

Luke 8:37

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again.

Analysis

Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again. The community's response is tragic rejection. "Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about" (kai ērōtēsen auton hapan to plēthos tēs perichōrou tōn Gerasēnōn, καὶ ἡρώτησεν αὐτὸν ἅπαν τὸ πλῆθος τῆς περιχώρου τῶν Γερασηνῶν) indicates widespread, unified rejection—not merely pig owners but the entire region. "Besought him to depart" (ērōtēsen auton apelthein, ἡρώτησεν αὐτὸν ἀπελθεῖν) uses strong language—they urgently requested, begged Him to leave.

"For they were taken with great fear" (hoti phobō megalō synēichonto, ὅτι φόβῳ μεγάλῳ συνείχοντο) explains their rejection. The verb "were taken" (συνείχοντο) means seized, gripped, held fast—fear overpowered them. "Great fear" (φόβῳ μεγάλῳ) was intense terror. They feared Jesus' power more than they valued the demoniac's deliverance. Economic loss (2,000 swine) combined with supernatural fear drove them to reject the very One who could save them. They preferred their comfortable paganism over disturbing holiness.

"And he went up into the ship, and returned back again" (embas de eis ploion hypestrepse, ἐμβὰς δὲ εἰς πλοῖον ὑπέστρεψεν)—Jesus honored their choice. He doesn't force Himself on the unwilling. Divine grace can be resisted; Christ's offer

can be rejected. This sobering truth warns that miraculous evidence doesn't guarantee faith. Many witnessed undeniable proof of Jesus' authority yet chose economic security over spiritual salvation. Their rejection prefigures Israel's rejection of Messiah and humanity's ongoing rejection of Christ despite overwhelming evidence.

Historical Context

The Gadarenes' rejection illustrates the conflict between material interests and spiritual truth. The destroyed swine herd represented significant wealth—Mark 5:13 numbers them at 2,000, worth perhaps 100,000 denarii (over 250 years' wages). The region's economy likely depended heavily on pig farming, making Jesus' presence economically threatening. They chose mammon over Messiah, commerce over Christ.

First-century Greco-Roman culture valued prosperity and stability. Mystery religions and pagan worship didn't demand moral transformation or economic sacrifice. Jesus' presence brought disturbing upheaval—supernatural power that destroyed property, challenged demons, exposed spiritual realities. The comfortable status quo was threatened. Rather than embrace costly discipleship, they rejected Jesus entirely.

Early church history records similar patterns. Roman persecution intensified when Christianity threatened economic interests (Acts 16:16-24, 19:23-41). The gospel confronts not only personal sin but systemic evil embedded in economic and social structures. The Gadarenes' choice—preferring economic security over one man's salvation and Christ's presence—reveals the human tendency to value temporal wealth over eternal souls. Their rejection stands as perpetual warning against allowing material concerns to determine spiritual choices.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What does the Gadarenes' choice to value 2,000 pigs over one man's salvation and Jesus' presence reveal about human priorities?
2. How does Jesus' willing departure demonstrate respect for human free will and the possibility of rejecting grace?
3. In what ways do economic interests and material comfort continue to cause people to reject Christ despite clear evidence of His power?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἡρώτησαν αὐτὸς ἄπαν τὸ πλῆθος τῆς περιχώρου
Then besought him the whole G3588 multitude G3588 of the country
G2532 G2065 G846 G537 G4128 G4066

τῶν Γαδαρηνῶν ἀπελθεῖν ἀπ' αὐτὸς ὅτι φόβῳ μεγάλῳ
G3588 of the Gadarenes to depart from him for fear with great
G1046 G565 G575 G846 G3754 G5401 G3173

συνείχοντο· αὐτὸς δὲ ἐμβὰς εἰς τὸ πλοῖον
they were taken him and he went up into G3588 the ship
G4912 G846 G1161 G1684 G1519 G4143

ὑπέστρεψεν
and returned back again
G5290

Additional Cross-References

Acts 16:39 (Parallel theme): And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city.