



(They) “found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind.” (Luke 8:35)

Legion

If we turn to Luke 8: 27-35, we will read the story of a man who had severe mental disorders. His name was called “Legion”, because he had a multitude of problems. He lived in the tombs without clothing, and was bound with chains because he was considered a danger to society. Jesus healed this man of his mental disorders in a very dramatic way, to demonstrate the power of God.

IN HIS RIGHT MIND

Before we examine this story in more detail, we want to call attention to verse 35, (as quoted in the box above).

The entire verse reads: “Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.”

It is significant that when the man was under the influence of these mental problems, the people thought of them as “devils.” After he was cured, they understood that he was now in his right mind.

Today, we would understand that when he was ill, he was “crazy”, “nuts” or “out of his mind” We are not under the same influence of superstition, and we therefore identify the problem in more rational terms.

The Man cries out

After Jesus commanded the spirits to come out of the man, he cried out saying: “What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not.” (See verse 28-29)

This man knew better than anyone that a great miracle had been performed and Jesus must be the Son of God. He was inspired to cry out so that his healing would remain as a testimony to the power and authority of Jesus the Christ.

The Swine - a Demonstration

There was another element to this healing that resulted in a further demonstration of the power of God working through Jesus. We are told:

“ Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked.”

Jesus chose to use the occasion to provide two witnesses. The first witness was the man in his right mind. The second was the transfer of the mental disorders to the swine. Their resulting madness showed clearly that a miracle had taken place.

Things Concerning

The Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ

“And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.” (Matthew 10:1)

UNCLEAN SPIRITS

It is always difficult for individuals in this present modern world to understand the language of the Bible, and especially when it speaks of such things as unclean spirits, as seen in the verse above.

The meanings of the words may help to improve our own understanding. The word “unclean” is relatively simple. The meaning has not changed much. It means impure, foul or needing cleansing.

The word “spirit” is a little more complicated. It comes from the Greek “pneuma.” This word has the same root that is used in the modern world for applying air pressure as a power source in manufacturing. Today, this is called “pneumatics.”

In the first century, this word could mean a “current or breath of air”, or it could mean “an unseen force” or a “state of mind.”

An Unseen force

To apply this information to the verse quoted in the box above, we could substitute the term “unclean spirits” by saying that Jesus gave his disciples the power to remove undesirable influences that were affecting the mind.

These unclean forces are like the air or the wind. They are unseen to the eye, unlike the physical ailments that are usually quite visible.

Diseases of the mind are manifested in the personality of the individual. Their actions may be the only evidence that a problem exists. The state of the mind, is changed and this often causes the affected individual to act in strange ways.

The simple definition of these problems today, is that the individuals are suffering from a deficiency in their “mental health.”

Beside one’s self

In Bible terms, these unseen, undesirable influences that were called “unclean spirits”, were occasionally expressed in terms that we could relate to today. For example, in Acts 26:24-25, Festus considers Paul to be mentally unstable. We read: “ Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.”

Jesus was also thought to be “beside himself.” (See Mark 3: 21-22) He was accused by his friends of casting out devils by Beelzebub (another one of their superstitions- known as the “dung god”)

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“For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city.” (Acts 8:7-8)

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Superstition

When Jesus and the apostles were teaching the gospel, the people were very superstitious. When someone was mentally ill, their pagan minds attributed the problem to devils or unclean spirits, which they believed were spirits of the departed.

Because they could not see or understand these invisible influences on the mind, they accepted the belief system of the day and attributed the source of the problems accordingly. Their superstitions about the state of the dead were manifested in their reactions to mental illness.

The State of the Dead

We could dedicate an entire issue to the Bible Truth concerning the state of the dead. Suffice it to say for now, that there are no spirits of the dead.

Man dies and returns to the dust of the ground. The spirit (breath) returns to God who gave it. (Eccles 12:7; Eccles 3:19-21, Eccles 9:5-6)

The Bible teaches plainly that man is unconscious in death and that the only hope for an after life is through Christ and the resurrection.

Modern terms

If we think in the terms that we use today, we would replace all of the “unclean spirits” and “devils” with their modern counterparts. The following are some of the terms that are currently used to categorize individuals with mental diseases:

UNCLEAN SPIRITS

Mental Disorders:

Dementia
Schizophrenic
Paranoia
Manic depressive
Hysteria
Obsessive compulsive
Phobias
Passive aggressive
Sexual deviations
Anorexia
Explosive
Hyperactive
Kleptomania
Anxiety
Delirium
Delusional
Hallucinogenic
Hypochondriac
Kleptomania
Panic

These are only a sampling of the many modern terms for the mental ailments that were called “unclean spirits” in the first century AD.

The disciples were given power to cast out these disorders, bringing great joy to all. This demonstration of power was necessary to promote the gospel message through “signs and wonders,” in an age when the written word was not available to the common man.

Today, man is no longer superstitious, and the advancement of knowledge has allowed them limited success coping with these diseases of the mind. The results obtained through the use of therapy and drugs can never compare with the healings that were done through the power of God.

“And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits; (Mark 6:7)

The Power of God

As we consider these Bible examples of the healing of mental disorders, our emphasis should not remain on the confusion that is generated by the terms that are used to describe the illness.

The important part of the process is that the people were healed. This brought glory to God and great joy to the people. The power of God (The Holy Spirit) was made available to a few faithful men so that those who had faith could be cured.

Why the Gift?

Why were the gifts of the Holy Spirit concentrated on that generation? Why were these disciples allowed the blessing of this great power for such a limited period of time.

Think of all of the people that could be healed of mental and physical illness today, if the power of God were available to the psychologists and the doctors, who are currently struggling along with their operations, medications and therapy.

Power of the Kingdom

There is a very important reason for the administration of the Holy Spirit power during the first century.

Jesus and his disciples were preaching the good news (the Gospel) about the coming Kingdom of God on the earth, in fulfillment of all of the promises made to the fathers in the Old Testament period.

It was fitting that their words be supported by miracles. This allowed them to both teach and show the people about the Kingdom.

The healings through the power of the Holy Spirit provided a visual manifestation of how wonderful the Kingdom would be, using a foretaste of the power of the age to come.

Foretaste

The gifts of the Holy Spirit were an “earnest” (foretaste) of the Kingdom powers. (see Eph 1:13-14, Heb 6:5) We are told that God’s power will be present in the Kingdom age, and that these blessings will result:

“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.” (Isaiah 35: 5-6)

“God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” (Rev 21: 4)

When Jesus and the disciples taught and healed the people, they demonstrated these blessings of the Kingdom:

“ And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them.” (Matt 15:30)

The Sabbath Day

Jesus often performed these healings on the Sabbath day (The seventh day of the week.) This day was set aside as a day of rest, and it was intended to be typical of the future (The millennium or 1000 year day) of rest in the Kingdom of God. (Hebrews 4:3-11)

The miracles demonstrated the power of the Kingdom on a day that was typical of the Kingdom.

“And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.”

(Mark 16:15-20)