

## Matthew 8

In 4:23, Matthew records that Jesus spent time “preaching, teaching, and healing.” In chapters 5-7, Matthew gave us Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, an example of His preaching and teaching. Another summary statement will be made in 9:35. In the next few chapters, He will give us examples of His healing. This chapter has three specific examples of His healing with a general statement of His miracles (8:16-17). The three specific examples are all of individuals who were overlooked often in that society: a leper, a Gentile, and a woman. At the end of the chapter, Matthew highlights another healing miracle, casting out demons from two men.

### TRANSLATION - 8:1-4:

**1** Then after His coming down from the mountain, there followed Him many crowds. **2** And behold, a leper after coming to Him was bowing to Him, saying, “Lord, if you might desire, you are able to make me clean?” **3** After extending the hand, He touched him, saying, “I desire. Be clean.” And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. **4** And Jesus said to him, “Beware no one you might tell, but go, yourself show to the priest and offer the gift which Moses commanded, for a witness to them.”

### WORDS:

The verb “to follow” (ver. 1) is used 90 times in the NT, 25 of those are in Matt. “Crowds” are mentioned 175 times, 50 in Matt. “Lepers” (ver. 2) are mentioned 9 times in the NT, four are in Matt (8:2; 10:8; 11:5; 26:6). The English word *leper* is a transliteration of the Greek word. “To bow” is one of the words used for worship; it is used 60 times, 13 in Matt. It does not appear, here, that we should understand the spiritual connotation. See at 2:2, 8, 11; 4:9-10; 28:9, 17 where it likely means “worship”. “To make clean” is used 31 times, 7 in Matt. “To touch” (ver. 3) is found 39 times, 9 in Matt. “Leprosy” is the related noun to “leper” used earlier; it is found 4 times: Matt. 8:3; Mark 1:42; Luke 5:12-13. The verb translated “beware” (ver. 4) is the verb “to see” (found first at 5:8). Here, it carries a warning connotation. “Priest” is found 31 times, three in Matt (8:4; 12:4-5). The verb “to offer” was first seen at 2:11. It is used frequently in the context of offering gifts in worship (see at 5:23-24). “Gift” was first seen, also at 2:11; 5:23-24. The verb “to command” was first seen at 1:24. It is only used 7 times in the NT. “Witness” is used 19 times, only three times by Matt (8:4; 10:18; 24:14).

### PARALLELS:

This event is presented by Mark (1:40-45) and Luke (5:12-16).

### OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

A leper, perhaps being contagious, was to be isolated socially. When he entered crowds, he was to cover his lip and cry out, “Unclean! Unclean!” (Lev. 13:45-46; Num. 5:2-4). Leprosy was also considered a curse from God (Num. 12:10-12; Job 18:13). This is the first reference in Matthew to the great lawgiver, Moses. Matthew will mention him 7 times: 8:4; 17:3-4; 19:7-8; 22:24; 23:2.

### ARCHAEOLOGY:

Leprosy (ver. 2) was used in the Bible for any number of skin diseases, including the very destructive and contagious disease now known as Hansen’s Disease (caused by the *Mycobacterium leprae* bacillus). It could also refer to elephantiasis, psoriasis, vitiligo or others. There was a process of quarantine and tests performed over a period of days to see if the “leprosy” was contagious or not. In general, leprosy was considered incurable or only cured by God (2 Kings 5:7).

### COMMENTS:

Verse 1 ties this chapter to chapter 5:1-2, showing that the Sermon on the Mount was given at one time, to a single audience. Once Jesus descended from that occasion, a crowd of Jews met Him, among whom was a leper. This leper was apparently breaking protocol by being so close to a crowd of people, but his faith in Jesus compelled him to get closer. He respected Jesus, as he bowed before Him (probably not an act of worship in this case). He also recognized Jesus' right to heal or not. Jews often thought that leprosy was God's punishment on them for some sin. Perhaps Jesus would choose not to heal him.

Jesus did something which probably amazed the leper, and all who were around: He touched him (see also 9:25, 29). Under the Law, Jesus would have been considered unclean now (Lev. 5:3-6). Yet, His touch, instead, cured the man. Curing of leprosy was viewed as "cleansing." The man's leprosy was cleansed immediately. How happy and thankful he must have been!

Jesus then commanded him not to tell anyone (see also 9:30; 12:16; 16:20; 17:9). Jesus did this frequently, but not consistently. The text never gives us the reason Jesus commanded silence. The best assumption is that He did not want to draw crowds in unintended ways or times. Instead, since they lived under the Law, Jesus commanded the man to show himself to the priest, as the Law required. Only the priest could pronounce the man clean. Showing himself to the priest and offering the sacrifices required under the Law (Lev. 14:1-32) would be a witness to the priest and to the Jews that the man was cleansed of his leprosy and, consequently, that Jesus was the Healer of Israel (cf. Exo. 15:26).

#### APPLICATION:

When the Messiah would come, He would cleanse lepers (Matt. 11:2-6). Jesus cleansed lepers; therefore, He is the Messiah. Jesus would also give His apostles power to cast out demons (10:8). There are no cases of healing of lepers or leprosy after the life of Jesus. There are no references to the disease after the Gospel of John. Miracles of healing show: 1) Jesus is Who He says He is; 2) Jesus has the ability to heal diseases; that's why we pray to Him (James 5:14-15); 3) Jesus has the ability to give us permanent, spiritual bodies, which are not susceptible to disease or death (1 Cor. 15:42-44). 4) Jesus loves human beings. If He does not heal us now, He will in the next life.

#### TRANSLATION - 8:5-13:

**5** And after His entering into Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, entreating Him **6** and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying in the house paralyzed, being terribly tormented. **7** And He said to Him, "I, coming, will heal him." **8** Then after answering, the centurion said, "Lord, I am not worthy of You under the roof to enter; but only speak a word, and my servant will be strengthened. **9** For even I, myself, am a man under authority, having under myself soldiers, and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does [it]."

**10** Then after hearing, Jesus marveled and said to those following, "Truly I say to you, from no one such a faith in Israel I have found. **11** But I say to you that many from the east and west will be present and will be reclined at the table with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, **12** and the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into the darkness outside. There, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

**13** So Jesus said to the centurion, "Go. As you have trusted, let it be to you." And [his] servant was healed in that hour.

#### WORDS:

"Centurion" (ver. 5) is used 20 times in the NT, only here in Matt (8:5, 8, 13) and 27:54. "To entreat" was found first at 2:18; 5:4. It can mean to "encourage" or to "call beside." "Servant" (ver. 6) is used 24 times, 8 in Matt (first at 2:16). In some contexts, it can mean "child." "Lying" is the common verb "to cast." This word for "paralyzed" is found 10 times, half

by Matt, half by Mark. "To be tormented" is found first here in Matt (8:6, 29) and at 14:24. It is used 12 times in the NT. "To heal" (ver. 7) was first seen at 4:23-24.

We have translated the verb "to heal" in ver. 8 as "to strengthen" to distinguish it from the prior synonym. This word is found 26 times, 4 by Matt (8:8, 13; 13:15; 15:28). "Soldier" (ver. 9) is used 26 times, three times by Matt. This is the first use of the word "slave," which was extremely prominent in the Roman Empire; the word is found 126 times, 30 by Matt.

"To marvel" (ver. 10) is used 43 times, 7 by Matt, twice in this chapter (8:10, 27). In Mark 6:6, Jesus marvels at the *unbelief* of His hometown. This is the first use of the great biblical word "faith." It is found 243 times, but only 8 times by Matt. "Israel" designates God's people of the OT who were chosen from the family of Abraham to be the nation, the conduit, through whom Jesus would come into the world. The designation is found 68 times in the NT. "To be reclined" at the table (ver. 11) is all one word; it is used twice by Matt (8:11; 14:19) and 6 times total.

The expression "sons of the kingdom" (ver. 12) is found only here and 13:38. It refers to those who have the quality of character of belonging to the kingdom. Here it refers to the Jews. "Darkness" (ver. 12) was first seen at 4:16; 6:23. "Outside" is only used by Matt (8:12; 22:13; 25:30). "Weeping" is found 9 times, mostly (7 times) by Matt. "Gnashing" is also primarily used by Matt (7 out of 8 times). "Teeth" was found first at 5:38; it is used 12 times, 8 by Matt. This is the first use of the verb "to believe" or "to trust," as we have translated it. This verb is used 241 times, 11 by Matt.

#### GRAMMAR:

"Lying" (ver. 6) is a perfect tense verb, which suggests the seriousness of the illness the child has. "Will be reclined" (ver. 11) is a future passive verb. Frequently, passive verbs, in the Jewish mentality, reflected the working of God. Here it suggests God setting Gentiles at the Messianic banquet table with the patriarchs. "Sons of the kingdom" (ver. 12) is a Hebrew idiom to designate someone who has the quality or characteristics of something. Here it is an expression denoting Israelites.

#### PARALLELS:

Luke gives an extended portrayal of this event in Luke 7:1-10, in which Luke informs us that the centurion approached Jesus through emissaries. Other passages suggest or allude to a Messianic banquet: 5:6; 22:1-4; 25:10; 26:29; Luke 14:15-24; 22:30; Rev. 3:20; 19:9. There is no parallel in Mark or Luke to verses 11-12 (but, see Luke 13:28-29).

#### OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

Matthew mentions Abraham 7 times; Isaac, 4 times; Jacob, 6 times. There are some prophecies which anticipated what has been called the "Messianic banquet:" Isa. 25:6-9; 56:3-8; 65:13. The phrase "from east to west" (Psa. 107:3; Isa. 43:5-6; 49:12) was interpreted by the Jews to refer to the Jews scattered by the exiles. The OT also predicted the entrance of Gentiles into the people of God, to worship God: Isa. 2:2-3; 45:6; 59:19; 60:3-4; Micah 4:1-2; Zech. 8:20-23. The concept of "weeping and gnashing of teeth" might be reflecting the idea behind Psalm 112:10.

#### ARCHAEOLOGY:

"Centurions" (ver. 5) are always viewed in a favorable way in the NT: 27:54; Acts 10; 27:1, 3. Soldiers served in the Roman legions for twenty years. They were not legally permitted during those twenty years to have families. Centurions were the officers working most closely with the soldiers. They led 100 men, give or take some. There were 25 Roman legions scattered throughout the empire (six legions in the Danube region). A legion (see Matt. 26:53; Mark 5:9, 15; Luke 8:30) was composed of 6,000 soldiers, within 10 cohorts. A cohort (Matt. 27:27; Mark 15:16; John 18:3, 12; Acts 10:1; 21:31; 27:1) had 6 centuries, each of which was composed of 100 men overseen by a *centurion*. The century was the smallest unit in the army.

“Capernaum” was Jesus’ base of work for much of His ministry, at least in the area of the Sea of Galilee; see at 4:13. Jews sat at tables low to the ground, reclining on pillows, typically leaning on their left elbows and eating with their right hands. Later, Jesus will rebuke Capernaum for their lack of faith (11:23).

#### COMMENTS:

Jesus’ ministry during His life was primarily to the people of God, the house of Israel (10:5-6; 15:24). However, there were a few times in which He touched the lives of non-Jews, which foreshadowed His universal reach. The Jews believed they were saved simply because they were descended from Abraham and had been circumcised (3:9).

Now, a centurion comes to Jesus as He returns home to Capernaum. The centurion serves King Herod Antipas. He has a servant who is paralyzed, we do not know from what, but the ailment causes the servant to be “tormented.” Jesus responds immediately that He will come and heal the servant. It was not a part of the Law of Moses or Roman law, but Jews considered it unlawful to enter a Gentile’s home (cf. John 18:28; Acts 10:28). Some scholars suggest Jesus is asking a question, “Shall I come...?” to suggest Jesus’ hesitancy to help a Gentile, as He does in 15:21-28. The only time Jesus actually goes to a sick person is the daughter of Jairus. In other cases they come, or are brought, to Him.

The centurion, however, does not feel worthy to have Jesus enter his house, apparently based on the reputation of Jesus. The centurion understands authority. He serves at the pleasure of the emperor. He is able to tell one servant, “do this,” and he does it. To another, “do that,” and he does it. The centurion, despite not having any prior examples of such (recorded), believes Jesus can heal the servant simply based on speaking the word! That is a tremendous trust in Jesus Christ.

Jesus also marvels at this man’s confidence. Jesus remarks that He has not seen that type of faith in Israel. On the contrary, Jesus says that many will come from the east and west (referring to Gentiles) and will “be reclined” at the table with the patriarchs. The passive voice of the verb suggests that God is the one who will make the Gentiles to recline at the table. This table is the banquet God has prepared for His Messiah, pictured by the prophets and fulfilled in heaven (Rev. 19:7-10).

As for the “sons of the kingdom,” an idiomatic expression for the Jews, they will be cast out into outer darkness, which refers to the fires of Gehenna (see comments on 5:22). In that state, the Jews will endure weeping and gnashing of teeth. Jesus could hardly have used a phrase that would more depict the lifelessness, hopelessness, and pain associated with the fires of Gehenna.

Then Jesus tells the centurion that His trust in Jesus is well-placed. His servant was healed. Later, the centurion is informed that the servant was healed at the “hour” or “moment” that Jesus pronounced him healed.

#### APPLICATION:

“Weeping and gnashing of teeth” (found in Matt 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28) is one of the most fearful descriptions of life in hell in the NT. Another point we can draw from this event is that, since Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be at the Messianic banquet: 1) They (we) retain identities even in the afterlife; 2) We will recognize each other in heaven (even people we have not yet met). Matthew has a strong emphasis on the universal scope of the Messiah’s plans: 2:1-12; 3:9; 4:14-16, 25; 8:5-13, 28-34; 10:18; 12:21, 42; 13:38; 15:21-28, 29-31; 24:14, 31; 25:31-46; 28:19. The incorporation of the Gentiles into the people of God (the “Israelites”) under Christ is illustrated by Paul with the wild and cultivated olives in Romans 11:17-24. Many other passages also teach the same point; for example, Eph. 2:11-22.

#### TRANSLATION - 8:14-17:

**14** And after Jesus came into the house of Peter, He saw his mother-in-law lying and burning with a fever. **15** And He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she arose and was

16 And after evening came, they brought to Him many demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits by a word and all those having badly, He healed. 17 So that the word might be fulfilled through Isaiah the prophet, saying, "This one our weakness He took away and illnesses He removed."

#### WORDS:

"Mother-in-law" (ver. 14) is found 6 times: 8:14; 10:35; Mark 1:30; Luke 4:38; 12:53. "Lying" is the same verb describing the child in the prior paragraph. "Burning with a fever" is all one word with "fire" as its root; it is used here and at Mark 1:30. "To leave" (ver. 15) was first seen at 3:15 where Jesus called John to "allow" Him to be baptized. "Fever" is related to the verb above; it is used 6 times (8:15; Mark 1:31; Luke 4:38-39; John 4:52; Acts 28:8). The verb "to serve" was first seen at 4:11. Its noun form gives us the servant role in the church called "deacon." "Demon possessed" (ver. 16) is all one word, first seen at 4:24. The word "Spirits" was first seen, in the singular, at 1:18, 20 in reference to the Holy Spirit. Here it is plural, referring to demons, evil and unclean spirits. "To heal" was seen first at 4:23-24. "Weakness" (ver. 17) is a literal translation but it refers to diseases. It is used 24 times, only here in Matthew. "Illnesses" is used 11 times, five by Matt, first at 4:23-24. "To carry away or remove" was first seen at 3:11.

#### GRAMMAR:

"Lying" (ver. 14) is the same verb describing the child in the prior paragraph. "Was serving" (ver. 15) is in the imperfect tense, indicating continuous service.

#### PARALLELS:

This healing is found in Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38-39.

#### OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

The quotation in verse 17 comes from Isaiah 53:4. Matthew's quotation is either his own or from some other translation besides the LXX. Isaiah 53 plays a significant role in the life and ministry of Jesus: 53:7 (Matt. 27:12), 53:9 (Matt. 27:57), and 53:10-12 (Matt. 20:28). The Ethiopian nobleman in Acts 8 is reading from Isaiah 53 and does not know to whom it refers (Acts 8:32-33). Some Jews understood Isaiah 53 to be Messianic but either ignored or misapplied the references to His suffering.

#### COMMENTS:

Peter has done well in his fishing, as he owns his own home, and he is married (cf. 1 Cor. 9:5). His mother-in-law is sick with a fever. We are not told what was causing the fever, but Jesus healed her as He touched her. As with practically all of Jesus' miracles, this one was instantaneous and immediately effective. She arose and began serving Him.

Verses 16-17 give another summary of the miracles Jesus was performing. We understand from Mark's account that this day was the Sabbath (Mark 1:21, 29), which explains why the people waited until evening to bring the sick to Jesus. He cured the demon-possessed. This word ("demon-possessed") has its root word as "demon;" in this same text, these beings are referred to as "spirits." There has been some discussion as to what demons are but it seems clear that demons are evil (unclean) spirits, which are angels which have followed Satan (Matt. 25:41) in his rebellion. He heals with a word (8:16) just as He did in 8:8.

In verse 17, Matthew informs the reader that Jesus' miracles fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah from Isaiah 53:4. The Hebrew text reads "griefs" and "sorrows" and Matthew, perhaps making his own translation, interprets those words in their physical meaning. Jesus carries our illnesses and our diseases. From a theological perspective, Jesus came to heal from the illness of sin and its sting, which is death (cf. 1 Cor. 15:55-56). Yet, since Jesus, on the cross, destroyed the works of the devil (1 John 3:8) and removed the sting of sin, He will eventually

heal all illnesses and all diseases as Christians will put off the body of death and will put on an eternal body of life (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

#### APPLICATION:

Consider the thoughts presented at 8:1-4 relative to the lessons we learn from Jesus' healing miracles. In Psalm 103:3, we are told that God will heal diseases and in Revelation 21:4, we learn that in heaven, there will be no more pain. How anxious we ought to be to get there! Jesus came to defeat the powers of Satan (1 John 3:8; Col. 2:15; 1 Cor. 15:24).

#### TRANSLATION - 8:18-22:

**18** And after Jesus seeing the crowd around Him, gave command to depart unto the other side. **19** Then after drawing near, one scribe said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you may go." **20** And Jesus said to him, "The foxes dens they have and the birds of the heaven, nesting places. But the Son of Man does not have where the head He may lay."

**21** And another of [His] disciples said to Him, "Lord, permit me first to go away and to bury my father." **22** But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me and permit the dead ones to bury their own dead ones."

#### WORDS:

"To give command" (ver. 18) is used 25 times, 7 times by Matt. It is a different word than the normal Greek verb "to command." "Scribe" was first seen at 2:4; see there. This is the first use of the designation "teacher;" it is used by Matthew 12 times, out of 59. For the verb "to follow," see above on 8:1. "Foxes" (ver. 20) is found here and Luke 9:58; 13:32. "Dens" are found only here and Luke 9:58. "Nesting places" is also found only here and Luke 9:58. The phrase "son of man" is found 196 times in the Bible; 88 times in the NT; 31 times in Matt. In the OT, it referred to a human being, someone who had the quality or characteristic of being human. With the exception of three passages (Luke 24:7; John 12:34; Acts 7:56), the phrase is always on the lips of Jesus. "To lay" is used only 7 times, only here in Matt. "Disciple" was first seen at 5:1. "To permit" is used 18 times, only twice by Matt (8:21; 19:8). "To bury" is found 11 times, in Matt here (8:21-22) and 14:12. "Dead ones" (ver. 22) is found 128 times, 12 by Matt.

#### PARALLELS:

Luke 9:57-62; 14:25-33 are parallels to this text.

#### OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

It is almost certain that Daniel 7:13-14 is the primary text behind Jesus identifying Himself most often with the phrase "Son of Man." This is the case because Daniel taught most clearly about the coming kingdom (2:44).

#### ARCHAEOLOGY:

If ancient practices are any indication of life in the first century, mourning for a funeral could last a week (Gen. 50:10; 1 Sam. 31:13). The dead were buried the same day as death (Matt. 27:59-60; Acts 5:5-6, 10). A year later, family members would return to the cave of the burial and put the bones into a special box (called an ossuary), and set it at the back of the cave to make room for others at the front of the cave.

#### COMMENTS:

As the crowd pressed on Jesus, likely for healing, He gave the command to leave the city and travel by boat to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. At that point, a scribe, likely among the followers of Jesus, came to Him and offered that he would follow Jesus anywhere. Jesus responded with the price of discipleship. Jesus had a home in Capernaum, or He stayed in Peter's home. However, it was not His home; He was just a traveling preacher. The animals had their dens and nests, but the Son of Man had no place to lay His head. In other words, He

would be traveling throughout His ministry. Jesus refers to Himself as the “Son of Man,” a likely allusion to the individual predicted by Daniel (7:13-14) who would set up the Kingdom of God.

Another of His disciples (which suggests the scribe above was a disciple) desires first to bury his father. As mentioned above under “Archaeology,” it is not likely that burying his father would take more than 24 hours. If he intends to stay home for a year in order to put his father’s bones into an ossuary, we better understand Jesus’ rebuke. It might also be the case that the man’s father has not yet died. Either way, Jesus sets the standard for discipleship very high. His call must come first and before family. Those who refuse to follow Jesus (the “spiritual” dead) should bury their own dead.

Using “dead ones” to refer to those *spiritually* dead is not something found frequently in the teachings of Jesus Himself, but it is consistent with NT theology: Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13; Rev. 3:1.

#### APPLICATION:

Paul will say that we need to give, to support those in need, just as Jesus gave up His riches (in heaven) and assumed the poverty of humanity (2 Cor. 8:9). This verb “to lay” (ver. 20) is used of Jesus in John 19:30. He finally found a place to lay His head! In the bosom of His Father, in death. Paul will point out some other areas in 1 Cor. 4:11 where the disciples of Christ have suffered for His sake. The NT teaches that the Christian’s citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20) and we are strangers on this earth (1 Pet. 2:11). What conviction will it take to keep our hearts focused on our priority?

#### TRANSLATION - 8:23-27:

**23** And after His embarking into the boat, therefore followed Him many disciples. **24** And behold, a great storm happened in the sea, so that the boat was overwhelmed by the waves; but He was asleep. **25** And after approaching, they awoke Him saying, “Lord! Save [us]! We are dying!” **26** Then He said to them, “Why are you timid, little faith ones?” At that time, after rising, He rebuked the winds and the sea, and there happened a great calm. **27** And the men marveled saying, “What sort is this One that even the winds and the sea submit to Him?”

#### WORDS:

“To embark” (ver. 23) is used 16 times, 5 in Matt. “Storm” (ver. 24) is used 14 times, 4 times by Matt (8:24; 24:7; 27:54; 28:2). It is often used to refer to earthquakes. Matthew’s use here helps us picture how violent this storm was. The Greek word, *seismos*, is the root word for the seismograph, which registers the strength of earthquakes. “To be overwhelmed” is used twice by Matt (8:24; 10:26), out of 8 times. “Waves” is used twice in Matt (8:24; 14:24), out of 5 times. “To sleep” is used 22 times, 7 by Matt. This is the first use of the verb “to save” since 1:21. In that text, it was used with spiritual connotations; here, it simply means to “rescue from danger.” “To die” was first seen at 2:13. “Timid” (ver. 26) is used three times: 8:26; Mark 4:40; Rev. 21:8. “Little faith ones” was first seen at 6:30; it is used also at 14:31; 16:8; and Luke 12:28. “To rebuke” or “to reprove” is used 29 times, 6 in Matt (8:26; 12:16; 16:22; 17:18; 19:13; 20:31). “Calm” is used 3 times, in Matt (8:26), Mark (4:39), and Luke (8:24). Jesus “marveled” (ver. 27) in verse 10. “What sort” is a question posed 7 times: 8:27; Mark 13:1; Luke 1:29; 7:39; 2 Pet. 3:11; 1 John 3:1. “To submit” is an intensified form of the verb “to hear,” meaning literally “to listen under.” It is found 21 times, in Matt only here.

#### PARALLELS:

This event finds parallels at Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25.

#### OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

God calms the storms in OT teaching: Job 38:8-11; Psa. 29:3-4, 10-11; 65:5-7; 89:9; 107:23-32.

### ARCHAEOLOGY:

The Sea of Galilee was shaped like a pear, 8 miles wide and 13 miles from north to south. It was 680' below sea level, but winds coming down from the mountains around could stir up the waters very quickly and very strongly. The Sea was infamous for unexpected storms.

### COMMENTS:

Jesus had wanted to get into the boat at verse 18 but was distracted by the men desiring to delay their discipleship. Now, He gets into the boat with His disciples. If Peter, Andrew, James, and John were with Jesus in the boat, and we presume they were, these men were experienced fishermen (4:18-22)! They were knowledgeable about the Sea of Galilee. But they were still afraid, so afraid they asked a carpenter for help!

This great storm, almost of earthquake proportions on the sea, came up on the Sea of Galilee. The boat was overwhelmed by the waves. Worn out, illustrating His humanity, Jesus was sleeping through the storm. The experienced, but fearful disciples, woke Jesus with three words (in Greek): "Lord! Save! We are dying!" Jesus has been performing miracles on a regular basis, but it had not convinced the disciples, yet, that He had full control of nature. So, He rebukes their shallow faith, calling them timid or afraid. Then He arose and rebuked the storm, the winds and the sea. Everything immediately became perfectly calm.

The disciples marveled, the same response Jesus had at the centurion's faith in verse 10. They wondered at what type of man Jesus was that nature submitted itself to Him! The winds and the sea obey this man!

### APPLICATION:

God still allows storms to enter our lives, in order to teach us to rely on His grace (see 2 Cor. 12:7-8). Leprosy submits to Christ (8:3); paralysis submits to Christ (8:13); fever submits to Christ (8:15); storms submit to Christ (8:27); demons submit to Christ (8:32). Men and women sometimes refuse to submit (8:20, 22).

### TRANSLATION - 8:28-34:

**28** And after His coming unto the other side, into the district of Gadarene, there met Him two demon-possessed from the tombs coming out, very violent so that not to be able anyone to pass by through that way. **29** And behold they cried out, saying, "What [is it] to us and to you, Son of God? Have you come here before the time to torment us? **30** And there was far away from them a herd of large pigs feeding. **31** And the demons were urging Him, saying, "If you cast us out, send us into the heard of pigs." **32** And He said to them, "Go." And these after going out, entered the pigs. And behold, all the heard rushed headlong down the slope into the sea and died in the waters. **33** And those herding fled, and after entering into the city they announced everything and the things of the demon-possessed. **34** And behold, all the city went out to the meeting to Jesus and seeing Him, they urged thus He may go away from their region.

### WORDS:

"To meet" (ver. 28) is used 10 times, twice in Matt (8:28; 28:9). "Tombs" is found 40 times, 7 times in Matt, five of those related to the death and resurrection of Jesus. "Violent" is only used here and at 2 Tim. 3:1. "To cry out" (ver. 29) is used 55 times, in Matt, 12 times. The expression "Son(s) of God" is used 53 times in the Bible, 5 times in the OT (Gen. 6:2, 4; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7), 48 times in the NT, 8 times in Matthew (4:3, 6; 5:9; 8:29; 26:63; 27:40, 43, 54). "To torment" is used 12 times in the NT, three in Matt (8:6, 29; 14:24). By Jesus' day, perhaps Jews would understand the term as synonymous with "Messiah."

"Feeding" (ver. 30) is used 9 times, only here in Matt (8:30, 33 - referring to the herdsmen). We translate it "to herd" when it refers to the humans caring for the pigs. This is the only place where this word for "demons" (ver. 31) is found. "To urge" was first seen at 2:18; 5:4; 8:5, 31, 34. It is used 109 times in the NT. "To send" was first seen at 2:16. It is the verb form of



the noun translated (transliterated) *apostle*. "To rush headlong," all one word (ver. 32), is used here; Mark 5:13; Luke 8:33; Acts 7:57; 19:29. The verb "to die" means just that, although it is understood that they died by drowning. The verb is used 111 times, 5 times in Matt (8:32; 9:24; 22:24, 27; 26:35). "To announce" (ver. 33) was first seen at 2:8. It is related to the verb, "to evangelize," and the noun "gospel." The noun "meeting" (ver. 34) is related to the verb "to meet" in verse 28. The noun is only used three times (8:34; 25:1; John 12:13). "To urge" was used in verse 31. "To go away" is used 12 times in the NT, 6 times in Matt (8:34; 11:1; 12:9; 15:29; 17:20).

#### GRAMMAR:

The verb "to urge" (ver. 31) translates an imperfect verb which denotes consistent action; they "kept urging" Him. "If you cast us out" is a first-class conditional statement, suggesting the idea of "when you drive us out..."

#### PARALLELS:

Mark (5:1-20) and Luke (8:26-39) speak of only one demoniac while Matthew speaks of two. There is no contradiction here; Mark and Luke simply focus on the one who is speaking. Some have suggested Matthew chooses two since the Law required two witnesses for a matter to be established (Deut. 19:15). However, first, Matthew does not indicate that is the reason he gives two. Secondly, the suggestion implies that Matthew is making up things; that this "two" is not historical.

#### ARCHAEOLOGY:

"Gadarene" (ver. 28) refers to one of the villages of the Decapolis. It was five miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee, but its territory, as we see here, reached to the area of the Sea. Since pigs are present, we should understand this to be a Gentile region and the herders are probably Gentiles. Jews understood pigs were unclean (Lev. 11:7; Deut. 14:8). There are three different variant spellings / villages within the Greek manuscripts for Gadara (see also Mark 5:1; Luke 8:26). The *Textual Commentary* prefers *Gadara* as the superior reading.

Jewish, and other, exorcists used incantations and elaborate rituals to cast out demons, or at least to portray the idea they were casting out demons. There are only a few such accounts in non-biblical sources and they do not compare to the accounts of Jesus and His apostles. Jesus could do so simply with the power of His word. His followers could do it, simply by invoking the name of the Resurrected Lord (Acts 19:11-16).

#### COMMENTS:

This is the first elaborated account of five "exorcisms" performed by Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew (see for the others: 9:32-33; 12:22; 15:21-28; 17:14-20).

Jesus' boat reaches the other side of the Sea of Galilee and immediately, two men possessed by demons meet Him as they leave a cemetery. We have no understanding why the demons dwelt in the cemeteries. To suggest this means "demons" are the spirits of evil men is to exceed the evidence and contradict other passages. These two men were extremely violent so that others would not pass that direction. Biblical demon possession is very much unlike modern so-called demon possession. Biblical demon possession did give the individuals possessed super-human strength and motivated the person to inflict pain on others (here; see also 17:15) or pain on themselves (see Mark's account at 5:5). But in these examples, demons did not otherwise motivate the possessed person to sin. In other words, murder, lying, fornication, no other sin is attributed to demon possession in the NT.

Demons apparently heard God's testimony about Jesus being His Son (Matt. 3:17). Once God speaks from heaven, Satan and the demons have access to His word. Without God speaking, Satan and his demons are as ignorant as man is (cf. 1 Cor. 2:8). The demons know Jesus is the Son of God and they confess that fact! They even tremble at His power to judge (cf. James 2:19). The demons also know that Jesus is going to punish them in the fires of hell

one day (Matt. 25:41; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). These demons just don't want that to happen too early.

We do not know why the demons requested to be cast into the pigs. Perhaps it shows that they have to dwell within some other being. Or, it might be that they suspected the owners of the pigs, angry that the pigs drown in the sea, would drive Jesus out of their region. Whether they could have anticipated the pigs reacting as they did, we do not know. The demons recognized Jesus' power and assumed He is going to cast them out (ver. 31). Jesus gives a one-word command: "Go!" The demons exit the humans (we do not know if the demon possessed men are Jews or Gentiles; nor do we know the ethnicity of the herders) and enter the pigs. The whole herd runs down the slope and drowns in the sea.

The herdsmen are now without a means of income and run back to the city of Gadara and report everything they had seen. They also reported what had happened to the demon possessed men. Yet, the towns people are not happy concerning the formerly demon possessed men. They are upset that the pigs have been killed; perhaps this herd was the whole village's herd. But, they "urge" Jesus (the same verb the demons used to convince Jesus to authorize their possession of the pigs in verse 31) to leave their region. Which He does (9:1).

#### APPLICATION:

There are only a few examples of demon possession after the Gospel of John: Acts 5:16; 8:7; 16:16-18; 19:11-16. As with the miracles of healing mentioned at 8:1-4, casting out demons showed: 1) Jesus was Who He claimed to be; 2) He loved people; 3) He came to destroy the works of Satan (1 John 3:8; 1 Cor. 15:24-25; Rev. 20:10), and these events were a visible testimony to that point. Jesus has more power than Satan does. That means that He has the power to help us defeat Satan's lies and temptations, even sin, in our lives (cf. Rom. 16:20). This event is the only example of Jesus destroying animal life, but clearly, here, Jesus knew the health of human beings was more important than the herd of pigs. Just as the people rejected Jesus, so Jesus warns His apostles in 10:13-15 that they will also be rejected as they preach: "the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"