

**TRUTH FOR TODAY**

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### **FREEDOM FROM BONDAGE #3**

We're involved in a study of a miracle performed by Christ - the record of which is Mark chapter 5. This would be an encounter between Jesus and two men demon possessed. Thus far we've noted what little we know about demon possession, a description of one of the poor men afflicted, and are now noting the confrontation between the Lord and the demons.

*“And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country [into the deep (Luke 8:31)]” (Mark 5:10).*

Even for demons, there's no place like home! Note their fear of being cast into “*the deep.*” Was this a reference to the deep waters of the Galilean lake? No, for as Lockyner explains, “The word ‘deep’ means **abyss**, the bottomless pit...and the demons asked for any doom but that.”<sup>1</sup>

*“Now there was there nigh unto the mountains [a good way off from (Matthew 8:30)] a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them” (Mark 5:11-12).*

These demonic forces realize they can't resist the command of Christ because He is too powerful for them. They ask to enter into the herd of swine feeding nearby. Why? Perhaps it is best to say we simply do not know. It is worth noting that they are requesting to enter filthy animals, they being filthy themselves.<sup>2</sup>

#### ***The Deliverance (Mark 5:13)***

*“And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. [And he said unto them, Go. (Matthew 8:32).] And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two*

*thousand;)* and were choked in the sea [perished in the waters (Matthew 8:32)]”  
(Mark 5:13).

Demons obey Christ even if men do not! The demons enter those two thousand pigs, and, if distributed evenly, that comes to three demons per animal. The frenzied swine rush pell-mell down the cliff into the sea,<sup>3</sup> and everyone of them drowned.<sup>4</sup> The swine preferred suicide to demon possession.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps you are asking the same question most do when studying this passage -- **why?** Why did Jesus grant these demons their request and destroy valuable farm property in the process? Animal rights activists have a field day with this passage! In responding to this question, it is best to say we do not know for sure, and any guess is just that. But, here are a few guesses:

1. The pigs would die one day anyway, and they might as well die now. Death by drowning would be more merciful than death at the hands of a butcher.<sup>6</sup> Response: Would a pig know the difference?

2. Some are of the opinion that since the owners of the swine were Jews, the pigs were destroyed since it was illegal for Jews to possess these under the Law.<sup>7</sup> Response: How do we know the owners were Jews?<sup>8</sup>

3. God owes no explanation of His deeds (*Isaiah 55:8-9*).<sup>9</sup>

4. Jesus allowed the demons to enter the swine, but did not command them to. It was they who destroyed the swine, not Jesus.<sup>10</sup>

5. Jesus was teaching the owners a lesson: they were selfish, and had felt it better to acquire and keep material possessions than to help a demon-possessed man.<sup>11</sup>

Other suggestions have been set forth as possible explanations, but those should suffice.

Now observe:

***The Results (Mark 5:14-20).***

As a result of this mighty miracle those many demons were expelled and those two thousand pigs were destroyed, but a far more important outcome was that a man was healed, and how grateful he was!

*“And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done” (Mark 5:14).*

Why did those who fed the swine broadcast the news? Was it because they were overwhelmed with amazement and joy? Or, was it to escape blame for the loss of two thousand swine?<sup>12</sup> After all, some explanation had to be given!

*“And they [the whole city (Matthew 8:34)] come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting [at the feet of Jesus (Luke 8:35)], and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine” (Mark 5:15-16).*

The townspeople find a radical change in the man -- he is now Christ-possessed instead of demon-possessed! He was no longer out of control, but sitting calmly; he was no longer naked, but clothed<sup>13</sup>; he was no longer acting like a madman, but in his right mind.

Inexplicably, the people were afraid: *“And they [the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about (Luke 8:37)] began to pray him to depart out of their coasts” (Mark 5:17).* Instead of rejoicing, they were *“taken with great fear” (Luke 8:37)* and asked Jesus to

leave. Of what were they afraid? Afraid that if Jesus stays, more of their prize pigs will die? That more damage will be done to the economy?<sup>14</sup>

Fortunately, another result was that the good news was spread: *“And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him”* (Mark 5:18). As Jesus and the disciples climbed back into the boat to leave, the man started pleading with Jesus again. Only this time the demons were not talking, but the man himself! He begged to stay with Jesus. Was this request out of gratitude for the One who had radically transformed his life for the better?<sup>15</sup> Or, out of fear that those demons might return?<sup>16</sup> Whatever the motive, Jesus had other purposes for him: *“Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee”* (Mark 5:19).<sup>17</sup>

Why did the Lord not let him accompany Him? Christ realized it was far better for the man to teach his own family than to go. In this way, he could be a “missionary” to his people. Thus, in one sense, Jesus leaves; in another, He stays: *“Jesus departed, but left behind him a witness whose very body was a living monument bearing testimony to Christ’s compassion and power.”*<sup>18</sup>

[continued next month]

## ENDNOTES

1. Lockyer, p. 190.
2. “The Bible tells us of the powers of darkness entering into only two species of lower animals -- the serpent and the swine -- the first the symbol of intellectual cunning, and the latter the symbol of gross uncleanness.” Lockyer, p. 190.

3. “The slope is so steep and the ledge at its foot so narrow that a herd rushing down could not check itself before tumbling into the water.” McGarvey, p. 346.

4. In an attempt to discredit this entire account of demon possession, skeptics offer this ridiculous view: the men who were supposed to be tending the swine were drawn by curiosity to the encounter between Christ and the sick man. Being left unattended, the pigs began fighting among themselves and tumbled headlong over the cliff! See Trench, pp. 186-187.

5. Lockyer, p. 189.

6. View set forth, but not held, by Hendricksen, p. 194.

7. Lockyer, pp. 189-190.

8. Trench, p. 185.

9. Hendricksen, p. 194.

10. McGarvey, p. 347.

11. Hendricksen, pp. 194-195

12. Wiersbe, p. 126.

13. Lockyer speculates the disciples provided the clothing to hide the man’s nakedness. Lockyer, p. 190. People in their right minds wear clothes!

14. McGarvey, p. 348.

15. Wiersbe, p. 126.

16. Trench, p. 190.

17. Others [for instance, the leper and two blind men (Matthew 8:4; 9:30)] had been told not to spread what had happened to them, but here the cured demonic is given

permission to spread the news to all. Why the difference? *“In Gadara, he [Jesus] was not as well known as in Galilee where popular political movements to make Him a political king were almost out of hand.”* Lockyer, pp. 190-191.

18. McGarvey, p. 348.

Wayne Cox

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### MEMPHIS SCHOOL OF PREACHING LECTURESHIP

*March 31 - April 4, 2019*

*Theme: Purer in Heart, O God*

**FOREST HILL CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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### GOSPEL MEETING

*June 28 - 30, 2019*

*Mel Futrell, speaker*

*VERONA CHURCH OF CHRIST*

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