

THE LORD AND LEGION

Mark 5:1-20

Intro: Our text for today gives us the second account of demon possession in the Gospel of Mark. The first was in 1:23-28. It is also recorded in the Gospel of Luke, 4:31-36. The account here in Mark 5 is also found in both Matthew 8:28-34 and Luke 8:26-39. A third account involving demon possession had to do with the Lord's deliverance of a boy who was demon-possessed. It is found in Mark 9:14-29, and is also included in both Matthew (17:14-18) and Luke (9:38-43). Of all of the miracles that our Lord performed during His earthly ministry, none have been more under attack than the times in which he delivered those who were demon-possessed. I have one commentary in my library in which the author spoke of the man in Mark 5 as one who was merely hallucinating. Obviously he thought that he was just a mental case, but not demon-possessed.

No doubt all of the miracles have been questioned by people who have no belief in God, nor in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. And they always try to find some human explanation for the miracles, many holding that the apostles and others who believed in Christ were deceived into believing that He performed all of the miraculous events which were ascribed to Him. But for those of us who believed that our whole universe came into existence by the very words of God, we have no doubt that the Lord performed the miracles that the Bible declares that He did, and that He performed many, many more which are not described in detail.

But there is another point of doctrine that the Bible gives us which is related to the opposition that many people hold to the miracles of our Lord, especially those involving demon-possession. People deny that there is a Devil, and they deny that there are a countless number of demons who do what the Devil wants them to do. They think that the Apostle Paul was being ridiculous when he wrote what we find in his epistle to the Ephesian church where we find these words in Ephesians 6:12:

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

As most of you know, I have been in the ministry for over fifty years, and yet I have never seen what I believed was a true case of demon-possession. I firmly believe that there is a Devil, and I believe in demons. But

they are nothing to joke about. They are very active in other ways in these days, getting people to believe that there is no God. He has gotten our legislators to enact laws which are directly contrary to the Word of God without any fear of the consequences of what they have done. How long it was after God created Adam and Eve before the Devil cornered Eve and deceived her into disobeying God, no one really knows. But we can be sure that it was not very long. Getting Eve to disobey God, and then getting her to get her husband to disobey God, is the reason for all of the ills that we have in the world today, ills for which man has no solution, and for which there is no solution apart from a return to God, to the Bible, and to faith in His Son, Jesus Christ the Lord.

When Jesus Christ was on earth there was an all-out attack upon Him by Satanic forces, and unfortunately for them, what the Devil and his demons did to tear people's lives apart by demon-possession, provided the Lord with many opportunities to show that He was the Son of God Who had come from heaven, born of the virgin Mary, for the purpose of suffering and dying that the deepest human need might be met, which is the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life. So the miracles of our Lord, and especially those involving people who were actually demon-possessed, are very, very instructive for those who really want to know the truth. *Let us see what we can learn from the account of the demon-possessed man here in Mark 5.*

First I want to call your attention to:

I. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN CHAPTER 4 OF MARK'S GOSPEL, AND CHAPTER 5.

You can see it by comparing verse 35 of chapter 4 with the first verse of chapter 5. In verse 35 of chapter 4 we read that the Lord said to His disciples, "Let us pass over unto the other side," that is, to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. And in the first verse of chapter 5 we are told, "And they came over unto the other side of the sea." In between they had the storm. At one point the apostles thought that they would all die. But they didn't. And the point is that they got where the Lord had said that they were going to go. The will of the Lord always prevails even though at times it looks like it will not prevail. God's will is always sovereign.

J. C. Ryle, who was a bishop in the Church of England in the days when there were many strong evangelicals ministering in that Church, published

a set on the New Testament Gospels, made some helpful comments on the Sea of Galilee which it would good for all of us to know to show how important that place was in the ministry of our Lord. This what he said:

The Sea of Galilee, or Tiberias, on which the circumstances recorded in this passage took place, is an inland lake, through which the river Jordan flows, about fifteen miles long and six broad. It lies in a deep valley, much depressed below the level of the [Mediterranean Sea], – and is surrounded on most sides by steep hills. Owing to these last circumstances, sudden squalls or storms are reported by all travelers to be very common on the lake.

The Sea of Galilee and the country surrounding it were favored with more of our blessed Lord's presence, during His earthly ministry, than any other part of Palestine. Capernaum, Tiberias, Bethsaida, and the country of the Gergesenes were all on its shores, or in the immediate neighborhood of this lake. It was on the Sea of Galilee that our Lord walked. It was on its shore that He appeared to His disciples after His resurrection. Sitting in a boat on its waters, and in a house hard by, He delivered the seven parables recorded in the 13th chapter of ... Matthew. On its banks, He called Peter, and Andrew, James and John. From it He commanded His disciples to draw the miraculous draught of fishes. Within sight of it He twice fed the multitude with a few loaves and fishes. On its shores He healed the man possessed with demons; and into it the two thousand swine plunged headlong after that miracle had been wrought.

Few localities in the Holy Land were so immediately connected with our Lord's ministry as the Sea of Galilee and the country around it (Ryle, J. C., *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, Mark*, pp. 87, 88 (footnote)).

The Lord and the disciples arrived at the area known as Gadara. This is what Mark and Luke called it, Gadarenes; Matthew called it “the country of the Gergesenes” (but obviously it was the same place, both names used for it). The man who met them was

II. “A MAN WITH AN UNCLEAN SPIRIT” (Mark 5:2-10).

This man had an evil spirit, morally filthy, according to William Hendriksen. And he added, “They are evil in themselves and a source of harm and evil for those over whom they exercise control” (p. 188). There isn't anything about the Devil or his demons that is good. This is clear from what happened to Adam and Eve and the whole human race when they sinned against God, doing what the Devil wanted them to do instead of doing what the Lord had told them *not to do*.

Notice the picture that is given to us of this man who was under the control of this unclean evil spirit.

Notice where he lived – he had come out of the tombs. This was a place

where there were caves where people were buried. See verse 2 and 3a. What he would have done to the apostles, we do not know. But it was quite evidently seeing the Lord that caused the man with the unclean spirit to forget the apostles (which must have been to their great relief).

We don't know how this man became demon-possessed, but it was obvious because the man had become careless in some way about sin. He may have even been raised in a godly home, but decided to see what the world was like, and this is what happened to him. He was Example #1 of the way not to go.

Then notice that men had tried to control him with chains and some other kind of fetters. But he was uncontrollable. Every possible method had been used to change him, probably even counseling, but nothing worked.

So humanly speaking there was no hope for him. All human efforts had failed. He was powerful, even more powerful than groups of men who had tried to control him. The Devil is wiser than we are, and he is stronger than we are. How many people there have been who have compromised with sin, thinking that they could get out of it when they chose to get out. The picture gets darker and more and more hopeless the farther you read about this man with the unclean spirit.

But then notice verse 5. Had all of his sin brought him happiness? Absolutely not! Notice how Mark described this man with the unclean spirit. He used words to show his totally hopeless condition: "always, night and day" it was the same life style – "crying, cutting himself with stones." No person is ever happier by going the way of sin, by following the lusts of his or her heart. We see in this man the result of following the Devil's way. It was total misery and unhappiness.

It may be that a person has a lovely home, a good job, a loving wife, and good kids, but I was visiting in another city a few years ago and my host was showing me around town. As he took me through the area where there were the most luxurious homes, he told me that he knew that some of the most unhappy people in their city lived in those homes. It was not because it was wrong to have nice homes, but it was because they had no place for God or Christ in their lives. They were doing what they wanted to do, buying whatever they wanted to have, going wherever they wanted to go in all of the world, but they had everything but happiness and peace, with only hopelessness as far as the future was concerned.

Here the Holy Spirit gave us a picture of the life and the destiny of those who forget God, or who have succeeded in convincing themselves that they are able to handle things for themselves. They don't have time for God, or for Christ, or the Bible, or the Church. We meet people every day who fall into this category. People are slaves to their own sins.

But let us read on because there are a couple of surprises in what Mark had to tell us about this man with the unclean spirit.

The first surprise is in verse 6, and it is introduced by the words, "But when he saw Jesus afar off." Now there is enough in the Bible to tell us that Jesus looked just like any other Jew in Israel at that time. That is the reason that most people did not believe that He could possibly be God. But the unclean spirit, the demon, needed no one to point out to them which one was the Lord; He knew the Lord instantly. And the demon caused the man to run to the Lord, who then fell down before the Lord, and worshiped Him, meaning only that he felt overwhelmed, and subdued by the Lord. What men could not do with all of their chains and restraints, the Lord did instantly just by being there. And the demon speaking through the voice box of the man, began pleading with the Lord like the coward that he was, and asking that the Lord would not send him to hell. That is the place of "torment."

Let me say to any of you who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, don't boast about how you are going to handle yourself when you see the Lord (and you are going to see Him some day). You are going to do just what this demon did, and plead with the Lord for mercy – but then it will be too late.

But how did the Lord respond? He addressed the unclean spirit, and told him to come out of the man.

But then he asked the demon a question: "What is thy name?" What did the demon answer? "My name is Legion." I guess every demon has a name. But what is the meaning of his name? The demon himself told the Lord: "For we are many."

Now "legion" is a military term. It suggests that the demons are trained as an army. A Roman legion was made up of 6,000 men. And so instead of being indwelt and possessed by one demon, this man was under the control of an army of them. It is no wonder that all the men who had tried

to control this demon possessed man, were unsuccessful. And yet the very presence of the Son of God, subdued the whole army of demons who held this man under their control, making each day totally miserable and totally hopeless – *until the Lord Jesus appeared on the scene!*

In verse 10 they pled with the Lord not to send them out of the region, that is, not into hell which “is prepared for the Devil and his angels,” or demons (see Matt. 24:41).

III. THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS (Mark 5:11-20).

This part of the text can be divided into three parts.

A. The request of the demons (Mark 5:11-13).

There is much about this that is difficult for us to understand. Evidently the demons had been charged by the Devil to enter into the bodies of human beings. But knowing that the Lord would not allow that, they asked that they might enter into the pigs who were a short distance away. It was against the Mosaic Law that Jews would even touch a pig. This was a business carried on, therefore, contrary to the Law. The swine entered the pigs, not knowing what they would do. But the two thousand of them, immediately having the demons enter them, ran down into the sea of Galilee, and were drowned.

B. Those who fed the swine (pigs) (Mark 5:14-17).

They went into the city and the surrounding countryside, and brought the Jews out to see what had taken place. They saw Jesus, and the formerly demon-possessed man completely changed, no longer a threat to the community. But what did they do? They pled with the Lord to leave them. They were afraid of all that had happened. But instead of turning to the Lord, recognizing that a great miracle had been performed, and seeking to learn more from Him, “they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts” (v. 17).

The natural man is not prepared to receive the things of the Spirit of God. No one comes to the Lord unless he is drawn to Christ by the Holy Spirit.

C. The demoniac who had been delivered (Mark 5:18-20).

When the Lord and the disciples prepared to leave, the former demoniac wanted to go with them. But the Lord did not permit him to go with them. Instead He

told the man to go home and to tell his friends about the great things that the Lord had done for him, and how the Lord had had compassion upon him. This meant that the man was to understand the grace of God, and that he was to glorify the Lord, not himself in any way, for the great work that the Lord had done for him. The fact that the Lord spoke of the “great things” (pl.) that the Lord had done for him, seems to indicate that the Lord had not only delivered the man out of the power of the demons, but that he had saved him from his sins, the very things that had caused him to be demon-possessed in the first place.

People marveled as he traveled throughout Decapolis telling his story, but we are not told if any who heard were saved.

Concl: We today are in a position very much like the people who came out of the city and from the surrounding area to see firsthand what had taken place with the demon- possessed man. Those of us, while we have never seen anything like this in our day, nevertheless believe the whole story because we know that there is nothing too hard for the Lord. We can see the effects of the man’s sin. We are not surprised that men could not even control him, to say nothing about changing him. But can we understand all of that, and yet not come to Christ. The demons knew that they were facing the eternal judgment of God. And while they could not avoid it, yet they prayed the only prayer that they could pray to the Son of God, and that was that they could have a little more time before divine judgment was exercised upon them.

Only God can impress upon our hearts the need to flee from the wrath to come. If we are trusting Christ for our salvation, we are safe and ready for the Lord to come at any time. If we are not trusting Christ, we need to know that we are in danger of eternal judgment, and that judgment will be ours instead of the forgiveness of our sins and the gift of eternal life “through Jesus Christ our Lord.”