

Can The Demonized Be Delivered?

Mark 5:1-20

Introduction. 1). In his classic, *The Screwtape Letters*, the literary giant C.S. Lewis provides for us a glimpse into the thinking and strategies of Satan's demons. An older and wiser demon named Screwtape is going about the business of instructing and mentoring the younger Wormwood. Their conversations are fascinating. However, it is Lewis' preface to the book that I want us to give our attention, for here we discover words of unparalleled wisdom and insight. Lewis writes,

“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or magician with the same delight.”¹

2). Lewis is quite right in his assessment, and the human race has indeed been duped by both errors. The materialist of the “Age of Reason” and the Enlightenment were fooled into disbelieving in the existence of demons or any spirit beings. In contrast, New Ageism and Postmodern mysticism has been enamored with the magician, exhibiting indeed “an excessive and unhealthy interest” in angels, demons and spirits beyond this world. Beginning in 1969 with *Rosemary's Baby* and in 1973 with *The Exorcist*, Americans have been engaged in a peculiar fascination with the occult and the demonic. The evidence is irrefutable in the context of the popular culture if you stop and survey the continued offerings of Hollywood: (1974) *Devil Times Five*; (1976) *Hostage to the Devil*; (1976) *The Omen*; (1977) *The Possessed*; (1977) *Good Against Evil*; (1977) *Exorcist II: The Heretic*; (1982) *The Entity*; (1987) *My Demon Lover*; (1997) *The Devil's Advocate*; (1999) *The Blair Witch Project*; (2000) re-release of *The Exorcist*; (2000) *Bedazzled*; (2000) *The Little Vampire*. Add to this television series like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*; *Angel*; *Charmed* and *Touched By An Angel*, the hotly debated issue of **SRA** (Satanic Ritual Abuse), and our love affair with Halloween, and you have a significant element of our culture awash in spiritism and the occult.

3). Never has there been a time when we needed more a good dose of biblical balance and sanity, a God's view perspective on the issue. Mark 5 provides an excellent starting point, for here we see our Lord confronting and conquering the demonic. Yes, Jesus believed demons were real, and that should settle for all of us the question of their existence. Yet beyond this fact we see in our Lord's encounter with the Gerasenes demoniac, the power, mercy and authority of the Son of God who commands the demon with merely a word. In this text we will see the purpose of Satan to destroy, and the power of the Savior to deliver. A demonic man (5:1-20), a diseased woman, or a dead little girl (5:21-43), regardless of the situation, Jesus had the power to deliver and save.

I. Jesus Confronts The Demonic

5:1-5

Jesus has just calmed the sea, rebuking it and commanding it “Silence! Be still” (4:39). The sea immediately became calm, provoking the disciples to ask, “Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey Him!” They are about to get their answer, but it will come from an unlikely source, it will come from a demon.

¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: MacMillan, 1961, rev. 1982), 3.

- 1). **Satan Attempts To Defile The Image Of God In Man.** **5:1-2**
- Crossing now a calmed Sea of Galilee, Jesus and the 12 arrive in the area of the Gerasenes (*NKJV* has “Gadarenes”). Gerasenes was a region or district, and Gadara was (cf. Luke 8:26, 37) a major city in the area. South of the little town called Geresia there was a steep slope only 40 yards from the shore; two miles from there cavernous tombs.
 - As they **got out of the boat** Mark tells us “immediately” (*NKJV*) **a man with an unclean spirit** [a demon] **came out of the tombs and met Him** [Jesus]. Mark provides a vivid and elaborate report of the encounter, and unlike Matthew who mentions two demon-possessed men (Matt. 8:28ff), gives attention to only one, probably the more prominent and wild of the two.
 - Possessed by an **unclean spirit**, this man was defiled. A Jew would view the touching of a dead body as an act of great defilement, and here was a man living among the dead. Satan had taken him down, and was close to delivering a knockout blow.
- 2). **Satan Attempts To Deface The Image Of God In Man.** **5:3-4**
- The portrait Mark paints grows more tragic and pathetic. It is heart wrenching to think the devil could so deface one who was created in the very image of God. This man **came out of the tombs** because **he lived in the tombs**.
 - Further, **no one was able to restrain him any more-even with chain-because he often had been bound with shackles and chains, but had snapped off the chains and smashed the shackles. No one was strong enough to subdue him.** Deranged and utterly depraved in his behavior, this man was not a maniac but a demoniac. The people of his town had concluded at best he was mad, and they had driven him away, forcing him to live among the dead. They had attempted to bind him but with no success. Possessed by a supernatural power he exhibited supernatural strength snapping **the chains** like twigs and smashing **the shackles** like a tomato. Defiled and defaced, he descended into a life of filth, loneliness and terror. People feared him with his Herculean strength. It is shameful to see what Satan had conquered and captured.
- 3). **Satan Attempts To Destroy The Image Of God In Man.** **5:5**
- Jesus says in John 10:10, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy” (*NIV*), and in John 8:44, “[The devil] was a murderer from the beginning” (*NIV*). Peter adds in his first letter, “Your adversary the Devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Verse five reveals this was the plan the Devil had in mind for this poor demon-possessed soul. **And always** (it never stopped), **night and day** (there was no rest), **among the tombs and in the mountains** (there was no escape), **he was crying out and cutting himself with stones.** Howling like a wild animal, running here and there, he cut himself against the jagged rocks of the land. Some believe this is evidence of depraved pagan worship. Others see wild but futile attempts to drive out the demons. I believe what we see is a failed attempt to end his pain and suffering by suicide. Running about wild, naked and unkempt, he was by now a body of cuts and bruises, lacerations, scabs and infected tissues. Living in a constant state of

delirium and pain, he tried again and again to end his torment and unbearable existent in death. I have no doubt this was the agenda of the demons inside him. It is perhaps the case that the only thing that prevented his death was the last vestiges of the image of God in him and the common grace of God about him. Defiled and defaced, he was daily staring death and destruction in the face. A more miserable existence could hardly be imagined.

Transition. But, something happened that would turn things upside down and reverse the course of his despair. That something is a person. That someone is Jesus.

II. **Jesus Conquers The Destructive.**

5:6-14

Like a filthy, wounded animal, the demoniac has ranted and raged. The Jewish *Talmud* gave four signs of madness: 1) walking about at night; 2) spending the night on a grave; 3) tearing one's clothes; 4) destroying what one was given. This man met these criteria and more. All seems lost. His situation appears hopeless until...he meets **Jesus, Son of the Most High God.**

1). **Our Savior Is A Liberator.**

5:6-13

- Verse 6 picks up where verse 2 left off (verses 3-5 are something of a parenthesis filling in some important details). Seeing **Jesus from a distance**, this madman does something surprising. **He ran and knelt down** (“worshipped”, *NKJV*) **before Him**. He came before the Son of God because he must. Kneeling was not an act of worship but an acknowledgment of authority, the authority of the **Son of the Most High God**. He then **cried out with a loud voice, “What do You have to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg** (“implore”, *NIV*; *NKJV*) **You before God, don’t torment me!”** The demons reacted and responded this way because of what we read in verse 8, **For He** [Jesus] **had told him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!”**
- Here was a spiritual encounter and contest that is completely one-sided. **Legion** (v.9) vs. the Son of God. This is no contest! The demon possessed man must drop to his knees. He cannot help but confess **Jesus** for who He truly is. We must not miss the fact that 1) the demons always confess Christ accurately and truthfully (cf. Mark 1:24); 2) that their knowledge of who Jesus is is superior to the disciples, at least at this point; and 3) the confession of 5:7 answers the question of the disciples in 4:41. The demoniac’s statement is fearful and violent, taking the form of an adjuration. The demon knows who **Jesus** is, he knows his mission is at an end and his existence at stake. He goes on the defensive in a feeble attempt to defend himself. In essence he asks **Jesus**, “What do we have in common?” “What do you want with me?” (*NIV*) This demon knows “the gig is up,” that his time has run out. The title **Son of the Most High God** is nothing less than recognition of deity. Still as William Lane notes, “The full address is not a confession of Jesus’ dignity but a desperate attempt to gain control over him or to render him harmless, in accordance with the common assumption of the period that the use of the precise name of an adversary gave one mastery over him.”² It is fascinating to note that the demon actually appeals to God for

² William Lane, *Mark*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 183-84.

- protection (**I beg you before God**). His request will not receive a positive response. Jesus has commanded him to **come out**, and **come out** he will.
- Verses 9-10 contain or continue the dialogue between Jesus and the demon. The full impact of the control and horror this demon had on this man now becomes painfully evident. Jesus asks, **What is your name?** The demon responds, **My name is Legion...because we are many.** **Legion** is a military designation referencing a contingency of 6,000 Roman soldiers. This man was not possessed by one, but thousands of demons working in concert as one evil force. Captured and indwelt by this alien army, his natural mind, will and emotions had all but been destroyed. These soldiers of Satan had attacked and trampled his soul. His only hope was in an outside Liberator whose power and authority was greater than that which now lived within him. That Liberator had arrived in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
 - In something of a microcosm of the titanic battle that rages between Good and evil, God and Satan, Jesus gives us a preview of coming attractions for Satan and his demons. In verse 10 the demons, through the voice of the man, **kept begging Him [Jesus] not to send them out of the region.** The tormentor is now the tormented as he contemplates his destiny. Luke 8:31 is helpful here being more specific: “They begged Him not to banish them to the abyss,” a place of spiritual confinement in anticipation of final, eternal judgment.
 - The demons attempt to bargain, negotiate with Jesus, though their request is in the form of a plea. **A large herd of pigs was there, feeding on the hillside. The demons begged Him, “Send us to the pigs, so we may enter them.”** Jesus complied, **He gave them permission.** The man had met his Savior. The man had met his Liberator.

2). **Satan Is A Murderer.**

5:13

- Again, I am convinced that in verse 5 when the man is **cutting himself with stones**, the demons in him were driving him to kill himself by suicide. I believe that judgment is confirmed by what happens now in verse 13. **Then the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs, and the herd of about two thousand rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned there.** The will and volition of a human being made in God’s image is stronger than that of an animal, a brute beast. What **Legion** could not get the man to do was easily accomplished in **a large herd of pigs.** Being in the area of the Decapolis (Ten cities) with a predominant Gentile population explains why a large number of pigs (an animal viewed as unclean by Jewish persons) were present. The pigs could not withstand the will of Legion, and they were led to their death. Why did Jesus allow the demons to enter into this **herd of pigs?** The answer to that question is not certain, but William Lane provides a plausible explanation:
 “First, Jesus recognized the time of the ultimate vanquishment of the demons had not yet come; his encounter and triumph over the demonic does not yet put an end to Satan’s power. It is the pledge and the symbol of that definitive triumph, but the time when that triumph will be fully realized is yet deferred. It must await the appointment of God. Therefore, Jesus allows the demons to continue their destructive work, but not upon a

man. The second element is related to this: Jesus allowed the demons to enter the swine to indicate beyond question that their real purpose was the total destruction of their host.”³

To this we can add two further observations: 1) we should remember the demons, not Jesus destroyed (killed) the pigs and 2) the event demonstrates that God cares more for man whom He created in His image and recreates in salvation, than he does for animals which do not bear his image. Satan is a murderer of human beings, but Jesus is their Savior.

What are we to make of this unusual story up to this point, this course in “Demonology 101”? Several important theological truths stand out for our consideration.

- First, a demon, in fact many demons, can inhabit and take possession of a person. Demons are real and dangerous.
- Second, demons can make themselves known by speaking through a person and even taking control of their body.
- Third, demons are fallen angels and powerful spiritual being. They can exhibit enormous strength through a person under their control.
- Fourth, demons can inflict serious personal injury to the one possessed and to others, with the ultimate goal of that person’s death.
- Fifth, demons can move or be transferred from one host to another.
- Sixth, demons can resist leaving their host. They may even beg, out of self-interest, for their own well-being.
- Seventh, demons recognize and are subject to appropriate spiritual authority.
- Eighth, if demon spirits attempted to resist the incarnate Christ, we can be sure they will also attempt to resist us.
- Ninth, Jesus spoke directly to the demon even asking for his name. This may provide a pattern for us to follow.
- Finally, Jesus, unlike the exorcist of His day, who used elaborate rituals and incantations, simply spoke the word and gave the command and the demoniac was forced to obey. When it comes to our confronting the demonic, in the name of Jesus and by the power of His blood work on the cross, we can see the demonized delivered and the spiritually captive set free.⁴

III. Jesus Commissions The Delivered.

5:14-20

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come.” Never was this wonderful truth more real than in this man whom the Lord Jesus had delivered from a Legion of demons. The rest of this story is something of a mixed bag. You would think there would be joy and thanksgiving all around. Sadly, that is not the case. Still, we will focus our main attention on this “new man” in Christ, while also noting the unfortunate and disappointing response of the townspeople. Keep in mind that what Jesus did for this man in saving him from Satan and his sin He will do for you if you will simply come to Him in faith.

³ Ibid., 186.

⁴ Clinton Arnold, “Exorcism 101,” in *Christianity Today* (Sept. 3, 2001), 58.

1). Let Jesus Change You.

5:14-17

- When the demon-possessed pigs plunged into the sea and drowned, **The men who tended them ran off and reported it everywhere in the town and the countryside.** Not unexpectedly, **the people went to see what had happened.** I'm not sure that they were fully prepared for what they would find. **They came to Jesus** and then...they saw him, **the man who had been demon-possessed by the legion.** But, was this really him? Was this the same man no one could control who had terrorized their community for so long? Why he was **sitting there**, not running about wild and in a rage. And, he was **dressed**, not half-naked in ragged, dirty clothes. Further, and even more wonderful, he was **in his right mind.** He knew who he was and who they were. He sits clothed, calm, and a new creature because of what Jesus had done for him.
- We are informed that **the eyewitnesses described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and [told] about the pigs.** There can be little doubt that this conversation was lively and captivating. The herdsmen recounted again what they had witnessed with their own eyes. This man that they doubtless knew as a madman was now sitting before them dressed, and in control of all his faculties. Perhaps he was smiling, rejoicing in his salvation and deliverance. Perhaps with gratitude and devotion his eyes were fixed on Jesus. However, these men had something else on their mind as well: they **[told] about the pigs. Then they began to beg Him to leave their region.** What a surprising reaction. What a disappointing response. Now to be fair we should note the last phrase in verse 15, **and they were afraid.** A combination of commercial concern (we just lost 2,000 pigs and the income they represent) and fear of the One who can control and cast out demons by a word was more than they could handle. What else can this man named Jesus do? What demands might He make of the rest of us? If he can change and transform a demoniac what might He do with us? With me? Pathetically, they decide it would be best all around if Jesus left. They asked **Him to leave.**

“Rabbi, be gone! Thy powers
Bring loss to us and ours.
Our ways are not as Thine.
Thou lovest men, we—wine.
Oh, get you hence, Omnipotence,
And take this fool of Thine!
His soul? What care we for his soul?
What good to us that Thou hast made him whole,
Since we have lost our swine?⁵
- The townspeople may have not cared for the demoniac's soul, but the Son of God did. Jesus changed him, made him a new man. Heaven was glad, but his fellow humans only wanted him gone. What a sad commentary on the wickedness and self-centeredness of the human heart void of the grace and goodness of God.

⁵ Quoted in R. Kent Hughes, *Mark*, vol. 1 (Westchester: Crossway, 1989), 122.

2). Let Jesus Command You.

5:18-19

- Jesus does not stay where He is not wanted. He prepares to move on **getting in the boat**. Whether out of ignorance, fear or greed, the people in the region of Gerasenes had decided that they had had enough of this miracle worker. It was time for Him to ship out and get out. To my knowledge, Jesus never visited this region again.
- However, there was one man who felt all together different. It was the one who had been demon-possessed. He had met Jesus and his life had been wonderfully transformed. No one had ever showed him such love and compassion. Never had he known such mercy and kindness. The townspeople may be begging Him to leave, but this man **kept begging Him to be with him**. The tense of the verb denotes continuous action. He again and again begged, pleaded with Jesus. If Jesus would not stay fine. “Then let me go with you. I’ve never met anyone like you. No one ever did, could ever do, what you did for me. I love you. I want to be with you. Where does not matter, as long as I am in your presence, walking by your side.” No one could doubt the change Jesus had brought about in his life. No one could question his love, devotion and commitment to the Savior.
- Somewhat surprisingly, Jesus denied his request. **But He would not let him; instead He told him, “Go back home to your own people, and report (“tell,” NIV, NKJV) to them how much the Lord has done for you and how He has had mercy on you.** In gratitude this man wanted to follow Jesus. Our Lord, however, had an evangelistic assignment. Go and tell others what I, **the Lord**, have done for you. Start in your **home** and work from there. Go to your family and friends and share with them all that **the Lord has done for you**. Tell them of his **mercy**. Be my witness, give your testimony. You were lost but now you are saved. You once belonged to Satan but now you belong to the Son of God. The people of Gerasenes might not want Jesus, but Jesus still wanted them. He would not leave them without a witness. He commissioned the former demoniac: stay here and be my witness. **Tell them how much the Lord has done for you.**

3). Let Jesus Consume You .

5:20

Unlike so many followers of Jesus this man did not argue, complain or refuse his assignment from his Master. HE accepted his “marching orders” without question. **He went out and began to proclaim in the Decapolis** (lit. “Ten cities”) **how much Jesus had done for him**. And the response for those who heard? **They were all amazed**. It is easy to imagine scene after scene as people who had only known **Legion** now met this new man in Christ. I imagine he stopped friend and stranger alike to tell them **how much Jesus had done for him**. All the while, I am convinced, he was on his way to obeying the words of Jesus in verse 19: **go back home**. Using a little sanctified imagination, one can sense the excitement building within his heart as he got closer and closer to home. Perhaps he was a husband with a wife and a father with children. How long had it been since he saw them, kissed the lips of his wife and held his children in his arms. Is it possible they had been praying for him all this time? “Lord, rescue the soul of my husband.” “Dear God, please help my daddy and bring him back home.”

Finally, after walking for some time this man sees a home he has not seen for a long time. Suddenly a little boy turns from playing in the dirt and sees his daddy. At the

same moment running out the front door is his precious little girl. She stops in her tracks when she sees him, and with the excitement only a daughter can have for her daddy she begins to scream to the top of her lungs, “Mommy, Mommy! It’s Daddy, it’s Daddy! He’s come home! He’s come home!” No longer walking, the man is now in a sprint, gathering in his arms his little boy and little girl who had run to him. Then, there in the doorway, stood a lady, his wife. With tears streaming down her face and the sweet smile of an angel, she is speechless, all caught up in the joy of the moment. Now they are all embracing and crying tears of joy. How could this be? What happened? Wiping the tears from his eyes, the man looks at his wife and children and begins, “I met a man named Jesus. He is **the Son of the Most High God**. Let me tell you all that He has done for me.” I imagine this was a wonderful story told many, many times. After all, those who are forgiven much, always love much (Luke 7:47).