

## **New Creation from Chaos (Mark 5:1-20)**

### ***Demonology***

#### **Intro**

Today we need to take some time to try and understand a very serious, yet much understood topic—Demonology. Demonology is The Doctrine of Demons or The Doctrine of Fallen Angels.

#### **I. The Existence of Demons**

“Does the Bible really teach that demons exist?” The answer is, “Yes.” In fact, the existence of demons is **mentioned by every New Testament writer** except the author of Hebrews, who did mention Satan, the head of demons. Also, **Yeshua (Jesus) recognized the existence of demons** in two ways. First, He taught that demons really do exist (Mat. 7:22; 10:8; 12:27–28; 25:41; Mk. 7:29; 16:17; Lk. 10:20; 11:18–20; 13:32). Secondly, He clearly recognized the existence of demons because He cast out demons (Mat. 12:22–29; Mk. 1:39; 5:1–20; Lk. 4:35, 41; 8:29–33; 9:42; 11:14). Finally, the disciples recognized the existence of demons, according to Matthew 10:1. Outside of the apostolic group, the seventy disciples recognized the existence of demons (Lk. 10:17).

#### **II. The Names of Demons**

Demons are given a number of names in Scripture. There are a total of twelve **Old Testament** names used concerning demons. First, they are called *the angels of evil* (Ps. 78:49).

Secondly, they are called *the sons of God*. This term sometimes refers to good angels, but it can also refer to evil angels or demons (Gen. 6:2, 4).

A third Old Testament name means “to rule” or “to be lord.” It is used of demons in Deuteronomy 32:17 and Psalm 106:37. This name emphasizes a demon’s desire to be lord over or to rule over a person.

The fourth Old Testament name refers to demons who have the form of a goat. It is no accident that satanic groups often use the symbol of the head of a goat. This name is used of demons in the Hebrew text in Leviticus 17:7; 2 Chronicles 11:15; Isaiah 13:21; 34:14.

The fifth Old Testament name is a night demon or “demons of the night.” It is used of demons in the Hebrew text of Isaiah 34:14.

A sixth Old Testament name is *evil spirit* (1 Sam. 16:14–16, 23; 18:10; 19:9).

A seventh Old Testament name is *lying spirit* (1 Kg. 22:21–22).

The eighth Old Testament name is *a familiar spirit* (Deut. 18:11; Is. 8:19; 19:3). In the Bible demons that reveal themselves through mediums, wizards, and witches are familiar spirits.

A ninth Old Testament name is “fortune,” as in Isaiah 65:11.

A tenth Old Testament name is “fate”; this, too, is found in Isaiah 65:11.

An eleventh Old Testament name is *elilim* (Ps. 96:5). This is often translated as “idols,” but it actually refers to the work of demons who are especially involved in the work of idolatry.

The twelfth Old Testament name is *ketev* (Ps. 91:6), and refers to those demons involved in the work of destruction.

There are four groups of names found in the **New Testament**.

The first group is those names that contain the Greek root for “demon.” The meaning of the root for demon is “intelligence.” Demons are intelligent beings.

The second group is those that contain the word *spirit*. There are five different names: *evil spirit* (Lk. 7:21; Acts 19:12–16); *unclean spirit* (Mat. 10:1; 12:43; Mk. 1:27; 3:11; 5:13; Acts 5:16; 8:7; Rev. 16:13); *wicked spirit* (Lk. 11:26); *seducing spirits* (1 Tim. 4:1); and the last name combines “spirit” and “demon” together as *spirits of demons* (Rev. 16:14).

A third group is *angels*. The word *angel* means “messenger,” and demons are referred to as *angels* because they are also messengers, Satan’s messengers (Mat. 25:41; Rev. 12:7–9).

The fourth group is the name *destruction*. This is the name of the demon of the *abyss*, according to Revelation 9:11.

### III. The Personality of Demons

That demons have an intellect is evident in six ways: they know who Jesus is (Mk. 1:24); they know their own future doom (Mat. 8:28–29); they knew both Yeshua and Paul (Acts 16:16–17; 19:15); they know *that God is one* (Jas. 2:19); they have a counterfeit system of doctrine (1 Tim. 4:1–3); and they have the ability to communicate by speech (Lk. 4:34–35, 41; 8:28–31).

Demons have the emotion of fierceness and anger (Mat. 8:28); and they have the emotion of fear (Mat. 8:29; Jas. 2:19).

Also, demons have the will to make requests (Mat. 8:31, Lk. 8:32); they have the will to obey commands and orders (Mk. 1:27; Lk. 4:35–36); and they have the will to leave a person, seek a new place to live or to return to the place where they formerly lived (Mat. 12:43–45).

### IV. Origin of Satan and Demons

Unfortunately, we do not have the time to study every aspect of demonology. The listener is referred to a few passages to understand the origin of Satan (The Accuser) and demons: Is. 14:12–14; Ezekiel 28:11–19; Rev. 12:7–12.

### V. The Number of Demons

There are several indications that there are a great number of demons. For example, today’s text mentions a *legion* of demons residing in one person. A *legion* consisted of anywhere from four thousand to six thousand demons. Revelation 9:16 mentions two hundred million temporarily confined demons. Revelation 12:3–4 reveals the percentage of angels that fell with Satan—one third. According to Hebrews 12:22–24, there was an *innumerable* [number] of *angels* created. So there are a great number of demons.

### VI. The Organization of Demons

The fallen angels are as organized as the good angels are, with the same titles and ranks. 1 Corinthians 15:24 speaks of three different ranks in the organization of angels: *rule*, *authority*, and *power*. Ephesians 6:12 lists: *powers*, *principalities*, and *world-rulers*. Colossians 2:15 mentions: *principalities* and *powers*. The Old Testament tells of demons that function as rulers over nations; such as, *the prince of the kingdom of Persia* (Dan. 10:13–20) and *the prince of Greece* (Dan. 10:20).

### VII. The Characteristics of Demons

The first thing about their *nature* is that they are spirit beings. In fact, demons and unclean spirits are one and the same. For example, Matthew 17:18 mentions a *demon*, but the parallel account in Mark 9:25 calls it an *unclean spirit*. They are bodiless; they

do not have physical bodies (Mat. 12:43–45; Mk. 5:12). They can possess a physical body, but they do not have bodies of their own. Now while they are spirit beings, they have clear shapes and features, which are frequently animal-like (Rev. 9:7–10, 17–19; 16:13–14). They seek to possess people (Mk. 5:1–13; Acts 16:16; 19:16).

Demons have the **power** to control men from within as seen in Mark 5:1–5; Acts 19:16. Second, they can afflict humanity from the outside, as we see them doing in Revelation 9:1–21. Third, demons can perform miracles, as we see in Revelation 16:14. Finally, they have the ability to appear visibly, as seen in Revelation 9:7–10, 17–19; 16:13–14.

### **VIII. The Activities of Demons**

Throughout the Old Testament, there was very little demonic activity. However, in the gospels demons were everywhere, and Yeshua was confronted with them wherever He went. The reason for this is found in Revelation 12:1–5, which states that while Yeshua was on earth during the First Coming, Satan brought down his entire demonic army from their present abode in the atmospheric heavens to the earth; particularly into the Land of Israel. The reason Satan brought the majority, perhaps all, of his demons into this area was to try to prevent the purpose of the First Coming of Yeshua. Satan was there manipulating events and people to try to keep the Messiah from the cross.

In a general sense, demons are involved in three main activities. First, they try to stop the purpose of God (Daniel 10:10–14).

Second, they try to extend Satan's authority over his cosmos by doing his bidding (Eph. 2:1–2; 6:11–12).

Third, they can and are used by God to carry out His own purposes, plan, and will. For example in 1 Samuel 16:14, a demon was used to torment Saul. In 1 Kings 22:19–23, a lying demon was used to arrange for the death of Ahab. And in 2 Corinthians 12:7, a demon was allowed to be used to keep Paul humble.

The activities of demons in relationship to the occult are an extensive subject, so we only briefly mention it here. In dealing with the occult world, three passages of Scripture need to be considered. The first is Deuteronomy 18:9–14, in which Moses mentions eight aspects of the occult world: *divination*, "fortune-telling by magical means;" *augury*, soothsaying and trying to determine the future by reading the entrails of animals; the *enchanter*, a magician who puts others under a demonic spell or under demonic control; the *sorcerer*, witches and witchcraft, including astrology; the *charmer* or one who practices magic miracles, incantations, and hypnotism; the *consulter with a familiar spirit*, which refers to a medium who is controlled by a demon; the *wizard*, who is the clairvoyant or the psychic person; and lastly the *necromancer*, who is the medium that consults the dead. The other two passages are Acts 8:9 and 16:16. The main point here is that **the Bible clearly prohibits** any contact with the occult. Such prohibitions are found throughout the Scriptures (Ex. 22:18; Lev. 19:26, 31; 20:6, 27; Deut. 18:9–14; 1 Sam. 15:23; II Kg. 21:6; Is. 8:19; Jer. 29:8–9; Mic. 5:12; Acts 19:18–20).

### **IX. Demonic Control**

By way of definition, **demonic control** involves a demon residing in a person and exercising direct control over that person with a certain degree of derangement of the mind or physical distress of the body (Matt 12: 43-45; Mark 5:1-20). Now, a distinction needs to be made between demonic control and two other types of demonic activities. The first is **demonic harassment**, where a demon harasses a person from without, found in Romans 15:22 and 1 Thessalonians 2:18, where Satan hinders the plans of a

believer. Second, there is **demonic influence**. An example of this is Matthew 16:21–23. After Yeshua made the statement that He was going to die, Peter said that no such thing would come upon Him. Then Yeshua turned around and, facing Peter, He said: *Get you behind me, Satan*. Obviously, Satan was trying to keep the Messiah from the cross. At that point, Peter had been influenced by Satan to try to deter Yeshua from going to the cross. Peter was under demonic influence.

The distinction between believers and unbelievers is **not** that a believer cannot be controlled while an unbeliever can be. Rather, the difference is a matter of the extent of the control. An unbeliever can be totally controlled, while a believer can only be partially controlled.

The **ultimate cure** for demonic control is exorcism; that is, casting out the demon. The unbeliever has absolutely no spiritual authority whatsoever. In the case of an unbeliever, someone who is a believer must force the demon out by ordering the demon out in the name of the Messiah, by the power of the Spirit, on the basis of faith, and in certain situations, to pray the demon out.

When dealing with a believer being controlled or influenced by demons, the believer him- or herself can force the demon out. That is why, in dealing with Satan, the believer is encouraged to do one thing: to resist (Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8–9; Eph. 6:10–18). If a believer resists Satan, the believer can force the demon to stop controlling or influencing his or her life.

### **Creation from Chaos (5:1–20)**

Yeshua has just calmed a violent storm at sea (4:35–41), which revealed that He is YHVH. He now meets a man with an equally violent storm inside him. In both cases the power of Yeshua prevails over the chaos and destruction. Once again Jesus is connected with God (v. 20).

1 “Gerasenes” is not a certain reading. The name of the location in v. 1 appears in different manuscripts as “Gerasa,” “Gadara,” or “Gergesa.” None of the three locations is clearly superior to the other two in terms of textual support. A midrash to Song of Songs (*Zuta* 1:4) mentions a form of the name in the following reference, “the graves of Gog and Magog will be open from south of the Kidron Valley to Gergeshta on the eastern side of Lake Tiberias.” Although the *Zuta* midrash is late, this particular saying is ascribed to Rabbi Nehemiah, an acclaimed disciple of Akiba in the second century a.d.

In 1970 a bulldozer cutting a road along the eastern shore of the lake unearthed the remains of an ancient town immediately south of Wadi Samak in the Valley of Kursi (“Gersa” or “Gursa,” as known in local dialect), suggesting an identification of Kursi with Gergesa. Although the foregoing evidence is not conclusive, it is both respectable and reasonable. The “Gerasa” of Mark 5:1 was probably Kursi/Gergesa, which lay within the administrative district of Hippos, one of the major cities of the Decapolis situated on the commanding promontory to the south overlooking the Sea of Galilee.

2–5 The healing of the Gerasene demoniac is Mark’s third and most graphic exorcism so far (1:25; 3:11). He is a terror to himself and others. Even in life he is consigned to the land of the dead. Mark’s description is more fitting of a ferocious animal than of a human being; indeed, the Greek word for “subdue,” *damazō*, is used of taming a wild beast in James 3:7.

From a Jewish perspective, the story is replete with elements of uncleanness. The setting is the eastern shore of the lake, the Gentile Decapolis. These cities, which had been Judaized during the Hasmonean period, were severed from Hasmonean rule by Pompey when he invaded Palestine in 63 BC and were reestablished as showcase cities of pagan Hellenistic culture and ideals.

In this region there lived a man who, according to Mark, had been commandeered by “an unclean spirit” (v. 2). His banishment to the tombs rendered him unclean according to OT law, where contact with the dead defiled one for seven days. According to Num 19:11–14, anyone who failed to purify himself from the pollution of tombs “must be cut off from Israel.” Expanding on this Torah teaching, rabbinic interpretation extended uncleanness from contact with the dead to include contact with anything associated with them, including contact with tombs. In the region there were also swine herders. Following the OT proscription against swine (Lev 11:7; Deut 14:8), the Mishnah states categorically: “None may rear swine anywhere” (*m. B. Qam. 7:7*). Hence Yeshua meets a man with an unclean spirit, living among unclean tombs, surrounded by people employed in unclean occupations, all in unclean Gentile territory.

**6–7** Mark’s narrative implies that demonic powers are intent on prohibiting Jesus from entering the region. First, the demonic nature of the storm on the lake nearly sinks the boat; now a demon-possessed man powerful enough to break irons hurls himself at Yeshua and the disciples. This is a place where no one would want to go for any reason. Contrary to all reason and expectation, however, Jesus goes there.

Rather than falling on Jesus “he ran and fell on his knees in front of him and screamed at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Yeshua, Son of God *Ha’Elyon*? I implore you in God’s name! Don’t torture me!” The Greek verb for “fell on his knees,” *proskynein*, denotes prostrating oneself before a person to whom reverence or worship is due, even kissing his feet or the hem of his garment.

The plea not to be “tortured” or tormented by Jesus is an admission of subservience. Most important is the reference to Jesus as “Son of the Most High God.” In Judaism, “Most High God” is an epithet emphasizing the transcendence and exaltation of Israel’s God over pagan gods and goddesses and rival powers.

**8–10** The unclean spirit is expelled from the demon-possessed man solely by the authoritative word of Yeshua. The discovery of Greek magical papyri in Egypt informs us of the long and convoluted formulas, spells, conjurations, and catchwords that ancient exorcists employed as they sparred with demonic opponents to gain advantage over them. And most of us have seen movies where Catholic priests go through special rituals in order to try to exorcize people. But with Yeshua there is no elaborate ritual, nor is the effectiveness of the exorcism dependent on the words he utters. The power to prevail over the demonic resides within Jesus Himself. He speaks and the demons are expelled.

Asked who he is, the demoniac identifies himself as “Legion, for we are many.” The grip of demons resembled the grip of the Roman legion on Palestine, which had been subjugated by Pompey less than a century earlier. The Greek term “Legion” is a military term and designated the largest troop-unit in the Roman army, some 5,600 soldiers. Nevertheless, the demons offer no challenge to Jesus, but plead for his mercy as the only alternative to experiencing his wrath.

**11–13** On their own initiative, they “entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering around two thousand, rushed down the hillside into the lake and were drowned.” The destruction of the pigs plagues or embarrasses many modern interpreters. About two miles south of Kursi/Gergesa a ridge extends from the eastern slopes of the Decapolis practically to the lake. The ridge ends in a steep embankment and fits the description of 5:13.

In the eyes of Jesus, the rescue and restoration of one person is more important than the value of the pigs. Compared to the redemption of a human being, the loss of the swineherds, considerable though it is, does not deserve mentioning.

**14–17** The remainder of the story centers on the reaction of the locals to the exorcism. The swineherds “reported this in the town and countryside” (5:14). The report summons people from the surrounding area to see what has happened. And they see something quite astounding: the infamous demoniac is in a wholly altered state, “sitting there, dressed and in his right mind.” This is a picture of discipleship and salvation: a restored individual sitting at the feet of Yeshua.

**18–20** The story ends with the former demoniac asking to *be with him*, indicating his wish to join Jesus. Yeshua forbids him, however, probably because a Gentile would have been a stumbling block in His mission to Israel (Matt 10:5–6). The mission and call of Jesus are according to His will alone—there are no self-appointed disciples or ministers—only those who have been called. The reason Jesus sends the man to announce what happened to him may be related to the fact that Yeshua has been banished from the region. The response to Jesus in the Decapolis is essentially no different from the Jewish response in Galilee. Yeshua tells him, “Go home to your people, and tell them how much *Adonai* in his mercy has done for you.’ ” Their banishment of Jesus does not rid them of Him, for He is present in the message of the gospel proclaimed by His followers. In the concluding verses of the story Mark tells us that Yeshua commanded the man, “ ‘Tell them how much the *Lord* has done for you.’ ” The man then went out and told “how much *Yeshua* had done for him.” For this man, the Lord and Jesus are one and the same. In the Gospel of Mark, the healed demoniac becomes the first missionary-preacher sent out by Yeshua. Remarkably, he is a *Gentile* sent to the Gentiles.