δαιμονιζόμενοι

And when he had come across to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two demoniacs who had come of the tombs encountered him. They were extremely violent, so that no one was able to pass by on that particular road. And look, they cried out and said: "What have we to do with each other, Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the appointed time?" And some distance from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. And the demons began to implore him, saying, "If you are going to cast us out, send us into the herd of swine." And he said to them, "Go." And they departed and went into the herd of swine. And behold, the entire herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and died in the water. But those tending the herd fled, and when they came to the city, they reported everything including the curing of the demoniacs. And look, the whole city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they begged that he would leave their territory.
Matthew 8:28-34

This fifth miracle in the narrative tells of a confrontation between demonic forces by Jesus on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Matthew had set this encounter up back in v.18.

Now when Jesus saw a crowd around him, he commanded his disciples to go across to the other side.
Matthew 8:18

Matthew follows Mark's narrative, placing this encounter after the calming of the sea. The point of this account following the calming of the sea is so that the reader can behold the sovereign power of Jesus on display in various environments.

The irony of the passage is that this sovereign power of Jesus is articulated pointedly by the demoniacs themselves.

Matthew once again truncates his narrative when compared to Mark's and is also shorter than Luke's. Let's look at the differences between these accounts.

Mark and Luke report of only one demon-possessed man whereas Matthew reports two.
Matthew omits the detailed descriptions of the man such as his often being bound with chains; that he cries out and bruises himself opting instead for the description that they were extremely violent.
Matthew omits the dialogue between the demoniac(s) and Jesus.
Matthew omits the more detailed description of the crowd's fear.
Matthew omits the parting conversation between the healed man and his desire to follow.

Even through this truncated version, Matthew conveys the elements essential to the story in a fitting manner. Matthew may have omitted Mark's and Luke's details for the following reasons:

Matthew places more emphasis on the teaching of Jesus and may have wanted to direct his attention there.

He may have desired to remove the exorcism technique in this story in order to emphasize that the power of Jesus is not derived from *magic arts.* Matthew is keen to draw a sharp divide between illegitimate manipulation of spiritual forces and the sovereign authority of God.

> *Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold μάγοι (wise men) from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."*
> *Matthew 2:1-2*

Matthew redefines the use of the magi, a term which carried heavy connotations of astrology, dream interpretation and the occult, using them instead as literary proponents who bow to the true king of the Jews. This may not serve so much as an anti-magic text, but it does reveal that even esoteric wisdom bows to Christ.

> *Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, "Can this be the Son of David?" But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons." Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.*
> *Matthew 12:22-24, 28*

In the ancient world, using demonic names to compel spirits was a standard element of sorcery and black magic. Matthew shows Jesus rejecting this framework of magical invocation and instead, cites the Spirit of God as the agent he uses which signals the arrival of the Kingdom.

> *That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word.*
> *Matthew 8:16*

Magic relied heavily upon incantations, secret knowledge and precise physical rituals to coerce spirits. Matthew consistently portrays Jesus as operating outside of this framework. Jesus does not use long incantations or magical tools to drive out spirits but simply does so *"with a word."*

> *"And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.*
> *Matthew 6:7*

Here Jesus directly criticizes the repetitive and formulaic nature of ancient magical spells which were used to manipulate the gods. Matthew shows Jesus operating entirely apart from magic.

It may well be that Matthew abbreviates the details of this account since his focus leans toward discipleship and following Jesus as a disciple.

Then there is Matthew's chronological setting which at this time shows Jesus on mission to the people of Israel first. Though he has healed the Centurion's son, he has done so from a distance and the response of Jesus in this matter suggest he was being critical of Jerusalem and the Jews as a motivator toward repentance. Although Matthew is setting up the mission of regathering the Gentiles for some time later in his narrative, his focus now is on discipleship and the twelve Jewish men with Jesus.

Thus, the effect of Matthew shortening the account compared to Mark focuses our attention on Jesus while diverting it from the demoniacs whose healing Matthew assumes rather than states.

Unlike Mark, Matthew omits the demoniac running to fall down before Jesus.

Matthew omits the demonic using the name *"Jesus"* perhaps because it focuses too much on the familiar *humanity* of Jesus.

He also omits Mark's phrase *"Most High God"* probably to focus solely on Jesus.

Matthew omits the number two thousand, preferring to simply say *"many."*

If Mark is the source for Matthew, then it could be that Matthew added a second demoniac rather than Mark subtracting one. Matthew will do this later in the narrative by adding a second blind man on the road from Jericho.

**A reason that Matthew may prefer to use another man in this healing narrative is that since his readers are Jewish, he could see two witnesses being in keeping with Torah tradition. This is important because Matthew has a tendency to quote from the Old Testament and two witnesses would tell us that he had the Old Testament context in mind.*

A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two or three witnesses shall a charge be established.
Deuteronomy 19:15

This would help his convert Jewish readers in their debate with those in the synagogue.

Matthew, then, in doubling those healed, represents something of the true extent of Jesus' healings.

The structure of the passage can be seen as follows:

1) Matthew gives a description of the situation.

2) Jesus confronts the demons.

3) The demons make a special request.
4) The casting out and the destruction of the swine herd.
5) The report and reaction of the people in the town.

Matthew places Jesus at the center of the narrative:
1) He is encountered.
2) He is confessed as the Son of God.
3) He is implored by the demons.
4) He is portrayed as the sovereign Lord who commands.
5) He is encountered and implored a second time,

this time by the crowd.

Of possible interest is that although both the crowd and the demons encounter and implore Jesus, only the demons acknowledge him as Son of God.

> *And when he had come across to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two demoniacs who had come of the tombs encountered him. They were extremely violent, so that no one was able to pass by on that particular road.*
> *Matthew 8:28*

Note that Matthew names this location *Gadara* whereas Mark and Luke call it *Gerasa.* Much is made of the differences between these locations considering the accounts are clearly the same.

"Gadarenes" and *"Gerasenes"* (sometimes called *"Gergesenes"* in alternative manuscripts*)* describe the wider territory or surrounding administrative regions associated with these cities rather than a single exact GPS location. Gadara was closer to the lake (about six miles away), while Gerasa was much further south/east, but both names were used broadly by ancient writers to designate the same general district. There is no definitive answer to this variance.

Upon landing, Jesus is encountered by two demon-possessed men who had come out of the tombs.

We discussed the semantics of the difference between demon *possession / oppression.* Some English texts use either. The Greek term is flexible. It describes a person under harmful demonic *influence* or distress and could be better translated as *"vexed"* which in severe cases resulted in a high degree of control by the demon. Understand, however, that this does not mean absolute ownership.

Modern English speakers often hear *"possession"* and think of legal ownership. However, the New Testament Greek vocabulary does not imply that the demon *owns* the human host. Instead, it describes an internal state of being dominated, harassed, or severely afflicted by an unclean spirit.

Matthew simply but effectively states that the men were demon-vexed, extremely violent and because of this, no one could pass that way.

That they came from the tombs not only relates the idea that they dwelt in places of ritual uncleanness but also associates them with death and evil.

a people who provoke me to my face continually, sacrificing in gardens and making offerings on bricks; who sit in tombs, and spend their nights eating swine flesh, and broth of tainted meat in their vessels.
Isaiah 65:3-4

Woe to you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.
Matthew 23:27

The setting is that Jesus had been teaching on the western side of the sea of Galilee. Matthew intentionally used the phrase *"the other side"* to denote that Jesus had now *crossed over* to the eastern side of that same sea and also into Gentile territory.

Though Matthew does not state this yet, such a detail is indispensable to the story and to the mission Jesus is undertaking.

That the region belongs to the Gentiles is highlighted by the given language of *"the other side," "tombs,"* and *"swine."*

And look, they cried out and said: "What have we to do with each other, Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the appointed time?"
Matthew 8:29

Matthew once again uses the word *"look"* to gain attention that something special is about to happen.

Note the perception of the afflicted men calls attention to the identity of Jesus as *Son of God.* Matthew has used this title earlier in his Gospel.

"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel (which means God with us).
Matthew 1:23

And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my Son."
Matthew 2:14-15

and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.
Matthew 3:17

Oddly enough, these designations come from Matthew himself while a third at the Jordan comes from the Father. But within the narrative of Matthew's Gospel itself, thus far only the devil has designated Jesus as the Son of God.

> *And the tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.*
> *Matthew 4:3 (see also 4:6)*

It's ironic that after Jesus calmed the sea his disciples asked the question: *"Who is this?"* Now we see these demoniacs proclaim, *"who he is."*

These men are abandoned by the community to the dead; they live among the tombs of the dead; they are afflicted with unclean spirits making them unclean and thus figuratively dead; they are in the land of Gentiles and as such are symbolically dead; and the proximity of the unclean swine not too distant from them and most likely used as food source completes the scene with a sense of Old Testament gloom.

It would seem the demons here can quickly sense the identity of Jesus whereas it is veiled to people. For them the threat Jesus poses it real.

"What do we have to do with each other?" is rhetorical, positing a statement.

Not long ago in the narrative Matthew presents, Jesus told a would-be disciple to *"Follow me and let the dead bury their dead"* which we suggested was an allusion to the calling of Elisha by the prophet Elijah. So too, here with this language, Matthew may once again be alluding to Elijah.

> *After this the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill. And his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. And she said to Elijah, "<u>What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to bring my sin to remembrance</u> and to cause the death of my son!"*
> *1 Kings 17:17:18*

Like the two men in Gadara suffering affliction while protesting the presence of Jesus and needing healing from their living death, the widow of Zarephath's son is afflicted to death while she protests Elijah's presence.

Note the interesting language being used by the demoniacs: *it suggests something like a courtroom.* The demonic spirits are already accused, already charged and are already awaiting their judgment. Their concern seems past tense, as if their outcome is certain as the verdict has been cast. Their present complaint is not in debate of their condemnation at the appointed time, but that Jesus has come *before the appointed time to carry out their judgment.*

This same sort of *"what have we to do with each other"* statement also took place at the wedding in Cana of Galilee and that account also suggests an *"appointed time."*

And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what has this to do with me? My hour has not yet come."
John 2:4

"Have you come to torment us before the appointed time?"

This question should arrest our attention in the following ways:

1) the demons realize that at the final judgment they will face the wrath of God and experience his judgment and the end of their power.

Then addressing me, He spoke and said, Hear, neither be afraid, O righteous Enoch, thou scribe of righteousness: approach hither, and hear my voice. Go, say to the Watchers of heaven, who have sent thee to pray for them, You ought to pray for men, and not men for you.

Wherefore have you forsaken the lofty and holy heaven, which endures for ever, and have lain with women; have defiled yourselves with the daughters of men; have taken to yourselves wives; have acted like the sons of the earth, and have begotten an impious offspring?

You being spiritual, holy, and possessing a life which is eternal, have polluted yourselves with women; have begotten in carnal blood; have lusted in the blood of men; and have done as those who are flesh and blood do.
1 Enoch 15:1-3

And as to the death of the giants, wheresoever their spirits depart from their bodies, let their flesh, that which is perishable, be without judgment. Thus shall they perish, until the day of the great consummation of the great world. A destruction shall take place of the Watchers and the impious.
1 Enoch 16:1

And the chief of the spirits, Mastêmâ, came and said: 'Lord, Creator, let some of them remain before me, and let them harken to my voice, and do all that I shall say unto them; for if some of them are not left to me, I shall not be able to execute the power of my will on the sons of men; for these are for corruption and leading astray before my judgment, for great is the wickedness of the sons of men. 'And He said: Let the tenth part of them remain before him, and let nine parts descend into the place of condemnation.'
Jubilees 10:8-9

2) The demons also realize their time has not yet come. It would seem Jesus has come too early and threatens their realm too soon.

This last point fits with Matthew's perspective of realized eschatology: the Kingdom of God has indeed come but in advance of its fullest and final coming.

And some distance from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. And the demons began to implore him saying, "If you are going to cast us out, send us into the heard of swine."
Matthew 8:30-31

"At some distance" may be Matthew's way of saying that the herd was stationed somewhere in the neighborhood of the lake.

We are told that the demoniacs were extremely violent, yet now we hear them imploring Jesus. Matthew, at times careful not to expand on details in his narrative, makes sure to let us know that against Jesus, the demons are powerless.

If the demonic spirits are terrified of God's judgment coming early, and they understand that Jesus desires to heal the two men, their preference to enter the swine rather than be judged (perhaps being sent into the abyss), makes sense.

And he said to them, "Go." And they departed and went into the herd of swine. And behold, the entire herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and died in the water.
Matthew 8:32

Jesus gives permission with a simple word, *"Go."* What is important to know is that evil has boundaries or limits. It does not set those boundaries.

Perhaps Jesus' permission with the swine provides a teaching moment. If the narrative shows the resourcefulness of the demons, then it even more significantly makes the point that not even the unclean swine were prepared to contain the demons.

It may also be that the swine become an object lesson for the authority of Jesus, visual evidence that his word carries power.

Jesus gave permission for the demons to enter the swine. He does not, however, command the swine to their destruction.

The sovereignty of the one-word command, "go" spoken by Jesus is striking: it is Matthew's major emphasis here. The feat performed by Jesus is in itself unparalleled and astonishing. The end result, however, is much the same as if Jesus had not first sent the demons into the swine: viz., they are dispersed and rendered powerless. They were not accommodated by Jesus. They gained nothing by their delaying tactics but were cast out – and not into some temporary lodging from which they might be able to do further harm.
Hagner – Matthew, page 228

It would seem that whether man or swine, whatever the demons touch, they destroy.

But those tending the herd fled, and when they came to the city, they reported everything including the curing of the demoniacs. And look, the whole city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they begged that he would leave their territory.
Matthew 8:33-34

It seems that in fear those who tended the herd fled after what had happened. So much so that they went into the city and reported all they had seen – *including the healing of the demoniacs.*

Matthew does not report on the healed man's attire and state of mind, preferring instead to focus on the one who accomplished the healing.

Once again Matthew uses the word, *"look"* as the whole city comes out to meet Jesus. Earlier it was the two demoniacs who came to meet him.

At this point something unexpected happens. Being Gentiles and lacking any Old Testament framework for the miracle, they regard Jesus as someone dangerous, perhaps even as a magician who can only bring more harm to their region.

What is interesting is that the same Greek word is used by the demons in v.31 as by the people of the city here.

And the demons began to παρεκάλουν (implore /begged) him saying, "If you are going to cast us out, send us into the heard of swine."

And look, the whole city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they παρεκάλεσαν (begged) that he would leave their territory.

Contrast this with the response toward Jesus in Capernaum as recorded in Luke.

And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them.
Luke 4:42

Though the economic loss of the herd could not be missed, Jesus valued the men over the animals.

He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."
Matthew 12:11-12

The demons with their supernatural knowledge know immediately who now stands before them and cry out almost unwillingly, "Son of God." This Christological conclusion is at the very heart of the passage. Christ has come revealing the advent of the kingdom. This hardly means, however, that we have a

shortage of evil. We have merely demythologized it and given it new names. The story reveals the sovereignty of Jesus in the miraculous healing of the two men; it does not address the effect of the evil upon the swine or the destruction of the latter and its possible moral implications. Nor does it address the issue of the inhabitants of that region who strangely ask Jesus to leave. This final element too witnesses to the power, authority, and person of Jesus. The Gospel presents Jesus as the answer to every manifestation of evil – that which can be explained "naturalistically" and that with may find its causation in a realm inaccessible to our scientific instruments.

Hagner – Matthew, page 229