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"CLOTHED AND IN HIS RIGHT MIND."

– MARK 5:1-20 – MAY 13. –

Golden Text: – "Go home to thy friends and tell them what great things the Lord hath done for thee."

THOSE who deny the personality of Satan must logically also deny the personality of demons, so frequently referred to in the Scriptures, including this lesson. The Scriptures clearly set forth a prince of devils, Satan, and his subordinates, and as clearly refer to them as individuals possessed of intelligence and reason. We are aware of the subtlety of the arguments by which those who disbelieve in spirit beings invisible to men deny intelligences that cannot be recognized by the five human senses; but surely they find it hard to "kick against the pricks" – to deal honestly [R3771 : page 141] with the divine records and yet hold to their position.

The people of God will find it best to be humble, not to attempt to be wise above what is written, to admit that their knowledge is limited and to accept the divine testimony without wresting it, subverting it, misconstruing into harmony with their own ignorance. Their objection is that these people were simply insane and not possessed by demons – that if demons possessed mankind then we should expect similar possessions today. We answer that in our judgment a large proportion of the so-called insane are in that condition because they are obsessed or possessed by demons – wicked spirits – the one-time angels who kept not their first estate. – Jude 6.

OBSESSED BY DEMONS

The picture of this poor man's condition is most vividly given. There are many similarly possessed in our day confined

in asylums, in padded cells, where they can harm neither themselves nor others. Very few are aware to what extent insanity has a hold upon humanity even in civilized lands. If the comparatively small State of South Carolina has 1247 inmates in its Lunatic Asylum, imagine how many there are in the asylums of the most populous States and throughout the world. Alas, poor creatures! would that we had the power to bid the demons come out of them! How glad we are that it will not be very long until he who has the power, the rightful authority to deliver mankind from the power of sin and Satan and death, will exercise it – when Satan shall be bound and the judgment of the fallen angels shall proceed as the Apostle has foretold. (1 Cor. 6:3.) It is not for us to guess how many or how few of those debauched spirits will under favorable influences be rescued from their infamous condition, but it is for us to rejoice that the Lord has provided for their judgment, their trial, their testing, and that his grace is sufficient for the delivery of all who under full opportunity shall demonstrate a thorough conversion to righteousness.

As there were no asylums at that time, the maniacs, demonized, were subject to the private care of their friends, and the one of our lesson, we are informed, had been frequently bound hand and foot, but manifested a wonderful strength, breaking his cords and fetters, and, leaving his home, roamed wildly in the mountainous places and caves **[R3772 : page 141]** and open tombs of the limestone formation of that country.

Verse 6 tells us that he saw Jesus from afar and ran to meet him. He must have seen the boat coming across the lake of Galilee, heading for the coast near where he was, because we have the statement that he met Jesus immediately upon the landing of the ship (v. 2). Quite probably the disciples were considerably alarmed to see the maniac thus come running toward them as the ship landed, and doubtless they were

surprised when he fell upon his knees and worshiped Jesus, crying out in a loud voice, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God that you torment me not." Apparently Jesus had already begun to command that the unclean spirit should come out of the man, and this entreaty not to be tormented was apparently a plea for extension of time, not too great haste. Another account says, "Art thou come to torment us before the time?" Another similar statement is, "Art thou come to destroy us before the time?"

The thought apparently would be that the demons understood that God had a time appointed which would mark the limitation of their liberties and opportunities in connection with the tormenting of mankind by obsession, as in this case. The false reasoning exhibited in this expression, this implication that an interference with their tormenting of mankind would be an injury to their rights, their liberties, seems peculiar; yet we know that there are many amongst men who have similarly perverted notions of what are their rights, their liberties – to impose upon the rights of others, to defraud others, to mislead others to their injury. It is common today for men to claim that their rights and liberties are interfered with when they are estopped from pillaging and variously injuring their fellow-creatures. When great corporations, affecting to be public servants chartered by the Commonwealth, use their opportunities to the public injury, contrary to the public welfare, they also cry out, Let us alone – you are interfering with our vested rights.

WHAT HAVE WE IN COMMON?

The expression, "What have I to do with thee?" might be more literally rendered, "What have we in common?" Truly there is nothing in common between the Son of God and his mission and the demons and their work; and all Christian people who recognize the work of these demons through spirit mediums,

hypnotism, mental science, Christian Science, etc., should be on guard; none should have anything whatever to do with them. They should remember that there is nothing in common between the Lord and these powers – that to have anything to do with these is to neglect the divine counsel and to jeopardize their peace and all their best interests.

The plea of the demon apparently arrested the Lord's command and he made inquiry as to his name. We may not unreasonably suppose that the Lord knew that the man was possessed of a legion, a great number, of fallen spirits, but that he took this method of bringing out the answer for the sake of his disciples and the others who crowded around. Everything we know on the subject goes to corroborate the thought that the evil spirits do not have special pleasure in their own company, and that they are debarred from all intercourse with the holy angels, and that therefore they are specially solicitous of being in contact with humanity and of gaining possession of human beings whom they may use as their agents, through whom they may operate and come in contact with others.

Apparently God has so arranged the human mind that it is invulnerable to the attacks of these evil spirits except as some special condition may give them opportunity: apparently the will of the individual must consent in some measure to their cooperation. We may see that none would consent did they possess full knowledge of what they were doing, but the entertainment of evil thoughts, the practice of vicious habits, seems to a considerable degree to break down the will and to give admittance to these evil spirits to have control of it, and, through the will, the mind and the body.

From what we see and from what the Scriptures declare we have every reason to expect that there will be a greater onslaught of these evil spirits upon humanity in the near future. To our

understanding hypnotism, mind cure, etc., are already operating in large degree toward this end – toward the bringing of the human will into that condition [R3772 : page 142] where it will be amenable to the influences of these evil spirits. The influences of Spiritism and Christian Science and Theosophy are all, we believe, cooperating in the same direction. Terrible will the harvest be! Thank God, the reign of Satan and his minions will be brief! We are nearing the time when Satan shall be bound for a thousand years that he may deceive and obsess humanity no more until the thousand years be finished. – Rev. 20:2,3.

THE DEMON-POSSESSED SWINE

Scholars are of the opinion that this part of the country was largely inhabited by foreigners, the owners of large herds of swine. While the Jews did not eat swine's flesh the foreigners did, especially the Roman soldiers, and doubtless the swine industry of those parts must have been a very lucrative one, on which account, perhaps, the Jews of that vicinity were favorable to it, being more or less interested in its prosperity, just as many farmers are interested in the prosperity of breweries, distilleries, etc., because through these they find a market for their crops, and other advantages through the money thus put into circulation.

There was a herd of swine numbering about two thousand near by. (From this we have the intimation that it was quite a swine-producing country, and that there may have been numerous herds as large or larger.) The demons possessing the man besought Jesus that they might not be sent away, that they might not be condemned to the abyss – to the Second Death, to utter destruction, but that they might be allowed to remain in that country even if he should demand that they should leave the man. They asked permission to go into the herd of swine near by and the Lord permitted it.

Swine were condemned under the Jewish Law, and may therefore have been considered contraband and their destruction authorized. At all events we may know that our Lord violated no principle of justice in permitting the demons to take possession of the swine. But here we would ask those who admit the truth of this narrative but deny obsession, deny that the man was afflicted with evil spirits – we ask them in what way they would attempt to account for the transfer of a disease of the mind from a man to a herd of two thousand hogs? It cannot be accounted for except on the hypothesis that a legion of evil spirits possessed the man, and that these evil spirits took possession of the swine instead, a spirit for each hog.

Whatever may have been the hopes of the demons in respect to these brutes they evidently were disappointed. Man, with his higher organization, is able apparently to stand much more mental torment than the brute creation. The effect upon the brains of the swine was such as to make them crazy, and in their insanity the whole herd rushed down a steep embankment and were choked in the sea.

This miracle of healing as well as the permission of the demons to enter into the swine was doubtless intended and permitted to be a demonstration to the people of those parts of the power of the Lord over evil spirits, a demonstration also of the fact that they were evil spirits as made clear by the conduct of the swine into which they entered. And this lesson, we believe, was intended more particularly for the Lord's people of the Gospel age than for those who were witnesses of the miracle and its results.

We can imagine the swine-herders barely escaping with their lives from the rush of the crazy beasts toward the sea. We can imagine their fear and perplexity and their haste as they ran to tell the owners of the herd what had happened – to clear

themselves of responsibility and to tell them that the man who caused the difficulty was still near the spot. It took but a little while for the owners and herdsmen and, one account says, all the people of the city to come to where Jesus was. On their arrival they saw the demoniac sitting at Jesus' feet, "clothed and in his right mind." In his insanity he had torn off clothing and everything, but now peace and serenity reigned.

THEY IMploRED HIS DEPARTURE

What was the effect of the miracle upon the people? Did they rejoice and glorify God that a fellow-creature had been delivered from the power of the demons? This certainly would have been the proper course, the natural course for people in the right attitude of mind, which these were not. On the contrary, selfishness reigned in their hearts instead of love and sympathy; hence they did not hail Jesus as their friend and deliverer, nor say, "Come on, Master and Teacher, we have other poor people here afflicted of the devil, cast out from them the evil spirits also. We have others who are sick and who need your healing; we all need your instruction that we may put off the works of darkness and put on the garments of light and righteousness." Instead of thus reasoning they thought on the opposite side, the selfish side of the question. Two thousand hogs are lost, several thousand dollars worth of property has been destroyed. If this man remain and should cast out any more devils and allow them to go into other herds of swine it might wreck all the business of this prosperous country.

This is exactly the reasoning of a large proportion of mankind in respect to the liquor traffic and its manufacture. Selfishness reigns; evidently the world will not vote for the new dispensation and the reign of Christ and the binding of Satan, and because they are unwilling to cooperate for their own deliverance, their help must come in another way – by **[R3773 :**

page 142] the fall of present institutions and the establishment of the Kingdom of God's dear Son in power and great glory, the binding of Satan and the uplifting of all the debased ones and the enlightening of the whole world.

What further evidence do we need that those people, professing to be the chosen people of God, professing to hope for the coming of Messiah and his Kingdom, were making such professions only with their lips and that they did not come from the heart? They loved better the ways of sin than the promised ways of righteousness. Our Lord did not force himself upon them – with his disciples he again entered into the ship to leave their shore. The time had not yet come to establish the Kingdom by force. That was deferred until the election, the selection of the faithful ones, should be accomplished – the selection of the Israelites indeed from amongst natural Israel, and eventually, by the begetting of the Spirit, from among all nations, peoples, kindreds and tongues, to whom the message of God's love and grace will be sent. Soon the selection will be accomplished and the reign of Messiah begin.

While it would not be true to say that all mankind are possessed of devils, possessed of these evil spirits, these demons, and we thank God that it is not so, yet it would be **[R3773 : page 143]** true to say that through the influence of evil all mankind has become more or less possessed of the spirit of demons, the spirit of selfishness, the spirit of sin, alienation from God. From this standpoint the whole world is slightly insane, some more, some less so.

The Apostle corroborates this thought, saying of those who have accepted Christ and who have received of his Spirit, the new mind, that they have "the spirit of a sound mind." (2 Tim. 1:7.) He thus implies that previously they did not have a sound mind, and that the world in general does not have a sound mind,

but unsound. The poor man out of whom a legion of devils was cast is an extreme example of all out of whom the spirit of evil is cast through the power of the Truth. We are not so bad as he, thank God! No! Nevertheless it was not until we had received the new mind of Christ, not until the old things were done away and all things became new that we really stood at Jesus' feet, clothed and in our right mind. (2 Cor. 5:17.) Thank God for the clothing which we have in Christ's robe of righteousness, covering our blemishes and imperfections, the bruises of sin and the injury which we did to ourselves! Thank God that this is stopped, that we can now see things from the better standpoint, from the only true standpoint.

The healed man alone appreciated Jesus of all the people of that country. They wished him to depart, but this poor man entreated the Lord that he might go with him, that he might become one of his disciples. How touching! What a picture we have of those who receive the spirit of a sound mind, who now long to be with the Lord, who now long to be his disciples, to proclaim him to others, who now appreciate him as others do not. As the Apostle declared, "To you, who believe, he is precious." (1 Pet. 2:7.) The man may have been fearful of being left lest the demons should take possession of him again, or he may have been ashamed of his previous course in life and of his old associates, and thought to find new ones; but more probably we think he desired to be a witness to the Lord respecting the great blessing which he had received through him.

"GO TO THY HOME AND THY FRIENDS"

While Jesus refused the request he did not spurn the consecration, but sent the man back to his home and his friends, saying, "'Tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.' And he departed and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done to him: and

all men did marvel." We know not how many of the people as a result of that preaching ultimately became the Lord's disciples – after Pentecost, after the Spirit dispensation had been ushered in, under the power and guidance of which all the Israelites indeed were found and sealed by the Truth as followers of the Lord. We may reasonably suppose that there was some fruitage of the labor. Indeed our Lord's journey on that occasion seems to have resulted in the conversion of but the one person, the demoniac, his subsequent work there being done through him.

We thank God that the proportion of those possessed by evil spirits is comparatively small, and we thank him also that amongst the whole of unsound minds we and others who have heard his message have been reached by it, reclaimed, and that we have come to the feet of Jesus clothed and in our right minds. Has he not a work for us to do? If we cannot be the apostles to follow his footsteps we can at least follow the example of this one freed from the demons: we can go to our own homes and to our friends and there confess the Lord and his mighty power in us. We can thus sound forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light; we can thus be co-laborers together with God in the ministry of the Truth, in the ministry of reconciliation, telling how great things the Lord hath done for us. Moreover, we are glad that he has had compassion on us, forgiven our sins, and, when we consecrated, accepted us and adopted us into the heavenly family and made us partakers of his holy Spirit and commanded us to proclaim the good tidings of his grace.

Truly it would appear that none who have received God's favors thus should receive them in vain – that all so honored should be awakened to newness of life and energy in the service of the Lord. One of the best testimonies we have ever heard as respects the power of Christian living and its influence upon others was from a lady who asked to be remembered in prayer,

that she might be enabled to see clearly and to follow the Truth. Subsequently we asked her why she had been anxious to see the Truth, and her reply was: "I have a sister-in-law who has received this Truth, and her course in life since has convinced me that there is a power in the religion of Jesus that I did not previously recognize. For years I have been an agnostic, an unbeliever, and my friends and associates are of this class. I thought there was nothing to religion but merely ignorance and superstition, but when my sister took up with the MILLENNIAL DAWN views it made such a great change in her life, all her conduct seemed so transformed, that I said to myself, "There is a power, there must be truth in the religion of Jesus, for I see it now demonstrated in the life of this woman, and I desire the same for myself."

O, that we all might be diligent to be thus faithful stewards of the grace of God, and faithful representatives of our great Redeemer – not only witnessing with our lips, but in all the departments of life testifying that we are now sane, that we have now the spirit of a sound mind, that we love the things that are right and true and noble and good, that we hate and are living in opposition to the things which are sinful and contrary to the mind of the Lord and the ways of righteousness.
