

Luke 8:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.

Analysis

And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep. The demons' plea reveals their desperation and fear. "They besought him" (parekaloun auton, παρεκάλουν αὐτόν) uses the imperfect tense, indicating repeated, urgent begging. The demons recognize Jesus' absolute authority—they cannot resist His command, only plead for mercy regarding their destination. "That he would not command them to go out into the deep" (hina mē epitaxē autois eis tēn abysson apelthein, ἵνα μὴ ἐπιτάξῃ αὐτοῖς εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον ἀπελθεῖν) reveals their greatest fear.

"The deep" (abysson, ἄβυσσον) is the Greek abyssos, meaning bottomless pit or abyss—the place of demonic confinement and torment. This term appears in Revelation 9:1-11, 20:1-3 as the prison where Satan and demons are bound. The demons' terror of the abyss indicates awareness of their coming judgment (2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6 describe angels bound in chains of darkness). They prefer any earthly habitation—even swine—to premature consignment to their place of punishment.

This verse reveals several theological truths:

1. Demons recognize Christ's authority to consign them to judgment
2. They fear the abyss—their ultimate destiny
3. They prefer temporary earthly activity to eternal confinement
4. Even in rebellion, demons must acknowledge divine sovereignty.

Their plea also demonstrates that Christ's victory over Satan and demons is already secured—they await only the execution of sentence already pronounced.

Historical Context

Jewish apocalyptic literature (1 Enoch, Jubilees, Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs) extensively describes the abyss as the prison for fallen angels and demons. These texts, widely read in first-century Judaism, portrayed the abyss as a place of darkness, chains, and torment where rebellious spirits awaited final judgment. The concept derives from Genesis 6:1-4's enigmatic passage about "sons of God" and the Nephilim, interpreted in Jewish tradition as describing angelic rebellion.

2 Peter 2:4 states God "cast down the angels that sinned, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." Jude 6 describes angels who "kept not their first estate" being "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." Revelation portrays Satan himself being cast into the abyss for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:1-3), then released briefly before final judgment.

The demons' fear of premature consignment to the abyss reflects Matthew 8:29's parallel account where demons ask, "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" They recognize an appointed schedule for judgment but fear Christ might advance it. Early Christian theology developed the concept of intermediate states—demons currently have limited earthly activity but await final judgment and eternal punishment in hell.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What does the demons' terror of the abyss teach about the reality and certainty of divine judgment?
2. How does this verse demonstrate that Satan and demons are already defeated enemies awaiting final sentencing?
3. Why do demons prefer temporary earthly activity in swine over their ultimate destiny, and what does this reveal about the nature of hell?

Interlinear Text

καὶ παρεκάλει αὐτοῖς ἵνα μὴ ἐπιτάξῃ αὐτοῖς εἰς τὴν
And they besought him G2443 G3361 command him into G3588
G2532 G3870 G846 G2004 G846 G1519

ἄβυσσον ἀπελθεῖν
the deep to go out
G12 G565

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 25:41 (Parallel theme): Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

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