

"35 On that day, when evening came, He \*said to them, "Let us go over to the other side." 36 Leaving the crowd, they \*took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. 37 And there \*arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. 38 Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they \*woke Him and \*said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" 39 And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. 40 And He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" 41 They became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" 1 They came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes. 2 When He got out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him, 3 and he had his dwelling among the tombs. And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; 4 because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him. 5 Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and gashing himself with stones. 6 Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him; 7 and shouting with a loud voice, he \*said, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!" 8 For He had been saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" 9 And He was asking him, "What is your name?" And he \*said to Him, "My name is Legion; for we are many." 10 And he began to implore Him earnestly not to send them out of the country. 11 Now there was a large herd of swine feeding nearby on the mountain. 12 The demons implored Him, saying, "Send us into the swine so that we may enter them." 13 Jesus gave them permission. And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand of them; and they were drowned in the sea. 14 Their herdsmen ran away and reported it in the city and in the country. And the people came to see what it was that had happened. 15 They \*came to Jesus and \*observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the "legion"; and they became frightened. 16 Those who had seen it described to them how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and all about the swine. 17 And they began to implore Him to leave their region. 18 As He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was imploring Him that he might accompany Him. 19 And He did not let him, but He \*said to him, "Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you." 20 And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed." Mark 4:35-5:20, NAS95.

#### 4:35-8:26 Powers of the kingdom of God

This is the start of a long section full of stories of miracles, all illustrating power in different areas. The NT is clear that Jesus performed miracles; even his enemies admitted it, although some of them said that he worked through the powers of evil not through the power of God which as we studied was the unpardonable sin.

As we have seen, Jesus easily disproved this charge. How Jesus performed miracles we

do not know or need to know. Of course, as Son of God he was not restricted in the same way that we are. The greatest miracle of all, however, was that he summoned imperfect human disciples to join him in his task of advancing the kingdom. By changing the wicked hearts of men through regeneration, which brings us to repentance and faith, we who were the enemies of God can now be His disciples. What a radical transformation because of the grace of God.

Once again, we must remember that miracles are not meaningless magic, but designed to show us who Jesus was. That is why, although Mark's gospel contains a great collection of miracle stories, they are all in the opening chapters. Once Peter recognized that Jesus [p. 958] was the Messiah, there was a change. From teaching the crowds, Jesus turned to teaching his own disciples, and there was no longer any need for more miracles to show them who he was.

Mark's gospel is characterized by action, vividly portraying the non-stop work of Jesus, making frequent use the Greek adverb meaning immediately or straightway and the conjunction translated as and, also, or even to tie events together, and giving miracles a prominent place in the record [9]. His abundant use of the historical present tense, peppered with many personal touches, leaves the impression that the story is unfolding before the reader's eyes. Mark is careful not only to record the human emotions of Jesus - compassion (1:41, 6:34, 8:2), sighing (7:34; 8:12), indignation (3:5; 10:14), and distress (14:33-34) - but to pay attention to reactions of people around Him - amazement (1:27), criticism (2:7), fear (4:41), astonishment (7:37), and bitter hatred (14:1). He also documents over a hundred different questions, many of them asked of Jesus and even more asked by Him. After inquiring about others' opinion He asks, "But who do you say that I am?" (8:20). It could be said that Mark wrote his gospel to invoke a response from his readers to this most important question of all.

Are such miracles still needed today, in preaching the gospel? Opinions have been divided on this question throughout church history, and it has come to the fore during times of charismatic renewal and revival. Some have felt firmly that all miracles

Mark 4:35-5:20 New Covenant Baptist Fellowship Pastor Joseph Krygier Jan 4, 2008, 3  
ceased once the NT had been written; others have felt that 'power evangelism'  
demands continual miracles to support preaching; others have felt that God may  
perform or withhold miracles at his sovereign will. Whichever we believe, it is important  
that we do not see miracles as a suspension of the natural order, but as God working in  
all things and in all ways, whether usual or unusual to us.

POWER Evangelism described:

The last thing Jesus said to His disciples on earth was for them to tarry in Jerusalem until they received power from on high (Luke 24:49). Jesus directly linked the receiving of this Holy Ghost power to the ability of disciples to witness the gospel to others (Acts 1:8). Sharing the good news and having it confirmed through miracles, signs and wonders (Mark 16:20) is Power Evangelism. It is allowing yourself to be filled with the overflowing fullness of the Holy Spirit so that He can work through you to make His truth known. Power Evangelism is stepping out in faith to share not only the word but also the life-transforming power of Jesus Christ with everyone He brings across our paths. When people not only hear the truth but see it and feel it, they come to know how very real Jesus Christ is. In John 4:48, Jesus comments on how effective signs and wonders are in helping people believe. Jesus gives us kingdom authority and supernatural power to be effective witnesses, and fulfill the Great Commission. He empowers us to share the gospel and also to prove it through miracles, signs and wonders like healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, raising the dead and casting out demons. That's His kingdom come. That's His will being done on earth as it is in heaven. That's power evangelism!

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. And so are we, his disciples. We still can do nothing without Him but oh the things that can be done through us by Him if we are willing to be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. Go for it!

This was a controversial teaching that is drawn from a course taught at Fuller Seminary by John Wimber who was a key leader in the Vineyard Movement that led to the Toronto Blessing and other movements.

The next part of our text concerns Jesus' power over nature.

4:35-41 Power over nature (see Mt. 8:23-27; Lk. 8:22-25).

The first of the group of miracles is a 'nature' miracle. Jesus, who had already shown himself Lord over demons and sicknesses, now showed himself Lord over nature. The story is full of vivid eyewitness details (e.g. the cushion of v 38). We can almost see the storm on the lake and the terrified disciples. The frightened disciples rebuked Jesus by implication (38), and then he actually rebuked the wind and storm, and they obeyed his word of command (39). None but the Creator himself could have done this. In the OT God alone is the one who causes storms and calms them. The disciples only half grasped the truth and were too terrified to express it (41). The chief lesson for us is Jesus' rebuke to his disciples for their lack of trust in him. We must learn to trust completely, even if our obedience to him leads us into storms, whether persecution or anything else. (It was Jesus, not the disciples who had suggested crossing the lake; they were not out of his will.) Sometimes we assume that storms in life show disobedience, but this is not always so. There are storms, disaster and hardships that are ordained for us.

Some will say that this is 'spiritualizing' a miracle that dealt with the calming of an actual storm on the lake. They feel that we should trust Jesus to calm actual storms and save us when we are traveling.

There is really no such thing, biblically, as praying for traveling mercies for example. What we should do is just pray and trust the journey to God's providence.

Of course, God can do whatever he wills, but he did not calm the storm for Paul (Acts 27), although Paul was a man of great faith. The disciples on this occasion had little faith, so the calming (or not) of a storm does not seem to depend on faith, but on God's will. God strengthened Paul to endure the storm in quiet faith. Sometimes God saves us from trouble; sometimes he saves us in trouble; sometimes he saves us from death; and sometimes he uses our death to glorify his name. Should we expect to be able to rebuke wind and waves, as Jesus did? According to the gospels, only Jesus did

'nature' miracles (for only Jesus is God), and there is no hint that he ever gave this power to his disciples. Only God can do God's work.

5:1-20 Power over demons (see Mt. 8:28-34; Lk. 8:26-39). Once again, the driving out of demons from a man shows the powers of God's kingdom. This exorcism is different from the others. First, the man was probably not Jewish; he certainly lived in a Gentile area.

5:11-12. Only Gentiles (or very nonobservant Jews) raised pigs, and Jewish readers would think of pigs as among the most unclean animals and rightful hosts of evil spirits. Ancient exorcists found that demons often asked for concessions if the pressure for them to evacuate their host was becoming too great for them to stay.

Secondly, the witness of the enemy was more specific, although it was not accepted by Jesus and was not expressed in Jewish terms. The exact place where the incident took place is uncertain, but it was across the lake, i.e. on the eastern, Gentile side. This man was not someone sitting quietly in a synagogue until aroused by Jesus' preaching; his state was desperate, and no human beings could help or even restrain him. (Some of us will know well the almost superhuman strength shown by the demonized.) This man was in agony, torturing himself and under the influence of evil powers. That seems to be the significance of the name Legion ('Army') that he gave himself. There is no hint in Scripture that we need to know the name of an evil force before expelling it, nor does the Bible suggest that multitudes of demons have different names and personalities. These are ideas taken over from other religions, which we should reject like the idea that there is one demon of lust, another of greed and so on. One enemy is enough for us to beware of. (In this account the evil spirit is described in the singular in vs. 2 and 8 and in the plural in vs. 9, 10, 12 and 13.)

A legion included four thousand to six thousand troops. This man may have been hosting a large number of demons; they probably outnumber the pigs (5:13).

5:10. Ancients were familiar with demons pleading for mercy or other concessions when they were about to be defeated (e.g., 1 Enoch 12-14; Testament of Solomon

2:6). Perhaps they wish to stay in the area only because of the tombs, but in ancient lore spirits were often associated with particular local areas.

5:13. Jewish tradition often taught that demons could die, so many ancient readers would assume that the demons had been destroyed (or at least disabled) with their hosts. (Some traditions also portrayed at least some demons as fearing water—Testament of Solomon 5:11-12; but in other traditions, certain demons lived in water. What is significant in the Gospel accounts is the much greater dependence of demons on their hosts than in most other sources from the period.)

5:14-17. The opposition to Jesus arises from both economic interests—the loss of a large herd of swine—and some Greek conceptions of dangerous wonderworking magicians, whom the people would fear.

Unlovable though the man was, Jesus loved and pitied him. His command to the spirit to depart came before the man's outburst, which was therefore in a sense his response to the good news, which was before him in person in Jesus. Most High God was a typical Gentile name for the God of Israel.

Why was the entry of the demons into the pigs necessary? At best we can only say what we see. I mean it was a visual demonstration of Christ's authority over all created things and especially in a Gentile area, so that both the man and everybody else might see that the forces of evil had truly left the man. It was an outward aid to faith, though one, which prompts modern readers to wonder about the loss of animal life, let alone the economic loss to the owners of the pigs. It was also another clear outward sign of the powers of God's kingdom. This story too is full of eyewitness touches, like the number of the pigs. It is true that pigs panic easily, but to say that does not explain why these pigs should. The pigs are not the main point of the narrative. The man is. It is a demonstration of the Sovereignty of God and the kingdom and the king but the true miracle was not what happened to the pigs but what happened to the man, who was completely changed by the compassion and power of Christ.

In light of that what do we see, here is a man delivered from a horrible existence and all

we see is this result - this display of God's power brought only fear to the unbelieving, not faith, and this often happens in the Third World even today. Instead of begging Jesus to stay, the local people begged him to leave, and so he went. What a disaster for them! The healed man begged to go with Jesus, but Jesus did not allow him. This was probably because his witness to Jesus in that non-Jewish area was supremely valuable. Perhaps that was also why in this case Jesus asked the man to witness to the mercy that God had shown him.

In ancient stories, those recovering from madness might be unaware of their prior state but this was not always the case (Dan 4:34-37).

5:19-20. We have already established in our study of Mark, that because his messiahship would be misunderstood, Jesus kept it a secret in predominantly Jewish areas. In the predominantly non-Jewish Decapolis, however, where people would perceive him as a magician not a Messiah, he urges his new disciple to spread word about what God had done, thereby correcting the people's misunderstanding.

God's revelation of Christ comes where, when and how God has purposed it.

It is in God's eternal purpose to establish His kingdom throughout the course of human history where it pleases Him to do so. He can use any means at any time to accomplish this. He may choose to accompany the Gospel with miracles - He may choose not to.

Many have gone to very difficult places to bring the good news. Some have prospered, some have labored long and hard with little to show for it others have almost instantly met their deaths.

Opposition to the Gospel was there for Jesus and it remains the same. We should not expect any less, however we should, on the other hand, expect a great work of God whenever the Gospel is preached as it reaches those to whom has given the ears to hear and the eyes to see for this will always bring forth a harvest unto the glory of Christ even if it is a demon possessed man who is the object of the gospel message.

The two greatest enemies of man, death and sin have been completely conquered.

The powers opposed to Christ have also been conquered. They have not disappeared but they are defeated. And when the good news is preached to those who will hear, the proof that the powers opposed to God are defeated is once again demonstrated.

Don't think for a moment that just because in God's wisdom these enemies of the cross are still around that they can have any real victory. They are crushed and can have no effect on those who belong to Christ.

In God's wisdom we are to engage, as Christ's church, in a warfare until Jesus comes.

He has given us every weapon that we need and the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly but mighty to the destruction of fortresses 2 Cor. 4:10

Strongholds is an allusion to the towers or raised ramparts used in ancient battles, but here it stands for arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God. It was by the proclamation of the gospel (which involved reasoning and arguing in an effort to remove false barriers thrown up against the truth) that Paul sought to overcome people's resistance and so to take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. The imagery here is that of a stronghold breached and those sheltering behind its walls taken captive. Paul's purpose is not only to demolish false arguments but also to bring people's thoughts under the lordship of Christ. Finally, he says he will be ready to punish every act of disobedience (to the gospel on the part of the opponents) once your obedience is complete (i.e. once the Corinthians acknowledge again Paul's authority and the truth of his gospel).

A passage such as this reminds us that Christian ministry involves a battle, first of all for the heart - the mind. False arguments need to be demolished, so that people might yield to the truth of the gospel and find life under the lordship of Christ. There may be those who are demonized and others who need other miracles wrought by God but it is the heart that needs to be changed so that repentance and faith can occur and one can be made a true and genuine disciple of Christ as the kingdom advances until Christ returns.