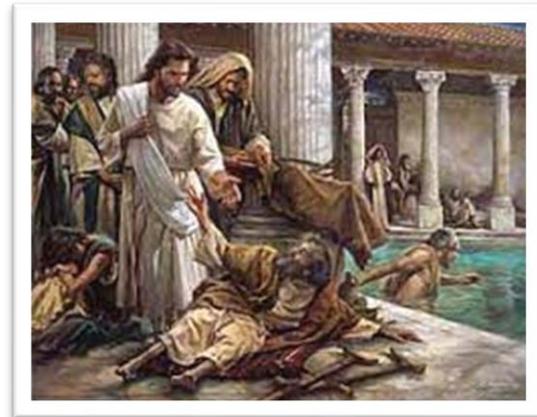


Jesus Cures in Bethsaida and Again Returns to Capharnaum

Two blind men came to meet Jesus on His arrival in Bethsaida, crying out to Him for help and, as if to disprove the old saying, they were leading each other. Jesus restored their sight, cured also the lame and gave speech to the dumb. Wherever He appeared, crowds pressed around Him bringing to Him their sick. Many touched Him, and were cured.



The people were everywhere expecting Him, because they knew that He was coming again for the Sabbath. The story of the two possessed and of the swine was already well-known here, and had excited great comment and astonishment. Some of the disciples baptized the cured at Peter's house. But as Jesus continued His labors and took no time either to eat or to rest, the disciples sought Him out and tried to induce Him to take some repose and refreshment. When He went back to Capharnaum, a man dumb, blind, and possessed by the demon came to meet Him, and Jesus cured him instantaneously.

This miracle created intense astonishment, for even when approaching Jesus, the man had recovered his speech and cried out: "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus touched his eyes, and he saw. He was possessed of many devils, having been wholly perverted by the heathens on the other side of the lake. The sorcerers and soothsayers of the land of Gergesa had seized upon him. They dragged him around with them by a cord and exhibited him in other places, where they showed off his strength in all kinds of skillful feats. They showed how he, though blind and dumb, still could accomplish everything, could know and understand all, could go everywhere, could bring everything and know everything by virtue of certain incantations, for all this the demon performed in him. These pagan sorcerers from Gergesa, who were ever wandering through the Decapolis and other cities, used the devil by means of that poor creature to help them earn their bread. If they journeyed over the sea, their miserable victim was not allowed to go on board a ship, but at the command of his masters, he was obliged to swim like a dog at its side. No one any longer troubled himself about him, for he was looked upon as forever lost. Most of the time he had no place of shelter.

He lay in tombs and caves and endured all manner of ill-treatment from his cruel masters. The poor wretch had long been in Capharnaum, and yet no one had led him to Jesus. Now, however, he went to Him himself and was cured.

While Jesus was teaching in Peter's house near the city gate just before the Sabbath began, a great tumult arose in Capharnaum. The miracle of the swine and the deliverance of the dumb and blind possessed had created great excitement. Several boats of Jews from Gergesa had crossed the lake to spread far and wide the report that Jesus cast out devils by the power of the devil. This irritated the people, and they gathered in large numbers outside the synagogue. As Jesus drew near to the city, the man possessed of the devil, as well as blind and dumb, ran out through the streets to meet Him.

He was without a keeper and was followed by a crowd of people who became witnesses of his miraculous cure. They were so transported by it that they gave loud expression to their indignation against the Pharisees, who never wearied inveighing against Jesus, repeating again as they were now doing that He healed through the power of the devil. Among the crowd here assembled were many armed with a crossbow. These men called out to the Pharisees to desist from slandering Jesus, to recognize His power and acknowledge that never before had such things been done in Israel, and that no Prophet before Him had ever wrought such wonders. If they did not cease from obstinately opposing Jesus, they might depart from Capharnaum, for that they (the people) could no longer support such abuse and ingratitude.

On hearing this, the Pharisees pretended to be quite subdued. One of them, a great, broad fellow, stepped out before the rest and craftily addressed the crowd. He said it was indeed true that never had such doctrines been heard, never had such doings, such wonders been seen in Israel, no Prophet had ever performed the like. But he begged them to consider the circumstances attending the driving out of the demon from the man of Gergesa, as also those connected with the similar wonders wrought among them that very day. The man whom they had just seen delivered from the power of the devil, owing to his relations with the Gergeseans, just as good as belonged to them. In the critical examination of such things, one could not be too circumspect, etc" etc. Then he went on to give them a lengthy description of the kingdom of darkness. He described its orders and hierarchies, and showed how one is subordinate to another. Jesus, he said, had now a powerful spirit in league with Him. If not, why had He not long ago delivered that furious demoniac? Why, if He were the Son of God, was He not able to banish the demons from the land of Gergesa, without going there in person? No! He was obliged first to go into that country, and conclude an agreement with the chief of the Gergesean demons. He had to make a bargain with that demon prince and give him the swine as his booty, for although inferior to

Beelzebub, that prince was still of some consequence. And now since He had freed that man at Gergesa, He had, by virtue of the same agreement, delivered the one here in Capharnaum through the power of Beelzebub. With much cunning and eloquence the Pharisee advanced the above and similar stuff. Then he begged his hearers to be calm and attend to the conclusion, for their own doings would show forth the fruit of all this excitement. The laborer no longer performed his task on working days, but ran around after the new Teacher and His miracles, and the Sabbath was turned into a day of din and uproar. Then he exhorted them to reflect, to go home at once and take some rest in preparation for the coming feast. By such persuasions he succeeded in inducing the people to disperse, and many of the light-minded were half convinced by his empty babble.

It was the eve of the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple. In the houses and schools stood pyramids of lighted lamps, while in the gardens and courtyards and at the fountains were lights and torches arranged in all kinds of figures. Jesus, followed by His disciples, entered the synagogue and taught unmolested, for His enemies were afraid of Him. He knew their thoughts and in what terms they had addressed the people, and He made allusion to it in these words: "Every kingdom divided against itself shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then shall his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out?" With words like these Jesus silenced them and, without further contradiction, left the synagogue. He passed that night at Peter's.

The next day Jesus, accompanied by some of His disciples, visited Jairus' family, whom He consoled and exhorted to the practice of good. They were very humble and entirely changed. They had divided their wealth into three parts, one for the poor, one for the Community, and the third for themselves. Jairus' old mother was especially touched and thoroughly converted to good. The daughter did not make her appearance until called, and then came forward veiled, her whole deportment breathing humility. She had grown taller. She held herself erect, and presented the appearance of one in perfect health. Jesus visited likewise the pagan Centurion Cornelius, consoled and instructed his family, and then went with him to see Zorobabel, at whose house the conversation turned upon Herod's birthday and John. Both Zorobabel and Cornelius remarked that Herod had invited all the nobility, including themselves, to Machaerus for the celebration of his birthday, and

they asked Jesus whether He would permit them to go, Jesus replied that if they dared to stand aloof from the evils that might there take place, it was not forbidden them to go, although it would be better if they could excuse themselves and remain at home. They expressed their indignation at Herod's adulterous life and John's imprisonment, and hoped confidently that Herod would set him at liberty on his birthday.

Jesus next visited His Mother, with whom were then stopping Susanna Alpheus, Mary, the daughter of Cleophas of Nazareth, Susanna of Jerusalem, Dina the Samaritan, and Martha. Jesus told them that He was going away the next morning. Martha was very sad on account of Magdalen's relapse into sin and the state of demoniacal possession in which she then was. She asked Jesus whether she should go to her, but He told her to wait awhile. Magdalen was now often like one beside herself. She yielded to fits of anger and pride, struck all that came in her way, tormented her maids, and was always arrayed in the most wanton attire. I saw her striking the man that lived as master in her house, and I beheld him returning her blows with ill-treatment.

At times she fell into frightful sadness, she wept and lamented. She ran about the house seeking for Jesus and crying out: "Where is the Teacher? Where is He? He has abandoned me!" and then fell into convulsions like epileptic fits. One may imagine the pain of her brother and sister at beholding one of a noble family, one so richly endowed by nature, given up to so frightful a state.

What a touching sight, that of Jesus traversing the streets of Capharnaum, His robe sometimes girded up, sometimes at full length; His motions so well regulated, and yet without stiffness; His step so gentle that He seemed rather to glide than to walk; His whole appearance, though breathing simplicity, so full of majesty that His like was never before seen! There was nothing strange in His look, no irresolution in His manner. He never took a false step, never a useless one. He cast no vain glance, made no aimless turn, and yet in all His bearing there was no trace of affectation or design.

Martha and Susanna had visited their inns on the way through Galilee to Samaria, for they exercised a kind of general superintendence, the other women seeing to those established in their own respective districts. They went together to the several inns, taking with them asses laden with all kinds of household necessaries. Once when Mary the Suphanite accompanied

them, the report spread among the people that Mary Magdalen now went around with the women who provided for the needs of the Prophet of Nazareth and His party. The Suphanite was in figure very like Magdalen, and neither of them was very well-known on this side of the Jordan. Besides being called Mary and the ill repute her past life had gained for her, the Suphanite also had anointed Jesus at a feast given by one of the Pharisees. She was consequently, even at this early date, confounded with Magdalen, a mistake that only increased with time among those not well acquainted with the Community.

The holy women took care that their inns were well supplied with beds, coverlets, linen, woolen clothes, sandals, cups, jugs of balsam, oil, etc. Although Jesus had need of little, yet He was desirous that the disciples should not be a burden to others, and should find their necessary wants supplied. In this way He deprived the Pharisees of all reasonable cause of reproach.