

Christ in Prophecy
Bible Times 8: Doug Greenwold on the Demoniac

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: One of the most important principles of biblical interpretation is to keep in mind the context of what you are trying to interpret. There is a wise adage that says, “A text without a context is a pretext.” But grammatical context is not the only context we need to be aware of. There is also cultural context, historical context, and geographical context, among others. For a fascinating illustration of the importance of biblical context, stay tuned.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Blessed Hope, and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. My colleague, Nathan Jones, and I have a very special guest with us today. His name is Doug Greenwold. He is a down-to-earth Bible scholar who serves as the Senior Teaching Fellow for a ministry called Preserving Bible Times. Doug has been with us several times before, and he is one of our favorite Bible teachers. Welcome to Christ in Prophecy, brother.

Doug Greenwold: Thank you, both of you.

Nathan Jones: Oh, so good to have you back on.

Doug Greenwold: Good to be here.

Nathan Jones: Excellent. Well, last time that you were here you wowed our audience with the fact that you get into context, context, context. I went to your website and as I studied it you have fantastic articles and a newsletter that is about context. Tell us a little about your ministry and why context to you is so important.

Doug Greenwold: Well, you said, context, context, context matters, because of transformation, transformation, transformation.

Nathan Jones: There we go, okay, tell us about that.

Doug Greenwold: Yeah, well you know the Bible writers when they wrote their scroll assumed that their readers lived when, where, and how they did. So, they had no need to explain what everyone knew to be true, they just assumed you knew. Well, 2,000 years later 90% of that is missing in our western way of thinking. It is in the white spaces between the lines.

Dr. Reagan: In the white spaces.

Doug Greenwold: So, what we do at Preserving Bible Times is equip people to read in the white spaces between the lines. To understand it like it was originally understood. That gets us closer to the original meaning of the passage. And if we want to get closer to the original meaning of the passage, we get closer to the epicenter of the always intended transformation by

the Holy Spirit. And that's why we do what we do with books, and publications, and seminars, and conferences. And they are wonderful resources at preservingbibletimes.org. And I highly recommend people if they are interested in reading the Bible like the people who first heard those words, check us out.

Dr. Reagan: And you do a very good job of it.

Nathan Jones: Yes.

Dr. Reagan: Well, folks, we are going to take a brief break and when we return Doug is going to give us an illustration of the importance of context with regard to the story in Luke 8 about Jesus healing the demoniac.

Part 2

Nathan Jones: Welcome back to Christ in Prophecy and our interview with Doug Greenwold, the Senior Teaching Fellow for a ministry called Preserving Bible Times. Doug, I want to get into the illustration you said about context, particularly about the demoniac in Luke chapter 8. Can you tell us about that?

Doug Greenwold: Absolutely. And to get us started I'm going to read from the text.

Nathan Jones: Alright, let's read.

Doug Greenwold: You're welcome to join me in Luke 8:22, "One day Jesus got into a boat with his disciples and said to them, "Let's go across to the other side of the lake." So they set out, and as they sailed He fell asleep. Now a violent windstorm came down on the lake, and the boat started filling up with water, and they were in danger. They came and woke Jesus, saying, 'Master, Master, we are about to die!' So Jesus got up and," interesting word here, "rebuked the wind," we are going to return to that, "and the raging waves; they lied down, and it was calm. And then He said to them, "Where is your faith?" I am going to ask you in a little bit while here: What's the nature of that question; where is your faith? Now, I'm going to hop over to Mark 4 where there is a collateral passage that deals with the same encounter. Mark 4:35, "On that day, when evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, 'Let's go across to the other side of the lake.' So after leaving the crowd, they took him along, just as he was." That's an idiomatic phrase that we are going to open up here. So, let me set the stage. We are about 18 months into Jesus' earthly ministry. Half of the time now of the training of these disciples. Maybe it is time for their mid-term exam. Are they getting it, right?

Dr. Reagan: Mid-terms.

Doug Greenwold: Yeah, this vision of the Kingdom of God, this bringing mercy to people who have been systematically deprived of it. Are they getting it? You know? So, I think this is part of what's going on here. This is also the first time that Jesus is going to leave the friendly confines of the northwest corner, quadrant of the Sea of Galilee, where the religious Jews live, and go on the offensive into enemy territory down into the south eastern quadrant of the Sea of Galilee which is the Decapolis. So, it's late in an afternoon. You've been standing around watching Jesus teach and heal, heal and teach, teach and heal, heal and teach. You're probably kind of tired because standing around is often the most tiring thing we can do. It is about 5 o'clock in the afternoon and Jesus says, "Get in the boats we're going to the other side." Now, as observant Jewish men when you hear the phrase the other side, you know that's the code word for the Decapolis, which is a word that cannot be spoken because it will make you ritually unclean.

Nathan Jones: Even to speak the word?

Doug Greenwold: Absolutely. There's actions you can't do. There are words you can't say in this world of observant Judaism.

Nathan Jones: And the word Decapolis is evil because?

Doug Greenwold: The Decapolis is what's left from Alexander the Great's conquest of this part of the Middle East when he bought in whole-sale Macedonia city states to conquer, and this is what's left.

Dr. Reagan: So, it's a pagan area.

Doug Greenwold: It's not only pagan it's viewed as the kingdom of evil; Satan is the chief operating officer. And an observant Jewish man is forbidden from going there. Okay, so how are you feeling disciples?

Nathan Jones: Not good.

Doug Greenwold: We are going to a place you're forbidden to go.

Dr. Reagan: Never knew that was code language.

Doug Greenwold: Absolutely. And it is late in the afternoon, and this phrase from Mark, "just as he was," means now. Not as soon as possible. Not after you leave a note for your wife, or you know get a snack. Get in the boats and get in the boats now. Alright, so how we doing?

Dr. Reagan: Well, okay, I'm learning things I didn't know.

Doug Greenwold: Yeah, well I got to think you're not too pleased with this. So, you set off. You start sailing southeast from Capernaum down here to the Decapolis. A wind is going to come from the east and blow us off course. So, we are sailing along, and a wind starts to pick up. No, problem. We fishermen have seen this.

Dr. Reagan: Experts.

Doug Greenwold: We can handle this. Well, it picks up a little bit more. And a little bit more. And suddenly it is a wind like they've never seen. And they realize they are going to die. And so somebody says, "Well, I guess it's time to wake up Jesus." Why did you wait so long disciples to do that?

Nathan Jones: Well, you said we are fishermen right? That means we should be pretty good sailors, right?

Doug Greenwold: Isn't it, it can be real troublesome to lean on your own self-competency, can it not?

Nathan Jones: Ah, yes.

Doug Greenwold: We can handle this. Well, we've seen this before. I think there is a little implied message here. Go to Jesus sooner rather than later. Why do we wait so long thinking that we can?

Dr. Reagan: Yeah, that's usually our last resort you know, we try our education and money and everything else.

Doug Greenwold: So, Jesus wakes up and says, "Calm. Peace." And we have a miracle. Not only does the wind stop blowing but the waves are completely suppressed.

Dr. Reagan: It should take several hours for them to settle down.

Doug Greenwold: Maybe. I grew up in Michigan lakes, okay, I tell you when a wave gets set in motion it keeps going until it hits the shore.

Dr. Reagan: Yeah.

Doug Greenwold: This is amazing. These waves suddenly went, boop. Right? Now, Jesus says, "Where is your faith?" So, that is an interesting question.

Dr. Reagan: Yeah.

Doug Greenwold: Let me fill it in, the disciples are going to a place they know they're forbidden to go. It's the land of Satan. They expect the response. And as wind comes up they are very familiar with Hosea 12:1 because these observant Jewish men have memorized most of their Torah, their Old Testament. Right? Where it says, talks about "the wicked winds from the evil empires of the east," they're sailing east. This is a sharqia wind. Those people who live in California understand Santa Ana winds. This is semi-arid land on the east side of the Sea of Galilee. It gets very hot during the day, gets very cold at night. You get the wind inversions. And it's not that unusual that in 15 minutes you have 6 and 8 foot waves on the Sea of Galilee. I actually have pictures.

Dr. Reagan: Oh, yeah.

Doug Greenwold: So, they're on a mission they know they shouldn't be going on. It's to the land of the adversary. They expect the response. They know about the wicked winds from the evil empires of the east. They see this as a demonic wind. The issue of faith here is not that Jesus doesn't have control over nature, they saw that in the great catch of fish. Right? That's the way the word rebuke is there. Jesus is going to rebuke His adversary who is high jacking nature to try to stale this offensive from going to his territory, his domain, his kingdom. And the disciples know this, but they were not with Jesus during the 40 days of temptation. They do not know that Jesus triumphed over the Adversary. So, this is a showdown at the O.K. Corral, and they're not sure who's going to win. I would suggest to you that's the context of Jesus' question: "Where is your faith? Don't you know, in a word I AM, will conquer the adversary and triumph over him?" No, they don't. So, now, the wind has stopped, right? But you still got a ways to go to get to the other side. How are you going to get there?

Nathan Jones: You have no wind.

Dr. Reagan: You are going to have to row.

Doug Greenwold: Row, row, row your boat.

Nathan Jones: Okay, yeah.

Doug Greenwold: So, you know this is a 28 foot boat, it is 7 foot across, it is 4 foot deep, it's a minimum 4 person boat. Starting to row, row, row your boat. Jesus has an interesting way of getting us involved in the ministry, right?

Nathan Jones: They can't just sit anymore and float.

Doug Greenwold: They can't just sit there, they are an active participant.

Dr. Reagan: But as they rowed, don't you think that they were probably pretty upset where they were going, and wondering why we're going to a pagan area?

Doug Greenwold: We almost lost our life. We're about to become totally ritually unclean.

Dr. Reagan: Unclean, yeah.

Doug Greenwold: We may be in the purification baths for 30 days, and get dry rot in our armpits. You know. I mean are you happy campers as the disciples?

Dr. Reagan: No.

Nathan Jones: No.

Dr. Reagan: No, we're very confused probably.

Doug Greenwold: Right, you're on a journey you don't want to go on.

Dr. Reagan: Yeah.

Doug Greenwold: And by the way Jesus decided to do this late in the day. That raises an interesting question does Jesus' call always come when we're fresh and ready?

Dr. Reagan: No.

Nathan Jones: No, not at all.

Doug Greenwold: Lots of insights here, right?

Nathan Jones: By going late would they think then that they might have to stay overnight there too? Could they get back in time?

Doug Greenwold: They frankly don't know. It's all the part of the great unknown here. You know?

Nathan Jones: So, they have to follow Jesus without knowing where they're going.

Doug Greenwold: That is what a Rabbi does. He follows his Rabbi, he submits his authority to him, and happy or not you're going to do it. By the way welcome to the way Jesus makes disciples, shock therapy just about every day.

Dr. Reagan: Boy, you better believe it.

Doug Greenwold: That's right.

Dr. Reagan: Taking me out of my comfort zone.

Doug Greenwold: Jesus started by touching the leper, you think that blew their minds right there since leprosy was communicable by touch in their way of thinking. So, we are rowing the boat, and if you've been around water you know that sound travels over water. All of a sudden you start to hear shrieks, and screams. And somebody turns around and then the ambient light of the moon, that's a naked man. We as observant Jews are forbidden from observing the nakedness of another person.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Doug Greenwold: Wait a minute. There's some caves there. They could be tombs. We as Jewish men are forbidden to get too close to tombs. We can't set foot on the land because it is demonic land. I mean the ritual impurity issues here are just really building up. Right?

Dr. Reagan: We are talking about baths for three months now.

Doug Greenwold: Yeah. So, how happy are we now?

Nathan Jones: Oh, wow, wanting to go back home to Capernaum probably.

Doug Greenwold: Yeah, I mean you can almost hear Peter and John saying, "Is it time for an intervention here?" I mean we've seen some strange things, but this is over the top. We really cannot do this. But no they're disciples, they need to submit to their Rabbi. So, we are approaching the gravel shore of the Sea of Galilee, it's not sand, right?

Dr. Reagan: That's right.

Doug Greenwold: And we're going to pick this up right after our break here.

Dr. Reagan: Yes, folks, we are going to take just a brief break, and when we return Doug is going to continue with this story telling what happened when Jesus and His disciples arrived on the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

Part 3

Nathan Jones: Welcome back to Christ in Prophecy and our interview with Doug Greenwold, the Senior Teaching Fellow for a ministry called Preserving Bible Times. Okay, Doug you took up across the Sea of Galilee. We are now in the Decapolis, and don't leave us hanging what happens?

Doug Greenwold: Well, let's pick up as Luke records it here, "So they sailed over to the region of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. As Jesus stepped ashore," we'll return to that, "a certain man from the town met him who was possessed by demons. For a long time this man had worn no clothes and had not lived in a house, but among the tombs. And when he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and shouted with a loud voice, 'Leave me alone,' this is the demoniac inside this man, 'Jesus, Son of the Most High God! I beg you, do not torment me!' For Jesus had started commanding."

Dr. Reagan: So, the demon recognized who Jesus was.

Doug Greenwold: Oh, James tells us that of course the demons recognize who Jesus is. "For it had seized him many times, so that he would be bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard. But he would break the restraints and be driven by the demon into deserted places." Let's leave that there for the moment, and pick up Mark's corresponding account here, "So they came to the other side of the lake, to the region of the Gerasenes. Just as Jesus was getting out of the boat, a man with an unclean spirit from the tombs and met him. He lived among the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. For his hands and feet were often bound with chains and shackles, but he had torn the chains apart and broken the shackles in pieces. No one was strong enough to subdue him. Every night and every day around the tombs and in the mountains, he would cry out and cut himself with stones."

Nathan Jones: Terrifying.

Dr. Reagan: Very grim picture.

Doug Greenwold: It is. What I want us to get a sense of here is this demoniac in the eyes of this culture is a sub, sub, sub, sub-human being. And we're going to see how God's heart beats for a sub, sub, sub-human being. So, let's go back to the boat. We're rowing. We're getting closer to shore. We hear the screeches. We realize he is naked. We see the tombs, and we're panicked. Ritual impurity, upon ritual impurity is just stacking up here. And isn't it interesting when you read this carefully it only--Luke says, "Jesus gets out of the boat." I would suggest to you, you all disciples stayed in the boat.

Dr. Reagan: I'm not putting my foot on that cemetery.

Doug Greenwold: Exactly.

Nathan Jones: No.

Doug Greenwold: I mean we're willing to follow Jesus, right? But sometimes it gets a little too messy. So, we're going to stay in the boat. Interestingly enough Jesus does not chide them, fortunately. Doesn't chide disciples when they mess up, or stay in a boat. Thank you, Jesus for that. So He gets out of the boat. Now, freeze that thought and let's be the demoniac for a minute. You've been harassed. You've been despised. You've been ridiculed. You've been cursed for as long as you can remember. And now it is 2 o'clock in the morning, and you start to see multiple boats coming toward the shore. And you say to yourself, "Now, they're coming at two in the morning to harass me." How bad can it get? Right. And then the boats gravely beach, if you will, and one person gets out of the boat. And I don't know whether it was 15 feet, or 20 feet, 25 feet depending on the ambient light of the moon, but the demoniac realizes He's got facial hair. It's a Jew.

Dr. Reagan: Ah, yeah.

Doug Greenwold: Wow! What are Jews doing over here at two in the morning? What is going on? And then it doesn't take the demoniac long to figure out this Jew has come to contest for me, to fight for me. And there's this dialogue that takes place between the demons, who immediately recognize who Jesus is. Who do not want to be sent back into the abyss. And I want to suggest to you here that the Adversary, Satan, always has a backup plan. If plan one didn't work, the wind, to keep them from coming to shore, he's got a backup plan B. And so there is negotiation and the demons say, "Can we go into those boars, pigs?" And Jesus eventually says, "Yes."

Nathan Jones: How many demons are we talking about? His name was Legion, right, which means in a Roman legion is how many?

Doug Greenwold: In a Roman legion, the Roman Tenth Legion is occupying this land 4,800.

Dr. Reagan: 4,800!

Doug Greenwold: 4,800. Now that's not to say there's exactly 4,800 but the word means many. On the Richter scale of demonic possession, this is off the charts. And so let me tell you something about boars, they're really not pigs, but that is how we Westerners are given the word here to understand it, they have very wide girths which gives them tremendous buoyancy. Boars are actually really good swimmers. The fact that one of them drowns would be kind of stunning, but that 2,000 of them drowned, utterly amazing.

Nathan Jones: So they killed themselves?

Doug Greenwold: Pretty much, yeah. They killed the boars. Yeah. Now, gotten a little comparison here. Across the Sea of Galilee back where the Jewish people are if a family has five sheep they are considered well off. If a family has, with other families in the clan, 15 sheep that is a pretty good deal. And if the whole village has 100 sheep it is a fairly prosperous village. We're talking now about 2,000 boars. This is an estimate but it maybe 25% of the agricultural gross national product of this whole region.

Nathan Jones: This is a crop basically.

Doug Greenwold: This is a big deal. This is a big deal. And so we read in the text, "So the people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus." I'm reading verse 35 of

Luke 8. "They found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, clothed and in his right mind." Alright, now this is really fascinating. Sitting at the feet of Jesus is the posture of a disciple. That's what disciples will do. Now, he was naked.

Nathan Jones: Yeah, where did he get the clothes?

Doug Greenwald: Exactly. You think there's armories of clothes in these caves waiting for this moment in time?

Dr. Reagan: No.

Doug Greenwald: Another miracle. Yeah, where did the clothes come from?

Nathan Jones: Could Jesus even had taken His own cloak off and given it to him, or one of the disciples?

Doug Greenwald: Ah, He wouldn't have had enough cloth on Him to pull that off.

Nathan Jones: Okay.

Doug Greenwald: So, the people from the region come here. And rather than rejoice in an incredible rescue of a demon possessed man, they're upset over the 2,000 boars.

Dr. Reagan: I can understand why.

Doug Greenwald: Materialism always trumps a human being, alright. Yeah. So, they want Jesus to leave.

Dr. Reagan: Get out of here.

Doug Greenwald: Get out of Dodge. You know. As fast as you can. For they were seized with fear. Picking it up in verse 38, "The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with Jesus, but Jesus sent him away, saying, 'Return to your home, and declare what God has done for you.' So he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole town, city, what Jesus had done for him." Interesting juxtaposition there, Jesus says, "You go tell them what God's done." And he goes and tells them what Jesus did, because Jesus is God as far as he is concerned.

Nathan Jones: A proclamation of Jesus being of the Father.

Doug Greenwald: Well, I mean be this demoniac for just a minute here. Wouldn't you want to stay with Jesus, like stuck like a Siamese twin for the rest of your days to this man, for what He has just done for you? Absolutely. And it seems a little harsh here. Jesus says, "Stay here." And by the way let me give you an assignment, I want you to go tell your story. Go into the city here of 12,000-15,000 people and tell your story.

Dr. Reagan: I found that interesting because Jesus often said to people don't tell the story.

Nathan Jones: Yes.

Doug Greenwald: Well He is in a different place. That's why we always have to ask where is Jesus when He says what He says, and does what He does. So, he is obedient. And he goes into the city Gergasa, and says, "Hey, you, about to go into the Roman gymnasium can I tell you my story? You got five minutes?" "You going into the taberna, yeah, you three can I tell you my story?" "Um, sir, you are about to go into a temple with ritual prostitution here, but before you do can I tell you my story?" Wherever he went he told his story. Everybody knew the before, and the after is pretty obvious, right?

Dr. Reagan: Sure is.

Doug Greenwold: It was a short story. But he told it, and he told it, and he told it to whoever would listen. And when Jesus returns in several months in Mark 7, beginning of Mark 8 we have the feeding of the 4,000.

Nathan Jones: Wow! That's where they came from.

Doug Greenwold: Because this is the first missionary of the New Testament.

Dr. Reagan: Missionary.

Nathan Jones: The demoniac.

Doug Greenwold: And all he did was tell his story.

Nathan Jones: That's all we're asked to do, right?

Doug Greenwold: The story is powerful. And only you can tell your stories. Only I can tell my story, which has been pretty remarkable in the last 12 months. And so we need to encourage people in your audience tell your story.

Dr. Reagan: Yes.

Doug Greenwold: You know when you go to the supermarket. When you go to the PTA. When you go to the high school basketball game, ask for permission to tell your story.

Dr. Reagan: I often tell people that when they say, "I want to witness but I just don't know all the verses to use." I say, "Tell them how Jesus has impacted your life."

Doug Greenwold: I mean there is one thing you ought to know is your story, right? And no one else can tell your story but you. Only you have the credibility to tell it. We need to tell our story wherever we can.

Nathan Jones: And look at the fruit 4,000 people show up as a result of it.

Doug Greenwold: Amazing yield, right?

Nathan Jones: Wow!

Doug Greenwold: Way to go Holy Spirit.

Dr. Reagan: Amen.

Doug Greenwold: So, what do we learn about God in this passage? Well, quite a bit actually, His heart beats for people who society marginalizes as sub, sub, sub-human being. He will do whatever it takes to rescue one person. We learn here with Jesus that His time table isn't the disciples' time table. Jesus says we're going late in the afternoon, and they're not ready. Right? We also learn here that disciples can't manage God. Much as they might want to try. We learn here that He has authority over the adversary, and one word is sufficient. And we learn here that His time frame is not our time frame, and none can stay His hand. Isn't this a remarkable story?

Nathan Jones: Especially when you understand the context.

Doug Greenwold: I know. And this is what happened in the first 12 hours, now the next 12 hours He's going to go back and bring Jairus' daughter back to life, and deal with the woman with the issue of blood. What a remarkable 24 hour window of time for Jesus.

Dr. Reagan: Absolutely remarkable.

Closing

Nathan Jones: Doug, that was amazing! Thank you for teaching us about context. Could you look in that camera and tell folks how they can get in touch with your ministry?

Doug Greenwold: Well, if you'd like to be equipped to read the Bible in the way that we were just developing this passage here go to preservingbibletimes.org, and check out a wealth of contextual resources that will get you up to speed.

Dr. Reagan: Well, folks that's our program for today. I hope it has been a blessing to you. And I hope the Lord willing you'll be back with us next week. Until then, this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb & Lion Ministries saying, "Look up, be watchful, for our redemption is drawing near."

End of Program