

REACTING TO AN AWESOME GOD

Luke 8:22-39

Can you imagine what it might have been like to be there to see what Jesus' followers saw?

The awesome demonstration of power

The transformation of lives

The miracles

His control over the forces of nature?

How *did* the witnesses respond to what they saw?

They all were caused to **FEAR**.

But that **FEAR** produces two very different responses!

The demonstration of Jesus' power attracts some to worship Him, and causes others to flee.

DIFFERENT RESPONSES PREDICTED 8:4-21

DIFFERENT RESPONSES DEMONSTRATED 8:22-56

After stating the principle that receiving God's word is based on the condition of the heart rather than on the evidence,

Examples are presented where evidence that Jesus is Messiah is provided but the response of the observers differs (8:22-56).

In each case the difference is in the observer, not in the evidence.

We're going to look at three of those responses:

The first witnesses of His power:

AMAZED (Attracted) **BY AN AWESOME GOD 8:22-25** Calming the storm

The high hills surrounding the lake cause sudden squalls to occur as winds from the mountains funnel down to the lake, 600 feet below sea level.

Usually after the winds die down, the waves remain rough for hours.

This time everything stops at once. It suddenly becomes calm.

The quiet is impressive.

The disciples have never seen anything like this!

This is no ordinary storm.

These veteran fishermen are used to the impetuous storms of this lake.

But this time even they are terrified! It must have been something else!

Why did they cry out to Him? What did He know about boating?

Jesus addresses them with the question:

"What happened to your faith? **Why don't you trust me?**"

They lost sight of the Lord again. You see, they missed the point:

"You can't sink with God in the boat!"

Notice that He doesn't ask them about the *quantity* of their faith!

It's not: Why didn't you trust me *enough*?!

In this matter they didn't trust Him *at all*!

Jesus asks them what happened to their faith.

Why didn't they trust Him?

Wiersbe: A woman once said to D.L. Moody, "I have found a wonderful promise!" She quoted Psalm 56:3, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee." "Let me give you a better one," he said; he quoted Is. 12:2, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid."

How did the disciples respond to what they saw? 8:25

Sometimes I get the idea that there were fourteen disciples. Have you ever met the other two? "Fearful and amazed."

Passage doesn't make a direct reference to their fear until *after* He calms the storm!

Their question: The fear provoked by the great miracle causes them to ask the critical question: **WHO IS HE?**

Even His disciples ask the question: "WHO IS THIS?"

He even commands the winds and the water! . . . and they obey Him!!!

Their answer: (implied) Who can do that? Answer: "Only God can!"

Jesus is TOTALLY AWESOME!

It's apparent from their reaction, and from parallel passages, they answered that He must be God. Under similar circumstances, Peter worshipped Him.

However, here the question is never answered. We're left hanging.

Hendriksen suggests that it fixes our attention on Christ, but gives no answer to the question, so that everyone who reads it may grapple with his own answer, may profess his own faith, and add his own doxology.

THE CALMING OF THE STORM CAUSES A FEAR IN THE DISCIPLES WHICH DRAWS THEM TO JESUS

There may be a "side-bar" in this story.

Jesus is headed toward pagan territory.

The storm could be an attempt at spiritual warfare.

Satan is attacking the One who is going there for battle.

First he causes the wind and sea to rage against Him.

It certainly scares the disciples.

Then, he sends a wildman down the hill.

I can picture the disciples thinking: "L-I-I-I-let's get out of here!"

Part of their fear, I believe, was the fear to go over there.

THEY WERE VENTURING INTO ENEMY TERRITORY!

I think they were saying to themselves, "Let's go home! NOW!"

That was all they needed.

Jesus asks them.

"WHERE is your faith?"

"Is Yahweh only God in Israel?"

Notice how Jesus confronts the battle.

He never flinches.

He doesn't focus on it.

You almost miss the point that there is a spiritual battle going on.

Our focus is placed on the Victor—not the enemy!

The point here is that their FEAR attracted the disciples to Jesus.

He's the One who deserves our attention—NOT the enemy.

THEY WERE DRAWN TO HIM—OUT OF FEAR THEY LEAN ON HIM!

THEY SEE HIS AWESOME POWER!

THEY WORSHIP HIM!

Not everyone who saw His power reacted that way, however.

There was a second group of witnesses to His power.

They too responded in FEAR.

But their fear produced a different reaction:

REPELLED (afraid, driven) **BY AN AWESOME GOD 8:26-37**

Healing of the demoniac

Now we see Jesus clearly entering Gentile—PAGAN— territory.

Luke seldom takes us there.

Here he does.

Immediately Satan sends out the welcoming committee.

This time the attack is meant to scare them off!

This passage makes clear that demons are real.

They are not afraid to attack and to confront God's people.

They love to deceive and to make us think they are invincible.

Perhaps most important, they love to get us to focus on them and fear them.

It's apparent that this man is demon possessed—he "had demons."

He's running around nude.

Instead of living in a house,

he's hanging out around the graveyard.

The passage says the man came out to meet Jesus.—Confrontation is in view.

It's the same word they use to talk about going to fight a battle.

He comes after Jesus.

Can you imagine the fear that goes through Jesus' disciples as this man comes after their Lord.

Little time is spent on them.

The point here is that the Lord takes control.

He has power to stop the demons and send them away.—He still does!

The demons recognize Jesus and give testimony to Who He is

—He's the Son of the most high God!

The demons answer the question the disciples had just raised.

They know Who this is!

The man cried out and fell down before Him.

Even demons recognize His authority!

They know exactly who He is!

What they can't figure out is why He would come to them!

They have nothing in common.

They have no business to handle together—at least not yet!

They know the time isn't right.

So, what's HE doing here?

Notice the deception:

He recognizes who Jesus is.

But this is the devil's turf.

Why are you tormenting me?

You have no right to be here now. Go away and leave us alone!

What does the "man's" question imply?

It makes it look like Jesus is out to harm the man.

The devil makes the victim fear what Jesus will do to him or her.

Jesus came to liberate the person and to end Satan's victimization.

A legion was a group of about 6,000 Roman soldiers.

The point is that there's a lot of them!

They ask Him not to send them to the Abyss

—the spiritual prison house where the demons await final judgment.

Jesus permits them to do as they ask and escape into the herd of swine.

Mark 5 indicates that the herd contained about 2,000 pigs!

This poor man is possessed by a horde of demons, determined to stay in control of the man and, by extension, through fear, the people of the community.

Note the contrasting response:

How do the masses respond to what they see? 8:35, 37

The herdsmen: run away

The people: tell Jesus to go away.

The demoniac: ?

Fear drives them away from Jesus.

No one here asks WHO He is!

Notice what strikes fear into them.

They're frightened when they see the man dressed, in his right mind, and sitting at Jesus feet.

What is there to fear now?!!!

Remember the fear the demons put on the man's lips at first:

What are you going to do to me? Are you here to torment me?

They create fear of Jesus and what He will do,
instead of rejoicing at the prospect of liberation.

Spurgeon: "If these words be looked upon as the language of the man himself, they are most extraordinary. In fact they are so singularly mad and foolish, that we can only account for them by the fact that, though it was a man who spoke, yet the devil was in him; for surely none but a man possessed with a devil would say to Jesus, who alone could bless him, "Depart from me!" or say, "Torment me not!"

"And yet, there are tens of thousands of men in this world who are saying just the same thing. Thousands of persons appear to be far more anxious to escape from salvation than to escape from eternal wrath. They avoid heaven's love with scrupulous diligence, and the prayer of their life seems to be "Keep me, Lord, from heaven! Prevent me ever being saved! Give me full swing of my sins, and let me live so as to ruin my soul!" Conduct most strange! Whence comes such folly? . . . we can only account for men being so besotted and maddened, by the fact that Satan has mastery over them, and leads them captive at his will."

"You are afraid of being made miserable. Are you so mightily happy then at present? . . . [You] tell me that religion would make you melancholy, when you are as melancholy now as you can pretty well live, and have to be looking after this excitement and that to try and forget yourself, for when you sit down in your sober senses, and calculate what you are, and where you are going to, you know very well that nothing could make you much more miserable than you are, and you are about as dull now as you could be. Do not make this mighty fuss about religion making you miserable, when you are miserable already; but like a sensible man, find no fault with what you have not tried."

Remember the demons' lie:

They make the man think that Christ will bring torment.

In reality, it's Christ who sets the man free from his chains!

The mass of the people want Him to leave.

The pursuit of truth is not the motivating factor.

They're convinced of the truth.

But, they're afraid of the implications.

They should bow down and worship!

They should entrust their lives to one who can bring about this type of transformation.

They should joyfully present themselves to the one who can bring peace to such a troubled chaotic life.

Instead, all they want is to get the powerful One out of there!

If He stays, He might change their lives as well!

They know he will bring some things they don't want to deal with!

Notice our Lord's response.

He leaves.

He won't force His way in.

They have to accept His offer.

They miss out on the peace He came to offer them because they're afraid of Him!

A third response is seen to Jesus' awesome power.

This one had demonstrated FEAR, but now no longer!

He is now FREE!

TRANSFORMED BY AN AWESOME GOD 8:38-39

Testimony of the demoniac

How does the demoniac respond to Jesus?

The demoniac wants to follow Him and becomes a witness concerning Him.

The man troubled by the demon realizes that they ought to follow Jesus.

Jesus didn't let him go with Him.

What difference does it make in his life?

He can no longer continue his isolation and separation from his own people.

It's time to go home.

He can better demonstrate the transformed lifestyle Jesus has given him by going back to his home and living among them.

Missionary activity begins at home—Not by cornering everyone you know and forcing Jesus down their throat! That only brings a desire to escape.

But we can go home and show what a difference Jesus has made in our life.

IT'S THE TRANSFORMED CHARACTER OF THOSE WHO HAVE TRUSTED CHRIST THAT WILL DEMONSTRATE THE TRUTH ABOUT HIM!

Andrew's burden for his brother illustrates an important point: Evangelism should begin with those closest to us--the members of our own family circle. They may ridicule our testimony, but as they see a change in our life they cannot help but be impressed. As soon after his conversion as possible, D. L. Moody traveled back home to tell his closest relatives about Christ. Through his persistent witness, some of his family eventually placed their trust in Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Moishe Rosen, the man who founded Jews For Jesus, says that his wife Ceil "is not much of a soul-winner. The only people she has ever won to Christ are her daughters and me!" Yet through Rosen's witness, thousands have come to Christ.

He went everywhere telling about what Jesus had done for Him.

There is something compelling about sharing what Jesus has done for us.

The skeptic might deny our doctrine or criticize our church, but he cannot easily deny the transformation of our life.

A person might plug his ears to the presentation of a preacher, but it's harder to resist the sharing of your own story.

People may not understand or accept all our theology, but it's hard to deny how God changed your life.

***The more hopeless our starting point,
the more obvious it is that God did it!***

How have you responded to the evidence concerning Jesus?

How has that response changed your life?

Have you told anyone else about it?

Some are called to follow Him and serve Him.

Some reject Him and flee from Him.

Some are called to go back home and tell others what He has done for them

NONE leave there the same!

Worshipping and serving, loving and sharing, or fearing and rejecting.

BUT, ALL are changed by Him.