

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

SESSION 6: CHAPTER 4:35 - 5:20 "DEALING WITH DEMONS"

For the next chapter and a half, we are going to be dealing with the forces of evil, disease and death. We are going to see how Jesus dealt with those who were terrified, were besides themselves and those who facing death.



Read Mark 4: 35 - 41



The Sea of Galilee is 680 feet below sea level and it is surrounded by hills. Winds blowing across the land intensify close to the sea, causing violent and unexpected storms. Although the disciples were experienced fishermen, they probably shared that fear common in the ancient world of demons dwelling in the deep, possibly seeing them as responsible for the sudden devastating storms that were apt to burst upon the Sea of Galilee

QUESTIONS:

- 1(a). How does Mark set the scene in these opening verses?
- (b) What are we told about Jesus' reaction to the onset of the storm? What does this tell us?
How are we meant to cope with the storms of life?
- (c) Can you see any connection between how Jesus is described as acting here when awake and his treatment of the man with the unclean spirit (cf 1:25)?
- (d) Why do you think the disciples called upon Jesus for help?

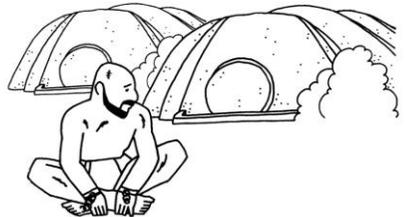


What was their reaction to the "calming of the Sea"?
How does their fear after the storm differ from their previous fears?

- (e) What do we understand by our Lord's reactions?
Did he appear uncaring (v.38)?
What does he see as the opposite of fear?
- (e) What do you understand by the reaction expressed in v.41?
How does this relate to the statement to be found in Psalm 111:10?
- (e) What OT character do you recall who slept in a boat in a storm, and yet how does this story here contrast with that one?

Read Mark 5: 1 - 13

- 2.(a) If this incident follows immediately after the previous one, what time of day is it?
- (b) Where exactly did this incident take place?
Is the site important?
What other details are we given that suggest supernatural surroundings?
- (c) Who do you think was frightened in this place?
How do these fears compare with those in the previous incident?
- (d) How is the severity of this man's condition described?
What significance might lie in his name?
Have you had experience of people like that?
- (e) What happened in the conversation between Jesus and this man?
Did Jesus' first attempt at exorcism fail?



NB The man fits the four characteristics of madness found in rabbinic literature: running about at night, staying overnight in burial places, tearing apart one's clothes, and destroying what one has been given. ARNOLD

Many people find it hard to understand why Jesus allowed the demons to destroy the pigs. It could have been to prevent a violent exit from the man or to show him visibly that he was now free.

- (f) What does the fate of the pigs show about what the demons were trying to do?

What does this show about the value Jesus places on the man?

Read Mark 4: 14 - 20

3. (a) What are the reactions to this exorcism?

How is the man now described?

- (b) Why did the locals want Jesus to leave?

NB At the end of this incident Jesus seems to reverse strategy.

For the first time he tells someone to go and tell others about his healing.

- (c) How is this man different from the others?

(cf. 1:21-26; 1:40-45; 3:7-12)



NB Ancients understood that demons always want to inhabit something rather than wander about aimlessly. Some were thought to be land demons, who would be destroyed in water. In the *Testament of Solomon*, a demon about to be exorcised pleads: "Do not condemn me to water."

The enormously large herd of 2,000 pigs grubbing on the hillside must have belonged to a swine cooperative and marks this as a pagan area. Isaiah lumps pork eaters, tomb dwellers, and demon worshipers together (Isa. 65:3-4). Demons try to destroy whatever they inhabit and never leave their victims quietly (Mark 1:26; 9:26). When Jesus grants the demons' request to enter into the pigs, these very un-herdlike animals stampede down the bank and into the waters, where Jesus has just demonstrated his dominion (4:39, 41). The text assumes that both animals and demons are destroyed in the sea. ARNOLD