

## **People Jesus Touched: A Demon-Possessed Man, a Fearful City, and a New Believer (Mark 5)**

By Bob Young

### **Introduction**

After about so much time in thematic studies, I feel driven back to the biblical text. How does God communicate his truth. We often see the text as incomplete, not the whole story, but I rather see the topic as incomplete.

Want to tell you how I chose the stories in this brief series: People Jesus Touched.

### **Understanding Mark's Gospel**

Gospel of Mark (8-9-10 for passion predictions)

Three sections: 1-8:21, center, last week of his life

Section 1: Beginnings of ministry

Choose disciples, early miracles, amazing stories, amazing teachings (parables)

Detailed stories—this is what we will focus on for the next few weeks

Section 2: the passion predictions, primarily interspersed with extended teachings: Peter's confession, transfiguration, faith (boy with evil spirit), greatness, sin, divorce/family, humility, wealth (rich young man), service/sacrifice

Section 3: triumphal entry and Jerusalem events

I have chosen several of the detailed stories from the early section—amazing stories.

### **Background**

Jesus went to Gentile territory, unclean animals. Gerasa was about 35 miles from Sea of Galilee. When he got out into the real world of hurt, when he went outside the Jewish comfort zone, he saw that all kinds of evil were at work. Somewhat like visiting a major metropolitan area of our world—can see things you prefer not to see. Realities that we would like to deny. No sooner got out of the boat, than a man approaches him.

### **SOMEONE WITH PROBLEMS NOT SOLVABLE BY PERSONAL EFFORTS**

Who do you know like this?

Think about the people who fit in this category.

Possessed by powers beyond themselves—hurts, hang-ups, addictions?

Overcome by evil rather than overcoming evil.

Really the word is unclean spirit—but the picture of impurity and unholiness is enough to suggest evil.

Such are the outcasts of our society, living in isolation

A power in our society without power over themselves

Hurting self, often without realizing it

We can only imagine that the people were frustrated—nighttime cries, powerless to stop the intervention in their daily lives.

Were the people glad to see Jesus come? Had they also heard of him?

Sees and recognizes Jesus.

Confrontation with Jesus raises difficult questions—obvious that evil spirits are involved. Threatened? Challenged? How/why would Jesus torture him? Jesus came to deliver him.

Next part is not easy to understand—accept as part of the first century culture, Jesus in conversation with evil spirits, pigs destroyed. Jesus releases the man from his problem. The spirits are legion—a Roman legion had 6000 men. This man had numerous demons, even as many we meet today have so many problems we don't know where to start.

We start with the one who is the very power of God over all evil. We start with Jesus. We do not start with problem solutions, one by one. Start with Jesus, who can overcome all evil. In the request to enter the pigs, do we see unclean identified with unclean? Do not know for certain.

### **A FEARFUL CITY**

What did the report of the pig-herders sound like?

How did they understand what had happened?

In what sense could this text be a picture of our city and our world?

Why are they afraid?

Why are people afraid when they come face to face with goodness?

Was it the financial loss, threat?

Were they afraid of such life-changing possibilities?

Were they afraid of the man?

Why do people reject the cornerstone rather than building their lives on him?

### **A NEW BELIEVER**

The story concludes by focusing specifically on the readers. This is the section about us.

The man says, "Let me be involved in all of your 'stuff'."

No, go tell others, family, what God has done for you.

We have forgotten what God has done for us, because we have not kept telling.

We are not amazed, and others are not amazed. We must recover the amazement; we must recover the wonder.