



**Lesson Title:** Where He Finds Us—In Chaos



**Key Concept:** Wherever we are, in any situation, God can find us. As in Genesis 1, Jesus brings order out of chaos.



**Scriptures:**

Jesus demanded, “What is your name?” “Legion,” he replied, for he was filled with many demons.

(Luke 8:30 *New Living Translation*)

After Jesus rose from the dead early on Sunday morning, the first person who saw him was Mary Magdalene. . . from whom he had cast out seven demons.

(Mark 16:9 *New Living Translation*)

**Context Scriptures:** Genesis 1; Matthew 4:25; 8:16; 28–34; 9:32–33; 10:7–8, 10; 17:14–18; Mark 1:32–39; 5:1–20; 7:25–26; 16:1–11; Luke 4:40–41; 8:26–39; 13:31–32; John 6:70; 8:44; Acts 10:38; 13:8–10



**Lesson Thoughts:**

There is an old joke about a traveler asking a local for directions to a certain place. After several false starts, the local says, “You can’t get there from here. You’ll have to go someplace else.” Though we can’t get out of the direst situations, Jesus is our someplace else. Probably the most terrifying thing to suffer besides death is demonic control. Jesus repeatedly showed himself Master of even this situation.

The incident with the demoniac of Gadara is given in three Gospels. The tragedy for this man who had lost control of his emotions and actions was mirrored in the terror of the community frightened by his screams and incessant unpredictability, along with the fact that their strongest chains could not confine him. His residence among the tombs added the fear of ritual impurity to any he came close enough to touch. Into this chaotic situation came Jesus, not with

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revulsion, but with the power of deliverance. In a matter of minutes chaos was replaced by calm. Jesus calmed the inner storm caused by the legion of demons and gave the potential of peace to the surrounding villages. He brought purity to the man while removing the *spiritual* swine that made the region a huge pig sty. Modesty replaced nakedness as quiet was switched for clamor. Unfortunately, the citizens of that region were so used to foulness and confusion that they turned against the deliverer of a peace with which they could not be comfortable.

The second instance is that of Mary Magdalene, of whom it is reported twice that Jesus cast out seven devils. No other details are given. Tradition based on later supposition by Pope Gregory I in AD 591 (*Homily CCCIII*)<sup>1</sup> made out Mary's backstory to be that of a prostitute. All other specific descriptions of demonic influence speak of muteness, seizures, madness, and the like. Not once in the New Testament is demon possession linked with immoral behavior. Humanity seems very capable of immorality without having to be controlled from another realm. Demonic activity seems to align more closely with the aims of the thief in John 10:10—to steal, kill, and destroy.

The emphasis on seven devils in Mary's case likely points to the extremity of her tumultuous condition when Jesus released her from the chaos of her disordered state. From whatever her status was, she became included in the group which traveled with the Lord. As Jesus did with the demoniacs, he still brings calm to the most violent of mental, spiritual, and emotional storms.

## ? Discussion Questions:

- 1) Discuss the change in the behavior of the man of Gadara.
- 2) Why do you think the people of Gadara wanted Jesus to go away?
- 3) What would your reaction have been had you witnessed the deliverance of the demoniac and the destruction of the swine? What if you owned the swine?
- 4) Why do you think Mary Magdalene was so devoted to Jesus?

**Next Lesson:** At A Broken Point

<sup>1</sup>"Who Was Mary Magdalene?" *Smithsonian Magazine*, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/who-was-mary-magdalene-119565482/>

### **Notes and Reflections**

- 1) Read Matthew 8:23–34 and contemplate the similarities and differences in the natural and spiritual storms.
- 2) How does portraying Mary Magdalene as a prostitute influence our perception of her deliverance and devotion as opposed to the blank slate of her past the scripture gives us?
- 3) A Roman Legion consisted of between 5,000 and 6,000 warriors. The number seven is used twice in describing Mary's deliverance. Could there be some significance to the use of these numbers in these two stories?

**Notes and Reflections, cont.**