

## From Darkness To Light

By: Keith R. Keyser

The powers of darkness confront mankind on every side. As 1 John 5:19 expresses it: “We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.” (ESV) Unwitting humans are pawns in the hands of infernal powers who use them to inflict damage on the globe. The situation of the Gadarene demoniac mirrors the state of planet earth. More importantly his encounter with the Lord Jesus provides the solution for the raging malevolence that besets the world today.

The Lord Jesus repeatedly faced opposition from the Satanic forces. Both Matthew 4 and Luke 4 detail His direct temptation by the “Accuser of the brethren” himself. In the Gospel of Mark, Christ’s first miracle is the casting out of “an unclean spirit” which afflicted a man in the Capernaum synagogue (Mark 1:21-27.) In Mark chapter five, as soon as the Lord Jesus crosses over the Sea of Galilee, He is met by a demon-possessed man from out of the tombs. Other Gospel accounts show that there were two demoniacs, but Mark chooses to focus on one of them in particular.

His dwelling-place indicates that there is something gravely wrong with this man: he lives in the tombs. Realtors are not in the habit of showing their clients prospective homes in graveyards; this is because such places are reserved for the dead, not the living. The wicked spirits within him drove this poor man from civilized company, to dwell on the fringes of society. Day and night he cried, screamed, and acted with frenzied violence. He was a hazard to others and himself, as his self-mutilation with stones demonstrates (v. 5.)

Apparently members of the community had tried to restrain the man with chains for his hands and feet. These measures were a total failure in thwarting the demons that controlled the unfortunate man. In trying to subdue evil, lost men can only lock up the malefactor; they cannot change his iniquitous heart. Many people today dabble with the occult, hoping to gain supernatural power. Such forces are more cunning and stronger than humans; those who experiment with them discover too late that they only bring misery and spiritual oppression into their lives. Ouija boards, tarot cards, astrology, psychic readings, astral projection all hold forth the tantalizing promise of prescience and power. In reality they are only means for the unclean spirits to influence lost souls. Mind-altering drugs also seem to open their users up to demonic influence.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the Gadarene demoniac sought power from spiritual beings. Unfortunately, he possessed unbridled strength without the ability to marshal it. Instead of manipulating the spirits, they enslaved him.

What a tragic picture of what the contemporary world is like. Matthew 8:28 describes the demon possessed men as “fierce.” This word means “hard to bear, troublesome,

---

<sup>1</sup> See Gal. 5:20 – “witchcraft” (KJV) or “sorcery” (NKJV) is the Greek word *pharmakeia*, from which the English language derives “pharmacy” and “pharmaceutical.” Several ancient and modern cults employ hallucinogenic substances to facilitate visions and contact the spirit world.

dangerous; harsh, fierce, savage,” and only occurs in one other passage.<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. 3:1 uses the word to depict the character of the last days as “perilous.” Modern times are typified by this demonic, unbounded hostility. Only the power of Christ can counter the wicked cruelty that proliferates on every side.

Despite his supernatural strength, the demoniac prostrates himself before the Lord Jesus. This is not “worship in spirit and in truth,” but rather an involuntary obeisance that foreshadows the day when “every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10-11, NKJV.) As James 2:19 notes: “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.” They recognize the Judge of all the earth; moreover, they implore Him not to torment them. One day they will be sentenced and imprisoned for their rebellion, but for now, the Lord Jesus accedes to their request of entering into the swine.

His name makes it clear that a formidable host of unclean spirits ruled over this poor wretch. “Legion” was a Roman military term that denoted between 4,000 and 66,000 soldiers.<sup>3</sup> In spite of the demons’ numerical superiority, they were no match for the authoritative word of the Lord. He commands them to come out of the man and they must obey. Mark 5:15 describes the dramatic change in the demoniac. Whereas before he was running around greatly agitated, now he is seated at Christ’s feet. The Lord is the master teacher, who is able to bring out the fruit of the Spirit – including “self-control” – in a human life. He experientially discovers the truth of Col. 1:13: “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (NKJV.) Furthermore, the man had been naked, but now he is clothed. The Lord is able to take away our shame, and to clothe us with the righteousness of God (Rom. 5:17-19; Rev. 19:8.) Sin debases human beings; by contrast, the gracious work of God removes their guilt and defilement. The final evidence of the change in the man is seen in his mindset. Instead of being dominated by a foreign, infernal intelligence, the man is now in his right mind. His experience reminds one of Ephesians 4:22-24: “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

At first glance, the reaction of the local people seems strange. Instead of rejoicing at the man’s miraculous healing, they are afraid. Rather than ask Christ to liberate themselves and others from the power of Satan, they beg Him to leave their territory. Likewise, people today are often opposed to dramatic conversions. They tolerate all sorts of sin and debauched lifestyles, but they will not endure a righteous life. They sigh at addicts and perverts, but only hate them when Christ has freed them from their iniquitous chains. If God was now visiting their community, they might have to change their sinful ways. “No thank you,” said they; “we’d rather continue with business as usual, and not be interrupted by the holiness of the Lord.” Thus, they asked him to leave promptly.

---

<sup>2</sup> See 2 Tim. 3:1. The definition is from *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*, Electronic Edition, [www.e-sword.net](http://www.e-sword.net).

<sup>3</sup> Adrian Goldsworthy, *The Complete Roman Army*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), 215.

It also seems odd that of the three geographical requests made of Christ in this passage, He heeds the two by demons and lost men, but refuses to hearken unto His new disciple. He begs the Lord to allow him to accompany Him, but Jesus says no. Why? The answer demonstrates the grace of our God, for Christ says: "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee" (Mark 5:19.) He denies the man's request, so that the region would not be left without a witness. Although the local populace asked Him to leave, He graciously leaves behind a messenger of the Gospel. The Lord does not "beam up" believers to heaven upon conversion. Instead, He sends them into the world with the command to "...preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15.) Even though humans rejected and crucified the Lord, He still seeks to win them to Himself. Even though millions tell Him to leave them alone, He persists in wooing and warning them. If anyone finds himself in the Lake of Fire, it will be because of his own negligence, and not any deficiency in the grace and love of God (2 Pet. 3:9; 1Tim. 2:4, NKJV.)