

OpenTheo

Man of the Tombs (Part 1)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg discusses the well-known biblical story of the man possessed by demons and healed by Jesus. He addresses the apparent contradictions in the different mentions of the story in the Gospels and emphasizes the meekness of Jesus in dealing with the situation. Gregg also points out that not all demon-possessed individuals are necessarily completely controlled by demonic spirits and highlights the broader philosophical questions surrounding the concept of demons and spiritual bondage.

Transcript

Let's turn now to Mark chapter 5, and we have this well-known story, probably the most famous story, of Jesus casting demons out of persons. In fact, when people think about the subject of demon possession, nowadays there are a number of cinematography and theatrical images of demonization that come to people's minds if they've seen movies like *The Exorcist* or a lot of other copycat movies that came out after the success of that movie. Where demon-possessed persons are portrayed as wild and insane and doing supernatural things and are very sinister and very evil.

Certainly, the only case we really read of in the Bible of a demon-possessed person having these phenomena associated with them or anything like them is this story. And while it is the case, we have to assume from this story and from modern stories about such things, that these things do happen, that this kind of demon possession is not unheard of. Yet, the majority of demon-possessed people in the scriptures were much less wild, much less bizarre, much less crazy in their reported behavior, at least, which is recorded in the scriptures, than the case before us.

But often, when we think of demon possession, depending on where we've gotten our images, if we've gotten them from... Well, let me put it this way. If you've been in a church that emphasizes deliverance ministries, you might think of demon possession as characterized by nothing more than you have a drinking problem or you crack your knuckles nervously or something like that. I mean, almost everything is equated with demon possession in some demon-chasing, deliverance-type groups.

In such cases, the slightest aberration in behavior, a nervous twitch or anything, can be considered to be evidence of demon possession. But I think the average person who has not been in such circumstances, if they think of demon possession at all, they think of crazy behavior, the kind of person who ought to be locked up if not delivered. And this is the only case, like I said in the scriptures, where we really read of demon-possessed people behaving in that way.

Now, in the story before us, we have the encounter of Jesus with a demon-possessed man in Mark chapter 5. Matthew's parallel, which is in Matthew 8, we won't turn there now, but in Matthew chapter 8, we have the parallel story, also in Luke chapter 8. And we are told by Matthew, but not by Mark or Luke, that there were actually two men that were encountered by Jesus on this occasion. And this is one of the several cases of its type, where people have again tried to find some kind of fault, some kind of error in the record of the Gospels, and some evidence that we should not trust the Gospels, because after all, they are hopelessly at odds with each other and full of contradictions. Namely, that Mark and Luke speak of a man of a certain description that came and Jesus encountered him and cast demons out of him.

For as Matthew mentions, two men came. And so some have thought, well, there is a contradiction. But as I've pointed out on other similar cases, to call this a contradiction is certainly unfair.

Because Mark and Luke do not deny that there were two men. They only record what happened with a man. And in particular, a conversation that took place between the demons that were in a man and Jesus.

Jesus had this conversation and this interaction with the demons in this man. Whether a similar conversation took place with the other man, who was in a similar condition or not, we don't know. And if not, it's possible that that's why Mark and Luke don't record anything about the other man.

Maybe either nothing dramatic happened in the second man's case, or maybe, you know, maybe the same thing happened in both cases. And to tell of one is enough for the Gospel writers. In any case, for a man to say Jesus met such and such a person, and for another person to say Jesus met two such persons, is in no sense a contradiction.

If you were robbed on the street and you were asked to come to testify in court, and you were robbed by two people, but only one of them was apprehended or even one was on trial at the moment, and you're asked if that man had robbed you and you testified that he had, with or without mentioning that there had been a second party present, your testimony could be true, even if there were, in point of fact, two persons. If you're in fact dealing with an individual case and talking about an individual case without denying or affirming that there were two, no one can say that you're lying or being non-historical or inaccurate. And it would be no contradiction if in some other setting you mentioned that

there were two men who were involved.

Obviously, it is possible for two accounts to be contradictory in nature to each other, but this is not a case of that. This is simply a case where both accounts can be true. Now, I want to say this, too.

When I make that point, and I make that, of course, every time I encounter a passage like this where there's that kind of a discrepancy, I always, of course, come to the defense of the scriptural writers, as Christians always have throughout history. It's certainly nothing new for a Christian to defend the biblical writers on these points. These are not new discoveries that modern skeptics have discovered all of a sudden.

I mean, the differences between Matthew, Mark, and Luke have been well-known for almost 2,000 years now in church history. It has never been, to Christians, a thing beyond explanation. But to skeptics, they might say, but, you know, that's a fancy piece of talk you've just given.

But the fact of the matter is, if there really were two demon-possessed persons, it seems unlikely that Mark or Luke would neglect to mention both. I mean, why would they only mention one? I don't know the answer to that. And, of course, one has to make his own decision on the basis of what he considers to be plausible or probable.

That is to say that I can tell you that all the gospel writers told the truth, although they didn't tell all the same details of the account. That may be true, or it may be the case that two of the accounts were wrong, or one of the accounts was wrong. That's the choice a person has to take.

But the point is, you can't really say there's a contradiction unless all the accounts cannot be true. And the fact is that all the accounts can be true. One doesn't have to be embarrassed by any of the accounts when comparing with the others.

They are capable of being harmonized. The same is true about Judas hanging himself or Judas falling headlong and his bowels bursting out, the two accounts of Judas' death. Certainly there's no reason why both of those stories can't be true.

One might say, but it's not very likely that a person would hang himself, and then also sometime later his bowels would go out. Maybe not likely, but many unlikely things happen in history. We're not talking about what's likely, particularly.

One has to make his own judgment in that respect of whether he thinks it's likely enough that that would happen or so unlikely that one must disparage the scriptural accounts. But as far as what is possible, if you read history, you'll read of many things that did happen, or at least are universally believed to have happened because they're reported as such, which were unlikely to happen. If one wanted to sit down and talk about the laws of averages and the likelihood that things would happen, all kinds of things happen

in your own life.

That if, prior to them happening, someone wanted to calculate the chances of it happening or not might be considered to be very improbable, but they do happen. And therefore the knowledge of whether something really happened or not is best known not by the question of probabilities, but on the basis of whether there's reliable witnesses to the event. And in the judgment of many, myself included, the gospel writers give very good evidence of being reliable witnesses to their accounts.

And therefore if you find what looks like a discrepancy, or even is a discrepancy in the way they tell the story, a discrepancy isn't always a contradiction, and it certainly doesn't mean there's a flaw in one of the accounts. It simply means that they have told the story differently, though it is possible for all the accounts to be telling the truth, and that's good enough for me. I'm not perhaps overly skeptical.

I am a believer, that's why. There's a difference between people who are believers and people who aren't believers. Believers believe, but that doesn't mean they're gullible.

Now, having made that observation, we're not really going to be using Matthew's version much. We're going to cross-reference a few things from Matthew's version, but the first thing to notice is that when Jesus encounters this demon-possessed man, Matthew tells us there were two, and that's one of the things that makes Matthew's version stand out, and that's one of the things that's considered problematic to many people. Let me read the story in Mark's version, which is, in my judgment, the best one to use as our standard, and we'll compare some things from Matthew and Luke as it becomes appropriate.

It's the first 20 verses of Mark chapter 5 that we're considering. We have just discussed the storm at sea that Jesus and his disciples encountered. They were on their way over to this particular confrontation that we now read of, and Jesus stilled the storm, and 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, the 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 in clothes 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 the great things, or 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 Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him and all marvels. Now, we had some comments to make about this in our previous session because at the beginning of our previous session I wasn't sure that we might cover this story as well.

I stated at that time I didn't think we necessarily would get through it, but it was a possibility. And I do think there are some important connections to draw between this story and the previous one. There's two levels at which I want to talk about this story.

One is simply the historical account and the details of what happened. The other is what spiritual lessons there may be implied by it. As I've said in the past, some of the cases in the Gospels, certainly it's the truth in John, but I believe there's reason to believe it's true in the Synoptic Gospels as well, where miracles or mighty acts of Jesus are done.

There is sometimes more reason behind the report than just to tell what happened, but also the desire to illustrate some spiritual truth. And that is, I think, the case here, as I made the point in our last session that I thought it was the case in the story of the sealing of the storm as well. I'd like to bring that out, but only after we've gone through the details of the story.

Now, one of the first details we have to deal with is in verse 1, that Jesus and his disciples came onto the other side of the sea to the country of the Gadarenes. Now, what

makes this difficult is that different manuscripts read differently and the different Gospels read differently, and given the name of this place. In this particular case, in Mark 5, verse 1, the Alexandrian text says Gerazenes, or Gerazenes, rather than Gadarenes.

But there's also, in some of the Gospels, Gergazenes is the way it reads. Now, there's three different ways that this particular location is identified in the Gospel accounts, if you compare them. It's either the Gerazenes, the Gadarenes, or the Gergazenes.

Or Gadara is the name of the place. That would be the place for Gadarenes, is Gadara. These are all different ways that this location is identified.

Now, it's not altogether important to identify the spot, and therefore it wouldn't justify a great deal of time to try to sort out where the spot is. Scholars are not entirely sure, but they have identified a spot on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, which is across the sea from where Jesus stayed most of the time in Capernaum, up to the northeast side of the shore of the Sea of Galilee, which is known to modern people as, I think it's called, Carassa or Carcassa, or something like that. I could have looked it up.

I've seen it before. I've read it before. It's not important enough for me to identify the place, so I had other things to consider than just trying to identify the modern name of the place.

But it's something like Carassa or something. And there are some steep cliffs there. In fact, one reason that scholars have identified this spot with the probable location of this story is it's, I think, the only place on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee where there are steep cliffs that drop off into the sea.

The story seems to indicate that kind of geography, that kind of topography, that they hurled themselves over a cliff or down a steep way into the sea. So that's probably a true identification. That's not the important thing.

One of the important things is that Jesus apparently was, he came over there just to meet this one man. Now, maybe not, maybe, you know, maybe he didn't see it that way. Maybe, you know, Jesus was always being led by his father, but didn't always know what was going to happen next, in my opinion.

I don't think Jesus always knew all that was ahead. As far as Jesus knew, perhaps he was going over there to do some ministry in that region. But as it turned out, after he helped this man, or these two men, we're not told if the second man was delivered, I guess we have to assume that was true too, the people of the area asked Jesus to leave.

And one of the remarkable things is that as soon as they asked, Jesus got in the boat and left. Here, the man who is demonstrated in the immediate context to have power over the wind and the sea, he is the Lord over the elements of nature, over the heaven and the earth, that he has authority and lordship, and he gives commands to the wind and

the sea, and they obey him. And beyond that, he gives commands to the demonic hosts, and they obey him instantly, or nearly instantly.

Yet, he obeys the commands of the people, when they say, go away, we don't want you here. This is something about the great meekness of Jesus Christ, that he is God in the flesh, or the meekness of God himself, for that matter. That he who is God and commands the storm, which no man can control, who commands the demons, which no man can control, that he can control powers much greater than man, but he allows himself, at least in some measure, to be governed by man, only in the sense of personal reception of his ministry.

Obviously, if they had said, listen, Jesus, go out of the ministry, we don't want you to preach anymore, he wouldn't have obeyed that. But they said, listen, don't preach in our area, we don't want you. He just turned around, got in the shit, and left.

Which is an important thing to note, because many people feel that if we allow, that the Bible teaches that God has given man free choice with reference to salvation, to his own personal salvation, that we are somehow depriving God of being God, depriving God of his sovereignty, depriving God of his authority. And yet, nothing shows more clearly than these stories, that Jesus, who is in full possession of all authority in heaven and earth, who orders the elements of nature and they obey him, who orders the demons and they obey him, yet he allows man to make man's own choice with reference to reception of Jesus, or not. These people didn't want Jesus, and therefore he let them go.

Now, even the demon-possessed man, I don't think there's evidence there that this man was sovereignly by God forced to be converted, or to be delivered. It is an interesting thing that the man was just overrun by demonic hordes, probably thousands of demons. Of course, there's the reference to the number 2,000 in verse 13, which looks to be a reference to the number of swine.

It's probably the number of swine there were, 2,000. Although, I suppose, from the way the sentence is worded, it would not exclude the possibility that it could be saying there were 2,000 demons, because the sentence speaks about demons, or unclean spirits, went out and entered the swine. Parenthetically, it says there were about 2,000.

It doesn't say 2,000 swine or 2,000 demons. I guess it could be taken either way. It is generally assumed that 2,000 is the number of the swine.

But since the demons are said to have been many, and took the name legion to describe their hordes, and since the Roman legion of soldiers was 6,000, it's possible that the demons' number is even greater than 2,000. Maybe even 6,000, who knows? The point is, though, this man was about as demon-possessed as they get. I mean, there's other individuals that Jesus cast single, individual demons out of a spirit of infirmity, or a dumb spirit, or a deaf spirit, out of someone, or an unclean spirit.

But here we have a cluster, a large cluster, a large community taking residence. From my own studies of demon possession as a subject in the Bible, and by the way, I've mentioned before, well, we've gone on some excursions on this subject in a few previous lectures where it's been justified, I thought, by the material. In my own study of what the Bible says on it, fragmentary as the material is, and anecdotal rather than didactic, it doesn't really teach anything about it.

We just get the anecdotes, this happened here and this happened there, and we kind of make deductions. I have personally come to the conclusion that demon possession is a phenomenon that is a matter of degree. You know, we always have heard people say, maybe you haven't, but I have a great deal, heard people say, well, Christians can be demon-oppressed, but they can't be demon-possessed, and only non-Christians can be demon-possessed.

Now, that might be true. I don't know if that's true or not. I have my doubts that that's true, but it may be true.

I can't claim to be an expert about that, but the one thing I would say about that statement is how unscriptural it is. Because, for one thing, the expression demon-oppressed is not even a biblical expression. No one in the Bible is described as being demon-oppressed.

There's no reference even to the phenomenon of being demon-oppressed. The closest thing you get is in Peter's sermon at the household of Cornelius, where he said that Jesus went around healing all who were oppressed by the devil, which would presumably be Satan, and may not be a reference to demon possession at all. It might be a reference to sicknesses.

Jesus healed all who were oppressed by the devil. So, it's arguable that that's not even referring to the cases where Jesus cast demons out of people, but even if it was, then we have reason to identify oppressed by the devil with demon-possessed, because, I mean, that's the cases. Jesus dealt in the Scriptures with sick people whom he healed and demon-possessed people whom he delivered.

And we don't know which Peter is talking about, but on the one hand, if Peter is saying when Jesus healed all that were oppressed by the devil, in Acts chapter 10, if he means the healings, then it has nothing to do with the issue of demonic invasion of believers or whatever. So, we can't use that statement as a statement about whether Christians can be demon-possessed, or oppressed. Furthermore, if when he talks about Jesus healing those who are oppressed by the devil, if he means the people that Jesus drove demons out of, then we simply have a case where demon-possession, as it's described in the Gospels, is called oppression by the devil, in the Acts, which identifies the terms, but makes no distinction between the two.

What I'm saying is, when Christians, perhaps for the sake of peace of mind, say, well, Christians can't be demon-possessed, only demon-oppressed, they are using a term that the Bible doesn't use. And the closest the Bible comes to using it would seem to disagree with a distinction being made between oppressed and possessed. It sounds like those would just be two different ways of talking about the same kind of problem.

Now, I have pointed out to you before that the word demon-possessed, as it's frequently translated in our Bible, is one word in the Greek, it's simply demonized, or demonizomai in the Greek, and when you anglicize that or transliterate it, it comes to demonize. And many people who have done research on this have preferred to even just eliminate the term demon-possession from their vocabulary because it's misleading. Possession in English sounds like someone owns something, you know, and that's not necessarily implied in the Greek word.

The Greek word just means to be demonized, whatever that means. But in doing case studies from the Scripture of how many people are said to be demonized, and what we're told about those people, it would certainly appear that demonization, or demon-possession, is a situation which exists in varying degrees in different individuals. I mean, obviously, the case would be somewhat different.

On the one hand, if a person had a demon, or on another hand, if they had 6,000 demons, you know, their life would seem to be worse off in the latter case. It seems like to have a greater number of demons would be a greater bondage. Frankly, I've come to think that the word bondage is the most scriptural term to use in any of these circumstances, that Jesus came to make people free, the devil comes to make people in bondage.

Some people are relatively free, but feel in bondage a great deal. Others are quite in bondage. I mean, bondage in more areas of their life.

I don't want to make any absolute statements about what the right terminology is, but I feel most comfortable talking about people being in bondage to demons. And I say that a person who has one demon is in bondage. It needs to be delivered.

But a person who has 6,000 demons is in a greater bondage. And it should be reflected somewhat more in their behavior, I would think, because of the greater degree of demonization that they are subject to. Now, this man, by that definition, is about the most demon-possessed, the most demonized guy that we read anything about in the scriptures.

Now, the reason I point that out is because this man, when he saw Jesus, came running to Jesus, bowed down at his feet, and it would seem that the demons, not the man, were speaking, crying out for mercy. But the point is, one can hardly think that the demons motivated the man to run up to Jesus. The demons would want to run the other direction,

you'd think.

I mean, now, different people have different opinions about this. I've heard different things said about this. My impression for reading the story has always been this, and I can only give it as my impression.

You can decide whether it's yours or not. My impression is the man ran to Jesus for deliverance, and the demons who were in him found themselves against their desire in the presence of Jesus and screamed out for mercy that he wouldn't torment them. It seems much more that that is the case, more likely that that is the case, than to suggest that the demons themselves, who were terrified of Jesus and afraid of being tormented, would bring themselves into close proximity on their own with him.

Now, if what I just said is true, then there is a point to be made, and there's reason for my making it. And that is that here is a case of the man who is arguably the most demonized man on record, anywhere, in all literature, and especially in the Bible. And yet, he has enough self-control that when he sees Jesus, he can come to Jesus.

He has that much will left. Now, one of my reasons for emphasizing that point is because I've heard all kinds of extra-biblical, very guesswork-quality doctrines about demons given by Christians in many different situations. And people have often said, well, when a person is demon-possessed, they've lost their will.

You know, the demon controls their life, and they don't have any control anymore. And they suggest that a person is demon-possessed can't decide for himself whether he wants to be delivered or not, because the very fact of demon possession is defined in terms of they have no more will of their own. They're now simply totally motivated by a demonic mind, a demonic spirit.

Now, I don't know where a person gets that particular definition of demon possession, but it doesn't appear to come from the Bible, because you find in most cases that demon-possessed persons that Jesus dealt with came to him of their own accord. And I don't know whether we can assume it, but it seems reasonable to, that they came because they wanted help. They came because they wanted to be delivered.

Why else would a person full of demons come running to Jesus, you know? Now, it's important to note this, that Jesus never, on record at least, never went hunting down demon-possessed people to deliver them. I used to think that it would be a really wonderful thing to go into all the mental hospitals and find all the demon-possessed people and cast all the demons out of them. You know, take the offensive in this deal.

Now, Jesus certainly was on the offensive with reference to the kingdom of darkness, but we don't find him just going out, searching out all the demon-possessed people in the land, and, you know, not letting them get away, cornering them and casting the demons

out of them. In all the cases on record, the people came to him or identified themselves. I mean, the first case we ever read about was in the synagogue of Capernaum, and this man was in Capernaum synagogue listening to Jesus preach up to a point, and then he jumped up and started screaming at Jesus.

But certainly, I don't know, but I certainly would imagine Jesus discerned that that guy had a demon probably before he spoke, but didn't take the initiative with the guy. He waited for the man to identify himself and for there to be a manifestation of his problem. There was, of course, a case, we haven't studied it yet, but it's after the Mount of Transfiguration when Jesus and his three disciples came down the mountain.

They found at the foot of the mountain a man who'd brought his son, who was demon-possessed. Now, there's probably the only case, specific case, recorded in Scripture where a demon-possessed person came to Jesus without coming themselves. But here's a case where a child, probably a child, was brought by his father.

And that would be, you know, similar. Jesus didn't go looking for him, the person was brought to him. Now, I say that because there is much questioning on the part of almost anybody who's tried to become involved in any kind of ministry toward demon-possessed people.

Why it is that sometimes demons come out on command and some don't. And I don't profess to be an expert on this. I don't know the final answers.

But one of the conclusions I reached from my own study of Jesus' cases that he cast himself out of is that perhaps, unless the person wants to be delivered, they can't be. That Jesus himself, he wouldn't even stay with the Gadarenes, even though he obviously wanted to be there, that's why he went there in the first place. But they didn't want him there, so he left there.

It's also probable that if the demon-possessed man had not wished to be delivered, that Jesus would have left him alone and let him stay with his problem, let him keep his problem. That certainly, I'm reading between the lines, and there's maybe some danger in doing so, but in looking at all the cases in the scripture, you never find Jesus casting a demon out of someone where it was clearly Jesus who took the initiative in the case. I mean, it's always the demon screams at him first, or the person comes to him first, or is brought to him first, and then he deals with it.

But it would seem that if there were so many demon-possessed people in the country, as there were at the time, that Jesus would have been, you know, if it had been appropriate, would have been wise to just go around and hunt them all down, and cast the demons out of them. But we don't read of him doing that. They come to him, or else it appears they don't get help, which suggests that they already had a desire to be free.

And I think it goes along well with the idea that God has given them a person's free will, with reference to their spiritual well-being, or their spiritual destiny, to say that if a person doesn't want to be delivered, even Jesus himself can't or won't cast demons out of them. You can bring that over here, honey. Anna? You can bring that to me over here.

Thank you. There we go. Okay.

And that may be the explanation of why in some cases, though you bring plenty of faith and authority to the situation, you may find yourself incapable in some cases of getting a demon to go out of a person, just because they're not so sure they want the demon gone. Remember, certain people have derived some benefit, or what they regard as a benefit, from their association with the demonic. I mean, there's a great number of occultists who like what they do.

And it's quite clear from the Scripture that to be delivered of a demon removes the ability to do those things. I mean, the case in Acts 16 is very illustrative of this. You know, the woman who was a fortune teller.

She was able to tell the future until Paul cast the demon out of her, and then she was incapable anymore. It even got Paul thrown in jail, because the owners of her, she was a slave girl, were upset they couldn't make money off her. She lost her ability when the demon left.

Now, she was following Paul and Silas around for three days before she got delivered. And one can argue that she was seeking help. But her owners didn't want her to be helped.

But it could have been, there certainly can be cases where persons who have such powers from demons don't want to get rid of their powers. This woman had nothing to gain. She was a slave.

But if she was making the money off the ability, she might not have wanted to be delivered either. Who knows? The point is that there are times when persons, for reasons never good ones, but reasons of their own maybe, don't care too much to be delivered of demons. They may, in fact, be deriving some, what they regard as a benefit from the situation.

And the fear of God has never taken hold of them to know what danger their soul is in. And so they, you may not be able to always do that. You can't just walk down the street, find every crazy person and cast a demon out of them.

That'd be nice if we could do that. But even Jesus didn't do that, and Paul and Silas and Barnabas didn't do that. There are perhaps other reasons why demons sometimes don't go out.

But in my opinion, this is one of them. And the story of the man in the tomb is so helpful to me in making this decision because of the fact that they don't get much worse off than this guy was. There just aren't too many people who have lost more of their willpower and their sanity to the demonic forces than this man had.

I mean, the guy was nut filled. He was running around naked, one of the gospels tells us. Yes, I really don't know.

I don't know how the man would have known who Jesus was. But you see, I don't know, I've never been demon possessed, so I don't really know to what degree the consciousness of the demon and the consciousness of the individual are mixed. I mean, obviously, if people have fortune telling abilities by a demon, then presumably what the demon knows is somehow so inextricably mixed with what the person knows that it would be hard to draw the line to where one mind ends and one begins.

So it's possible, since the demons knew who Jesus was, it was impossible for this man not to know also. Well, that's the question. That is the question.

Was it the demons who worshipped Jesus deliberately or was it the man who did? A few months ago, what I mentioned is that there's more than one opinion about that. I've heard different people say different things. I've heard people say that the demons actually drew the man to Christ in this situation.

The Bible doesn't say it, you know, and it tells us so little about demon possession. We're not even sure exactly the mechanics of how things work in the mind of a person who's demon possessed. But I guess I'd just say my impression has always been that the demons didn't feel comfortable in the presence of Christ, so I would imagine that it was not their choice.

To come running to Jesus and bow down. Once finding themselves there before him, they had no choice but to scream out and beg for mercy from him, which is what they did. But while the Bible doesn't say so explicitly, and I can't say that with 100% certainty this is true, I think the man, I think this is a case of the man saying, hey, this is my only hope.

Somehow he knew this was the Son of God, and probably he knew it because the demons did him to it, and there is some sharing of knowledge between the man and the possessing demon. A lot of this is mysterious, and I'll tell you, my curiosity is greater than my knowledge on the subject. But I also feel it necessary to harness my curiosity a little bit, because what we need to know the Bible tells us, and a lot of things we want to know aren't necessary for us to know, and it might even be unwholesome for us to speculate too much.

I'm not saying that anyone here has done that, or even that that question borders on that, but it just gets to a place where some people I've known have just gotten so

fascinated with the demonic, and there's so few questions about the demonic answered in the scripture that they have to fabricate answers or guess them, and eventually those become almost canonical in certain denominations. There's human answers to mysterious questions about this. And I suppose if we were to be as taken up with the study of demons as we are sometimes inclined to be, God would have given us enough material to answer all our questions about them.

I think the phenomenon of demon possession in the biblical times was just so recognized, so taken for granted that there was no need to discuss all the details. It was just something that was there, and people knew it. Now, I think the phenomenon is still around, obviously.

I believe there are still demon-possessed people around, but we now live in a world that doesn't understand it. In fact, in most cases, officially does not even acknowledge it to exist. And people who were called demon-possessed in the bible times today would be called psychos.

They'd be called persons who had some kind of psychological or psychiatric disorder, a brain chemical imbalance. They'd be schizophrenic or something like that. So that the society we're now in doesn't even acknowledge the phenomenon for what it is, and those of us who do find ourselves not being raised taking it for granted like people back then, and we have all kinds of questions that aren't answered, because I think a lot of people just kind of knew people who were demon-possessed or knew of cases enough that they didn't have to ask the questions.

They knew the answers or maybe... I don't know whether the answers were known or not, but apparently since the Bible doesn't answer them, there must not be questions that we need to know the answers to in every case. And some people never encounter somebody that they recognize to be demon-possessed. I mean, it's possible that some of you will live your entire lives without meeting somebody that you know for sure is demon-possessed, but I have a feeling that most of you at one time or another will meet some demon-possessed person or persons, and it doesn't hurt at all to know something, at least as much as the Bible tells us about the subject.

Anyway, my deduction from the passage is that the man had enough free will still about him, enough sanity about him, to know that his only hope of ever getting out of this situation was to come to Jesus. So he came to Jesus. Now, the business of him being bound with chains and pulling them apart and stuff, I think it's Luke chapter 8 that gives us some detail on this, more of a chronology than we have here.

In Luke's parallel, chapter 8, verses 27 and 28, at the beginning of Luke's telling of this story, when Jesus 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. I don't think Mark mentions that part.

He wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house, but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out in self-reform and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with you? Jesus, Son of God, of the Most High God, I beg you not to torment me. For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man.

Now, go on in verse 29. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard. Now, we're not told that in the other versions.

This man had been kept under guard, like police control. He had been bound with chains and shackles, and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness. Now, here's some details.

We're told, for example, in verse 27, the man was a man from the city. Okay? Now, he was a man who had lived in the city. For a long time he'd had demons.

And apparently when this had been recognized, he had been placed under guard, under police control. You know, it's very difficult to know what to do with people like this. I mean, people in the world who don't have the power to cast out demons.

What do you do with someone who's a psycho like this, a nutcase like this? He won't wear any clothes. He cuts himself with sharp rocks. He screams and howls all night long, keeps the neighbors awake.

You know, if you have a son like that, a teenage son or something, and what do you do? Well, the parents eventually can't control him, so they turn him over to the cops. And they put him under guard, probably in prison. Or at least they chained him up.

But he broke the chains. And whether they continued to try to bind him after that, or just gave up, well, hey, you know, he breaks chains, what can we do? He'd probably break prison bars too. They allowed him to be driven by the demons and so drove him out in the wilderness.

And he didn't find a house to live in, so apparently he spent some of his time in the wilderness and some in the tombs. Now the tombs were a very unclean place, of course. The Jews were not allowed to come near dead bodies.

And if you went to a cemetery or something, that would make you unclean for a while. This man lived in continual uncleanness. And he spent his time, apparently, between the tombs and the mountains, or the wilderness itself.

That would agree with what, of course, the other scriptures say, although Luke gives us more information about that. Now, it also indicates in Mark 5.4 that he had been bound with shackles often, not just once or twice. Apparently the authorities had found him hard to keep.

His parents, no doubt, depending on how old he was when he first came into his condition, his parents, very likely, whom he was sent back to after his deliverance, by the way, his family and friends, had found him uncontrollable, so they turned him over to the cops. They kept him under guard, but he kept breaking the chains. If a guy keeps breaking the handcuffs, what are you going to do? You hang him up to a wall on shackles and you just tear him apart.

If the demons want to drive him to the wilderness, good riddance. Go for it. And they just kind of avoid the area where he was.

In Matthew, I think it says that these men were very fierce. The demons made them fierce. By the way, that's the only case in the Bible where we read of demon-possessed people being fierce-like.

In fact, demon possession is kind of a spooky thing to us in our modern world because we don't understand it very well, but the Bible doesn't necessarily indicate that all people who were demon-possessed were particularly dangerous or scary to be around. Sometimes they had their spells where they got kind of wacko, like the guy in the synagogue, or some of them just had demons that tormented them, caused them to throw themselves into the fire or the water to try to kill them, or that left them physically blind or dumb or something like that. Demon possession wasn't always something that when a person had it, you had to be afraid of them.

But these guys, this is the case where we read that they were very fierce. In fact, I think this is the only place, if I'm not mistaken, in the Bible that associates demon possession with any kind of negative character trait. When we think of bad demonized cases, we often think of somebody who's a very great sinner.

But demonization in the Bible is more often represented as a torment to the person who has it rather than as something that makes him torment others or be evil to others, or he doesn't become a criminal or a racist or anything like that for the most part. That's not what in the Bible characterizes demon possessed people. They're not criminals or greater sinners, at least they're not so described in most cases.

They're tormented victims. Here's a case where victimization can be spoken of without fear of giving in to the psychological mindset of our times. These persons are victimized.

They are oppressed. They are tormented. And that is the thing.

You don't see a demon possessed person as someone who's particularly wicked in every case, although this case tells us that there are situations like that where a person who is demon possessed can be very terrifying, very fierce, and people avoided this particular person. When we think of someone like Charles Manson or Adolf Hitler as someone who does horribly crazy, deluded, and violent and terrifying things, it is most natural for us to

think, well, they must be demon possessed. And I think they probably are.

I've had correspondence with Charles Manson, not recently, but years ago. He and I corresponded a little bit. And from his letters to me, it was very clear that the guy was demon possessed.

I mean, I can't repeat the details. His letters are mostly unrepeatable. And also, it's so rambling and so crazy.

It clearly was not a sane man. But there are cases, no doubt. And this is probably one of them, where the demonized condition actually rendered the person scary and evil.

But that's not necessarily the way that demon possessed people are described generally when we find them in the Bible. Now, note, too, that in Luke's version, which we read a moment ago, I think it's fair that we get the picture that this is the first and maybe the only case in the Bible where Jesus commanded a demon and it didn't immediately go out. This comes out, I think, more clearly in the Luke passage.

But ordinarily, Jesus just gave a word of command and the demons were gone. This man, however, had a much more severe case. Of course, the demons could not stand up to Jesus.

They had to go. But they didn't apparently go immediately. What we just read a moment ago in Luke 8, 28 and 29, it says that these demons begged Jesus not to torment them.

But it says in verse 24, He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. That is, the command to come out came early on and the demon continued to beg for mercy and didn't immediately go out. Now, it's quite clear, the demons, although they didn't immediately obey, were not in any sense in the bargaining position.

They were begging for mercy. They knew Jesus could send them anywhere He wanted to and they had to obey. What I find interesting, though, is that even Jesus didn't, in every case, see the demons go away on an initial single command.

Although the fact that the demons didn't leave immediately in this case is no indication that Jesus was not in control of the situation. He certainly was. They asked Him, Have you come to torment us? Please don't torment us.

Now, in Mark's version, it says, they begged Him, in Mark 5.10, that He would not send them out of the country. That's a peculiar expression. But in Luke 8.31, their request is that He would not command them to go into the abyss.

The abyss, in the Greek, is the abyssos, which is, obviously, the word abyss is simply the transliteration of the Greek word. It is often translated, at least in Revelation, it's the same Greek word that translates as a bottomless pit. Now, bottomless pit may not really

be a good translation of abyssos, but obviously it means a very deep pit.

And it certainly means a place of entrapment.