

Bi132 The Gospels

Lesson Bi132-20 Power Over Demons

Do you have a curiosity about the spirit world and Satan? There are some Christians who want to understand details about the kingdom of darkness that the Scriptures do not give. They venture into all kinds of speculation and sometimes talk even more about the devil than about the Savior! The important thing to remember is that Jesus has power over the world of the demonic. Jesus wants us to follow his example, to liberate those controlled by unclean spirits, in the power and authority of the Holy Spirit working through us.

One day Jesus and the disciples crossed the Sea of Galilee to a region on the eastern side where the Gerasenes lived, a predominantly Gentile territory. When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with a demon spirit came from the tombs to meet him. It was not unusual for the same cave to provide burial for the dead and shelter for the poor in an area, though most people avoided such a place. This man lived among the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. He had often been chained hand and foot, but he was able to break all the chains apart. No one was strong enough to subdue him. Night and day, among the tombs and in the hills, he would wail and cry out, cutting himself with stones. Satan's purpose in demonic possession is to torment and try to destroy a person who is created in the image of God.

When the man saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. The demon, using the man's voice, shouted out, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God's name do not torture me!"

Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you impure and evil spirit!" Then Jesus asked the man, "What is your name?" Jesus was asking the man's name, but it was the demons who replied, showing they were in control.

"My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." And the demons begged Jesus again and again not to send them out into the abyss for punishment. The man was possessed by thousands of evil powers, though only one spoke. A Roman legion was a group of up to 6,000 men. But even so, God's power working through Christ was stronger!

A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. Jews considered pigs to be unclean and unfit to eat, so most of the people nearby were probably Gentiles. The demons begged Jesus, "Send us into the pigs; allow us to enter them." He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, consisting of about 2,000 pigs, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and was drowned.

Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons. He was sitting there, clothed and in his right mind. The people were afraid. Those who had seen it told the others what had happened to the demon-

possessed man—and also about the pigs. Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not allow him to, but said, “Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” So the man went away and began to tell in the ten-city region, called the Decapolis, how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people who heard marveled (Mark 5:1-20). In this way many highly cultured Gentiles in the cities of Decapolis, east of the Jordan, heard about the power of God.

The Gerasene people had feared the demon-possessed man and had tried to put chains on him. When they heard he had been delivered, they came to see if it was true. Now they no longer feared him. Now they feared Jesus who had caused this great financial loss to the owners of the pigs when their animals had drowned. They were more concerned about further loss of money than this miserable man being set free. Perhaps they were also disturbed that a powerful force was at work in their midst, that they could not comprehend.

Some time later, Jesus traveled north and west of Capernaum to the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and the Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon. It was a journey of about 48 kilometers (30 miles). At this time Jesus was avoiding the opposition in Galilee and teaching his disciples privately. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it, yet he could not be hid. A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, “O Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is possessed by a demon and suffering terribly.”

Jesus did not answer her at all. So his disciples came to him and urged him, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.”

He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

But she came and knelt before him. “Lord, help me!” she said.

He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their little dogs.” Jesus meant that the gospel was to be given first to the Jews.

“Yes, Lord,” she said. “But even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” She understood what Jesus was saying and was willing to acknowledge his lordship and settle for ‘crumbs.’

Then Jesus turned and said to her, “Woman, great is your faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour (Matt 15:21-28).

How should we understand the words spoken between the Canaanite woman and Jesus? This Greek woman, a Syro-phenician by birth, sought out Jesus because of her daughter’s need. She addressed him as, “Lord, Son of David” indicating she believed he was the Messiah. Jesus’ response to her emphasized that his mission was primarily to Jews, not to Gentiles like her. The ‘children’ he refers to are the Jews; the dogs equate to the Gentiles. Often small dogs lived in the

homes of that day and were allowed to eat table scraps. The difference is that the main share went to the children. The woman understood this and asked simply to be allowed to get the crumbs of the blessing intended for the Jews. Jesus rewarded her faith by delivering her daughter.

These two stories demonstrate how Jesus dealt with demons when they took control of people. In both cases the greater power of God overcame the lesser powers of Satan. In neither case are we told how the persons became controlled by the evil spirits. In both cases, the person approached Jesus knowing that he alone could deliver. In both cases they expressed faith in Jesus as the Messiah, son of David. The demons feared Jesus for they knew he had power over them.

This story is **important** because it reminds us that Jesus always comes against the work of Satan in this world. The devil wants to control people's lives in order to destroy them, because they are made in the image of God. But God works through believers, by the power and authority of the Holy Spirit, to deliver people from Satan's power.

The **main truth** of this story is that Satan's power is not greater than the power of God. When the power of the Holy Spirit is present, Satan will always be completely defeated. "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1John 4:4).

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. What did Jesus say to the demon that possessed the man living among the tombs?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said Jesus commanded it saying, "Come out of this man, you impure and evil spirit!" you are correct.
2. What instruction did Jesus give the former demon-possessed man who wanted to go with him in the boat?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said Jesus told him, "Go home to your own friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you," you are correct.
3. What did Jesus say to the Gentile woman after she expressed her faith in Him as the Messiah?
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said Jesus told her, "Woman, great is your faith! Your request is granted," you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to learn both of these stories, so you can tell them from memory. After telling the two stories to a fellow believer, ask them, "Do you know anyone who is disturbed by evil forces that control their behavior and seek to destroy them?" If the person answers 'yes,' pray with them for deliverance of the disturbed person, in the name of Jesus. Together, memorize the verse from First John: "**Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.**" The Holy Spirit wants to take away your fear and work through you to deliver people from Satan's power.