

THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL STORIES AND SIGNS

JESUS THE MIRACLE WORKER

The Gadarene Demoniac

Matthew 8:28-34, Mark 5:1-20, Luke 8:26-39

Paul wrote in ***Ephesians 6:12 (ESV)***¹² *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.* Today, we will discuss ‘Satan’s helpers.’ Satan has an army of demonic creatures who assist him in his attacks against us. Satan and his cronies are a strong enemy and we need the power of God to stand against them.

While the Bible does not state whether a Christian can be possessed by a demon, related biblical truths make it abundantly clear that Christians cannot be demon possessed. There is a distinct difference between being possessed by a demon and being oppressed or influenced by a demon. Demon possession involves a demon having complete control over the thoughts and actions of a person like we will study in our focal passage today. Christians are told to resist the devil: ***James 4:7 (ESV)***⁷ *Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

True believers can genuinely be oppressed by a demon. Paul said that he was – it came in the form of what he called *a thorn in the flesh*. And he described this thorn as being a *messenger of Satan*. In the midst of being attacked by this *messenger of Satan*, Jesus said to Paul in ***2 Corinthians 12:9 (ESV)***⁹ *But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” ...*

The subject of demons and demon possession has always seemed somewhat remote to ‘sophisticated’ Americans. Nevertheless, even in our times, there is an intense interest in the supernatural and the occult. Ouija boards are found in many American homes. Horoscopes and astrological predictions are found in most major newspapers. Bible-believing Christians should accept the fact of demons and their activity. ***James 2:19 (ESV)***¹⁹ *You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!* The time period that Jesus walked on earth was a time of great demon activity. As we move closer to the final days and the return of Christ for His Bride, the church, demons and demonic activity are likely to become much more prevalent. ***1 Timothy 4:1 (ESV)***¹ *Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,*

Matthew, Mark, and Luke give accounts of a specific miracle showing that Jesus is Lord of all – even the world of evil spirits.

Before we read the miracle of the demoniac, let's look at the event that occurred just prior. It was a miracle which the Lord of All performed over the storms – picturing how He protects us in the storms of life. This was not the storm where Jesus walked to them on the water. This is the storm where Jesus slept in their boat. There was no need to fear – the Lord was with them. During the storm, we read in **Mark 4:38-40 (ESV)** ³⁸ *But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?”* ³⁹ *And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.* ⁴⁰ *He said to them, “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?”* Next, they came ashore to a cemetery of all places.

Jesus cared about the demoniac who was isolated from society.

Read Mark 5:1-8 (ESV) ¹ *They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes.* ² *And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit.* ³ *He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain,* ⁴ *for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him.* ⁵ *Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones.* ⁶ *And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him.* ⁷ *And crying out with a loud voice, he said, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.”* ⁸ *For he was saying to him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!”*

They landed in the country of the Gerasenes – probably occupied by Gentiles or Jews who did not adhere to the law of Moses . In Matthew's account the place name is the country of the Gadarenes. The use of two different names has called some to quote this as a biblical contradiction. Gersa was a tiny village on the east side of the Sea of Galilee near steep cliffs and cave tombs. Gadara was larger city about 33 miles away. It is easy to understand the different name usage when you think of Little Rock Air Force Base actually being located in Jacksonville. The Bible does not have any contradictions.

In comparing the accounts, we find that Mark and Luke mention only one man among the tombs. Matthew mentions two demon possessed men. **Matthew 8:28 (ESV)** ²⁸ *And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way.*

This is not a contradiction. Jesus would cast out the demons in both men leaving them free to make their own life choices. Mark and Luke focused on the one who turned to Jesus. Look at the two thieves on the cross, two men were given the same opportunity to choose Christ – one did and one did not. Being free of demons, does not necessarily denote coming to Christ.

Scripture does not reveal how Satan's demons entered these men and took control. Demons can get a foothold in the lives of people who cultivate sinful practices. Never underestimate the destructive power of Satan.

The demons' immediate recognition of Jesus is a proof text for **James 2:19** which I mentioned earlier. And their recognition is also a reminder that there is more to eternal salvation than just "believing in God" even demons believe in God! A crucial step in making Jesus Lord of your life is acknowledging there is a difference between believing in the reality of God and true faith in Jesus.

Jesus confronted the evil spirits in control of the demoniac.

Read Mark 5:9-17 (ESV) ⁹ And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many." ¹⁰ And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. ¹¹ Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, ¹² and they begged him, saying, "Send us to the pigs; let us enter them." ¹³ So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea. ¹⁴ The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. ¹⁵ And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. ¹⁶ And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. ¹⁷ And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region.

The demons spoke through the man calling themselves Legion. A legion was a regiment in the Roman army. At the time of Christ it consisted of 6,000 men. You may not have demons like this man but what is it that controls you? Drugs? Alcoholism? Money? What is the thing that drives you? Your career? Your education? Your family? Your past? What possesses you? This man who was living with the dead had a legion of Satan's demons that possessed him.

Even the demons in the man recognized the authority of Jesus because they begged him not to send them out of the country. The demons' request is strange; perhaps demons dread being disembodied completely. Scripture does not explain why the Lord complied but he did permit the demons to enter a herd of swine feeding nearby upon leaving the body of the man. The alarmed creatures rushed violently down a steep hill into the sea and were drowned. We need not attempt to explain this strange phenomenon, but we can reflect on the magnitude of evil one man could hold – more evil spirits than 2,000 hogs.

Keep in mind, the Lord Jesus did not cause these pigs to run headlong into the sea, He permitted it, and there's a big difference. It was Satan's destructive power that destroyed those pigs. Jesus permitted them to go into the swine, He did not force them over the cliff and into the water.

I can just hear the animal rights activists: “Oh, those poor pigs never had a chance.” Pigs were unclean to the Jewish people. They were not allowed to eat pork or even breed pigs. So, it would appear the owners were Gentiles unless, of course, the Jews had developed some elaborate scheme to get around the law as they often did. Since about 2,000 pigs rushed into the sea, it was big business for someone. Jesus had exhibited His power over the spirit world and the people of the region pleaded with Him to leave. They were more concerned with their possessions than eternal life. This is a sad commentary on the reaction of people to Jesus. But, their reaction helps Christians today not to be discouraged because not all who see the display of Jesus’ power will acknowledge Him as Lord of All. But, even one soul is important to Jesus. A man who had been running naked through a place where the dead were buried now sat at Jesus’ feet, dressed and in his right mind. Jesus did not stop with this one man that we only know as Legion; He is still waiting with arms open wide to heal all who come to Him!

Jesus called the man to testify to God’s goodness toward Him.

Read Mark 5:18-20 (ESV) ¹⁸ *As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him.* ¹⁹ *And he did not permit him but said to him, “Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.”* ²⁰ *And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.*

The Life Application Bible gives a good answer as to why Jesus told this man to tell His friends about the miraculous healing. “Most of the time, Jesus urged those he healed to keep quiet. Why the difference? (1) The demon-possessed man had been alone and unable to speak. Telling others what Jesus did for him would prove that he was healed. (2) This was mainly a Gentile and pagan area, so Jesus was not expecting great crowds to follow Him or religious leaders to hinder Him. (3) By sending the man away with this good news, Jesus was expanding His ministry to people who were not Jews.”

It is quite possible that Kim Jong Un, the current leader of North Korea, is a demon-possessed man. However, we do NOT need to fear – even a demon-possessed man. **Psalm 118:6 (ESV)** ⁶ *The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?*

From this lesson, we reminded that Jesus our Savior – our King of Glory is Lord of All. **2 Chronicles 7:14 (ESV)** ¹⁴ *if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*