

The Character of Jesus 28
Matthew 8:28 – 34, 9:10 – 17, Mark 2:15 – 22, 5:1 – 21, Luke 5:29 – 39, 8:26 – 40
Jesus Heals Two Demoniacs and Eats with Matthew

- Following the Matthew account
- Characteristic: Responding to the heart
 - Responding to people who were entirely focused on worldly things (8:28 – 34)
 - Mark and Luke record one demoniac. Matthew, two. But, they are the same incident. Mark and Luke record the name of one, Legion, and ignore the other one.
 - This is a Hellenistic region, not Jewish. Pork was popular.
 - Jesus did not cause the loss of property, the demons did.
 - The people of the city did not react to the two men being returned to their right minds, or the power of Jesus over demons. All they cared about was the property loss, which they blamed on Jesus.
 - Compare this to the reaction of the people of Samaria (John 4:4 – 43) who persuaded Jesus to change His plans and stay for two days. However, they had not suffered any financial loss.
 - As requested, Jesus left (Matthew 9:1).
 - Responding to those who object to His methods (9:9 – 13)
 - Luke 5:27 confirms that this meal was at Matthew's house (also called Levi).
 - The Law did not specifically address eating with non-Jews. But, rabbis had taught a convoluted logic to make it a generally accepted prohibition.
 - Jesus' message was similar to John's in that both were characterized as "Repent for the Kingdom is at hand." Jesus responded to the questions of the legalists in three ways:
 - Perhaps using His healings as an illustration, He was like a physician who must meet with the sick, not the well.
 - Ritual is not much help to those on the fringes of polite society. Mercy (a compelling desire to fix what ails you) is the only way to get the job done.
 - His message targeted this audience, not the religious establishment.
 - Jesus did not dispute the assessment of the Pharisees that the "tax-gatherers and sinners" were deficient. He only addressed how to respond to them.
 - Responding to those who are confused over differences
 - Traditionally, the Pharisees fasted twice a week. Apparently, the disciples of John did something similar.
 - Jesus explained that:
 - The Good News was incompatible with the sorrow implied by fasting.
 - Jesus' message introduced a new order with new ways. Mixing the two would defeat the purpose of the new.
- Application: Responding to the heart
 - If people are not interested in relating to God, but are consumed with earthly life, be polite and walk away.
 - Those who are trying to relate to God but find your methods objectionable deserve an explanation that overcomes the objection.
 - Associating does not imply condoning.

- We cannot demand that the “sinners” fix themselves first. That is contrary to the “good news.”
- The Scriptures about being separated from sinners are about church folks who are divisive (Titus 3:10, Jude 19), call bad things good (1 Corinthians 5:9 – 13), or assert that Jesus did not come in the flesh (1 John 2:18 – 19, 4:2 – 3, 2 John 7 – 11).
- Other objections may arise over musical instruments, organization, or various other doctrines. The same principle applies.
- Those who are merely confused over differences need a more philosophical approach:
 - Where’s the peace and joy?
 - Why did God create? We need to address His objective.