

The Gospel of Mark

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Chapter Five

Mark now links together three seemingly very different events. However they are related for the Jews considered anyone unclean who had been associated with graves, blood, or death so the events of this chapter are related theologically. Mark often seems more concerned with theology than with putting events in any chronological order.

Mar 5:1-13 NASB

*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."*

They now came over to the eastern shore of the lake about 30 miles from the town of Gerasa. The area from that town to the lake is called the region of the Gerasenes. Jesus had shown His authority over the forces of nature and now He was faced with the forces of evil. The tombs were an area near the lake of limestone rock that is easily carved into tombs where people were buried. This was a place where people thought many demons lived also and so would have been the best place for this demon-possessed man to be living. He had been bound before but he had broken the chains and now his strength was so great that nobody could bind him anymore. He was in constant turmoil as the demons controlled him and wanted to destroy him. He was ranting and howling over the area in a way that must have caused great terror among the residents of the area. He must have looked terrible as he had been gashing himself with stones. He saw Jesus from a distance and ran toward Him. The demon-possessed man bowed before Jesus, not in worship but in respect as he knew who he was. Jesus had been commanding the demons to leave the man but apparently more force was needed for such a possession. The demon had addressed Jesus as Son of the Most High God showing that the demon recognized the deity of Jesus. He almost seemed to be stating that he was of equal authority with Jesus when he asked Jesus what business they had with each other. But the demon requested Jesus not to torment him showing that the demon recognized the authority of Jesus. Jesus then asked the man to tell him his name for that was a means to control him. A Roman legion is over 6000 men and the man must have felt like such a number was controlling him. The man seems to have been so completely controlled by the demons that he could not identify himself apart from them.

Mark 5:10-13)

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.

The demons begged Jesus not to send them out of the country. Luke states the request as: “*They were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the abyss.*” (Luke 8:31) The abyss is the place of confinement before judgment (Rev 20:1-3). They wanted to be free to continue to plague other men rather than confined. This region was mostly Gentile and there were many herdsmen with swine in the area. Pigs are unclean to the Jews so they would not have had any of them. Rather than being confined the demons asked to be sent into the pigs. Jesus apparently wanted to show to the man and to the people of the area that He had control over the demons and letting them go into the pigs to destroy them showed the true purpose of Satan, the Destroyer. Rather than destroying the man they destroyed about 2000 pigs as they drowned in the sea. Round numbers are seldom to be translated literally and this number is given by Mark just to state that a very large number of pigs were killed when the demons were released from the man by Jesus and they controlled the pigs.

Mark 5:14-17

*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.*

The entire area would have known about this demon-possessed man so the herdsmen ran to the city to report what had happened. When the people came to where the man had been they would have been amazed when they saw him sitting down, clothed, and in his right mind. They naturally would have been afraid because they had not been able to control the man at all. Luke reports that the man had roamed naked in the area (Luke 8:27) so the transformation was incredible. There is a spiritual component to this event for the man had been naked and Jesus clothed him just as He gives spiritual clothing to those who have been born again. The eyewitnesses to the event described the complete event to the people from the city. Being in the presence of such a power that they could not understand would have been terrifying to them so they begged Jesus to leave their area. Jesus does not stay where He is not wanted so He did leave. Their selfishness is revealed for they had no compassion for the former demoniac.

Mark 5:18-20

*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.

The former demoniac begged Jesus that He might take him with the group but Jesus did not allow that. Rather Jesus told the man to go home and report to his people the great mercy that Jesus had shown him. This is a different response by Jesus than what He told the leper that He had cured (1:44--). Decapolis was not just one city but a conglomeration of ten cities so the man was given a considerable mission. Since this was a largely Gentile area the people would not have generally identified Jesus as the promised Messiah but as a holy man with great healing powers. They were then amazed at what Jesus had done and showed none of the hostility that the Jews demonstrated against Jesus since He posed no threat to their lifestyle.

Mark 5:21-24

*When Jesus had crossed over again in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered around Him; and so He stayed by the seashore. (22) One of the synagogue officials named Jairus *came up, and on seeing Him, *fell at His feet (23) and *implored Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death; please come and lay Your hands on her, so that she will get well and live." (24) And He went off with him; and a large crowd was following Him and pressing in on Him.*

Mark does not state where Jesus now arrived but most commentators consider this to be the area around Capernaum. The crowds were very large as they had been before He first crossed over the sea and many of these people may have been waiting for Him to return. He stayed by the shore to teach and minister to the group and one of the synagogue officials came to Him and worshipped Him as he begged Jesus to help his daughter. Generally the synagogue officials were "lay" people who had administrative duties to maintain the synagogues. They would be maintaining the building and supervising the worship services but had not priestly duties. Jairus told Jesus that his little daughter was at the point of death and said that if Jesus would just lay His hands on her she would get well and live. This plea showed that Jairus had been given great faith concerning Jesus. Mark does not report that Jesus replied to the man but that He went with him to where his daughter was living. A large crowd followed them probably out of curiosity since they had heard much about His healing powers.

Mark 5:25-34

A woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years, (26) and had endured much at the hands of many physicians, and had spent all that she had and was not helped at all, but rather had grown worse-- (27) after hearing about Jesus, she came up in the crowd behind Him and touched His cloak. (28) For she thought, "If I just touch His garments, I will get well." (29) Immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction.

As they were going with Jairus to his home, a woman with a severe hemorrhage problem approached the group. It is interesting that she had this problem for twelve years and the little girl was twelve years old. The woman had endured many attempts by physicians who were unable to heal her and she had spent all of her money seeking a cure. Rather than even obtaining

some relief from her condition she had grown worse. Luke does not give all the details that Mark relates (Luke 8:43), perhaps because he was a physician also. She had been given great faith also as she thought that if she just touched His cloak she would be healed. The healing power of Jesus did immediately cause the woman's condition to be healed and Jesus immediately sensed that the power had flowed from him to someone.

Mark 5:30-34

Immediately Jesus, perceiving in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My garments?" (31) And His disciples said to Him, "You see the crowd pressing in on You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'" (32) And He looked around to see the woman who had done this. (33) But the woman fearing and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. (34) And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your affliction."

Jesus showed His great compassion for the ill as He asked who had touched His garments. But the disciples thought this was a rather strange question since they were surrounded by many people and any of them could have touched Jesus's clothing. Perhaps they also wanted to rush on the home of Jairus rather than pausing to find out who touched Jesus. However Jesus was determined to find out who touched Him so He looked about at the crowd. The woman was afraid to the point of trembling as she knew what had happened to her that no mere human had been able to make happen. So she worshipped Him and told Him the entire story of her condition and the healing that had happened when she touched His cloak. Jesus knew exactly what had happened so He told her that her faith had made her well. God gives faith and Jesus knew that the Father had ordained her healing. He then told her to go in peace, meaning to not be in fear of Him, and He further commanded her to be healed completely of her affliction. Perhaps her symptoms were removed when she exercised her faith and at the command of Jesus the cause was then removed as well. The address by Jesus to this woman as "daughter" is the only such instance in the Gospels of Jesus so addressing a woman. He must have been greatly touched by her faith and He had great compassion on her for the long time she had suffered. The Greek word translated "healed" can also be translated as "saved" and the two are definitely linked in this application. The phrase "go in peace" is a traditional Jewish way of parting from someone and the meaning is not just freedom from some inward anxiety but a feeling of wholeness or completeness of life that comes from being brought into a right relationship with God.

Mark 5:35-43

*While He was still speaking, they *came from the house of the synagogue official, saying, "Your daughter has died; why trouble the Teacher anymore?" (36) But Jesus, overhearing what was being spoken, *said to the synagogue official, "Do not be afraid any longer, only believe." (37) And He allowed no one to accompany Him, except Peter and James and John the brother of James.*

Jesus was still talking to the woman healed of her hemorrhage when some people from the house of the synagogue official came to tell the group surrounding Jesus that the young girl had died. The people thought that death was a final event so they thought there was no reason to bother "the Teacher" anymore with this concluded event. Referring to Jesus as the Teacher reveals that

they had no concept of the true identity of Jesus. Jesus knew that such news would be devastating to Jairus so He told him to not be afraid any longer but only to believe. Of course it was the power of Jesus that Jairus was to believe and when he did that all fear would be gone. Jairus did not try to impede the progress of Jesus but apparently did believe as he did when he first approached Jesus. Jesus was about to perform a momentous miracle and He did not want a great crowd to see it so He allowed only Peter, James, and John (the brother of James) to accompany Him and Jairus (assumed) to the side of the child.

Mark 5:38-43

*They *came to the house of the synagogue official; and He *saw a commotion, and people loudly weeping and wailing. (39) And entering in, He *said to them, "Why make a commotion and weep? The child has not died, but is asleep." (40) They began laughing at Him. But putting them all out, He *took along the child's father and mother and His own companions, and *entered the room where the child was. (41) Taking the child by the hand, He *said to her, "Talitha kum!" (which translated means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). (42) Immediately the girl got up and began to walk, for she was twelve years old. And immediately they were completely astounded. (43) And He gave them strict orders that no one should know about this, and He said that something should be given her to eat.*

The custom was to hire professional mourners to be at the place of an event like death and that is what the house of Jairus had done. These people would have been singing choral songs or antiphony that was accompanied by hand-clapping. Jairus was a well-known and important person in the community so a large number of mourners would have been there as well as many friends and family members. After entering the house Jesus asked them why they were making such a commotion and weeping for the child is only asleep. The mourners (surely not the family) laughed at this remark by Jesus for they had been to many death beds and knew that the girl was indeed dead. It seems hugely rude for them to laugh at Jesus' remark in the presence of the family, which says a lot about them. Jesus often used the term "sleep" synonymous with death and Luke (as a physician) makes it clear that the girl was indeed dead: "*And her spirit returned, and she got up immediately; and He gave orders for something to be given her to eat.*" (Luke 8:55)

Jesus dismissed the group except for the mother and father of the girl and His chosen disciples as they entered the room where the girl was. Jesus gently took the girl's hand and commanded her to get up. He addressed her in a very tender fashion as "little girl" for Jesus was very compassionate in His dealing with those who do not malign Him. Mark reports that Jesus spoke in Aramaic, which was probably His native language. Mark then translates it to Greek for that would be the main language of the people in this area. Not only did the girl immediately get up but she also began to walk about. Being a meticulous detailed person, Mark informs his readers that the girl was twelve years old. As noted previously this is the same time period that the woman had been suffering her hemorrhaging. So strength as well as life immediately returned to the girl. The entire group was immediately and completely astounded at this miracle. Jesus then gave them two strict orders. First they were not to reveal the facts of this miracle. Certainly this order would have been possible for them to obey but because of the great crowd of family,

friends, and mourners, many people would see the result of the “treatment” by Jesus. However He did want the details kept within this small group. Without input from the family, many of the people would probably assume that the girl had indeed just been asleep or in a coma even though they laughed at this suggestion by Jesus initially. Thus the reality of the messianic position of Jesus would only be known by the five people present at the miracle. It would be veiled from the knowledge of the raucous mourners who could not be trusted with this knowledge. I imagine that it would have been very difficult for the parents to keep this secret but having seen the power of Jesus they may have been able to not reveal the details of her coming back to life. Maybe the girl would not have known that she had died unlike some people today who give great credit to having died and come back to life. The second command by Jesus was for them to feed the girl as an acknowledgment that her entire life force had returned and she could not digest food properly.