

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship

March 24, 2019

“React & Act”

9:00 ~ Fellowship.

10:00 ~ Service with the King’s Kid’s & Communion for all who are Christians

NEWS

<https://40daysforlife.com/local-campaigns/whitefish/>

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Visit the website ~ www.myaletheia.com ~ Hear a sermon at aletheiachristianfellowship.podomatic.com

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- 1) How has God intervened in your reality?
- 2) What does their question to Jesus reveal?
- 3) What is the evangelistic question that is also relevant to Believers?

God still intervenes. Joshua 1:9^{aNASB} ~ “Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” Please continue to pray for Amy, her kids, Daniel & Vicki and the Easthaven branch of our family.

MATTHEW 8:28-32 ~ ^{28NASB}When He came to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two men who were demon-possessed met Him as they were coming out of the tombs. They were so extremely violent that no one could pass by that way. ²⁹And they cried out, saying, “What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?” ³⁰Now there was a herd of many swine feeding at a distance from them. ³¹The demons began to entreat Him, saying, “If You are going to cast us out, send us into the herd of swine.” ³²And He said to them, “Go!” And they came out and went into the swine, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the waters.

Jesus' miracles are in three basic areas - His _____ & _____ over disease, nature and evil - and they all point to the salvation only He can provide. Here we have the _____ kind of proof.

_____ and _____ both call it "The country of the Gerasenes"; Matthew says, "The country of the Gadarenes," which the KJV has as "Gergesenes."

Gergesa was a tiny village (Kursi, Israel).

Gadara was a town (Umm Qais, Jordan).

Gerasa was a major city (Jerash, Jordan).

Tombs. A graveyard with headstones? A burial area with mausoleums? The most famous rock cut tombs are in _____.

Matthew mentions two demon-possessed men, while Mark and Luke, both with more detail, mention _____.

Demon possession was real in Jesus' day and it's still real. 1) The Bible is only hitting _____. 2) The New Testament covers a 100-year _____. 3) Demonic activity was intensified around _____. 4) There are 40 times more _____ now.

There is no more shame in getting help for depression, than there is in getting help with a broken arm.

Don't worry about getting rid of _____, worry about the person's salvation because once they are saved and filled with the Holy Spirit the demons cannot remain or return. (Matthew 12:43-45, Luke 11:24-26).

"What business do we have with each other, Son of God?" It was a colloquial phrase. It means we have _____ common ground in this matter.

John 2:3b&4

"Have You come here... (come where? Think about that) ...to torment us before the time?" Implies that Jesus is _____ to torment them and that they think they have more _____.

The same word, "Torment," is used in Revelation chapter 20. There it indicates that the Lake of Fire is a place where all, not eternally with God, are _____ day and night forever and ever.

They are fully aware of their fate - their appeal has to do with timing. "Please don't punish us before the eschatological end."

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

Luke 8:31 gives us an extra insight. It says, “They were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the abyss.”

The word abyss, ἄβυσσος (ä-büs-sös), from βυθός (bü-thös). Like Bathymetric charts, but greatly intensified, deep dark depths, or a “_____ pit.”

MATTHEW 8:33&34 ~ ³³NASB The herdsmen ran away, and went to the city and reported everything, including what had happened to the demoniacs. ³⁴And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw Him, they implored Him to leave their region.

“The herdsmen ran away.” Really? Hearing, seeing, knowing, and then to run away from Jesus. It is, of course, a _____. The rest of the folks make the same _____.

Their fear was really that they realized that Jesus was no ordinary man. If He can easily command a “Legion” of demons to flee and the evidence for that is so undeniable... Then what He says, must be _____.

“What are you going to do with Jesus?”

Check all that apply – detach and place in the offering or the prayer box

_____ I want to talk with the pastor about _____

_____ I want prayer for _____

_____ I want to volunteer to _____

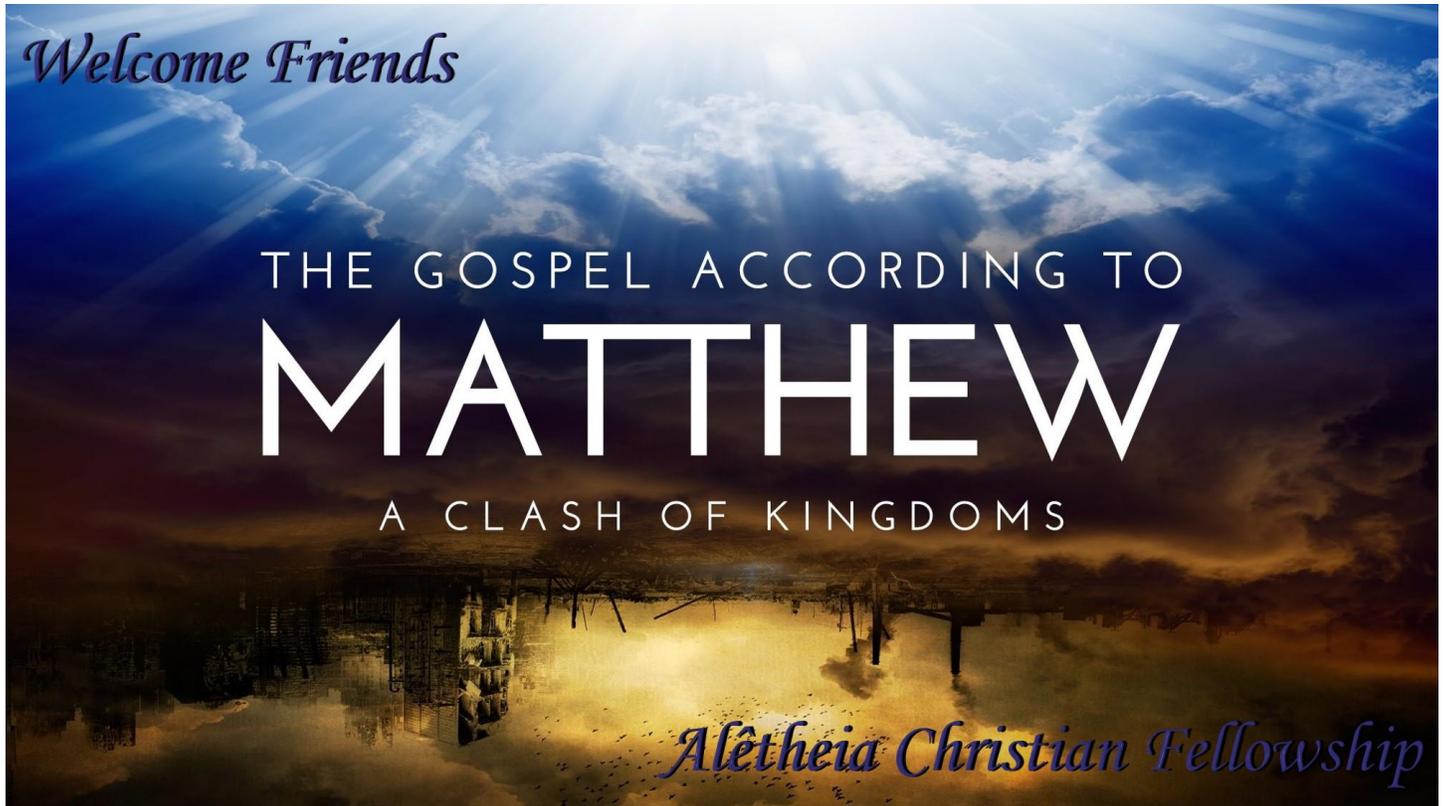
_____ I want more information about _____

_____ Other _____

Name _____ Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

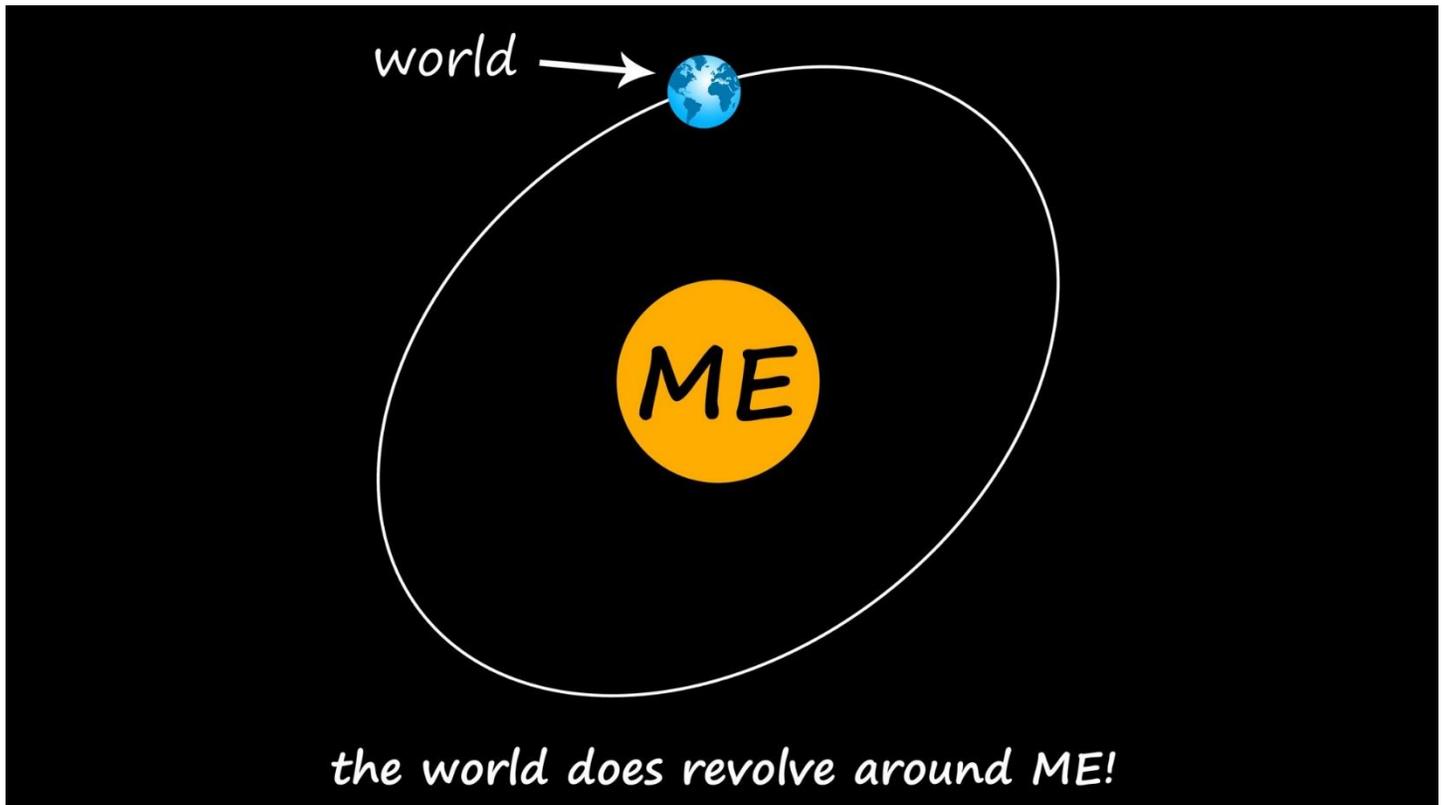
Alêtheia ~ Matthew 8c ~ 032419



We've been talking about supernatural events, and miraculous healings wrought by Jesus.

They serve to prove that God interferes in this physical reality and did so ultimately with His own Word. He became flesh and dwelt among us so that all who turn to Him could be eternally healed.

Well, my friends God is still in the interference business. We've been praying for a young woman over at Easthaven Baptist for a long time... (About the first 13 minutes of the sermon).



Last week we looked at a guy who was overenthusiastic about following Jesus; “I’ll follow You anywhere!” And another guy who was under enthusiastic; “Ditto Jesus, just let me take care of some stuff first.”

We found that the cost of discipleship is not only far greater than we can imagine; it is also far more urgent.

Matthew then took us into the first of three supernatural events to clearly demonstrate the reasonableness of such a radical call.

The mistake the disciples made in the midst of the tempest at sea was to worry. Jesus rebuked them for their emotional reaction to the situation. He rewarded them by rebuking the storm for their action in calling upon Him.

There is very little that we can do to control the things that happen to us, but we can have some control over how we react to them and we can certainly control how we act afterward.

All three of these episodes deal with Satan's realm, activity and authority. As is typical, the center pericope, the one we're about to read, is the focal point, as it is the most detailed and most obvious in revealing the spiritual conflict behind the physical reality we see.



GOD INTERVENES

Matthew 8:28-32 ~ 28NASB When He came to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two men who were demon-possessed met Him as they were coming out of the tombs. They were so extremely violent that no one could pass by that way. 29 And they cried out, saying, "What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?" 30 Now there was a herd of many swine feeding at a distance from them. 31 The demons began to entreat Him, saying, "If You are going to cast us out, send us into the herd of swine." 32 And He said to them, "Go!" And they came out and went into the swine, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the waters.

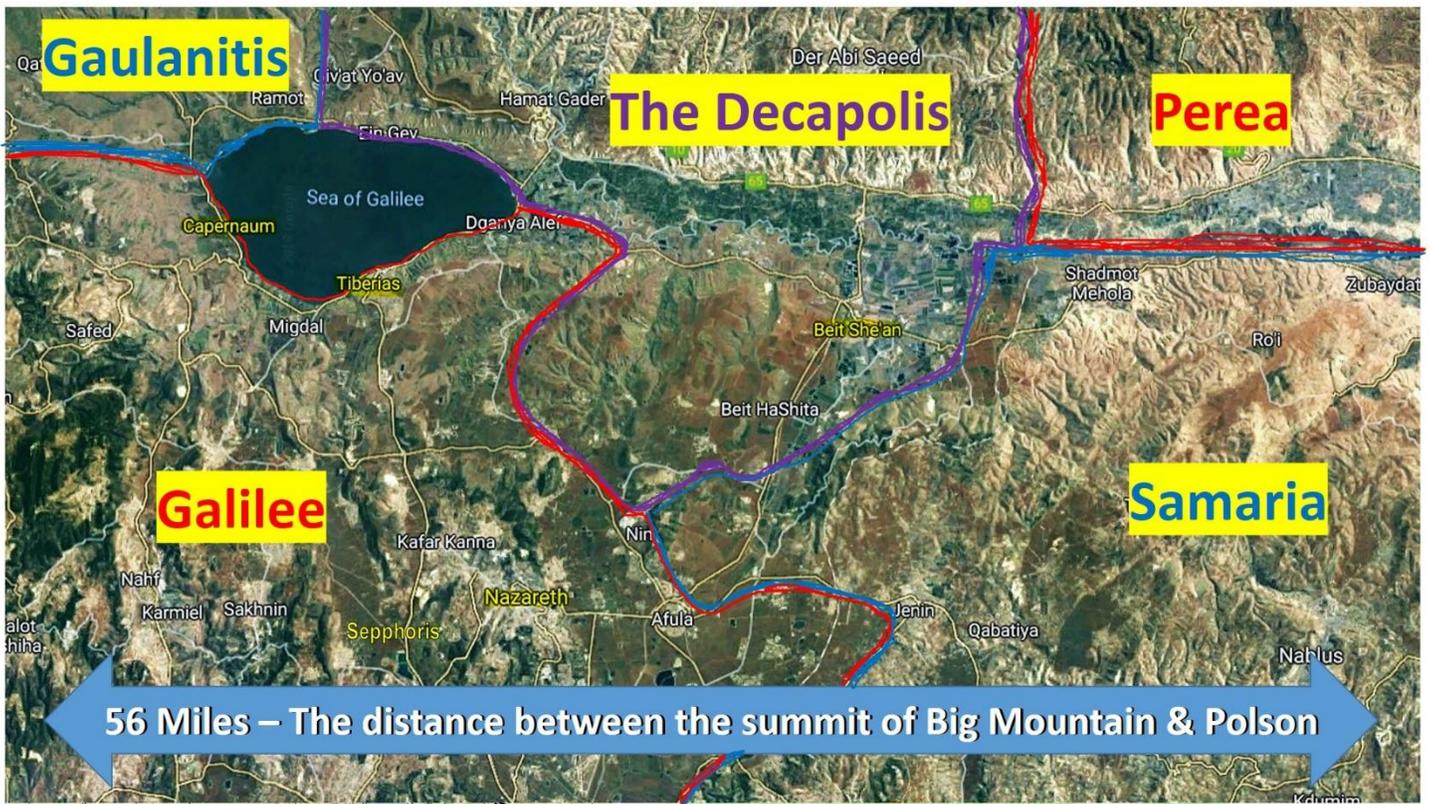
God interferes in the physical. He intervenes in our affairs. Appearing to, and interacting with, various people, in various ways. Sending flood and drought, brimstone and fire. He has spoken to us through the prophets of old. He has miraculously healed and given a mother more time with her children.

Ultimately, He Himself came and dwelt among us as one of us and yet as the unique “Son of God.”

The point of all of it, is to make a way, for fallen human beings to be eternally saved into an abiding and everlasting relationship with Him. We can say healed from our humanity disease. We can say protected from our inevitable decay due to the natural forces. We can say removed from the clutches of Satanic, demonic control.

Jesus’ miracles proving His person, are in those three basic areas - His power and authority over disease, nature and Satan - and they all point to the complete and eternal salvation only He can provide.

Here we have the dramatic account of the third kind of proof. Matthew greatly abbreviates the story compared to Mark and Luke. Once again, Matthew keeps the focus on Jesus, because his purpose in telling us the event is to show us why Jesus must be everything to us.

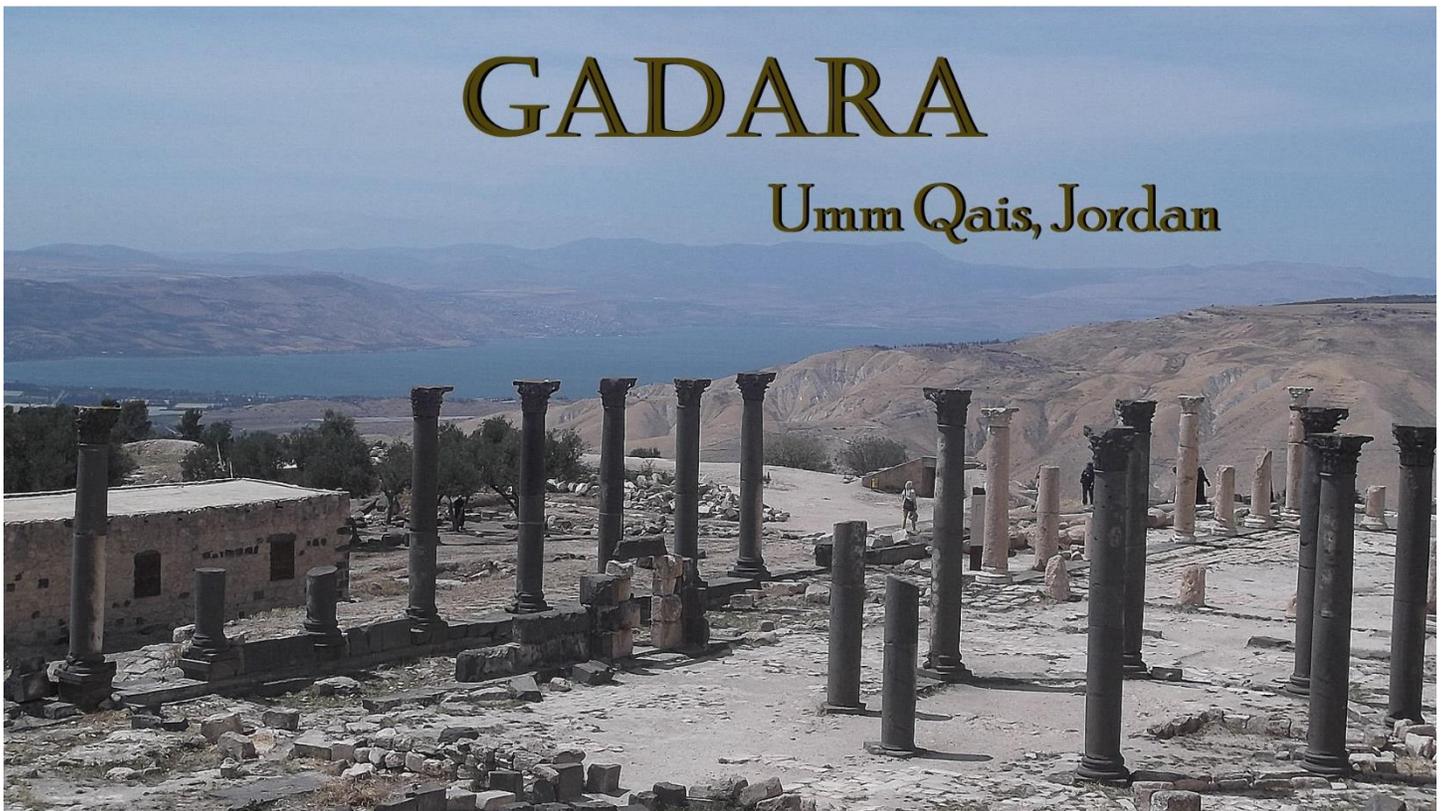


The other side is the east side of the Sea of Galilee. East is up, we're oriented. There's some confusion as to the place on the east side where this happened. Mark and Luke both call it "The country of the Gerasenes"; Matthew says, "The country of the Gadarenes," which the KJV has as "Gergesenes."

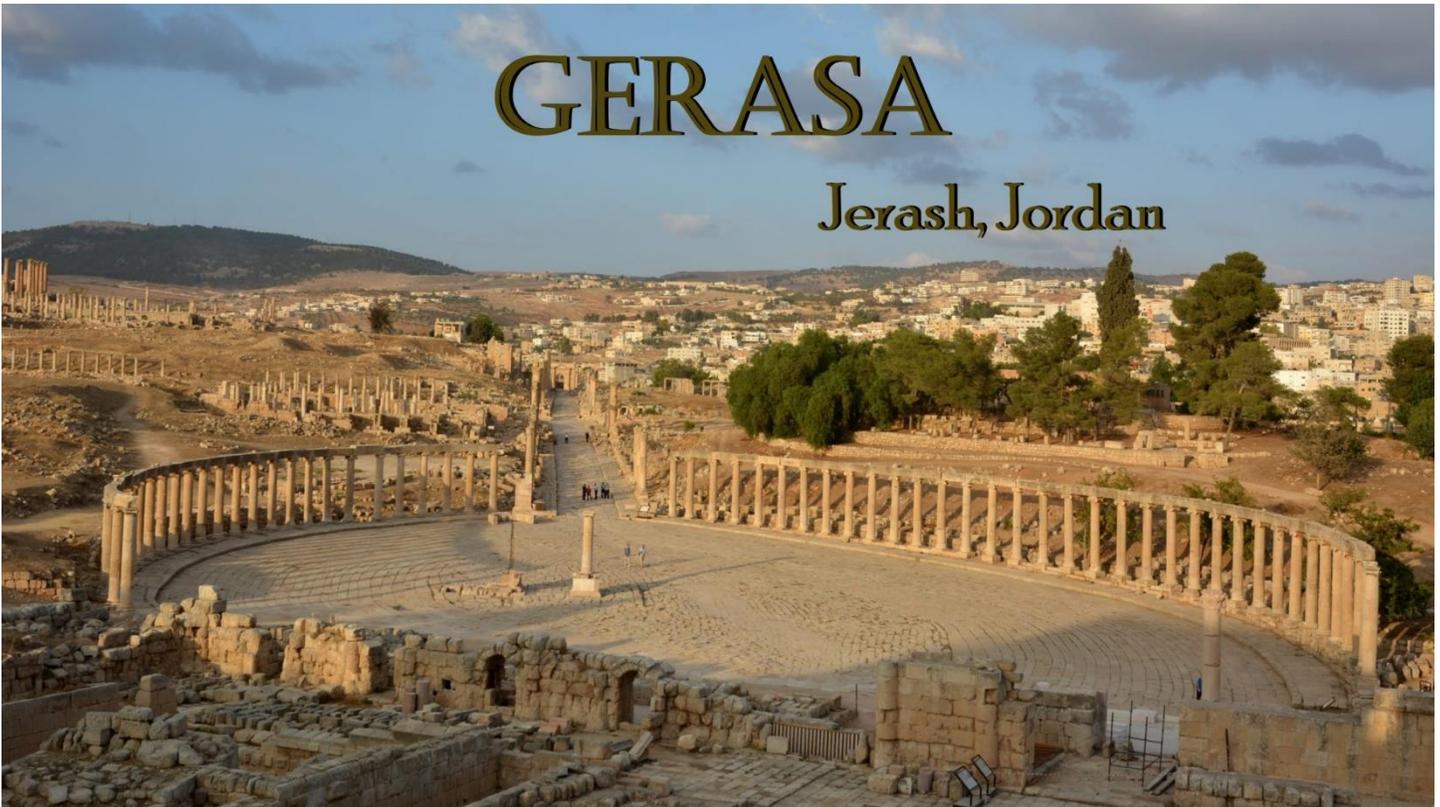
All three were inhabited places in the autonomous Gentile province of the Decapolis and all three are well-known archeological sites today.



Gergesa was a tiny village that is still tiny. It is modern-day Kursi, technically in Syria, but now in the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights. It is on the eastern shore of the Sea.



Gadara is modern-day Umm Qais in Jordan, and is about 5 ½ miles southwest of the Sea. It was a fairly large town of the Decapolis.



Gerasa is the modern-day city of Jerash in Jordan. It was, and still is, a much larger, better known city, about 31 miles southwest of the Sea.



To scale. Scholars are confident that the KJV “Gergesenes,” indicating the small village on the shore, is not original to any of the accounts. They strongly believe that the original in Matthew was “Gadarenes” and the original in both Mark and Luke was “Gerasenes.”

What they believe happened was because there are two different inland cities named and because the event obviously took place near the shore of the Sea of Galilee, people began to question the text. Was it an error in the Greek translation of some unknown and lost town on the shore?

In the third century (about 200 years after the event), the Church Father Origen of Alexandria, tried to figure it out and he located a small village near the shore called Gergesa, modern-day Kursi. He assumed that he had discovered the place and that the Gospel writers had mistranslated into Greek. Through a whole convoluted history, the KJV still goes with his idea.

It is possible that he was right about the village, doubtful, but possible. What he was definitely mistaken about, was that the Gospels had messed up the place names.

In describing the event, assuming Origen was on to something, you could say that it took place outside of the village of Gergesa. Nice. No one, other than a local, would have any idea where that was.

So, instead you could describe it in relation to the nearest large town, Gadara. We know from a variety of ancient sources that Gadara owned and controlled land all the way to the shore. Some people might have heard of Gadara and so, have an idea of where the episode took place.

Or you could describe it in relation to the largest and best-known city in the region, Gerasa. Maps of the day showed that city. Sure, it was about 30 miles away, but most everyone in the Roman, Parthian and Ethiopian Empires could figure out that location relatively near the Sea of Galilee.

None of the three authors claim it happened in a village, town, or city, but in the region of...

It is the same as if I described the house we lived in when our kids were born. I could say it was near Plummers Lake, but few know where that is, so I might say it was in the Creston area (about 2 miles away). That might work for people around here, but if I was talking to someone from another area, I'd probably say it was near Kalispell (about 15 miles away).

For over 40 years people have asked me where I live, and I've said Kalispell. Technically, I've never lived in Kalispell. For a time, we lived in Lakeside. I was asking permission to hunt on a ranch over east. The rancher asked where I was from. I said, "Lakeside." The ranch hand with him asked, "Where's that?" The rancher snarled, "Kalispell!"

The encounter happened somewhere on the Gentile-controlled southwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, two demon-possessed men came toward Jesus from the tombs.



Tombs. A graveyard with headstones?



A burial area with mausoleums, like in New Orleans?
No, neither of those. This was a cliffy area with caves.

Petra, Jordan



The most famous example is in the ancient city of Petra. That's what most of the ornate structures cut into the cliff walls are... Tombs. Over 1,000 years of dead people.



This is what the tombs looked like.

Exorcism reported in 2018



Matthew mentions two demon-possessed men, while Mark and Luke, both with more detail, mention only one. It was two dudes, but one did all the talking. Mark and Luke reduce it to the main guy because they both name the demonic presence in him as “Legion.” The Legion is plural. With one guy it’s singular. It makes it much easier to keep the story straight mentioning only the main guy.

Demon possession was very real in Jesus’ day and we must accept that it still is today. The notion that Jesus and the Apostles misdiagnosed mental illness as demon possession is preposterous and blasphemous.

When we read the Bible, we get the idea that demon possession was rampant. Remember that the Bible is only hitting highlights. It doesn't tell the stories where no one was demon possessed. When you recognize that the New Testament covers a 100-year period, from before Jesus' birth, to the Book of Revelation there are few encounters. When you add to that the likelihood that demonic activity was dramatically intensified around Jesus and His fledgling church and couple that with the fact that there were about 200 million people living in the world then. Today we are at 7.7 billion bodies. That's nearly 40 people today for every person back then. Demon possession is still real, but it is not as common as some think.

There are mental health maladies, just like there are a whole host of other physical maladies. There is no more shame in getting help for depression, than there is for getting help with a broken arm.

People sometimes ask about exorcism. The short answer is the Holy Spirit can eject even a "Legion" of demons and occupy the once possessed person.

Since an unoccupied person is susceptible to a worse infestation, I've always said "Don't worry about getting

rid of demons, worry about the person's salvation because once they are saved and filled with the Holy Spirit the demons cannot remain or return." (Matthew 12:43-45, Luke 11:24-26).

That brings up another common question. Can a true Christian be demon possessed? No, but we can easily be demon influenced, if we're not careful.



So back to our two guys. They were out of control and had caused a lot of problems for the locals for a long time. Everyone in the area was well acquainted with the situation.

They cried out “What business do we have with each other?” And then they call Jesus the “Son of God.”

What does the “Son of God,” and demons have in common? That’s the gist of their question. It was a colloquial phrase common to the time.

It’s found in the Old Testament in a few places and Jesus Himself uses the phrase on His mother Mary. In John chapter 2, she says to Jesus “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does that have to do with me?” (John 2:3b&4).

It means we have no common ground in this matter - you have an agenda and I have an agenda and they are running in opposite directions.



The next thing they say in relation to the “Son of God” title is, “Have You come here to torment us before the time?”

The question is meaningless if Jesus isn’t the “Son of God” operating with God’s full authority over them. Stop to think about that for just a moment. These are fallen angels. The most powerful supernatural creatures known to man. There is a “Legion” of them. Ostensibly 1,000 demons quaking in their proverbial boots before the being they call the “Son of God.” Jesus isn’t just some prophet, or some teacher, or some all-around good guy.

So often we get the idea that Jesus was like a cross between Gandhi and one of the Bee Gees (British pastor Sam Allberry). Jesus was and is the very Word of Almighty God Who became flesh and blood. I'll tell you honestly, if Jesus was anything less than that we are all fools to trust in any salvation provided by Him.

“Salvation belongs to the Lord” (Psalm 3:8, 62:7, Isaiah 43:11, etc.) - only God can fix what we've broken my friends.

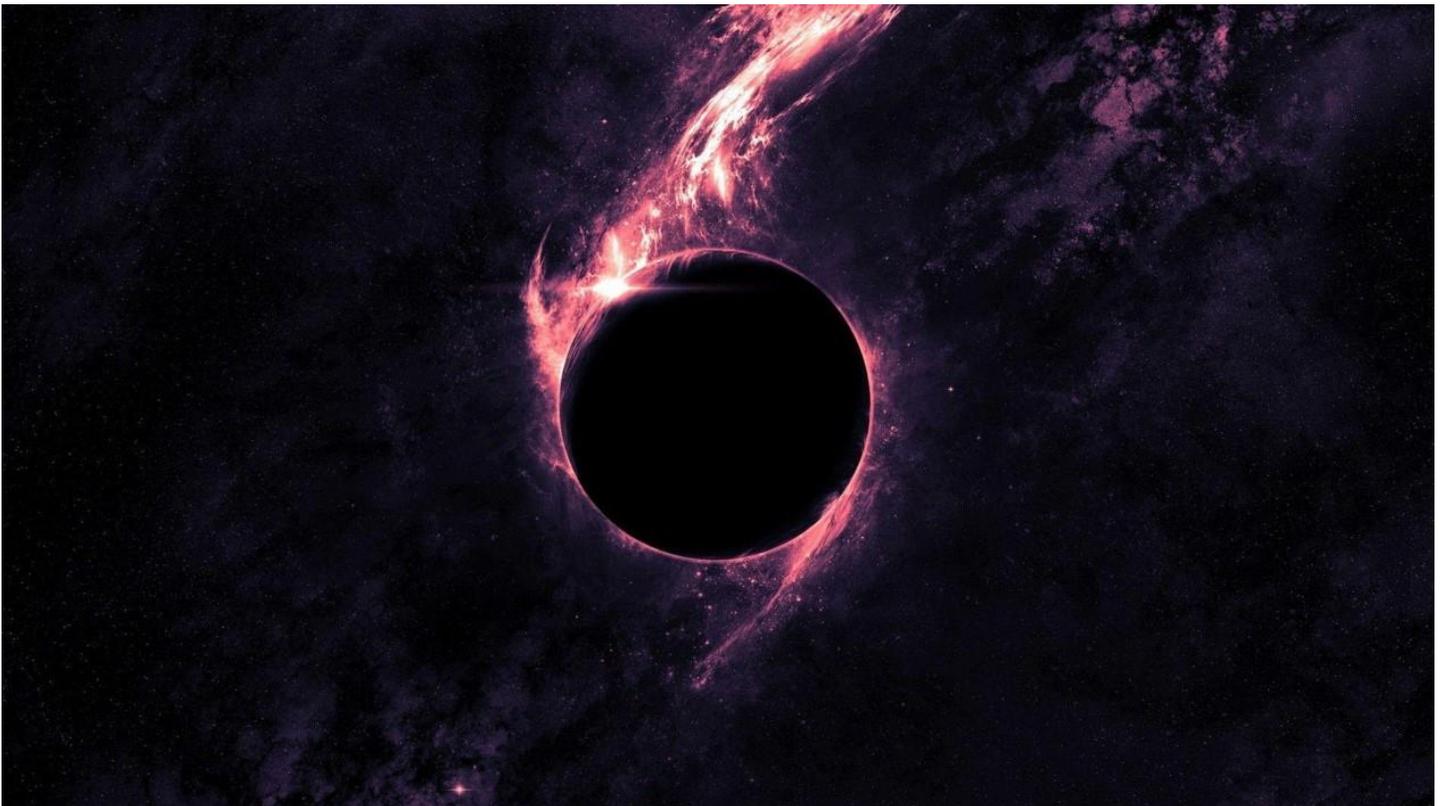
They say to the “Son of God,” “Have you come here...?” Stop right there. Come here? Come where? It's like, “We know You, we remember You from before the war in Heaven and our fall from Your presence.”

What are You doing on this planet? Why are You here on earth, “Son of God”? “We know we are doomed. We know eternal “Torment,” awaits, but it's not time yet. We still have time, don't we?”

The same word is used in Revelation 20:10,
10NASBA and the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. A few verses later in

Revelation 20:14&15, 14NirVThen Death and Hell were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15Anyone whose name was not written in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire.

They are fully aware of their fate - their appeal has to do with timing. "Please don't punish us before the appointed eschatological or end time."



Luke gives a great insight worth mentioning here. In Luke 8:31, one of the things the demons are terrified about is revealed. It says, 31NASBThey were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the abyss.

Other than that, and an Old Testament quote by Paul, the word abyss only occurs in the Book of Revelation. It is ἄβυσσος, in this case the alpha on the front serves to intensify the meaning of βυθός. You know βυθός from our word bath, and bath comes from bathymetry. The study of the underwater depths. Bathymetric charts of Flathead Lake or the Marianas Trench are very intriguing to me. With the alpha, this is a greatly intensified, deep dark, foreboding depths, usually thought of as a “Bottomless pit.”

According to the Book of Revelation there are demons who are so out-of-control evil and violent they are presently locked up in the Abyss. God will release them upon mankind in the end. This “Legion” of demons begs Jesus not to lock them up with those other, far worse, demons.

Jesus allowed them to remain on earth, but commanded them with a single word to leave the men.



It was their idea to enter the herd of pigs. A lot is made of that. They were unclean animals, blah, blah, blah. Some animal rights people condemn Christianity because Jesus killed all those poor pigs.

I think the primary point is that it serves as a very physical and definitive proof of the exorcism. The guys are okay, and the pigs now run amuck.

Beyond that it will test the priorities of the people in that area.



I'm outta here!

Matthew 8:33&34 ~ 33NASB The herdsmen ran away, and went to the city and reported everything, including what had happened to the demoniacs. 34 And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw Him, they implored Him to leave their region.

Naturally, “The herdsmen ran away.” Really? I would love it if they had not been privy to what happened with Jesus and the “Legion.” If they had been peacefully tending their combined herd and then suddenly and inexplicably the pigs fantasized that they were lemmings. “Here we go boys - make room for the next generation!”

If that was how it happened, it would have made sense for the herdsmen to run to their employers and report the insanity.

That's not at all the situation though. The Bible tells us unambiguously that they "Reported everything, including what had happened to the demoniacs."

They were witnesses to the exchange between Jesus and the demons. We can imagine that as the scene unfolded, the herdsmen were drawn to it like flies to honey.

They might have even been joking about it. "These Jewish dudes are in for it, talking to those crazed psychos - come on, this ought to be good."

Hearing what they heard, seeing what they saw, knowing what they knew, and then to run away from Jesus. It is, of course, a choice.

HOW WILL YOU RESPOND?



When you encounter Jesus, how will you respond? It is a reaction, followed by an action. They could have reacted with awe, instead of fear. They could have acted by immediately bowing down before Jesus and becoming His followers, instead of running away.

There's a lot more detail in Mark and Luke that Matthew ignores because he's interested in focusing everything on Jesus, His person, His power and His authority.

The stirred-up people from the surrounding area come out to see for themselves. Their response to Jesus? Again, they react with fear and they act by imploring

God made man - God with us - Jesus Messiah - to leave them alone.

They run Jesus and His friends out of the region.

Their fear was driven by the power of Jesus - it was driven by their financial loss - I think the implication the context points to is that their fear was recognizing in the event precisely what Matthew wants us to see.

I think they reckoned that Jesus was no ordinary or even extraordinary man. He was someone Who's power pointed to His authority. He was beyond just a man, even a great man and they knew it.

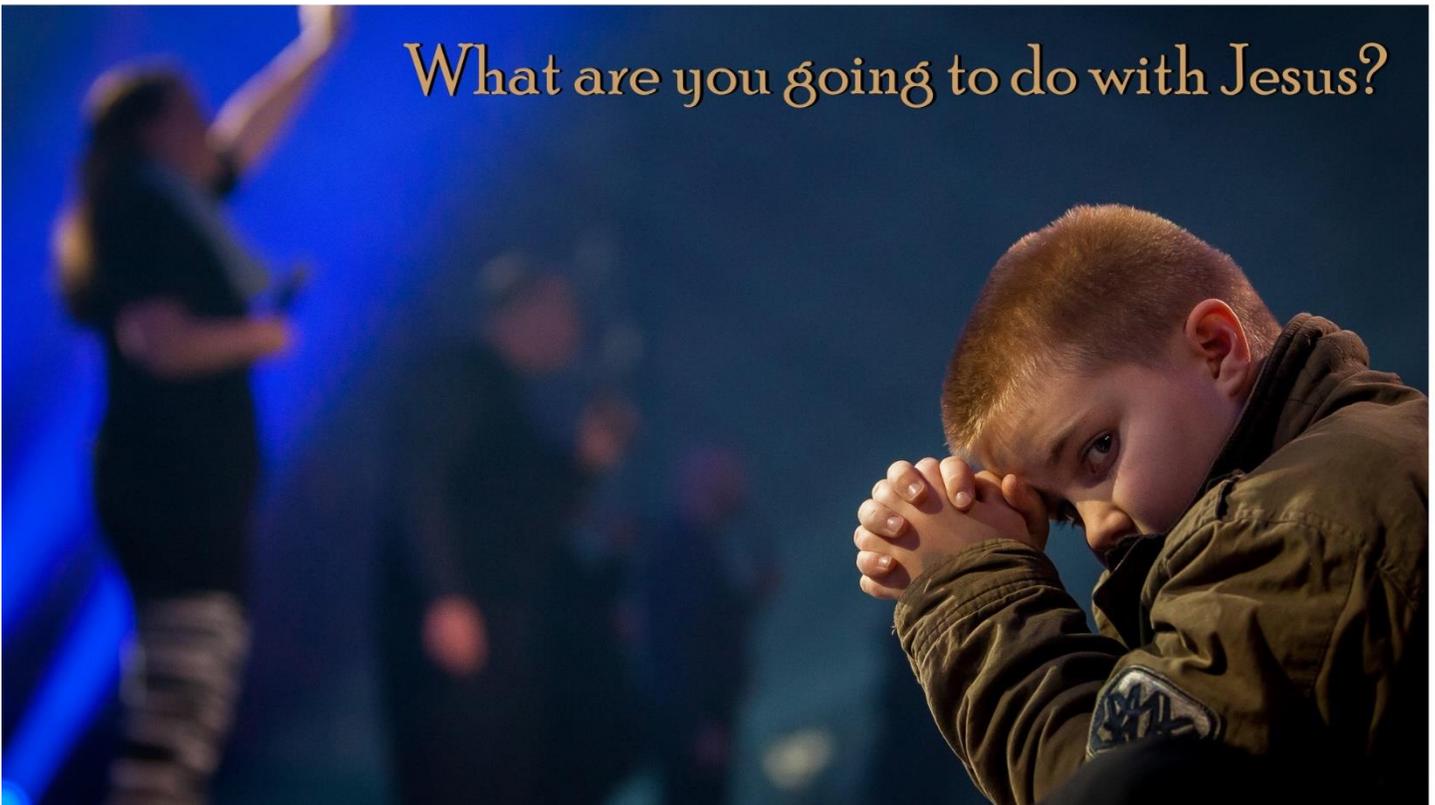
If He can easily command a "Legion" of demons to flee and the evidence for that is so physical - so dramatic - so undeniable... Then what He says, must be obeyed.

He must be followed. I think that was the main source of their fear.



The pigs were no doubt collected, butchered and sold. It may have been a little before the owners wanted them slaughtered, but that was their fate anyway. It might have flooded the local market with pork bellies. The price of bacon might have been a little depressed, but it wasn't a total loss and it wasn't like the pigs were pets the people were emotionally attached to...

It wasn't economic disaster that scared them - it was the unmistakable implication that Jesus' power proved His authority.



It is the same with people today. When Christ is shared with a person and they are confronted with the question, “What are you going to do with Jesus?” Which, by the way, is what you must always bring it back to in your ministering to others. “What are you going to do with Jesus?” It will force a reaction that will be followed by an action and it will be as a result of either accepting Christ’s authority or running from it in fear. Fear of losing control of your life. Which is ironic, since none of us ever had control in the first place.

“What are you going to do with Jesus?”