

**MARTYRS ACINDYNUS, PEGASIUS, ELPIDEPHOROS ANEMPODISTUS AND THOSE WITH THEM OF
PERSIA**

15 November 2020

Christ is in our midst He is and ever shall be!

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!

Saint Acindynus suffered martyrdom in Persia along with Saints Pegasias, Aphthonius, Elpidophorus, Anempodistus, and 7,000 other Christians at the time of King Sapor II (310-381). These saints were Sapor's courtiers, and were secret Christians. When the king began his persecution against Christians, envious pagans denounced them to him.

Ephesians 2:4-10

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Theme: HEALING of the human condition in terms of the eternal battle between Good and Evil – Earthly kingdom vs Heavenly Kingdom: The kingdom of God – the harmony of the universe – Redemption of the soul defined in terms of Mercy and Love: Requirements from us – thankfulness and praise – the need to live good lives in harmony with the teachings of the Lord Jesus – Paul addresses again the question of which comes first – good faith or good works. Orthodox Study Bible: “We are not saved BY good works, but FOR good works!

What is our model? The healing love of the Lord Jesus – from spiritual death to new life in Christ! We are saved by His grace; we are raised up together as the Body of Christ, as the Church. The emphasis of the passage is on healing: Paul writes of “grace”, of living together as a community, of kindness, as resurrected beings, saved by grace through faith, through the gift of God alive and working in us!

Luke 8:26-39

Then they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, 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 often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness. Jesus asked him, saying, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," because many demons had entered him. And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss. Now a herd of many swine was feeding there on the mountain. So they begged Him that He would permit them to enter them. And He permitted them. Then the demons went out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned. When those who fed them saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. Then they went out to see what had happened, and came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. They also who had seen it told them by what means he who had been demon-possessed was healed. Then the whole multitude of the surrounding region of the Gadarenes asked Him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. And He got into the boat and returned. Now the man from whom the demons had departed begged Him that he might be with Him. But Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you." And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

The story of the Gadarene Swine occurs in Matthew and Mark as well as Luke.

Theme: HEALING – Good in the form of the Lord Jesus vs the personification of evil in the demons in the man possessed by them. Today we might think of such a man as possessed by alcohol, drug other forms of addiction, by anger, bitterness, hatred and extreme violence, by the most extreme forms of what we now call "mental illness"! The man possessed by demons as a basic symbol of realities in the human condition. The possessed man is helpless in his nakedness. Nakedness: An image of helplessness! The human condition without God! Spiritually dead, the man possessed dwells not in a house

but in the tombs among the physically dead, alone and abandoned by his fellow Gadarenes.

The possessed man was violent, kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles until he escaped. Jesus asks “What is your name?” Answer: “Legion” (4000 to 6000 soldiers – metaphor) The power of the demons in him, however, is not equal to the healing power of the Lord Jesus! The love and compassion of the Lord Jesus is stronger than the violence and hatred of the demons! Confronted by love and kindness and spiritual strength, the demons are powerless.

NOTE: THE DEMONS RECOGNIZE THAT JESUS HAS POWER OVER THEM! The demons plead for a new home when they are driven out. Jesus allows them to enter a herd of swine. The swine then throw themselves into a lake and drown!

OCA: “The universal meaning of baptism is that of ‘starting anew,’ of dying to an old, way of life and being born again into a new way of life. Thus, baptism was always connected with repentance which means a moral conversion, a ‘change of mind’, a change in living from something old and bad to something new and good.

Result: The possessed man is healed, free, and is found “sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind.” The Gadarenes, however, are not pleased and urge Jesus to go away! Why? Jesus has ruined their traffic in animals – the swine – regarded as unclean! The implication is that the Gadarene people themselves are unclean – collectively they represent an unhealthy environment, one in which evil – in the form of the demons – can flourish! Do they symbolize the presence of evil in the world?

The man who has been healed wants to be with Jesus, but the Lord tells him to return to his own house and to be a witness to the great things that God, through the power of love of the Lord Jesus, has done for him! This man, now healed, returns as a witness to all around him of the compassion and love of the Lord Jesus!

These accounts are for us – to bring enlightenment and promise into our lives!

CHRIST IS IN OUR MIST! HE IS AND EVER SHALL BE!