was so violent and unpredictable that the townspeople tried to restrain him with chains to prevent him from harming others or himself. But he would always break the chains — such was the strength of his madness.

1.8 They write that he cried out day and night among the tombs and in the mountains and struck himself with stones. They also note that both men were so violent that no one dared pass along that road.<sup>2</sup>

1.9 A catastrophe. I shudder at the very thought of something like that happening to anyone. Deep sadness fills me when I imagine a human being suffering so terribly — “striking himself with stones.” A tragedy, nothing less.

1.10 What we can conclude as we read this passage is that the Gospel writers took great care to describe the condition of these men. I assume one reason was to help us grasp how significant this event was to them — how significant it would be to the people of that region, and how seriously we, the readers, should take it as well. The description of these tormented men is terrifying, and what happens next must have shaken the disciples — and everyone else present — to the very core of their being.

## THE ABYSS

2. All right, let's move on.

2.1 **(Luke 8:28)** When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before Him, and said with a loud voice, “What business do You have with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!”

2.2 Here we see the demon shouting at the top of his voice who Jesus truly is. Before all those present, the demon openly declares that Jesus is the Son of God — and that He holds authority to do with him whatever He wills. In other words, the demon fears Jesus.

2.3 Moreover, the people who lived in those days knew that possessed individuals could not be reasoned with; they were unpredictable and dangerous. This inspired great fear, for the evil behind such manifestations was overwhelming and powerful — far beyond human control. Everyone knew and believed this to be true. And now, for the first time in their lives, they were witnessing the opposite — evil itself trembling before a man.

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<sup>2</sup> Mark 5:2-5; Matthew 8:28

2.4 Let's return to the scene. The demon's plea, "*I beg You, do not torment me,*" comes after Jesus had already commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. The question arises: where exactly did Jesus intend to send the demon to be tormented? In verse 31 it says, "They were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the abyss."

2.5 Let's pause here. When we hear the word hell, we often picture a place where God eternally torments demons, and eventually — on Judgment Day — the condemned.

2.6 Personally, I do not believe that the Bible teaches the church doctrine of eternal hell, but I won't go into that topic here — it would take far too long. What I do believe, however, is that the biblical authors in this passage were not referring to hell as a place of eternal punishment, but rather to the *abyss*.

2.7 The word *abyss* is used, for instance, in Revelation 9:1: "Then the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key to the bottomless pit was given to him." And again in Revelation 20:1: "Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand."

2.8 In both Luke and Revelation, the Greek word used is *abyssou* — which generally means the bottomless pit or the deep, depending on the context.

## PLAYING DETECTIVES

3. What I personally believe is that we must never forget who wrote the Bible. It wasn't written by the Church Fathers — it was written by the Jews. And their understanding of the abyss was roughly this: it is the dwelling place of the dead and of evil spirits — a bottomless pit.

3.1 Why do I believe that Luke is referring to the abyss rather than hell? Personally, I believe that when we interpret Scripture, we should think like spiritual detectives. What does that mean? It means that we must carefully examine all the clues Scripture gives us — the context, the words, the circumstances, the symbols — and not jump to hasty conclusions. Just as a detective does not form judgment from a first impression, we too must not interpret the text by what seems most logical at first glance. Instead, we must dive deeper into the meaning of what has been written.

3.2 A detective, when trying to find the perpetrator of a crime, continually strives to enter his way of thinking. The better he understands how the criminal thinks, the easier it becomes to predict his moves — and ultimately, to catch him.

3.3 In the same way, when we study the Bible, we should try to enter the mind of its author. We must ask: What kind of culture did he live in? In what time period did he write? What worldviews and circumstances shaped his understanding of life and reality?

3.4 When we begin to "play detectives" in this way, we start to understand the authors more deeply — and through them, the divine ideas behind their words. I know — it's not an easy task. But believe me, it's worth it.

3.5 Because to understand biblical truth is to find peace in the deepest layers of one's being. These truths are like pieces of a puzzle — when each one is placed in its proper position, the complete picture of God's plan begins to unfold before us, a plan that He is carrying out in the very reality we live in.

3.6 On the other hand, we must always be willing to admit to ourselves that we are prone to error. But that's a good thing — it's not bad at all. On the contrary, it motivates us to examine ourselves, to pursue truth more passionately, and to question the authority that has been taught to us for centuries through church tradition. What truly matters in the end is this: all we can do is give our best effort to truly understand the text — and then hand that understanding over to the world. That is all we can do.

### STILL WITHIN THE IDEA OF "THE ABYSS"

4. Now I'll do my best to explain why I believe this passage is referring to the abyss. When I gather all the necessary information, I am convinced that the "star" in Revelation 9 represents Satan. Jesus confirms this in Luke 10:18: *"He said to them, 'I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.'"*

4.1 The biblical authors make it clear through their writings that until the moment Jesus appeared, Satan had full authority over the earth.<sup>3</sup> But his power was drastically reduced by the coming of Jesus. One proof of this is precisely the fact that Jesus now holds authority to send demonic forces into the abyss. Yet, within God's plan, Satan will once again receive the keys to the abyss, and from it all the demons — who had been imprisoned there — will emerge and deceive the world into waging war against the people of God.

4.2 In other words, Jesus was driving demons into the abyss — diminishing Satan's influence — knowing that one day, before the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom, Satan would again be granted the key for a short time, releasing his army from the abyss in an attempt to destroy God's plan.<sup>4</sup> But then an extraordinary, dramatic reversal will occur: Jesus will triumph over Satan and his army in order to establish the Millennial Kingdom — the Kingdom of God<sup>5</sup> — on earth, where He will reign in righteousness together with His people Israel, who will finally become the most just and holy society that has ever existed on this planet.<sup>6</sup>

4.3 I hope I haven't made things too complicated for you. My desire was simply to help you understand why I believe that the biblical authors were not talking about "hell-hell," but rather about the abyss — and what the purpose of the abyss was, and still is, within God's plan.

— In the end, the abyss is the place where God keeps those who are waiting to play one more "match" before He sends them permanently to the locker room — where they will be destroyed and cease to exist — to put it in sports terms. —

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<sup>3</sup> A detailed explanation of "Satan had authority over everything" can be found in sermon no. 20, §§ 2.–2.8

<sup>4</sup> Revelation 9:1

<sup>5</sup> A brief description of the Millennial Kingdom of God that will be on earth can be found in Revelation 20:4–6.

<sup>6</sup> Revelation 20:1-3

4.4 There's something else that fascinates me, and I'd like to share it with you. In Matthew 8:29 the demons say, *"Have You come here to torment us before the time?"* It's as if they already knew that the moment for God's Kingdom to be established on earth had not yet arrived. They seem to be trying to convince Jesus that the time of their dominion had not yet come to an end.

4.5 Of course, Jesus doesn't care about what they have to say — and we see that clearly in the rest of the passage. But what we can take from this scene is the insight that they, just like their leader Satan, are extraordinarily cunning and dangerous when it comes to twisting truth to serve their own ends.

## I AM A LITTLE GOD

5. All right, let's continue.

5.1 (Luke 8:30) Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," because many demons had entered him.

5.2 I wonder, is this the first time Jesus asks a demon its name? I do not know, but I know that in Luke 4:33 He did not ask the demon its name.

5.3 What I do know is that the church throughout history has made a big fuss over this text. In the sense: if a priest manages to persuade a demon to tell him its name, then, in the name of Christ, by speaking the demon's name the priest succeeds in casting the demon out of the person. I don't know what to say about that, especially because I've seen on YouTube all kinds of bizarre and somewhat, personally, laughable videos in which well-known self-proclaimed men of God, in the name of Jesus, perform miraculous healings where people shake, are thrown to the floor, shout disconnected words, and everyone around them screams in euphoria while a huge musical choir shouts, *"Hallelujah, hallelujah! Glory to God in the highest!"*

5.4 What I want to say is this: the Bible teaches us that only God can decide to whom He will give authority to cast a demon out of another human being. And if God through history gave such authority to priests or ordinary people — so be it, that is His prerogative. By the way, I do not believe they had to coax the demon to say its name; they would simply say, *"Go out of this man!"* and it would happen. But to take it upon oneself — just because one has convinced oneself, as the church, that one has authority in the name of Christ to cast a demon out of another human being — to me that is presumptuous, narcissistic, arrogant and, ultimately, dangerous. In other words, they believed and still believe this: *"I am a little god."*

5.5 As I noted above, Jesus did not always ask the demon its name before saying to it, *"Go out of this woman,"* or *"Go out of this man!"* For that reason I believe Jesus had another motive for asking the demon its name — and that motive was the abyss. And why the abyss? To pictorially (visually) demonstrate to all present what kind of authority He has as the Son of God.

## VISUAL DEMONSTRATION OF THE ABYSS

6. Let us go on with the text.

6.1 (Luke 8:31–33) And they were begging Him not to command them to go into the abyss. And there was a large herd of swine feeding on the mountain; and the demons begged Him to permit them to enter into the swine. And He gave them permission. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

6.2 “They begged Jesus not to send them into the abyss, and Jesus permitted them to go into the swine?” Is this an act of mercy by our Lord toward the demons? Of course not! That would truly be absurd.

6.3 What happened after the demons went into the swine? In verse 33 it says, “Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.” So, we have a herd of swine that drowned, which means the demons drowned with them.

6.4 We have a sea which by its nature is large and deep, which means those who watched this event witnessed the pigs vanishing into the dark depths of the sea that to the people of that time were unknown — both in regard to depth and to end.<sup>7</sup> Let us recall: the Jews believed the abyss to be the home of the dead and of evil demons, a bottomless pit. Is this event not a perfect visual demonstration by Jesus of what the event will roughly look like when on the Day of Judgment Jesus tells all who do not belong to Him, “*Go into the abyss,*” where endless darkness will swallow them into nonexistence?

6.5 And that is what Jesus wanted to emphasize here: “*All those who do not heed my teaching, one day, when I become king, will end up just like these demons — they will be destroyed, wrapped in a darkness that has no end (the abyss).*” In other words, Jesus is saying: “*I have the authority — given to me by God the Father — to decide to cast the disobedient to the truth into the abyss, that is, to destroy them. And those who heed my teaching, those who are written in the Book of Life, will reign with me and dwell in the kingdom of God.*”<sup>8</sup>

## BE FOOLS BEFORE THE WORLD

7. Let us move slowly toward the end. In Mark 5:13 it says that there were about two thousand pigs that drowned in the sea. There are, and there have been throughout history (academics, professors, atheists, ordinary people...) who have mocked, and still mock, our faith when they read this passage. Naturally, their goal is to shame us, to portray us as fools. And if we do not know history, if we do not know the background of the event, if we do not know what the author intended to convey to the world through this truth—then we truly appear foolish before the world.

7.1 Do not misunderstand me—we will always appear foolish before an unbelieving world, no matter how “divinely wise” we may sound to them. My desire is that we, who call ourselves disciples of Jesus, should at least know for ourselves—why this event? So that when they ask us, we do not stare at them in ignorance, because we ourselves do not know—why this event? There is a great difference

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<sup>7</sup> Modern man, equipped with advanced technology, manages to reveal the depth and darkness of the ocean floor.

<sup>8</sup> Revelation 20:11-15



between “foolish in the eyes of the world” (I do not know why I believe) and “foolish in the eyes of the world” (I know why I believe, and now I will explain it to you).

7.2 All right, I got a little carried away—but that’s how it must be, I believe. What I want to say is this: at that time it was not uncommon to see a herdsman tending a herd of pigs. Today’s world neither keeps nor raises pigs for food—we raise bakeries... I’m being a bit sarcastic, forgive me... now, let me move slowly toward the point. This is not about the pig as a pig—any animal could have been there and would have met the same fate; it would have drowned.

7.3 So, the pig is not the focus. Rather, it is about the word: multitude, thousands. I believe Jesus wanted to visually demonstrate how much dominion demons had over people before His coming into the world. Think about it—if there were thousands in one location, how many were there across the whole world?

— And the point is this: multitudes, thousands, millions of demons could have stood before Jesus at that very moment, and it would not have troubled Him in the least. He is the future King, and they must obey Him—and He proved that before everyone. All two thousand went into the abyss. —

7.4 Therefore, regardless of the world and what it thinks of us, we must stand firm in the conviction that Jesus is the ruler of the abyss and of hell, and that we will not go there—let us freely be fools before the world with that conviction. Because, sadly, those who now mock us will likewise, just like the demons, beg Jesus not to send them into the abyss.

7.5 But the merciful Jesus who is gentle in heart—the Jesus we know through the Gospels—is at the same time the Righteous One of God, who at His second coming will say to such people: *“Go into the abyss, go into hell, for I never knew you; you are not mine!”*

## THE BIBLE IS LIKE A LION

8. Let us move slowly toward the end of the event. The herdsmen, when they saw all this, ran away into the city and reported everything. The people came to see with their own eyes. When they arrived at the scene, those who had once screamed, struck themselves with stones, whom the townspeople had bound with chains so they would not harm themselves or others, who had walked naked among the tombs—now sat before their eyes clothed. They spoke normally, behaved normally. And that was an enormous shock for the townspeople: *“How is this possible? Who did this? You, man—did you do this? We cannot believe that the powers of heaven obey a single man!”*

8.1 I believe that event was too overwhelming for them—they could not comprehend or accept it all at once. In their confusion, which was a mixture of awe and fear deep within their being, they said to Jesus in Luke 8:37: *“We beg You, leave our region, depart from it.”*

8.2 I believe my interpretation of the text is supported by the verse in Mark 5:17: “And they began to plead with Him...” That means they did not command Him, they did not shout at Him, they did not try to drive Him out of their region by force—they pleaded with Him to leave. In other words, I do not believe this was an act of unbelief, but an act motivated by fear, amazement, and bewilderment.

8.3 All right, let us continue.

8.4 (Luke 8:38–39) But the man from whom the demons had gone out was begging Him that he might accompany Him; but He sent him away, saying, “Return to your home and describe what great things God has done for you.” So he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

8.5 We see the incredible love and devotion shown by the man—who had been possessed—toward Jesus. This theme is repeated throughout all the Gospels. Those who had been possessed, when Jesus freed them from that exhausting bondage, their first reaction was great love and gratitude toward Him. And they expressed it through action: “I want to follow You; I want to be near You.”

8.6 As I said at the beginning, I believe Jesus’ intention was to preach the Good News in the region of the Gerasenes. But after this event, and after they asked Him to leave, He knew that this was enough—enough for the news about Him to spread. Those who would be interested would come and ask the right questions. That is why He said to the man, *“Go back to your home and tell everyone what God has done for you.”*

8.7 The text then says that he did exactly that. My question is: how did the authors of the Bible know—and record in their accounts—that he went and told everyone what Jesus had done for him? Why do I ask this? Because we know from the continuation of the text that Jesus and His disciples immediately afterward returned to the boats and went on their way.

8.8 The only logical answer I can give myself is this: there must have been a time when people from the region of the Gerasenes came to the places where the apostles and other disciples of Jesus were, and told them the reason they had come to see them.

8.9 In other words, because of the testimony of those who had been possessed, some from the region of the Gerasenes decided to go and see who this Jesus was. And in the end, the disciples had the opportunity to share the Good News with them.

8.10 With that said, I believe the words of our Teacher from Matthew 7:7–8 were fulfilled here: “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find!” Some from the region of the Gerasenes sought, they knocked—and they found!

8.11 One more question before the end: do possessed people still exist today? I am very cautious and skeptical regarding that topic, but I cannot deny an experience that happened to me in a hospital a few years ago.<sup>9</sup> Were those people possessed? I do not know. But it was a very strange and frightening event that I will never forget as long as I live.

8.12 What frightens me more, however, is the reality in which we live. How can we explain that people have, in such a short time, lost their minds concerning so many things that, even ten years ago, would have been unimaginable to think about—let alone to see happening before our very eyes? I do not know—perhaps the gates of the abyss are slowly opening again, perhaps the power of Satan and his army is growing once more... perhaps the end is near.

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<sup>9</sup> My personal experience can also be found in sermon no. 24, §5.2



8.13 Whatever the case, what we must believe in the deepest part of our being is this: Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega—and to that truth we must hold firmly. When we are confused and afraid because of the circumstances happening to us and around us, let us keep repeating to ourselves: *“I belong to Jesus Christ, and on the day of resurrection He will say to me, ‘I know you; you are Mine!’”*

8.14 Finally, one teacher once said that the Bible is like a lion. When you let a lion free, do you need to defend or protect it? No, you do not—for it is a lion; it knows how to defend itself. The same goes for the Bible: we do not need to defend it—it defends itself. In other words, when people question us, when they perhaps mock us, let us say to them: *“Read it for yourselves and allow the Bible to tell you the truth—about yourself, about God, about the reality you live in, about Jesus and why He came into the world. And if you still do not believe—then sadly, I cannot help you.”*