

Stage IV. The Great Galilean Ministry

G . The Second Tour of Galilee

11. A Legion of Demons Obey Jesus (Miracle #14)

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #097

Base Text: MK 5.1-20 (Parallel Texts: MT 8.28-34; LK 8.26-40)

1 ^MThey went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. 2 When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him, ^{MT}who was possessed by many demons ^Land had not worn any clothes for a long time, and did not live in his own house.

3 ^MThis man was living in the tombs, ^{MT}and was extremely fierce, so that no one could approach him, ^Mand no one was able to bind him anymore, not even with a chain. 4 For he had often been firmly chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and permanently destroyed the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. 5 Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would keep on crying out and cutting himself with stones.

6 Because he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran up and fell on his knees in front of him. 7 He shouted out at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? ^{MT}Have you come to torment us before the appointed time? ^LI beseech ^Mand implore you in God's name, don't torture me!"

8 For Jesus had been saying to him, *"I command you to come out of this man, you impure spirit!"*

9 Then Jesus asked him, *"What is your name?"*

"My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." 10 And he pleaded with Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area, ^Lnor command them to depart into the abyss.

11 ^MA large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. 12 The demons begged Jesus, ^{MT}"Since you will cast us out, ^Msend us among the pigs; permit us to go into them." 13 He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

14 Those tending the pigs took off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened.

15 When ^{MT}the whole city ^Mcame to Jesus, they took a long look at the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and functioning in his right mind; and they were afraid. 16 Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man--and told about the pigs as well.

17 Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region, ^Lfor their hearts were gripped with overpowering fear. So Jesus got into the boat and returned.

18 ^MAs Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. 19 Jesus did not permit him, but said,

"Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you."

20 So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people continued to be amazed.

=====

NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until

Stage IV. The Great Galilean Ministry

a different superscript appears. In addition, *the words of Jesus are italicized in red*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	Gerasa, in the Decapolis (East of the Sea of Galilee)
Timeline	May--Oct. (Months 16 to 21)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage IV: The Great Galilean Ministry
	G. The 2 nd Tour of Galilee
Title	II. A Legion of Demons Obey Jesus (Miracle #14)

COMMENT:

The second miracle in the sequence of six that followed Jesus' teaching in parables was the exorcism and healing of a man held in bondage by a multitude of demons. The man's possession by many demons made him the worst case of demonic oppression in the entire Bible. The ease with which Jesus set this man free stood in stark contrast to the horror of his condition, and served to highlight the surpassing power and grace of Jesus. It is no mere coincidence that all three synoptic gospels describe this saving encounter with Jesus.

Jesus had crossed the Sea of Galilee in the night, after quieting the storm. Gerasa, also called Gadara, was an important town in region called "Decapolis"--located to the East/Southeast of the Sea of Galilee. The town was about 6 miles inland from the Lake. There was a steep cliff area by the lake that the herd of pigs cast themselves down.

This is the only event on Jesus' 2nd Tour that did not occur in Galilee proper. Why would Jesus cross the Lake to venture into the Decapolis at this juncture on his 2nd Tour?

This exorcism gave unique evidence that Jesus was not a Satanist. He had just pointed out to the Pharisees that if he was casting out demons by the power of the Devil, then Satan's kingdom would be divided against itself and surely fall. Jesus' ability to cast out multitudes of demons in one man with a word shows that he was not dividing Satan's power back against Satan. All of the cast out demons were unified in their obedience to Jesus, not fragmented into obedient and disobedient groups, as would have been the case if Satan's kingdom was in division. This miracle was a reproof to the accusations of the Pharisees.

Matthew pointed out that Jesus cast demons out of two men in this event. However, the emphasis was placed on one of the men, who was possessed by enough demons to be called "Legion." In the Roman army, a legion typically consisted of 5,000 men, though the actual numbers varied. The highly unusual scope of this man's demonic possession caused Mark and Luke to concentrate the narrative on the one man with the multitude of demons. So will we.

The man's life under the control of the "Legion" of demons could best be described as a living death akin to hell itself. The man lived in graveyards. He could not be restrained by any human force, including iron fetter and chains strong enough to moor large boats. He was constantly injuring himself, and no one could approach him for fear of being destroyed. He lived in a state of nakedness. The entire city and surrounding countryside near him was being buffeted by the power of Satan through one man's demon possession, and they were all helpless against the continuous assault of darkness and death.

When Jesus came near he did not have to initiate anything to heal the man. Rather, the man whom everyone else avoided like the plague came straight up to Jesus, and fell down before him. Jesus obviously welcomed him, while he repudiated the demons! The demons feared Jesus and requested to leave the man and flee into a herd of pigs. Jesus let them do so.

Stage IV. The Great Galilean Ministry

In a matter of just a few seconds this man went from being the most oppressed man on the face of the earth to being of sound mind, clothed, fed, and seated in fellowship at the feet of Jesus. At the end of the encounter Jesus sent the man home to be a witness of his Savior's love and grace. This demonstration of God's power through Jesus was one of the greatest ministry scenes of his entire ministry. Jesus himself described it as, **"What great things the Lord has done for you."** What did this earn Jesus?

After the demons destroyed the herd of pigs by running them into the sea, the townspeople came to Jesus and asked him to leave their region, without even a "thank you." He had made their town a safe place again, and had delivered a life from the pit of hell. Yet the people could not get rid of him any faster than they did. They preferred living under the oppression of a legion of demons to freedom in Jesus.

APPLICATION:

Jesus has total power over the Devil and his demons. He came to save us from all of the effects and consequences that come to us as a result of believing the Devil's lies and schemes. Jesus saves all of us as decisively and effectively as he ministered to the man oppressed by "Legion." He has also given us his own authority over the kingdom of darkness in his name. He saves completely, and forever.

Yet, when Jesus delivers and transforms us he shakes up the status quo for us personally, and for all who know us, too. This inevitably creates great tension with those around us who resist change, and end up opposing Jesus' work in our lives as a result. What should we do about that? Just what Jesus did: we keep on loving and ministering, and we continue moving on to share the message with all people.

How are you overcoming resistance from those around you in your own ministry? What does Jesus' example say to you about this?