

Reading Plan for the Week of August 2, 2020

Hey Students!

This week we will read about Jesus' divine power over demonic forces. As the Son of God, Jesus has ultimate authority over all things physical and spiritual. So how should we respond to Him? Like demons, we can be forced one day to submit to His rule. Like some people, we can be fearful and resist His authority to our own destruction. Or like the man who was freed from his demonic oppression, we can look to Jesus in faith and joyfully obey what He commands as we tell others of the freedom from sin that we too have experienced in Him.

Day 1

Read Luke 8:26-33

In His brief conversation with the demon-possessed man, Jesus asked for the demon's name. He did not do this as a means to gain power over it. He already had the power. Jesus needed no magic or ritual to free the man from his oppressor. He is the Son of the Most High God, and one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord (Phil. 2:10-11). But it is worth noting that at this moment, the demon-possessed man fell at Jesus' feet. While the fullness of Jesus' rule hasn't been fully realized by us, Jesus remains sovereign nonetheless, a truth even the demons know full well.

Because Jesus is sovereign over this world, over all things both physical and spiritual, we can know that nothing, including the sinful and scary work of demons, has the power to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:39). By faith in Jesus, we are forever free to live, run, fall, and crawl in His never-ending love.

How does Jesus' sovereignty over all things encourage you to step out in the obedience of faith?

Day 2

Read Luke 8:34-37

The people in the Gerasene region asked Jesus to leave, and it is natural to wonder why. He could have healed people; He could have cast out more demons; He could have provided satisfying meals. But the Scripture passage simply says they were afraid.

It is common here to analyze the people's state of mind and conclude that perhaps they were a bit upset and unnerved that a large herd of pigs had just been destroyed in the sea. The idea is that financial concerns weighed heavy upon them and that Jesus just couldn't be trusted not to cause the destruction of other sources of income, so they asked Him to leave.

But our main goal in reading and studying the Bible is to go where the authors and the Author— God Himself— want us to go. The text says they were "afraid" and had "great fear." This fear was not aimed at the loss of pigs but at the One who had the power to command demons.

How have you experienced fear directed toward God? How did you respond to that fear?

Day 3

Read Luke 8:38-39

This brief passage contains a subtle yet beautiful statement about the deity of Jesus. As the Son of the Most High God, Jesus is the Second Person of the Trinity. The “legion” of demons possessing the man knew this to be true, and it seems their spiritual knowledge rubbed off on him.

Jesus refused the man’s request to join in His travels, but He gave him a mission instead—go home and declare what “God has done for you.” This the man gladly obeyed; after all, he had been freed from his demonic oppression. But curiously, his obedience involved a slight adjustment in the message he was told to proclaim. He did go home, and he did tell what God had done for him, but he did so by proclaiming what “*Jesus* had done for him.” Previously, Jesus’ disciples had wondered “Who is this?” when Jesus calmed a storm on the sea with a word (Luke 8:25). The man whose soul had been calmed and saved with a word had no need to question—Jesus is the divine Son of the Most High God.

What are some ways you will honor the Son of the Most High God with your thoughts, words, and actions?

Day 4

Read Luke 11:14-16

What sort of ailments are demons not responsible for? They drove a man mad in Luke 8 and here prevented a man from speaking. Demons were also attributed with seizures and deafness in the Gospels (Mark 9:17-27). Satan was guilty of causing natural disasters and boils that affected Job (Job 1–2). It seems there could be no end to the mischief, torment, and destruction perpetrated by demons in the spiritual realm.

But we must be careful not to give demons more credit than they are due. Not every ailment is the direct result of a demon’s work (John 9). We shouldn’t neglect going to the doctors and hospitals when sick. Nor should we ignore the reality that spiritual forces do manifest their work in tangible ways, for good or for ill. Beyond these points, we must remember that God alone is sovereign. Demons can only go as far as God allows them to go, and they can never hold sway over God’s children.

How do you reconcile the activity in the spiritual realm with what you see and experience in the physical realm?

Day 5

Read Luke 11:17-23

Jesus knew people were questioning His power to command and exorcise demons. But logically, this made no sense. If Jesus cast demons out by the power of Beelzebul, another name for Satan, then this would have been evidence of an internal turf war among the demons. A kingdom divided from within has no strength to defend from without.

So, logically, Jesus wasn’t casting demons out by the power of Satan, and if not that, then He must have been doing so by the power of God. Instead of a coup or infighting, Jesus was demonstrating His superior status and strength over spiritual matters. He marched into this world under the sway of demonic forces and began dismantling their power because He is the superior force.

So the question arises: Who will you side with? The demonic forces of this world that have lost and are losing or the victorious Son of the Most High God, the rightful and good ruler over all of creation?

How can you help people see the logic of siding with Jesus? Pray that they will see and believe in Him for salvation.
