

Mark 5:1-13 Jesus Cleanses the Gadarene Demoniac

The purpose of the healing of the demoniac, as with the stilling of the storm on the lake, is not simply to leave readers awestruck at Jesus' power, however, but to prompt them to consider, as the disciples did "what kind of man is this?" that all of these physical and spiritual forces obey Him. And also to consider that it is also our duty to report " **‘how much the Lord has done for [us] , and how He has had mercy on [us]’** " (Mark 5:19), so that God gets the glory.

Mark 5:1 They came to the other side of the sea, into the region of the Gerasenes.

Mark 5 situates the event "opposite Galilee" (Luke 8:26), specifically "the region of the Gerasenes". This eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee belonged to the Decapolis, a confederation of 10 largely Gentile cities founded on Hellenistic culture and under Roman control. Archaeology at Hippos (Sussita), Gadara (Umm Qeis), and nearby Kursi confirms a predominantly non-Jewish population: theaters, pagan temples, Greco-Roman inscriptions, and abundant pig bones in refuse layers all date to the first century. Jewish Law vs. Mere Presence--Leviticus 11:7–8 and Deuteronomy 14:8 forbid Israel to eat or even touch the carcass of swine. Some Jews did live in the Decapolis .If Jews owned or profited from these herds, they were violating Torah, a fact that would underscore the compromise, and moral bankruptcy of the region, which was it's reputation.

2 When He got out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him.

From a Jewish religious perspective, there's a lot of uncleanness going on here. In this region there lived a man who, according to Mark, had been commandeered by "an unclean spirit" (v. 2). His banishment to the tombs rendered him unclean according to OT law, where contact with the dead defiled one for seven days. According to Num 19:11–14, anyone who failed to purify himself from the pollution of tombs "must be cut off from Israel." If the swineherds were supplying the Roman legions with pork, then the raising of unclean food for the detested Roman occupation was doubly offensive. Thus Jesus meets a man with an unclean spirit living among unclean tombs surrounded by people employed in unclean occupations, all in unclean Gentile territory.

3 He lived among the tombs; Both the fact that the man was demon-possessed, and that he lived among the tombs, a place of uncleanness, emphasizes the desperate state that the man was in, and also Jesus' willingness to minister to him in such a spiritually awful situation.

We read that **no-one was able to bind him, not even with a chain, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces, and no-one was strong enough to subdue him.** The supernatural strength of the man is emphasized by his ability to break chains and shackles, and his strength, that was greater than other men. We see something similar in Acts 19:16 when a group of Jewish exorcists attempted to exorcise a demon out of a man without having the power of Jesus, **16 And the man in whom was the evil spirit, pounced on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.**

5 Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and cutting himself with stones.--During the night and the day, he would be seen among the tombs or on the mountains, wildly shrieking, cutting his flesh with sharp stones, attempting to destroy himself and bring to an end the torment of an unbearable existence. In the description of what the demon is making the man do, we see a common theme of demon possession—that there is an extreme hatred of mankind, and of those that they possess in particular, and that their purpose is to distort and destroy the divine likeness that God put within man, punishing people for reminding the demons of the likeness of God.

6 Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him

The man had seen Jesus from a distance, and running he fell upon his knees before Jesus. We look at this, and see the man running up to Jesus, and falling on his knees before Him, and think, "oh, the man wants to be freed from the demons", he's bowing before Jesus, but actually the demon

has full control over the man at this point, and the first thing to notice is that the demon is interfering with Jesus' mission in the area.

7 and shouting with a loud voice, he said, "What business do You have with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? ? The demoniac uttered an adjuration that was violent and fierce. Its purpose is entirely defensive; knowing who Jesus was, the unclean spirit raises its voice to defend itself against him, in an attempt at intimidation. Intimidation and deception are the two chief weapons of these creatures, when it comes to how they attempt to deal with Children of God. Notice the complete rejection by the demon of any identity with God. The first phrase in this address to Jesus could be rendered **"What have I and you in common?"** or **"Why do you interfere with me?"**—**"what do you want with me?"** [lit. **"What [is it] to me and you?"**], The demon is basically saying to Jesus—you stay on your side of the supernatural realm, and don't come any closer! It's attempting to get control of the situation, here.

I implore You by God, do not torment me!"

It sounds strange to our ears to hear the demon asking this favor "By God", his enemy. The only dealings that God has with the demons is to oppose and condemn them, which is why James demonstrates that belief in God without actual faith in Him, evidenced by good works isn't salvation. **19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. 20 But are you willing to acknowledge, you foolish person, that faith without works is useless.** The demons believe in God, but they have betrayed their duty to serve Him, and instead they oppose Him.

8 For He had already been saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!"

The demon senses that he is to be punished and tries to invoke God's protection, but the adjuration is without force, for Jesus is the Son of God. In the act of kneeling, the defensive use of the divine name and the violent invocation of God to strengthen the plea that Jesus would not torment him, there is the full recognition of Jesus' superior power on the part of the demon. The power to prevail over the demonic resides within Jesus himself. He speaks and the demons are expelled; his word is deed. **The Word of God is Yea and Amen**—when He says it, it is done.

9 And He was asking him, "What is your name?" And he said to Him, "My name is Legion, for we are many." 10 And he begged Him earnestly not to send them out of the region.

Jesus orders the demon to tell Him his name. And, then the demon plays his next card of deceit. The demon has been saying "I", singular, throughout this conversation. There is clearly a chief demon amongst the many demons, who is acting as a spokesperson. Yet, he avoids giving Jesus his name by mentioning that there are many demons inside the man, sidestepping the question. And, so when asked who he is, the demon identifies himself as "Legion, for we are many." The demons are desiring to withhold their true names from Jesus in a desperate attempt to thwart his power. It is also possible that the name may have been selected to invoke the fear of a powerful name. The Greek term "Legion" is a military term borrowed from Latin. A legio designated the largest troop-unit in the Roman army, some 5,600 soldiers. To the Jews, this was a word that struck fear into them—legions conquered nations, like Israel. Roman legions destroyed whole cities at a time. Roman legions would later burn the temple in 70 AD. It is a further clue that the Decapolis is dominated by demonic forces of darkness hostile to the arrival of Jesus.

10 And he begged Him earnestly not to send them out of the region.

The plea of the demons not to be sent from the area is similar to the kind of territoriality that is exhibited within the spiritual realm. Demons, and fallen angels can sometimes have geographically located assignments, and be tied by their duties to an area.

11 Now there was a large herd of pigs feeding nearby on the mountain.

The demons play their last card. Seeing the herd of pigs feeding on the nearby mountain, they ask Jesus to send them into the pigs instead of sending them into the chaotic prison of the abyss.

12 And the demons begged Him, saying, “Send us into the pigs so that we may enter them.”

The demons beg Jesus to send them into the herd of pigs, so that they may enter them. Demons long to possess a body, just as the fallen angels in Jude seem to have tried to do in the past, and this demon is trying to maintain his position in the man in this current encounter. Apparently, it is painful for the demons to be cast out, as we see them crying out when this occurs in several places in the gospels. And this is a much better alternative than the abyss, the bottomless pit.

13 Jesus gave them permission. And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the pigs; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand of them; and they were drowned in the sea.

Once Jesus gave them permission, saying “Go”, **“the evil spirits came out and went into the pigs”**. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.” The unclean spirits sought out unclean pigs. Like seeks out like, corruption seeks out, and is drawn to corruption. Pigs are unclean animals, so the destruction of the pigs out of Israel, where they probably shouldn’t have been in the first place means that the demons were, without meaning to, being forced to do the Will of God in getting rid of the pigs. The land was more pure without the pigs, and a source of temptation for any Jewish people there to raise pigs in order to feed the hungry gentiles, especially the Romans, and make some money, was removed.

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The pigs were driven by the demons down the steep bank into the sea, about 2,000 of them. They were scattered into the abyss of the sea—so Jesus used their own request against them. The demons y had been harming the man for years, torturing him, causing him to scream day and night, making him cut himself, isolating him among the dead, stripping him of his name, his clothing, and his sanity, driving him more and more insane—whatever humanity was left in him was being devoured by the demons. But, the pigs had no such humanity to lose, and no such endurance to resist the demons. The moment that they were possessed, they instantly ran as fast as their legs could carry them toward the quickest death that they could find, unable to tolerate the presence of the demons. They did what part of the man was trying to do all those years, which is why he was bound with chains, and why he was cutting himself in self-loathing. 2,000 pigs dying instantly in this way wasn’t collateral damage of Jesus’ miracle, it was a demonstration to anyone who wanted to understand of Jesus’ power. The pigs couldn’t stand for a moment what this man had endured for years. Everyone knew this possessed man. Everyone would know what happened to him, and to the pigs. It was a visual sermon, an object lesson for all of the people in the area. It let everyone know what these demons were like, and what they wanted. It showed the people of Gadara what had been happening to their neighbor. They chained and abandoned him, but Jesus had set him free spiritually. He still had some humanity left, and Jesus reached out for that, and cleansed Him.