

## The Kingdom of God Is Near Jesus Retakes What Is His

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We saw last week that not only did Jesus begin His ministry, in the power of the Holy Spirit, by taking the offensive directly to Satan, He was victorious and moved onto engaging other fallen members of the unseen realm.

Mark makes very clear for us what Jesus is doing.

Mark 1:29–34

“And immediately after they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and they immediately spoke to Jesus about her. And He came to her and raised her up, taking her by the hand, and the fever left her, and she served them. Now when evening came, after the sun had set, they began bringing to Him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed. And the whole city had gathered at the door. And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew who He was.” (NASB 2020)

Whatever else the rule of God is about, it is about vanquishing the rule of Satan, and thus about setting people free from demons and from the ungodly infirmities they inflict on people. (Boyd 1997, 187)

The cosmic war, hinted at in the Old Testament and the unseen realm, which a Jew of 30AD would accept as a fact, becomes very real. This causes problems for us in the 21st century.

“Satan and his forces have a plan to terrorize your soul, to render you impotent as a believer, to make you worthless to the cause of Christ, and to make your life one of misery and spiritual defeat.” (Ingram 2015, 44)

The biggest problem today, most of the church does not accept that Satan even exists much less that he has others at his beck and call dedicated to our destruction.

...the existence of Satan (60 percent of born agians are not sold on this)... (Barna 2011, 138)

In many corners of the church today, a class such as this one would never be taught, why, no one believes that an unseen realm even exists, much less that it is populated with faithful as well as malevolent beings who have been locked in warfare for centuries.

For a faith built on the notion that we are sinners tempted by God’s enemy, Satan, it is perhaps surprising to find that a majority of Americans do not believe that a living entity known as Satan exists. Nearly six out of ten adults (59 percent) suggest that Satan is just a symbol of evil. (Barna 2011, 140)

This is not an issue just dealing with evil and why it exists in the world today. No, the survey Barna conducted showed something else that is truly disturbing.

A majority of adults (56 percent) contend that the Holy Spirit is merely symbolic. Most significant, even half of born-again adults maintain that view. And one of the most eye-opening realizations is that two-thirds of Catholics (67 percent) deny the existence of the Spirit. (Barna 2011, 141)

And we wonder why Biblical literacy continues to fall. We really wonder about some of the statements well-meaning people make thinking they are talking “believer speak.” And we also see why there is a growing attempt in the press as well as in other areas of public discourse to belittle believers and even call into question their sanity.

ABC is facing mounting criticism after its panelists on “The View” mocked Vice President Mike Pence’s Christian faith. Detractors of “The View” are focusing on the fact that ABC News, which claims to be an unbiased broadcast news operation, oversees such a nakedly partisan program with one “token” conservative. The women of “The View” took a shot at Pence’s Christian faith on Tuesday, mocking the former governor of Indiana for talking to Jesus and even calling it a “mental illness.” Sunny Hostin said it’s “interesting” that former White House staffer Omarosa Manigault Newman recently said that Pence talks to Jesus and believes Jesus tells him things. Hostin said she is a “faithful” Catholic but doesn’t want her vice president “speaking in tongues.” Joy Behar then said, “It’s one thing to talk to Jesus. It’s another thing when Jesus talks to you... that’s called mental illness.” (Flood 2018)

Top that with the suggestion, post Parkland, that the police would like to be able to Baker Act someone when they appear to be on the edge. At first that makes sense, but considering the comments made in the earlier press piece, are you and I ready to be mentally evaluated simply because we love Jesus?

Sheriff Scott Israel said during a news conference that he wants the Baker Act to give more power to police and doctors to hospitalize people who make threatening or violent social media posts for a psychiatric evaluation. Florida’s Baker Act, which was enacted in 1972, allows authorities to detain a person for up to 72 hours for a psychiatric evaluation, but there usually has to be “evidence of harm, self-harm or harm to others, or self-neglect and evidence of mental illness,” said Annette Christy, director of the Baker Act Reporting Center. (Pruet 2018)

It is possible that those with anti-Christian sentiment possess antipathy toward conservative Christians but do not dehumanize them. They may perceive Christians as possessing full human qualities and merely have distaste for the beliefs and practices of conservative Christians. If so, then their perception of conservative Christians does not necessarily lead to the worst elements of prejudice, hatred, and bigotry. However, the animosity of those with anti-Christian sentiment could plausibly lead to the dehumanization

of Christians. Defining Dehumanization? Dehumanization can lead to a willingness to oppress and exterminate unwanted groups. (Yancey and Williamson 2015, Kindle Locations 1349-1355)

We, as can be clearly seen, are in a real war. One which is spiritual in nature that bleeds into the physical world.

Jesus certainly thought Satan was real. He referred to Satan twenty-five times and had a personal encounter with him in Matthew 4:1–11. Someone has calculated that 25 percent of Jesus's actions, parables, and miracles had to do with demons. (Ingram 2015, 45)

Jesus worked from His base of operations in Capernaum. The synagogue was where He first cast out demons. In our text from Mark, we see that Jesus, after casting out the demon, went over to Peter's house in Capernaum, healed Peter's mother and then once again cast out demons and healed.



(Bolen 2012, Used with Permission)

Mark 3:11–12

“And whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, they would fall down before Him and shout, “You are the Son of God!” And He strongly warned them not to reveal who He was.” (NASB 2020)

Jesus is repossessing the nations, He is bringing about the Kingdom and doing so by demonstrating that He is the one who is in control, not the unfaithful corrupted fallen divine beings.

Luke 4:38–41

“And he arose and left the synagogue and entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they appealed to him on her behalf. And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her, and immediately she rose and began to serve them. Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them. And demons also came out of many, crying, “You are the Son of God!” But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ.” (ESV)

Jesus then proceeds to “rebuke” a demonic fever (v. 39), heal multitudes of sick people (v. 40) and cast out multitudes of shrieking demons (v. 41). Shortly thereafter he heals a man of leprosy (5: 12-16), a paralytic (5: 17-26) and a man with a withered hand (6: 1-10). As Clinton Arnold argues, the point is that the prisoners who are to be set free are “trapped in the bondage and oppression of Satan's kingdom.” What the kingdom of God means, therefore, is that the hostile alien kingdom of demonic captivity, oppression, poverty and blindness (physical and spiritual) is coming to an end through the ministry of Jesus. He is the bringer of the kingdom of God, for he is the vanquisher of the kingdom of Satan. (Boyd 1997, 188)

In the New Testament demon-possession means that a person is dominated by the spirit of a demon and tormented by him. It is noteworthy that it is distinguished (especially in the Gospel of the physician, Luke) from cases of ordinary sickness, insanity (“lunacy”), leprosy, blindness, lameness, deafness and other natural defects and diseases (cf., e.g., Matt. 4:23, 24, 8:16, 10:8; Mark 6:13; Luke 4:40, 7:21, 22). Accordingly this was not merely an ordinary form of mental disease as some writers have alleged, but a special phenomenon which was particularly frequent during Jesus’ earthly sojourn and thus was directly connected with His coming to destroy the power of darkness. That the unclean spirits were personal beings is evident from what is related about their leaving a possessed person, talking or crying out, possessing knowledge concerning Jesus, as well as other supernatural knowledge—showing fear, and the like. Demon-possession is, therefore, not merely a mental state in which someone suffers from a delusion or is subjected to some subjective disturbance of the world of ideas. Neither is it only a kind of physical disease, although spiritual and physical disease often accompany it (e.g. Matt. 12:22, 17:15; Mark 9:18). (Geldenhuys 1952, 174)

Jesus, the Son of God, the second power in heaven, who came out of the unseen realm and entered into the physical realm, does so to destroy the works of the devil.

Satan literally is attacking Jesus by using any and all he has control over, and Jesus demonstrates He is here to reverse Genesis 3, 6, and 11 and is the Redeemer by engaging and demonstrating to all that He has defeated the evil one.

The miracles wrought by Christ were largely, if not wholly, a vital feature of His kingdom ministry. Miracles, signs, and wonders are evidently the credentials of those who preach the kingdom gospel. It was commanded as the disciples went forth to preach the kingdom of heaven as “at hand” that they were to “heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils” (Matt. 10:7–8), and Joel predicts the supernatural in relation to the oncoming kingdom. (Chafer 1993, 172-173)

Satan attacked more than once using some of the tools at his hand such as the Sea of Galilee. More than once in the scriptures we see Jesus exercising authority over the water and whatever it is that was behind the actions of trying to destroy Him and His disciples.

Even more interesting is that the attack took place while Jesus was intentionally going, by water, to the east side of the Sea of Galilee.



(Bolen, Kursi steep slope from north 2012, Used with Permission)

Jesus is intentional in this trip, He is going to the east side, a clearly gentile area, but for the Jew, an area that is associated with the giant clans that Moses destroyed and is also associated, as is much of the north part of the country, with demon activity.



The area Jesus is going to is one which is gentile controlled and predominately thaw is who lives there. The attack against the enemy is going to cover more than one variable and is an intentional act of war by Jesus who will prevail.

Luke 8:22–39

One day he got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side of the lake.” So they set out, and as they sailed he fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger. And they went and woke him, saying, “Master, Master, we are perishing!” And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased, and there was a calm. He said to them, “Where is your faith?” And they were afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, “Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?” Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. When Jesus had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me.” For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.) Jesus then asked him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Legion,” for many demons had entered him. And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned. When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. And those who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed. Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, “Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.” And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him. (ESV)



(Bolen, Gadera harbor area aerial 2012, Used with Permission)

Gadara, a bit south of where Jesus went, was a Roman gentile city. And yes, there are Roman tombs there. It was also a commercial center. But at Gerasa (Kursi), where Jesus landed, was a Temple to Artemis.

There were actually ten cities there, thus the name Decapolis.

As it pertains to the worship of false gods taking place in Decapolis, the creator Himself went right into the area a good Jew would avoid, in order to confront the false gods as well as the economy that existed to service them.



(Bolen, Gadera Decumanus 2012, Used with Permission)

These parallels both serve to demonstrate the prophetic significance of Jesus and the disciples' future ministry to Gentiles that had been predicted in Isa 65:1 and partially fulfilled in Mark 5:20, as well as to show Jesus' authority over demonic forces as he triumphed over them by casting them into the "sea" using their own medium (i.e., pigs). In other words, and with regards to the Isaiah parallels, pig sacrifice was a pagan rite that was undertaken in secret, at night, on sacrificial bricks, and presumably directed at demons. In the Roman world, pigs were widely used as sacrifices to deities and were often considered to be holy animals. (McKinny 2016, Mt 7:6-Lk 15:32)



(Bolen, Gerasa Temple of Artemis entrance 2012, Used with Permission)

Notice the characteristics of the demon possessed man. Remember, based on what we reviewed earlier in 1 Enoch where the Jews believed demons came from. He was naked, hung around the dead, had extraordinary strength. And was anti-social.

I also find it incredible that wherever Jesus went, the demon possessed people were compelled to see Jesus. Was their goal to attack Him? Or were they compelled simple because of who He is?

## 1 Enoch 15:8 – 12

“And now the giants who are born from the spirits, even the strong spirits of flesh upon the earth, their dwelling will be on the earth. Evil spirits went out from their body, for they came from the higher places, and the beginning of their creation and foundation is from the watchful holy ones. They will be called evil spirits. And so for the spirits of heaven, their dwelling will be in heaven, and the spirits that are born upon the earth, their dwelling will be upon the earth. “The spirits of the giants were doing unjustly, destroying, attacking, and wrestling with each other and thrown together upon the earth, the hard spirits of the giants. They are making courses, and no one is eating, but they are fasting and thirsting and stumbling spirits. These will rise up against the sons of men and women because they have gone forth from them.” (Lexham Press 2020, Enoch 15:8-12)

This man is possessed by the spirits of the Nephilim, they were the direct result of the foolishness in Genesis 6 and had been destroyed as a result of the flood. Now the creator was reclaiming what they had been part of, and they are scared. More shrieking demons.

But as soon as the demoniac came to Him Jesus commanded the evil spirits to leave him. So the possessed man fell down before Him and the demons, who immediately recognised the Redeemer, cried out through their victim: “What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high?” (see explanation at 4:34), and the possessed man pleaded: “I beseech thee, torment me not.” (Geldenhuys 1952, 255)

Knowing they cannot ultimately withstand the Son of God, the demons then beg Jesus not to be sent “out of the country” (Mk 5: 10; Luke has “into the abyss,” 8: 31). Instead, they ask to be sent into a local herd of swine. Surprisingly, Jesus acquiesces to their request. The plan seems to backfire on the demons, however, for instead of finding a permanent abode that would allow them to stay in the region, the pigs immediately rush headlong over a cliff and drown (Mk 5: 11-13; Mt 8: 32-33; Lk 8: 33-34). (Boyd 1997, 193-194)

These are pigs who are being raised to be used as a sacrifice to the demons. When they seek refuge in them, they drown themselves. How many demons?

Borrowed from Lat. legio, legi<sup>o</sup>n is used for the Roman legion, which consists of about 6,000 infantry, 120 cavalry, and supporting special troops. (Kittel, Friedrich and Bromiley 1985, 505)

## Mark 5:13

“Jesus gave them permission. So the unclean spirits came out and went into the pigs. Then the herd rushed down the steep slope into the lake, and about two thousand were drowned in the lake.” (NET)

Did you notice the demons wanted to remain in the same geographical area? An area that had been known for giant clans as well as being just a short way away from Mount Hermon just a few miles to the north.

And in this particular passage, a “Legion” of soldiers within this Satanic army had illegitimately captured a person. Jesus comes, however, to reclaim territory that belongs to his Father and bring it under his rightful rule. Hence when Jesus shows up, the legion of demons must leave. (Boyd 1997, 195)

At the request of the people, Jesus then leaves. What took place?

Jesus intentionally crossed the sea defeating those powers who wanted to use the sea to kill Him. He then confronted a large number of demons on their own turf. He allowed them to enter into animals who were being sacrificed to demons. And those animals destroyed themselves.

Oh yes, one more characteristic of being possessed, self-destructive.

#### Mark 5:5

“Each night and every day among the tombs and in the mountains, he would cry out and cut himself with stones.” (NET)

The man who had been reclaimed from the evil one, who had been set free, wanted to go with Jesus, but Jesus said to remain and tell his story. This has a huge impact on the area as Jesus will go back later and find believers.

In Luke 9, Jesus chooses 12 disciples who are then empowered by Him to continue to communicate the message of the Kingdom.

#### Luke 9:1–6

“Then Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. He said to them, “Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and leave from there. Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leaving that town shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.” They departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere.” (NRSV)

They were providing the same message as Jesus. The Kingdom is very near.

Deliverance was a sign of the coming kingdom of God, not a sign of various individuals’ moral improvement. The kingdom of God advances as victims of the kingdom of Satan are freed. (Boyd 1997, 199)

Jesus then doubles down and sends out even more to communicate the message.

#### Luke 10:1

“After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go.” (NRSV)

12, 70 - Are these numbers significant?

Jesus sent out seventy disciples. The number is not accidental. Seventy is the number of nations listed in Genesis 10 that were dispossessed at Babel. The seventy “return with joy” (Luke 10:17) and announce to Jesus, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” Jesus’ response is telling: “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (10:18). The implications are clear: Jesus’ ministry is the beginning of the end for Satan and the gods of the nations. The great reversal is underway. (Heiser 2015, 280-281)

Jesus is intentional in His actions, and many times, as we just saw with the man possessed with Legion, there are also multiple layers to the warfare. There was a point though, in the ministry of Jesus, where the message and the overall tenor changed, and did so dramatically.

#### Matthew 12:22–32

Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, “Can this be the Son of David?” But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons.” Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can someone enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.



And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.” (ESV)

After this, everything changes. Jesus starts talking to the people in parables, and this is intentional so that they hear information that with the power of the Holy Spirit, they can get it, but otherwise, they will not. This is Jesus exercising mercy as they like we, if unsaved, will be held accountable for the amount of truth we know.

Verse 28 is arguably the single most important teaching of Jesus on realized eschatology—the present aspect of the kingdom (on which see the discussion under 3:2). Debate continues on the meaning of ephthasen (“has come”), but some sense of arrival seems inescapable here. Matthew also uses the “kingdom of God” (rather than “kingdom of heaven”) for the first time, probably to parallel the “Spirit of God” in the previous clause. (Blomberg 1992, 202-203)

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