

Mark 5

Written by K B Napier
Monday, 23 August 2010 10:28

Standard Reformed teaching is that the gifts and miracles died with the Apostles. At least, that is one theory. Others in the same fold modify the claim and say only some of them died away, gradually. There are other theories, too. The fact there are several theories proves that none of them has a final word from God!

Though I came from a reformed background, I cannot fathom why anyone can believe in a God Whose power has now gone! I see and know of spiritual power coming from God – so how can I deny it? Yes, I deny totally the claims made by charismatics and other cultists; but I cannot deny God's power, with us today.

In this chapter Jesus continues to show us His boundless heavenly power, including bringing a dead child back to life. The immensity of this power cannot be contemplated! It is just too much for any human being to think about. Yet, Jesus displayed this power in abundance and with no boundary placed on it. Do you believe it? I do!

These are not just stories, used to propagate a new religion – as some suppose. They are active, historical accounts of what Jesus, Son of God, did on this earth. Real, hard-nosed, and so plenteous that most were not included in the Bible.

The chapter also speaks of true faith. This is trust in God implanted in a person, so that he or she has implicit and firm belief that Jesus will do what is asked of Him. This is not wishful thinking, or the 'glazed-eye' syndrome shown by charismatics, all of desire and nothing of God. When God puts faith in our hearts, and we act on it, we see true results, every time. Without this genuine faith, nothing happens. Same goes for prayer. Do you have this genuine faith? If you do, what you seek will be given to you. That is the proof.

Verses 1-5

1.

And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.

2.

And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with

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an unclean spirit,

3.

Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:

4.

Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.

5.

5: And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.

Very soon after the storm incident, Jesus and His disciples sailed across to the “country of the Gadarenes”. This was the “other side of the sea”, to the east. ‘Gadarenes’ (‘reward at the end’) is also known as Gergesenes. The Sea of Galilee was also known as the ‘Lake of Genesaret’, or the ‘Sea of Tiberias’. The land of the Gergesenes appears to have been about one third down on the eastern side of the Lake. Gergesaret was the capital of Peraea. An individual from the area was a ‘Gadara’.

In Matthew we are told there were two demoniacs in the place. This does not contradict what is said here in Mark, who only mentions one.

A man immediately met Jesus and the others, as soon as they landed their ship. We know from the description that this shoreline went back through a graveyard, which later gave way to slopes into mountains. The capital referred to was in the mountains, not on the shore.

The man who met them had an “unclean spirit”. Though this can mean a demon of filth and immorality, it generally means any demon, because ALL demons are unclean to God. The man, who was possessed, lived amongst the tombs or sepulchers. Locals had tried to bind him with

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chains on a number of occasions, but the man was so strong he tore them off. For this reason “no man could tame him”, and he was left alone, wandering amongst the dead.

We can give several modern notes to accompany this episode: many today have an unhealthy interest in the dead and death. Increasing numbers also cut themselves, usually on the wrists, but cuts can be made on other parts of the body; self-harm is rampant, including amongst those with supposed ‘mental’ afflictions. These should give a clue as to the source of the activities. Verse 5 refers to this kind of self-harm. The man was “crying”, a word meaning to croak or to scream out loud.

Note also the saying, that an insane man has the “strength of ten men”. This is absolutely correct, as I have experienced when faced with such people. Their strength is not of themselves but from demons. Such people are seen today in mental hospitals and prisons, and even free in public, doing immense damage to others. Sadly, no magistrate understands the reality of demons, so they assume the men and women they deal with are just violent.

Verses 6-10

1.

But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,

2.

And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.

3.

For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.

4.

And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.

5.

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And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country.

The demonized man saw Jesus arriving from a distance, and ran towards Him. Jesus was the first to speak: He told the demon to leave the man. Firstly, He asked the demon for his name. This is because though demons are spirits and normally invisible, they are also personal beings, angels. The reply of the demon was interesting, for he said his name was “Legion”, because “we are many”. If he had just said ‘Legion’ it could have meant that though a single demon, his influence was greater. But, the demon speaking was only a spokesman for “many”. The man was living a miserable, nightmarish existence, because he was possessed by countless demons, who did whatever they liked with him.

I do not know why the name “Legion” is used, unless it was easier to describe that way. It is Latin for a body of soldiers. In the Roman army at that time a Roman legion had nearly seven thousand men. Did the name mean the man was possessed by such a huge number of demons? It is not such a ridiculous question – a medieval theological argument was about how many angels could be gathered on top of a pin-head. The real theory was about the nature of spirit. In such theory an incalculable number is possible at any one place, if angels have position but no mass! We do not know exactly how many were in the man, but we do know there were “many”, and that the Greek means a large number.

Note that the demoniac ran to Jesus and “worshipped him”. Most Christians misunderstand this kind of word. It does not mean the man worshipped in the usual sense of praise. It is used more as a sign of deference for God, which demons MUST show. Thus, the demons (not the man) were showing proper obeisance towards Christ. If we look at a probable root link, *kyōn*, we find it means something similar to a dog licking the hand of its master; it also bears the idea of a person of impure mind. Demons have NO OPTION but to bow the knee to God when He is present, as He was in Christ. We also see that the man “ran” indicating full haste. This is not what we would expect from demons, but, as I have just said, they had no option. Satan is their master for a season, but it is God Who created them, so they owed allegiance to someone higher than Satan.

Remember that it was the demons, not the man, who spoke with Christ. Like other demons before them, they loudly shouted “What have I to do with thee, Jesus (thou) Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.” You will notice the individual note - “I” and “me”. Yet, there were many. This is simply because one could speak for them all, and all of them were like one. What did the demons mean by “torment”? It means not to apply such

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pressure as to cause distress; it can also refer to the pains of hell.

The plea by the demons cannot be understood by us, looking on, though the words used are plain. Here was Jesus, Creator and Master of everything, being questioned and pleaded-with by demons. Yet, He did not just cast them out as He had done so many times before. They pleaded with Him and He allowed their plea to stand! They specifically asked that He should not send them “away out of the country”. Does this seem an odd request?

Though ‘country’ can mean the place the man lived, it also can mean a space between two limits. Thus, it could possibly mean a place of no abode, empty. They were asking, then, not to be left without a body. They asked that He should “not send them away”. This carries the idea of being sent to a ‘place appointed’... would this be ‘outer darkness’? Possibly. What we read is a personal discussion between beings, angels originally created good, but who were now evil and destined for hell. In between times, they lived wherever they could find available, around the earth and occasionally entering into bodies to do damage.

Jesus listened to the pleas of the demons, but we do not know why. It could not have been compassion, because none can be given to demons. Possibly, He was just showing He had power over them and where they existed. So, His reasons are hidden from us.

Verses 11-15

1.

Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.

2.

And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.

3.

And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. 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.

4.

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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.

1.

And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

Feeding below the mountains was a “great herd of swine”, or pigs. That is, a very great number; we see later there were about 2000. The demons were so desperate to find another place to inhabit, they begged Jesus to send them into the pigs. This suggests several interesting things: that animals have no extra-special place in Jesus’ mind – they could be used even to death if it helped human beings; that one human was worth more than two thousand animals; that Jesus had no qualms about using animals in this way. Today’s feeling for animals is often ‘over the top’.

For some this might have an uneasy link to modern practices of using animals in medical experiments. I have no problem with this activity, so long as there is no cruelty and the experiments are for a serious purpose. Those who think differently ought to bear in mind that humans were made lower than the angels, but that animals were made below humans, and humans have been given total charge over everything on earth, to use as they wish. The emotions and sentiments shown by some towards animals are inappropriate and, in many cases, inordinate (see separate Article on animals), especially when ‘pet love’ is greater than human love.

My point is simple: Animals are not above human beings in value; to spend money on them as if they were, is a waste of resources and cash, especially when many people live in poverty or in social discomfort, or when money is owed; animals should live as animals and not as humans! Suffice to say Jesus was not sentimental about animals.

Jesus gave permission to the demons to leave the man and enter into the pigs. The herd was very large, but it looks like every pig was filled by at least one demon, and the entire herd went berserk. As soon as they were filled with the demons they became agitated, and ran full speed

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down the hill and jumped into the sea, where they all drowned.

The swine-keepers saw the whole incident and ran off afraid. Quickly, everyone in the countryside and in the city knew about it. Before long citizens went to see for themselves who had done this thing. Today, the most probable site for the incident seems to be Tell es S'alib, near es-Samrah. In 1973 Roman tombs were discovered by archaeologists in a nearby valley, plus an area where pigs could have grazed.

When the people arrived at the scene, they saw Jesus, and the man they all knew to be the demoniac, only he was now dressed, quiet and sane. Far from being overjoyed, they were afraid. They were probably also annoyed that 2000 swine were lost to the sea because He cast out demons! A very human reaction!

Verses 16-20

1.

And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine.

2.

And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.

3.

And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.

4.

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.

5.

And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

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After listening again to the witnesses (those who were looking after the swine), the people of the area began to “pray him” to go away and leave them alone. What a way to treat the Son of God! He did a wondrous act, and all they could say is ‘Go away!’ Is it any different today? How many people (including Christians) really want to know Jesus? How many really want to live a genuine Christian life? If they did, they would experience and show an excitement not found in anything else!

Jesus walked back to the ship with His disciples, and the man who was possessed asked if he could follow. This time, Jesus refused, and advised him to return home, to show everyone what wonderful things the compassionate God had done for him. Mostly, Jesus asked people to keep quiet, but here He tells people to spread the word of God’s amazing actions. See, too, how Jesus again tells people He was God.

Jesus then left the shores of that place and went away. Meanwhile, the once demonic man told his story to all who would listen. To do it he travelled an area of land called Decapolis (‘ten cities’); this included the great Damascus, as well as Gadara. “And all men did marvel”. Sadly, many marvel at Christ, but few do anything about it! How marvelous do YOU think Christ is? What do you do about it? Do you gladly live every day as a gift from God? Do you happily enjoy what He gives you, or does not? Is your personal witness to His provisions - or to your own lack? In other words, do you live as if the Lord’s Son were at your side? Most people live miserable existences – no Christian should follow their example, for they have been given something far better.

Verses 21-24

1.

And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him: and he was nigh unto the sea.

2.

And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet,

3.

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And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.

4.

And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him.

Jesus went back to the western shores of Galilee. As soon as he landed crowds again pressed forward to see Him. As Jesus stood there, Jairus ('whom God enlightens') a ruler from the local synagogue came and lay prostrate at Jesus' feet. 'Ruler of the synagogue' is one word in the Greek, because it is an official title. He had overall charge of the synagogue, chose speakers, examined what was said, and generally made sure everything was said and done according to tradition and decency. There is no similar role in the Christian churches (except when invented by falsity).

Jairus was besides himself with anxiety and told Jesus his young daughter, just 12 years of age, was very ill, dying. If only Jesus would visit her, she would be well again. Jesus immediately started out with Jairus, and the crowds went too, pushing and jostling around them as always.

It is true in any age – everyone wants what God can give, but are not very keen on living a life commensurate with holiness.

Verses 25-34

1.

And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years,

2.

And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,

3.

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When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment.

4.

For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole.

5.

And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.

6.

And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?

7.

And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

8.

And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing.

9.

But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth.

10.

And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

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As Jesus followed Jairus, a woman in the crowd touched Jesus' outer garment. She had suffered "an issue of blood twelve years". That is, she had what was essentially continuous menstruation. This would have incapacitated her, especially as it would have made her chronically anaemic. In an effort to get better she saw many doctors who gave her countless 'treatments'. In those days no doctor could stem this kind of problem, so she spent her money on useless applications. Invariably, because of continual blood loss the woman was seriously at risk.

But, she heard about Jesus and determined to find Him. She pushed through the crowd until she could touch His clothes, convinced that even this fleeting touch would heal her. How many Christians try every known thing to make their lives better – money, friends, government, medical and social... but nothing works? They go to these things first and only go to God as a last resort. In Christian terms this is the wrong way: we must go to God *first*, no matter what the problem is.

As soon as the woman touched Jesus' clothing, her blood dried up; she was "healed of that plague". Bear in mind, too, that Jews were commanded never to touch a woman who was menstruating. Thus, if she was married, she would not have known the comfort or physical touch of her husband. So, her malady had a double-edged sorrow to it.

Jesus knew someone had touched His clothes. Though many were jostling around Him and touching Him, He knew the difference. The faith of the woman and her subsequent healing took "virtue" out of Him. Virtue, dynamis, in this text, means the power to perform miracles, the power Jesus had as God. There is always a two-way 'connection' between those of real faith and God. Both know a transfer of spiritual power.

This is why I teach that genuine prayer must come from God... it is a transfer of power between God and Man, rather like the way electricity runs from light switch to light bulb. The bulb does not illuminate unless the switch is turned on. With God, His spiritual power comes to us partly by direct communication through prayer. But, if that prayer is not 'connected' to God by truth and faith, there is no connection at all – the prayer is useless and we do not communicate.

It is also why I teach that any spiritual gift is only operative if this 'connection' is active – known to us as a 'burden' of the soul. Without it we are just fighting shadows, or trying to grasp thin air. The 'burden' is proof within that God has sent us a prompting to act. When we act upon the burden the results are always positive. None of this is a formula: the burden must always come

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first from God, not from our own desires.

Jesus looked around and asked who had touched His clothing. Because He is God, He looked around the crowd and fixed His gaze upon the healed woman. Afraid, the woman came forward and fell prostrate before Jesus, quaking, telling Him of her plight. Filled with compassion, Jesus said "thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace and be whole of thy plague." The woman had faith that Jesus would heal her, and she was healed. The faith came first from God. When she applied that faith, she was made whole. If she merely had a whim that perhaps Jesus could heal her, because she had heard about Him, she would not have been healed. Indeed, proof that her faith was real shows in the fact that she did not speak to Jesus but tried to touch His garment secretly.

Her faith was greater than the supposed faith found amongst us today. Few have this kind of genuine faith, even amongst reformed Christians. They talk about it in their churches, and amongst themselves in groups. They even pray about it. But nothing happens. Theirs is a fruitless faith because it is second-hand, and not inwardly part of the person's life. They talk about faith and pretend to have it, but it is all a delusion. They do not listen for God's prompting, as David waited to listen for the rustling of the tree-tops. Instead, they chatter aimlessly about it. They do not wrestle the angel until they get answers, but want ready-made replies from God!!

Verses 35-37

1.

While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?

2.

As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe.

3.

And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.

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As Jesus spoke with the woman, someone from Jairus' house approached Jairus and bluntly told him "Your daughter is dead", saying 'Why trouble the rabbi any further?' Of course, the incident with the woman was brief and would not have affected the outcome with the daughter. When Jesus heard the news He turned to Jairus and said "Be not afraid, only believe." Again, this illustrates the truth I have given above: that God must first give us the burden or faith. Here, Jesus, God Himself, gave that burden and reason for faith. The result would, and had to, be positive.

From that point Jesus commanded that no-one should follow Him, except for Peter, James and John. He does not say why this was so, or why He only chose three apostles to accompany Him. Very often in life only a few are chosen by God to act for Him. Very few are chosen to be pastors and teachers, etc. Yet, most think they can add their voices! They think their zeal is a substitute for faith and calling! But, it is not.

Verses 38-43

1.

And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly.

2.

And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.

3.

And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying.

4.

And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.

5.

And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And

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they were astonished with a great astonishment.

6.

And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

Finally, Jesus and the three apostles, with Jairus, came to Jairus' house. A group of female mourners stood outside, crying and wailing, as was the custom. A similar group was inside the house, and Jesus asked them 'Why are you making such a fuss? The girl is not dead – she is only asleep.' At that the mourners laughed in scorn at Him. They saw the girl and she was dead! This is just like us today; we see the immensity of a problem and fail to understand that the size of a problem does not affect God. He can take it away in an instant, because He is the Creator and Lord of all. The 'problem' is not the circumstance, but our inability to have faith.

Jesus had everyone removed from the house, and took the parents and the three apostles into the girl's bedroom. Standing alongside the bed, Jesus held the girl's hand and said "Talitha cumi". This was Aramaic for "Maiden – get up". This shows that the everyday language used by Jesus was Aramaic, the ordinary language of the people.

The girl immediately awoke and got up. Yes, she was dead, but Jesus gave her life again. This is just as dramatic as the giving of spiritual life. A dead person cannot hear what is said, nor can he comply with any instruction... unless God gives the life to do it. This is exactly what regeneration does. It gives new life to a dead person. It is proof that only God can give us salvation. We cannot choose it.

The girl got up and moved around, amazing all who had seen her dead and who had scorned Jesus! Once again, Jesus told them not to spread the word, but to give the girl something to eat, to give her strength.

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