

The Nature of Yeshua in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts

Matthew 21:22; John 14:12). In response to this, Bowman and Komoszewski summarize in their book *Putting Jesus in His Place* that there are some key differences between the miracles performed by Yeshua, and those performed by His early followers:

“One possible counterargument at this point might be to appeal to Jesus’ saying that his apostles could do similar things. When he was in Jerusalem, Jesus saw a fruitless fig tree and cursed it, causing it to wither. When the disciples asked him how that had happened, Jesus told them that if they had faith and no doubts, they could even tell a mountain to go jump into the sea and it would obey. The traditional understanding of this passage is that Jesus was speaking hyperbolically about the performance of extraordinary miracles. Whatever type of event Jesus means here, he says it will happen in response to prayer: ‘And all things *you ask in prayer*, believing, you will receive’ (Matt. 21:18-22 NASB, emphasis added; likewise Mark 11:12-14, 20-24).

“A similar qualification applies to Jesus’ promise that those who believe in him will do the works that he did and even greater works (John 14:12). Jesus immediately explains, ‘I will do whatever you *ask in my name*, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. *If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it*’ (John 14:13-14, emphasis added). Jesus is the actual miracle worker; the disciples are merely the ‘petitioners of numinous power’ (PNP), asking Jesus in his name to perform the miracles in order to glorify the Father in the Son.

“As a matter of record, the apostles do not seem to have performed any ‘nature miracles’ after Christ’s ascension, such as walking on the sea. When the ship taking Paul to Rome encountered heavy seas, no miracle prevented its shipwreck, although God providentially protected Paul and his shipmates from death (Acts 27:14-44). The miracles the apostles performed appear to have consisted primarily of healings, exorcisms, and a couple of judgment miracles, inflicting blindness and death. The miracles that the Gospels report Jesus as performing go beyond anything reported of the apostles.

“The mastery of Christ over nature, for example, is so complete that he does not even need to be physically present at the location of the miracle. On two or three occasions, Jesus healed people at a distance, without his ever seeing or touching them (Matt. 8:5-13; 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30; Luke 7:1-10; John 4:46-54). In one amusing account, when Peter asked him whether they should pay the temple tax, Jesus responded by telling Peter to go fishing; the first fish Peter caught would have a shekel in its mouth, with which Peter was to pay the temple tax (Matt. 17:24-27).⁸⁸

Yeshua calming the sea at a simple command, in Mark 4:35-41; Matthew 8:23-27; and Luke 8:22-25, invites us to further investigate the actions of the Messiah, and what they indicate regarding His nature.

Mark 5:1-20; Matthew 8:28-34; Luke 8:26-39

“Yeshua Casts Out Legion”

“They came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes. When He got out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him, and he had his dwelling among the tombs. And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him. Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and gashing himself with stones. Seeing Yeshua from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him; and shouting with a loud voice, he said, ‘What business do we have with each other, Yeshua, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!’ For He had been saying to him, ‘Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!’ And He was asking him,

⁸⁸ Bowman and Komoszewski, pp 202-203.

'What is your name?' And he said to Him, 'My name is Legion; for we are many.' And he *began* to implore Him earnestly not to send them out of the country. Now there was a large herd of swine feeding nearby on the mountain. *The demons* implored Him, saying, 'Send us into the swine so that we may enter them.' Yeshua gave them permission. And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand *of them*; and they were drowned in the sea. Their herdsmen ran away and reported it in the city and in the country. And *the people* came to see what it was that had happened. They came to Yeshua and observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the 'legion'; and they became frightened. Those who had seen it described to them how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and *all* about the swine. And they began to implore Him to leave their region. As He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was imploring Him that he might accompany Him. And He did not let him, but He said to him, 'Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and *how* He had mercy on you.' And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Yeshua had done for him; and everyone was amazed" (Mark 5:1-20).

"When He came to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two men who were demon-possessed met Him as they were coming out of the tombs. *They were* so extremely violent that no one could pass by that way. And they cried out, saying, 'What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?' Now there was a herd of many swine feeding at a distance from them. The demons *began* to entreat 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 came out and went into the swine, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the waters. The herdsmen ran away, and went to the city and reported everything, including what had happened to the demoniacs. And behold, the whole city came out to meet Yeshua; and when they saw Him, they implored Him to leave their region" (Matthew 8:28-34).

"Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when He came out onto the land, He was met by a man from the city who was possessed with demons; and who had not put on any clothing for a long time, and was not living in a house, but in the tombs. Seeing Yeshua, he cried out and fell before Him, and said in a loud voice, 'What business do we have with each other, Yeshua, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me.' For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had seized him many times; and he was bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard, and *yet* he would break his bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert. And Yeshua asked him, 'What is your name?' And he said, 'Legion'; for many demons had entered him. They were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the abyss. Now there was a herd of many swine feeding there on the mountain; and *the demons* implored Him to permit them to enter the swine. And He gave them permission. And the demons came out of the man and entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they ran away and reported it in the city and *out* in the country. *The people* went out to see what had happened; and they came to Yeshua, and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting down at the feet of Yeshua, clothed and in his right mind; and they became frightened. Those who had seen it reported to them how the man who was demon-possessed had been made well. And all the people of the country of the Gerasenes and the surrounding district asked Him to leave them, for they were gripped with great fear; and He got into a boat and returned. But the man from whom the demons had gone out was begging Him that he might accompany Him; but He sent him away, saying, 'Return to your house and describe what great things God has done for you.' So he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city what great things Yeshua had done for him" (Luke 8:26-39).

The Nature of Yeshua in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts

Upon their arrival at the country of the Gerasenes or Gadarenes, a largely pagan area, Yeshua and His Disciples encounter two individuals (Matthew 8:28) not just demon-possessed, but possessed by Legion (Mark 5:9; Luke 8:30). The term *legiōn* (λεγιών) is mainly taken from Roman military jargon, “which consists of about 6,000 infantry, 120 cavalry, and supporting special troops...The underlying idea is that of extremely powerful demonic or angelic forces” (TDNT).⁸⁹ Regardless of the specific number or quantity of demonic beings, chains and shackles could not hold down one possessed by Legion (Mark 5:3-4; Luke 8:28). When Legion encounters Yeshua the Messiah, Legion is subdued, calling Him the “Son of the Most High God” (Mark 5:7; Luke 8:28), which is not surprising in view of the demon-possessed persons not being Jewish, with “Most High God” being a frequent way that pagans would refer to the One True God (cf. Genesis 14:18-19; Numbers 24:16; Isaiah 14:14; Daniel 3:26; 4:2). Questions are asked about the nature of Yeshua—even from demon-possessed pagans—because Legion recognized that the Messiah possessed something beyond a supernatural uniqueness:

- “What business do we have with each other, Yeshua, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!” (Mark 5:7).
- “What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?” (Matthew 8:29).
- “What business do we have with each other, Yeshua, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me” (Luke 8:28).

Those who hold to either a high or low Christology should recognize that Yeshua possesses significant power and authority, by the testimony of Legion’s statements. But immediately, readers are posed with the inquiry by Legion, “Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?” (Matthew 8:29, NIV), *pro kairou* (πρὸ καιροῦ) or “before the time” representing a future point in history. Luke 8:31 narrates how Legion was “begging Jesus not to order them off to the bottomless pit” (Phillips New Testament), *eis tēn abussōn* (εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσος) or “into the abyss” being a self-obvious reference to the final judgment. Rather than this happening, Legion is cast into an adjacent herd of swine or pigs, which then rushes down into the Sea of Galilee, being drowned (Mark 5:11-13; Matthew 8:30-32; Luke 8:31-33).

In the supernatural order of things, one might legitimately expect a supernatural agent sent from God, and/or one of the archangels of the Heavenly host, to be able to exhibit the power and authority to cast demons into a herd of swine. But would a supernatural, yet ultimately created, messenger or angel of God be recognized as having *the final authority* over casting the demons into the abyss in the final judgment?

The swine herders, who witnessed their pigs rush to their deaths, demanded that Yeshua leave the region, as did the local pagans (Mark 5:14-17; Matthew 8:33-34; Luke 8:37), as they did not quite know what to do with this miracle-working Jew. Within the narrative of Luke 8:39, Yeshua extends permission to the formerly demon-possessed: “Return to your home, and describe all that God has done for you.’ So he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole town all that Yeshua had done for him” (TLV). Within the record of Mark 5:19-20, while the formerly demon-possessed is not allowed to join Yeshua and His Disciples, he is permitted to go and report about the miracle:

“But he refused, and said to him, ‘Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.’ And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him; and all men marveled” (Mark 5:19-20, RSV).

⁸⁹ H. Preisker, “*legiōn*,” in TDNT, 505.

Noting how in Luke 8:39 “what great things God has done for you” (*hosa soi epoiēsen ho Theos*, ὅσα σοι ἐποίησεν ὁ θεός) is paralleled by “what great things Jesus had done for him” (*hosa epoiēsen autō ho Iēsous*, ὅσα ἐποίησεν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς). And also noting in Mark 5:19-20 how “what great things the Lord has done for you” (*hosa ho Kurios soi pepoiēken*, ὅσα ὁ κύριός σοι πεποίηκεν)⁹⁰ is paralleled by “what great things Jesus had done for him” (*hosa epoiēsen autō ho Iēsous*, ὅσα ἐποίησεν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς), Bowman and Komoszewski draw the conclusion that no mere supernatural agent was present here, but that God Himself was acting:

“One of Jesus’ best-known miracles was his casting out of a ‘legion’ of demons from a violent demoniac (Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39). The demons immediately recognized Jesus as the Son of God (and called him by name!) and were ready to leave the man’s body without argument. After the demons left the man, Jesus told him, ‘Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you’ (Mark 5:19). Luke reports the same instructions, with Jesus’ saying, ‘Declare how much God has done for you’ (Luke 8:39). Mark and Luke then state that the man went home and began telling people ‘how much *Jesus* had done for him’ (Mark 5:20; Luke 8:39b, emphasis added). Evidently, it’s essentially the same thing: what Jesus did for him, God did for him. What is remarkable and telling is that this is true about anything and everything that Jesus did: he was God in action.”⁹¹

The parallels in Mark 5:19-20 and Luke 8:39 cannot be easily dismissed, nor can the demonic recognition that Yeshua had the final authority over casting them into the abyss (Luke 8:31) in the final judgment (Mark 5:7; Matthew 8:29; Luke 8:28).

That Legion recognized something significant about Yeshua is detectable from the narrative of Mark 5:6. As seen in the NASU, “Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him.” The clause that need not escape us is *kai prosekunēsen autō* (καὶ προσεκύνησεν αὐτῷ). Certainly, there are commentators who prefer the verb *proskuneō* (προσκυνέω) to be viewed as Legion bowing down to Yeshua as a sign of honor.⁹² In his commentary on the Gospel of Mark, France describes how “In Matthew [*proskuneō*] occurs frequently to denote the positive homage of those who approach Jesus, with at least sometimes the implication of his more-than-human status (especially Mt. 2:11; 14:33; 28:8, 17), but its own occurrence in Mark is of the mock homage of the Roman guards in 15:19. Here it is followed by an address which recognises Jesus’ supernatural authority, but with reluctance rather than enthusiasm...Two spiritual powers are here in confrontation...”⁹³ Edwards concludes that more than deference of an inferior supernatural force to a greater one is in view, detailing,

“The verb for ‘fell on his knees,’ *proskynein*, denotes prostrating oneself before a person to whom reverence or worship is due, even kissing his feet or the hem of his garment. When demoniac meets divine, it is a no-contest event.”⁹⁴

The implications of *proskuneō* appearing in Mark 5:6, implying Legion actually worshipping Yeshua the Messiah, are quite serious. Later on in Mark 5:33, the verb *prospiptō* (προσπίπτω), which does mean “to fall down at another’s feet, prostrate oneself” (LS),⁹⁵ is employed to describe the woman who touched Yeshua’s garment. But here, you have supernatural beings

⁹⁰ A Messianic version like the CJB actually has the paraphrase, “how much *ADONAI* in his mercy has done for you”; the TLV similarly has, “how much *ADONAI* has done for you.”

⁹¹ Bowman and Komoszewski, 204.

⁹² Cranfield, *Mark*, 177; Robert A. Guelich, *Word Biblical Commentary: Mark 1-8:26*, Vol. 34a (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 278.

⁹³ France, *Mark*, 228.

⁹⁴ Edwards, *Mark*, 156.

⁹⁵ LS, 696.

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interacting with one another, and a different level of deference being demonstrated. That some versions have more correctly translated *kai prosekunēsen autō* with, “and worshipped him” (Marshall),⁹⁶ in Mark 5:6, should not go unnoticed:

- “But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him” (KJV).
- “When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him” (NKJV).
- “And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshipped him” (American Standard Version).
- “And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped him” (RSV).
- “When he saw Jesus a long way off, he ran and bowed in worship before him” (The Message).

Demonic forces not just paying some kind of deferential homage *but actually worship* to Yeshua, upon encountering Him, serves as definite proof of Divinity, and the Son being a member of a plural Godhead. But surely, more encounters between Yeshua and the demonic, as well as instances of veneration being issued to Him, have to be weighed.

Mark 5:25-34; Matthew 9:20-22; Luke 8:43-48

“A Woman is Healed by Touching Yeshua’s Garment”

“A woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse—after hearing about Yeshua, she came up in the crowd behind Him and touched His cloak. For she thought, ‘If I just touch His garments, I will get well.’ Immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. Immediately Yeshua, perceiving in Himself that the power *proceeding* from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, ‘Who touched My garments?’ And His disciples said to Him, ‘You see the crowd pressing in on You, and You say, “Who touched Me?”’ And He looked around to see the woman who had done this. But the woman fearing and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. And He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your affliction’” (Mark 5:25-34).

“And a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years, came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak; for she was saying to herself, ‘If I only touch His garment, I will get well.’ But Yeshua turning and seeing her said, ‘Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well.’ At once the woman was made well” (Matthew 9:20-22).

“And a woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and could not be healed by anyone, came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped. And Yeshua said, ‘Who is the one who touched Me?’ And while they were all denying it, Peter said, ‘Master, the people are crowding and pressing in on You.’ But Yeshua said, ‘Someone did touch Me, for I was aware that power had gone out of Me.’ When the woman saw that she had not escaped notice, she came trembling and fell down before Him, and declared in the presence of all the people the reason why she had touched Him, and how she had been immediately healed. And He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace’” (Luke 8:43-48).

Within today’s Messianic movement, the scene of the woman with the hemorrhage of blood is typically invoked as evidence that Yeshua the Messiah was faithful to observe the Torah command (Numbers 15:37-41; Deuteronomy 22:12) to wear fringes or *tzitzityot* on the

⁹⁶ Alfred Marshall, *The Interlinear KJV-NIV Parallel New Testament in Greek and English* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 115.