

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339883383>

# Reading Mark 5:1–20 in the Context of Exorcism in African Christian Theology: Implications for the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Chapter · April 2019

CITATIONS

0

READS

2,035

1 author:



**Sampson M Nwaomah**  
Adventist University of Africa

53 PUBLICATIONS 122 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

# **BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS**

## *Implications and Application in Africa*

Edited by

Davidson Razafiarivony

Anna Galeniece

Kelvin O. Onongha

The Theological Seminary  
Adventist University of Africa  
Nairobi, Kenya

Copyright © 2019 by the Theological Seminary,  
Adventist University of Africa  
Private Bag, Mbagathi 00503  
Nairobi, Kenya  
+254 733 333 451/2

The authors assume full responsibility for the accuracy of all  
facts and quotations in this book.

Edited by        Davidson Razafiarivony  
                     Anna Galeniece  
                     Kelvin O. Onongha

Copy-edited by Nancy Vyhmeister

Layout by R. Mercy Chebichiy

Cover design by R. Mercy Chebichiy

ISBN: 978-9966-825-95-7

All Rights Reserved

Printed By Only Creative Ltd

## CHAPTER VIII

---

# READING MARK 5:1-20 IN THE CONTEXT OF EXORCISM IN AFRICAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Sampson M. Nwaomah

### Introduction

Mark 5:1-20 provides one of the most intriguing accounts of exorcism in the ministry of Jesus. It relates the healing of the demoniac in the region of the Gerasenes. This passage is the longest exorcism narrative reported by Mark. As in the other Synoptic Gospels, the event in Mark occurs just after the crossing of the Sea of Galilee and the calming of the storm that threatened the safety of Jesus and his disciples. The story shows the faint-heartedness of the disciples, Jesus' lordship over nature, and the subsequent rebuke of the lack of faith of the disciples (Mark 4:35-41). The uniqueness of the healing of the demoniac in Mark 5 is further illustrated because "this is the only exorcism that mentions multiple demons and Jesus' asking for their name, as if to garner power over them. It is also the only one that involves animals and that provokes opposition and a plea for him to leave."<sup>1</sup>

The authenticity and motif of this story have been questioned in some circles. It is argued that this could have been a secular story transformed by Jesus or that Mark unduly elaborated a simple story by Jesus. Some also query even the morality of Jesus' seemingly punitive action of destroying the

pigs.<sup>2</sup> Justin Campbell argues that the story of the healing of the demoniac departs from the traditional narration of exorcism in the Gospels by providing details of the plight of the man.<sup>3</sup> Van Iersel adds that the graphic description of the condition expresses the absolute helplessness of this demon-possessed man, putting him beyond human liberation<sup>4</sup> and impairing the image of God in in man. Guelich, as cited by Campbell, argues that the “four characteristics of insanity in Judaism,” such as (1) running around in the night, (2) rending one’s garments, (3) spending the night in cemeteries, and (4) destroying what one has been given<sup>5</sup> are captured in Mark 5:3-5. For Booring, the story of the demoniac is not “about the response of faith and its transforming power, but about an invasion of alien territory and reclaiming it for the kingdom of God.”<sup>6</sup>

However, diverse theological meanings have been given to this passage. These include a political reading of the passage by Ched Meyers, who anchored his argument on the use of military vocabularies. He opines that the word legion describing the number of the demons in the possessed man refers to the Roman soldiers and the Greek term for *agelē* (v. 11), used for the herds, was also used for recruits in the Roman army. Further, in his reading, the dismissal of the herds and their charging into the sea suggests troops quickening into battle and even legion hints to the Roman regiment in Palestine.<sup>7</sup> Gail R. O’Day provides another alternative sociological and liberation interpretation. This interpretation focuses on the mental state of the demoniac and portrays the rejection of society and the compassion provided by Jesus.<sup>8</sup> Further, it is also argued “Mark uses this story to foreshadow Jesus’ own death and resurrection.”<sup>9</sup> While it may be argued that each of these alternative readings seems to go beyond the plain reading of the text, the analysis and evaluation of these alternative readings are beyond the limited scope of this paper. This work is based on a plain reading of the Markan passage in the context of exorcism in African Christian

Theology and its implications for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

## **The Story of the Freeing of the Demoniac**

### **Issues on Geographical Location**

The story of the healing of the demoniac is common to the Synoptic Gospels (Matt 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-37). Apart from the issues of geographical locations, briefly discussed in the next section, each of the Synoptic provides some aspects not found in the other. The identity of the location where Jesus encountered and healed the demoniac in Mark 5 has attracted much attention. According to Matthew 8:28 this happened in the land of the Gadarenes, in Mark 5:1 it took place in the land of the Gerasenes, and in Luke 8:26, 37, we read Gergesenes. Some efforts have been made to reconcile what appear to be the challenges faced in the textual variants.<sup>10</sup> It seems rather than the exact location; the description of the Gentile region is paramount for some reasons.

First, in Mark 5:1, the thalassic boundary between Jews and non-Jews is introduced with the phrase "Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gadarenes." Second, the mention of the herd of pigs, one of the unclean animals in the story (v. 11), also suggest the Gentile region. In this vein, Watts posits: "Evidently, in the Roman world, pigs were favourite sacrificial animals, no Roman tomb was legally protected without a pig being sacrificed, and demons were understood to have a particular liking for them."<sup>11</sup> Donald Juel, also argues that "More important than precise location is the description of the territory: it is unclean, out of bounds. A herd of swine is there, suggesting impurity; pigs were forbidden food for Jews."<sup>12</sup>

Next, the ex-demoniac is described as returning to the Decapolis (v. 20), "apparently constituted originally of ten Greek cities," and in the Gospels the term is used "in a predominantly

geographical sense.”<sup>13</sup> The crossing of Jesus to the Gentile territory signals the commencement of his Gentile mission and the encounter with the demonian symbolizes the control of Satan over unbelievers.

### **Initial Encounter: Mark 5:1-5**

Mark reports that as Jesus disembarked he was confronted by a man who had an unclean spirit (*anthrōpos en pneumatī akathartō*), whose residence had been in the tombs. The unclean man was under demonic control and influence (v. 5).

It might be helpful to survey the development of the Jewish worldview on demons. The Old Testament has scanty references to demons or evil spirits. This could be because “the Old Testament focus is not on demons and their schemes, but on God and his sovereignty. Demons are not depicted as free, independent agents, but operate under God’s direct control.”<sup>14</sup> Demons are described as evil spirits under God’s directive for punitive actions, as was in the cases of Abimelech (Judges 9:23-24) and Saul (1 Sam 16:15-16). They influenced evil, malicious intentions in Saul (1 Sam 16:14-23; 18:10-11; 19:9-10). Evil spirits were also lying spirits in the mouths of Ahab’s prophets (1 Kings 22:19-23; 2 Chr 18:18-22) and were what the witch of Endor saw coming up from the ground (1 Sam 28:13). The book of Daniel suggests warfare between angels and evil spirits when the Angel from God was delayed for twenty-one days in bringing an answer to Daniel’s prayer (Dan 10:13). Satan is specifically named in only three passages (Job 1-2, Zech 3:1, 1 Chr 21:1). In these occurrences, the OT does present the evil spirit as non-possessing. But these spirits are agents of temptation and punishment for the disobedient.

However, in the apocryphal literature, the development of Jewish demonology and the character of demons and their effect on humans are indicated. 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.

Further, Jubilees 11:5 states 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.” Further, in 1 Enoch 106:13-14 it is written: “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.” The New Testament expands the description the wicked activities of demons and devastating impact on people’s life. Some of these include the blind man (Matt 9:32-33); the blind and mute man (Matt 12:22-23; Luke 11:14), the Canaanite woman’s daughter (Matt 15:22-28; Mark 7:24-30), the man in the synagogue (Mark 1:23-27; Luke 4:31-37), the Gerasene demoniac (Matt 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-37), the boy with seizures (Matt 17:14-20, Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43), the seven demons expelled from Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:1-2).

Hence, as Walter A. Elwell observes:

Throughout Jesus’ life we see his work against the devastating work of demons in the lives of people. The vocabulary of demonic activities against human beings is rich and varied, though it all shows movement toward the ultimate destruction of people. They robbed a young boy of his speech (Mark 9:17 Mark 9:25), rendered a man mute (Matt 9:33; Luke 11:14), and froze the back of an elderly woman (Luke 13:11 Luke 13:16). They seized the Gerasene demoniac (Luke 8:29) and a young boy (Luke 9:39) in order to destructively overcome him.<sup>15</sup>

## Reading Mark 5:1-20 in the Context of Exorcism

Accordingly, the man Jesus met as he arrived in the region of Gadarenes is described as having an unclean spirit (v.1). He was controlled by an external and supernatural force, which completely altered his personality. However, John Dominic Crossan argues that the demoniac in Mark 5 was a Jew in Gentile territory, suffering psychological depression from the oppression of the Jews by the Romans in the first century. The man's depression had led to mental illness.<sup>16</sup> This view is also sustained by E Van Eck and A G Van Aarde who, from their survey of literature on the subject, conclude that demonic possession can be the result of "class antagonism rooted in economic exploitation, conflicts between traditions, where revered traditions are eroded, and colonial domination."<sup>17</sup> This interpretation limits demonic possession and control to social disorder, which was manifested by the man's extraordinary physical strength, inhabiting the tombs, his nocturnal life, nakedness, and self-destruction (vv. 3- 5). Further, some have suggested that a mourning ritual gone out of control or failed necromancy caused the state of the demoniac. This may have been due to his habitation in the tombs.<sup>18</sup>

However, the New Testament provides a distinction between demonic possession/control and physical and mental illness (Mark 1:32; 16:17, 18; Luke 6:17, 18). The personality of the one possessed is split. Demons could speak through their own persons (Matt 8:29; Mark 1:23, 24; Mark 1:23). It is clear that "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."<sup>19</sup> Similarly, spirit possession could be understood as "any altered state of consciousness indigenously interpreted in terms of the influence of an alien spirit."<sup>20</sup>

In this vein, according to Kattering Emmet, R. T. France argues that the condition of the demoniac in Mark was not mere mental abnormality, but was something out of his control.<sup>21</sup> If

this is condition of the man, it is arguable that was not such an illness that could be healed but requires exorcism by one with supreme power. That the power in control of this man was external and malevolent is clearly indicated by: (1) the initial condition of the man (v. 2), (2) the command of Jesus (v. 8), (3) the plea by the spirits inhabiting the man (v. 9-13); and (4) the description of the after-condition of the man (vv. 15, 16, 18). Thus, it is problematic to conclude that the demoniac in Mark 5 had a mere psychological and emotional depression or folklore. Rather, the condition of the demoniac was the result of the destructive activity of an outside, supernatural, and malevolent force, which was in control of his person. In this regard, Green argues that “the repetition of the words ‘demon,’ ‘demons,’ and ‘unclean spirit’ portend the development of this scene as an encounter of cosmic proportions.”<sup>22</sup> Further, the comprehensive and graphic description of the demoniac given by Mark illustrates the magnitude of the consequences of the destructive influence of evil spirits on humans. The community remedial efforts to mitigate his pains by restraining him were futile. All efforts to restrain even with chains had been abortive. The man’s extraordinary strength was clearly the result of the power in control of him, which had neutralized the restraining instruments. His condition was such that he was left to his fate, descending to complete insanity and a life of self-destruction. And as pointed out earlier, the man’s condition completes the four characteristics of insanity in Judaism.<sup>23</sup>

### **Power Encounter: Mark 5:6-10**

Mark 5:6-10 provides the direct encounter between Jesus and the spirit-possessed man. Mark reports that when he sighted Jesus, “he ran and worshipped him” (*edramen prosekunēsen autō*, v. 6). Some scholars have questioned the motive of this act. Lee opines this could be as sign of worship and submission.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Green declares, “falling before Jesus is a sign of reverence, even submission, but the demoniac’s loud

shout suggests a defensive posture, even resistance.”<sup>25</sup> However, Garland opines that the demoniac addressing Jesus with “shouts to leave him alone and not to torment him betray that falling at Jesus’ feet is only false submission inspired by desperate demons.”<sup>26</sup> He further suggest that the demons were “invoke a higher power to ward off the exorcism (Mark 5: 7).”<sup>27</sup> But his interrogation of Jesus, by distinguishing himself from Jesus and the plea of the evil forces to Jesus to spare them from torment (v.7), was unquestionably an acknowledgment of the supremacy of Jesus and submission to his authority. Ferguson rightly states, “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.’”<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, as Jean Starobinski states, “the difference between Jesus and the demon does not only appear to be a difference of essence, the result of the division separating the powers of good and evil, but it also appears in the way in which each one exercises his power.”<sup>29</sup> The demon exercises his power to destroy, but Jesus brings life (John 10:10). And the two powers cannot co-inhabit a person.

The evil forces controlling the demoniac could see in Jesus a power opposed to them, sovereign and triumphant, and this sudden encounter signalled doom. James Edwards believes “Mark sets the powerful and tragic description of the demoniac (5: 3-6) in stark contrast to Jesus as the strong Son of God (5: 7-10).”<sup>30</sup> Edwards further observes: “Jesus does not confront the demonic with such protocols, incantations, or magic. His power over the demonic resides within himself.”<sup>31</sup> Nor does Jesus demand to know the identity of the strange spirit because he was ignorant of their nature. The man answered, “My name is Legion; for we are many” (v. 9). A legion was the largest military unit of the Roman army at the time of Christ. It consisted of about 5,600 solders. The numeric presence and enormity of the emptiness in the life of the demoniac was best described by the subjugation and oppression of the Jews by the Romans.

Rather than immediately departing from the man, the demons attempted to “negotiate with Jesus and, indeed, to gain ascendancy over him.”<sup>32</sup> But Jesus commanded him to depart from the demoniac. Lane observes thus:

The expulsion of demons is nothing less than a forceful attack on the lordship of Satan. Jesus’ ability to cast out demons means that one stronger than Satan has come to restrain his activity and to release the enslaved. The heart of Jesus’ mission is to confront Satan and crush him on all fields, and in the fulfilment of his task he is conscious of being the agent of irresistible power.<sup>33</sup>

In so doing, “Jesus’ subjugation of the demonic establishe[d] his supremacy over satanic power in the created order.”<sup>34</sup> The overpowering of the demons and expelling them from their victim extended Jesus’ power beyond the sea and its elements of destruction, to over the evil forces, thus redeeming their victims.

Realizing that they had been conquered, the demons’ requested to remain in the territory. They have lost their authority over the helpless man and now request to remain in Gentile territory, but to change habitation from the man to a herd of swine. Jesus obliges the request of the demons. They are sent to the herd of swine, about two thousand in number and destined to destruction. The demons had severed the man’s community life and he had been confined to isolation and death by living in the tombs. Now the demons possessed the herd of swine and also drove them to death and self-destruction.

In the Roman world, “pigs were favourite sacrificial animals, no Roman tomb was legally protected without a pig being sacrificed, and demons were understood to have a particular liking for them.”<sup>35</sup> This signals the great value that the owners of the herd would have placed on the herd and reporting such a loss meant loss for the herdsmen. So why would Jesus permit such destruction? I contend that in addition to the obvious knowledge of the Jews’ hatred for pigs as unclean

animals, this act of Jesus also illustrated that no creation is more valuable than man, made in the image of God. The man who once was possessed by demons, unclean, severed from community life, plunged into self-destructive acts and living in tombs was made whole again and his worth was not comparable to the economic loss occasioned by the death of the herd of swine. In other words, economic loss was subordinated to the physical and spiritual salvation of humankind.

The reaction of the herdsmen was with trepidation. Mark reports that they fled and broadcast what had happened all over the city (5:14). They were amazed that in an instant, wholeness had been restored to the demoniac. This event was unexplainable, considering the possibly long duration of the deranged state of the man and the dehumanization he had suffered from that possession. Further, the dramatic drowning of the herds they were tending was beyond their comprehension. As slaves, the consequences of a loss of that magnitude were grave. Hence for their personal safety they felt it a duty to go back to their master to report what had happened and do so with reasonable explanation. Their masters may have been the ones who demanded Jesus should leave the territory.<sup>36</sup>

When the villagers arrived on the scene, they met the ex-demoniac sitting at the feet of Jesus, as a disciple would (cf. Luke 8:35)—clothed and whole. Luke employs *sōzō* to describe the new state of the man, signifying not just a physical healing, but salvation as well. The scene also caused fear in them, knowing the former state of the man. The fear may have been because they also did not fully comprehend who Jesus was and the possibility of further economic loss. But one man restored to the image of God was worth more than herds of swine.

Mark ends the narrative by contrasting two responses to the healing. The citizens of the region demanded that Jesus leave the territory. But the ex-demoniac pleaded to remain with Jesus. He sought to become a disciple of Jesus, while the others were irritated by Jesus' continuous presence. Jesus, however, did not

oblige the request, but rather commissioned him to share the goodness of the arrival of the kingdom of God experienced in his life. This, he gladly did.

### **Demonology and Exorcism in African Christian Theology**

This paper set out to discuss the story of the demoniac in Mark 5 in the context of exorcism in African Christian theology. Therefore, I begin this section, concurring with Gerrit Brand, who states: "The impact of the context on the content of theology can be clearly discerned in the reflections of African Christian theologians on the problem of evil. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the prominence of the theme of witchcraft and the spirit world in their writings."<sup>37</sup> To this I may add Christian ministry on the continent. Also, Mbiti, reflecting on the African worldview on the spirit world, states that the "mystical power [of witches and sorcerers] is not fiction: whatever it is, it is a reality, and one with which African peoples have to reckon."<sup>38</sup> Hence, the difficulty of ignoring this has been expressed, because it is "a serious concern for large sections of [African] societies"<sup>39</sup> Apparently, therefore, experiences such as trance states, illness, and bad luck are attributed to witchcraft and spirit attack. Although K. Weridu argues that "in the face of the claim that principalities, spirits, gods, etc. are responsible for physical evil, one can but await probative evidence,"<sup>40</sup> yet the biblical worldview which gives "emphasis on spiritual forces behind events in the material world finds a strong parallel in the traditional world view."<sup>41</sup> Since it seems difficult to deny the effect of malevolent forces on human misfortune, this worldview has given popularity to African Initiated Churches, who build their theology of evil on the "claim to eradicate and successfully destroy witchcraft."<sup>42</sup> In this vein, Irene John writes that the Pentecostal movement in Africa "emphasises power in the name of Jesus, the only power to overcome all other spiritual forces. It is by this power that they offer [d]eliverance from demonic

## Reading Mark 5:1-20 in the Context of Exorcism

attacks and influences.”<sup>43</sup> This feeling and attribution of the demonic attacks considers all misfortune, suffering and illness as possession caused by spiritual forces.<sup>44</sup> They do not distinguish between natural causes or personal responsibilities for mental health or even other misfortunes. Everything is nothing but the work of the devil.

This worldview has influenced the African Christian theology of exorcism so that the ministry of deliverance or exorcism is very popular. Arising from this is the theory of spiritual warfare in most Pentecostal churches in Africa. Enoch A. Adeboye, the General Overseer of the Pentecostal Church of Nigerian origin describes spiritual warfare as “a war against the devil and his agents; principalities, power and rulers of this world and the lust of the flesh.”<sup>45</sup> Hence, “spiritual warfare is a constant theme of sermons, teachings, and rituals.”<sup>46</sup> Adeboye also teaches that deliverance involves warfare with three features namely, “i) there is someone who has been captured, ii) there is somebody who captured him, and iii) there is somebody who is coming to deliver the one who has been captured!”<sup>47</sup>

Using Mark’s demoniac story, we may illustrate Adeboye’s trio of features thus:

	There is someone who has been captured	There is somebody who captured him	There is somebody who is coming to deliver the one who has been captured
The Gospel of Mark	The demoniac	Satan	Jesus
Neo-Pentecostalism in Africa	Victims	Satan. <i>However, one drawback in African Theology on demonology is attributions of all insanity and misfortune to the direct work of the devil the victim.</i>	Jesus The Power Men  <i>Also, in Neo-Pentecostalism in Africa, it seems the one who is coming to deliver the one who has been captured may not always be Jesus.</i>

## Biblical Hermeneutics

Adeboye goes further to identify what he considers the various methods the devil and his agents operate against human beings. These include: (1) Affliction, which may involve canning the victims; (2) Spiritual oppression, which may inhibit the upward mobility of a victim; (3) Spiritual repression, such as resisting the growth of the victim; (4) Regression, that is pushing a person backward; (5) Distraction, when the devil attacks a loved one to divert the attention of a person; (6) Confusion leading to lack of spiritual perception; and (7) Obsession, which is manifested in compulsion about a particular thing, such as money, women, or food.<sup>48</sup> It is, however, difficult to understand how Adeboye arrived at the various descriptions of the methods employed by Satan, just as it is difficult to conclude that the manifestations associated with method are a direct consequence of the work of the devil and his agents in the life of people.

Another author argues that “in the Christian charismatic churches, it is commonplace to see and hear Pentecostal pastors show their mastery and essence of the ‘power of deliverance over women’s bodies’ by publicly casting the male sexual demons out. This can even be observed by people from different places through ‘live broadcast’ of deliverance services.”<sup>49</sup> Similarly, in her study of three Kenya Neo-Pentecostal Churches, Damaris S. Parsitau concludes that “they advocate a local ontology of engagement to the human predicament using a language of demonology.”<sup>50</sup> This is evident in their sermons, prayers, and literature. Conclusively, exorcism is an obvious regular part of most Neo-Pentecostal movements in Africa. This is no doubt influenced by the African worldview of the world of spirits, which has also impacted the theology and ministry of the church in Africa. In the context of the African worldview, that seems to have influenced interpretations of demonology. What implications do Jesus’ deliverance of the demoniac in Mark 5 have for the worldview of demonology and exorcism in the Adventist Church in Africa? This is the subject of the next section.

### **Implications for the Seventh-day Adventist Church**

The episode in Mark 5 is the most engaging and dramatic exorcism done by Jesus and recorded in the Gospels. The manner in which Jesus confronted the man under the control of the demons provides a paradigm that can guide the church today. Hence, this passage, in the context of demonology, exorcism and deliverance ministry in some Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in Africa, holds some implications for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The first implication centers on the biblical worldview of the existence of demons. This addresses the reality of demons and the effect of their activities on humans. The biblical theme of the Great Controversy between God and Satan and his hosts (Rev 12:7-12; cf. Job 1:6-12) makes the existence of demons a reality. It is not just something imagined. Thus, the Bible attributes human suffering to the malevolent activities of the devil. Since this biblical worldview is important for wholistic Christian ministry in Africa, a denial of this biblical view, as the experiences of many on the continent indicate, may equally deny victims under demonic control and influence the deliverance available in Christ, thus leaving such persons at the mercy of the devil. However, while it is certain that the ultimate cause of human suffering and woe is the devil, there is danger in attributing every misfortune and mental state in the lives of people to the work of Satan. This obsession about demons, where everything bad is attributed to demons, also portends danger and is inimical to faith.

Second, exorcism, as evident in the ministry of Christ in the Gospels, is the declaration of the supreme reign of God over Satan and his destructive work in the life of people. A significant illustrative incident is the narrative of the life of the demoniac in Mark 5:1-20. Jesus, as the stronger one, overthrows the presence of the devil and his agents in the life of the victim and sets the

## Biblical Hermeneutics

victim free (Matt 12:29; Mark 3:27). This act of Jesus resonates with his mission to set the captive free from sin and the dominion of Satan and his agents (see Luke 4:18, 19 cf. Col 2:15), the depth and length of such dominion notwithstanding. Similarly, the Church must anchor on the authority and mandate of Jesus to fulfill its mission of proclaiming salvation and deliverance to the many who today live under the oppression and in the possession of Satan, whether they manifest strange mental states or seem to lead normal lives. However, exorcism and deliverance ministry are of no value if the focus is only on releasing the captive without building a relationship with Jesus. The wholeness that Jesus promises (John 10:10), and can occur in the life of those who are redeemed from the captivity of Satan, is the significant objective and needs to be the ultimate focus of exorcism.

From the example of Christ, we see that genuine exorcism does not require dramatization. Since the power of God is above that of the devil and his agents, exorcism done in the authority and power of God is a declaration of the sovereignty of God and his victory over the devil and his agents. It does not seem to require formulas or learned methods. Neither does it correspond to the example of Christ, when those who pretend to engage Satan in the process of exorcising his victims become theatrical and cause amusement or become the center of the ministry. It also seems that exorcism cannot be made a ministry vocation.

Further, the event in Mark 5 and other similar passages on exorcism in the Gospels do not suggest that Jesus devoted his time to looking for demons to exorcise. The event in Mark 5 was not pre-arranged, nor was Jesus hunting for demons and spirits to exorcise. The need arose in the course of his ministerial itinerary and he responded in the power and by the mandate of God.

Mark 5:1-20 presents one of the significant events in the ministry of Jesus, illustrating power encounters and the triumph

## Reading Mark 5:1-20 in the Context of Exorcism

of Jesus over Satan and his agents. This passage captures the hope that is available for those who are under the captivity of Satan. Aware of the dangers evident in some versions of contemporary exorcism in African Christian Theology, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Africa is challenged to continually understand the struggles that many of its members face under the attack of the devil and that the church encounters in the fulfilment of its mission. Hence, the church needs to continuously provide a wholistic approach to ministry, even as it encounters the opposition of Satan and his agents in the fulfilment of the mission mandate from God.

### NOTES:

- <sup>1</sup> David E Garland, *Luke*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Book 3, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 357.
- <sup>2</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 335, 336.
- <sup>3</sup> Justin Campbell. "Jesus in the Shadows: Healing the Gerasene Demoniac in Mark's Gospel, an Existential Christology," *Obsculta* 7, no.1 (2014): 183.
- <sup>4</sup> Bastiaan M. F. Van Iersel, *Mark: A Reader-Response Commentary* (London: T & T Clark International, 1998), 198.
- <sup>5</sup> Robert Guelich, *World Biblical Commentary 34A* (Dallas: Word, 1989), 278, cited by Justin "Jesus in the Shadows: Healing the Gerasene Demoniac in Mark's Gospel, an Existential Christology" *Obsculta* 7, no.1 (2014): 184.
- <sup>6</sup> Eugene Boring, *Mark: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 150.
- <sup>7</sup> Ched Meyers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Gospel* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), 190-191. A

legion of Roman soldiers in the time of Christ consisted of about 6,000.

- <sup>8</sup> Gail R. O'Day, "Hope Beyond Brokenness: A Markan Reflection on the Gift of Life," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 15, no.3 (1988): 244-251.
- <sup>9</sup> Jeffrey R. Reed. "More than Suicidal Swine: Jesus' Mission to the Gentiles in Mark 5:1-20," *Obsculta* 3, no. 1 (2010): 32-36. <http://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/obsculta/vol3/iss1/10>. See also Justin Campbell. "Jesus in the Shadows: Healing the Gerasene Demoniac in Mark's Gospel, an Existential Christology," for a discussion of the symbolic reading of the demoniac narrative.
- <sup>10</sup> See Z. Safrai, "Gergesa, Gerasa, or Gadara? Where did Jesus' Miracle Occur?" *Jerusalem Perspectives* 51 (1996), 16-19; Raymond G. Clapp, "A Study of the Place-names Gergesa and Bethabara," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 26 no 1 (1907), 62-83; and I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 336, 337.
- <sup>11</sup> Rikke E. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* (WUNT 88) (Tübingen, Germany: J. C. B. Mohr, 1997; repr., Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Academic, 2000), 158.
- <sup>12</sup> Donald H. Juel, *Mark*, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990), 79.
- <sup>13</sup> Robert B. Sloan, "Decapolis," in Watson E. Mills, *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), 206.
- <sup>14</sup> "Demons," <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/demon.html>.
- <sup>15</sup> Walter A. Elwell, *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 2001, s.v. "Demons," <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/demon.html>,
- <sup>16</sup> D. J. Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (New York: Harper Collins, 1989), 90.

- <sup>17</sup> E Van Eck and A G Van Aarde “Sickness and Healing in Mark: A Social Scientific Interpretation,” *Neotestamentica* 27, no. 1 (1993), 27-54. This position supports the political reading of Mark 5:1-20.
- <sup>18</sup> J. Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 343.
- <sup>19</sup> Kattering Emmett, “The Gerasene Demoniac: An Exegesis and Exploration of The Synoptic Texts.” 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), 19.  
[https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/emmett\\_katherine\\_g\\_200508\\_ma.pdf](https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/emmett_katherine_g_200508_ma.pdf)
- <sup>20</sup> Vincent Crapanzaro, *Introduction to Case Studies*, 1-40, esp. p. 7, cited in Craig S. Keener, “Spirit Possession as a Cross-cultural Experience,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 20, no 2 (2010): 215- 227.
- <sup>21</sup> See Kattering Emmett, “The Gerasene Demoniac: An Exegesis and Exploration of The Synoptic Texts, 20.
- <sup>22</sup> Joel B. Green. *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 338.
- <sup>23</sup> See note 4.
- <sup>24</sup> D. Lee, “Luke’s Stories of Jesus, Theological Reading of Gospel Narrative and the Legacy of Hans Frei,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 188 (1999): 308.
- <sup>25</sup> Joel Green. *The Gospel of Luke*, 338, cf. See Luke 7: 38, 44– 46; 8: 41; 10: 39; 17: 16; Acts 4: 35; 10: 25; 22: 3; cf. Josh 10: 24; 1 Sam 25: 24, 41; 2 Sam 22: 39; Pss 8: 7; 17: 10; 46: 4.
- <sup>26</sup> David Garland, 357.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 358.
- <sup>28</sup> F. Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1980), 6.
- <sup>29</sup> Jean Starobinski, “The Gerasene Demoniac: A Literary Analysis

- of Mark 5; 1-20," in *Structural Analysis and Biblical Exegesis*, ed. Dikran Hadidian (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1974), 72, cited in Justin Campbell, "Jesus in the Shadows: Healing the Gerasene Demoniac in Mark's Gospel, an Existential Christology," 211.
- <sup>30</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (PNTC) Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015) 249.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 250.
- <sup>32</sup> Joel Green, 339.
- <sup>33</sup> William Lane, "Gospel According to Mark," *The International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 143.
- <sup>34</sup> Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke* (Kindle Locations 7482-7484).
- <sup>35</sup> Rikke E. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* (WUNT 88; Tübingen, Germany: J. C. B. Mohr, 1997; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000), cited in Brennan Reed Hamil "A Warrior Against A Legion: A Literary Reading of Mark 5:1-20," [https://www.academia.edu/1144867/A\\_Warrior\\_Against\\_a\\_Legion\\_A\\_Literary\\_Reading\\_of\\_Mark\\_5\\_1-20](https://www.academia.edu/1144867/A_Warrior_Against_a_Legion_A_Literary_Reading_of_Mark_5_1-20).
- <sup>36</sup> J. L. P Wolmarans, "Who Asked Jesus to Leave the Territory of Gerasa? (Mark 5:17)?" *Neotestamentica* 28, no. 1 (1994): 89-90.
- <sup>37</sup> Gerrit Brand "Witchcraft and Spirit Beliefs in African Christian Theology," *Exchange* 31 (January 2002), 36.
- <sup>38</sup> J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers: 2011), 198.
- <sup>39</sup> J. S. Pobee, *Toward an African Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), 40.

- <sup>40</sup> K. Weridu, "On Decolonising African Religions," in P.H. Coetzee and A. P. J. Roux, *The African Philosophy Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003), 31.
- <sup>41</sup> Irene John, "Charismatics and Community," in John Parratt, *A Reader in African Christian Theology* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1987), 133.
- <sup>42</sup> Pobe, 48
- <sup>43</sup> Irene John, 'Charismatics and community', 133.
- <sup>44</sup> Asonzeh Franklin-Kennedy Ukah. "The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Nigeria (Local Identities and Global Processes. In *African Pentecostalism* (Dissertation zur Erlangung des Doktorgrades an der Kulturwissenschaftlich Fakultät der Universität Bayreuth, 2003), 195.  
<https://epub.uni-bayreuth.de/968/1/Ukah.pdf>
- <sup>45</sup> Enoch Adeboye.
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>48</sup> Ukah, 196.
- <sup>49</sup> Vivian Besem Ojong, "The Young Female Body as a Site of Demonic Sexual Abuse: The Case of Christians in Charismatic Pentecostal Churches in Durban, South Africa," *The Oriental Anthropologist* 16 (2016): 284.
- <sup>50</sup> Damaris Selena Parsitau, "The Civic and Public Roles of Neo-Pentecostal Churches in Kenya (1970-2010)" (Doctoral thesis, Kenyatta University, 2014), 162.