

MIRACLES | THE LORD WHO DELIVERS

INTRO:

WHY MIRACLES SERMON SERIES:

- Miracles reveal the power and authority of God
- Miracles reveal the supernatural activity of God — His intervening presence and redemption — in our world
- Studying how God has moved in one generation, reveals His willingness to move in another.
 - If God did this for them, we can ask Him to do so for us.
 - Our faith to pray and receive answered prayer can grow through reading and hearing testimonies of God's power recorded in Scripture

TODAY WE'RE LOOKING AT MIRACLES OF DELIVERANCE OR VICTORY OVER THE POWERS OF DARKNESS

New Testament: individual deliverances from demons and spirits (9)

- Man with an unclean spirit in the Capernaum synagogue ([Mark 1:23-28](#); [Luke 4:33-37](#))
- Gerasene/Gadarene demoniac, "Legion" ([Matt 8:28-34](#); [Mark 5:1-20](#); [Luke 8:26-39](#)). Matthew has two men, but it is one event.
- Mute man, demon cast out ([Matt 9:32-34](#))
- Blind and mute demoniac ([Matt 12:22](#); [Luke 11:14](#)). (This is a separate event from above—[Matt 9:32-34](#)).
- Syrophenician woman's daughter ([Matt 15:21-28](#); [Mark 7:24-30](#))
- Boy with a spirit after the Transfiguration ([Matt 17:14-20](#); [Mark 9:14-29](#); [Luke 9:37-43](#))
- Woman bent over for 18 years ([Luke 13:10-17](#)). The text calls it a "spirit of infirmity" and says Satan had bound her.
- Mary Magdalene, seven demons cast out ([Luke 8:2](#); [Mark 16:9](#)). This one is reported rather than narrated.
- Slave girl with a spirit of divination in Philippi ([Acts 16:16-18](#))

Old Testament: victory over gods or spirits, named in the text (3)

- The plagues and Passover, where God says He will execute judgment "on all the gods of Egypt" ([Exod 12:12](#); [Num 33:4](#))
- Dagon falls and breaks before the ark ([1 Sam 5:1-5](#))
- Elijah against the prophets of Baal on Carmel ([1 Kings 18](#))

Summary statements, not counted as single events (9)

- Jesus casting out many demons:
 - The evening at Capernaum ([Mark 1:32-34](#), [Matt 8:16](#), [Luke 4:40-41](#))
 - The Galilean preaching tour ([Mark 1:39](#), [Matt 4:23-24](#))
 - The crowds by the sea ([Mark 3:10-12](#), [Luke 6:17-19](#))
 - When John's disciples come asking ([Luke 7:21](#))
- The Twelve: [Mark 6:7](#), [13](#)
- The seventy-two returning: [Luke 10:17-20](#)
- Peter's ministry in Jerusalem: [Acts 5:16](#)
- Philip in Samaria: [Acts 8:7](#)

- Paul in Ephesus, through handkerchiefs and aprons: [Acts 19:11-12](#)

Borderline cases (4)

- **Saul's oppressive spirit ([1 Sam 16:14-23](#))**. The harmful spirit departs from Saul when David plays. This one is debatable as a "miracle," since nothing in the text says the music had supernatural power. But something happened, because Saul was relieved. Possibly implied: David's playing music that honored the LORD brought freedom (albeit temporary) to Saul.
- **Elymas blinded ([Acts 13:6-12](#))**. Paul calls him a "son of the devil," but this is judgment on a man, not deliverance from a spirit.
- **Sons of Sceva ([Acts 19:13-17](#))**. This is a failed exorcism, but it results in the name of Jesus being magnified and magic books being burned.
- **Paul and the viper ([Acts 28:3-6](#))**. The islanders invoke "Justice" (Dikē, a goddess), but the miracle is really protection.

SUMMARY:

- The Scriptures, especially the NT are filled with accounts of Jesus casting out demons/impure/unclean spirits.
- It was a major component of his ministry and fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy regarding Messiah. ([Isaiah 61:1-3](#))
- Clearly this demonstrates:
 - His power and authority over all the principalities and powers of darkness
 - His compassion to rescue and deliver those oppressed by darkness
- Q: Where do we see this at work today?
 - Do demons really oppress/possess people? Do demons even exist?
 - Is the Bible right when it teaches that world includes spiritual forces at war behind everyday life?
 - What are we to think of all this?

OPENING ILLUSTRATION: The Wireless and the War

The year is 1941. Europe is on fire. London has spent months under the Blitz, with bombs falling night after night. Across the Channel, Hitler's armies have swept through nation after nation, and darkness is spreading across the continent unlike anything the modern world had seen.

That same year, two men sat down to write about the devil.

The first was Rudolf Bultmann, one of the most influential New Testament scholars of the twentieth century. In 1941 he gave a lecture that shaped how a generation of pastors and professors read the Bible.[1] He argued that the world of the New Testament, a world of angels, demons and miracles, was a relic of a primitive age. Listen to how he put it:

"It is impossible to use electric light and the wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of spirits and miracles."[2]

In other words: we have light bulbs now. We have radios. We have modern medicine. Surely we've outgrown all this talk of demons. He called that biblical worldview "obsolete," "simply the cosmology of a pre-scientific age." [3]

Now catch the irony. Bultmann said modern people with the wireless (radio) couldn't possibly believe in dark spiritual powers. And in that very moment, the radio was carrying the speeches of a dictator into millions of homes, stirring a nation toward evil so organized and so monstrous that the world still struggles to explain it. The most educated, scientific, electrified nation in Europe was being swept into darkness. If there was ever a year when a thinking person should have reconsidered whether evil is something more than a primitive idea, it was 1941.

The second man writing about the devil that year was C. S. Lewis. And here's another irony. That same year, Lewis went on the radio himself. The BBC asked him to speak to a nation at war, and those radio talks later became *Mere Christianity*. [4] The very technology Bultmann said made faith in the spiritual world impossible, God used to carry the gospel into homes all over Britain.

That same year, Lewis began publishing a series of imaginary letters from a senior demon named Screwtape to his nephew Wormwood, a junior tempter learning his trade. We know them as *The Screwtape Letters*. [5] In the preface, Lewis wrote:

"There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight." [6]

Lewis understood something Bultmann missed. The enemy doesn't need you to believe in him. In fact, sometimes he'd prefer you didn't. Listen to Screwtape's instructions:

"Our policy, for the moment, is to conceal ourselves." [7]

And if the man ever starts to suspect something is out there, Screwtape says, "suggest to him a picture of something in red tights, and persuade him that since he cannot believe in that... he therefore cannot believe in you." [8]

So the enemy has two strategies.

Strategy one: hide. Convince people he isn't real. Let them explain away everything dark in the world as only psychology, only chemistry, only politics. A man who doesn't believe he's in a battle will never put on armor.

Strategy two: frighten and fascinate. Where people do believe, draw them into fear or obsession. Get them chasing spirits, consulting the dark, playing with what they don't understand. [9]

And Screwtape's dream was to combine the two. He called it "our perfect work": "the Materialist Magician," a person who doesn't believe in demons but is "veritably worshipping, what he vaguely calls 'Forces.'" [10] Lewis wrote that eighty-five years ago. Look around at the world we live in today.

Just look at this month. Our culture dresses the devil up in red tights and hands out candy. Our culture binges shows about hauntings and possessions as entertainment. Tarot cards sit next to the self-help books. People who would never say they believe in actual demons or a literal Satan will tell you to "trust the

universe,” “protect your energy,” and “manifest” what you want. Screwtape’s Materialist Magician isn’t fiction anymore. He’s our neighbor.

So where does that leave us? Not with Bultmann. Scripture doesn’t scoff at existence of the powers of darkness or their destructive power. And not with the magicians either, because Scripture condemns aligning ourselves with them and further it never tells us to be fascinated by it or afraid of them. Instead, Scripture reveals Jesus as one who fearlessly dealt with the powers of darkness head on and soundly defeated all the powers of hell. When Jesus walked into a room, demons didn’t debate Him. They couldn’t hide from Him. They recognized Him, they trembled, and they left at His command.

Citations

1. Rudolf Bultmann, “Neues Testament und Mythologie” (1941). English translation: “New Testament and Mythology,” in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch, trans. Reginald H. Fuller (London: SPCK, 1953), 1-44.
2. Bultmann, “New Testament and Mythology,” in *Kerygma and Myth*, 5.
3. Bultmann, “New Testament and Mythology,” in *Kerygma and Myth*, 3.
4. Lewis’s broadcast talks began on the BBC in August 1941, during the war. They were first published as *Broadcast Talks* (1942), *Christian Behaviour* (1943) and *Beyond Personality* (1944), and then collected as *Mere Christianity* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1952).
5. *The Screwtape Letters* first appeared weekly in *The Guardian*, an Anglican church paper (not today’s newspaper), from May to November 1941. It was published as a book by Geoffrey Bles in 1942.
6. C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (1942), Preface.
7. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, Letter 7.
8. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, Letter 7.
9. See Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, Letter 7, where Screwtape laments that when humans disbelieve, “we lose all the pleasing results of direct terrorism and we make no magicians”; cf. the Preface on the opposite error: “to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.” The examples given are my own application.
10. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, Letter 7.

Today we’ll look at a miraculous story that shows Jesus’ power and compassion.

- POWER over the principalities of darkness
- COMPASSION to those caught in their oppressive snare

SCRIPTURE:

Luke 8:26–39 NIV

²⁶ They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. ²⁷ When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs.

Mark 5:5 NIV

⁵ Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

Luke 8:26–39 NIV

²⁸ When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don’t torture me!” ²⁹ For Jesus had commanded the impure spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places. ³⁰ Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” “Legion,” he replied, because many demons had gone into him. ³¹ And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss. ³² A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he gave them permission. ³³ When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. ³⁴ When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, ³⁵ and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus’ feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. ³⁶ Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. ³⁷ Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left. ³⁸ The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹ “Return home and tell how much God has done for you.” So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

LET’S FRAME THIS:

Before saying another word, there are two quick things that I believe are helpful to know before looking at how we can understand and rightly apply the text today.

1. I don’t believe that Christians can be ‘possessed’ by demons in the way described in this account.
 - a. Because Christians have the Holy Spirit living within us ([Romans 8:9-11](#))
 - b. AND Greater is He that is within us than he that is in the world. We’ve been rescued from satan’s dominion. ([1 John 4:4](#), [2 Cor 6:16](#), [Col 1:13](#))
 - c. I don’t believe that He would let another spirit possess or control us. We’re His children.
 - d. I do believe that non-christians (this includes people who profess to be Christians, but in fact are not genuine believers) can be possessed as this and other biblical accounts describe, but believers cannot.
 - e. Therefore genuine believers have no reason to fear spirit/demonic possession
2. However, this is a great depiction of what the demonic is aiming for — destruction.
 - a. [John 10:10](#) states that the thief comes to ‘steal, kill, and destroy’ — this is the work of the devil and the demonic
 - b. They are after the total destruction of human life
 - c. So while we recognize believers cannot be ‘possessed’ we do recognize that we can be harassed, tempted, and oppressed (external pressure)

- d. Further, if they cannot physically control/destroy your life, they will seek to influence you in making sinful decisions that will have terrible outcomes

These are important to recognize up front because we're probably not going to face what this man faced, but every one of us faces the same enemy with the same goal.

1: THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL IN THIS MAN'S LIFE

Note: a demon doesn't have to possess a person to work towards these destructive outcomes. They can influence, tempt, lead us to go there ourselves. Often times they use deceptive tactics, promising something we want and delivering destruction instead.

A: ROBBED OF DIGNITY: His condition strips him of normal human dignity

- The man surely has a backstory — we don't know how he gets to this place in life — but it's in this condition that we find him.
- He's naked and known for his demons
- This was a man that at times had been in chains and under guard and by the demonic powers, he broke loose and fled into lonely places
- Whoever he once was, it's gone and he's now known for this crazy condition — man with demons

B: SUFFERED IN PAIN AND TORMENT: His suffering is ongoing and physically destructive

- [Mark 5:5](#) states that he would cut himself with stones and cry out day and night (among the tombs and hills)
- What an awful and eerie sound plagued the hills — this man is in torment — for years

C: DRIVEN INTO ISOLATION: He is separated from ordinary community and relationships

- He's driven by the demons into isolated places — he had formerly been a man from the city or town.
- He once had family and friends.
- Now he lives among the tombs and his only companions are demons and the demonized ([Matthew 8:28](#))
- There's no life giving relationships, only tormented and destructive voices leading him further into despair

D: ROBBED OF HIS IDENTITY: His life has become defined by the demonic presence rather than his personhood

- What's interesting is trying to sort out his voice from the demons in this account.
- Notice that when Jesus asked his name, he said "legion" for many demons possessed him.
- But the demons seem to use his voice to speak too.
- The end result is a man whose identity is no longer unique and his own, but intertwined in and with the demons.

E: POSSESSED A DISTORTED VIEW OF JESUS: He recognizes Jesus' identity but fears His intentions

- When he approaches Jesus he fears that Jesus will torment him.
- Yet he knows (from the demons) that Jesus is the Son of the Most High God

- So there's a recognition of WHO Jesus is, but a DISTORTION of what Jesus has come to DO
- "What have you to do with me?"

Again, let's attempt to contextualize this: 'you don't need to be possessed to be influenced astray'

- We might not see a demon at work as clearly as in this story, but we ought to recognize/discern the source.
- The temptation to give into lust or adultery may sound appealing to your flesh, but apart from the grace of God it will end with a broken marriage, isolation, shame, emotional/relational pain, and even a distorted view of God.
- Alcoholism, narcissism, selfishness, pride, fear, etc. etc. will all lead to those same places.
- Can you recognize the temptation, influence, voice of the enemy — can you discern the intended outcome he has for you?

2: THE WORK OF JESUS IN THIS MAN'S LIFE

[John 10:10](#) - further states that Jesus came to give life and life abundantly. This is clearly seen in how he miraculously works in this man's life.

A: JESUS LIBERATED THE MAN

- He had the authority and the power to command the demons
 - And they left, right into a herd of pigs
 - Note: there was a clear change in the man and an external witness to all who saw
- Notice they asked for his permission (to go into the pigs)
- They also feared the judgment (abyss)
- What no power or force could do in liberating or restraining, Jesus does in a word of command

B: JESUS MADE HIM WHOLE

- By cleansing the man of his demons, he made him whole again.
- The man is found to be in his right mind and at peace with Jesus

C: JESUS RESTORED HIS DIGNITY AND VALUE

- Somewhere along the way, the man gets clothed. (I imagine the Lord found a way to provide that)
- He's not only concerned about the spiritual condition, but the whole of the man.
- In doing this, he's reestablishing the man's value, worth, and dignity.

D: JESUS SENT HIM HOME

- The man wanted to stay with Jesus (understandably so)
- But Jesus says 'no' and sends him home.
- He's doing two things here... one of them is giving the guy his family and friends back.
- He had been driven away for years, now he gets to go home

E: JESUS GAVE HIM PURPOSE

- That's the other thing — he now goes home with a purpose

- Tell everyone—declare—how much God has done for you.
- And the whole city heard how much Jesus had done for him!

NOTICE: WHERE DID THIS ALL TAKE PLACE

- In perceived 'enemy territory' - Gentile land - where the enemy supposedly has dominion — NOT ANYMORE
 - [Luke 8:22-25](#) describes that Jesus crossed the sea and a raging storm came upon them and the disciples feared for their lives
 - I just notice all that Jesus went through, seemingly only to minister to this one man.
 - We've talked about His power over the spiritual real, but in this light we also see the lengths He went through which demonstrates His great compassion.
 - The miracle happens at Jesus' feet.
 - Whatever your struggle, it can be dealt with at the feet of the Lord.
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3: OUR RESPONSE

1: Don't be ignorant of the enemy's schemes ([2 Cor 2:11](#))

- Like Lewis essentially said: don't fear them or become infatuated with them
- Focus on Jesus and walk in the Holy Spirit — have discernment

2: Bring your 'demons' (struggles) to the Lord

- Your greatest battles
- Your greatest struggles
- The temptations and addictions you can't seem to break free from
- Jesus has power and compassion to help you, to save you!

3: You have no reason to fear

- The enemy operates through fear, but Jesus is the victor
- Jesus, not the enemy, has authority in and over your life
- You and I simply need to not hand or give the enemy any room to operate here ([Eph 4:27](#))
 - Resist the devil, flee temptation, submit to God ([James 4:7](#))
 - NOT embrace temptation, flirt with the enemy and walk in known disobedience

4: Because Christ has conquered, move towards the lost and broken

- The world doesn't have all the answers
- We have the light and hope of the world in Jesus
- Remember Jesus' example: He moved towards the lost and hurting and oppressed (crossing a raging sea) — so should we with the gospel!

PRAYER TIME

- **To follow Jesus and receive His salvation**
- **If you're struggling, fighting a battle you can't seem to win and need a miracle**

- **someone you love is struggling**