

Mark Chapter 5

Mark 5:1 "And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes."

“The sea” is the Lake of Galilee, about 12-1/2 miles long by 7-1/2 miles wide.

This place of the "Gadarenes" is on the side of the Sea of Galilee across from Capernaum. The word Gadarenes most likely refers to the small town of Gersa (or Khersa, Kursi; see note on Matt. 8:28), which was located midway on the eastern shore.

“Country of” refers to the general region that included Gersa and was under the jurisdiction of the city of Gadara, which was located some 6 miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee.

Mark 5:2 "And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,"

“A man with an unclean spirit”: Mark mentions only one of the demon-possessed men, who was probably the more prominent of the two (Matt. 8:28). The “tombs”, common dwelling places for the demented of that day, were burial chambers carved out of rock hillsides on the outskirts of town.

If the man and his possible companion were Jews, for who touching dead bodies was a great defilement, living in such an area was an added torment.

“Unclean spirit”: This refers to the demon who was controlling the man. Such spirits in themselves were morally filthy and caused much harm for those whom they possessed (see notes on 1:32-34; Luke 4:33, 36; 7:21; 8:2).

Mark 5:3 "Who had [his] dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:"

“No man could bind him”: Multiple negatives are used in the Greek text to emphasize the man’s tremendous strength.

This country of the Gadarenes had a place of caves where they put those who were mentally deranged. This insane man was living in the caves used as entombment for the dead. This man was obviously possessed of an evil spirit so ferocious that it was impossible to chain him.

It appears that like most insane people, this man was not only harmful to others, but to himself as well. This man's malady, as many insane people of our day, was a spiritual problem. Sometime during his life unclean spirits had entered into him, and now, they were in total control of him.

This man really had no life. Being possessed of these evil spirits caused him to be totally alienated from society.

Mark 5:4 "Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any [man] tame him."

“Fetters and chains”: “Fetters” (probably metal or perhaps in part, cord or rope), were used to restrain the feet and “chains” were metal restraints for the rest of the body.

This so many times is true of the insane. Society tries to lock them up away from everyone else to keep them from harming others and themselves. There are no answers by man for curing this.

Mark 5:5 "And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones."

“Crying ... cutting himself with stones”: “Crying” describes a continual unearthly scream uttered with intense emotion. The “stones” likely were rocks made of flint with sharp, jagged edges.

There really is no hope available for these people, aside from Jesus Christ. Usually, they wind up as suicide victims, because they can't live with others or themselves. These evil spirits that are called insanity actually torment the victim. Not all, but most insanity is actually being possessed by demons or evil spirits.

Mark 5:6 "But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,"

Not “worshipped” in the full sense. The idea is that he knelt or prostrated himself before Jesus.

Mark 5:7 "And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, [thou] Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not."

“What have I to do with thee”: A common expression of protest (see note on 1:24).

“Son of the most high God”: The demons knew that Jesus was deity, the God-man. “Most High God” was an ancient title used by both Jews and Gentiles to identify the one, true and living God of Israel and distinguish Him from all false idol gods (Gen. 14:18-20; Num. 24:16; Deut. 32:8; Psalms 18:13; 21:7; Isa. 14:14; Dan. 3:26; Luke 1:32; Heb. 7:1).

“I adjure thee by God ... torment me not” (see note on 8:29). Mark adds “I implore you,” which shows the demon tried to have Jesus soften the severity of his inevitable fate (James 2:19).

Probably this demoniac man had been watching the boat as it came across the water. The man ran to Jesus and fell down and worshipped Him. Even the demons bow at Jesus' feet. All are subject to Him. This voice that came from the man was the voice of these unclean spirits. They were demons (fallen angels).

They were fully aware that Jesus has power over them. You see again that they know who Jesus is. They do not want to be put in the lake of fire, which they know is their final home.

Mark 5:8 "For he said unto him, Come out of the man, [thou] unclean spirit."

The Greek verb is in the imperfect tense, he was saying, as though the demoniac had interrupted our Lord even while the words were in the act of being uttered.

"You unclean spirit": It is noticeable that our Lord first speaks as if the men were oppressed by a single demon only, and that it is in the answer of the man himself that we learn that their name was Legion. On the man's use of the word "Legion" (see Note on Matthew 8:29).

Mark 5:9 "And he asked him, What [is] thy name? And he answered, saying, My name [is] Legion: for we are many."

"What is thy name": Most likely, Jesus asked this in view of the demon's appeal not to be tormented. However, He did not need to know the demon's name in order to expel him. Rather, Jesus posed the question to bring the reality and complexity of this case into the open.

"Legion" would mean simply a vast number. A legion was a Roman army unit consisting of as many as six thousand soldiers. Such a name denotes that the man was controlled by an extremely large number of militant evil spirits, a truth reiterated by the expression "for we are many."

Jesus just spoke, not to the man, but to the unclean spirit in the man. And tells him to come out of the man. I personally believe that the reason Jesus asked him what his name was is for our benefit.

Another reason that I believe He asked his name was so the magnitude of this miracle can be told. Many times a person that is demon possessed will have many demons.

Mark 5:10 "And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country."

"He besought him": The demon understood that Jesus had all power over him and addressed Him with an intense desire that his request be granted.

"Not send them away out of the country" (see note on verse 1). The demons wanted to remain in the same area where they had been exercising their evil powers.

This is a strange thing about demons. They do not like to leave the family or the area where they are cast out. I suppose they feel that other members of the family might have a similar weakness and will allow them into them. These unclean spirits do not have bodies; they try to find a body that will be willing for them to enter, so that they may use the body as a dwelling place.

Mark 5:11 "Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding."

"Swine": Pigs were unclean animals to the Jews, so the people tending this herd were either Gentiles or Jews unconcerned about the law (see note on Matt. 8:30).

Mark 5:12 "And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them."

Notice here a few things about these devils or unclean spirits.

- (1) They were not in control, even though there were many of them.
- (2) They had to ask Jesus' permission to go into the swine.
- (3) They preferred people to indwell, but their second choice was animals.

Mark 5:13 "And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea."

“Jesus gave them leave”: According to His sovereign purposes Jesus allowed the demons to enter the pigs and destroy them, the text offers no other explanation (Deut. 29:29; Rom. 9:20). By doing this, Jesus gave the man a graphic, visible and powerful lesson on the immensity of the evil from which he had been delivered.

You can easily see why the man was so violent with 2,000 of these terrible spirits in him.

Mark 5:14 "And they that fed the swine fled, and told [it] in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done."

You can imagine how the story would spread. These men had lost a great herd of swine.

Mark 5:15 "And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid."

“Sitting”: The man’s restful condition was a strong contrast with his former restless, agitated state.

“In his right mind”: He was no longer under the frenzied, screaming control of the demons.

“Possessed with the devil” and “had the legion” refers to this one man having been the victim of multiple-demon possession.

“Afraid:” the same response the Twelve had in (4:41).

This fear that came upon these men was because the power of God had come among them, and they did not know what to do. Here, they saw the man who just an hour earlier was insane, and he was totally restored to his sanity and was worshipping Jesus. They had never seen anything like this before. People fear what they do not understand.

Mark 5:16 "And they that saw [it] told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and [also] concerning the swine."

“Those ... told ... concerning the swine”: “Those” may refer to both the 12 and the men who tended the pigs. They wanted people to know what had happened to the man and the pigs, and the relationship between the two events.

“Pray” here means “request” or “implore.” “Coasts” means “region.” The local citizens asked Jesus to leave their region, out of fear of suffering further financial losses, though His presence might have brought them additional blessings and their sick more healings.

Mark 5:17 "And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts."

“Pray him to depart out of their coasts”: The residents of the region became frightened and resentful toward Jesus because of what had happened. They may have been concerned about the disruption of their normal routine and the loss of property, and they wanted Jesus and His powers to leave the area so no more such financial losses would occur.

More compelling however, was the reality that they were ungodly people frightened by Christ’s display of spiritual power (see note on Matt. 8:34).

We see here, not men who were humbly seeking to repent before the Lord. These men wanted Jesus to leave their area fearing that Jesus would cause them more loss of their worldly goods. They had to be aware that this great power is of God, but perhaps their fear was worsened by their knowledge that they were not godly men.

Mark 5:18-19 "And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him." "Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee."

“Tell them ... the Lord hath done”: Jesus was referring to Himself as God who controlled both the natural and the super-natural worlds (Luke 8:39).

Mark 5:20 "And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all [men] did marvel."

“Decapolis” was the area southeast of the Sea of Galilee, containing many Gentile settlers. This was a league of 10 Greek-influenced (Hellenized), cities east of the Jordan River (see note on Matt. 4:25).

Jesus seems to have been more willing to make His deeds and identity known in a non-Jewish context. (See also John 4:4-26). In the Capernaum area by contrast, He felt the need to maintain a lower profile (1:34, 44; 3:12). The man tells what Jesus has done, although Jesus told Him to speak of “the Lord,” the God of Israel (verse 19).

The folks at home knew just how badly possessed of demons this man had been. They were his neighbors and friends. There had been a miracle, and these people could not deny it. It was only up to the man to tell them who did it and how He did it. They knew it was done.

Here we see in effect, a person giving his testimony to those who know just how bad it had been. Now they would be more receptive of Jesus. There would be no question who He is and that the power of Almighty God brought this miracle about.

Mark Chapter 5 Questions

1. What country did Jesus go to on the other side of the sea?
2. Who met Jesus immediately after He got out of the ship?
3. Where was the man's dwelling place?
4. This man's problem was so great they could not restrain him even with _____.
5. What really had happened to the man?
6. Who would a person like this harm?
7. How did the man try to destroy himself?
8. What is insanity, usually?
9. What did the man do when he saw Jesus?
10. The unclean spirit in the man called Jesus what?
11. What did he ask Jesus not to do?
12. What did Jesus say to the unclean spirits?
13. What was the name of the demons?
14. Why did these demons not want to leave the country?
15. The devils asked to be cast into what animals?
16. Jesus gave these evil spirits what permission?
17. How many animals were there?
18. What did the keepers of the swine do?
19. What condition was the freed man in when the men of the city saw him with Jesus?
20. What request did the man make to Jesus?

21. What did Jesus answer him?
22. What did the men of the city ask Jesus to do?
23. What witnessed to the home folks more than what the man said?
24. What two things could the man tell the people that they could not readily see?