

## Matthew Chapter 8 Continued

**Matthew 8:18 "Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side."**

The people thronged Him so greatly, that He was pressed from every side. Every so often, He went aside to rest and pray. This multitude, it seems, had followed Him from the time He had given the Sermon on the Mount.

He needed some time alone. His Spirit was always ready, but His body got tired; just like ours does.

Verses 19-27: The reference to "a certain scribe" is unusual since scribes were usually referred to in the plural. "Master, I will follow thee." These words indicated that he was willing to follow Christ both spiritually and publicly. The word master (Greek didaskalos) here means "Teacher."

Instead of making it easy to follow Him, Christ insisted that he count the cost of such commitment to discipleship. "The Son of man" is the title by which the Lord most frequently referred to Himself. The title originally come from (Daniel 7:13), and had messianic significance. The Lord deliberately used this biblical title of Himself in order to teach the godly that He was in fact, the Messiah.

The reference to another of His disciples must refer to a professed disciple who was unwilling to follow Him unconditionally. The request to "bury my father" probably meant he wanted to stay at home until his father died. Jesus' strong reply, "Let the dead bury their dead," was not intended to be harsh, but rather to emphasize that the time to be about the heavenly Father's business was now.

The "tempest" refers to a violent storm. Jesus rebuked the "little faith" in light of the fact that He had commanded the trip across the Sea of Galilee. In one of His most awesome miracles, He simply "rebuked the winds and the sea," resulting in an instantaneous miracle of total calm.

**Matthew 8:19 "And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest."**

"A certain scribe": As a scribe. This man was breaking with his fellow scribe by publicly declaring his willingness to follow Jesus. Nonetheless, Jesus evidently knew that he had not counted the cost in terms of suffering and inconvenience.

Scribes were the keepers and registrars of all public documents. The "scribe" mentioned, here, was learned in the law. These men technically knew the rules in the Bible. Very few recognized Jesus for who He really was (the Messiah). This "scribe" had probably, been among the multitude who heard Him preach the Sermon on the Mount and who saw Him do many miracles.

Just as many Jewish people do even today, this scribe recognized Him as a great teacher and as a prophet of God who could perform miracles. The question is, did he recognize Jesus as God manifest in the flesh?

Scribes were teachers of the law. It is so strange, to me, that they could not see that Jesus fulfilled the law in every aspect. This "Scribe" was like so many new Christians. They promise to follow no matter where or how hard the road gets, but when trouble come, they fall away.

**Matthew 8:20 "And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air [have] nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay [his] head."**

“Son of man”: This is the name Jesus used for Himself more than any other. It is used 83 times in the gospels, always by Jesus Himself. It was a messianic title (Dan 7:13-14), with an obvious reference to the humanity and the humility of Christ. Yet, it also speaks of His everlasting glory, as (Dan. 7:13-14 shows; Acts 7:56).

Jesus told this scribe just right off, if you follow me, it would not be easy. You might have to sleep outside and may not even know where your next meal would come from. Jesus does not promise an easy life even today to His followers. He just promises to take care of our needs, not our wants.

**Matthew 8:21 "And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father."**

“Suffer me first to go and bury my father”: This does not mean that the man’s father was already dead. The phrase, “I must bury my father” was a common figure of speech meaning, “Let me wait until I receive my inheritance.”

From this statement above, it seems that this disciple, mentioned here, was not one of the 12, but, probably, part of the 120 who followed Jesus for a while. He was asking Jesus to let him tend to his business at home, and he would answer the call to the ministry later.

We cannot put off the call of God for any reason. Even though this seems to be good enough excuse, we will see that God will not wait while we tend to earthly things.

**Matthew 8:22 "But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead."**

“Let the dead bury their dead”: Let the world (the spiritual dead), take care of mundane things.

Here we must understand the religious significance of this statement. He was speaking of the spiritually dead. He was saying, you cannot do anything for him now. It was too late. Salvation is offered to the living only. He told the man, go minister to others before they too die physically not knowing salvation. He too was saying, time is running out. Hurry!

**Matthew 8:23 "And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him."**

This was probably, a ship on the Sea of Galilee. It possibly belonged to some of the disciples, who were fishermen before Jesus called them.

**Matthew 8:24 "And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep."**

“There arose a great tempest in the sea”: The Sea of Galilee is more than 690 feet below sea level. To the north, Mt Hermon rises 9,200 feet, and from May to Oct. strong winds often sweep through the narrow surrounding gorges into this valley, causing extremely sudden and violent storms.

“He was asleep”: Just before the disciples saw one of the most awesome displays of His deity, they were given a touching picture of His humanity. He was so weary that not even the violent tossing of the boat awakened Him, even though the disciples feared they would drown (verse 25).

Jesus' body was tired. He was sleeping right on through the storm. The Sea of Galilee is well known for the heavy wind and boisterous waves. These storms come up suddenly and drown many fishermen. These disciples who had fished on this sea, knew how dangerous it could be.

**Matthew 8:25 "And his disciples came to [him], and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish."**

They knew where the help was. They knew Jesus could save them. The cry of mankind should be, "Lord, save us: we perish." Jesus is the only one who can save us, but we must cry out for His help. Jesus always listens to our cries, as He did these disciples.

**Matthew 8:26 "And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm."**

Fear is not of God. Jesus rebuked them for being fearful. Fear is the opposite of faith. Probably all this happened to make them realize they should act in faith not fear. Nevertheless, He spoke to the "wind and the sea", and they both immediately obeyed the Word.

Jesus has all power over everything, even the elements.

**Matthew 8:27 "But the men marveled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!"**

“Even the winds and the sea obey him”: This was convincing proof of His deity (Psalms 29:3-4; 89:9; 93:4; 107:25-29).

The amazing thing, to me in all of this, is the fact that they were amazed. Jesus has been doing all these fantastic miracles, and they still did not know that He had power over the entire universe. They were right; truly he was not "man". He was God housed in the body of a man.

**Matthew 8:28 "And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way."**

“Country of the Gergesenes”: This refers to a small town on the lake opposite Tiberius, perhaps where the modern village of Khersa (Kursi) is located. Some ancient tombs are there and the shoreline descends steeply into the water, exactly matching the description of the terrain in this account.

“Gergesenes:” The usually preferred reading is “Gadarenes.” Gergesa was a town on the eastern slope of the Sea of Galilee and was included in the district of Gadara, one of the cities of the Decapolis. Both of these were included in the large administrative district of Gerasa, whose center was the town of Gerasa in Gilead.

“Two possessed with devils”: The two other synoptic writings mention only one. Mark and Luke emphasize the more predominant convert of the two, whereas Matthew gives the more complete account of both men with whom Jesus dealt, perhaps the law demanded two or more witnesses.

This area that was on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, today is the Golan Heights controlled by the Arabs. In Bible times, it was a very evil area. There were three accounts of men in tombs who were possessed of devils in three of the gospels. It appears that these were three men telling the same account of what happened.

Verses 29-34: “What have we to do with thee?” The demons reacted with resentment at Jesus’ intrusion into their realm, meaning, “What is there in common between us?” Their reference to Him as the “Son of God” indicates that the demons were fully aware of who Jesus was, and their question about being tormented “before the time” also indicates that they were aware of why He had come to earth.

The reference to a “herd of many swine” suggests that they were being kept illegally by Jews who were living in the Gentile region. Swine were considered unclean by the Mosaic Law. “The whole herd ... perished:” Jesus granted the demons’ request because of His concern for the man. The spiritual principle in the incident is that those who are deliberately disobedient deprive themselves of divine protection and place themselves at the mercy of the forces of evil.

**Matthew 8:29 "And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?"**

“To torment us before the time”: Evidently, even the demons not only recognized the deity of Jesus, but also knew that there was a divinely-appointed time for their judgment and He would be their judge. Their eschatology was factually correct, but it is one thing to know the truth, and quite another thing to love it (James 2:19).

There are several things we need to take notice of here. These devils recognized Jesus. They had been in heaven with Jesus before they followed Lucifer. Devil spirits, or demons, are really fallen angels. When God threw Lucifer out of heaven, one third of the angels followed Lucifer, and became his demons.

These demons were well aware that there is coming a day when they would be thrown into the lake of fire with Lucifer. That was why they asked Jesus, if He was going to torment them before the time. These spirits need a body to dwell in. If they cannot get a human, then they will settle for an animal.

**Matthew 8:30 "And there was a good way off from them a herd of many swine feeding."**

“Herd of many swine”: Mark 5:13 adds that there were 2,000 in this herd. Such a large herd of unclean animals suggests that Gentiles dominated the region. It also suggests that the number of demons was large (Mark 5:9).

**Matthew 8:31 "So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine."**

“The devils besought him”: (Luke 8:31), relates they pleaded not to be sent into the abyss, meaning the pit, the underworld, the prison of bound demons who disobeyed. They knew Jesus had the power and authority to send them there if He desired.

You see, the devils did not want to be disembodied. Being a spirit, they have to inhabit a person or an animal, because they did not have a body of their own.

**Matthew 8:32 "And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters."**

One word and they obeyed. Jesus just said, "go". The swine were driven mad by these devils, and rather than live with them, they committed hog suicide.

**Matthew 8:33 "And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils."**

Can you imagine how frightening it would be to be herding hogs, and suddenly, they ran and drowned themselves in the sea? Not only were they frightened, but think of the financial loss.

**Matthew 8:34 "And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought [him] that he would depart out of their coasts."**

“Besought him that he would depart”: perhaps they were concerned with the financial impact from the loss of the pigs. More likely, they were all ungodly people frightened to be in the presence of such spiritual power (Mark 5:14-15).

You would think the people would be tickled to have someone as powerful as Jesus in their midst, but instead, they did not want Him and stopped him at the edge of town. The only reason that makes any sense at all would be that this was a very evil city.

Probably many demon possessed people lived in this city, and you can easily see why they would not want Jesus (the Deliverer), in their city. In (Mark chapter 5), we read the same account (or at least a similar) beginning with verse 2.

Mark 5:2-13 "And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit," "Who had [his] dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:" "Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any [man] tame him." "And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones." "But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him," "And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, [thou] Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not." "For he said unto him, Come out of the man, [thou] unclean spirit." "And he asked him, What [is] thy name? And he answered, saying, My name [is] Legion: for we are many." "And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country." "Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding." "And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them." "And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea."

These three could be separate deliverances, because of so many similar details; I believe they are accounts of the same incident.

## **Matthew Chapter 8 Continued Questions**

1. Why did Jesus say, to depart to the other side of the sea?
2. What promise did the scribe make Jesus?
3. What job for the community did the scribe do?
4. What did scribes have to do with the law?
5. What did Jesus tell the scribe about his living conditions?
6. The disciple that wanted to go and bury his father was probably from what group?
7. What does the statement "Let the dead bury their dead" mean?
8. Salvation is for whom?

9. How did Jesus get to the other side of the sea?
10. When the storm was raging, where was Jesus?
11. What did the disciples say to Jesus about the storm?
12. What did Jesus do?
13. Why did Jesus rebuke them?
14. What is wrong with fear?
15. What should we do, if we are caught in a storm?
16. How many accounts of the demon possessed, whose demons went into the hogs, are in the Bible?
17. What difference is in the stories?
18. Name at least two things we need to remember about these devil spirits.
19. Where were the devil spirits asked to go?
20. What did the swine do?
21. How did the people of the town feel?
22. What does Mark 5:4 show us about demon possession?
23. What was the name of the demons?