

THE GERASENE DEMONIAIC:
AN EXEGESIS AND EXPLORATION OF THE SYNOPTIC TEXTS

by

KATHERINE GAIL EMMETT

(Under the direction of Carolyn Jones Medine)

ABSTRACT

This study will provide an in depth interpretation and comprehensive historical background to the Gerasenes demoniac story found in the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke). The first chapter will follow modern biblical scholarship's contributions to its interpretation. The second chapter will include a verse by verse study of the text and its historical and social backgrounds. The last chapter will explain some of the main themes of the story and why this story would be important to the early Christian community.

INDEX WORDS: New Testament, Synoptic gospels, Gerasenes, Demons, Exorcism, Jesus

THE GERASENE DEMONIAK:
AN EXEGESIS AND EXPLORATION OF THE SYNOPTIC TEXTS

by

KATHERINE GAIL EMMETT
B.A., Radford University, 2000

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTERS OF ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2005

© 2005

Katherine Gail Emmett

All Rights Reserved

THE GERASENE DEMONIAIC:
AN EXEGESIS AND EXPLORATION OF THE SYNOPTIC TEXTS

by

KATHERINE GAIL EMMETT

Major Professor: Carolyn Jones Medine

Committee: David S. Williams
William L. Power

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
University of Georgia
August 2005

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER	
1 BIBLICAL CRITICISM AND THE GERASENE DEMONIAK.....	3
Genre and Form Criticism.....	3
Other Works Relevant to this Study.....	6
2 COMMENTARY.....	12
3 THEMES RELEVANT TO ALL THREE VERSIONS.....	39
The Universal Mission of Jesus.....	39
The Power of Jesus.....	41
The Conquering of Evil.....	43
The Coming of the Kingdom.....	44
CONCLUSIONS.....	46
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	49

INTRODUCTION

The story of the Gerasene demoniac (Matthew 8:28-34, Luke 8:26-39, Mark 5:1-20) is the most graphic exorcism found in the synoptic gospels. Jesus' first entrance into Gentile territory, after the crossing of the sea of Galilee, is marked by this spectacular miracle. The explicit details in this story make it one of the most theologically powerful for an understanding of some of the main themes of Jesus' mission and message. This paper discusses the scholarship that deals with this story, provides an exegesis of each version, explores the historical background and setting, and describes the main themes of the story.

The first chapter will review modern biblical scholarship's contributions to the study of the Gerasene demoniac story. This chapter begins with an exploration of works that utilizes form criticism and genre analysis. This first section discusses how the story fits into the miracle story form and its subtypes, the miracle quest story form and the objection story form. This chapter will end with a discussion of other works that are pertinent to the scholarship of the story. D. R. MacDonald's study on the similarities between this story and stories found in the Homeric epics, D. E. Nineham's suggestion that this story is perhaps a fulfillment of Psalm 68, and R. E. Watts's idea that Mark's Jesus can be understood through Jewish categories, particularly those in the Hebrew Bible Isaiah, are some examples.

The second chapter contains the commentary and exegesis of the details of the Gerasene demoniac story. It will include a verse by verse study of the text and its

historical and social backgrounds for each gospel. The chapter explores what Romans and Jews thought about demons and exorcism. It also contains background about the Jewish understanding of impurities and Jewish relations with Gentiles. This chapter will also compare and contrast the drastic differences found among the three versions.

Evangelists had a theological agenda when composing their gospels. What details the evangelists changed can help to determine the theological agenda of the particular gospel.

The last chapter will explain some of the main themes of the story and why this story would be important to the early Christian community. This chapter will discuss how the story is an example of the universal mission and message of Jesus. Next, it will uncover how the story displays the incredible power of Jesus through his ability to exorcize demons of amazing strength. This chapter will also discuss how Jesus' exorcism shows his power over evil and Satan. One of the most important themes demonstrated in this story for earlier Christians was the coming of God's kingdom. This chapter will discuss how all three evangelists of this story understood that Jesus' mission heralds the coming of God's kingdom here on earth. ¹

¹ One aspect of the story that I will not explore is the historical accuracy. Did in fact Jesus exorcise the demoniac? It has been suggested that this story was perhaps originally a story of another healer that was attributed to Jesus by the evangelist or at least an elaboration of a historical moment. What is important to this paper is how the early Christian community who read or heard it would have understood the story. Therefore, the question of the historical reliability of this story will not be addressed in this paper.

CHAPTER 1

BIBLICAL CRITICISM AND THE GERASENE DEMONIAK

This chapter reviews modern biblical scholarship's contributions to the interpretation of the Gerasene demoniac story. I begin with some of the contributions of form criticism to the interpretation of this story. This pericope defies normal form-critical analysis as it contains features from several different forms. I illustrate how this story could be considered a counterpart to a traditional call form. The call form is a story form that involves someone being called away from home and normal life to perform a special role or action. Despite the fact that scholars are unable to agree on the precise form of the story, I think it is a fully developed miracle story enshrouded with elements of the fantastic and grotesque.

Next, I explore the contributions from literary and comparative scholarship to this story. I begin with scholarship on the similarities between Mark's version of this story and Homer's *Odyssey*. I then describe similarities between the story and several of the Psalms and the *Testament of Solomon*. Finally, I compare elements of Mark's description of the demoniac with ideas of idolatry and tomb dwelling found in the Hebrew Bible

Genre and Form Criticism

Form criticism is the study of the history of genres and literary forms preserved in the Bible. Form criticism works on the assumption that literary genres have fixed written formulas and structures that tell the audience how to respond and how to interpret the

literature. The forms reflect the *Sitz im Leben* of the community for which they were composed, and life settings correspond to a certain set of literary genres. Rudolph Bultmann and Martin Dibelius popularized New Testament form criticism in the early 20th century. While some scholars focus on Greco-Roman genres, others focus on Jewish genres.

Some elements of the Gerasene demoniac story are not found elsewhere in the New Testament.² The story begins with travel to a new location, unlike any other New Testament exorcism story.³ The description of the possession is the most detailed depiction of such a condition anywhere in the New Testament. Further, this is the only time that Jesus requests the name of the demons involved in a possession. No other exorcism contains as lengthy a dialogue between Jesus and the local people. The town's people, instead of being happy or relieved at the results of the exorcism, respond with fear and confusion. Finally, this exorcism is not typical because it contains a request for the former demoniac to follow Jesus in his mission.

Perhaps because of its distinct elements, the Gerasene demoniac story defies normal form-critical analysis as it contains features from several different forms, such as the exorcism narrative, the miracle story, the miracle quest story and the objection story. An exorcism narrative is a story that includes the removal of demonic forces from an individual by a healer. The features of a miracle story, when the miracle is a healing, include the condition of the person who is to be healed, the method of the healing, and

² H. Hendrickx, *The Third Gospel for the Third World* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier Book, 1998) 2-3.

³ D. L. Bock, *Luke, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, (1994), 154.

evidence that the healing has been successful. In the miracle quest story, a subtype of a miracle story, a request for the healing is an essential element that distinguishes it from other miracle story forms. Usually, there is an obstacle that emerges between the request and the end of the quest that must be overcome for the quest to be fulfilled.⁴ The objection story, another subtype of the miracle story, includes an objection or challenge to the healing that is to take place.

What is the form of this story? There are several possible forms that might describe this story. John Painter suggests that it is patterned on a traditional miracle story.⁵ The evangelists included detailed descriptions of the possession, the words used by Jesus to perform the exorcism, and evidence of the effectiveness of the miracle, all basic elements of a miracle story. Painter also suggests that this story could be a miracle quest story because the demoniac⁶ comes out to meet Jesus to request a healing, and the story begins with movement of Jesus and the disciples to a new location. It could also be an objection story as evidenced by the demoniac's coming out to meet Jesus (which could be either a challenge or an act of objection on the part of the demons); the demons demand to know from Jesus, "What do you want with us?" and they request, almost demand in Matthew's version, to be sent into swine.

⁴ J. Painter, *Mark's Gospel: World in Conflict* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997), 90.

⁵ Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 89.

⁶ I will address the difference between the demoniac and the demons in chapter two. In this story it appears that sometimes the demons are the ones who are talking; at other times it appears as if the man is the one who is speaking.

Bastiaan Van Iersel suggests this story is a counterpart to a call story.⁷ Many elements of the story seem to be the reverse of a call form. Jesus, instead of asking to be followed, a feature of a normal call story, refuses to grant a request to be followed. Whereas the disciples are called from their homes to leave and follow Jesus, the former demoniac is sent to be with his family at home. Jesus sends the man home, not to restore broken relationships, but to tell others what has happened to him. This is especially significant in Mark in which the messianic secret is prevalent.⁸

Despite the fact that scholars are unable to agree on the form of the story, it is most likely a fully developed miracle story enshrouded with elements of the fantastic and grotesque.⁹ It alerts the audience to the power of Jesus, his ability to perform miraculous deeds, not just for Jews, but also for Gentiles who are willing to accept his message. This story “breaks down the predictability of the standard story, challenging the reader to realize that much of what he or she thinks is normal might have turned out differently.”¹⁰

Other Works Relevant to this Study

There are several other scholars whose studies, as they pertain to the Gerasene Demoniac story, will be discussed in this paper. Dennis MacDonald’s comparison of Mark’s gospel to the Homeric epic, suggests that Mark may have modeled his gospel

⁷ B. M. F. Van Iersel, *Mark: A Reader-Response Commentary* (Sheffield, U. K.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 201.

⁸ Compare Mark 5:19 “Go home to your family and announce to them all what the Lord has done for you,” with Mark 1:44, 5:43, 7:36 and 8:26. The evangelist’s attitude about secrecy in this story is very different.

⁹ A fantastic element of this story is Jesus’ ability to exorcise such strong demons. A grotesque element of this story is the death of the swine. There are several other examples of both fantastic and grotesque elements in this story.

¹⁰ Van Iersel, *Mark*, 203.

upon Homer's *Odyssey*. Dennis Nineham, in *Saint Mark*, is one of the scholars who discusses potential parallels with Psalms and the Gerasene story. Rikki Watts, in *Isaiah's New Exodus and Mark*, suggests that Mark's Jesus can be understood through Jewish categories, particularly those in the Hebrew Bible Isaiah. All four of these studies contribute to the understanding of the Gerasene story.¹¹

MacDonald's study of the similarities between Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark contains some interesting interpretations of the Gerasene demoniac story. MacDonald employs a literary tool called hypertext. Hypertext refers to a "text that relies somehow on a written antecedent or hypotext."¹² Changes made from the hypotext articulate the different values of those who wrote the hypertext. New Testament evangelists, according to MacDonald, as well as later Christian authors, imitate pagan literary models. He compares the content of the original pagan model he believes the Christian authors used with the Christian texts.¹³

MacDonald applies this idea to his study of Mark and suggests that Mark is a hypertext of Homer's *Odyssey*. MacDonald compares Jesus to Odysseus. He points out that both heroes sail the seas, associate with inferiors, oppose supernatural foes, visit dead heroes, and prophesize their return in third person. In sum, one of Mark's primary literary inspirations was *The Odyssey*.¹⁴

¹¹ D. R. MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark* (London, U. K.: Yale University Press, 2000); D. E. Nineham, *Saint Mark* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Book, 1963); R. E. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus and Mark* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 1997).

¹² MacDonald, *The Homeric*, 2.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

MacDonald suggests that what Mark borrowed from Homer's *Odyssey* could explain the unique nature of the story of the Gerasene demoniac story. Specifically, MacDonald suggests that Mark's story might be based upon the story of Circe the witch and Odysseus. For example, Circe turns Odysseus' men into swine, just as Jesus turns the demons into swine that later drown in the sea just as the soldiers do in *The Odyssey*. Circe, like the demons, recognizes who is approaching her and pleads for Odysseus to do her no harm. The demon does the same in Mark's version when he says, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me" (Mark 5:7). This parallel could explain why Mark decided to have Jesus sail across a sea before encountering the demoniac.

MacDonald also compares Mark's story to the story of Polyphemus. In both stories, the heroes sail across the ocean to meet the enemy.¹⁵ Both of the enemies dwell in caves. Homer says, "There in the cave a monstrous man spent his nights, who shepherds his flocks alone and far and did not mingle with others but lived apart obedient to no law."¹⁶ This is very similar to Mark's description of the demoniac who dwells in the cave. Also, Odysseus and the demoniac do not give their names.¹⁷ Finally, both Homer and Mark include a final verbal exchange between heroes and the subdued foe.¹⁸

MacDonald's study is compelling and creative, I do not think, however, there is enough evidence to suggest that Mark used *The Odyssey* as his primary source for the

¹⁵ Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. R. Fagles (New York, NY: Viking, 1996); Homer, *The Odyssey*, 9:101, 103-7 and Mark 5:1.

¹⁶ Homer, *The Odyssey*, 9:187 – 189.

¹⁷ Homer, *The Odyssey*, 9:354-46, 363-66 and Mark 5:9

¹⁸ Homer *The Odyssey*, 9:501-5 and Mark 5:19. It is possible that construction of these two stories is a common pattern or form used by both Mark and Homer.

creation of his gospel. Mark was telling the story of the extraordinary works of Jesus. I do not believe that the evangelist would have wanted the audience to confuse or equate Jesus' actions with characters from Greek literature. There would have been literary models when Mark was composing his work, and like any other author, these could have influenced him. Source scholarship looks for shared material in texts as evidence for source relationships. Stories having similar plots or characters, such as the similarities between the Gerasene demoniac and Odysseus, would not be strong enough evidence to suggest this kind of dependence.

Nineham is among those scholars who have found potential parallels with Psalms and the Gerasene story. Nineham has suggested that this story is perhaps a fulfillment of Psalm 68.¹⁹ Which reads, "God gives the desolate a home to live in; he leads out the prisoners to prosperity, but the rebellious live in parched land" (Psalm 68.6). This is similar to the demoniac's dwelling solitarily in the cave and living segregated from society. Secondly, this story may be a fulfillment of Psalm 65 that states, "You silence the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples" (Psalm 65:7). This story fulfills this description when Jesus exorcises a demon-possessed man directly after Jesus has calmed the roaring seas.

Watts suggests that Mark's Jesus can be understood only through Jewish categories and particularly those in the Isaiah.²⁰ He argues that Jesus is a Yahweh Warrior, combating demons rather than idols.²¹ Yahweh, as the warrior, fights on behalf

¹⁹ Nineham, *Saint Mark*, 151.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 102.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 157.

of his people, restores their glory, delivers them from bondage, and is understood as an agent of salvation. He continues that there is a similar understanding of demonic possession found in the Hebrew Bible and Mark's gospel. Furthermore, he says that Mark uses Isaiah 65:1-7 as background for the Gerasene demoniac story.²² This is evident because Mark stresses tomb-dwelling and the presence of swine in this story, a departure from his normal style. Isaiah contains a scathing account of Israelites in which swine eating and tomb-dwelling are the most repugnant results of idolatry. In ancient times, swine were a part of pagan worship and were offered to Zeus, Dionysus, Athena, Nemesis and other Greek gods. There is also evidence of the widespread sacrifice of pigs to Roman gods such as Mars.²³ Watts says, "Evidently, in the Roman world, pigs were a favorite sacrificed animal, no Roman tomb was legally protected without a pig being sacrificed, and demons were understood to have a particular liking for them."²⁴ He continues,

It is most probably this linking of idols, demons, and pigs in the ancient world that forms the backdrop of the Markan account and which, along with the tomb-dwelling, suggests that he uses Isaiah 65 as the horizon for his story thereby linking the powerful forces of "Legion" with the typical images of anti-idol polemic such as Jesus' victory over the demonic host corresponds to the end of the idol's power.²⁵

²² Nineham, *Saint Mark*, 46.

²³ Watts, *Isaiah's New*, 158.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 158.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 159.

Watt's work is very interesting and provocative. It is easy to understand how he would have arrived at his idea that Isaiah influenced Mark's gospel. It can be imagined that the evangelist would have had access to the Hebrew Bible and could have depended on its themes and literary models. It seems difficult, however, to assume that Isaiah was the single work that the evangelist used when composing this gospel.

This chapter provides an overview of scholarship and shows that scholars have been unable to agree on a precise definition of the Gerasene demoniac story and its background. The story contains so many elements unique to the New Testament that both Greco-Roman and Jewish literary models could have influenced its composition. The complexity of this story suggests that it may very well have depended on multiple sources and been through multiple revisions before arriving in its final form found in the New Testament Gospels.

CHAPTER 2

COMMENTARY

In all three of the synoptic gospels, the Gerasene demoniac story is located right after the calming of the storm, linking a natural disaster with a human healing (Matt 8:23-27, Mark 4:35-41, Luke 8:22-25). The original author of this story probably chose to connect the two types of miracles to highlight Jesus' miraculous abilities. It is also important to contrast the confusion and disbelief of the twelve after the calming of the storm to the immediate recognition of Jesus by the demons. In all three versions of the calming of the sea, the disciples ask a similar question, "Who is this man who even the winds and seas obey him?" (Matt 8:27, Luke 8:25, Mark 4:41). The disciples clearly do not understand who Jesus is or his relationship to God. In the Gerasene story, the demons know who Jesus is. They call him, "Jesus, Son of the Most High God." The term "Most High God" was used by the Romans to refer to the Jewish God. The demons know his name and identify his relationship to the Jewish God, the great God on High, while the disciples do not understand.

There are three possible locations for the story: Gergesa, Gerasa and Gadara mentioned in three different gospel versions. The decision for the original location of the story cannot be determined by textual evidence alone.²⁶ With the help of geographical evidence, the location may be determined. The story must take place at a location that allows for the demise of the herd of swine by rushing into a body of water. While Gerasa

²⁶ Z. Safrai, "Gergesa, Gerasa, or Gadara? Where did Jesus' Miracle Occur?" *Jerusalem Perspectives* 51 (1996), 16-19.

is the best attested reading, it is geographically the most difficult. The town of Gerasa is located about thirty-seven miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee and separated by two cities.²⁷ The second variant reading is Gadara, a city about six miles southeast of the lake. It is debated whether the territory of Gadara extended to the lake's shore at the time this story was composed. Results from excavation completed at Bethsaida suggest that the shore of the Sea of Galilee has changed dramatically as a result an earthquake that took place in 363 CE.²⁸ Scholars such as Moshe Inbar of the University of Haifa have demonstrated that due to a massive slope failure and subsequent debris, the plain of the Sea of Galilee has been enlarged.²⁹ At the time this story was composed, it is possible that the city of Gadara was much closer to the Sea of Galilee and may even had the slope required for the swine to leap to their demise. Today, geographically the best location is Gergesa. Gergesa, an ancient city, was located on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee.³⁰ Gergesa is mentioned in Midrash, but probably was desolate and unknown to later scribes. Therefore, Gergesa could have been understood by later scribes to be a mistake and was changed to Gerasa, a famous Hellenistic city.³¹ Since Gerasa was far away from

²⁷ H. N. Roskam, *Gospel of Mark in its Historical and Social Context* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2004), 100.

²⁸ H. W. Kuhn, "An Introduction to the Excavation of Bethsaida (et-Tell) from a New Testament Perspective," *Bethsaida : A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee* (ed R. Arav & R. A. Freund; Kirkland, MS : Truman State University Press, 1999), 283.

²⁹ J. F. Shroder, M. P. Bishop, K. J. Cornwell, & M. Inbar, "Catastrophic Geomorphic Processes ad Bethsaida Archeology, Israel," *Bethsaida : A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee* (ed R. Arav & R. A. Freund; Kirkland, MS : Truman State University Press, 1999), 115-116.

³⁰ Safrai, *Gergesa*, 18.

³¹ Roskam believes that the original geographic mistake was made in Mark's gospel and that attempts to solve the problem of distance from the sea prompted the profusion of textual variation found with location this story takes place. Roskam, *Gospel of Mark*, 100.

any body of water this prompted some scribes to again “correct” the location to Gadara, a location closer to the Sea of Galilee.

Whatever the location of the story, Jesus’ crossing over into Gentile territory is symbolic of Christianity’s movement from the mostly Jewish to Gentile world.³² Sean Freyne argues that, “Crossing boundaries, be they social, political or religious, is usually also making a statement, especially if the boundaries are crossed freely. Because of the territorial nature of the Jewish religion which viewed *Eretz Israel* as Yahweh’s gift, there was a particular need to pay attention to the precise boundaries of the land, as defined by the religious establishments.”³³

In both Mark’s and Luke’s gospels, the crossing over begins Jesus’ Gentile mission.³⁴ Jesus leaves the area of Palestine, in which Jewish customs and views are dominant, and crosses onto foreign soil where there is a mix of pagan ideas and customs with a smaller Jewish influence. When Jesus crosses over into this mixed society, the evangelists are implying a universal message meant for all people regardless of culture or race. For Matthew, the story’s location within the gospel, right before Jesus’ public ministry, points to the universal nature of Jesus’ mission.

Luke writes that they arrived at the country of Gerasene (8:26); then, there is a pause for details that could be understood by an oral audience as a way to express a time lapse.³⁵ Luke continues with Jesus stepping out onto land where he is met by a man of the

³²S. E. La Verdere, *Luke* (Wilmington, DL: Michael Glazier, 1986), 116. LaVerdiere uses the term Christianity. I think perhaps a better term for the religion in described in the gospels is the Jesus movement, not yet fully developed Christianity.

³³ S. Freyne, *Galilee and Gospel: Collected Essays* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 164.

³⁴ La Verdere, *Luke*, 117.

³⁵ The timing in Luke’s version will be discussed further beginning on page 23.

city who has demons (8:27). The story continues without the disciples, who are no longer mentioned in the rest of the story, to emphasize that these are the actions of Jesus, without assistance.

Mark's version is closer to Luke's. He also writes that they come to the other side of the sea; then Jesus steps out of the boat, and immediately a man out of the tombs with an unclean spirit meets him (5:2). "Immediately" is the word Mark uses in his gospel to express the linear and quickly paced movement of Jesus' ministry.

Matthew's version of Jesus' initial encounter with the demoniac is much simpler than either Luke's or Mark's. As soon as Jesus comes to other side of the sea, two demoniacs coming out of the tombs meet him. There is no pause for Jesus to step out of the boat, to leave his disciples,³⁶ or to prepare for the confrontation. Matthew's version does not contain a time lapse or a shift from past to present as is found in the other two gospels. It seems, according to this narrative, as if these demoniacs were aware of his coming, that they knew beforehand that they were to be visited by someone great.

Exploring essential elements of first and second century demonology sheds some light on this story. Both the Greco-Roman and Jewish understandings of demons would have influenced New Testament demonology. The Greek word *daimon* means simply "divine." Demons were thought to be supernatural or divine powers and were not necessarily associated with evil. In fact, Homer used the word *daimon* interchangeably with *theos* or god. Demons were separate from humans, more powerful and exotic, but

³⁶ It is possible Matthew understood that the disciples witnessed all of the events of the exorcism. J. R. C. Cousland suggests that there is a correlation between the miracles and what Jesus asks of his disciples in verse 10:8. The Gerasene demonic story is the parallel story for the request by Jesus to 'cast out demons.' Other requests include: healing the sick found in Matt 8:5-13, raising the dead found in Matt 9:18-26, and cleansing the lepers found in Matt 8:2-4. J. R. C. Cousland, *The Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2002), 112.

they did not have as much influence or magnitude as deities, or their divine power. A second way that word *daimon* was used was to mean “fate” or “destiny.” Things would happen to humans as a result of *daimon*, luck or chance.

Another way that “demon” would have been used was in reference to a person who was made insane by demonic forces.³⁷ This was a play on two of meanings of the word *daimon*: both the supernatural force causing the insanity and a reference to the insane individual. “To be demonized” meant to be insane or mad. Therefore, someone who behaved outside the bounds of the social norms would have been understood to be possessed by demonic entities. Greeks also understood that those who were epileptic were afflicted with a sacred disease, caused by the possession of the individual by a *daimon*. One simple way to understand possession would be as a type of illness caused by an external and supernatural source. It does not seem that the synoptic authors understood possession to be an illness. In fact, there is evidence that there was a distinction between an illness that could be healed and a possession that must be exorcized.

There were several common characteristics of demons.³⁸ Demons haunted deserted places, and usually resided in tombs. They could take possession of a person, who would then show signs of insanity. Usually there was a dramatic difference between the individual before the possession and after the demon took hold. Demonic possession could give the individual abnormal abilities. Knowledge of the demon’s name gave a

³⁷ F. Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World* (New York, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1980), 2.

³⁸ Ferguson, *Demonology*, 2-3.

person control over the demon or possessed person.³⁹ It was possible to expel the demons, which would usually move into animals. Finally, demons once expelled, would return to dwell in the abyss.⁴⁰

There are very few references to demons or “evil spirits” in the Hebrew Bible. There are the evil spirits that tormented Saul in 2 Samuel 16:14 and 19:9. In Numbers there is mention of the “spirits of jealousy” and “lying spirits” (Num 5:14-15, 30). The Adversary or Satan is recorded in only three passages (Job 1-2, Zech 3:1, 1 Chr 21:1). Overall, demons in the Hebrew Bible rarely appear as visible entities that act beyond divine supervision.⁴¹ Most of the time these spirits are non-possessing figures in the service of God. It is in the intertestamental literature that the development of Jewish demonology can first be found. 1 Enoch 15:7 – 16:1 reads,

And now, the giants, who are produced from spirits and flesh, shall be called evil spirits upon the earth, and on the earth shall be their dwelling. Evil spirits have proceeded from their bodies; because they are born from men and from the holy Watchers is their beginning and primal origin; they shall be evil spirits on earth, and evil spirits shall they be called.

It is apparent that this Jewish text thought of evil spirits as entities created by the union of spiritual beings and humans. These evil spirits tempted humans and punished the condemned.

³⁹ Names were used in exorcisms to gain control over demons. E. Sorensen, *Possession and Exorcism in the New Testament and Early Christianity* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 120. It was man’s privilege as the lord of creation in Genesis 1:26 and 2:19 to give animals their names and the knowledge of all of their names was considered the privilege of a sage. L. Oppenheim, “Man and Nature in Mesopotamian Civilization.” *Dictionary of Scientific Biography 15* (1980), 634.

⁴⁰ Ferguson, *Demonology*, 3.

⁴¹ Sorensen, *Possession*, 49-51.

Demons were also thought to be pagan gods. This idea is found in several places in Jewish literature. Psalms 96:5 refers to the gods of the Gentiles as demons. Jubilees refers to the sacrifice offered to demons, the standard interpretation of pagan religion.⁴²

Several different apocryphal texts expressed the idea that demons were the cause of sin, illness, and suffering. Jubilees 11:5 reads that these evil spirits, “do all manner of wrong and sin, and all manner of transgression, to corrupt and destroy, and shed blood on earth.” 1 Enoch 106:13-14 says, “And the spirits of the giants afflict, oppress, destroy, attack, do battle, and work destruction on the earth, and cause trouble: they take no food, but nevertheless hunger.”

Demonic forces were still under the control of God who would allow them to wreak havoc until God overthrows evil. 1 Enoch also suggests that these spirits shall be destroyed on the day of consummation, the great judgment (1 Enoch 69:4-6, 53:3, 98:4). *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* contains several statements about God overcoming evil spirits at the end time: “All the spirit of deceit shall be given to be trodden under foot and men shall rule over the wicked spirits” (TZeb 9:8). The elect one, or messiah, would be the one to bring about the judgment of Satan and his host.

Was possession considered to be a form of mental illness in the New Testament world? Can individuals today in retrospect diagnose the abnormality of the possessed? Some scholars, like John Dominic Crossan for example, suggest that what was wrong with possessed individuals was an expression of the colonial oppression experienced by the individual that lead to a mental illness.⁴³ Individuals would exhibit a symptom of

⁴² Ferguson, *Demonology*, 74.

⁴³ D. J. Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1989), 90.

split personality disorder caused by the strain between submitting to colonialism and simultaneously wishing for its destruction. The Gerasene demoniac, according to Crossan, was a Jew suffering from a mental illness caused by Roman oppression in a Gentile territory.

This interpretation leaves many questions unanswered. It assumes that the demoniac was a Jew, though the text does not mention the demoniac's ethnic identity. Second, it assumes that demoniac possession was understood to be a form of social expression by the evangelists who crafted their stories. It assumes that the audience would understand that the individual was not actually possessed by demons but was acting out his frustrations physically. Finally, it assumes that the Romans emotionally and psychologically oppressed Jews in Gentile territory at the time. Crossan has projected modern psycho-social norms of mental illness back into a story and time when the understanding of abnormal behavior was not as sophisticated as it is today.⁴⁴ In the New Testament world, possession was understood as a supernatural experience caused by demonic forces not a psychological event.

In the New Testament world there was a clear distinction between possession and physical or mental illness. To be possessed was to be controlled by an evil spirit or demon that had its own personality, distinct from that of the human being it controlled. Possession could cause illnesses or the effects of illness, but was considered different from illness.⁴⁵ Mark 1:32 says that the people brought to Jesus all who were sick or

⁴⁴ T. Klutz says, "A diagnosis that imposes a modern medical category on the ancient Mediterranean world-view of the text and requires Jesus to heal illness which a comparable folk healer would probably never heal." T. Klutz, *The Exorcism Stories in Luke-Acts: A Sociostylistic Reading* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 82.

⁴⁵ A. Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness in the Gospel of Luke: Insights of Ancient Medical Text* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 13.

possessed with demons. Luke 6:17 speaks of those who were healed of their disease and those who were troubled by demons who were cured. In both examples the evangelists seems to recognize a clear distinction between the sick and those who were possessed.

The evangelists do not tell us how the demoniac came to be possessed. There are any number of reasons that could have led to his condition. One suggestion is that the man's behavior is a mourning ritual gone out of control.⁴⁶ This suggestion is based on the demoniac's residence in the tombs. One of the reasons the evangelists could have picked this location was to emphasize the demoniac's desperate living condition. Tombs were also know to be a common haunt of demons and supernatural forces, making this location a natural choice. It makes sense that the location of the demoniac's residence has more to say about his current conditions than about how he came to be possessed in the first place. Joel Marcus also suggests that this man was a former magician who consulted with the dead and lost control.⁴⁷ R. T. France does not believe that the man suffered from a mental abnormality but something outside his control.⁴⁸ All of these ideas are extrapolation of the text that does not mention mourning rituals, magic, or magicians. The evangelists simply do not provide the audience with any information about how the man came to be possessed.

The man in this story is described in several ways: with unclean spirits, with demons, without demons, and simply as "the demoniac." When reading these three versions side-by-side, one of the first things that becomes apparent is Matthew's unique

⁴⁶ J. Marcus, "Mark 1-8," *AB* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2000), 343.

⁴⁷ Marcus, *Mark*, 343.

⁴⁸ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (New York, NY: Doubleday Bible Commentary, 1998), 65.

description of the demoniacs. In this version, there are two demoniacs that reside in one separate man, not one demoniac as in Luke's and Mark's stories. Most of the scholarship that attempts to explain this difference assumes that Matthew was the evangelist who changed the details. There are two major explanations for the doubling of the demoniacs. Robert Gundry suggests Matthew was compensating for material omitted from Mark by including the information elsewhere.⁴⁹ The second possible reason for the doubling, suggested by Dorothy Weaver, would be Matthew's need to fulfill the idea of two witnesses found in Jewish Law.⁵⁰

Matthew's gospel does not contain the story of the man with unclean spirits found in Mark 1:21-28. Gundry suggests that Matthew makes up for this deletion by adding another demoniac to the Garasene demoniac story. This is not the only time this deletion and addition takes place in Matthew's gospel, insists Gundry. In Matt. 20:29, the Healing of the Two Blind Men, the characters in the story are also doubled in comparison to Mark 10:46, The Blind Bartimaeus. The theory that Matthew doubles characters to compensate for stories that the evangelist chooses to leave out is incomplete. If the stories were not important enough to include in Matthew's gospel, why would the evangelist decide to add the characters into another story? Secondly, how is the audience to know that the redacted story, with the additional character, is compensating for the other story that was left out?

⁴⁹ R. H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1982,) 158. Another example of this doubling is in Matthew 20:29. Compare it to Mark 10:46.

⁵⁰ The idea of a need for two witnesses is found in Deut. 17:6. See also D. J. Weaver, *Matthew's Missionary Discourse A Literary Critical Analysis Journal for the Study of New Testament Sup 58* (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1990,) 54.

Weaver suggests that Matthew chose to use two demoniacs instead of one to fulfill the need for two witnesses in Jewish law found in Deut. 17:6. Again this is an incomplete explanation. First, the Jewish law that Weaver refers to concerns witnesses needed in the case of capital punishment: “On the evidence of two or three witnesses the death sentence shall be executed; persons must not be put to death on the evidence of only one witness” (Deut 17:6). Second, even if one extends this law to include witnesses for all events, even miracles, there is still potentially no need for a second witness given the presence of herdsman. This is, of course, if the evangelist understood a witness to be anyone who watched the event not just the individual who experienced the miracle. According to Matthew, after the exorcism the “herdsman fled and going into the city they told everythin.” If the herdsman were present for the exorcism, was there a need for second witness?

Mark describes the demoniac as one who lived among the tombs. No one could bind him, even with a chain, for he had often been bound with fetters and chains, but the chains he wrenched apart, and the fetter he broke in pieces, and no one had the strength to subdue him. Night and day, among the tombs and on the mountains, he was always crying out, and bruising himself with stones (5:2-5). The detailed description emphasizes the story’s purpose, that Jesus has the power to exorcise even the strongest of demons, and slows the pace keeping the audience’s attention on the demoniac to create the illusion that they are themselves viewing the demoniac’s plight.⁵¹

Luke writes that, for a long time, the demoniac had worn no clothes and that he lived not in a house but among the tombs. The man was seized many times by the

⁵¹ P. G. Bolt, *Jesus’ Defeat of Death: Persuading Mark’s Early Readers* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 143.

demons and, therefore, was kept under guard. Bound with chains and fetters, he broke the bonds and was driven by the demons to the desert (Luke 8:27, 29). This description of the demoniac's lack of clothing is not included in Mark's version. That the man is not only driven from his home, but also from his clothes emphasizes the severity of the possession. Luke uses the phrase "the man who had a demon" instead of the noun "demoniac" used by Mark. Luke then pairs this phrase with "the man from whom the demons had gone" after the healing has taken place. Luke's repetition of "a man who had demons" and "a man from whom the demons had gone" emphasizes the outcome of the healing.⁵²

Matthew's description is simple. He says of the demoniacs in verse 8:28, "two demoniacs met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way." The evangelist does not give us more details about the demoniacs' state. Matthew does not state that the men were bound with chains and fetters. Matthew's version does not include reference to the demoniacs' wailing or cutting themselves with stone or running from their clothing.

No name or origin is given for the man who shares center stage with Jesus in this story, in any of the versions. The man has been living in pagan tombs and forced into nakedness by the demons. Any contact with a dead body resulted in a state of impurity for the Jews of the time. In fact, it is said that even one bone fragment as large as barley corn could cause defilement. If this man was a Jew, imagine how impure he would be living naked among the dead.⁵³ Whether the man was a pagan or Jew, it is obvious that he

⁵² J. B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), 335.

⁵³ D. S. Russell, *From Early Judaism to Early Church*. (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1986), 13.

was an outcast from society, and, therefore, it is even more miraculous that Jesus can restore him.

Mark's story begins with Jesus meeting a man with unclean spirit. Mark puts the present story on hold in verse 5:3 to depict the severity of the possession and the utter helplessness of the demoniac through a lengthy description of the demoniac's condition. In verse 5:6 Mark switches back to the present situation. The demoniac runs from afar to Jesus and worships Jesus. This sentence does not fit with what has already happened in the story, for in verse 5:1 Jesus already met the demoniac. Now, the author says the man ran from afar. Mark intends for the audience to understand the strength and power of the demons that confront Jesus before any actions on the part of Jesus take place.

Luke 8: 26-30 also moves back and forth in story-time. The purpose of this movement is to underscore the immediacy of the confrontation between Jesus and the demoniac.⁵⁴ While Mark's timeline shifts from past to present, Luke's timing is even more difficult. The story begins in the same way. Jesus steps out of the boat to be met by a man. Next, both stories give details of the man's past condition (Mark 5:3-5, Luke 8:27). Luke then moves the story back into the present by saying, "when he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him" (Luke 8:28). Luke again interrupts the present progression of the story in verse 8:29 to provide more of the background information that Mark provided earlier. Jesus then asks who the demoniac is only after the demoniac has first addressed Jesus (Luke 8:30). Mark's story suggests that Jesus asks the demoniac who he is before Jesus is addressed by the demon.

⁵⁴ Green, *The Gospel*, 334-342.

In both Mark's and Luke's versions the demoniac runs out to meet Jesus. The action of demoniac running out is confusing. Is the man running out to request healing or is the demon coming out to present a challenge? These are unanswerable questions, as the man was understood to have no identity of his own, only a voice fragmented by demons.⁵⁵ The demoniac, upon seeing Jesus, cries out and falls down before him in Luke's version. The action of falling before him suggests worship and submission to Jesus.⁵⁶ Mark leaves out the falling before him and simply says that the demoniac "ran and worshiped him" (5:6). That Jesus' power is immediately recognized without his having to perform any action or even speak shows his sovereignty over the demonic forces.

The demoniac, after he has run to meet Jesus, cries out in a loud voice, "What have you to do with me?" (Mark 5:7), literally "what of me and you?" "What of me and you" is a common Semitic idiom used to recognize distance between the speaker and addressee found in other biblical passages (cf. 2 Sam 19:22 and Kings 17:18).⁵⁷ Every time this idiom is used in the gospels it is in recognition of the divine nature of Jesus and his adversarial relationship to the demoniacs.⁵⁸ In Luke's version, the demons ask of Jesus, "What have you to do with us?" This difference highlights how confusing it would have been to distinguish between the possessed human being the demons occupied and

⁵⁵ Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 89-90.

⁵⁶ D. Lee, "Luke's Stories of Jesus. Theological Reading of Gospel Narrative and the Legacy of Hans Frei," *JSNT* 188 (1999), 308.

⁵⁷ C. S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 281-288.

⁵⁸ W. D. Davies, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew: In Three Volumes* (Edinburgh, England: T & T Clark, 1988), 87.

the demons. Ferguson says, “The demon recognized the distinction of the personalities but associated the possessed person with himself to the extent of using the first person plural pronoun, ‘us.’”⁵⁹

In both Mark’s and Luke’s versions what is important is how the demoniac addresses Jesus. The demoniac refers to Jesus as the “Son of the most High God.” Most High is a term originally used by the Canaanites and in Greek religions to designate the supreme deity.⁶⁰ The “Most High God” was also a term used by Gentiles for the God of Israel. It is interesting that the demon uses Jesus’ name, for to know one’s name is to have power over him.⁶¹ Therefore, the demoniac is simultaneously begging to not be hurt and hoping to gain power over Jesus. In Matthew’s version the demoniacs refer to Jesus as “the son of God,” a term used by both Gentiles and Jews, and do not use the term the “Son of the most high God.”

The demons in Luke’s versions beg Jesus not to torment them. They know that Jesus brings the coming of the kingdom, judgment and the demise of all demons. In Mark verse 5:7 the demoniac abjures Jesus not to torment him, even though the evangelist provides no reason why Jesus would torture the demon. The word “abjure” is common exorcism terminology. The request is not without irony, for the demons beg not to be tortured, even though they are torturing the man.⁶²

⁵⁹ Ferguson, *Demonology*, 6.

⁶⁰ Painter, *Mark’s Gospel*, 343.

⁶¹ Please see page 16 for more information about the power of names.

⁶² A parallel request is made by a demon in Philostratus’ writing the *Life of Apollanius of Tyana* when a demon begs an exorcist to not torture it. See Painter, *Mark’s Gospel*, 344.

In Matthew's version, the demoniacs do not worship Jesus but instead ask him if he has come to torment them "before the time." Scholars suggest that the time that the demons are referring to is the impending coming of the cosmological struggle when all demons will be banished from earth and the kingdom of God will be victorious over the forces of evil.⁶³ Fredrick Bruner remarks that "the time" could be a spatial reference and the demons mean that Jesus has begun his ministry to the Gentile prematurely.⁶⁴ Francis Beare suggests that Matthew's idea of torment is similar to the everlasting punishment which is in store for Satan and his entire host mentioned in Revelation 20:10.⁶⁵ It is interesting that the demons are aware that the time has not come; the kingdom has not yet arrived. Yet, they know that they cannot escape the coming events. They recognize Jesus as a supernatural entity who will be both their Lord and Judge⁶⁶ and do not beg for mercy but merely accept Jesus' purpose, understanding that the time of his kingdom is not quite at hand.

Jesus asks the demon, "What is your name?" in Mark's verse 5:9 and Luke 8:30. It seems strange that Jesus, in Mark's version, would now ask the name of the demoniac when he has already commanded the demons to come out of the demoniac in verse 5:8. The demons respond that their name is "Legion, for we are many." The title "Legion"

⁶³ Sorensen, *Possession*, 130.

⁶⁴ F. D. Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmann, 2004), 404.

⁶⁵ F. W. Beare, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row Publishing, 1981), 219. It is also normal for demons to plea for mercy when they meet someone who is powerful. Keener, *A Commentary*, 286.

⁶⁶ Keener, *A Commentary*, 286.

emphasizes the extent of the possession⁶⁷ and implies that this is the strongest demonic force Jesus has yet to confront.⁶⁸ “Legion” is an Aramaic word for a soldier and Greek word for a military group of five thousand men.⁶⁹ This name would bring the Roman presence to mind. A legion was a division within the Roman army of 6,000 infantry with auxiliary troops. In the province of Syria, Palestine held four legions at the time of Jesus.⁷⁰ That Jesus conquers the “Legion” could suggest to an audience that perhaps Jesus was powerful enough to conquer the Romans presence. The evangelists, with the use of this one word, imply Jesus was the Hebrew messiah. The Hebrew messiah was understood, by some Jews of the time, to be the one who would come at the end of days to conquer the Jewish enemies and free the Jewish lands from the oppressors.⁷¹ The demoniac, like the country he lived in, was an occupied territory.⁷² This detail may support Crossan’s reading of the text.⁷³ In Matthew’s version, the demons are not named. The lack of the demon’s name leaves out the suggestion that Jesus may be present to conquer the Romans.

Is this demoniac a Jew or a Gentile? Scholars like Crossan believe the man was a Jew and that his possession is a psychosomatic manifestation of repression suffered under

⁶⁷ J. F. Williams, *Other Followers of Jesus: Minor Characters as Major Figures in Mark’s Gospel* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 109.

⁶⁸ France, *The Gospel*, 64.

⁶⁹ Nineham, *Saint Mark*, 149-155.

⁷⁰ G. B. Caird, *The Gospel of St. Luke* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1968), 121.

⁷¹ L. Tripp, *Judaism: Development and Life* (New York, NY: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 2000), 6-8.

⁷² Caird, *The Gospel*, 121.

⁷³ Crossan, *Jesus*, 90.

Roman occupation.⁷⁴ While “Legion” suggests that the territory was occupied, there is not much evidence to support that this man was a Jew. Other scholars, such as R. D. Aus,⁷⁵ believe that the demoniac was a Gentile. First, there was a herd of pigs nearby. An unclean animal for the Jews, a pig would not be found in a predominantly Jewish territory, which means that the exorcism took place in Gentile territory.⁷⁶ When the demoniac addresses Jesus, he refers to the Jewish God in a Gentile manner calling Jesus “Son of the God Most High” in Mark’s and Luke’s versions.⁷⁷ In Mark’s version the demoniac goes off and proclaims what Jesus has done for him, after he was instructed to proclaim what God had done for him.⁷⁸ It seems probable in these two versions that the demoniac Jesus exorcises is a Gentile, and, if so, it is an example of Jesus’ universal mission, a message that is not only for the Jew but meant for the Gentiles also.⁷⁹

This question is harder to answer in Matthew’s story. While Jesus has crossed over into a Gentile territory, these demons do not address Jesus as the Son of the God Most High, but refer to him as the Son of God. Jew or Gentile could use the title Son of God. Bart D. Ehrman says, “In most Greco-Roman circles, the designation [son of God was] of a person born to a god, able to perform miraculous deeds and/or to convey superhuman teachings; in Jewish circles, the designation of persons chosen to stand in a

⁷⁴ Crossan, *Jesus*, 88 -91.

⁷⁵ R. D. Aus, *My Name is “Legion”* (New York, NY: University Press of America, 2003), 82.

⁷⁶ Donahue and Harrington argue that “Keeping pigs was forbidden by Jews (*m. B. Qam. 7:7*), and swineherding was, like tax collecting, one of the occupations forbidden to a Jew (see *m. Tohar. 7:6, m. B. Qam. 10:2, m. Ned. 3:4*, see also Luke 15:11-32).” Donahue & Harrington, *The Gospel*, 166.

⁷⁷ This idea is found in *Ant 16.6.2163*. Hendrickx, *The Third*, 174.

⁷⁸ Aus, *My Name*, 82.

⁷⁹ For evidence to support the universal mission of Jesus in Luke see Luke 28:28.

special relationship with the God of Israel, including the ancient Jewish Kings.”⁸⁰ The confusion could be intentional and a way for Matthew to emphasize that Jesus’ mission was meant for everyone (see Matt 28:19).

The demons, in Luke’s story, beg not to be sent into the abyss. It is ironic that beings that have caused so much pain beg to not be harmed. The abyss, in Jewish texts, is the abode for the dead and evil spirits.⁸¹ This word implies that Jesus has the power to send the demons from whence they came. The abyss was the original home of all demons, a place of containment for rebellious spirits and, ultimately, judgment.⁸² In Revelation 19-20, the abyss is a place of punishment.⁸³ Tombs were thought to lead to and from the abyss from which evil originated.⁸⁴ The word “abyss” also provokes imagery of the depths of the primeval water of the universe before creation (Gen. 1:2).⁸⁵ The swine run into the lake, which could symbolize the primeval water.

In Mark’s version, the demons beg to not be sent out of the country (5:10). Mark does not mention anything about an abyss. Demons are associated with certain countries and locations. It is possible that these demons do not want to be banished from their home but would prefer to stay in the comfort of the possessed man. In Matthew’s version, the demons neither beg not to be sent into the abyss nor out of their country. The demons simply say, “If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of swine” (8:31). The demons

⁸⁰ B. D. Erhman, *The New Testament* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 459.

⁸¹ For examples of this idea see Ps 71:20, Jub 5:6-7, I Enoch 10:4-6, 18:11-16. See also Bock, *Luke*, 156.

⁸² The myths of Hades, Gehenna, and the Tartarus have parallel concepts. Bock, *Luke*, 156

⁸³ W. R. F. Browning, *The Gospel According to Saint Luke* (London, England: SCM Press, 1972), 93.

⁸⁴ S. H. Ringe, *Luke* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 120.

⁸⁵ La Verdere, *Luke*, 119.

are not powerful enough, in Matthew's story, to negotiate with Jesus. The demons do not beg or abjure, they simply request to be sent into swine.

The spiritually unclean men are paired with the physically unclean swine in all three versions (Matt 8:31, Luke 8:32, Mark 5:12). Pigs were a symbol of paganism. Swine were linked with idol worship, as they were a sacrificial animal used in the Greek cults of Zeus, Dionysus, and Athena.⁸⁶ The symbol for the Roman legion was a wild boar.⁸⁷ Therefore, the evangelists could have chosen pigs to point out that Jesus would be capable of defeating a Roman presence by driving out a legion of Roman swine.

The demons come out of the man and enter the swine, which rush down the cliff into the sea and drown (Matt 8:32, Luke 8:33, Mark 5:13). Sending demons into animate objects when exorcising them from humans is well-attested Hellenistic demonology.⁸⁸ That the herd goes berserk is part of the physical evidence that the exorcism worked.⁸⁹ The results of the exorcism are immediately visible when the pigs rush down the bank. R. A. Horsley suggests that the swine drowning in the Sea would have evoked memories of the Exodus of Israel when the Pharaoh's armies pursuing the fleeing Israelites had been cast into the Sea and drowned (Exodus 15:1-10).⁹⁰

Mark includes the number of swine, at about two thousand (5:13) that perish to emphasize the destructive force of the demons. The number also emphasizes Jesus'

⁸⁶ Watts, *Isaiah's New*, 156.

⁸⁷ Williams, *Other Followers*, 181.

⁸⁸ Hendrickx, *The Third*, 179.

⁸⁹ R. C. Tannehill, *Luke, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996), 158.

⁹⁰ R. A. Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark's Gospel* (Louisville, KN: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001,) 141.

power to purify by simultaneously banishing from the land all that is unclean, both demons and the pigs. Why does Jesus allow such destruction? The story is meant to teach the spiritual truth that the power of Jesus leads to deliverance of the humans. The mission of Jesus includes four miraculous activities: the healing of the sick, the cleansing of the lepers, the raising of the dead and the exorcising of demons. All are eschatological signs of the messianic age.

This story does not include all formal words Jesus could have used to perform the exorcism. Matthew says only that Jesus spoke only one word, the command “Go.” Most other healers at the time would have used chants, incantations and special magical words to command demons.⁹¹ That Jesus can simply cast out with a word indicates that he was much more powerful than the other healers, exorcists, and magicians of the time. John Hull remarks about the results of Jesus exorcism, “All the elements of struggle, of menace, of tension is gone. The spirits have not been exorcised by a wonder worked; they have perished for ever before the face of the messiah.”⁹² Luke also omits all of the exact words Jesus could have used during the exorcism. Luke’s redaction suggests the evangelists also understood that Jesus was more powerful than other exorcists. The only words Jesus uses to perform the exorcism found in Mark’s version are “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit.” Jesus, upon seeing the demoniac running toward him, speaks

⁹¹ There is a long history of words, incantations, prayer and chants used to control demons and influence divine actions. The *Udug-hul* (Evil Demons) is a collection of rituals and incantations used against demons that spans from the Old Akkadian (2300-220 BCE) to the Seleucid periods (300-200 BCE). Some of the passages from the Zoroastrian texts *Vendidad* and *Yashts* refer to the use of petitions for divine support against forces of evil. See Sorensen, *Possession*, 25, 42-43. For examples of magical incantation during Greek antiquity please see H. Dieter *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

⁹² J. M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition* (Naperville, IL: A. R. Allenson, 1974), 132. See also D. E. Garland, *Reading Matthew* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Inc, 2001), 101-102.

only a few simple words to exorcise the demons. Jesus is clearly in complete control of the situation in Mark's version also.

When the swineherders see what has happened, they flee and report the incident (Matt 8:33, Luke 8:34, Mark 5:14). This could be another reason that the pigs are included in this story, to provide for the story of the exorcism to spread. One wonders, upon reading this story, where the swineherders were when the exorcism took place. Did they see the exorcism or just their pigs rushing to their deaths? Wolmanrans suggests that the swineherders were slaves who must return to tell their owners about the loss of the pigs.⁹³ This also explains why the swineherders did not ask Jesus to leave, but instead fled the site. According to Keener, the swineherders and townspeople approach Jesus as if he were a prince, as described in Josephus' *Antiquities* 11:227 and *Bell* 7:100.⁹⁴ At that time, slave herdsmen were the lowest member of the household, and would have had to explain any damaged of the property that was in their care. In order to prevent trial, torture, or potentially death, these herdsmen would have to provide a reasonable explanation for the loss of their owner's property.⁹⁵ It is interesting to note that this is the only time the evangelists leave Jesus and the demoniac to focus on other characters.⁹⁶ Mark's and Luke's versions contain an extra detail that the swineherders report the incident in the city and country (Luke 8:34, Mark 5:14). Matthew 8:33 states that the swineherders flee only to the city.

⁹³ J. L. P Wolmarans, "Who Asked Jesus to Leave the Territory of Gerasane (Mark 5:17)?" *OLP* 28 (1986), 90.

⁹⁴ Keener, *A Commentary*, 287.

⁹⁵ Please see V. Ehrenberg *The People of Aristophanes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951) and T. E. Wiedemann, *Slavery* (Oxford, England : Clarendon, 1987).

⁹⁶ Weaver, *A Literary*, 45.

The herdsmen report what has happened, and the people come to see the former demoniac (Matt 8:34, Luke 8:35, Mark 5:14). When they approach, in Mark's and Luke's versions, the people see the formerly destructive and uncontrollable demoniac sitting in his clothes and in his right mind. Luke adds that the man is sitting at the feet of Jesus, as would a disciple.⁹⁷ These descriptions of the man emphasize his complete recovery. The demoniac once again can become a full member of society. He has been restored through Jesus' exorcism. Matthew's version leaves out description of the outcome of the exorcism upon the demoniac. He simply says, "And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their neighborhood" (8:34).

One of the most important differences in Luke's version is the use of the verb *sozo* that can mean both "save" and "heal." In Luke's version, it is clear that the swineherders report that the man was not only cured but also saved. In Mark's version, the herdsmen simply report what happened with no mention of salvation or healing. Jesus, in Luke's story, is the one who brings salvation. From what had this man been saved? Simply, he was saved from the demonic possession and restored to health. The man no longer lives in tombs, unclean, or involved with demons; he has been cured.

The people who hear the story of the man's exorcism are afraid in Luke 8:35, 37 and Mark 5:15. The power of Jesus is probably what causes the fear of the people. Would not joy be a more appropriate response?⁹⁸ Another reason for the fear could be that Jesus' exorcism brings the people's hatred of Romans into the open.⁹⁹ This assumption, of

⁹⁷ Hendrickx, *The Third*, 181.

⁹⁸ Ringe, *Luke*, 121.

⁹⁹ Hendrickx, *The Third*, 188.

course, presupposes that the demoniac was a Jew and was currently being oppressed by the Romans supporting Crossan's reading. Marcus suggests that the people are afraid because they believe the exorcism to be the work of the devil and do not understand who Jesus is or his message.

Mark 5:16 again refers to those who had witnessed the incident. Mark already mentioned that the herders fled and told all the city and country what had happened. Why then does the evangelist now mention these eyewitnesses and who they are again? Mark could be repeating how the story spread to emphasize how miraculous and awe-inspiring this incident would have been to the people of the time and how rapidly the story spread. Unfortunately, because of Mark's confusing writing style, it is difficult to determine who these people are and what they are reporting to others.

In all three versions of the story, the townspeople beg Jesus to leave their territory (Matt 8:34, Luke 8:38, Mark 5:18). It seems that Jesus has an easier time dealing with ungovernable demons than with unwilling humans.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, the result of Jesus' first venture into a Gentile territory is rejection. That Jesus is asked to leave is a strong suggestion that the story may not be completely fictitious; otherwise, it would seem more appropriate for it to end with praise from the crowd. If we assume that the herdsmen were slaves and that some of the townspeople are those who have come to see the destruction of their herds by Jesus, then, the people's request could be a reflection of the value of their property. They may not have given Jesus the opportunity to prove who he was but focused on the destruction of their material possessions. This request also provides the evangelists with a reason to move the story back into Jewish territory. This is where

¹⁰⁰ D. E. Garland, *Reading Matthew* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Halwys Inc, 2001), 102.

Matthew's account ends. In Mark it is completely unclear who begs Jesus to leave. It could be the herdsmen, the eyewitnesses, or the people from the city. Whoever it is that asks Jesus to leave, he immediately obeys and steps into his boat, presumably with his disciples.

In Mark's and Luke's versions, the former demoniac asks if he may join Jesus as a disciple.¹⁰¹ In Mark's version, Jesus is getting into the boat to return as the man comes to request to remain with Jesus. In Luke, Jesus has already begun his return when the former demoniac requests to go with Jesus. The request, therefore, seems like a side note. The purpose of this change in timing could be to highlight the request of the man. Just as a lens of a camera shrinks to focus on a detail, so too the evangelist focuses the story upon the man's request.

In both versions, Jesus does not permit the demoniac to follow him. Perhaps the request is denied as a privilege reserved for the disciples.¹⁰² Perhaps Jesus does not want a universal discipleship. It is ironic, for the disciples are given the powers to exorcise demons and allowed to follow Jesus, yet the demoniac is exorcised and sent away. Still, Jesus does not want the former demoniac to join him.

In Mark's version, Jesus specifically instructs the former demoniac to go and tell his friends how much the Lord has done for him and how the Lord had mercy on him. It is clear that Jesus understands his power to be from God. It is also possible that, in Mark, he understands that he and God are one in the same. This is the first time in the Gospel of Mark that Jesus does not order the participant of a miraculous event to keep quiet. Jesus

¹⁰¹ M. A. Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary-Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 166.

¹⁰² D. R. Hare, *Mark* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 63-65.

is ready to start spreading the message. In Luke's version, Jesus tells the former demoniac to return to his home and to declare how much God has done for him. Luke leaves out the request for the former demoniac to report how much mercy the Lord had on him.

The man does not obey Jesus, in both versions, but proclaims what has happened. The disobedience of the man is similar to the disobedience of the leper in Mark 1:45. In Mark's version he proclaims in Decapolis, one of the ten Roman cities, what Jesus had done for him, not what the Lord had done for him. Marcus insists that the man interpreted Jesus' command expansively, yet not incorrectly, if the former demoniac was a pagan.¹⁰³ It would be natural for a pagan to attribute the actions to Jesus, for Jesus was the one who performed the healing.

In Luke's version the mission of the man who had demons is not limited to a specific city, as it is in Mark, but broadened to include the urban world in general.¹⁰⁴ This interpretation expands Jesus' mission, making it more universal than in Mark. Jesus is not bringing salvation to one city alone but to the entire Gentile world.

In Mark's account the people who hear the former demoniac's story are amazed, a normal response to a miracle. Mark's description emphasizes the spread of Jesus' message and mission. The former demoniac becomes a type of a disciple who spreads the word of the miraculous power of Jesus. This could have been Jesus' intention for denying the man's request to stay with him; instead, he is to spread his message to the Gentile world.

¹⁰³ Marcus, *Mark*, 347.

¹⁰⁴ La Verdere, *Luke*, 117.

Matthew does not include any more information about the demoniac after the demons are exorcised. The former demoniac is not sent on a mission to the Gentile people. There are no amazed town's people. In Matthew's version the exorcism takes place, the herdsmen flee, the town comes out, and Jesus is asked to leave.

CHAPTER 3

THEMES RELEVANT TO ALL THREE VERSIONS

Over the centuries, many different ideas have been proposed for the purpose of including this story in the gospels. Jerome wrote that the intention of the evangelists was to elicit faith and attest to God's power.¹⁰⁵ Athanasius believed the story proved the sovereign power of God as recognized by the demons.¹⁰⁶ Tertullian describes the story as an example of vindicated faith, "the power of the trial of a believer is sometimes temporarily granted to the devil to test and challenge faith."¹⁰⁷

One noticeable purpose for the inclusion of this story is to show that Jesus' mission was not limited to Israel but was universal and included the Gentiles. The story also shows Jesus' incredible power when compared to other spiritual men of his time. Jesus' ability to conquer evil and Satan through the power of God is another major theme. The story shows that Jesus understood his mission to bring the coming Kingdom of God here on earth, one of the most important themes of the story.

The Universal Mission of Jesus

One of the main themes of this story is to show that Jesus' power is not limited to Israel or to the Jews. I have mentioned that it is hard to determine the ethnicity of the

¹⁰⁵ C. A. Hall & T. C. Oden, *Mark: Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 66.

¹⁰⁶ Hall & Oden, *Mark*, 68.

¹⁰⁷ Tertullian, *Cetedoc* 0025, 2:52; ANF 4:117.

demoniac. It is possible that the demoniac was a Gentile and, therefore, that this story was the only exorcism and only the second miracle that involves Gentiles in the synoptic gospels.¹⁰⁸ This story shows that Jesus is powerful even in the midst of Gentiles, unlike the demons who are associated with town and country.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, Jesus' mission was not limited to the Jews, but extended to the Gentiles also.

This story may also be an explanation of the gospels writers' sense of the need for the conversion of Gentiles to Christianity. The pagan gods that the Gentiles worshipped, to some Jewish authors, were nothing more than demons. Some of the members of the early Christian community also thought of the pagan gods as demons. The Gentiles of this early Christian community could have been encouraged to understand their conversion as a release from the powers of these demons.¹¹⁰ This story describes how one individual was converted and released from the power of demons to become one who follows Jesus, extending his mission even to those Gentiles still involved with the pagan religion, demons and gods. Jesus also could have wanted the man to witness to his fellow Gentiles and to begin the spread of Jesus' message to the Gentile community.

This story is a vivid preview of the Gentile mission that would begin in earnest with the resurrection of Jesus and the missions of Peter¹¹¹ and the apostle Paul.¹¹² The time for the proclamation to the Gentiles has not quite come, so the neighboring villagers

¹⁰⁸ In Matthew Jesus heals the Centurion's Servant with only a word (8:5-13). Luke also contains the story of the healing of the Centurion's Servant. In Luke's version though the man seems to be a God fearer as he is described as, "he loved our nation and built our synagogue," Luke (7:4)

¹⁰⁹ Beare, *The Gospel*, 220.

¹¹⁰ Tannehill, *Luke*, 147.

¹¹¹ See Acts 10:44-48 for an example of Peter's mission to the Gentiles.

¹¹² D. Senior, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997), 113.

ask Jesus to leave and fear him. This story foreshadows the earnest movement in early Christianity to encompass all peoples and, as Jesus exorcizes Gentiles, it provides a theological and historical backbone for this movement.

Not only is Jesus' mission universal, but also he is the one sent from God to bring salvation for all humankind. Russell says, "What the creator willed and planned at the time of creation will reach its fulfillment in the last days; he will rectify and restore what has gone wrong and bring to perfection what he has made."¹¹³ What has gone wrong is, in part, demonic possession of man, but also all disease and illness that plague humankind. Jesus brings with his message a promise of salvation and wellness. He brings this universal promise not just for the Jews but, as this story would suggest, for Gentiles also. Therefore, the salvation is simultaneously spiritual and physical.

The Power of Jesus

This story begins directly after the calming of the sea (Matt 8:22-25, Luke 8:22-24, Mark 4:35-41). Therefore, the evangelists place together two different types of miracles: one, a natural disaster, the other, an exorcism. Jesus, mastering both situations, proves his authority over the chaos of the world and the destructive forces that can attack human beings.¹¹⁴ The disasters of demonic possession and a violent sea storm challenge the authority of God.¹¹⁵ Jesus, God's son, according to these gospels, has the power to meet this challenge and bring about the power of God's kingdom.

¹¹³ Russell, *From Early*, 119.

¹¹⁴ La Verdere, *Luke*, 115-121.

¹¹⁵ Caird, *The Gospel*, 121.

Miracles, like the exorcism of the demoniacs, can express the Christological concerns of the evangelists. Therefore, this miracle shows that Jesus has the power of God and is the one who can control demons. Miracles in the gospels are the divine will of God and are part of Jesus' merciful ministry, which culminates in his death and resurrection.¹¹⁶ Jesus carries out part of his mission in this story by saving a demoniac from his sins. He, therefore, manifests the divine presence and power of God.¹¹⁷

Jesus is able to perform this exorcism without the words, chants and rituals that are involved in other exorcisms of his time. The only version that contains any of the words of his exorcism, Mark, reports that he uses only the single one "GO!" That Jesus is able to exorcize with a single word again demonstrates his great power.

Another clue to the power of Jesus is the name given to the demons in Mark's and Luke's version. As I mentioned before, "Legion" is a reference to a Roman military unit and the fact the Jesus is able to control a legion suggests that he may have some power over the Romans themselves. This story is similar to other miracle stories in the New Testament Apocrypha such as the Acts of Peter and the Greek story of the Life of Apollonias, and therefore a way to show that Jesus was equal to the Gentile miracle workers.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ W. Carter, *Matthew: Storyteller, Interpreter and Evangelist* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Press, 1996), 65.

¹¹⁷ Carter, *Matthew: Storyteller*, 66.

¹¹⁸ Hendrickx, *The Third*, 178.

The Conquering of Evil

For liberation theologians, this story is a model story for the liberation of human beings from many forms of oppression, both psychological and social. Possession was understood as demons, the disciples of Satan, taking control of human life. People in early Christianity believed in the unity of the kingdom of Satan, even though evil may have many manifestations. These early Christians could have understood Jesus' exorcism to demonstrate that the whole dominion of Satan was being conquered.¹¹⁹ In Luke 10:18, the evangelist makes a reference to the final end of Satan and says that Jesus saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Jesus' performance with the Gerasene demoniac is the beginning of the final destruction of evil.

The evangelists understood that this ability to overcome the dominion of evil was God's gift. This gift required humble obedience and dependence upon God. Jesus, in the gospels, gave his disciples the authority to banish evil through their reliance upon God. In fact, just the name of Jesus, because of his special relationship to God, endowed the person with power to remove satanic forces from the world. In the gospel of Luke, John mentions to Jesus that the disciples saw a man casting out demons with Jesus' name. Jesus responds that what is not against you is for you, so that anyone doing the work of God in his name was given power over Satan. Paul in Acts 16:18 also banishes a demonic force using the simple phrase, "I charge you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." By casting out the demons, Jesus is overcoming Satan's realm and showing the presence of the reign of God.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Ferguson, *Demonology*, 20. This understanding of Jesus' demonology comes from Luke 11:14-22 when Jesus explains to the people that if Satan's kingdom is divided than it is a kingdom that would not stand.

It has also been suggested that Jesus' miraculous works against demons and, therefore, evil at Garasene could have been understood as conquering the Roman polytheistic religion and its inability to recognize the true power of the one true God. Jesus, exorcizing in a Gentile land and sending the former demoniac on a mission to spread his message, begins of the spread of the idea that God of Israel is the only one who can conquer evil.

The Coming of the Kingdom

One purpose of this story is to show that Jesus is a man entrusted with God's kingdom and God's sovereignty. The gospels use of the word "Legion" suggest that the evangelists understood that Jesus contested and resisted the Roman Empire's claim to sovereignty. With the banishment of the legion, the evangelists anticipate the coming triumph of God and the destruction of the Roman Empire.¹²¹

The disasters of demonic possession and a violent sea storm challenge the authority of God. Caird insists that,

The biblical view of man is that God intended him to be lord of nature (Gen 1:26; Ps 8), and because he has by sin fortified his viceregal throne, nature displays signs of disorder parallel to those in human life; the sovereignty of God is challenged not merely by human sin, but by disease and death, the unclean and the demonic, the desolation of the wilderness and the turbulence of the sea...The miracles of Jesus were all 'miracles of the kingdom,' evidence that God's

¹²⁰ Carter, *Matthew: Storyteller*, 144.

¹²¹ W. Carter, *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity International Press, 2001), 67-70.

sovereignty was breaking in, with a new effectiveness, upon the confusion of a rebellious world.¹²²

Jesus, mastering both situations, proves his authority over the chaos of the world and the destructive forces that can attack humans. LaVerdiere says,

The one who stills the winds and calms the waters has mastery over the humanly uncontrollable and destructive forces which attack human life and propel human beings away from their normal social environment or home into the desert region and among the tombs where all is death.¹²³

Jesus, the one who stills the winds, triumphs over enemies, and exorcises humans, is clearly understood to be the one in this story with a special relationship with God, entrusted with God's kingdom and God's sovereignty. Jesus' act of conquering the legion of demons points to the impending arrival of the kingdom of God, a time when all demons will be banished¹²⁴ and the whole universe will be purged of evil.¹²⁵ This final banishment is yet to come but is foreshadowed by the destruction of the demons in the Gerasene demoniac story.

¹²² Caird, *The Gospel*, 121.

¹²³ La Verdiere, *Luke*, 121.

¹²⁴ A. A. Just, *Luke 1:1 -9:50. Concordia Commentary* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia, 1996), 364.

¹²⁵ This was a common Jewish idea at the time that this gospel was composed. For examples of this type of belief, see *1st Enoch* 63, *2nd Barukh*, *Qumran Hymn 3* and the Jewish Sibylline Oracles.

CONCLUSIONS

As I have demonstrated throughout this paper, the Gerasene demoniac story includes some of the basic themes of Jesus' mission and message. The story would have been included in the gospels because of its function in the early Christian community to provide its audience with a message about Jesus. While there are some basic similarities, the three versions all contain different details and vocabulary that emphasize the particular message the evangelists wanted the audience to understand.

Each evangelist had a theological agenda when he composed his gospels. The different details each evangelist chose to add to his gospel emphasizes the particular idea that each author wanted the audience to understand. Individual differences change how each story would have functioned in the early Christian community in which they were read. There are three major categories of differences among the three versions that I discussed. First, variations occur either in the choice of single words or phrases, which can change the meaning and theological understanding of the story dramatically. Secondly, the length and detail of description differ in the three evangelists versions of the story. Finally, the order and structure of the story differs among the three versions.

There are several examples of word choices changing the function of the story. With the single word *sozo*, Luke's version adds the idea that Jesus is the one who brings salvation, an essential theological point for the early Christian communities. Matthew's version includes the demoniacs begging Jesus not to torture them before "the time". With these words Matthew expresses the idea understood in the early community that the

kingdom of God is on its way and that Jesus is the one who will bring it. Mark's version includes the demoniac speaking the phrase, "I abjure you by God, do not torment me" (Mark 5:7). With just these few words the audience would have understood that the demoniac recognized Jesus for who he was, a man with the power of God.

The explicit descriptions of the condition of the demoniac found in both Mark's and Luke's versions point to the early Christian community's understanding of the spectacular power of Jesus. The more details the evangelists added to the description of the demoniac's conditions, the more the evangelists wished to emphasize the strength it would take to exorcise the demons. Another purpose of the story, as suggested by Nineham, would be to illustrate the cleansing of the Gentile land in preparation for the coming of Christianity. Jesus takes a land ridden with impurities and removes the pigs and possessed, leaving the area cleansed.

The mission of the former demoniac, found in both Mark's and Luke's versions, explains the spread of Jesus' message into the Gentile world. The audience could understand the story as providing an explanation for how the Gentiles became Christians. Early Christians, including the apostle Paul, needed a reason to spread the message of Jesus to the pagan peoples. This story helps to provide that support. Jesus was here for everyone, Gentile and Jew, including sick and possessed, adults and children. Just as the demons recognized who Jesus was so should any early Christian audience who heard this story.

Both Mark's and Luke's version include some major structural differences in their stories. Luke shifts in story time bring all of the audiences focus on the actions of Jesus and away from the behavior of the demoniac. This functioned in the early Christian

community to emphasize the complete importance of Jesus' actions, in opposition to those of the other characters who were included in a story. Mark's interruption of the plot to provide extra details of the condition to the demoniac demonstrates to the audience the power of Jesus to interact with such a strong being.

In summary, the Gerasene demoniac story with all of its graphic descriptions and violent actions, is one of the most suggestive and instructive stories the evangelists included in their gospels. Whether reading the story in English today or hearing the story read in ancient Greek, in just a few verses, the Gerasene demoniac story explains some of the basic themes of Jesus' mission and the messages the evangelists intended for their audience to understand through their gospels.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- R. D. Aus. *My Name is "Legion"* (New York, NY: University Press of America, 2003).
- W. Baird. "New Testament Criticism," *ABD 1* (ed. D. N. Freedman; New York, NY: Doubleday, 1997) 730-736.
- F. W. Beare. *The Gospel According to Matthew* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row Publishing, 1981).
- D. L. Bock. *Luke, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1994).
- P. G. Bolt. *Jesus' Defeat of Death: Persuading Mark's Early Readers* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
- W. R. F. Browning. *The Gospel According to Saint Luke* (London, England: SCM Press, 1972).
- F. D. Bruner. *Matthew: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmann, 2004).
- G. B. Caird. *The Gospel of St. Luke* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1968).
- W. Carter. *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity International Press, 2001).
- *Matthew: Storyteller, Interpreter and Evangelist* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Press, 2004).
- J. R. C. Cousland. *The Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2002).
- D. J. Crossan. *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1989).
- W. D. Davies. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew: In Three Volumes* (Edinburgh, England: T & T Clark, 1988).
- H. Dieter. *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* (Chicago, WI: University of Chicago Press, 1986).
- J. R. Donahue & D. J. Harrington. *The Gospel of Mark* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2002).

- V. Ehrenberg. *The people of Aristophanes* (Oxford, England: Clarendon, 1951).
- B. D. Erhman. *The New Testament* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- R. Fagles. *The Iliad* (New York, NY: Viking, 1996).
- W. Farmer. *The Synoptic Problem* (New York, NY: MacMillian, 1964).
- F. Ferguson. *Demonology of the Early Christian World* (New York, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1980).
- R. T. France. *The Gospel of Mark* (New York, NY: Doubleday Bible Commentary, 1998).
- S. Freyne. *Galilee and Gospel: Collected Essays* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).
- D. E. Garland. *Reading Matthew* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Inc, 2001).
- J. B. Green. *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1997).
- R. H. Gundry. *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1982).
- C. A. Hall & T. C. Oden. *Mark: Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998).
- D. R. Hare. *Mark* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996).
- H. Hendrickx. *The Third Gospel for the Third World* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier Book, 1998).
- R. A. Horsley. *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark's Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).
- J. M. Hull. *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition* (Naperville, IL: A. R. Allenson, 1974).
- A. A. Just. *Luke 1:1 -9:50. Concordia Commentary* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia, 1996).
- C. S. Keener. *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1999).
- T. Klutz. *The Exorcism Stories in Luke-Acts: A Sociostylistic Reading* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

- H. W. Kuhn. "An Introduction to the Excavation of Bethsaida (et-Tell) from a New Testament Perspective," *Bethsaida : A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee* (ed R. Arav & R. A. Freund; Kirkland, MS : Truman State University Press, 1999) 283-294.
- S. E. La Verdiere. *Luke* (Wilmington, DL: Michael Glazier, 1986).
- D. Lee. "Luke's Stories of Jesus. Theological Reading of Gospel Narrative and the Legacy of Hans Frei," *JSNT* 188 (1999).
- T. O. Ling. *The Significance of Satan* (London, UK: S.P.C.K., 1961).
- D. R. MacDonald. *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark* (London, U. K.: Yale University Press, 2000).
- J. Marcus. "Mark 1-8," *AB* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2000).
- B. M. Metzger. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1971).
- D. E. Nineham. *Saint Mark* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Book, 1963).
- L. Oppenheim. "Man and Nature in Mesopotamian Civilization." *Dictionary of Scientific Biography* 15 (1980).
- J. Painter. *Mark's Gospel: World in Conflict* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997).
- D. Patte. *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1996).
- S. H. Ringe. *Luke* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995).
- F. Robert. *The Odyssey* (New York, NY: Viking, 1996).
- H. N. Roskam. *Gospel of Mark in its Historical and Social Context* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2004).
- D. S. Russell. *From Early Judaism to Early Church*. (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1986).
- Z. Safrai. "Gergesa, Gerasa, or Gadara? Where did Jesus' Miracle Occur?" *Jerusalem Perspectives* 51 (1996) 16-19.
- E. P. Sanders. *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985).
- D. Senior. *The Gospel of Matthew* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997).

- E. Sorensen. *Possession and Exorcism in the New Testament and Early Christianity* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2002).
- J. F. Shroder, M. P. Bishop, K. J. Cornwell, & M. Inbar. "Catastrophic Geomorphic Processes at Bethsaida Archeology, Israel," *Bethsaida : A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee* (ed R. Arav & R. A. Freund; Kirkland, MS : Truman State University Press, 1999) 115-173.
- D. C. Sim. *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community* (Edinburgh, England: T & T Clark, 1998).
- R. C. Tannehill. *Luke, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996).
- J. C. Thomas. *The Devil, Disease and Deliverance: Origins of Illness in New Testament Thought* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).
- M. A. Tolbert. *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary-Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996).
- L. Tripp. *Judaism: Development and Life* (New York, NY: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 2000).
- B. M. F. Van Iersel. *Mark: A Reader-Response Commentary* (Sheffield, U. K.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).
- R. E. Watts. *Isaiah's New Exodus and Mark* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 1997).
- D. J. Weaver. *Matthew's Missionary Discourse A Literary Critical Analysis Journal for the Study of New Testament Sup 58* (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1990).
- A. Weissenrieder. *Images of Illness in the Gospel of Luke: Insights of Ancient Medical Text* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).
- T. E. Wiedemann. *Slavery* (Oxford, England : Clarendon, 1987).
- J. F. Williams. *Other Followers of Jesus: Minor Characters as Major Figures in Mark's Gospel* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994).
- B. Witherington. *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-rhetorical commentary* (Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001).
- J. L. P. Wolmarans. "Who Asked Jesus to Leave the Territory of Gerasene (Mark 5:17)?" *OLP 28* (1986).