

**Mark 5:2-20, The Gerasene Demoniac**  
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**A. Overview**

1. Basic trip pattern (often with correlation among the pieces):
  - a) Opening: usually focuses on teaching and crowds; the trips often start to escape from the press. The only time this is a miracle is ch.8, which balances the unexpected lack of a miracle at the destination.
  - b) Travel out: mostly by sea. When the travel is not trivial, it is a time of special instruction for the disciples.
  - c) At the destination: always a miracle, except in ch. 8, where the Pharisees ask for one and the Lord expressly refuses!
  - d) Travel back
  - e) Closing: always some sort of miracle
2. Here we are at the destination of the first trip. Notice the connections with what has gone before:
  - a) The initial teaching was on the different kinds of soils; we'll see that strikingly illustrated here, in the different reactions of the demoniac (good soil) and the townspeople (unreceptive soil).
  - b) The boat trip raised the question, "What manner of man is this?" We'll find the answer to that here as well,
    - 1) in the confession of the demons, who know more than the disciples do about the Lord,
    - 2) and in the demoniac's later preaching.
3. Basic flow:
  - a) The man is introduced as coming to Jesus, twice: once in v.2, again in v.6.
  - b) This double introduction sets up a contrast between the failure of others to cure him, and the Lord's success.
  - c) The third section, 14-20, deals with the impact of this miracle on the people of the region, presumably the ones who had earlier failed either to restrain or to tame the man.

**B. 2-5, The Failure of Others**

1. 2-3a, The Man comes from the tombs to meet Jesus  
Compare v.6, which brings us back to this same point in time. Here as there the man "met him," coming to him, "out of" (moving away from) the tombs. Tombs in this part of the world are caves dug out of cliffs, not dug in horizontal ground as here, and are not filled in after burial. Compare v.5, where the tombs are associated with mountains, and v.11, where the swine are near the mountain (singular in Gk). The poor wretch found some shelter in

these caves. In addition, by driving him into an unclean area, the unclean spirits render him unclean and thus achieve their aim of destroying him.

*Application:* We live in an age when many are fascinated with the occult. Have your eyes open! These spirits are a) real and b) destructive. Don't dally with them. And if you have become entrapped, recognize that c) our Lord is more powerful than they are, and he can deliver you, if you will come to him.

2. 3b-4, Attempted actions of others:  
Others had tried to subdue him in two ways: with physical bonds, and by "taming," presumably as one might a wild animal, with punishments and rewards, but to no avail. The demons gave him such strength that he burst whatever bonds were on him; and he was immune to psychological manipulation.

*Application:* The modern psychiatric community disparages the notion of demon possession. But how successful are they in dealing with these problems?

3. 5, The Man's Cries  
Emphasizes the destructive effect of the demons on him, and his own miserableness. Satan's yoke is heavy. Do not let visions of power lure you into yielding to his demons--it's not worth it!

#### C. 6-13, The Lord's Success

1. 6, The Man comes from the tombs to meet Jesus (reprise)  
Amplification of 2-3b, to emphasize the comparison between the paragraphs.
  - a) "From afar": at the most likely location for this event (the ruins called Kursi, 210-248, about 10 km SE of Capernaum), the cliffs are about a km away from the shore.
  - b) "Worshipped."
    - 1) Shows that an act of worship toward Jesus does not mean that someone is already a believer! Cr. 1:24, where the demoniac was in the synagogue. Salvation is something that God does in our hearts, not something we do toward God.
    - 2) At the same time, we need to come to the Lord in repentance, acknowledging our need. I think that's what the wretch is doing here, cf. the leper in 1:40.
2. 7, The Man's Cries
  - a) The loud cry recalls v.5, and strengthens the parallel between the paragraphs.
  - b) The cry itself: cf. 1:24.

- 1) "What have I to do with thee?" Lit, "What do you and I have in common?" Here in the sense of "Why are you bothering me?" The demon feels sought out and unfairly challenged. "Why don't you leave me alone?" Shows the Lord making a direct challenge to the Satanic world order.
  - 2) By naming the Lord the demon attempts to gain control over him. For many pagan exorcists, the trick is finding out the name of the demon being exorcised, and that is what the demon is trying to do here. NB: also provides an answer to the disciples' question of 4:41.
  - 3) "Adjure" is elsewhere in NT only at Acts 19:13; it is what an exorcist does to an enemy spirit. Legion is trying to cast a spell on the Lord! The knowledge of the Lord's name is an element in this.
- c) How did we get from worship in v.6 to such a challenge here? Explained in the following verse.

### 3. The Lord's Success

- a) 8, the initial challenge: "for" makes this the explanation of the demon's protest in v.7, and shows that the Lord actually uttered this before the demon speaks in 7. This explains the transition from the man's worshipful position in 6. He comes begging for help; the Lord challenges the demon; now the demon rears up and strikes back.
- b) Then why was the demon still in the man, if the Lord had commanded him to leave?
  - 1) Up to this point, the entire interaction is in terms of a single demon.
    - a> The Lord's command is to one ("thou unclean spirit," explicit in the imperative in Greek).
    - b> The demon challenges the Lord in the singular, "What have I to do with thee?" Contrast the plural used by the demon in 1:24, even though it is only a single demon.
  - 2) Yet we will learn in v.9 that this is actually a host of demons. So a command to a single demon won't do the job.
  - 3) We should not think that the Lord has underestimated the task. He wants to make clear to those around just how great an opposition he is about to overthrow. Had he cleansed the man immediately, it would not have made the point about the number of demons involved.
- c) 9, the Lord makes this clear by asking the demon for its name.

- 1) He does not do this in order to use the name in exorcism: neither in 1:24 nor (in the event) here does he use the name. Rather, he is forcing the demon to acknowledge that "it" is really "they."
  - 2) Finally the demon moves from "I" to "we." The term "legion" describes a division of the Roman army, with 6000 men, but may be used just in the sense of a large number. There appear to be at least 2000, since they are able to possess that many swine.
- d) 10-13, Success with the Swine
- 1) Note the shift from singular in 9 to plural in 12 as the demons dissociate themselves from the man's personality.
  - 2) The demons have given up. No further command is needed. The question is no longer whether they will leave the man, but where they can go next. They do not want to leave this district (10). Why? Next point ...
  - 3) Swine: unclean hosts for unclean spirits. There is some discussion over whether the owners would have been Jews (in which case they had no business raising swine) or not.
    - a> There were many gentiles in this region, so they may have been Gentile.
    - b> On the other hand, the Lord's hesitation to heal a Gentile demoniac two chapters later (7:27) would make it strange for him at this point to seek out such and heal him without an issue. If that episode is indeed intended to instruct the 12 on the mission to the Gentiles, then this episode is probably not to Gentiles.
    - c> Conclude: the residents here probably are Jewish, and the loss of the swine serves them right. Also shows why the demons want to remain in this district. God's Word is not obeyed and he is not feared, leaving people open to demonic activity. In fact, the Scriptures frequently show that those who have known the truth and turned from it are far more susceptible to spiritual abuse than those who have never heard: Matt. 12:43-45; 2 Pet. 2:20-22.
  - 4) 2000 is a HUGE herd; usually a herd of swine had fewer than 200! Emphasizes just how large is the host of demons that the Lord overcame.

#### D. 14-20, The People

Now our attention turns to the people of the district, those who had earlier failed in their own efforts to quiet the man, and to two missions to inform them of what has happened, one by the swineherds, and the other by the cleansed man.

1. 14a, The Swineherds' Mission

- a) The loss of the swine is a major concern to the swineherds, who may expect to be held accountable. In addition to being terrified at the prospect of the demon-possessed herd, they are eager that their masters get the story straight, so they rush off into the city.
- b) Their message is a negative one: Look at what Jesus will cost you. How most of the world today sees our Lord: as a spoiler, someone standing between them and their passions.

2. 14b-17, The People's Decision

- a) 14b-15, their initiative: they come and see (2x). The verb tenses and word order emphasize the development of their consciousness. Literally, "They see the demoniac seated, clothed, and sane--the one who had had the legion."
  - 1) First they see "the demoniac," present tense. Their initial concern is over their pigs; they know this man as one demon possessed, and when they see him, that is how they conceive of him.
  - 2) But his appearance and conduct have changed. Seated instead of running around the hillside yelling; clothed instead of naked; completely sane.
  - 3) Thus they must agree that his possession is a thing of the past.
  - 4) Their response is to fear. A good start--but where will it lead?
- b) 16, the witnesses (the 12? the swineherds, now returned with the citizens?) now describe how the exorcism took place. The Lord's power is irrefutable. How will they respond to it?
- c) 17, they ask him to leave. Fear of the Lord must always lead in one of two directions: surrendering ourselves to his lordship, or (as here) wanting to dissociate ourselves from him as completely as possible.
- d) *Application:* Here we have a vivid contrast of the differences in the soils--and how unexpected! The one considered mad by the world is in fact the good soil, running to seek Jesus in the first case and now cleansed by him, while "respectable citizens" are the bad soil, rejecting the seed out of hand.  
  
*Application:* We cannot prejudge who will receive the seed and who will not. That's why we must broadcast it "to every creature."

3. 18-20, The Demoniac's Mission

- a) 18, by contrast, the cleansed man wants to be with the Lord. A natural sign of one truly saved is a desire to draw close to the Lord, to have fellowship with him, to avoid the contamination of the world.
- b) 19, The Lord has other plans for him. He is to return to his home and his family with a twofold message that will glorify the Lord. (Contrast the essentially message of the swineherds, and note the importance of the man's PERSONAL witness here.)
  - 1) What the Lord has done for him, showing the Lord's power and strength;
  - 2) Why the Lord has done them (out of mercy, not merit).
- c) 20, he obeys in spades.
  - 1) He does not only "tell" (the same verb that describes the informal announcement of the swineherds in 14), but "publishes," the word for formal preaching. He does not simply talk about it on the side, but goes out of his way to herald the Lord's work.
  - 2) He does not restrict himself to his house and family, but preaches in the entire district of Decapolis, a region that runs from Damascus on the north almost as far south as Jerusalem, mainly on the east bank of the Jordan.
  - 3) Jesus commanded him to declare "how great things the Lord hath done for thee," an exhortation that in Jewish ears could mean only to give glory to Jehovah (cf. Luke 8:39, "how much God has done for you"). The man replies by preaching "how great things Jesus had done for him." Thus we have another answer to the question asked by the disciples in 4:41, "What manner of man is this?" Answer: "The Lord from heaven."

E. Hymns:

- 177 "Onward Christian Soldiers" (v.2 "Satan's host doth flee")  
166 "A Mighty Fortress" (v.3 "The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him")  
Blue book, "Christian, doest thou see them?"  
171, "Faith is the victory"