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## **Jesus Drives Out a Legion of Demons**

**Mark 5: 1-20**

Two spectacular miracles, back to back.

I said last time... a few months ago... that the stilling of the storm is the most visually spectacular miracle Jesus ever did.

How amazing is it that, immediately after that, he does his most spectacular exorcism?! For that is exactly what this account reveals. There is no other account of an exorcism that even comes close to this one. For the magnitude of power it reveals, and the stunning transformation in one man, and the effect on the pigs – 2000 of them perishing in one moment; and the effect on the population... there is no other power encounter with a demonized human being that even comes close.

Oftentimes a preacher, as he is beginning a sermon, has to do something to capture the attention of his congregation. My task this time is to get out of the way and let the text do its work.

And what is that work? Well, remember that the whole theme of the Gospel of Mark is declared at the beginning, in the first verse:

***Mark 1:1 The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.***

This is also consummated at the end of the gospel by the centurion, who says right after Jesus' death on the cross:

***Mark 15:39 "Surely this man was the Son of God!"***

And in the spirit of the Gospel of John:

***John 20:31 these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.***

All four Gospels work together to give us all the evidence we need to make that confession... that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Son of God. To prove that, the Gospel writers give us stories of Jesus' amazing works. And these two accounts, back to back in Mark's Gospel, work together to stun us as readers

They show us the effortless power Jesus had – power that only Almighty God could have had; effortless power over a raging storm, making it perfectly peaceful with the words “Peace, be still.” And then, effortless power over a demon-possessed maniac who was the most wretched human being in history – effortless power over the perhaps 6000 demons that inhabited him, saying in the end simply “Go!” and they instantly obeyed him.

This is something only the power of God could do... and he can do it effortlessly. Although demons are vastly more powerful than humans, God is infinitely more powerful than they are. This is the second greatest eviction of demons in history... the greatest was before human history began, when God defeated the Devil and his angels – 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of all the angels in heaven – and evicted them instantly from their heavenly dwelling places, casting them down to earth. And God will once again conquer all the demons at the end of the world, gathering them and hurling them in the Lake of Fire. But this one exorcism in Mark 5 is the most powerful and most spectacular exorcism in the pages of the Bible. And it is done effortlessly by the simple word of Jesus.

Coupled with all the other evidence – the healing of paralyzed people and blind people and deaf people and even dead people – the feeding of huge crowds of people... all of this works together to put us in awe of Jesus and to bring us to faith in his for the salvation of our souls.

Sadly, however, we also will see in this account many who saw with their own eyes the direct results of this mighty miracle and responded in faithless fear, driving Jesus away. It seems that unreasoning unbelief is so strong, these people would rather have had the demon-possessed stark-raving homicidal maniac living in those tombs than have Jesus, peaceful Jesus, loving Jesus staying in their region.

The Gospels all make it clear that many people will see the evidence for Jesus and reject it... remaining lost in their transgressions and sins.

## I. A Demon-Possessed Maniac Terrorizes a Region

### A. Context

1. Jesus and his disciples had left the huge crowds to get away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee
2. Perhaps the disciples thought a time of restful retreat was in store for them... after all, the pace has been relentless, the needs of the crowds overpowering
3. Little did they know when they got into the boat what kind of drama awaited them... first the hurricane-level storm that came up on the sea of Galilee and threatened them with imminent destruction; and the astonishing stilling of the storm by Jesus' mere words
4. But now, landing in the region of the Gadarenes, they are confronted immediately by a demon-possessed maniac of terrifying power

***Mark 5:1-2 They went across the sea to the region of the Gerasenes.***

***<sup>2</sup>When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him.***

### B. The Region of the Gerasenes (or Gadarenes)

1. The little village near there was called "Gerasa", from which we get the term "Gerasenes"; but a larger city called "Gadara" was further away and also gave its name to that region

2. So Mark calls it the “region of the Gerasenes, after the little nearby village, as does Luke; but Matthew calls it the Gadarenes

### C. The Demon-Possessed Maniac Described

1. Verse 2 calls him a man with an evil spirit; Matthew says there were two men, but one of them is the dominant character and Mark and Luke just focus on him alone
2. The Greek says “unclean” spirit... a demon; demons are angels that rebelled along with Satan and were evicted from heaven in Revelation 12, as we’ve said; they are “unclean” because all their thoughts and works are pure evil
3. The encounter begins with Jesus and his disciples getting out of the boat after the stilling of the storm; the demon-possessed man sees them from a distance and comes from the tombs to the shoreline
4. The man is an absolute monster... his human personality has been swallowed alive by the demons inside him; this results in some stunning descriptions of his behavior and appearance

***Mark 5:3-5 This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him any more, not even with a chain. <sup>4</sup> For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. <sup>5</sup> Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.***

5. “Lived in the tombs”
  - a. No one in their right mind would live out in the tombs of dead people
  - b. They were often caves blocked up with large boulders; at best they offered rudimentary protection from the elements, but they were cold, dark, and hard
  - c. He is absolutely severed from all human society; he has a family as we will see at the end of the account, but his condition has cut him off from all interaction with them or with anyone else
6. “No one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain”

- a. The account gives us a sense of history with this man
- b. He had originally been bound with chains and even shackles... maybe fetters or manacles... large flat pieces of iron heated up and then pounded by a blacksmith into curved pieces to fit around the wrists and the ankles
- c. Iron chains would have been made of sizeable links to restrain a powerful man
- d. BUT this man had broken every chain put on him and shattered every shackle

***Mark 5:4 For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet.***

- e. Demons gave this man his supernatural power... remember this about a single angel:

***Matthew 28:2 an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it.***

So also demons have the same kind of physical strength

- f. Furthermore, the text says “No one could bind him anymore” and in verse 4

***Mark 5:4 No one was strong enough to subdue him.***

The Greek word means to “tame” as of a wild beast

This implies MANY EFFORTS to take this man down! Perhaps four or five grown men wrestling with him, one each grabbing an arm or a leg; someone trying to hold his head down; maybe even smashing him on the head with a club to knock him unconscious in order to put the chains and manacles on his hands and feet

But then, once the man was conscious again, he would roar and rip the chains apart

Finally the people in that region would have given up and run away from him... everyone there lived in terror of him

He was a raging bull, clearly aggressive, murderous, with power to match

#### 7. Lifestyle

a. Luke said that for a long time he had gone without clothes... he was naked, with no sense of shame, like an animal

b. Furthermore, he rarely slept... and was immersed in self-harm

***Mark 5:5 Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.***

Roaming restlessly like demons do, looking for rest, yearning for rest, and never finding it

Going about from tomb to tomb, from hill to hill, night and day

Crying out, as if for help, as if for deliverance... but who could ever set this poor man free??

Living like an animal... a ravenous murderous beast, a terrifying maniac

One commentator: "This man was the most wretched human being in the Bible."

## II. The Son of God Terrorizes the Demons

### A. The Encounter with Jesus Initiated

1. This demon-possessed monster sees people from a distance and comes to the shoreline
2. Then as he draws near, he sees that it is Jesus
3. I don't know how he knows who Jesus is or what Jesus has been doing to demons, driving them out everywhere he went, but he clearly DID know! He clearly DID see that it was Jesus, the Son of God

4. And what he did is simply astonishing:

***Mark 5:6 When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him.***

- a. Instead of running AWAY from Jesus, the demons run TO him!
- b. Why? Is it because they want an encounter with Jesus?
- c. They who are pure darkness, wanting to come into the radiant light of his holy presence? Wanting to COME TOWARD the LIGHT? WHY????
- d. Furthermore, they make the man fall on his knees before Jesus... a clear sign of submission; often even a sign of worship
- e. They know exactly who Jesus is, as we see in their statement:

***Mark 5:7 He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?"***

- f. This is my theory... the demons want nothing to do with Jesus, but they know his infinite and effortless power over them
- g. They also know this truth:

***Psalm 139:7-10 Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? <sup>8</sup> If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. <sup>9</sup> If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, <sup>10</sup> even there...***

***Amos 9:1-4 Not one will get away, none will escape. <sup>2</sup> Though they dig down to the depths of the grave, from there my hand will take them. Though they climb up to the heavens, from there I will bring them down. <sup>3</sup> Though they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, there I will hunt them down and seize them. Though they hide from me at the bottom of the sea, there I will command the serpent to bite them. <sup>4</sup> Though they are driven into exile by their enemies, there I will command the sword to slay them. I will fix my eyes upon them for evil and not for good.***

5. There is NOWHERE to run to, NOWHERE to hide!

6. In Mark 7, Jesus will drive the demon out instantly from the Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter without ever seeing the daughter... and without even a word; just in his mind, from a distance
7. Such is the power of Jesus over all demons
8. So, they run TOWARD Jesus, fall on their knees before him and beg a request

***Mark 5:7 He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?"***

- a. Demons are utterly unruly... they frequently make their human hosts scream or shriek
- b. This one is SHOUTING AT THE TOP OF HIS VOICE!!!
- c. It is clear that they are utterly terrified of Jesus

#### B. The Reason for the Terror

The demons literally say, **"What business have we with each other?"**

Also the demons call Jesus, "Son of the Most High God"

The central reason for the terror is the power of Almighty God and of his perfect and holy Son, Jesus

1. The demons have very accurate theology... and a total revulsion against what they know is true about God

***James 2:19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-- and shudder.***

2. Furthermore, the demons know their future

***Matthew 25:41 Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.***

***Revelation 12:12 woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.***



3. BUT this assault on the earthly kingdom of Satan is unprecedented; for all of redemptive history, the demons operated in secret, in the darkness, in the shadows of the spiritual realms, doing absolutely whatever they wanted in the world of human beings
4. Now Jesus is coming and invading their world, driving out demons, defeating Satan... and they want to know about TIMING

***Matthew 8:29 "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?"***

5. Furthermore, they are well aware that there is a pit of torture for demons into which demons can be thrown IMMEDIATELY...

***Luke 8:31 And they begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.***

"Abyss" = literally "bottomless"... but the demons in Matthew 8:29 speaks of TORTURE... as does Mark 5:7

***Mark 5:7 "Swear to God that you won't torture me!"***

That implies demonic AGONY... of which they are clearly terrified!!

And Peter speaks of this temporary place of restraint and torture for demons:

***2 Peter 2:4 For if God didn't spare the angels who sinned, but threw them down into Tartarus and delivered them to be kept in chains of darkness until judgment***

They are very aware that Jesus can instantly do this to them at any moment. This speaks to his overwhelming power over all demons

C. They Are Also Afraid of Losing Their Jurisdiction

***Mark 5:10 And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.***

Not only do they not want to lose their freedom, they want to stay right there in that area!

The Greek says they were “BEGGING HIM EARNESTLY” or “again and again” ... pleading with Jesus

So, this demon-possessed man is the greatest nightmare of that entire region... a murderous, powerful maniac who threatens them all

But it is also clear that the Son of the Most High God is the demon’s greatest nightmare... they are as terrified of Jesus as the region is terrified of this man

### III. The Son of God Drives Out the Legion

#### A. Jesus Commands Him to Leave... and He Will Soon

***Mark 5:8 Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you evil spirit!"***

#### B. Jesus Demands the Demons’ Name

***Mark 5:9 Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many."***

1. The demons have no desire to reveal anything about themselves
2. But Jesus gives them no choice... they must answer his questions and obey all his commands
3. He demands their name... just as angels have names, like Michael or Gabriel, so demons must have names as well
4. But here, they use a human term—LEGION, and the reason is “We are many”

#### C. Legion

1. A Legion was a division of the Roman Empire’s world-conquering army, a little bit larger than the size of a modern-day brigade... about 5000 to 6000 Roman soldiers
2. It shows that multiple demons can inhabit one human being
3. It also shows something of the demons’ personality and mind

4. Thought the demons might ordinarily have been BOASTFUL about their cumulative might, they would never have dreamed about boasting in front of Jesus
5. Picture the power of Jesus...

Spartacus: the climactic scene of the 1960 movie shows the slave army that has been rebelling against Rome taking the battle field against the Roman Legions... they stand in silent awe and terror as the well-trained Legions span out in high and perfect discipline to march toward them and slaughter them

I can picture Jesus walking alone toward them, no sword or any weapon in his hand... walking with confident stride right toward the Legion as they come toward him... then Jesus stops, and speaks and they all flee in abject terror!

That's what this would have looked like if we could have seen it with our eyes

#### D. The Demonic Request

***Mark 5:11-12 A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. <sup>12</sup> The demons begged Jesus, "Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them."***

This clearly shows this was a Gentile region... no Jews would have been tending a herd of pigs

The demons continue their begging, their pleading, their groveling to Jesus

#### E. A Single Word

Mark says "he gave them permission"

But my "red-letter edition" of the Gospel of Matthew has just one two-letter word in red in this whole account:

***Matthew 8:32 He said to them, "Go!"***

Just one word! And they instantly obey him!

Reminds me of Luther's "A Mighty Fortress"

The Prince of Darkness grim,  
 We tremble not for him;  
 His rage we can endure,  
 For lo! His doom is sure.  
*One little word shall fell him.*

So, Jesus gives that "one little word" in the Gospel of Matthew...  
 "Go!" and they GO!!!

That is the supreme power of Jesus Christ

And he draws out the name "Legion" so that we can see the  
 magnitude of the powerful demonic army he defeated all by  
 himself with that little word

So also what happened next

F. The Death of the Pigs

***Mark 5:13 He gave them permission, and the evil spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and were drowned.***

This is to show the scope of their defeat at the hands of Jesus... to  
 make it visible in the physical realm; but also the sheer  
 destructiveness of the demons...

"The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy..."

Lest you have too much sympathy for the owners of the pigs, all it  
 means is that they had to harvest the pigs a little earlier than  
 they may have intended... we are sure they fished all the dead  
 pigs out of the Sea of Galilee and sold the meat

Question:

WHY give permission to the demons? Why not send them to the pit?  
 Or to the Lake of Fire?

Answer, as in the Book of Job... God allows Satan and the demons to wreak havoc on earth that he, God, perfectly controls, with is "hedge of protection" so that Satan and the demons end up doing exactly what God permits them to do for his wise and loving purposes... they are all on a leash; they are all channeled by many "hedged of protection" and can only do what God wills for them to do.

When the time is right, he will collect them all in an instant and throw them in the Lake of Fire forever.

#### IV. Two Opposite Human Responses

##### A. The Report Spread in the Gadarenes... and the people reject Jesus

***Mark 5:14-17 Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. <sup>15</sup> When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. <sup>16</sup> Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man-- and told about the pigs as well. <sup>17</sup> Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.***

This is tragic.

Instead of falling before Jesus in wonder and awe and worship, and trusting in him for their salvation... they beg him to leave

I suppose it's the same terror that always comes on people when they understand the deity of Christ and don't yet understand his gentleness and love for them

Like when the disciples in the boat after the stilling of the storm are more afraid of Jesus than they had been of the storm

But we must understand how trust in the gentle saving purposes of Christ drives away faithless fear:

***Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you and learn from***

*me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

*Isaiah 40:11 He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.*

B. The Report Speak in the Decapolis, and the people marveled at Jesus

*Mark 5:18-20 As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. <sup>19</sup> Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." <sup>20</sup> So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.*

1. The formerly demon-possessed man is a different story altogether
2. I truly believe he is saved from his sins by faith in Christ
3. I think Jesus must have proclaimed the full gospel to him and he must have believed
4. Now here is this man, radically transformed
  - a. Sitting dressed and in his RIGHT MIND
  - b. And part of that is to see Jesus properly and love him and cherish him
  - c. And to see himself properly too... a vile sinner who needs a Savior

C. "I Never Want to Leave Your Side"

1. The man pleaded with Jesus to be with him
2. Jesus refused, but not out of any rejection
3. He had a plan for this man...

*Mark 5:19 "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you."*

4. Family evangelism... winning them over
5. They must have been the first ones who had tried to restrain him when the demons began entering him years ago
6. Now, they get to see the effect of God's mercy on him in Christ
7. And that account spread throughout that region

***Mark 5:20 So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.***

The Decapolis was a region of Ten Cities (that's what Decapolis means) made up of cities all around that area... in effect this man was sent to be a missionary to that whole region, beginning with his own family

Jesus would later go to the Decapolis to do some ministry there, and huge crowds were ready for him to heal them... quite likely the effect of this man's ministry

#### D. What a Testimony This Man Must Have Had!!

1. Imagine it beginning with the words "I used to be a demon-possessed naked maniac..."
2. And then "But I am no longer the man I used to be!!"
3. Telling everyone how much Jesus had done for him and how he had had mercy on him!!

#### V. Lessons

##### A. The Destructive Power of Satan and Demons

1. How demons have the power to destroy human personality
2. How many of the incarcerated serial killers and homicidal maniacs in our day around the world are almost certainly the effect of demonic power?
3. How demons come to steal and kill and destroy

B. More Importantly... How Terrified the Demons Are of Jesus...  
STILL; and How God Controls Them STILL

1. How Christ rules over them, since “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given” to him; how Ephesians 1 tells us that Jesus is “far above all rule and authority power and dominion”
2. How Christ rules them with a word and how terrified they are of him and how they are channeled by his wise plan... or they would do far more damage than they do

C. How Infinitely Great is the Power of Jesus!! How We Should Marvel At Him!!

D. Which Reaction Do You Have

1. The town, which asked Jesus to leave their region
2. Or the man, who begged Jesus that he might NEVER leave his side?

E. Imitate the Man in His Evangelism...

1. To his family
2. To his region