

# JESUS' POWER OVER EVIL SPIRITS AND ITS IMPACT: DELIVERING THE MOST ENSLAVED MARK 01:23–28

## *Introduction*

Man can be delivered from all the forces of evil by the power of Jesus. He can even be delivered from evil spirits that enslave him, no matter the grip of the enslavement. Jesus has the power to deliver man (Rom. 8:31; 1 Jn. 4:4). (See *Evil Spirits*, Mt. 8:28-34.)

- I. Picture 1: the need of the possessed man (vv. 23-24).
- II. Picture 2: the power of Jesus (vv. 25-26).
- III. Picture 3: the impact upon people (vv. 27-28).

## **I. *Mark 01:23–24 Evil Spirits***

The first picture is that of the possessed man and his need. The words by an evil spirit (*en pneumati akatharto*) should be translated “in” (*en*) an evil spirit. The man was in the grasp, in the possession of the evil spirit. He was in the grip, captivated by the evil spirit. He was under the spell, the will of the evil spirit. To better understand the meaning, think of all the evil in the world, all the evil that occurs every hour and every day. Then note John’s words, “The whole world is under the control of the evil one” (*en to ponero*, 1 Jn. 5:19). That is, the world lies under the influence, power, bondage, will, and grip of the evil one. In the very same sense, this man was possessed by an evil spirit. (See *Evil Spirits*, Mt. 8:28-34 for Bible’s teaching on *evil spirits*.)

Note three things.

1. The possessed man, surprisingly, was in the synagogue. What was he doing there? Was he a regular attendee or had he come just to hear Jesus? We are not told. But if he were a regular attendee, then the synagogue was spiritually dead. How do we know this? Because the man could attend services time after time and never be helped spiritually.

**Thought 1.** How many services are *dead*, so *lifeless* that men with evil spirits can sit in the services unaffected or spiritually not helped?

**2 Tim 3:5** *Having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.*

**Isa 29:13-15** *The Lord says: “These people come near to me with their mouth and honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men. Therefore once more I will astound these people with wonder upon wonder; the wisdom of the wise will perish, the intelligence of the intelligent will vanish.” Woe to those who go to great depths to hide their plans from the Lord, who do their work in darkness and think, “Who sees us? Who will know?”*

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**Thought 2.** How many sit in church and hear the Word of God week after week or live among believers and never make a decision to turn from their evil? They sit in service after service and brush shoulders with believers day by day, but they never decisively turn to God.

**Acts 7:51** *“You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!”*

**1 Sam 15:22** *But Samuel replied: “Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.”*

**Psa 51:16** *You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.*

**Eccl 5:1** *Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong.*

**Jer 32:33** *They turned their backs to me and not their faces; though I taught them again and again, they would not listen or respond to discipline.*

**Jer 44:16** *“We will not listen to the message you have spoken to us in the name of the Lord!”*

**Hosea 6:6** *For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.*

**Zec 7:11** *“But they refused to pay attention; stubbornly they turned their backs and stopped up their ears.”*

2. The possessed man raged and cried out, sensed and recoiled from purity. The evil spirit cried out in recognition of three things.
  - a. The evil spirit cried, “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth?” The evil spirit was entirely different from the clean spirit of Jesus. Jesus is perfectly pure and sinless. The evil spirit had nothing to do with the purity of Jesus. The evil spirit was diametrically opposed to the holiness of Jesus.

**Thought 1.** Sin, dirt, pollution and uncleanness do not have a part or a place with Jesus. Jesus has no uncleanness in Him whatsoever.

- b. The evil spirit recognized that Jesus had come to destroy him. Down deep within, the evil persons know they are to be judged and destroyed. They hate and despise, ignore and neglect, hide and rationalize in order to continue in their evil ways. The paradox is that they know they will be judged even while they are sinning and rebelling against God. “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work” (1 Jn. 3:8).
- c. The evil spirit identified Jesus. He said, “I know who you are — the Holy One of God.” He confessed Jesus. As James says, “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that — and shudder” (Jas 2:19).

**Thought 1.** What an indictment against so many! They deny, while demons confess.

**Mat 10:32-33** “Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.”

**Mark 8:38** “If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

**1 John 2:22-23** *Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist — he denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.*

**Thought 2.** Knowing that Jesus is the Holy One of God is not enough. A person has to believe in Christ and love Him and live a clean and pure life.

**2 Cor 7:1** *Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.*

**2 Tim 2:21** *If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.*

**James 4:8** *Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*

**Isa 1:18** “Come now, let us reason together,” says the Lord. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”

**Jer 4:14** *O Jerusalem, wash the evil from your heart and be saved. How long will you harbour wicked thoughts?*

3. The possessed man identified Jesus. This point is so significant it bears repeating: “I know who you are — the Holy One of God,” that is, the Holy Son of God (See *Evil Spirits*, Mt. 8:28-34).

**Thought 1.** One of the major purposes of Jesus in confronting evil spirits was to prove His Messiahship (See *Evil Spirits*, Mt. 8:28-34). He is the Messiah!

**Mat 16:15-17** “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.”

**Mat 26:63-64** *But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” “Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”*

**Luke 24:25-26** *He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"*

**John 4:25-26** *The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."*

**John 8:28-29** *So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him."*

**John 11:25-27** *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."*

**Mat 20:28** *"Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

**Luke 19:10** *"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."*

**John 10:10** *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."*

**1 Tim 1:5** *The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*

**Thought 2.** The world cries out, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth?" Why? Because He is the Son of God who demands belief and purity of life, self-denial and a life of sacrifice. "What do you want with us...?"

=> Wealth cries, "Leave us alone. Let us secure ourselves, build up, and bank more and more."

=> Power cries, "Leave us alone. Let us take over, exercise authority, rule and reign, dominate, manoeuvre and manipulate as we will."

=> Ego cries, "Leave us alone. Let us seek recognition, attention, esteem, honour and praise as we wish."

=> Flesh cries, "Leave us alone. Let us excite, indulge, stimulate, relax, release, escape, party, revel and carouse as we desire."

**Luke 9:23-24** *Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it."*

**Luke 14:33** *"In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple."*

**Luke 21:34** “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap.”

**Rom 8:13** For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

**Rom 13:14** Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

**Col 3:5** Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

**1 Pet 2:11** Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.

### MATHEW 08:28–34 EVIL SPIRITS, DEMONS, SATAN

The Bible teaches that there are beings in the spiritual world who are evil just as there are men in this world who are evil. The Bible calls these beings *demons* or *evil spirits*. *Demons* or *evil spirits* apparently have a leader called *the evil one*. He is sometimes called by other names describing the terrible work he is out to do in defiance of God.

Some deny a *force of evil* in an unseen world, whereas the person who accepts the Bible as the authoritative Word of God accepts what the Bible teaches about their presence.

Those who deny evil spirits feel that a civilized and scientific society knows better; it is just too intelligent to accept *evil beings* in an unseen world who have the power to possess, obsess and oppress men. Three primary reasons lead to this conclusion.

1. The existence of evil spirits in an unseen world cannot be scientifically proven.
2. The behaviour of what is called *demons* or *evil spirits* seems to exist more and to be more marked in unscientific societies that tend to stress evil spirits.
3. The behaviour of those *possessed* is thought to be nothing more than mental illness.

There are huge problems with the denial of an evil spirit behind the seen world. The denial just leaves so much unanswered.

1. How can *mental illness* explain such behaviour as is witnessed so often upon the scene of human history? Consider Hitler and other mass murderers and the many other inhuman atrocities committed against people. Realistically, several facts militate against all inhuman behaviour being assigned to mental illness.
  - a. There is the fact that so many who did so much evil were nurtured in the arms of a mother or someone else who did care. Mental illness points out deviations



from healthy rearing. But realistically, the deviations can come nowhere close to matching the terrible atrocities. And the deviation from normal behaviour does not always vary that much until the terrible atrocity is committed.

- b. A human being who is mentally ill cannot move among sound people for too long without being found out. True mental illness cannot fake that much and that often. Its behaviour deviates often enough that others know that a person is acting extremely abnormal, mentally ill person can be detected and reached out to by caring people.
  - c. A person who is mentally ill cannot move among a large number of sound leaders and convince them all to commit atrocity after atrocity. Realistically, there has to be more than mental illness behind inhuman behaviour that is deceiving (blinding) and so terribly destructive.
2. The claim that *demon-like behaviour* exists more in unindustrialised societies has two faults.
- a. Such a claim is disputable, although probably true. But the point is this: a scientific society that is dominated by unbelief is bound to ascribe abnormal behaviour to whatever it feels causes the defect. Therefore...
    - abnormal behaviour is always ascribed to mental illness.
    - severe abnormal behaviour is marked up as unexplainable or due to a complete diverse (split) personality.

However, claiming that something is unexplainable or coming up with a new name does not do away with reality, the truth of what actually exists. (There is not that much difference between the psychological belief in two complete personalities within a body and scriptural belief which also says that two persons can possess a body — the man himself and an evil spirit.)

- b. The Bible claims that the evil spirits of the unseen world are highly intelligent and deceptive.

=> When a man thinks he “walks in light” (is enlightened or scientific), the Bible says the evil one fashions himself into an angel of light and uses strategies of light. Therefore, men would naturally call abnormal behaviour by some natural or humanistic term as *mental illness* (2 Cor. 11:14-15; Eph. 6:11).

=> When a person believes in evil spirits and opens his life to such spirits, the evil one uses the strategies of what men call *dark spirits*. □

## MATHEW 08:32 EVIL SPIRIT

A question needs to be asked about the pigs that were killed (Mt. 8:30-32). There were about two thousand of them (Mk. 5:13). Why were they killed? As this is discussed, it should be noted that Christ did not kill them. He, of course, knew they would be killed; but the evil spirits were the ones who drove them wildly over the cliff. Why did Christ allow the owners to suffer such a great loss?

There are several possible answers.

1. It was a visible sign that the two possessed men were truly saved and freed from the demons or evil spirits. Everyone knew beyond question that the two were possessed. Only a dramatic act could give unquestionable proof.
2. It was to convince those who did not believe in demons that there are most definitely evil spirits who do possess bodies. (Unbelievers such as the Sadducees and other liberal thinkers of the day needed to see the truth.)
3. It was to teach obedience and holiness. It was against the law for a Jew to own and eat pigs (Lev. 11:7; see Isa. 65:3-4; 66:17). If the owners were Jews (and they probably were), they were sinning against the law. Jesus was thereby teaching that His presence demanded holiness and obedience to the law.
4. It was to teach the value of a human soul. The two possessed men were of far more value than any amount of material wealth, and even more so if the wealth were gained by illegal means.
5. It was to attract the attention of and open the door to the evangelization of the surrounding district. No doubt the news of the Messiah's presence and power would spread and stir people to open their hearts and receive the message of the healed demoniacs (Lk. 8:38-40).
6. It was to drive home Jesus' holiness and to arouse the people to acknowledge it; thereby the seeking and honest heart would be open for salvation (Lk. 8:38-40).
7. It was to awaken covetous men to the fact that they were gripped by greed. They were doomed unless they forsook their material possessions and turned to the Messiah (Mt. 19:16-26). This could have been the best way and the only chance for them to be awakened to their need and to the power of Christ to deliver them.
8. It was to show and reveal the true nature of evil spirits. Jesus revealed the nature of evil spirits. He used this occasion to teach and warn men of evil spirits. There are degrees of control by Satan just as there are degrees of control by God.
  - a. The evil spirit was subject to Jesus. No evil can stand up to Him. The evil spirit asked to remain in his present country. Apparently the country and its lifestyle were more evil and more subject to evil than other countries.

- b. The evil spirit desired a body to indwell and influence (Mt. 8:28-31). He asked to enter the bodies of a herd of swine. Note the plural, “demons”, and the fact that there were about two thousand pigs. This again stresses the enormous evil within the man, his desperate, hopeless plight.
- c. The evil spirit was malicious and violent; he was a destroyer. He destroyed the herd of pigs. □

## II. *Mark 01: 25–26 The Supreme Power of Jesus Christ*

The second picture is that of the power of Jesus.

1. Jesus rebuked the evil spirit. Note the words, “Be quiet.” Jesus did not accept demonic testimony to His Messiahship. Why? Such acknowledgment was involuntary, that is, of the mind only. It was only the mental knowledge that Jesus was the Son of God. It was not of the heart nor of the will to follow Jesus.

It did not come from being born again. The witness Jesus wants is the witness of a man who has made a deliberate decision to profess Him as Lord; the witness of a heart truly changed: the witness of a heart moved by the Spirit of God to confess, “You are the Holy One of God” (Mk. 8:29; see Mk. 1:34).

Note also the power of Jesus. He casts the evil spirit out. How? By His Word, by simply saying. “Come out of him.”

**Thought 1.** Just meditate for a moment upon the power of the Lord’s Word. He simply spoke what He willed — for the evil spirit to come out of the man — and what He willed happened. How we need to learn to depend upon His Word as we confront the evil spirits of this world!

**Rom 1:16** *I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.*

**Heb 4:12** *For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

**Jer 23:29** *“Is not my word like fire,” declares the Lord, “and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?”*

**Thought 2.** We must make the true confession of Jesus, the confession of a believing and clean heart.

**Rom 12:1-2** *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.*



**1 Cor 6:17-18** *But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.*

2. The evil spirit obeyed. Note the words *shook him* (sparasso). The words mean *to be convulsed*. Apparently the man had a convulsion, jerking to and fro and crying out with a loud voice.

The question is sometimes asked, Why all this? Why such a scene? Why did Jesus not calmly heal the man in a serene atmosphere? There are probably two reasons.

- a. The evil and unclean spirits in the world are powerful forces, possessing enormous power to enslave and possess man. Their power could be more clearly seen in a convulsive and noisy scene. People needed to know that the evil and unclean forces of the world are the true enemies of mankind. They are the powerful forces who enslaved men with their dirty, intoxicating, and immoral habits.
  - b. The man was possessed by an evil spirit. The convulsion and cry were evidence of the evil spirit's actually being in the man.
3. The convulsion and cry demonstrated the power and Messiahship of Jesus. Jesus was actually conquering the force of evil within a man, and only God had such a power.

**Thought 1.** When the evil spirit of a man is cast out, when a man really changes and is cleansed, he undergoes a convulsive experience. Conversion is always a convulsive experience. Change is convulsive.

**Acts 3:19** *Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.*

**Rom 6:16-18** *Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey — whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.*

**Rom 7:23-25** *But I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God — through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.*

**2 Cor 5:17** *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

**1 Pet 1:23** *For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.*

*Psa 19:7 The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple.*

### **III. Mark 01:27–28 The Impact Upon People**

The third picture is that of the impact upon people. The people reacted in three ways.

1. They were *amazed* (ethambethesan), astonished. What the people had witnessed was unbelievable. Using no charms, no invocations, no exorcising devices, Jesus simply said, “Come out of him”; and the evil spirit was dramatically cast out of the man. The people were shocked and stunned.
2. They questioned and buzzed among themselves, “What is this? What new power or revelation (teaching) is this? What is God showing us? Is the revelation, the doctrine, the power from and of the Messiah? ‘He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him.’” The people were doing just what Jesus had wanted. They were questioning if He were the Messiah.
3. They spread the news everywhere. Imagine the conversation in the stores, businesses, homes, and streets as people travelled throughout the area and throughout the world.

**Thought 1.** The impact upon us should be the same. All three responses should characterize us as we witness the power of God in changing and healing lives. Yet, how *gospel-hardened* so many of us become.

*2 Tim 2:2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.*

*1 Pet 3:15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*

*1 John 1:3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ■*