

The Authority of Scripture: Reconciling the NT Narratives

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Introduction: Compare Luke 8:26-39 and Matthew 8:28-34

Let's look at a difference between Matthew and Luke on historical detail. Matthew tells us in chapter 8 of his Gospel,

^{8:28} 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. ²⁹ 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?' ³⁰ Now there was a herd of many swine feeding at a distance from them. ³¹ The demons began to entreat Him, saying, 'If You are going to cast us out, send us into the herd of swine.' ³² 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. ³³ The herdsmen ran away, and went to the city and reported everything, including what had happened to the demoniacs. ³⁴ And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw Him, they implored Him to leave their region.

Luke, on the other hand, says this:

^{8:26} Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. ²⁷ 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. ²⁸ Seeing Jesus, he cried out and fell before Him, and said in a loud voice, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me." ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. ³¹ They were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the abyss. ³² 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. ³³ 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. ³⁴ When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they ran away and reported it in the city and out in the country. ³⁵ The people went out to see what had happened; and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they became frightened. ³⁶ Those who had seen it reported to them how the man who was demon-possessed had been made well. ³⁷ 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. ³⁸ But the man from whom the demons had gone out was begging Him that he might accompany Him; but He sent him away, saying, ³⁹ "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 Jesus had done for him.

What are some similarities and differences?

Similarities

- What it follows: the crossing of the Sea of Galilee
- Both Matthew and Luke use this story to answer the question raised by the disciples on the stormy sea, "Who then is this, that the wind and waves obey him?" Son of the Most High God (Luke), Son of God (Matthew)
- The general location of the place
- Demon-possession is involved
- That Jesus exorcises the demons
- That the demons go into a group of pigs
- That the surrounding peoples fear Jesus and ask him to leave

Differences

- Place name: Gerasa, Gadara
- Number of demoniacs: 1 or 2
- Whether the personal history of demoniac is given
- Precise title of Jesus used
- Whether the name of the demon (Legion) is used
- Whether Jesus has a conversation with the man/demons
- How long Jesus takes to exorcise the demons: gradually or instantaneously
- Response of healed demoniac
- What follows it: the paralytic (Matthew) or Jairus & the two daughters (Luke, Mark)

Here is where archaeology can't help us because it's beyond the scope of archaeology. We have to decide something more fundamental about Matthew and Luke. On the one hand, we can put it crudely. Which do you like more? Who is more relevant to your needs? Perhaps you like Luke better because it's easier to relate to just 1 person rather than 2; there's more human interest details that Luke includes. Just pick! But notice what begins to happen when we just pick what we like? **We take a consumer approach. It's like we're walking into a Jamba Juice and order a fruit smoothie; we want blueberries but not bananas. In this view, Scripture is just raw material that is waiting to be consumed by you, at your discretion. After all, that what the Gospel writers themselves are doing, aren't they?!? Selecting what they like, or what is relevant to them?!? It seems like it!! Let's pick this, let's not pick that.** But if we prefer one over the other, then how far can we take that? Can we decide that Luke is more important than Matthew? Here's a more live one: Can we decide that we like Jesus, but don't like Paul? Some people politely leave him in the Bible but they ignore his thoughts! Does that mean we can ignore New Testament passages we don't really like or feel we need? Do you see that how you handle small things like this will have major repercussions?

In order to evaluate this, I'm going to draw on literary analysis that has been offered predominantly by Jewish and Christian scholars. See bibliography in the footnotes below.

Matthew's Gospel, Overview

Let's look at Matthew. Here is a high level view of Matthew's Gospel. Matthew structures his Gospel in literary form involving a five major blocks of Jesus' teaching, framed by narrative substories that illustrate or contextualize the teaching. Each block of teaching ends with the phrase,

- When Jesus had finished these words... (Mt.7:28)
- When Jesus had finished giving instructions... (Mt.11:1)
- When Jesus had finished these parables... (Mt.13:53)
- When Jesus had finished these words... (Mt.19:1)
- When Jesus had finished all these words... (Mt.26:1)

The obvious parallel to the Torah of Moses is significant. The Torah – the charter covenant document of Israel – was understood by Jews of Jesus' time as existing in five scrolls. Whether this was its original form because of the limitations of scroll space, or whether this was a later development is irrelevant here; we know that the Torah existed in this form by the time of Jesus. The Torah was the charter document of Mosaic Israel. Here, Matthew strongly suggests that his Gospel is the charter document of Messianic Israel. Jesus has made a new covenant, and this describes it.

Furthermore, let's compare the endings of Matthew's Gospel and the Pentateuch.

| The Gospel of Matthew | The Torah of Moses |
|---|--|
| Mt.28:16 But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. 17 When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. 18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and | Dt.34:1 Now Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan, 2 and all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah as far as the western sea, 3 and the Negev and the plain in the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. 4 Then the |

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|---|---|
| the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” | LORD said to him, “This is the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, I will give it to your descendants; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there.” 5 So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. |
|---|---|

- Where does this happen? On a mountain, in both cases.
- Doing what? Looking over the world
- What are they going to do? Go get the inheritance (land for Israel, nations for disciples)
- Who gets to go? Moses dies and does not go with Israel, whereas Jesus is already resurrected and goes with the disciples into the world
- Does God go with them? With Mosaic Israel, yes, but in Tabernacle form. With Messianic Israel, Jesus is God’s presence, the ‘Immanuel,’ and he goes with his disciples spiritually.

That reinforces the commission to go into the world and make disciples. Claim the inheritance, Jesus says. Claim the inheritance, Matthew says. Disciple them.

Then, as if telling his readers what to do with these blocks of teaching, Matthew records Jesus’ commission to win and make disciples, and reproduce Jesus’ teaching. This is the very last command in Matthew’s Gospel:

Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you... (Mt.28:20)

The significance of this could not be clearer. Matthew’s Gospel is a handbook of disciplinmaking. Just as Jesus made disciples so that they could make more disciples, Matthew wants people to use his book to make disciples, who will develop still other disciples. SO: HOWEVER MATTHEW HAS UNDERSTOOD THE STORY OF THE TWO DEMONIACS IS HOW WE MUST UNDERSTAND AS WELL. WE MUST SEE IT IN LIGHT OF THE LARGER PURPOSE HE IS PROMOTING: WORLD EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP.

Matthew’s Gospel, Chapters 8 – 9

Now, let’s look at Matthew 8 – 9, where the story of the demoniacs is located. Interestingly enough, we see this similarity across the section.

| Ten Miracles of Matthew 8:1 – 9:38 | Famous Ten Utterances |
|--|---|
| Mt.8:3 Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying , “I am willing; be cleansed.” And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. | Of Creation, in Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 |
| Mt.8:8 But the centurion said...”just say the word, and my servant will be healed”...13 And Jesus said to the centurion, “Go...” And the servant was healed that very moment. | Gen.1:3 Then God said Gen.1:6 Then God said Gen.1:9 Then God said Gen.1:11 Then God said Gen.1:14 Then God said Gen.1:20 Then God said Gen.1:22 And God |
| Mt.8:16 He cast out the spirits with a word | blessed them, saying Gen.1:24 Then God said Gen.1:26 Then God said Gen.1:28 And God |
| Mt.8:26 Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm. | blessed them, and God said to them |
| Mt.8:32 And he said to them, “Go!” And they came out and went into the swine. | Of Israel, in the Ten Plagues on Egypt |
| Mt.9:6 Then he said to the paralytic, “Get up, pick up your bed and go home.” 7 And he got up and went home. | Of Israel, in the Ten Commandments |
| Mt.9:22 But Jesus turning and seeing her said , “Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well.” At once the woman was made well | |
| Mt.9:24 He began to say , “Depart, for the girl has not died, but is asleep”...25 But when the crowd had been sent out, he entered and took her by the hand, and the girl got up. | |
| Mt.9:29 Then he touched their eyes, saying , “It shall be done to you according to your | |

faith.” 30 And their eyes were opened.

Mt.9:32 As they were going out, a mute, demon-possessed man was brought to him. 33 After the demon was cast out, the mute man spoke; and the crowds were amazed, and were saying, “Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.”

When we compare Matthew with Mark and Luke, it is apparent that Matthew is not arranging his material in strictly chronological order. Rather, he has arranged his material in a literary and theological order. This is especially true concerning the miracle stories here.

This section resonates with power. It alludes to other occurrences of ‘ten utterances’ from God. In creation, God gave ten declarations to bring forth all life. In Egypt, God brought forth ten plagues to deliver Israel from bondage. In fact, the phrase ‘stretched out his hand’ (Mt.8:3) which begins this set of ten miracles appears originally in the Exodus, when God struck Egypt with ten plagues to lift Israel out of slavery (Exodus 3:20; 7:5; Psalms 136:12; 138:7). At Sinai, God gave Israel ten commandments to order its corporate life. Now Jesus is giving ten declarations to deliver humanity and heal humanity.

This is also significant to understanding why Matthew trims down all the miracle stories. Matthew’s narration of the miracles is uniformly shorter than the narration of Mark and Luke. For example, Matthew condenses the story of the hemorrhaging woman and does not mention her touching Jesus’ cloak. Rather, Jesus turns and sees her, speaks to her, and lo she is healed (Mt.9:22). Similarly, Matthew emphasizes the sheer power of Jesus’ word, making it seem like with one word (‘Begone!’) all the demons scatter. The overall effect on us as readers is to be impressed with the fact that Jesus expresses his power by his word. Matthew simply edits out lots of other material, whereas Mark and Luke offer more personal touches that allow the reader more insight and emotional connection to people who encounter Jesus. In Mark and Luke, Jesus also exorcises the demon(s) by his word, so Matthew is not being theologically different on that particular point. But Matthew seems less interested in handling each story in a case by case way. Rather, he wants his readers to quickly grasp the stunning power of Jesus’ spoken word.

Matthew discusses two men, whereas Mark and Luke discuss only one. How should we understand that? On the strictly historical level, apparently at some point in the night a second man came along. Even if the second demon-possessed man arrived a few hours after the first, it would still be fair by any story telling convention to compact the narration. From a historical standpoint, we can even speculate that more men came that night, since readers would ask, ‘Would Jesus cross the Sea of Galilee simply to heal one or two people?’ It’s always possible, of course, but it would make as much sense, if not more, if he sought to heal others. Again, Mark and Luke seem more interested in providing personal material so that their readers can engage more deeply with one person’s experience. It is likely that they intentionally tell only one man’s story for that purpose. The more people they add, the greater the distance widens between readers and character. Matthew, however, has less interest in his readers personally engaging with each recipient of Jesus’ miraculous healing. So he narrates the story with two men. The number two also has significance to a Jewish audience: Two human witnesses are important to establish a fact in a legal sense. Since by all accounts, Matthew primarily wrote for Jews (both Christians and non-Christians), this has added value to Matthew.

The motif of two men also serves a literary purpose. Interestingly enough, two Jewish men appear in 8:18 – 22, two Gentile men appear in 8:28 – 34, and two Jewish men appear again in 9:1 – 13. The teaching in 8:18 – 22 involves two Jewish men who fail Jesus’ challenge. The first seems to be unsure about the financial-social cost of following Jesus, since Jesus warns him, ‘The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head’ (Mt.8:20). The second wants to wait until his father dies and his familial obligations are ended before he fully enlists himself to Jesus, but Jesus of course says, ‘Follow me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead’ (Mt.8:22).

Even though the two Gentile men of Gadara are inhabited by unclean spirits, the two Jewish men on the other side of the Sea of Galilee are similarly inhabited by ‘unclean’ attitudes and fears. The two Gentile men in Gadara of 8:28 – 34 are literarily linked to the two Jewish men of 8:18 – 22 in this way. The ‘Jewish family ideal’ prevents Jews from reaching the Gentiles in the mission of Jesus. The Gentiles live

on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is where Jesus is going because of his mission. The Sea is a physical barrier representing a deeper social and religious one. Just as the two Jewish men are listening to many voices besides that of Jesus, so also the two Gentile men are haunted by many voices. Jesus can eject those other voices as he brings them under his lordship. Thus, in 9:1 – 13, the paralytic and Matthew the tax collector serve as the ‘two man’ counterpoint to those earlier two Jewish men. The paralytic, of course, rises at Jesus’ command. And instead of hesitating about the financial or familial cost of following Jesus, Matthew immediately rises from his tax booth and follows. In this way, Matthew embeds the two Gentile demoniacs literarily into this compact and powerful section.

One final remark: Matthew writes that the two demoniacs had been ‘so exceedingly violent that no one could pass by that road’ (Mt.8:28). What road? Mention of a ‘road’ here suggests that Matthew views this as a strategic opening into other Gentile lands. Jesus has now made the road passable, so that he and his disciples can one day go further.

Luke’s Gospel and Acts, Overview

We will explain more of the points of difference as we look at Luke’s writings. Because it is somewhat harder to discuss the overall structure of Luke – Acts because of the sheer volume of material, I find it advantageous to pick a major theme in Luke’s writings. Here is the theme of spiritual warfare:

| Scripture | Victory Over the Demonic |
|--------------------|---|
| Luke 4:1 – 13 | Jesus resists Satan’s temptations in the wilderness; Satan says he rules the nations |
| Luke 4:31 – 44 | Jesus begins ministry in Israel and rebukes unclean demons and spirits |
| Luke 8:1 – 21 | Jesus’ word opposed by the devil, who tries to prevent the word from being internalized |
| Luke 8:26 – 39 | Jesus begins ministry in Gentile lands, casts out the demon ‘Legion’ named after the Roman legion – a message to Rome |
| Luke 9:1 – 6 | Jesus gives his disciples authority to cast out demons and heal the sick in Israel |
| Luke 9:37 – 42 | Jesus casts out a demon from a convulsing boy |
| Luke 10:1 – 20 | Jesus sends out the seventy and says he watched Satan fall like lightning |
| Luke 11:14 – 26 | Jesus defines the contest: he is opposed to Beelzebub and plunders his domain |
| Luke 13:10 – 17 | Jesus liberates Abraham’s children: he heals a woman bent over by Satan |
| Luke 22:39 – 24:51 | Jesus arrives in Jerusalem, is tempted again by Satan in the garden of Gethsemane; Jesus put on trial; Jesus’ death and resurrection brings about a new humanity freed from Satan’s power; Christian mission to the world begins to liberate the nations from the rule of Satan |
| Acts 5:1 – 11 | Peter rebukes Ananias and Sapphira for allowing Satan to fill their hearts with a lie |
| Acts 8:1 – 25 | Philip, in Samaria, casts out unclean spirits and draws Simon the magician’s interest; but Peter rebukes Simon the magician |
| Acts 13:1 – 12 | Paul, in Paphos, begins his ministry and confronts Elymas the magician |
| Acts 16:16 – 18 | Paul, in Philippi, casts out a spirit of divination from a girl |
| Acts 19:9 – 20 | Paul, in Ephesus, at the height of his ministry as a free man; drives out demons, wins magicians |
| Acts 26:15 – 18 | Paul, in Jerusalem, describes conversion to Jesus as turning from ‘darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God.’ |
| Acts 28:14 – 31 | Paul arrives in Rome, awaits trial |

Here’s how I would tell this as a story of one thread of Luke’s overall narrative tapestry: At first, we find that Satan owns the nations, as we learn when he tempts Jesus in the desert. Then, as Jesus begins his ministry in Israel, he first expels demons. This seems to be his strategy, as he ejects Satan and his forces from humanity. When Jesus begins his ministry in Gentile lands, he follows the same pattern. He first expels a demon, this case a very powerful demon from the region of the Gerasenes. That demon just happens to have the name of the Roman Legion. Perhaps the impact of this fact on Luke’s intended reader would be clearer if we imagined that Jesus expelled a major demon who called himself ‘*the United States Armed Services*.’ The message would be quite impressive. Jesus is saying something like this: ‘You are the a world superpower. This fallen world is dominated by you, but I have come to claim people from you.’ It is even likely that the disciples, at this point in their experience of Jesus, interpret the Legion demon exorcism as a Messianic sign of military victory over the Roman troops in Israel. Jesus is somehow going to be victorious over the Gentiles.

We can therefore see why the name of the demon is important to Luke. ‘Legion’ is a signal concerning Rome. The story is a precursor of more to come, and Luke details what came. Jesus bested Satan at his

resurrection, then he sent his followers out into the Gentile world, challenged the Greco-Roman world and sent his servant Paul even to Rome itself. Matthew was writing to advance the mission of Jesus over the whole world, and didn't find it important to identify Rome in particular. But Luke was writing to directly confront Rome and Roman ideology. Arguably, Mark was writing for similar reasons. This helps explain why Matthew left out the name 'Legion' and why Mark and Luke included it. Much more can be said about Luke 5 – 9 as a literary section, but we'll have to leave that aside for now.

Jesus' decisive question is, 'What is your name?' This is unusual, as Jesus was apparently not interested in the name of any other demon or demonically possessed person before. Why does Jesus do this? Jesus poses the simple question that this man cannot answer. What is your name? Who are you? This man now has to ask himself, 'What IS my name? I have so many voices inside me, I can't tell me from them. I don't know who I am, and it hurts me to answer that question.' And then a voice blurts out of his mouth, 'Legion.' If the number of soldiers in the Roman legion serves as a reference point, this man has four to six thousand voices inside him. The deeper he lets that question go, the more confused he comes. That, too, is torment. Jesus' question is ultimately for this man's healing, painful as it may be. When the demon surrenders its name, it leads to an identification of the problem and the ejection of the demon.

Jesus causes three major changes to happen. First is the change in the demons. They cannot stay in Jesus' presence yet they must bow to Jesus' authority. In 8:31, they 'beg' Jesus 'not to command them to depart into the abyss,' the final place of defeat of the demons. In 8:32, Jesus gives the demons permission go into a pack of pigs. Of course, to a Jew, swine are unclean. So the situation is poetic from a Jewish perspective. Jesus makes the unclean spirit take on unclean flesh. Jesus makes what was invisible visible, just as he had done with the man, revealing what had been going on inside him. This serves to illustrate Jesus' point in 8:17, 'For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light.' The internal decision to receive Jesus' word will become known; so will the internal decision to not receive it. Everything will be known and will come to light. That which is clean will be shown to be so; that which is unclean will be as well. The unclean pigs tumble down a steep hill and drown in the sea.

The second change is in the man. The man is now sitting down as opposed to wildly crying out. He is 'clothed' as opposed to naked. He is 'in his right mind' as opposed to being raving mad. He has stopped hurting himself and ceased being a threat to others in that way. He has let Jesus heal him. We have here a touching a picture of a person at rest, whole, and complete in the presence of Jesus.

The third change is in the other Gentile inhabitants. From the city and the country, they come to see this Jesus. And they become frightened (*phobeo*). Literally, they were put to flight, they were terrified. 'And the people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they became frightened. And 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 depart from them; for they were gripped with great fear; and he got into a boat and returned.' The people's response is: Go away! Depart! Why do they dislike what Jesus has done? Partly because they value pigs more than people. Partly because they can sense that Jesus will punt and jettison everything unclean in them – all the other voices that they live by. They can sense his holiness and his authority, and they do not like it. And so they act just like the demons, except worse. They 'entreat' Jesus, just like the demons did. They 'beg' him. But whereas the demons asked permission to leave Jesus' presence, the people send Jesus away.

Fortunately Jesus does not let them forget him: '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.' And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.' (8:38 – 39) This conclusion does not occur in Matthew. In Luke, Jesus leaves the healed man as a witness, a sign. It was not yet time for Jesus' full ministry to the Gentiles. He had to first finish his mission to Israel and for Israel, but one day he would return in the person of the Holy Spirit indwelling his apostles. And Jesus wanted this community to be ready for those apostles to come back and speak with the voice of God the Spirit. So it is now: Jesus heals us, and sends

us into our communities, to tell the whole city in which we live what great things Jesus has done for us. In Luke, Jesus empowers Gentiles to witness to other Gentiles. Whereas in Matthew, the emphasis falls on how Jesus was teaching his Jewish disciples to reach Gentiles.

Methodology for Study

Here's how I would say you need to approach the Gospels in particular, but biblical narrative as a whole:

Summary of the Methodology

1. Treat and interpret each NT narrative as the Hebrew literature it is, observing the literary engagement with the Hebrew Scriptures
2. Then try to answer historical questions, usually reconciling different stories

The Characteristics of the Four Gospels: They are History...

- They assume and describe a real, historical Jesus from an eyewitness point of view
- They may exclude some details, *but they do not invent anything*. Where there is an apparent conflict, it is probably just that one Gospel writer omits some historical detail.
 - What was the name of the region? Gadara and Gerasa may be two names for the same area or are different areas that have overlap (both possibilities seem possible from archaeology)
 - Why does Luke give the personal history of demoniac whereas Matthew doesn't?
 - How many demoniacs were there? There were probably 2 demoniacs Jesus confronted, perhaps one right after the other. Matthew sums up their stories, Luke emphasizes one.
 - Precise title of Jesus used: The title 'Son of God' refers to the Messiah for Jews, whereas the title 'Son of the Most High God' is a comparison with Caesar for Gentiles, and the 'Most High' part is probably included by Luke for emphasis in helping a Gentile audience understand that Jesus is higher than Caesar because the God of Jesus is the Most High God.
 - Did the demon have a name? Yes: Legion. Luke includes it to make a confrontational point with the Roman Empire.
 - Was the exorcism instantaneous or a bit longer? Did Jesus have a conversation with the man/demons? Historically, it was a bit longer, as in Luke. But Matthew condenses, and demonstrates his interest in condensing in other ways.
 - Response of healed demoniac: I want to go (Luke, Mark) or not mentioned (Matthew)
 - What follows it: the paralytic (Matthew) or Jairus & the two daughters (Luke, Mark)? Matthew is not writing in chronological order; but seems to have literary reason for arranging his material in this way. Luke seems to write in a chronological order; Jesus seems to make a contrast between the story of the Gentile legion demoniac and the story of the Jewish hemorrhaging woman and Jairus' daughter. One has an unclean spirit and lives in the tombs of death. The Jewish women involve an unclean condition and being actually dead. Luke's primary point seems to be 'Jesus can bring life out of death for both Gentiles and Jews.'
- They invite historical inquiry about Jesus independent of themselves

...And they are Hebrew Narrative Literature

- Their literary properties are known
- They narrate Jesus' history in a clear literary format; if it is a non-chronological format, that format is apparent
- They organize Jesus' history into clear literary themes; there is a reason for any inclusion or omission of historical detail

See the bibliography below for more information.

Implications for Study, Teaching, Preaching

What implications are there here for how we see Scripture? If you just study this passage in isolation in Matthew or Luke or Mark, you would not actually comprehend the full intent. Context matters. Yes the passage has meaning by itself, but it has even more meaning in each context. So just because you studied this passage before in one Gospel doesn't mean you know it in another.

Furthermore, it should be clear that Luke cannot be subordinated to Matthew. Neither can Matthew be subordinated to Luke. Both are valid. And both are valid because of *the entirety of what Matthew and Luke are narrating*. Matthew's intent is located in the narration. Luke's intent is also located in his narration. That is what you need to understand. We cannot pick and choose between books because each book has a slightly different emphasis that complements the whole. If you discard one, you will not get the whole picture.

What this means is that every Gospel, and I would argue every book in the Bible, has authority in its entirety *because of the human author's inspired intention*. The human author was knowingly informed. That is where the point of God's inspiration occurred. Matthew did not become a robot while the Holy Spirit took over his body and wrote the Gospel. He was fully aware, informed, strategic, and drew upon the literary conventions of his time to communicate the most important point he could. That means that we simply cannot pick and choose within a book what we like and what we don't. You have to take the whole book because that is clearly how each author intended it to be taken. You cannot accept Jesus the healer in Matthew 8 and throw out his demand for evangelism in Matthew 28. You can't take Jesus the builder of cool community in Matthew 4 and throw out his teaching on radical financial sacrifice in Matthew 6. You can't take Jesus the one who reaches out to outcast women in Matthew 9 and throw out Jesus' definition of human marriage as monogamous, heterosexual, and binding in Matthew 19.

The Authority of Scripture: Reconciling the NT Narratives

Matthew

^{8:28} 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. ²⁹ 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?’ ³⁰ Now there was a herd of many swine feeding at a distance from them. ³¹ The demons began to entreat Him, saying, ‘If You are going to cast us out, send us into the herd of swine.’ ³² 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. ³³ The herdsmen ran away, and went to the city and reported everything, including what had happened to the demoniacs. ³⁴ And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw Him, they implored Him to leave their region.

Luke

^{8:26} Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. ²⁷ 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. ²⁸ Seeing Jesus, he cried out and fell before Him, and said in a loud voice, “What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me.” ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ And Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Legion”; for many demons had entered him. ³¹ They were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the abyss. ³² 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. ³³ 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. ³⁴ When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they ran away and reported it in the city and out in the country. ³⁵ The people went out to see what had happened; and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they became frightened. ³⁶ Those who had seen it reported to them how the man who was demon-possessed had been made well. ³⁷ 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. ³⁸ But the man from whom the demons had gone out was begging Him that he might accompany Him; but He sent him away, saying, ³⁹ “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 Jesus had done for him.

The Gospel of Matthew: The New Covenant

When Jesus had finished these words... (Mt.7:28)
 When Jesus had finished giving instructions... (Mt.11:1)
 When Jesus had finished these parables... (Mt.13:53)
 When Jesus had finished these words... (Mt.19:1)
 When Jesus had finished all these words... (Mt.26:1)

| The Gospel of Matthew | The Torah of Moses |
|--|---|
| <p>Mt.28:16 But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. 17 When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. 18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."</p> | <p>Dt.34:1 Now Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan, 2 and all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah as far as the western sea, 3 and the Negev and the plain in the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. 4 Then the LORD said to him, "This is the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, I will give it to your descendants; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there." 5 So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD.</p> |

Literary Patterns in Matthew 8:1 – 9:38

| Ten Miracles of Matthew 8:1 – 9:38 | Famous Ten Utterances |
|--|---|
| <p>Mt.8:3 Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.</p> <p>Mt.8:8 But the centurion said..."just say the word, and my servant will be healed"...13 And Jesus said to the centurion, "Go..." And the servant was healed that very moment.</p> <p>Mt.8:16 He cast out the spirits with a word</p> <p>Mt.8:26 Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm.</p> <p>Mt.8:32 And he said to them, "Go!" And they came out and went into the swine.</p> <p>Mt.9:6 Then he said to the paralytic, "Get up, pick up your bed and go home." 7 And he got up and went home.</p> <p>Mt.9:22 But Jesus turning and seeing her said, "Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well." At once the woman was made well</p> <p>Mt.9:24 He began to say, "Depart, for the girl has not died, but is asleep"...25 But when the crowd had been sent out, he entered and took her by the hand, and the girl got up.</p> <p>Mt.9:29 Then he touched their eyes, saying, "It shall be done to you according to your faith." 30 And their eyes were opened.</p> <p>Mt.9:32 As they were going out, a mute, demon-possessed man was brought to him. 33 After the demon was cast out, the mute man spoke; and the crowds were amazed, and were saying, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel."</p> | <p>Of Israel, in the Ten Commandments</p> <p>Of Creation, in Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 Gen.1:3 Then God said Gen.1:6 Then God said Gen.1:9 Then God said Gen.1:11 Then God said Gen.1:14 Then God said Gen.1:20 Then God said Gen.1:22 And God blessed them, saying Gen.1:24 Then God said Gen.1:26 Then God said Gen.1:28 And God blessed them, and God said to them</p> |

| Text | Subject | Beneficiary/Audience | Issue |
|-----------|------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 8:1 – 4 | Miracle 1 | Jewish | Uncleanness, leprosy |
| 8:5 – 13 | Miracle 2 | Gentile | Illness, suffering |
| 8:14 – 17 | Miracle 3 | Jewish | Fever, demons |
| 8:18 – 22 | Teaching 1 | Crowd | Jesus requires everything from us |
| 8:23 – 27 | Miracle 4 | Jewish | Stormy sea |

| | | | |
|-----------|----------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 8:28 – 34 | Miracle 5 | Gentile | Demons |
| 9:1 – 8 | Miracle 6 | Jewish | Paralysis |
| 9:9 – 17 | Teaching 2 | Disciples, Pharisees | Jesus has come for sinners |
| 9:18 – 26 | Miracles 7 & 8 | Jewish | Uncleanness, death |
| 9:27 – 31 | Miracle 9 | Jewish | Blindness |
| 9:32 – 34 | Miracle 10 | Jewish | Mute, demons |
| 9:35 – 38 | Teaching 3 | Disciples | More workers for the harvest! |

Luke's Theme of Victory over the Demonic

| Scripture | Victory Over the Demonic |
|------------------|---|
| 4:1 – 13 | Jesus resists Satan's temptations in the wilderness; Satan says he rules the nations |
| 4:31 – 44 | Jesus begins ministry in Israel and rebukes unclean demons and spirits |
| 8:1 – 21 | Jesus' word opposed by the devil, who tries to prevent the word from being internalized |
| 8:26 – 39 | Jesus begins ministry in Gentile lands, casts out the demon 'Legion' named after the Roman legion – a message to Rome |
| 9:1 – 6 | Jesus gives his disciples authority to cast out demons and heal the sick in Israel |
| 9:37 – 42 | Jesus casts out a demon from a convulsing boy |
| 10:1 – 20 | Jesus sends out the seventy and says he watched Satan fall like lightning |
| 11:14 – 26 | Jesus defines the contest: he is opposed to Beelzebub and plunders his domain |
| 13:10 – 17 | Jesus liberates Abraham's children: he heals a woman bent over by Satan |
| 22:39 – 24:51 | Jesus arrives in Jerusalem, is tempted again by Satan in the garden of Gethsemane; Jesus put on trial; Jesus' death and resurrection brings about a new humanity freed from Satan's power; Christian mission to the world begins to liberate the nations from the rule of Satan |
| Acts 5:1 – 11 | Peter rebukes Ananias and Sapphira for allowing Satan to fill their hearts with a lie |
| Acts 8:1 – 25 | Philip, in Samaria, casts out unclean spirits and draws Simon the magician's interest; but Peter rebukes Simon the magician |
| Acts 13:1 – 12 | Paul, in Paphos, begins his ministry and confronts Elymas the magician |
| Acts 16:16 – 18 | Paul, in Philippi, casts out a spirit of divination from a girl |
| Acts 19:9 – 20 | Paul, in Ephesus, at the height of his ministry as a free man; drives out demons, wins magicians |
| Acts 26:15 – 18 | Paul, in Jerusalem, describes conversion to Jesus as turning from 'darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God.' |
| Acts 28:14 – 31 | Paul arrives in Rome, awaits trial |

Summary of the Methodology

1. Treat and interpret each NT narrative as the Hebrew literature it is, observing the literary engagement with the Hebrew Scriptures
2. Then try to answer historical questions, usually reconciling different stories

The Characteristics of the Four Gospels: They are History...

- They assume and describe a real, historical Jesus from an eyewitness point of view
- They may exclude some details, but they do not invent anything. Where there is an apparent conflict, it is probably just that one Gospel writer omits some historical detail.¹
 - What was the name of the region? Gadara and Gerasa may be two names for the same area or are different areas that have overlap (both possibilities seem possible from archaeology)
 - How many demoniacs were there? There were probably 2 demoniacs Jesus confronted, perhaps one right after the other. Matthew sums up their stories, Luke emphasizes one.
 - Did the demon have a name? Yes: Legion. Luke includes it to make a confrontational point with the Roman Empire.
 - Was the exorcism instantaneous or a bit longer? A bit longer, as in Luke. Matthew condenses.
- They invite historical inquiry about Jesus independent of themselves²

...They are Hebrew Narrative Literature...

- Their literary properties are known³
- They narrate Jesus' history in a clear literary format; if it is a non-chronological format, that format is apparent
- They organize Jesus' history into clear literary themes; there is a reason for any inclusion or omission of historical detail

¹ See also Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*

² To do this, see N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*. See also Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*.

³ **New Testament:** Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, *The Literary Guide to the Bible*; Kenneth Bailey, *Poet and Peasant, and Through Peasant Eyes*; Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*; Robert Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 2 volume set; N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Studies in Pauline Theology*, *The New Testament and the People of God*, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*

Old Testament: Paul Borgman, *Genesis: The Story We Haven't Heard*; J.P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis, Narrative Art and Poetry in the Book of Samuel, Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide*; Duane Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis*; Werner H. Kelber, *The Oral and Written Gospel*; Isaac Kikawada and Arthur Quinn, *Before Abraham Was*; Tremper Longman III, *A Literary Interpretation of the Bible*; Tremper Longman III and L. Ryken, *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible*; John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative, Old Testament Theology*; Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*