

Author: Patrick J Griffiths ©
 Date: August 31, 2008
 Title: **Jesus Christ, Lord over Demons**
 Text: Mark 5:1-20 (Gospel Parallels – Matt. 8:28-34; Luke 8:26-39)

Introduction:

In keeping with Mark's dynamic and fast-paced style of writing, he clips off events in the life of Christ like ticker tape on a telegraphic ticker.

This event still falls within the long day that began in verse 3:20. Jesus and His disciples have just endured the events of 4:35-41. Now they are met by a man possessed with a legion of demons.

Notice as well how the event fits into the flow of the passage with the healing of the little girl in verses 21-24, 35-43 and the healing of the certain woman with the issue of blood, verses 25-34.

Demon possession -- the very thought can make our skin crawl and hair stand on end. In America, we have had little visible manifestations of demonic activity, yet it is real and surprisingly prevalent in 21st century America and becoming more so all the time.

Have you ever read accounts in the newspaper or on the news channel and wondered in utter amazement how anyone could commit such abominable acts or hideous crimes? Well, the impetus for such acts is depravity, but the exploitation and flagrancy of the act could be directly attributed to demonic possession.

This passage is not to alarm us into a false sense of vulnerability, nor is it to make us believe every deviant act is directly attributed to demonic activity. However, we must be made aware of our adversary, and there is no better way to teach this truth than from this passage.

THE BIG PICTURE

Beginning of THE BUSY DAY (3:20-5:20)

- The characteristics of God's family (3:31-35)
 Teaching by Parables
- The clarifying of His kingdom (4:1-34)
 Teaching by Miracles (4:35-5:43)

"This is the second story in a sequence of four stories about healing."

[The King's authority over all things created]

- Jesus will "heal" the storm (4:35-41)
- **Jesus will "heal" the demoniac (5:1-20)**
- Jesus will "heal" the daughter of Jairus (5:21-24, 35-43)
- Jesus will "heal" the woman bleeding for 12 years (5:25-34)

Summary Statement: (6:1-6)

[The King's hometown rejects Him]

Its Eternal Value:

Jesus is more than a match for any storm confronting us in life and in death.

The Present Danger:

In our unbelief we fail to believe that Jesus can calm the internal storms that would rob us of our rest in Him. There is a tendency to deny the power of darkness and to believe that deliverance is simply an exercising of one's will.

The Problem:

We indirectly believe the lie that the world, the flesh, and the devil tell us. We believe evil is stronger than good and that good, the Christian, is an inept, impotent, sniffling coward. Friend, Jesus is Lord over all things created, and that includes everything visible and invisible.

The Storyline:

Jesus Christ is the promised King. He stands before His people showing Himself mighty to save. He can calm the storms of life whether they are external or internal to our rest. He is everything we could imagine, in fact, He is more than we could imagine or think.

The authority of Christ has been clearly established up to and including our present passage. There is nothing in the created order that falls outside of that absolute authority. Demons, as horrible and supernatural as they are, must submit to the authority of Christ. Christ can and does deliver those under the power of sin. The result of that deliverance is the desire to be with and speak highly of Jesus Christ.

All of creation submits to the authority of Christ...except man. We have a free will and exercise that will in rebellion before God.

Questions:

1. How do we identify demonic activity today in our culture?
2. Is every case of addiction demonic in origin?
3. Can believers be demonically possessed?
4. Can believers be attacked?
5. How can believers engage in spiritual warfare?
6. In what area have you lost hope, and do you believe that God can deliver you from it and in it?

The Holy Spirit is calling to us from this passage to consider three ideas.

To Know: The Holy Spirit desires for us to know that God is more powerful than anything created and He has power over the demonic realm.

To Choose: The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose Jesus as our King and to reject the authority of the devil.

To Feel: The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of resting in the power and glory of Jesus Christ.

OBSERVATION:

The Immediate Context

Remember, the ministry of Jesus has experienced a dichotomy of reception among the people. The multitude flocked to Him (1:35-45; 3:7-12 (for whatever reason)) and the religious leaders hated Him (2:1-3:35). Jesus has explained why there is such a striking contrast in the receiving of His ministry by the parable of the soils. He has taught some initial truth concerning the kingdom of God in 4:25-34. There are the events of 4:35-41 and now the contrasting, but parallel picture of 5:1-20.

“The point for our purposes is clear: it wasn’t Jewish land, and the people weren’t Jews.” (N.T. Wright, *Mark for Everyone*, 55).

Consistent with the bigger picture are the authority of Jesus Christ and the response of the created order to that authority.

I must confess my perplexity over this passage and perhaps much of the New Testament. I know what it says. By faith I believe all of it, but I struggle with the daily outworking of it. This passage shows our Lord to be mighty in His power to deliver the demon possessed from their bondage. There is nothing in this passage that speaks of the possessed speaking his desire or will. It is the demon who speaks. Jesus delivers this person in the absence of him exercising His will. Can God do this? From the text I would answer yes. I see this in the Scriptures, where God’s power delivers despite the fact that the person delivered did not seek it; at least the text is silent.

As pastor, I have encountered many who are in bondage. They are blinded by their sin and live in complete oppression. They do not see the need to repent or abandon the path they pursue. What place does God have in this? Can He, in the absence of their willing, break their addiction? Can He bring reconciliation to situations that are beyond our ability to create? I have to answer yes. If my answer is no, then I have no right to be a shepherd.

The passages we are currently considering assure me that God is able to do the miraculous. No matter what we are willing, God can conquer and break our delusional self.

EXPOSITION:

I. The *description* of the man (vv. 1-5)

STATEMENT

By the fact that the man was controlled by an almost innumerable number of demons seems to suggest that “there are varying degrees of control by Satan.” (cf. Mark 16:9; Luke. 11:26)

A. He had an *unclean* spirit (vv 2, 8, 13 [Luke 8:27 – wore no clothes]).

Unclean occurs eleven times in Mark’s gospel. In Mark, it always refers to an unclean spirit. It is translated “foul” in Mark 9:25. It carries the idea of immoral and vile. It is opposed to that which is godly.

“Why, if they had been [Jews], would they have been keeping pigs? Everyone knew the Jews regarded them as unclean. That’s the first things to get straight. While we’re on about uncleanness, graveyards were also considered places of contamination. For a Jew, contact with the dead, or with graves, made you unclean. The man who rushes out to meet Jesus is about as unclean as you could get.” (N.T. Wright, *Mark for Everyone*, 55).

- B. He had an *uncontrollable* spirit (vv 3-5 [Matt. 8:28 – exceedingly fierce])
- C. He had a *suicidal* spirit (vv. 5)

“Cutting himself to pieces” intensive compound, verse 13, destructive/violent.

I think we consider a passage like this and say, “Wow a thousand demons possessed the individual. He must have been really strong and terrifying.” Yet whatever it was shrank in comparison to who God is. There could have been a million demons and they are still powerless in the face of God. We must never forget that greater is He in us than he that is in the world.

II. The *declaration* of the man (vv.6-13)

Verse 6: But a “mild adversative” ran at Jesus. What did the disciples do? What did the demon-possessed man do? He worshipped Him, a statement that occurs twice in Mark.

- A. They knew the certainty of His *person*
 - 1. His *humanity*/Jesus
 - 2. His *deity*
 - a. Son of the Most High God
 - b. The Holy One of God (1:24)
 - c. The Son of God (3:11)

B. They knew the certainty of their *punishment* (vv 7b, 10-13)

1. *Torment* is also found in Luke 16:23, 28 to describe the condition of the rich man in hell. It is used of the punishment awaiting the unbeliever in Revelation 14:10 and 20:10.

2. *Destroy* (1:24) is translated “marred” (2:22), “perish” (4:38), and “lose” (8:35). The idea is not of eternal loss as much as eternal *ruin*. The demons knew that their end was *damnation*.

STATEMENT

Why did the demons desire to go into swine, and why did Jesus allow it? Sometimes the expelled demon spent his force in a last attack on the individual (1:26). It may well be that this was some sort of “safety valve” or lightning conductor, to avert great spiritual/physical

violence from the individual. (Cole, *Mark*, p.98). Perhaps demonic activity is neutralized without a physical vehicle of expression. Do we not see mercy in wrath? If God (for whatever reason) hears the pleadings of the demon, should we not be encouraged as His people to cry out to Him?

III. The *deliverance* of the man (vv 14-17)

Why did the demons obey Him? They obey because of who He is. "The spirits especially see through what is unseen by human eyes. They could tell if Christ was vulnerable and refuse him any obedience at all. As it is, what human disbelief doubts, the evil spirits see clearly: that he is God. For that reason they flee from him and fall at his feet, still crying out even as they once cried when he was in the body." (Athanasius, "Incarnation of the Word," 32:4-5 in Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament II – Mark, 64).

Let us note two immediate consequences of this man's deliverance.

- A. There was a change in his *manner* (v. 15) (Jesus changes the way we act and look).
- B. There was a change in his *mind* (v. 15) (Jesus changes the way we think).

Notice the reaction of the people – fear. There is something scary about a transformed life for apart from God. (It is unexplainable! "Right mind" occurs 6 times in the NT. Twice in referring to the demoniac of Gadarenes (Mk 5:15; Lk 8:35) and 4 times for the Christian to think "soberly") to be rational, reasonable & Biblical!) (Rom 12:3; 2 Cor 5:13; Tit. 2:6; 1 Pt. 4:7). Christianity is not only good for the *soul*, but it is good for the *emotions* (John 14; Col. 3:15; 1 Thess. 4:13).

We would be in error if we did not see the idea of legion being cast into the sea. Such action speaks of Rome's demise when confronted by the greater king, King Jesus. It is also necessary to point out how our Lord would become "naked, isolated, outside the town among the tombs, shouting incomprehensible things as he is torn apart on the cross by the standard Roman torture." (N.T. Wright, *Mark for Everyone*, 56).

Jesus has come to deliver His people from the penalty of sin, the power of sin, and from the presence of sin. Jesus is mighty to save.

What I find interesting is the response of his community to him. They did not desire him when he was demonic and now they do not desire him because he has been delivered (vv. 14, 16, 17).

IV. The *desire* of the man (vv 18-20)

- A. He *wished* to be with Jesus (v 18)

Contrast this with the attitude of those who owned the pigs! The word "prayed" is "parakaleo." It is used extensively throughout the New Testament. Nine times it is used by Mark with five of those occurrences in this chapter (vv. 10, 12, 17, 18, 23). Notice its usage and

see the urgency and intensity of the word. What was this man's desire? **For this purpose he might be with Him.**

B. He *witnessed* of the works and character of Jesus (vv 19-20).

Jesus exhorted this man to do the great commission (Matt. 28:18-20) and he fulfilled it beautifully.

"Our glory must always be not in what we can do for Christ but in what Christ can do for us. The unanswerable proof of Christianity is a re-created man." (William Barclay, *Mark*, 125).

STATEMENT

The word "decapolis" means literally "ten cities." The cities were Scythopolis, Hippos, Gadara, Pella, Philadelphia, Gerasa, Diion, Canatha, Raphana and Damascus. They were located in the northeastern part of Galilee, near the Sea of Galilee. (*Unger's Bible Dictionary*. P. 257)

"Some time before St. Paul coined the phrase, this unnamed but beloved man seems to have become the first apostle to the Gentiles." (N.T. Wright, *Mark for Everyone*, 557).

"He was to be the first seed of what in time was to become a mighty harvest. Everything must start somewhere. Christ must always begin with someone. In our own circle and society why should he not begin with us?" (William Barclay, *Mark*, 125, 126).

Let us consider for just a moment the application of this passage to our present time.

V. The *devis*e of the devil

A primary concern for believers is answering the question, "Can believers be demonically possessed? Possessed as in to own or control?" My answer is no for the following reasons.

- A. Because of our present *position* (1 Cor. 12:13)
- B. Because of our present *protection* (John 10:28-30)
- C. Because of our present *power* (1 John 4:1-4)

"The devil's legion would not have had power over the herd of swine unless they had gotten it from God. Thus they are far from having power over the sheep of God. Even the bristles of the swine were counted by God, just as were the hairs of the heads of the just." (Tertullian, "On Flight During Persecution," in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament II - Mark*, 65).

There are two passages of Scripture that speak of this idea whereby the devil does God's bidding (1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20).

“I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 5:5).

“Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme” (1 Tim. 1:20).

Thus whatever spiritual warfare we are involved in, God oversees all of it.

If I cannot be possessed by the devil or demons, then can I be attacked? My answer is yes. Thus, how does Satan “attack” the believer? What do we mean by attacking? In our context, attack means to “allure” or to “entice.” It does not mean to compel or move upon.

Satan’s attack is always *providential*, never supernatural. It is a “winning over” or a “persuading of” by means of secondary causation. He uses *circumstances* in events. Satan cannot make you do anything against your will. Obedience and disobedience are an act of your will. You make a choice. How then does Satan “attack” the believer?

- A. By *deceiving* (Rev. 12:9, 2 Cor. 11:14)
- B. By *lying* (John 8:44)
 - 1. In the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1)
 - 2. In the temptation of Christ (Matt. 4:6).
- C. By *accusing* (Job 1:6, 7, 9-12; Rev. 12:10)

KNOW THIS, Satan is after the believer (1 Pet. 5:8) and he is a crafty (2 Cor. 2:11; Eph 6:11) opponent/adversary.

VI. The *defeat* of the devil

I have said this before, but it is worth repeating. Demons do the Lord’s bidding. “Through all creation God does good and teaches, and he may even use the demons themselves for this purpose of instruction.” (John of Damascus, “The Orthodox Faith,” 2:29 in Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament II – Mark, 65).

As believers, you and I are in constant spiritual warfare. Often, however, we fail to recognize our battles as such. In addition, we are often ignorant of Satan’s mode of operation. And finally, we regularly fail to fight from a position of victory. Although this is a lengthy study, I would like to simply note several verses and then conclude by noting how we live *from* victory and not *for* victory.

First, let us begin by noting how the devil’s defeat is already secured.

“But no one can enter the strong man's house and plunder his property unless he first binds (aorist active subjunctive) the strong man, and then he will plunder his house” (Mark 3:27)

This parable tells us that Jesus has bound the devil and has placed him in a position of subjection. Jesus is the strong king who has conquered His enemies.

“Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out (future passive indicative)” (John 12:31).

The devil’s demise is certain. He shall be acted on by something or someone outside himself. God, in the cross, will overthrow the devil for good.

“and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged (perfect passive indicative)” (John 16:11).

God, as the authority, has already judged the devil. This past judgment continues to this day. “The perfect emphasizes the completed act of judging the present ruler of the world.” (Rogers and Rogers, 219).

“These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome (perfect active indicative) the world” (John 16:33).

Our Lord’s victory over the devil is absolute and complete. His power is restricted and controlled. He can only do what God wants done.

“The God of peace will soon crush (future active) Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you” (Rom. 16:20).

Like John 12:31 the devil’s overthrow is certain.

¹⁴ [He made us alive,] having canceled out (aorist active participle) the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out (perfect active indicative) of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵ When He had disarmed (aorist middle participle) the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over (aorist active participle) them through Him” (Col. 2:14, 15).

The words “canceled out” “was used for wiping out the memory of an experience, or for canceling a vote, annulling a law, or canceling a charge or debt.” (Rogers and Rogers, 464).

“The perfect [tense] stands in contrast to the aorist in this section and fixes attention on the present state of freedom resulting from the action which was especially before the apostle’s mind.” (Rogers and Rogers, 465).

“Christ divested Himself at the cross of the evil power which had struggled with Him so strongly during His ministry in attempts to force Him to abandon the pathway of the cross.” (Rogers and Rogers, 465).

¹⁴ “Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless (aorist active subjunctive) him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and might free (aorist active subjunctive) those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives” (Heb. 2:14, 15).

At the cross Jesus stripped the devil of his power to use death as an element of fear and bondage. The word “to render powerless” means, “To render inoperative, to nullify, to make idle or ineffective, to render impotent as though no longer existing.” (Rogers and Rogers, 520).

By rendering the devil powerless, our Lord frees His people from fear of death. “The word was used in the papyri for the release from a position of responsibility; e.g., a marriage contract, the superintendence of land under lease, the release from a municipal office, or the release of a slave.” (Rogers and Rogers, 520).

The devil’s demise was pronounced in the Garden (Gen. 3:14, 15), sealed at Calvary (John 16:11), continues in the present (Col. 2:14, 15), and completed in an imminent future (Rev. 19:20; 20:10; Matt. 25:41).

VII. The *defense* of the believer

Let us note how we fight *from* victory and not *for* victory. How should we treat the devil in light of God’s work?

A. We need to be sober (2 Cor. 2:11; 1 Pet 5:8)

“so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for **we are not ignorant of his schemes**” (2 Cor. 2:11).

The devil has a plan of attack against you and God.

“Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the **schemes** of the devil” (Eph. 6:11).

Most note how the word “schemes” is our English word “method.” The devil has an intentional plan or method to his attack.

⁸ “**Be of sober** spirit, **be on the alert**. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world” (1 Pet. 5:8, 9).

The word “sober” means “to abstain from wine.” The idea is that we are cleared headed and not to have a clouded mind. “To be alert,” simply means “to stay awake.” Basically, do not fall asleep.

B. We need to be standing (Eph 6:11-16)

¹¹ “Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able **to stand firm against** the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our **struggle** is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore, take up the full armor of God, **so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.** ¹⁴ Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, ¹⁵ and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; ¹⁶ in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith **with which you will be able to extinguish all** the flaming arrows of the evil one” (Eph. 6:11-16).

“Submit therefore to God. **Resist** the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

⁸ “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ But **resist** him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world” (1 Pet. 5:8, 9).

Although we do not fight the devil in our own strength and we are fighting from victory not for victory, it is still a real and genuine battle. His opposition to God and thus His people is real and “in time.” We must go hard against the devil and his use of a fallen world system and his enticements toward our fleshly, fallen appetites.

C. We need to be submitting (James 4:7)

“**Submit** therefore to God. **Resist** the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

These two opposing ideas are two sides of the same coin. Submission to God is a resisting of the devil. Although living in unbroken conscious submission to God is impossible this side of heaven, we should be standing firm by submitting to God. Thankfully, even in the absence of this conscious submission, God is victorious. We still have the unimaginable privilege of willfully submitting to God, and in so doing we are resisting the devil.

Notice the text. Resisting the devil is impossible in the absence of submitting to God. The emphasis should not be on resisting the devil but on submitting to God. The one automatically produces the other. Even though there are distinct periods when I am fully aware of the spiritual warfare I am in with the devil, I try not to give the devil any more affirmation than is necessary. My focus is on God and how loving, gracious, and generous He

is toward me. My submission to Him is a consequence of the Holy Spirit's work in me and through me. Because of His gracious and generous acts in my behalf, the devil is resisted.

All of these verses shout one simple idea, "I reign because He does!" We have the victory in Christ Jesus our Lord over sin, death, and the devil. May He receive all the power, glory, and honor. We have the victory. GO FORTH AND STAND FOR GOD!!!

SHEPHERDING THE PEOPLE: (What is the NEXT STEP?)

1. Demonic possession takes many shapes. Demonic influence can cripple the child of God into believing the lie. God is able to deliver you from your storm, and no matter what, He is able to deliver you in your storm. You can have peace and rest no matter what your internal chains might be.
2. God wills you to be free from your demons. Call out to Him. He is mighty to save.
3. Jesus is here to deliver you from the power of sin.
4. Thank God Jesus has absolute *authority* over the spiritual world. Thank God that greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world (John 16:33, 1 John 4:4)
5. Learn to offer yourself in faith to the absolute authority of Jesus Christ.
6. Pray that you will stand against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:11). Pray that you will be a positive example of one who has delivered from the shackles of sin. Pray for deliverance, if you are yet under the power of sin.

What would happen if you came across an individual that you suspected of being demonically possessed? What would you do? Friend, our God is able to deliver such a one. When we realize the depth of our bondage we should begin to appreciate to a greater degree the glories of our release and freedom.