



The Gospel of Mark - Chapter Five

- II. Mark 1:14-8:26 - Demonstration of Jesus' Authority (continues)
- II.b Mark 3:13-6:6a - Jesus' later Galilæan ministry (continues)
- II.b.iii Mark 4:35-5:43 - Nature miracle, exorcism, and healing (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Five

This chapter is a series of three stories of compassion and the miraculous. Jesus started by healing a tormented man who was possessed by a multitude of demons. These impure spirits had such a strong hold on the man that he had become a social outcast, had to be frequently chained for his own safety, although the strength given to him by the demons allowed him to always break free, and he lived his life among the tombs, isolated from society. Jesus set him free, gave him back his sanity and his dignity, returning him to his former life in his own community.

Jesus then travelled back over the lake to Galilee, where he was met by the synagogue ruler, whose daughter was seriously ill. The synagogue ruler had genuine faith that Jesus could help and asked him to accompany him to see his child that she might be healed.

On the way, Jesus was being jostled by a large crowd when he became aware that some of his healing power had left him because someone with faith had touched him, becoming instantaneously healed. Despite the crowd, Jesus stopped and demanded to know who it was. A woman, who had suffered from menstrual bleeding for 12 years, stepped forward and told her story, even though she was full of fear. Jesus blessed her and sent her on her way, now both physically and spiritually healed.

Some people came from the synagogue ruler's home to inform him that it was now too late as the little girl had died. Jesus told the father to have faith and he continued to the house, taking just the parents and his inner core group of apostles with him. Jesus expelled a crowd of mourners from within the house,

went to the girl and raised her back to life, telling those present to keep the healing a secret.

II.b.iii.2 Mark 5:1-20 - Jesus Restores a Demon-Possessed Man

Jesus completed the treacherous sea crossing and arrived in the Gentile region of the Gerasenes, where he immediately encountered a spirit possessed man in a desperate state. Jesus had compassion on the man and healed him, but in the process the multitude of demons that had so cruelly possessed him, left the man, went into a large herd of pigs with Jesus' authority. The pigs then stampeded into the lake and were drowned. This upset and frightened the local people, who asked Jesus to leave their region.

¹ They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes.

Mark 5:1

They went across the lake. Jesus and his disciples continued their voyage across the Sea of Galilee following the dramatic stilling of the violent storm by Jesus in Mark Chapter Four.

The region of the Gerasenes. The incident occurred near Gerasa, a small town by the sea that is to be distinguished from the larger Gerasa, modern day Jerash, which is 34 miles or 54km away from the sea. Matthew 8:28 specifies that this was in the region of Gadara. A 5th Century church, excavated in Kursi, possibly marks the traditional location of this event, which occurred on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

² When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. ³ This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. ⁴ For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. ⁵ Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

Mark 5:2-5

A man with an impure spirit came, to meet him. Jesus' battle with the spiritual realm of Satan is never far from the surface. It appears that the impure spirit recognised Jesus the moment he got out of the boat to come ashore.

Mark's account is supported in Luke Chapter Eight, but Matthew writes: <<When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way>> (Matthew 8:28), clearly indicating there were two men under the control of Satan. Neither Mark nor Luke wrote at any point that there was *only* one man who was possessed by the impure spirit. Therefore, all accounts are equally acceptable without there being any conflict. There is a similar anomaly in Matthew 20:29, where he records Jesus healing two blind men when he was passing through Jericho on his way to Jerusalem, whereas Mark 10:46 and Luke 18:35 record just the one. On both

occasions what is really important is the compassion of Jesus and the mighty power he displayed in healing these people.

Lived in the tombs. Not only is this man a social outcast but the spirit forced him to live in the resting place for dead bodies. Such was the superstition of the people that Satan may well have been playing mind games with them by making them think it was the spirits of their own dead that were possessing this poor man.

He had often been chained hand and foot either because the local people feared his violent nature or they had pity on him, not wanting him to self-harm. The bible states: *<<But if people are bound in chains, held fast by cords of affliction, he tells them what they have done – that they have sinned arrogantly>>* (Job 36:8-9), indicating they are bound for their sins against God, but not so this poor man, for he was bound by Satan as a challenge to God. The prophet Jeremiah was bound in chains and destined for Babylonian exile until he was set free by his captors: *<<The word came to Jeremiah from the Lord after Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard had released him at Ramah. He had found Jeremiah bound in chains among all the captives from Jerusalem and Judah who were being carried into exile to Babylon>>* (Jeremiah 40:1). Peter was in chains in prison, awaiting execution by King Herod Antipas: *<<The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance>>* (Acts 12:6), before being miraculously released by an angel. Paul, too, was arrested and chained: *<<The commander came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. Then he asked who he was and what he had done>>* (Acts 21:33). Paul would remain in chains for Christ for about 5 years before being released for a short while. It was the fate of fallen angels: *<<And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their proper dwelling – these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day>>* (Jude 6), who will one day be joined by their master: *<<And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time>>* (Revelation 20:1-3).

He tore the chains apart demonstrates the superhuman strength given to the man by the impure spirit that had inhabited him. Samson was a man who had displayed similar strength that had been given to him by God to defeat the Philistines: *<<He said, “If anyone ties me securely with new ropes that have never been used, I’ll become as weak as any other man.” So Delilah took new ropes and tied him with them. Then, with men hidden in the room, she called to him, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” But he snapped the ropes off his arms as if they were threads>>* (Judges 16:11-12). Although he then became foolish and shared the secret of his strength with Delilah, who cut his hair while he slept, thus removing his great strength, allowing him to be captured by his enemies.

He would cry out and cut himself with stones. Baal worshippers would self-mutilate as part of their ceremonies, as seen when Elijah laid down a challenge to them: *<<At noon Elijah began to taunt them. “Shout louder!” he said. “Surely*

he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or travelling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.” So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention>> (1 Kings 18:27-29). However, this is more of a sign of a man with a serious mental health issue due to his demonic possession. This man was in a pitiful state and the people should have had compassion on him. However, many of them would have feared him, or at least the spirit within him, and probably stayed well away. The goal of demons is to destroy the person created in the image of God. The man’s demonisation is evident in his social isolation, superhuman strength, and self-destructive tendencies.

⁶ When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. ⁷ He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God’s name don’t torture me!”

Mark 5:6-7

When the man ran and fell on his knees before Jesus, it may indicate an involuntary submission of the demons to Jesus’ greater power, or that the man himself longed to be free of the demonic influence, or perhaps an element of each. In either case, the demon immediately took over the man’s voice. Some older translations indicate this was an act of worship showing it was the man recognising Jesus as his Saviour, for although the demons would submit to his greater power, they would never actually worship God.

Jesus, Son of the Most High God translates the name *El Elion*, a term used by the Phoenicians and other neighbouring states for the God of Israel, recognising him as being superior to their own gods, even though they did not turn to him themselves. It was an ancient name for God, used also by the Canaanites and identified the role of Melchizedek: <<*Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth>> (Genesis 14:18-19), and: <<*This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him>> (Hebrews 7:1).**

This acknowledgement that Jesus is the Son of God must not be confused with the writings of Paul, who states: <<*Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit>> (1 Corinthians 12:3), for there is a clear difference between recognising who Jesus is and accepting him as their personal Lord and Saviour!*

He shouted at the top of his voice. Again, if this were the man speaking he would not doubt be shouting from a perspective of great fear. From the demons, it would be a display to harm the reputation of Jesus as the God of compassion and justice.

In God's name don't torture me! This is an impassioned plea but by whom? Many would see this as the man having regained his voice from the demons, detecting a special spiritual presence in Jesus but expecting the same despicable treatment that was all he knew from the spirits that possessed him. More likely, it seems to have been the spirits, for they could detect the greater power and knew the treatment they could expect from their own master Satan, and would no doubt have been lied to by him about the way God would treat them. Jesus had come to destroy them but not to torture them. The treatment they would receive, eternal life in the pit of burning sulphur was their deserved and just fate, as it is for all and it would be if it were not for grace and mercy.

⁸ For Jesus had said to him, “Come out of this man, you impure spirit!”

Mark 5:8

Had said indicates that Jesus had told the demon more than once to come out of this man, but it had not obeyed, trying to resist the power of Jesus' Holy Spirit. This would be ultimately a futile gesture but it shows the strength and determination the impure spirit had to even resist for a short while.

⁹ Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”

“My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.”

Mark 5:9

What is your name? Jesus speaks directly to the demons and not to the man, indicating his ability to interact directly within the spiritual realm. For some reason he was interested in the name or names of the demons but no other details are requested.

My name is Legion. A legion was the largest unit of the Roman army and at full strength had 6,000 soldiers. This does not necessarily mean that there were 6,000 demons in the man, only that there were a great many. This militaristic language indicates that the first disciples later understood they were engaged in a cosmic battle within the spiritual realm, as did Paul: <<*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms*>> (Ephesians 6:12).

¹⁰ And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

Mark 5:10

Not to send them out of the area. The significance of this territorial fear is not clear from this account. In Luke 8:31, their request is not to be sent into the Abyss, which will be the final destination for Satan and his disciples. Scripture confirms this: <<*Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels*>> (Matthew 25:41), <<*For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment*>> (2 Peter 2:4), and: <<*He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it*

over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations any more until the thousand years were ended>> (Revelation 20:3a).

¹¹ A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside.

Mark 5:11

Due to Hellenistic influence, pigs that were ceremonially unclean for the Jews were no surprise in the mainly Gentile Decapolis region. They were the most common source of cheap meat in many parts of the Roman Empire.

¹² The demons begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.” ¹³ He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

Mark 5:12-13

He gave them permission. Although these impure spirits had not switched allegiance from Satan to God, they had willingly, if unknowingly, come under his divine authority, no longer trying to assert authority on their own.

The two thousand pigs that perished verified the claim that many impure spirits inhabited the man (v.9). If the demons cannot destroy the man, they will destroy the pigs which, after all, were another part of God’s creation, and they did so at a high cost to the owners. Ultimately though the pigs’ fate in the sea prefigures and pictures the final fate of all demons, when God defeats Satan and throws him into the lake of fire: *<<And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever>> (Revelation 20:10).* Jesus accomplished the decisive defeat of Satan in his earthly ministry, and ultimately through his crucifixion and resurrection.

¹⁴ Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened.

Mark 5:14

Those tending the pigs ran off. These were either servants or hired hands, who had no authority to deal with this situation, and perhaps little interest in the pigs: *<<The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep>> (John 10:12-13).*

If the Parable of the Lost, or Prodigal Son is a true story then this would have been the type of job he had. Refer to Luke 15:11-32 for the full account.

In the town and countryside. As noted before, news travelled fast in those days despite the lack of any methods of technological communication. Runners were normally used to get the news to those waiting to hear it: *<<Ahimaaz son of Zadok again said to Joab, “Come what may, please let me run behind the*

Cushite.” But Joab replied, “My son, why do you want to go? You don’t have any news that will bring you a reward.” He said, “Come what may, I want to run.” So Joab said, “Run!” Then Ahimaaz ran by way of the plain and outran the Cushite. While David was sitting between the inner and outer gates, the watchman went up to the roof of the gateway by the wall. As he looked out, he saw a man running alone. The watchman called out to the king and reported it. The king said, “If he is alone, he must have good news.” And the runner came closer and closer. Then the watchman saw another runner, and he called down to the gatekeeper, “Look, another man running alone!” The king said, “He must be bringing good news, too.” The watchman said, “It seems to me that the first one runs like Ahimaaz son of Zadok.” “He’s a good man,” the king said. “He comes with good news”>> (2 Samuel 18:22-27).

¹⁵ When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid.

Mark 5:15

The formerly spirit-possessed man is now sitting there, dressed and in his right mind, i.e. properly functioning again as an image-bearer of God.

They were afraid. See comments made on vv.16-17. This is also reminiscent of Mark 4:41, where the disciples were afraid of Christ for the awesome power he had displayed in controlling the storm. These people knew the man was demon possessed and knew the power that gave him. For Jesus to overcome such power meant that he was even more powerful, something that should have given them great comfort but instead instilled fear into their hearts because of their own lack of faith.

¹⁶ Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man – and told about the pigs as well. ¹⁷ Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

Mark 5:16-17

Those who had seen it were the servants or hired hands who had been tending the pigs in v.14.

Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region. The people were the owners and others from their community. While fearful reverence and awe are appropriate in the presence of Jesus, the fear of these townspeople (v.15) is negative and seems to have been a wrongful, superstitious fear of Jesus’ mysterious power. There was perhaps a fear of further loss of their property, for their fear does not draw them to Jesus as it should in faith.

¹⁸ As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. ¹⁹ Jesus did not let him, but said, “Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” ²⁰ So the man went

away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

Mark 5:18-20

As Jesus was getting into the boat. Jesus' stay was brief and he was now leaving. This story is a reminder of the deep compassion Jesus has for all people, even those who do not follow him. He had just undertaken a perilous sea journey to save this one poor soul. He would then depart without so much as giving a single message to the remaining residents simply because they asked him to! Jesus does not impose himself on anyone but waits patiently for them to invite him in: *<<Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me>>* (Revelation 3:20).

Did not let him. Jesus did not allow the restored and thankful man (v.15) to join him. It is possible that he was asking Jesus for permission to belong to the closer circle of disciples that he might be or go with him, which recalls Mark 3:14 *<<He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach>>*. However, Jesus needed him to work as an unwitting evangelist, witnessing to and planting seeds in his own community through his personal and very powerful testimony.

Go home; tell them how much the Lord has done for you. Jesus wanted the restored man to be a witness to God's power in the Decapolis, an example of Jesus intentionally instructing a restored person to proclaim what had happened to him. This is in contrast to his call for secrecy in other cases, e.g. Mark 1:44, v.43 and Mark 9:9. Jewish and Gentile people in the Decapolis did not yet pose the same danger of misunderstanding Jesus as a political or military messiah, as was the case in Galilee. Note that the work of the Lord in v.19 is described as the work of Jesus in v.20, i.e. how much Jesus had done for him, indicating that Jesus shares the same nature as God himself. This is made more explicit in a complimentary account: *<<Return home and tell how much God has done for you. So the man went away and told all over the town how much Jesus had done for him>>* (Luke 8:39).

The Decapolis means region of ten cities, and covered the region to the east of the Sea of Galilee.

All the people were amazed. This man was clearly well known to those in his former community. To see him fully restored to health after his long ordeal under the power of such a strong demonic force was nothing less than miraculous and *all* the people clearly recognised this.

II.b.iii.3 Mark 5:21-43 - Jesus Raises a Dead Girl and Heals a Sick Woman

Jesus raised Jairus' daughter (vv.21-24a) and (vv.35-43), after being interrupted by another person needing his attention (vv.24b-34).

²¹ When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake.

Mark 5:21

To the other side often marks the movement from a Jewish to a Gentile territory or vice versa. Having completed his planned mission, Jesus returned to the Galilæan side of the sea, where his popularity had consistently grown.

A large crowd gathered around him. Despite all that was going on, Jesus no doubt used the opportunity to continue to educate the people: <<*These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads*>> (Deuteronomy 6:6-8).

While he was by the lake. The crowds were used to meeting Jesus by the shore. Someone must have seen the boats returning, alerted the people, who immediately left what they were doing to be by the lake when Jesus came ashore. Such was the draw of this Rabbi at that time, yet it had been written about him: <<*He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him*>> (Isaiah 53:2). But he was the Christ of God, instinctively they gathered to him; not really understanding why.

²² Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet ²³ and pleaded earnestly with him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.” ^{24a} So Jesus went with him.

Mark 5:22-24a

The laymen who were synagogue rulers presided over the affairs of the synagogue, including organising and teaching in synagogue services. Most of them were Pharisees. The Greek term, archisynagōgos, has been found on many inscriptions from Palestine and throughout the Roman world.

The synagogue was the main place of worship for all Jews living outside of Jerusalem. For more information on synagogues and an artist’s impression of the synagogue in Gamla, refer to comments made on Mark 1:21.

The fact that Jairus fell at Jesus’ feet and pleaded earnestly with him demonstrated his real need and his sincerity. His dying daughter was clearly very precious to him. That she will be healed by Jesus simply putting his hands on her, indicates the level of the man’s faith in Jesus.

^{24b} A large crowd followed and pressed around him. ²⁵ And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. ²⁶ She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. ²⁷ When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.”

Mark 5:24b-27

While Jesus is on his way to heal Jairus' daughter, Mark interjects with the simultaneous event of the healing of the woman with a constant discharge of menstrual blood (vv.25-34). Her plight was heightened by its twelve year duration, leaving her without hope, with no cure in sight, no doubt destitute having paid for her healthcare, and in an anæmic, weakened condition. Moreover, her hæmorrhaging would have made her ceremonially unclean, which would have excluded her from normal social and religious relationships, which was of major importance to all Jews socially, culturally and spiritually: <<***When a woman has a discharge of blood for many days at a time other than her monthly period or has a discharge that continues beyond her period, she will be unclean as long as she has the discharge, just as in the days of her period. Any bed she lies on while her discharge continues will be unclean, as is her bed during her monthly period, and anything she sits on will be unclean, as during her period. Anyone who touches them will be unclean; they must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. When she is cleansed from her discharge, she must count off seven days, and after that she will be ceremonially clean***>> (Leviticus 15:25-28). She would not have been permitted to enter the synagogue section reserved for women; nor was she permitted to be in public without making people aware that she was unclean. By touching Jesus' cloak, she technically and legalistically rendered him ceremonially unclean: <<***When a woman has her regular flow of blood, the impurity of her monthly period will last seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening. Anything she lies on during her period will be unclean, and anything she sits on will be unclean. Anyone who touches her bed will be unclean; they must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. Anyone who touches anything she sits on will be unclean; they must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. Whether it is the bed or anything she was sitting on, when anyone touches it, they will be unclean till evening***>> (Leviticus 15:19-23), but Jesus is greater than any purity laws, for he makes her clean by his power instead of becoming unclean himself. Refer also to v.41.

Touched his cloak. Jesus' power was in his body but it radiated out into his clothes as well. This can be seen with others who had the Holy Spirit within them, having a similar effect: <<***As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by***>> (Acts 5:15), and: <<***God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them***>> (Acts 19:11-12).

²⁹ Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

Mark 5:29

Immediately her bleeding stopped. Jesus does not cure people in stages and her infirmity was dealt with instantaneously. This is a feature of spiritual healing by Jesus or when it is undertaken by others in his name: <<***Immediately the leprosy***>>

left him and he was cleansed>> (Mark 1:42), <<Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished>> (v.42), <<“Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road>> (Mark 10:52), <<Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God>> (Luke 5:25), <<Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God>> (Luke 13:13), <<“Aeneas,” Peter said to him, “Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and roll up your mat.” Immediately Aeneas got up>> (Acts 9:34), and: <<In Lystra there sat a man who was lame. He had been that way from birth and had never walked. He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed and called out, “Stand up on your feet!” At that, the man jumped up and began to walk>> (Acts 14:8-10).

She felt in her body may just have been a reaction to the physical healing or it may have been a spiritual release inside her for she was not just freed from her suffering, but was brought into the Kingdom due to her faith in Jesus.

³⁰ At once Jesus realised that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?”

Mark 5:30

Jesus sensed in himself, probably indicating either a physical sensation in his body or a reaction in his Spirit, that power had gone out from him, not merely by being touched but by being touched by someone who had faith to be healed.

³¹ “You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’”

³² But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. ³³ Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth.

Mark 5:31-33

You see the people crowding against you shows that the disciples were amazed at Jesus reaction for they clearly failed to grasp the significance of what had happened here.

Jesus kept looking. This may have been Jesus in his fully human state that was looking to find out who had touched him, for Jesus in his divine nature would have known who had touched him and would have seen it in the woman’s heart. Here though is a different situation to the normal crowds Jesus encountered. Jewish rabbis like Jesus would always wear a Tallit or prayer shawl. As they walked briskly along, the Tallit would billow out like a bird’s wings. Perhaps Jesus was excited that someone actually had the faith to believe in the prophetic Scripture about him that says: <<**But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings**>> (Malachi 4:2). Just as Jesus can detect hidden thoughts and hidden sins in the hearts of men, so too he can detect hidden faith.

When Jesus asked Who touched me? the woman responded with fear and trembling. Her fear may have been partly because, in working her way through the crowd to get to Jesus, she would have touched many other people and thus rendered them ceremonially unclean as already noted.

Once again, Mark notes the theme of fear and shows how it leads to faith. More importantly, the woman felt deep awe, the Greek word *phobeomai*, which can be rendered ‘be afraid’ or ‘feel awe and reverence’. This is what she would have felt in the powerful presence of God who had healed her. Therefore, she came and fell at his feet, and told him the whole truth, which testified of her confidence in and sincere gratitude toward Jesus.

³⁴ He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

Mark 5:34

Daughter. Having been on the fringes of the crowd surrounding Jesus, the woman now finds herself welcomed into the family of God.

Your faith has healed you would suggest both physical and spiritual healing, for the Greek *sōzō* can mean either heal or save. The woman’s faith in Jesus for physical healing at the same time became faith in him for salvation from sin. Of course, faith itself does not do the healing; God does. But the woman’s faith was the divinely appointed means for her bodily healing, as well as for her spiritual salvation.

Mark 35-43

The account of Jairus’ daughter (vv.22-24) resumes by showing the stark contrast between the words: <<***Daughter, your faith has healed you***>> (v.34), and the fact that now Jairus’ daughter is dead.

³⁵ While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. “Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher any more?”

Mark 5:35

Why bother the teacher any more? While the girl was still alive they believed that Jesus would have been able to do something for her. Now that she was dead, she was beyond the help of any mortal. In a similar situation there was a crowd that had gathered to mourn Lazarus: <<***Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”***>> (John 11:36-37), and at an earlier meeting with Lazarus’ sister Martha: <<***Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die***>> (John 11:25), clearly speaking in the present tense. He didn’t say ‘I was’ or that ‘I will be’, he said ‘I am’; where ‘I am’ also has a significant connotation with Jesus’ deity: <<***“You are not yet fifty years old,” they said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!” “Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!” At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself,***>>

slipping away from the temple grounds>> (John 8:57-59), which clearly indicated to the Jews that Jesus was claiming to be God from the well known description God had given of himself to Moses: <<*God said to Moses, “I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I am has sent me to you’”*>> (Exodus 3:14).

Your daughter is dead. One of the worst experiences in this life is for a parent to lose a child. People take such news in different ways: <<*David noticed that his attendants were whispering among themselves, and he realised the child was dead. “Is the child dead?” he asked. “Yes,” they replied, “he is dead”. Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request they served him food, and he ate*>> (2 Samuel 12:19-20), and: <<*At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised”*>> (Job 1:20-21). But with Jesus there comes hope in every situation, as foretold by the prophet, whether following a time of Babylonian exile or a time of spiritual exile: <<*This is what the Lord says: “Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for your work will be rewarded,” declares the Lord. “They will return from the land of the enemy. So there is hope for your descendants,” declares the Lord. “Your children will return to their own land*>> (Jeremiah 31:16-17).

³⁶ Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”

Mark 5:36

Ignoring what they said. Their personal viewpoint had no impact of Jesus, for he knew the reality of the situation.

Don’t be afraid, just believe. Again, Jesus defines faith as the antidote to fear (vv.33-34). In the face of his daughter’s death, this was a supreme challenge for Jairus, as it would be for any parent.

³⁷ He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James.

Mark 5:37

Did not let anyone follow him. Jesus clearly had authority over the large crowd that had been following him for they obeyed his command not to go any further with him.

Peter, James and John. Only the inner circle of disciples was permitted to join Jesus: <<*As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew*>> (Mark 1:29), and: <<*After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them*>> (Mark 9:2).

³⁸ When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. ³⁹ He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.” ⁴⁰ But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was.

Mark 5:38-40

The commotion with people crying and wailing loudly reflects deep grief in the face of death, and remains typical of Middle Eastern funerals today. However, some of the people would have been professional mourners, whose presence was required at funerals. Since bodies decomposed quickly in Palestine, mourners had to assemble fairly soon after a death as the person would be buried within hours of death.

Amid the mourning, Jesus proclaimed that the child is not dead but asleep. The crowd’s response was to mock and laugh at him, for they took Jesus’ statement literally, perhaps supposing that Jesus could not accept the reality of death. The child had indeed died, as shown by the account of her healing in the Gospel of Luke: <<*Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat*>> (Luke 8:55), but from Jesus’ viewpoint her physical death was but sleep.

He put them all out. The unbelieving crowd would only have been a distraction. Anyway, Jesus never forced his miracles on a hostile, sceptical audience. It stands in contradiction to the character and will of Jesus to heal where there is fundamental rejection of him, so Jesus allowed only the girl’s closest family members and his core group of followers to witness this particular miracle.

⁴¹ He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha koum!” (which means, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”).

Mark 5:41

He took her by the hand. Touching a dead person would normally render a person ceremonially unclean: <<*If a descendant of Aaron has a defiling skin disease or a bodily discharge, he may not eat the sacred offerings until he is cleansed. He will also be unclean if he touches something defiled by a corpse or by anyone who has an emission of semen*>> (Leviticus 22:4), and: <<*Whoever touches a human corpse will be unclean for seven days*>> (Numbers 19:11), but once again Jesus overcomes uncleanness, for the girl comes back to life. This account is similar to Elisha healing the Shunammite’s Son in 2 Kings 4:17-37. Refer also to comments made on vv.24b-27 regarding Jesus avoiding becoming unclean.

Talitha koum. At times, Mark reports Jesus’ statements in Aramaic, reinforcing the eyewitness quality of this Gospel account. He also gives a translation in Greek, supporting the belief that his initial intended readership were Gentiles.

Talitha koum. The miracle resurrection is achieved with a word by the Word: <<*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was*

God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it>> (John 1:1-5), and the light of life had shone into a dark place on this occasion once again: <<*But everything exposed by the light becomes visible – and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. This is why it is said: “Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you”*>> (Ephesians 5:13-14), or perhaps more graphically described in: <<*Then I passed by and saw you kicking about in your blood, and as you lay there in your blood I said to you, “Live!”*>> (Ezekiel 16:6).

⁴² Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished.

Mark 5:42

Immediately, again bears witness to the immediacy of the healing. Refer to comments made on v.29.

The girl stood up and walked around: <<*So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit*>> (1 Corinthians 15:45). Disease and death entered the world through the transgression of the first Adam; the last Adam had now arrived and both disease and death were conquered. Amen.

She was twelve years old. Interestingly, she was born about the time the woman in the previous healing became ill!

The amazement of those who witnessed the miracle does not necessarily indicate faith in Jesus. No doubt some believed, but others remained puzzled. Whichever they were, they were completely astonished.

⁴³ He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Mark 5:43

Give her something to eat is proof that full human life had been restored, and a healthy life with a healthy appetite. This was no spiritual trick with demons, something that the Teachers of the Law had accused Jesus of before: <<*And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons”*>> (Mark 3:22).

He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this. Earlier that day he had told the man in the Gerasenes to go and tell everyone what God had done for him. However, Jesus was now back on the Jewish side of the lake, where expectations of a political and military Messiah were high. Jesus did not want any news to spread that may have caused the people to come to him with false expectations, for his mission was quite different to what they would have wanted it to be, even though it was exactly what the whole world was so desperately in need of. In any case, it was his own then future resurrection that was to be publically proclaimed, and that to the whole world in each and every subsequent generation.