

Dominating Powers, Part 1

Scripture: Mark 5:1–20

Code: 41-22

When we train young men how to preach, one of the things we work on is the introduction to the sermon, because it's important to get people's attention. And there are a lot of ways to do that, and we get a little bit creative from time to time as to how we develop an introduction. There are a lot of ways to do it, but the goal of an introduction is to grab the attention of the people, and get them interested in what you're about to say.

You can do that a lot of ways. You can do that by surprising them a little bit. You can do that with a high-interest story. You can do that by focusing on a very applicable, practical truth that everybody wants to know about. You can do that by focusing on a problem that needs a solution, and you're about to give them the solution. There are a lot of ways you can capture interest. But there are some portions of Scripture that don't need that.

The very text itself has so much interest that it becomes compelling when simply read, and that is very often the case in narrative portions of Scripture. By narrative, I mean those portions of Scripture that tell a story, whether it's a true story or whether it's a parable, and there is enough interest generated in the story itself that it becomes its own compelling motivation to listen. This is one of those.

If this is not the most interesting incident in the life of our Lord, it is certainly one of the most interesting incidents in His entire life, and it is so compelling, and so riveting, and so strange, and so bizarre, and so fascinating, that merely reading it will set your mind in the right place to learn all about it, so let's do that. Chapter 5 of Mark; chapter 5 of Mark. I'm going to read you the text, which unfolds this amazing and bizarre incident.

"They came to the other side of the sea" - that is, Jesus, and the disciples, and apostles, traveling by little boats, they came to the other side of the sea - "into the country of the Gerasenes. When He got out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him, and he has his dwelling among the tombs. And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; 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.

"Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and gashing himself with stones. Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him; 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!' For He had been saying to him, 'Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!' And He was asking him, 'What is your name?'

"And he said to Him, 'My name is Legion; for we are many.' And he began to implore Him earnestly not to send them out of the country. Now there was a large herd of swine feeding nearby on the mountain. The demons implored him, saying, 'Send us into the swine so that we may enter them.'

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.

“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. 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. Those who had seen it described to them how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and all about the swine. And they began to implore Him to leave their region.

“As He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was imploring Him that he might accompany Him. And He didn’t 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.’ And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.” The final amazement would relate to the fact that why would anybody do any good to such a horrendous monster as this?

Well, one of the most, as I said, riveting accounts in all of Scripture; nothing like this display of power over demons is recorded in Scripture since God Himself threw Satan and all the evil, rebelling angels out of heaven. That was a massive upheaval. That was a sweeping act by God, in which He vacated heaven of Satan and a third of the angels. Thousands, and thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand, innumerable angels were thrown out of heaven in one moment by the power of God.

There has been no display like that until this. And there won’t be another display like this until the time of the tribulation comes to an end, Christ sets up His Kingdom, and binds Satan and all the demons for a period of a thousand years, and then throws them into the lake of fire. This kind of power over the kingdom of darkness is only possible when God is wielding it. Whether it’s in the casting out of heaven, or the casting into the lake of fire, or here, casting thousands of demons out of one man, this is the power of God on display.

This is the most extreme encounter with the powers of supernatural wickedness anywhere in Scripture. There are no such accounts in the Old Testament, and in the New Testament, this is far and away the most extreme, and the most extensive. Our Lord, throughout His ministry, vanquished demons. He did it regularly. He did it repeatedly. He did it often. But there was no such display as this one. This, to indicate that He is, in fact, the Messiah, that He is the Savior, that He is the Son of God.

That He is God in human flesh, who wields absolute, limitless power over the forces of hell, Satan and all his realm. Now, this is part of Mark’s proof. If you go back to his purpose - chapter 1, verse 1, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” - Mark is writing the history of Jesus to prove He is the Son of God.

John sums up that objective for all four writers, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, when at the end of the fourth gospel, the gospel of John, written last of all the four, he says, “These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you might have life in His name.” So, the purpose of this is evangelistic, but in order to get you to believe in Christ, you

must know who He is, and here is more powerful evidence that He is, in fact, God the Son. He is deity.

If He is the true Messiah, if He is the Lord of heaven come down, He must be able to conquer Satan, or He cannot bring the everlasting Kingdom. He must have power over the natural world, because the promise of the prophets is that He, the Messiah, is going to come and restore the earth, and lion will lie down with lamb, and the desert will blossom like a rose, et cetera, et cetera. There will be a restored, rejuvenated, restructured earth, that will approximate the Garden of Eden.

Does He have the power to do that over nature? We just saw in the last incident how He controlled the wind and the waves. Yes, He has the power to do that. The Kingdom to come and the assembly of saints in heaven are those whose lives have been transformed by His power. Does He have the power to transform people's lives? He has demonstrated that again, and again, and again. He can overcome everything. The curse - He can overcome the curse in terms of nature, He can overcome the curse in terms of illness and disease, He can raise the dead.

He has all the power required to establish an everlasting Kingdom. And as part of that, He has demonstrated the power over Satan and all his hosts, and here, in a way that has no parallel. His divine power vanquishes, by a command, thousands of demons. Remember now, it was said, first of all, of the Messiah, in Genesis 3:15, that He would crush the serpent's head, so whoever this Messiah is, he has to wield mighty power over Satan and his hosts, and here it is on exhibit again.

Remind yourself of 1 John 3:8. 1 John 3:8 says, "The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil." That's the New Testament fulfillment statement of Genesis 3:15. Now, that would be the seed of the woman who will come and crush the serpent's head, says the Old Testament, Genesis 3:15; the New Testament says, "The Son of Man has come for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil." Destroy, *luō*, to undo, to remove, to annihilate, to obliterate, the works, *ergon*, action, effect, impact.

That's why, in John 12:31, he said, "The ruler of this world is cast out." John 16:11, "The ruler of this world is judged." Romans 16:20, "Satan is under your feet" - he is a subjected power. So, our Lord is displaying His ability to fulfill His purpose of bringing to naught, obliterating, the works of the devil. He has total power over them, and He will be able to do what He says He will do in the end, when it tells us, in Matthew 25:41, that He prepared the lake of fire for the devil and his angels.

He has the power to place them there; Scripture makes it clear, and, believe me, the demons know it; the demons know it. This, then, is a validation of His messiahship. Now, our Lord's own words make that clear, in Luke, chapter 11, unmistakably so in verse 20. "If I cast out demons by the finger of God" - or by the power of God - "then the Kingdom of God has come upon you." "If I cast out demons with a word, with the power of God, then you know that the Kingdom of God has arrived.

"When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are undisturbed. But when someone stronger than he attacks him, overpowers him, takes away from him all this armor on which he has relied and distributes his plunder" - that's Christ. Satan is the strong man, who is doing fine until Christ appears, devastates him, plunders his house. And when that happens, you know the Kingdom of God has arrived.

Now, with that as a background, we understand why this is an important incident, because there's nothing of the vastness and the volume of this action against Satan recorded in any other place in the New Testament. But as we unfold the story, running down through the twenty verses - we'll do it today and next Sunday - there are three displays of power that I want you to see here. There's not just one; there are three displays of power.

Now, the first one I want you to see is the devastating, destructive power of demons; the devastating, destructive power of demons. We've already seen Jesus display His power in the previous paragraph, at the end of chapter 4, verses 35 to 41, power over wind, power over water, power to subdue the natural world, the natural elements, and here, He shows His power to subdue the supernatural world, the supernatural elements.

The experience the disciples had in the storm on the water frightened them, and this experience that we just read about is also a very frightening experience. Now, the disciples, you remember, were frightened of the storm, and then they were frightened of the power of Jesus. And we see the same thing here; the people are frightened by this maniac, and then they are even more frightened by the presence of Jesus, so those are parallel elements.

You remember how Jesus got to this shore. They left the northwest shore, by Capernaum, got in their little boats, started across the sea, intending to sail to the eastern shore, a more unpopulated area. Probably the disciples and apostles thought He was wanting some rest, and maybe they were glad to get some rest, from the massive, crushing crowds. They got in their little boat, started out, a storm came up, He stilled the storm.

They were thrown off course by the storm, eventually got back on course, sailed the rest of the night on a placid lake, and ended up in the dawn on the eastern shore, at precisely the place they had intended to go, about six miles around the curve from the city of Capernaum. When they arrived, the first thing we see is the devastating, destructive power of demons. Let's pick up the story. "They came to the other side of the sea into the country of the Gerasenes" - just a comment about that.

Luke adds, "which is opposite Galilee." It is on the opposite side from the Galilee, which runs down the western side of the Sea of Galilee. Luke and Mark say it is the country of the Gerasenes. Matthew says it's the country of the Gadarenes. That's not difficult to understand, it is both; it is both. Gerasenes, because there was a little town right there called Gerasa - or sometimes pronounced Gergasa - but it is the town, the small, small town of Gerasa that they came near.

As I said, it's about six miles around the curve of the lake, right there on the shore, so it is the land of the Gerasenes. However, a little further south and inland, is a bigger and more important town - and maybe the county seat - called Gadera. So, while it was the village of Gerasa, it was the region that associated itself with Gadara, so it was the land of the Gerasenes, if you look at the village, and the Gadarenes, if you look at the larger town that sort of gave its name to the region.

In any case, here's the key: it was Gentile country; it was Gentile country, and here He is, in this Gentile area, with His disciples and apostles, all of whom have gotten out of the little boats that had come across the sea, and they're expecting a little bit of rest. They're away from the Jews. It's pretty - it's pretty open country there, pretty rural. This would be a time for them to get a little rest, only that's not what was planned, and the Lord knew it.

Verse 2 says, "When He got out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him." This is not the local Chamber of Commerce representative, this is not the Welcome Wagon, this is your worst nightmare. This is a man from the tombs, who comes racing down the slope to the edge of the lake, to meet them. He is defined as having an unclean spirit. It's probably just barely dawn.

They have just tied up their boats - maybe a little dock was available there - and immediately, at the water's edge, a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met them. Matthew 8:28 says he has a companion; there are actually two men in this same condition. But as the story goes on, that second man is left behind, and all the focus of both Matthew, Mark and Luke, who all record this story, is on the one man, but there were two that came racing down.

Now, it says he came from the tombs. Now, that would be a little unusual. Jews wouldn't go near a tomb, for fear of being contaminated by a dead body. But this is a Gentile area, this is obviously a Gentile man; what's he doing in the tombs? Well, he lives there, verse 3: "He had his dwelling among the tombs." He's a tomb-dweller. In ancient times, this would be the common haunt of a deranged, insane, demon-possessed person.

Burial chambers, in that time and that place, as in many places in the world in ancient times, were carved out of the hillside. You can see them in various places in the world even today, and you can see them right there where the town of Gerasa is - there's a modern village called Kursi, and that - the village is located near some of the hillsides and some of the cliffs where you can still see these open tombs, where they put dead bodies.

Here is a man who is more comfortable with the dead than he is with the living - and by the way, the dead are more comfortable with him than the living would be as well, so it's a mutually agreed upon condition. He is defined as having an unclean spirit; that's simply a term for a demon that's more descriptive. A fallen angel, called a demon, clearly refers to demons, because the man is designated as a demon-possessed man, down in verse 18, so this unclean spirit is synonymous with a demon, a fallen angel.

They are spirit beings, and they occupy the bodies of human beings. They are unclean, all of them are unclean; all of them. So, unclean spirit is simply a term that applies to all fallen angels, and all demons. When we went through the gospel of Luke, we went through this story in Luke, chapter 8, and I digressed, as I am wont to do, and gave you a very expanded insight into the whole world of demons. I'm not going to do that again; you can find that information there, available for you in the Luke series.

And then verse 3 - "He had his dwelling among the tombs" - indicates to us that he wasn't just visiting a tomb to see a dead friend, or placing flowers outside a tomb, or meditating about the loss of a past relative. He would be classified, as a man who lived in the tombs, as a madman. He is a maniac. He's deranged, he's irrational, he's dangerous. He is a sub-human, anti-social, sociopathic, and intensely evil. He's a monster. He's a monster.

Luke adds, just to make matters worse, that he hadn't put on any clothes for a long time, which leads us to conclude he was not only exposed to the elements of hot and cold - and there was hot sun and

very cold nights, especially in the wintertime which would be this time - but that he was perverted. Nakedness, for him, was related to his sexual perversion. He is as wicked as wicked gets.

He is a man that fits into a category that we're somewhat familiar with when we're exposed to sociopathic people who have deviant sexual attitudes, who are dangerous to themselves, and dangerous to people all around them. This is that kind of man, who, although far worse, fits into the ilk of a Charles Manson, or some other kind of mass murderer of some freakish nature. Which, by the way, I'm convinced, is, if properly diagnosed, the result of demon possession, and cannot be explained because when he was a little kid his mother locked him in the closet with no lunch.

Nakedness, by the way, is a perversion, and that's why Luke adds it; it is a perversion. You remember that when Adam and Eve sinned, the first thing they did was what? Make something to cover themselves. And then God helped, by replacing their temporary covering with a permanent covering made out of hide. The New Testament commands us not only to be clothed, but to be clothed modestly, does it not? Modestly. Nakedness is a sign of great evil. It is a sign of perversion, sexual perversion.

In fact, in Levitical law, uncovering a person's nakedness was a euphemism for sexual sin. In Revelation 3:18 it says, "The shame of your nakedness." The more naked a person becomes, the more shameful it is. You start with a modest dress, and you keep moving toward further and further shame. Well, this is a very, very bizarre, wretched human being. He's also characterized by supernatural strength, verse 3. It tells us that no one was able to bind him anymore, which means they had been trying to do it.

In the ancient world, all you did with a maniac like this was restrain him. That's not too far into the distant past. I remember it wasn't too many years ago, before mind-numbing drugs had come into play, that people were put in straitjackets and put in padded cells, so that all they could do is bang around and not even do harm to themselves, cause they were bouncing off mattress-like walls. But that's the way it was through all human history.

Before the advent of mind-numbing drugs, or perhaps in the last century, brain fries, which turn people into zombies, this is what they did. They restrained them, and they restrained them because they were dangerous. They were so anti-social as to be dangerous, to be deadly. This guy would fit into the category of a sociopathic mass murderer if he got away with doing what he wanted to do. Who knows who he had harmed, who knows who he had killed?

He was frightening, he was dangerous, he was a horrible menace. He was a threat to the sensibilities and social morality of the people. They tried to chain him. They must have slammed him down, knocked him out with a blow to the head, tried to chain him. It didn't do any good. He would break the chains. In fact, Luke says he would break the chains, and be driven by the demons into the wilderness. Just a total out-of-control maniac, with amazing strength.

He's aggressive. He's wickedly aggressive, frighteningly so. And Luke's comment that he would break the chains, and the demons would drive him into the wilderness - the demons are torturing this man. They're torturing all the people that come in contact with him, but they're torturing him, too. He is both the means of torture and the victim of torture and torment. Verse 5 sadly says, "Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and gashing himself with

stones" - so he's just peripatetic.

He is sleepless. He is restless. He is wandering out, and in and out of the tombs, in and out of the mountains, driven into the wilderness, the desert, by the demons, tormented; this is a living hell. This is a taste of hell, completely subsumed to demonic power and presence. Nothing good, nothing left, no escape, no rest, no sleep; this is hell. And looking for relief, he grabs stones, and unsuccessfully attempting his own life, hacks away at his flesh with stones meant to cut.

The man makes modern, perverted monsters like Charles Manson look like Boy Scouts. He is so subdued that his own personality is never even seen. He's more at home with the dead than the living, and he's a threat to the living, serious threat. In fact, he's such a threat that Matthew 8:28 says, "No one would pass that way because he was so" - and the word is violent; violent. Just file this in your mind, will you?

If you took a survey of the local community and asked them which neighbor would you most like to see move away, it would be him, you would think, wouldn't you? I mean, if you had the choice between having him move away and Jesus leave, who would you choose? We'll see later who they chose. He's raging, violent, deadly, supernaturally strong, deviant, perverted. There's nobody like this guy in Scripture, nobody, because Satan doesn't usually operate this way.

He disguises himself as what? Angel of light. He likes to go to church in a gray suit, likes to sit in a pew, likes to stand behind a pulpit, likes to teach in a seminary. That's what he likes to do. And he disguises himself as an angel of light. The closer he can get to Christianity, the closer he can get to the truth, and deviate people from it, and lead people astray, the happier he is. He runs a clandestine operation; only occasionally do you see this kind of thing.

And we see it from time to time in our world, don't we? These deviated, perverted people that we call monsters, that do things that are beyond comprehension for normal people. Satan usually doesn't operate that way. He wants to hide in the pews, among the respectably religious people. Well, this man sits up in his perch on the hill, in one of the tombs, and he sees these little boats tying up, and realizes he's got some new victims, some people who aren't from the neighborhood.

And they don't know you're not supposed to go there; you're not supposed to be in that place. He sees them tying up on the shore, and coming off the boats, and walking along the beach, and I'm sure they were close to Jesus, since He was the leader, and there was no agenda. So, he probably started his usual approach, with his buddy flying down the hill, screaming with this demonic shriek, ready to attack, and maim, and kill.

And then, all of a sudden, when he gets to where he can see who's there, verse 6 says, "Seeing Jesus from a distance" - whoa! He just saw somebody he had known for thousands of years. You say, "Well, how did he know it was Jesus? A demon is a spirit, how did he know it was Jesus? How did he recognize Jesus?" The word is out among the demons. There is a demon network. What do you think Jesus has been doing for the last couple of years?

Confronting the kingdom of darkness, casting out demons - the word was out. The word was out - it probably - it probably went on the spiritual network really fast that Jesus had left Capernaum, and was going somewhere. And since they're not omniscient, they wouldn't know till He showed up.

Whatever the mechanism of recognition, he saw Jesus. Luke adds that when he saw Jesus, he shrieked, screamed in horror, and that was the standard operating response.

When Jesus showed up in a synagogue and there were demons in the congregation - sitting in the pews, if you will, in the respectable people - when Jesus was there, you remember the demons screamed. They blew their cover, because their fear overwhelmed their ability to hide. And then he did an amazing thing. It says, "He bowed down before Him." Whoa - he is now subdued; not by chains, but by sheer terror. The man collapses. He doesn't know what's going on.

But the demon dropped him to his knees. The man has no interest in worshiping Jesus, but the demon does, the demons do. When it says the man saw Jesus and "ran up to Him and bowed down before Him" - he's in a hurry to get to Jesus, not to do Him harm, but to bow. It's the word *proskuneó* in the Greek; it means to worship, to demonstrate submission, to show respect to one greater than yourself. No one could make him bow. No one could restrain him, no one could control him.

No one could make him submit, but the presence of the Lord Jesus cuts him to his knees. The man goes down because the demons go down, and the man goes down under their power. The demon force in that man are subdued - is subdued by the presence of their sovereign king, their sovereign Lord, their sovereign judge. The demons recognize Jesus as the Son of God, Lord over all principalities, all powers, all rulers of this present world, all rulers of the darkness.

They know that He is the sovereign, has the authority to control them, sentence them, execute them, eternally incarcerate them in the lake of fire, and that's the plan, and that's coming. By the way, as a footnote, demon theology is orthodox; demon theology is orthodox. Though they develop liberal theology, they espouse error, heresy, they themselves are orthodox. They know what is true about God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and salvation.

They're orthodox, and they hate what they know to be true. Verse 7a says, "And shouting" - or screaming - "with a loud voice" - this is the typical response, that demons go into some kind of paroxysms with terror, and they scream through the vocal chords of the person in whom they have taken their residence. More demonics shrieking using the man's voice, and the demon representative, who speaks on behalf of the mob of demons in the man says - it's so important - "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?"

I said they were orthodox, didn't I? They know exactly who Jesus is. And by the way, in the first part of Mark, until you get to the middle of Mark's gospel, they're the only beings who recognize who Jesus is. They're the only ones who say, "You are the Son of the Most High God. You are the Son of God." The first - the first time a human being says that is at the end of the book, but halfway through, at least the disciples confess that He is the Christ.

But it's not until a Gentile centurion confesses it at the end that you hear it from any human being. But they know who He is. And they - this is their standard, I guess their standard response, because it's exactly what the demon back in chapter 1 said in Capernaum in the synagogue. When Jesus started teaching in the synagogue, verse 23 says there's a man in the synagogue with an unclean spirit, and he screamed. And this is what the spirit said through that man's vocal chords: "What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth?"

“Have You come to destroy us? I know who you are - the Holy One of God!” Same thing: what business do we have together? Why are You here? And here it’s the same thing. What do they mean by that, what business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Two things to point out: first half of it, what business do we have; second half, Son of the Most High God. What do they mean by “What business do we have with each other?”

Do they know that there’s a plan to send them to the lake of fire? Absolutely. Do they know that Jesus will be their judge? Absolutely. Do they know He has the power to bind them, and send them everlastingly into hell? Yes. Do they know that, if He wants, He can send them into the pit, a place of demonic incarceration, already occupied by demons who sinned back in Genesis 6 and were sent there, and perhaps other demons had been sent there through history? Do they know that can happen? Yes.

Do they know there is a final judgment to be rendered on demons? Do they know they are to be bound for a period of time when the earth is renewed and restored in the great and glorious Kingdom of Messiah, and then sent to the lake of fire? They know all of that. They know that. They have been around since the creation - they know that. They know that. They understand that. So why do they ask the question, “What business do we have with each other?”

What they don’t understand is the timing. “Why are You coming after us?” You don’t find in the whole Old Testament any other prophets doing this. You don’t find any of the priests doing this. Nobody confronts the demonic enterprise in the Old Testament, nobody. Is it around? Of course. Nobody does this. This doesn’t happen until Jesus comes. But they are concerned that the timing is off. “Nobody’s ever done this to us before.”

Their eschatology is so good they know that the judgment of demons is related not to Jesus’ first coming, but His second coming, and so they’re saying, “What’s going on here? What’s happening here? What business do we have with You?” In fact, in Matthew 8:29, the demon’s spokesman for the group says this: “Have You come to torment us before the time?” “Have You come to torment us before the time? It’s not time yet. That’s connected to Your second coming, not Your first coming.”

They knew He was coming the first time. Listen, they interpreted Isaiah 53 perfectly. They understood that He would be the Lamb that would offer His life as a sacrifice. They understood that. They understood Psalm 16, that He would die and rise again, that God would never allow Him to see corruption, but show Him the path of life. It didn’t connect; why now? So, I say they’re orthodox even in their eschatology. They knew that it wasn’t the time.

This was the time of Messiah’s death, and Messiah’s resurrection. This is not the time of His reign, and His Kingdom, and their judgment. “What’s going on?” So, they correctly identify the timing of their final judgment, and they secondly correctly identify Jesus as Son of the Most High God. That is just such a complete statement: the Most High God, a glorious title for God in the Old Testament, that usually goes like this: the Most High God – comma - possessor of heaven and earth.

The Most High God is El Elyon, God Sovereign. The Most High means sovereign, above all others, higher than all others. You see it in Genesis, Numbers, Isaiah, Daniel, references to The Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth. And this demon’s recognition is that “You are the Son of the Most High God”; that is to say, You bear His same essence. In Luke, chapter 1, the angel Gabriel

comes to tell Mary she's going to have a child.

Verse 32: "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High." Verse 35: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason this holy Child shall be called the Son of God." He knows who Jesus is. He even understands the plan, and the timing of the plan. He's been having free reign, along with all of his fellow demons, in this one life, and out of that one life, wreaking havoc in the region, doing bodily harm, and damage, and probably even killing people. What is Jesus doing there now?

By the way, in the third chapter of Mark, and the eleventh verse, it says, "Whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, they would fall down before Him and shout, 'You are the Son of God!'" "You are the Son of God." That was not an act of repentance; demons can't repent. They are unclean, and will be forever. That was a recognition of the reality of who He is. Now, back to the story in chapter 5. Here is this bizarre, monstrous, sociopath, in a heap at the feet of Jesus, subdued; at the same time, screaming in fear.

And at the end of verse 7, he says, "I implore You by God, do not torment me!" You haven't minded tormenting that poor soul. Don't torment me – *basanizō*, it's to torture - the worst possible kind of experience, to be tortured. Why did he say, "Don't torture me"? Because Luke 8:31 says that he asked Jesus not to command him to go into the *abussos*– "Don't send me to the pit." Don't incarcerate me in the pit, the abyss, the place of bound demons.

Abussos really means the bottomless pit, the pit with no bottom; it's used four times in the book of Revelation. "Don't send me to that place." Don't send me, if you will, to the place of incarceration, the sort of vestibule to the lake of fire. That's where the Lord sent the demons that sinned in Genesis 6; that's what it says in 2 Peter 2:4, and Jude 6 and 7, that the angels that kept not their first estate were bound, and they're bound in that place of incarceration until they will be finally sent into the lake of fire.

And I believe there have been other demons added to that place through the years, because those demons from Genesis 6 were bound in everlasting chains; they're never going to get out of there. But in the book of Revelation, it tells us that there will be, during the time of tribulation, demons released from that place, so there are some who have been put in there that will be released, to add to the force of demon power during the time of tribulation.

But this group of demons, through their spokesman, begged Jesus not to send them into the *abussos*, into the pit. They're very happy where they are, wreaking havoc in a Gentile area. And I might add to you, for your information, this kind of massive demon possession fits the Gentile environment - full of idols, full of false religions, full of exposure to the kingdom of darkness at its widest point. So, that's his plea, because Jesus was saying, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit." "Please don't send us to the pit."

Now, I'm going to stop there, and just say this: here you see the devastating, destructive power of demons, Satan's power. Don't kid yourself about Satan. It's not always this blatant, it's not always this overt. But we have enough people that show up in society like this to understand that behavior, don't we? How else can you explain a Charles Manson? How else can you explain a Dahmer, how else can you explain somebody that kills relentlessly, and eats the victims? How do you explain that?

That is - that is not psychological deviation; that is demonic possession. We get enough of it to understand it's there. We even use the word monsters, maniacs. We run out of adjectives to describe people like that, whose lives have been literally taken over by demons. As I said, that's the exception, not the rule. They usually like to show up in religious situations, and hide behind clergymen, and teachers, and devoted religious leaders. But their power is fierce, deadly, destructive, and even damning, power.

So, the opening scene is the scene of the power of demons; we'll call it the devastating destructive power of demons. But in verse 8, we make a transition to another kind of power, the delivering power of deity; the delivering power of deity. And this - this spokesman demon, and these demons who are in mass in this man, they know the power that the Son of God wields, and they know it's a greater power than theirs. As the Scripture says, "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world."

And they know that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil. They know that He came to crush Satan's head, to judge Satan and his whole domain. They know that. And so, as Jesus begins to command them, all they can do is plead with Him not to send them to the pit, because they know His power is so great that He can send them any place He desires. All they can do is beg for a kind of mercy. You might think that He would send them to the pit, because that would get rid of them.

Now, wouldn't the world be a better place if there were a few thousand demons not here? But He doesn't, because they're really not the devil's demons, they're His demons; and like all demons, and like Satan himself - Satan is God's devil - they function within the purposes and the parameters of God's design for divine purposes. We'll see that unfold when we look at the delivering power of deity next time. All right, let's have a word of prayer together.

Thank You, Lord, for a wonderful time of worship this morning. How our hearts were lifted in the beauty of music, and what a contrast to be plunged into an encounter with this man. What a stark contrast to the sweetness of Christian fellowship, to the joy of life in the Spirit, living in the power and the presence of the blessed Holy Spirit, where there is peace, and joy, and love, and sanity, and calm, compared to this; what a contrast in two worlds.

And what a contrast between the frenetic man and the majestic Jesus, between all the ugliness, and horror, and violence, and terror, and the perfect calm in commanding presence in the Son of God. We thank You, Lord, that we've all been delivered from the power of Satan. We have been delivered into the power of Christ, and we live not by our own strength, but by His power. We can say with Paul, "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me."

We thank You for what He has brought to us of peace, and joy, and love, and sanity, and sweet fellowship, and blessed worship, which this dear man in the story was allowed to experience by Your grace. Thank You for that grace that reaches down to any sinner, no matter how wretched that sinner might be. Only Christ would desire to save such a horrendous person, and that has to be an almost unparalleled expression of the grace of salvation, that while he was a sinner, he was loved and transformed.

We thank You, Lord, for this transformation, that has occurred in our lives, that has set us free. May we rejoice in Your mighty work and give You all the praise, in Christ's name. Amen.

END

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