

Behind the Scenes – the Demoniac of Gedara

What you ever worked behind the scenes of a production? If so, you'll know that a lot more goes on that what you see on the stage or the screen. Similarly, a lot more goes on behind the scenes spiritually than what we realise. But sometimes that reality becomes plain, as it does in this miracle of the man healed of demon possession.

Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gadarenes. And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. And he cried out with a loud voice and said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me."

For He said to him, "Come out of the man, unclean spirit!" Then He asked him, "What is your name?" And he answered, saying, "My name is Legion; for we are many." Also he begged Him earnestly that He would not send them out of the country. Now a large herd of swine was feeding there near the mountains. So all the demons begged Him, saying, "Send us to the swine, that we may enter them." And at once Jesus gave them permission. Then the unclean spirits went out and entered the swine (there were about two thousand); and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and drowned in the sea. So those who fed the swine fled, and they told it in the city and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that had happened. Then they came to Jesus, and saw the one who had been demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. And those who saw it told them how it happened to him who had been demon-possessed, and about the swine.

Then they began to plead with Him to depart from their region.

And when He got into the boat, he who had been demon-possessed begged Him that he might be with Him. However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you." And he departed and began to proclaim in [e]Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marvelled

Mark 5:1-20

Satan has a plan for your life

You don't believe in a red man with horns and a pitchfork, do you? No – but I do believe in an ancient, very intelligent, very powerful, and awfully twisted, perverted and fallen angel called Satan. And I believe these demons in this miracle are other fallen angels, like what's referred to in the Bible as "Beelzebub – prince of demons", "the devil and his angels" and "principalities and powers."

Who or what are demons? There are some things the Bible tells us. They exist to torment and destroy and carry out Satan's plans; they prefer to be in some kind of body; they know they will one day be punished; they are under Christ's final control. We know they can possess or oppress humans, and when they do, it is the beginning of a tormenting self-destruction. In this case, perhaps thousands entered this man and tormented him night and day.

- They made the man insane.
- They caused him to be cut off from society.
- He was naked – (the account in **Luke 8:27** says, “*And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs.*”).
- They caused him to have to chained up (verse 3).
- They broke his chains in fits of rage (verse 4).
- He screamed and cut himself (verse 5).
- He was obsessed with death (verses 2-3).

Satan’s plan for your life is to take you down whatever path will ultimately destroy you: “*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death*” (**Proverbs 14:12**).

There are different paths for different people. Satan has a plan for the refined academic, for the stay-at-home mom, for the tough mechanic, for the number-crunching programmer. For children. For older people. For some, the plan is drugs or alcohol, for others, it’s pornography and immorality, for some its atheistic refinement, for others comfortable materialism, or even self-centred family life. As long as it takes you away from devotion, and real belief – it is fine. But the end of all these routes is the same – destruction.

You make ask, but why should Satan hate me so? Simply because you are made in the image of God. You remind him of God. And what gives him pleasure is to see the image of God acting unlike God, and so ultimately self-destructing.

There are a number of ways we can open ourselves up to his power, including:

1. **Dabbling in false religion.** Have you heard people say, ‘I’m an open-minded person – I give equal time to all the great religions of the world.’ But what is the first commandment of the Ten Commandments? “*Thou shalt have no other gods before me*” (**Exodus 20:3**). This also includes New Age religions, which is growing in popularity these days. Remember **1 Corinthians 10:20**: “*But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.*”
2. **Direct use of the occult.** **Deuteronomy 18:10-11** says “*There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, [this can include fortune-telling, palm-reading, tarot cards, astrology, Enneagrams and star-signs] or an enchanter [including reading fortunes through animal entrails like sangomas], or a witch, [one whom makes potions or concoctions for you to eat or drink, or who gives you good-luck charms to wear, or to keep in your house]. Or a charmer [person who makes spells, concoctions of words, superstitious sayings for good luck or protection, Wicca], or a consulter with familiar spirits [a channeler – one who allows spirits to speak through him], or a wizard [a cunning person who claims to tell and know fortunes], or a necromancer [one who speaks to the dead – ‘psychics’, those who conduct séances, etc.]*”
3. **Use of psychedelic drugs.**
4. **Revenge and bitterness.** “*Be angry, and do not sin:’ do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil*” (**Ephesians 4:26-27**).

Commented [AJ1]: I took out Harry Potter from this list, I hope you agree the books are more like LOTR than Wicca?

5. **Unbelief.** If you want to follow Satan – just doubt the Word of God. Think of the serpent planting unbelief in Eve with the words “*Did God really say...?*” in **Genesis 3:1**. The Word of God is like a light shining on a very narrow pathway. Abandon that light, and you press on into darkness, confusion and despair.

We may want to understand, why were the demons in our key passage able to possess this man? We don’t know. But this much is true – before you come to Christ for salvation – you are under the dominion and control of Satan. You are in his kingdom, “...in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience” (**Ephesians 2:2**).

Know that society cannot change your life much when you are under Satan’s power

What did this man’s society do for him? Society can lock you up; isolate you; provide you with drugs; give you 10-step programs. Society can offer you rehab places, homeless shelters, self-help books, self-development courses. Society might provide you with a market place, with a job and with money. But it really is powerless when Satan begins wreaking havoc.

Society is not the Saviour. In fact, society is content for you to be under Satan’s power, so long as you don’t bother them too much. It is when you yield your life to Christ that they get upset.

Jesus’ plan for you is better and His power stronger than that of Satan

Satan does not love you. What had these demons done to this man? But Christ does love you, and He comes to set you free. Jesus had compassion on this man. He crossed a stormy lake just to get to him and his companion. When society rejected him, Christ sought him. Jesus goes after individuals.

See how the passage reveals Christ’s powerful Person:

- Jesus is recognised by the demons as the Son of God (verse 7).
- The demons recognise that He is their Judge. (verse 7, and **Matthew 8:29** where they beg Jesus not to “*torment us before the time*”).
- The demons ask Him not to send them into the abyss (the account in **Luke 8:31** says, “*And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss*”).
- Jesus simply casts them out with a word (verse 8).
- The demons apply to Him for permission to enter the pigs (verse 12).
- They enter two thousand swine and plunge the pigs into the ocean.

Wasn’t this wanton destruction of property? Well, if these were Jews, they had no business keeping pigs. And if they were Gentiles, this man’s soul was worth more than pigs – and they ought to have known that. The effects of Jesus’ intervention are immediate – the once-possessed man now sits, wearing clothes and in his right mind (verse 15). So what is Jesus’ plan for your life?

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Jeremiah 29:11

O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!

Deuteronomy 5:29

Isn't it remarkable that we think it is God who will mess up our lives? We imagine that total surrender, living for Christ, will ruin our fun, dilute our joy, narrow our lives, turn everything into a dull shade of grey.

The truth is, you can either yield to follow Him, or ask Him to leave you

The formerly demon-possessed man wants to follow Jesus. Wouldn't you, after such an event? But instead, Jesus tells him to go out and tell others of what the Lord had done for him (verses 18-19). There's the simple formula of the Christian life – come to Christ and allow Him to change you, then go and tell others of who He is. Know Christ, and make Him known.

Come to Christ in faith and surrender your life to Him. If you believe He is the Son of God, and you believe he is your Saviour – then He owns you twice. And your life is not your own. You are now to be a follower of Christ.

What does this entail? Consider what it's like to follow another car to get somewhere you don't know. What do you do? You surrender the right to lead to them. You keep your eyes on them. You make your movements dependent on their leading. Similarly, you can surrender the right to Christ to direct your life. You can keep your eyes on Him by reading and meditating on His Word, and learning and applying His commands. You can make your movements depending on His Word and His Spirit dwelling within you.

"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honour."

John 12:26

The other reaction is to ask Jesus to leave. Sadly, many people do that. They do that when they hear the Gospel and reject it. They do that when they ask Christians to not talk about their faith. They do that when they let their Bible collect dust. They do that when they say, 'Don't force your religion down my throat' – which sometimes means, 'don't tell me that Christ is the only way' or 'don't tell me how to live my life.'

They put him off – another day. In the future. Or they say – this is all too radical for us. We have lived this way thus far; we will continue to live this way. Please don't try to change us, don't interrupt us. This is the myth of neutrality. People think, 'Well I'm not following Satan, and I'm not following Jesus' or 'I'm not growing spiritually, but I'm also not declining.'

The truth is – spiritually, you are either growing or declining, loving Christ more, or loving Christ less, following Him more, or following Satan's lies more. I don't like such black and white terms. But Jesus said, *"I AM the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"* (John 14:6). He is the way. Behind the scenes – there are forces devoted to your destruction. The only way they can achieve that is if they get you to never start following, or to stop following, Christ.