

Lesson From A Man With 2,000 Demons

Written by Bill Perkins

Two thousand demons had turned the man into a horror-movie monster. To protect themselves locals had shackled his hands and feet and secured him with chains. But "He had often been bound hand and foot, but he snapped apart the chains and broke the shackles from his feet. No man had the strength to tame him. Throughout the night and day, he kept screaming among the tombs and on the hills and cutting himself with stones." (Mark 5:4-5).

I wonder how they chained the guy. Maybe he had periods of right-mindedness and asked to be chained. I can't think of another explanation. Talk about spooky . . . a scarred monster-man with super strength wandering through the hills howling like a wolf.

A Vicious Storm

Before meeting him Jesus would still a vicious storm. A storm created by evil spirits. Yes, I believe demons blew the wind and stirred the sea. Why? You may recall in the book of Job that Satan sent a wind to blow down the home where Job's family feasted, killing his children (Job 1:18-19). The storm in Job gives credence to my belief that Satan created the wind that fueled the tempest, hoping to kill the Lord's disciples, and maybe even Jesus. Mark tells us that Jesus asked them, "Why are you so frightened? Do you still lack faith?" They were terrified and said to one another, "Who is this? Even the wind and sea obey Him!" (Mark 4:35-41). Jesus "rebuked" the storm.

The words translated "rebuked" and "be still" were used in Mark 1:25 with reference to an exorcism. This consideration implies a demonic presence in the storm. In fact the latter word, "be still," can be translated "be muzzled." Some have suggested an allusion to Jonah, in which case the storm shows Jesus' superiority to Jonah. Also the account pictures Jesus as doing what in the Old Testament only God could do (note Ps 107:29-30).

After rebuking that demonic storm, Jesus stepped on shore and faced two demonized men begging Him not to torture them, but to send them into a nearby herd of pigs. If you read the story in *The One* (P. 103-105) you'll see I've woven together the dialogue from Matthew, Mark and Luke to include the stories of both men. That's why it sounds like three people talking over each other.

As these men begged Jesus, the Lord focused His attention on one demonized man. When asked to identify himself, the demon said his name was, "Legion, for we are many." Think about that for a minute: a legion of evil spirits accessed the man's brain, saw his entire hard drive, controlled his body and spoke through his mouth.

First access and then control.

The Lord granted Legion's request.

"Hello, who turned on the lights?"

Was it like that for the man? Seems he woke up in a right state of mind . . . clear headed. For years demon chatter filled his mind and silenced his voice. And then quiet--like a placid lake after a storm. And healing. In a moment the cloud lifted and he could see clearly. I wonder what it felt like to live with a head full of demon talk . . . talk that snuffed out his own voice. Consuming anger fueled by a hatred for all who had wronged him. In a moment Jesus opened the jailhouse door and drove out the legion of demons sending them into a herd of "about 2,000 pigs." The demonized animals raced down the hill and into the lake where they drowned, ruining the local economy, including the pagan temples where pigs were sacrificed to idols.

And what of the man? When people from the surrounding area approached, they saw him "sitting there, dressed and in his right mind" (v. 15). Now liberated, the demon-free man with the scars on his arms "begged" Jesus to let him go with Him (v. 18).

The Most Powerful Apologetic

And the Lord's reply? "'Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you' (v. 19). The man returned to the Decapolis (the area east of the Jordan River) and told everyone how much the Lord had done for him. And all the people were amazed" (v. 20). How thrilled his friends and family must have been when they saw him clean, clear headed and talking non-stop about Jesus and God's mercy.

There's no apologetic as powerful as this: "Jesus forgave me." Or "Jesus healed my marriage." Or "Jesus broke my addiction." We often worry about how to answer probing questions about our faith. Instead of worrying, let's follow the Legion-less man's example and tell how God has shown us mercy. After all, no argument can overcome the story of God's work in your life.