

Miracles and Signs IV**Matthew 8:28—9:13****A Legion of Demons** (verses 28—27)

Jesus and His Disciples now arrive on the east side of the Sea of Galilee. It was here that they run into two who were living among the tombs, possessed by a legion of demons. A legion of Roman soldiers was between 3,000—5,000 so there were several thousand demons indwelling these men. Notice that we are seeing an unprecedented amount of demon activity in Galilee, which is why Matthew 4:16 says the people were in darkness and living in the shadow of death. Satan was very active and his power was overt. This should give us an idea of the demonic activity that will prevail over the earth during the Tribulation. The Tribulation was scheduled to come on the scene within a couple of years but was delayed by God's mercy (Luke 13:6—9) to give Israel one additional year to repent and accept Jesus as Messiah. When Israel rejected the offer of the Kingdom, God temporarily set Israel aside to introduce the Mystery and this Dispensation of Grace. After the Rapture, God will once again pick up His dealings with Israel where He left off in order to fulfill prophecy. The Tribulation will be ushered in shortly after the Rapture.

Why all the focus on the healings and demon activity? Because of the prophetic timeline. The demons were aware of this timeline and asked Jesus if He came to torment them before the time. They knew that torment awaited them after the Tribulation when Satan and the demons will be cast into hell (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10). They were aware of this prophetic timeline because it is laid out so clearly in Daniel. They knew they were living in the 69th week of Daniel 9. This week of years would come to an end at the stoning of Stephen as indicated by Jesus Christ rising up to come to earth in wrath.

Psalm 110:1 The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

Psalm 7:6 Arise, O Lord, in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies: and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded.

Psalm 3:1—8 ¹ Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me. ² Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah. **(It will look completely hopeless for the Little Flock as they are going through the Tribulation. It will appear that God has left them to die.)** ³ But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. ⁴ **I cried unto the Lord (as David cried out to the Lord and the Disciples cried out to the Lord while on the ship in the storm, the Little Flock will cry out to the Lord for their salvation) with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. (His Holy Hill is Jerusalem according to Psalm 2:6. When Christ comes to save Israel He will set up His throne in Jerusalem. This is a plea for the Lord to come back—the Second Coming.)** Selah. ⁵ I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me. ⁶ I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about. ⁷ Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. ⁸ Salvation belongeth unto the Lord: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah.

I believe the two men are representative of Judah and Israel (the southern two tribes of Judah and Benjamin and the northern 10 tribes). All of Israel has been overtaken with Satan through idol worship and he has become an overwhelming force throughout Israel. No one in Israel was capable of binding Satan's power and influence. Jesus Christ was able to free these men with just one word: "Go." The demons didn't want to leave the country according to Mark 5:10 or to be cast into the deep (abyss) according to Luke 8:31 possibly meaning that they were allowed to act only within a specific area of the world and only for a specific amount of time. They also appear to desire a physical body.

Luke 11:24 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out.

The demons recognized Christ because they knew Him from before the fall when they were in heaven with Him. This was before Jesus came to earth so they could not have known Jesus but they knew the second person of the trinity. They immediately knew that Jesus was God and respected Him as such. This picture of the demon-possessed pigs illustrates the fate of the demons in the end times when they will be cast into hell.

Instead of embracing Jesus Christ as Deliverer, the town's people became frightened and pleaded for Jesus to leave. They had no desire to change from their evil ways.

Paralyzed man (Matthew 9:1—8; Mark 2:3—12; Luke 5:18—26)

A paralyzed man was lowered through the roof for healing. Instead of healing, Jesus forgave his sins. The Scribes and Pharisees were thinking Jesus was a blasphemer because they correctly understood that God alone could forgive sins. Jesus Christ knew what they were thinking and asked them which was easier, to forgive sins or to heal. He then proceeded to heal the man. We have here a direct connection between healing and forgiveness. This was again in fulfillment of Isaiah 53:4—5 as we saw when He healed Peter's mother-in-law.

From Luke we find out this man needed to be lowered from the roof to come to Christ because the leaders of Israel were blocking his access. Access to God was suppose to be through the leaders of Israel and specifically the priests but they had been so far removed from God that they had become an impediment to people desiring a relationship with God. This group of four men found their own way to Christ apart from the leaders. This is a picture of Israel (a nation) and the Little Flock (another nation). The nation is apostate and has turned her back on God. The new nation that is being formed is the righteous remnant. They are coming to Christ in spite of the leaders of the apostate nation. This does not show there are many roads to God but actually shows Christ as the only way. The testimony of the Little Flock will be instrumental in bring many from Israel to Christ.

Matthew 21:43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

Today's "faith healers" gloss over one detail about this story. This man wasn't healed because of his own faith but because of the faith of the four men who brought him to Jesus. Today's "faith healers" blame the person desirous of healing for having too little faith if they can't heal him. This demonstrates it's not about how much faith a person has that determines his healability but about having faith in the right Person.

This story proves that Jesus had the authority to forgive sins and therefore was equal with God. The Disciples could also forgive sins (John 20:21—23) but this ability had to be delegated to them by Jesus Christ. Christ inherently possessed this ability. This ability to forgive sins and heal the sick is attributed to God in the Psalms making Jesus equal with God.

Psalms 103:1—3 ¹ Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. ² Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: ³ Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;

Jesus calls Matthew

Matthew was sitting in his tax collectors booth as Jesus walked by. A tax collector was looked upon as a traitor to Israel because they were working for the Roman government and they personally profit from over collecting. They profited from their brothers by legally charging whatever extra they could. This is why publicans (tax collectors) and sinners are mentioned in the same breath. As soon as Jesus told Matthew to follow Him, Matthew left everything, got up and followed. This is what Jesus expected of a disciple (Luke 14:33).

Being well off, Matthew was able to throw a large party in his good-sized house for the publicans and sinners. This rankled the holier-than-thou Pharisees and they questioned the Disciples about this indiscretion. When Jesus heard this he told them the sick are the ones who need a physician. The Pharisees viewed themselves as healthy spiritually because they were the ones who were so good at keeping and interpreting the Law. Jesus condemns them by telling them to go to Hosea to learn what it means when God says He wants mercy instead of sacrifice—to have the right heart instead of seemingly the right outward actions. The publicans and sinners knew they were in need while the Pharisees thought they had no need of Christ.

Hosea 6:6—7 ⁶ For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. ⁷ But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.

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