

4. Power over Evil

Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39

Matthew 8:28-34

²⁸ And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes,^[a] two demon-possessed^[b] men met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way. ²⁹ And behold, they cried out, “What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?” ³⁰ Now a herd of many pigs was feeding at some distance from them. ³¹ And the demons begged him, saying, “If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs.” ³² And he said to them, “Go.” So they came out and went into the pigs, and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters. ³³ The herdsmen fled, and going into the city they told everything, especially what had happened to the demon-possessed men. ³⁴ And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their region.

Mark 5:1-20

They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes.^[a] ² And when Jesus^[b] had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. ³ He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, ⁴ for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. ⁵ Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. ⁶ And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. ⁷ And crying out with a loud voice, he said, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.” ⁸ For he was saying to him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!” ⁹ And Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” He replied, “My name is Legion, for we are many.” ¹⁰ And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. ¹¹ Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, ¹² and they begged him, saying, “Send us to the pigs; let us enter them.” ¹³ So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea.

¹⁴ The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. ¹⁵ And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed^[c] man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. ¹⁶ And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. ¹⁷ And they began to beg Jesus^[d] to depart from their region. ¹⁸ As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. ¹⁹ And he did not permit him but said to him, “Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” ²⁰ And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.

Luke 8:26-39

²⁶ Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes,^[a] which is opposite Galilee. ²⁷ When Jesus^[b] had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs. ²⁸ When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me.” ²⁹ For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.) ³⁰ Jesus then asked him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Legion,” for many demons had entered him. ³¹ And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. ³² Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. ³³ Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned.

³⁴ When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country.

³⁵ Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. ³⁶ And those who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed^[c] man had been healed. ³⁷ Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned.

³⁸ The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹ “Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.” And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

1. Read the three passages, what are some of the differences? Similarities? How does this demonstrate accuracy of the accounts?

- There were two demon possessed men in Matthew, and only one mentioned in Mark and Luke – This is not contradictory, merely that one is clearly the focus of the story and mentioned specifically in Mark and Luke, while Matthew is referring to both.
- Location (Gadarenes in Matthew & Gerasene in Mark & Luke) There seems to have been many small towns in the area this account occurred. There were towns, and providences and locations were often called by their proximity to cities and by their location relative to the largest city nearby. These two names for this location are not contradictory, but defining the location relative to different landmarks.

2. What is the purpose of the passage? Why did God choose to incorporate this story into three of the Gospel narratives?

- To show that Jesus has power over demons and spirits. Jesus was in the Davidic line of king of Israel, but also He is the Son of God -therefore He has power over not only all creation, but the spirit world as well.
- If Jesus chooses a naked, spirit possessed man to be his missionary to the Gadarenes, He can use anybody regardless of our weaknesses and failings.

Luke 8:26-31 ³⁸ The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹“Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.” And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

3. What is the significance of the man with the unclean spirit’s initial statements to Jesus? (Matt 8:29; Mark 5:7; Luke 8:28)

- The Demon’s that possessed the man knew that Jesus was the Son of God. They did not have any difficulty recognizing Jesus identity. Demons are fallen angels that God created, and fell when they followed Satan and wanted to revolt against God. They do not reproduce (**Matthew 22:30** - For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.) and have been around since creation. They know God well and seem to have a correct theology about the unfolding of God’s plan. They always recognize Jesus as the Son of God, and obey his every request.

4. Read James 2:19. What does that tell us about belief in the identity of Jesus and it's relevance to Salvation? How is the belief described in John 3:16 different than the belief in James 2:19?

James 2:19 - You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons **believe**—and shudder!

John 3:16 - “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever **believes** in him should not perish but have eternal life.

- **It is not enough to believe that Jesus was a real person, walked the earth, died on a cross, and even to believe that Jesus rose again from the dead.** Many people saw Jesus as a person, believed he was a real person, watched him die on a cross, and still did not “believe” in the sense that it is used here in the scripture. When Jesus died on the cross he was alongside two thieves who were also being crucified. One of them submitted to His authority as God, and believed in Him for eternal life; and one of them mocked him. **The belief that is present in salvation is a belief that understands the identity of Jesus and submits to Him for forgiveness and salvation.** One of the biggest obstacles to salvation is pride and an unwillingness to repent and submit to Christ for forgiveness.

Luke 23:39-43 - ³⁹ One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him,^[d] saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” ⁴⁰ But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.” ⁴² And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” ⁴³ And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

5. Why did the demons beg Jesus to not torment them (Before the time – Matthew 8:29)?

- The demons know that Jesus will someday return to Earth and conquer Satan. They know that their ultimate destiny is to suffer eternal punishment in Hell. They know that God has granted them time now, as part of His divine plan, and that when Jesus was on Earth they knew that it was not yet their time to be punished.

1 Peter 1:10-12 ¹⁰ Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, ¹¹ inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. ¹² It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached

the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

6. Is demonic power real even today? Should we learn more about them so as to understand and engage this battle today?

- Demons and satanic powers are as real in the world today as they were in the Gospels. A general overview of the Bible, however reveals that there is an increased mention of demonic possession in the Gospels than there seems to be in other time periods in Scripture. Perhaps this is related to Jesus' presence casting a light that makes Satan's powers easier to see, perhaps there is more going on here than we are aware of. Scripture does not reveal this to us.

Ephesians 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

- We do know that it is important to remember that our focus needs to always be on Christ and His righteousness, and by keeping our eyes on Christ we will be shielded from the wrath around us.

Psalms 101:1-4 - I will sing of steadfast love and justice; to you, O LORD, I will make music. ² I will ponder the way that is blameless. Oh when will you come to me? I will walk with integrity of heart within my house; ³ I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless. I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me. ⁴ A perverse heart shall be far from me; I will know nothing of evil.

Proverbs 4:23-27 - Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. ²⁴ Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you. ²⁵ Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. ²⁶ Ponder^[c] the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. ²⁷ Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.

7. How do we battle the evil in the world around us today? Is Satan dedicated to destroying christens and the church?

- Yes, we do, but not in the way that Hollywood depicts it. The wrestling is not physical – it is for our righteousness, and our testimony. Job 1 illustrates this well. Satan accuses Job before God. We are created in the image of God, and our purpose (going back to Genesis) is to fill the Earth with God's image. To glorify God in all of our thoughts and deeds.

Genesis 1:26-28 ²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man^[h] in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over

the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Job 1:6-11 - ⁶ Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan^[b] also came among them. ⁷ The LORD said to Satan, “From where have you come?” Satan answered the LORD and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.” ⁸ And the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?” ⁹ Then Satan answered the LORD and said, “Does Job fear God for no reason? ¹⁰ Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹ But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.” ¹² And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.” So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

Romans 5:12 - Wherefore, as by one-man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

7b. Read 1 Timothy 4:1-10 and Ephesians 6:10-20. How do these passages tell us to fight the powers of Hell and Evil in the world today?

1 Timothy 4:1-10 - Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,² through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared,³ who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.⁴ For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving,⁵ for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer. ⁶ If you put these things before the brothers,^[a] you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, **being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed.**⁷ Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness;⁸ for while bodily training is of some value, **godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.**⁹ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. ¹⁰ For to this end we toil and strive,^[b] because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

Ephesians 6:10-20 ¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

Conclusion: Somebody once said of the Bible, “I read the end of the book – we win!” That is true, and a glorious truth at that. God promises in the Bible that He will one day crush Satan and evil, and we will live with Him in a new Heaven and a new Earth without sin, and sickness, and death. Until then we hold fast to the truths that He has given to us, and prepare our hearts for His return. **Revelation 22:20** - He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Revelation 12:7-12 - ⁷ Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, ⁸ but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. ⁹ And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. ¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers^[a] has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. ¹¹ And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. ¹² Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!”