

'There Met Him Out of the Tombs a Man With an Unclean spirit.'- Mar 5:2

by G. Campbell Morgan

The sermon explores the subject of demon-possession, its purpose, and the power and authority of Jesus Christ over the underworld of evil spirits.

Scripture: Mark 5:1

Topics: "Demon Possession", "Authority of Christ"

Description

G. Campbell Morgan emphasizes the significance of Jesus' encounter with the demoniac in Mark 5:1-20, illustrating the reality of demon possession and Christ's authority over evil spirits. He highlights the man's tragic condition, marked by isolation, lawlessness, and torment, and contrasts it with the transformative power of Christ, who restores him to sanity and community. Morgan argues that the existence of demons and their influence on humanity is a consistent theme in the New Testament, and he encourages believers to recognize the ongoing spiritual battle against evil forces. Ultimately, he reassures that through Christ, believers have the authority to overcome these dark influences and experience victory in their lives.

Transcript

Mar 5:1-20.

BY these words our attention is immediately fastened upon our subject, that namely of our Lord's dealing with demoniacs.

That special importance attaches to the subject is evidenced by the fact that Mark has given so much space to this particular story, relating it with much more of detail than either Matthew or Luke, who nevertheless both record the miracle.

The subject has arisen before in the course of these narratives. On the first wonderful Sabbath in Capernaum, in the synagogue in the morning, Jesus healed a demoniac, and still others in the evening of the same day (Mar 1:23-27, Mar 1:32-34). Mark records the fact that as He journeyed through Galilee He constantly did the same thing (Mar 1:39). Mark also declares that in the course of His ministry "the unclean spirits, whensoever they beheld Him, fell down before Him and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. And He charged them much that they should not make Him known" (Mar 3:11-12). In the choosing of the twelve also, He appointed them to have authority ultimately to do the same work (Mar 3:15). Moreover, He

had answered the declarations of the Jerusalem scribes on this subject with great solemnity, and solemn warning, as they declared that by the prince of the demons He cast out the demons (Mar 3:22-30).

Our story is significantly the next in order. As we proceed with our study of the Gospel we shall touch it again and yet again; when He sent out the apostles, He gave them this authority (Mar 6:7 and Mar 6:13); when He healed the daughter of the Syrophenician woman (Mar 7:25-30); when at the foot of the mount of transfiguration He healed the boy (Mar 9:17-29); when John reported that one, not of the twelve, had been casting out demons (Mar 9:38); in a final reference to Mary of Magdala, out of whom He cast seven demons (Mar 16:9), and last of all in the commission as Marie recorded it (Mar 16:17).

In this story of the man in the country of the Gerasenes the subject is evidently purposely dealt with most fully. The case was a remarkable one in many ways, and, Mark recorded it with much of detail. Matthew alone tells us that there were two men. Both Luke and Mark refer to one only, evidently because the case was a notorious one in itself, and the healing of the man therefore was all the more wonderful. The words of the text quite literally rendered are, "There met Him out of the tombs, a man in an unclean spirit." Dr. Morison says that the suggestiveness of the expression is that "the demoniac in the man was more conspicuous and obtrusive than the man's own manhood." Our Lord here came face to face with one of the most terrible cases of demon-possession. The special nature of the case, and the prominence thus given to it, compel special attention to the subject. I propose, therefore, now to deal generally with demon-possession, and to consider the illustration particularly as it bears on the subject.

The testimony of the sacred writings to the existence of spiritual beings is unequivocal. Behind that testimony I do not go. The whole Bible recognizes this world of spiritual beings, and the fact that under certain conditions, and for certain purposes, they have access to men. The testimony of the Gospel narratives to the fact of Demon-possession, and to the further fact that our Lord, during the course of His earthly ministry exercised authority over demons, which He manifested by casting them out of human beings, is equally without question. At the commencement of our study of this Gospel I drew attention to a book published in 1864, on Progress in Revelation, being the Bampton Lectures by Bernard, in which book attention is drawn to the fact that this seems to have been one of the dominant notes in this Gospel according to Mark.

The things that precede this particular story, leave the impression upon the mind that our Lord was constantly coming into contact with these demons, in men, women, and children; and that He ever acted with authority and with power over them.

Some objections have been raised to this view. It is said that our Lord did not know the truth about these cases. That I am not going to argue, for it involves our Christology, and I cannot accept that definition or interpretation of the Gospel stories.

It is suggested that there was no such thing as demon-possession, but that He adapted His language, using the method of expression of His age, well knowing that these people were not really possessed by demons. For me personally this charges Him with giving countenance to superstition, and I cannot accept the interpretation.

It is suggested that the language of the records is that of the writers, who have thus explained certain things which Jesus did; that He never really talked with demons as the narratives would lead a plain man to suppose, but that He did produce upon a madman a certain effect of quietness and peace, and that the disciples interpreted what He did in the way in which we have read the stories. That, for me, would destroy

the authority of the writings in every particular, and I should immediately say of my New Testament, there is nothing here upon which I can depend.

Therefore, dealing no longer with objections, let us face the subject. In order to its intelligent consideration it is important that we should observe a distinction which is made in the English Revision, in the marginal notes, between a devil and a demon. The American Revisers have brought the correction into the actual text. It is a very important change, and one that must be borne in mind. As a matter of fact, the word translated "devil" as a substantive, occurs thirty times in the New Testament, but always in reference to Satan. It is found adjectively three times in the pastoral epistles, always in reference to men. In the New Testament .then, taken as a whole, the word "devil" is always used of one strange, mystic, awful personality, whom we speak of as Satan. The word translated "demons" is used repeatedly. It was a common word at the time, a word with which men were perfectly familiar. It may be a little difficult for us to interpret its meaning to-day, although we know of its use, at the time. Confining ourselves to the New Testament, we find that the synonym for demon is always either "evil spirit" or "unclean spirit."

It is important in the second place that we should recognize all that the New Testament reveals, as to the relation between the one who is described as "the devil," and those who are referred to as "demons." In that controversy between our Lord and the Jerusalem scribes, which we have considered, they charged Him with casting out demons through Beelzebub, whom they named the prince of the demons, thus revealing the popular view and conception. It is to be borne most carefully in mind that in our Lord's answer to what they said, an answer characterized by the utmost solemnity, He did not correct that view. He accepted it, and based His argument upon its accuracy, as He declared that if Satan cast out Satan, then his kingdom is divided; admitting therefore that very conception which they held, of a great underworld of evil spirits or demons, controlled, marshalled, ordered, governed, so far as such words can be used in that connection, by this one of whom they spoke as Beelzebub, the prince of the demons.

The mission of Jesus Christ was once expressed by an apostle in these words, "He went about, doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil," the reference being to the healing of sickness and to the casting out of demons; and the entire conception being that of this world under the control of this one personality. Our Lord made no contradiction of this; but accepting it, in all His dealings with demonized men and women, proceeded upon the assumption of the accuracy of that view. Let it at once be said there is nothing final in the New Testament as to whom these spirits really are. The old view was that they were the spirits of men. The view of Greek philosophy was that these were the spirits of those who lived in the Golden Age. They were not looked upon as necessarily evil in all cases. Hence there was demon-worship, the worship not necessarily of evil spirits; but of the spirits of those who had existed in the Golden Age. That view, or a modification of it is held to-day by some. Both Pember and Gall in their most interesting books, have suggested that these spirits were those of pre Adamite man, of a race that fell before the story as recorded in Genesis. I but refer to these things in order to say that they are speculations with more or less likelihood of being true. Certainly when considering the subject, the weird revelation of the New Testament should be remembered, that these spirits were always seeking some material resting-place, always hankering after some material instrument through which to act, and in which to dwell. Nothing can finally be said concerning this, but it is repeatedly revealed.

There is also the generally accepted theory that these spirits are angels who were involved in the primal fall, when Lucifer, son of the morning, himself became the arch enemy, the prince of the power of the air, the god of this world.

The New Testament is quite clear as to the existence of these spirits, quite clear as to their access to humanity, quite clear in its revelation of the fact that their access to humanity always meant harm wrought in human life, both in intention and purpose. The pictures that the New Testament presents of demonized humanity are very terrible ones. Here once more let us halt for a definition. Our phrase "possessed of a demon" does not occur in the New Testament. The phrase is really "demonized man," or one who may be called "a demoniac." While not desiring to build anything final upon that distinction, it is well to bear it in mind, because when speaking of a man being demon-possessed, we have our own imagination as to what that means. Let us then correct, or hold in suspense our imagination by remembering that the actual word of the New Testament is not "demon-possessed," but "demonized"; a man under the influence of one or more of these evil spirits. The possibility of this is clearly taught in the New Testament.

It is taught also by modern experience, especially by the experience of missionaries in certain lands. They testify that to-day they find exactly the same conditions as those described in the New Testament; and they add to that testimony the fact that they also find the name and power of Christ, are sufficient for casting out these demons, and setting people free.

The purpose of demon-possession, so far as the demon is concerned, is always that of finding an instrument. The power of the demon is acquired from without, and is terrible in its finality. There is no single instance in the New Testament which suggests that a spirit of good takes possession of a human being, other than the Spirit of God. There is no single suggestion of a spirit taking possession of a human being in order to the enlightenment, healing and uplifting of that human being. There is no case in the Bible of men finding communion with spirits who are in themselves good and pure and holy, save the lonely exception of the appearance of Samuel to Saul.

What is revealed as to the condition of the man thus demonized? First of all, that he had passed to the place of terrible isolation; he was living among the tombs, in the region of death, as far as possible from his fellow beings. Secondly, that he was characterized by terrible lawlessness, breaking through all restraint. Thirdly, that his whole experience was one of restlessness, crying out night and day. Fourthly, that it was one of suffering self-inflicted, cutting himself with stones. Finally, that it was one of menace to all men,-as one of the evangelists records-so that it was not possible for men to pass by that way. The picture is a terrible one of the ultimate effect of the possession of a human being by an evil spirit.

What is here revealed as to the demons themselves? Perhaps the most suggestive thing,-and it is not peculiar to this story-is their recognition of Christ, the obeisance they yielded to Him. This man, seeing Jesus from afar, as our translation says, hastened to Him and worshipped Him. The word worshipped may simply mean that he yielded obeisance to Him, bowed in His presence; but what he said suggests that attitude of worship in the presence of Christ. The question asked was a strange and startling one: "What have I to do with Thee, Jesus?" Or, What is there to me and to Thee, Jesus? That is, What have we in common? Then came that strange word, so constantly recurring when evil spirits came into the presence of Christ, "Thou Son of the Most High God." Then followed the plea of the evil spirit: "I adjure Thee by God, torment me not"; and the weird request. "He besought Him much that He would not send them away out of the country" says Mark; and Luke says, "They entreated Him that He would not command them to depart into the abyss." At the last moment they clamoured that if they were to be driven out from possession of this man, they might enter into the swine; thus manifesting their desire for some material instrumentality; in order to the satisfaction of some craving of their nature.

Look at the story once again in order to observe the dealing of Christ with this demonized man. In answer to the challenge, "What is there to me and to Thee?"-the man speaking, and yet voicing the demon,-Jesus said, "Come forth thou unclean spirit out of the man." That was the word of quiet authority, which impressed the disciples, who listened and observed. In the first morning scene in the Capernaum synagogue, they were amazed, not that He cast the demons out, for the scribes also were doing this, but that He did it with a word, and with apparent ease, with an authority which the demon immediately recognized and obeyed. So in this case He spoke the word, "Come forth, thou unclean spirit out of the man," and the word was enough.

In the next place, in answer to the plea of the evil one, "I adjure Thee, torment me not," Christ asked a question: "What is thy name?" Here perhaps we are at the point of special arrest. The careful reading of the story convinces me that our Lord was not asking the demon his name, but the man; thus recalling him to the sense of personality. I believe that the question was asked with infinite tenderness. The Lord spoke to the man as he was emerging from the terrible control that had wrought havoc in his life: "What is thy name?" He was answered by the spirit of evil, which nevertheless was an answer revealing the man's agony, and sense of hopelessness, "My name is Legion, for we are many." It seems to me that in that answer also there is evidence of the man himself, wakened to a sense of his own personality. "My name is Legion, for we are many." Notice the awakened sense of personality, "My name," and then the swift return to the terrific sense of mystery that had blighted and ruined his life, "we are many."

When the spirits made their request that they might enter into the herd of swine, Mark says, "He gave them leave"; Matthew records His answer in one word, "Go!" The answer of Jesus, which was permission to the evil spirits to enter the herd of swine, was also His word of judgment on them; for the herd, possessed by the evil spirits, perished in the waters, and so were lost to the demons, who passed on into the abyss.

I am not going to enter into any discussion of the old time difficulty, the controversy between Huxley and Gladstone, about that herd of swine. Suffice it to say that our Lord was exercising His ministry in Jewish territory, and even if Josephus is right, that this, was a Greek city, it is nevertheless true that our Lord was dealing with the children of Israel, and in the destruction of the swine He was rebuking their indulgence in a traffic absolutely forbidden.

The Lord's last word to the man was this, "Go to thy house unto thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and how He had mercy on thee." Thus the whole incident was set in the light of the purpose of the ministry of Christ; the compassionating of man, and his deliverance from all evil domination. Thus also the whole purpose of demon-possession is revealed, as being, that of the spoiling of humanity.

The last scene is one full of sadness. It is that of the people as they besought Him to depart out of their coasts. They saw the man, sitting, clothed, and in his right mind; but they would dispense with such benefits rather than have their gains interfered with. Christ is seen therefore, taking boat and passing back to the other side.

What value has such a consideration for us? I suggest first of all that the fact of the incorporation of these stories in the records is proof that they are not without value. They serve first as an unveiling of the underworld of evil; and secondly, as a revelation of our Lord's power over that underworld.

But it is objected that there are no such cases now. That is a hasty conclusion. I have already stated that the testimony of missionaries as to their experience in what we call heathen lands at this time, is unequivocal. I suggest also that the whole of the phenomena of spiritualism is closely allied; and that the moment the word "medium" is employed, the word "demonized man " or "demonized woman" may be substituted. Christians make a terrible mistake when they laugh at spiritualism, and treat it as a fancy. It is a reality. Men are holding traffic with spirits, and obtaining answers from the spirit world; and yielding themselves thus to the control of spirits, they become mastered by spirits, and the media through which the spirits actually speak. But the whole realm of spirits, with which men thus communicate, is the realm under the dominion of Satan.

Admitting, however, for the sake of argument, that we have no such manifestations to-day in our own land, as those which the Gospels describe, the question arises as to whether this also is not a method of Satan. To-day, in this land, in the places where the Gospel has been preached, and where therefore the common level of spiritual intelligence,-quite apart from the intelligence of definitely Christian people,-is far higher than it can be in places where the Gospel has not been preached; the very fact that there are no such manifestations proves the subtlety of Satan. In such places he has girded himself as an angel of light, seducing men by evil spirits that come to them, as if they were spirits of God.

The underworld of evil spirits still exists. It is still true that "our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." But it is also true that the power of the Lord, and His authority over the whole of this realm abides; and therefore there may be for us perfect and constant victory over all the power of evil spirits as they approach us from without; and moreover, in and through His name there may be for us perfect authority and power for the exorcising of evil spirits from other men, if we will but place ourselves in true relation to the Lord Himself.

To quote again from Paul's language in his Ephesian letter, in order that we enter into the conflict with this underworld of evil, it is necessary that we should "put on the whole panoply of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." We fight our way toward the ultimate victory through unseen forces and foes; the principalities and powers, that are under the control of the arch-enemy of the race.

But if we recognize the foe, let it be none the less our business to remember the power of the Lord. When the apostle wrote, "We are not ignorant of his devices," he wrote as one who had come to a true understanding of the whole underworld of evil, into which he looked with intrepid eyes, and to which he perpetually made reference; and that understanding resulted from, the light that Christ had brought to him.

It is for us therefore, to study these stories, not as though we were face to face with exceptional things of long ago, not as though the adversaries therein described did then exist, and now are non-existent; but as those who take their way toward the perfecting of the realization of the Kingdom of God on earth amid these hosts of darkness.

O'er this whole realm of darkness also our Lord and Master has sovereign rule. As our trust is in Him, and we are yielded to Him, we in this regard also, may be more than conquerors.

Only let us ever remember that if

"Hell is nigh, . . . God is nigher,

Circling us with hosts of fire.

For lo! to faith's enlightened sight

All the mountain flames with light."

Source:

<https://sermonindex.net/speakers/g-campbell-morgan/there-met-him-out-of-the-tombs-a-man-with-an-unclean-spirit-mar-52/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net