

Study of the Gospel of Mark

Chapter 5 (Part 1)

After his baptism, Jesus began his ministry in Galilee (Mark 1:14), which is the region to the north and west of the Sea of Galilee. His work started along the shores of this sea (Mark 1:16), and in the city of Capernaum (Mark 1:21) which was on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. After some time Jesus left Capernaum on his first preaching tour through Galilee (Mark 1:38-39) and then returned again to Capernaum (Mark 2:1) where he taught in the synagogue (Mark 3:1), and healed many (Mark 3:10). Because of the increasing opposition by the Jewish leaders, Jesus withdrew from teaching in the synagogue and taught in the country by the sea (Mark 3:7; 4:1) and in parables (Mark 4:2,10-12,33-34). After this Jesus asks his disciples to cross to the other side of the lake (Mark 4:35). Chapter five resumes the account at this point (Mark 5:1) as they arrive on the opposite shore of the Sea of Galilee.



1. Where did Jesus and his disciples land? In the opening verse Mark tells us that they come to the other side of the sea. If you compare the parallel accounts in Matthew and Luke you find some differences. Matthew says they come to “the country of the _____” (Matthew 8:28) while Luke says they sail to “the country of the _____” (Luke 8:26). Depending on what translation you are using, you will find that Mark says they come to the land of the Gerasenes (most translations) or Gadarenes (NKJV). Some think that there must be an error in one or more of the Biblical accounts, since these cities are far from one another on the western coast of the Sea of Galilee (see map above for the location of Gergesa and Gadara). But we must recognize that the Gospel writers were not being specific here, but were using the broad term country or region. They are not describing a specific city, but a rural area near a certain city. Very literally this Greek word means: “the space lying between two places or limits.” If the disciples landed on the Southeastern coast of the Sea of Galilee which was between Gergesa and Gadara (which were both major cities in Decapolis), we could see why one writer would call it the country of the Gadarenes and another the country of the Gergesenes.
2. There is another striking difference between these accounts. Mark (5:2) and Luke (8:27) both describe one demon-possessed man, while Matthew (8:28) mentions two. Is this an error or contradiction? Certainly not. Neither Mark nor Luke say there was only one man. They simply draw our attention to one of the men (probably the one who was the speaker and was suffering the most) in order to describe the situation in greater detail.

3. What are “unclean spirits”? _____ (compare Matthew 8: 16; 12:28). The few words spoken by the demon-possessed man in Mark’s account reveal that these evil angels know three important things about Jesus and his work. What three things do they know? (compare James 2:19)
1. Mark 5:7a _____
 2. Mark 5:7b _____
 3. Matthew 8:29b _____
4. Jesus allowed the evil spirits to enter some nearby pigs when they depart from the man, and the pigs run off a cliff and drown in the sea. Many people lay the blame for this on Jesus for allowing them to enter the pigs. But who was the real cause of this destruction?
- _____
5. We find a similar destructive influence earlier in the chapter in 5:5. What was the greater travesty – the devastation to the man or to the pigs? What can we learn from this?
- _____
- _____
6. Mark tells us that when the people came out of the nearby city and saw the demon-possessed man clothed, calm and in his right mind they “became frightened”(5:15) and asked Jesus “to depart from their region” (5:17). Why do you think they were frightened and wanted Jesus to leave?
- _____
- _____
7. These people do not set a very good example of concern for their neighbor. What can we learn from this about the attitude we should have toward those around us who are suffering? (Compare Galatians 6:10; 1 John 3:15-18)
- _____
- _____
8. Notice the difference in Jesus’ response to this man (Mark 5:19) compared to the leper who was healed earlier in Jesus ministry (Mark 1:40-44). What was the reason for this difference in approach? (Compare Mark 1:45)
- _____
- _____