

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
OCTOBER 24 2026

good over evil

Scripture Story: Mark 5:1-19.
Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 31, 32.
Key Text: Mark 5:15.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

The spiritual war between Christ and Satan is not some isolated contention between two equal powers in the heavenly realms. First, God is supreme, all-powerful. Satan has already been defeated, sentenced, and his end is inevitable. Second, angelic beings created by God are at work with the tasks of the kingdom of God. Fallen angels who sided with Lucifer are also working furiously to inflict damage as their own doom draws near. Clearly, fallen humanity senses that something is going on beyond what the eyes can see. Christians know from Scripture that God has claimed victory over sin, but Satan still works to deceive and undermine the plan of salvation by seeking to "devour" and "steal" and "kill" those who would choose to claim their place as heirs of God's kingdom. This battle for souls is so clearly depicted in the story of the demoniac, possessed by thousands of demons and banished into Satan's domain. In Mark 5 and Matthew 8 the work of Satan's forces is revealed in the desperate plight of a man who, compelled by what must have been a mustard seed of faith but more prominently a band of demons, runs at Jesus.

The storied event is rich with a visceral look at the reality of evil angels and the ultimate victory of Christ's powerful hand of grace. Also emerging from this story is the way God's power goes with us when we testify of His great acts of salvation and His mercy. In fact, this lost and despised young man becomes perhaps the first Christian missionary sent to the Decapolis, a region of 10 cities bankrupt of true religion. What seems unavoidable is the question in this study: how does God's power over evil get fleshed out through His people in the days in which we are living?

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Open their eyes to the world of evil and angelic forces. (*Know)*
- Sense that the power over death and evil is sure. *(Feel)*
- Choose to align themselves overtly and eternally with God and His kingdom. *(Respond)*

III. EXPLORE

The Great Controversy, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 8

"All humanity is now involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe" (Gen. 3; 6-8; Job 1:6-12; Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:12-18; Rom. 1:19-32; 3:4; 5:12-21; 8:19-22; 1 Cor. 4:9; Heb. 1:14; 1 Peter 5:8; 2 Peter 3:6; Rev. 12:4-9).

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? *section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.*

Invite students to share examples of Bible stories

when God sent His angels to protect or deliver His people (e.g., King Jehoshaphat and the army of Israel didn't have to fight against the enemy, because the angels defeated their enemies; Peter was delivered from prison by an angel).

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

The story is told of John Paton, a missionary in the New Hebrides Islands. Late in the evening, a large band of hostile natives encamped and besieged the local mission station where Paton served. The goal was to burn out the missionary family and their colaborers. When they emerged, the natives were to take them and kill them. Possessed by an outright hatred for the Christians, they surrounded the compound. The Patons and the others waited and prayed throughout the terror-filled night for God to protect and sustain them. When daylight came they stood in amazement as their would-be attackers left. A little over a year later, due to the continued faithful work of the Patons, the chief of the tribe was converted to Christ. The same chief who a year previous had prepared an assault on the Patons made a decision to follow the living Christ. Remembering the event, Paton asked the chief what kept him from burning down the compound house and murdering all of them. The chief replied in surprise, "We almost attacked but were surprised to see that we were outnumbered. Who were all those men guarding your house?" What a good question! Paton knew that no men or contingent of human guards stood watch outside his house that night. The chief feared to attack and decided to run when he saw hundreds of large men with swords circling the mission station.

Is it possible that we go through our days unaware of the angelic presence protecting us? To what degree do you think God still promises to support and defend His people with sword-bearing angels today?

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

This story teaches us at least two things: (1) God protects us against demons and evil in ways that we are not aware; and (2) our devotion and prayer to God about this unseen world opens our eyes to the possibilities of extending the gospel to others when we might be afraid to launch out in faith. Read the story and answer the question given about this amazing event that took place in a region of the world that desperately needed someone to testify to God's mercy and power.

Out of the Story for Teachers

- As you read the story of the demoniac, what are some of the key sentences/phrases that are central to this story?
- Why do you think this story is included in the Gospels? What purpose does it serve? Why would the message in this event be important?
- How is the demoniac described?
- According to the text, how do villagers—even the disciples—relate to this man who is known to be "demon-possessed"?
- What is demon possession? How would you describe it? How do you think it happens?
- Are people who are demon-possessed really completely out of control?
- What are some other examples in Scripture that discuss this phenomenon?
- What is the reaction of evil angels when Christ is near?
- Why do you think the people reacted the way they did? Is it because they did not want people disturbing life with the forces of good and evil? What was their motivation in asking Jesus to leave the region?
- Why do you think the man who had been freed of the demons did not want to part company with Jesus? Why do you think Jesus gave this man the command to tell others what God had done for him? Why would this task be helpful to the man healed of the evil spirits?
- What does this story tell us about the nature of evil and its real presence in the human experience? Why do you think the obvious presence of demons seems rarer today than it seemed to be in the time of Christ?

Extra Questions for Teachers:

Where on the spectrum would you place yourself in regard to angels and demons:

In regard to angelic forces of God and the demonic spirits of Satan I would . . .

1 2 3 4 5 6

Rather not know See the battle more clearly

- Invite the students to respond and share why.
- When have you felt the presence of evil in an unmistakable way?
- When have you sensed God's angels protecting you in ways that are hard to explain away?
- What do you think will happen as we get closer to the end of time? Will this battle become more obvious? Will the deception become more subtle? Will people become so comfortable that they don't really care about angels or demons? What do you think?

Use the following as more teachable passages that relate to today's story: Judges 9; 1 Kings 22; 1 Samuel 16; 1 Samuel 18; 1 Samuel 19; Acts 12:5-11; 1 Kings 19:5-8; 2 Kings 6:8-17; Mark 1:13.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

The story of the demoniac opens up an important discussion for the church today, and especially for young people, on the nature of angels and demons and their work on behalf of the kingdoms they serve (Matthew 8; Mark 5; and Luke 8).

Two words are used in the New Testament that refer to demon possession. First, the Greek word, *daimonizomai*, usually translated "to be possessed by a demon," is used to describe the effect of agents of Satan at work in people. How that happens and to what degree people are "possessed" or "controlled" completely is debated. When referring to a person, it is translated "demoniac." One of the key conversations that may be helpful to have is how Satan enslaves in a way that controls individuals in contrast to God's angels who convey truths, protect, encourage, and guide.

The context of the story occurs after Christ has miraculously fed thousands of people and they seek to take refuge from the crowds by boat to the region of the Gadarenes. This area is populated by Greek-speaking people who are not Jewish in their practice of faith. One evidence of this is that they were keeping herds of pigs, whereas no Jews would defile themselves in that manner. Also, the inhab-itants of this region urged Jesus to leave when such a profound demonstration of spiritual power had been displayed. While the deliverance of this man is covered in the story and study portion of the lesson, it is critical to note that he goes to the Decapolis (10 cities) and declares what Christ has done. It is likely that Jesus gave this man the missionary task to build his confidence that he was restored and the demons would not return, but also to prepare a witness for their return, which is recorded in all three synoptic Gospels:

In Mark 5:20, 21 the story reads: "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. 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" (NIV). A couple of chapters later the impact of the formerly demon-possessed man is noted:

"Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson.

- **Key Text**
  Invite students to share the Key Text *with the class if they have committed it to memory.*
- **Flashlight**
  Read the Flashlight *statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book* The Great Controversy. *Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from* Out of the Story.
- **Punch Lines**
  Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that spoke most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.
- **Further Insight**
  Ask them how the quote in Further Insight *conveys the point of the story in this lesson.*

Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

RABBI 101

Internal and External Processors

Not everyone who talks has thought and not everyone who is quiet is disengaged and not participating. Some students are internal processors in that they think through the questions, answers, and issues as it relates to them without saying a word. Usually when they speak, it can be pretty profound and especially helpful. Often they don't speak up because even as there are internal processors, there are also external processors. Many cannot think through ideas unless their mouths are moving and they are expressing themselves verbally. They tend to ramble and even contradict themselves in mid-speech. They fight for words and eventually get there, but not without taking up the time and space of the discussion. Both are present in classrooms, and we need to learn to engage them both. For the external processors we affirm and confirm their discussion by summarizing and paraphrasing their words. They tend to appreciate it. Internal processors often tend to wait to speak up, to think again, and in the meantime someone else may chime in and even change the subject. As you discuss, be mindful that both kinds of learners are present, thinking and learning, even if some are not speaking.

through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis" (Mark 7:31, NIV; also echoed in Luke 8:26-40).

Initially the people were nervous about how Jesus had manifested His power over the evil forces in the demoniac man. But after the man told his story throughout the 10 cities, the people gladly received Jesus when He returned to their region.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Divide the class into groups of two or three and give them each a piece of paper and a pen. Ask the students to write any angel sightings they can remember in Scripture. Urge them to think of examples in which heaven and humanity collide and are unmistakable. The goal is to try to get them to collectively exhaust the list of examples from Scripture. As the students report their lists, write them on the board. Ask the students: "When angels and demons show up in the stories in the Bible, consider what is at stake. How real is the battle between heaven and the agencies of evil? To what degree do we need to pay more attention to this war in our world today?"

Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

A friend once told me that "80 percent of snake venom is made up of protein." Even though we all need a daily source of protein in our diet, it does not follow that snake venom is an appropriate source for protein. The 20 percent will kill you. Yet many have given a foothold to the enemy of souls thinking that the unseen world either is not so dangerous or they are smart enough to outsmart Lucifer.

God will send His angels to help us. Hebrews 1:14 tells us that they are "ministering spirits" (NIV) sent out to give service to those who belong to God. The Bible has plenty of other instances in which angels aided believers in times of need. (See Ps. 34:7; 91:11; Rom. 8:38, 39; 1 John 5:18; Acts 12:5-11; 1 Kings 19:5-8; 2 Kings 6:8-17.) Angels even ministered to Christ after His temptation by Satan (Mark 1:13). And they are there for you. Know that it is true.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages Series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 31, 32.

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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Mark 5:1-19.
Commentary: *The Great Controversy,* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 31, 32.

good over evil



Photo by Colleen Cahill

keytext

"Then they came to Jesus, and saw the one who had been demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid."

(Mark 5:15, NKJV)

flashlight

"Were not miracles wrought by Christ and His apostles? The same compassionate Savior lives today, and He is as willing to listen to the prayer of faith as when He walked visibly among men. The natural cooperates with the supernatural. It is a part of God's plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 525).

what do you think?

Do you think that many people today are aware of the angels that are sent to help, guide, and protect God's children? What evidence do you know of in Scripture that conveys the idea that God sends His angels to help us?

did you know?

Satan is using many avenues to turn our eyes from God's love and truth. It is in TV shows, movies, books, and the media. It is important that we guard the avenues to our soul and keep our eyes on Jesus.

"Seeing Jesus in Scripture brings spiritual vitality to our whole being. In the Gospels Jesus heals the sick, multiplies the bread, raises the dead, forgives sin, delivers demoniacs, and calms storms. He brings healing, happiness, and hope. He overcomes disaster, demons, and death. He defeats sorrow, suffering, and sickness. He triumphs over sin and Satan."—Mark Finley, *Solid Ground,* p. 23.

INTO THE STORY

"They went across the Sea of Galilee to the area of the Gerasenes. Jesus got out of the boat. A man controlled by an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. The man lived in the tombs. No one could keep him tied up anymore. Not even a chain could hold him. His hands and feet had often been chained. But he tore the chains apart. And he broke the iron cuffs on his ankles. No one was strong enough to control him. Night and day he screamed among the tombs and in the hills. He cut himself with stones.

"When he saw Jesus a long way off, he ran to him. He fell on his knees in front of him. He shouted at the top of his voice, 'Jesus, Son of the Most High God, what do you want with me? Swear to God that you won't hurt me!' This was because Jesus had said to him, 'Come out of this man, you evil spirit!'

"Then Jesus asked the demon, 'What is your name?'

"'My name is Legion,' he replied. 'There are many of us.' And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

"A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. The demons begged Jesus, 'Send us among the pigs. Let us go into them.' Jesus allowed it. The evil spirits came out of the man and went into the pigs. There were about 2,000 pigs in the herd. The whole herd rushed down the steep bank. They ran into the lake and drowned.

"Those who were tending the pigs ran off. They told the people in the town and countryside what had happened. The people went out to see for themselves.

"Then they came to Jesus. They saw the man who had been controlled by many demons. He was sitting there. He was now dressed and thinking clearly. All this made the people afraid. Those who had seen it told them what had happened to the man. They told about the pigs as well. Then the people began to beg Jesus to leave their area.

"Jesus was getting into the boat. The man who had been controlled by demons begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him. He said, 'Go home to your own people. Tell them how much the Lord has done for you. Tell them how kind he has been to you.'"

(Mark 5:1-19, NIrV)

OUT OF THE STORY

As you read the story of the demoniac, what are some of the key sentences/phrases that are central to this story?

Why do you think this story is included in the Gospels? What purpose does it serve? Why would the message in this event be important?

What is demon possession? How would you describe it? How do you think it happens?

What are some other examples in Scripture that discuss this phenomenon?

What is the reaction of evil angels when Christ is near?

Why do you think the people reacted the way they did? What was their motivation in asking Jesus to leave the region?

Why do you think the man who had been freed of the demons did not want to part company with Jesus?

punch lines

"Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies" **(1 Corinthians 6:19, 20, NIV).**

"When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation" **(Matthew 12:43-45, NIV).**

"So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me" **(Romans 7:21-23, NIV).**

"I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish" **(Galatians 5:16, 17, NKJV).**

further insight

"It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell."

—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy,* p. 555

Sabbath

Read Ephesians 6:10-12.

Read and respond to the activity in the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson.

What do you think is the biggest reason you don't see demon possession as is witnessed in the Gospels? On one hand, the world we live in seems too comfortable with the notion that there may be supernatural forces at work in relationship to humanity. On the other hand, there does not seem to be a healthy respect for the war that is raging beyond what the human eye can see. From our reading today note how real the struggle between good and evil is. The question is, How important is it? How much different would your daily life be if the curtain of spiritual battle were pulled back and you could see what is really going on?

Sunday

Read Philippians 2:10.

As you read the *Into the Story* section and answer the questions in the *Out of the Story* section, you will find one of the most amazing stories of deliverance in Scripture. What part of the story speaks to you personally? How is the demon-possessed man like people you may know today? How does his testimony impact others? What do you think God is trying to say to the church in this story?

Monday

Read Mark 5:15.

What does this text tell us about people whom the church or a community may "write off" or "set aside" because their problems are so severe that they could never be restored? Whom do you know in your church/community who never gives up on those who are oppressed by the spiritual war discussed in this lesson? How do they interact and work on behalf of those who seem bent in the direction of evil?

Tuesday

Read John 16:24; Matthew 17:20-22.

Read the quote from *The Great Controversy*, page 525, that makes what might be the boldest claim in the entire book, saying: "It is a part of God's plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask." Reflect on this idea for a moment and imagine what Ellen White is saying. Is it true that there are things God is "waiting to do" but is not going to do until we ask prayerfully and faithfully? Is it possible that we think too small or pray too little? Consider what bold things you need to be praying for in your life. With your mind on this spiritual war, begin praying boldly for God to do what He won't do unless you ask. Perhaps you might keep a notebook or a journal devoted to praying for such an outpouring of God's power in your life.

Wednesday

Read the verses listed in the *Punch Lines* section of this week's lesson. Put them in order as if you were preaching a sermon on those four texts or using them for a Bible study on the spiritual battle taking place with angels and demons and people. What are some other stories you would add or verses you can recall that might be helpful in sharing what the Bible says about the agencies of good and evil? Take some time to write out an outline or list the texts in the back of your Bible and pray for an opportunity to share what you are praying for or even give a Bible study in the coming week to someone who is struggling with a spiritual battle. Be ready for God to answer your prayer.

Thursday

Read Psalm 91:11.

As you make your way through the coming week how might you live confidently, but purposefully aware of the spiritual friends and enemies that are at work? Some have placed artifacts of angels or reminders written on note cards to stay aware of the unseen helpers and enemies that are close by. It is not insane to talk to God about angels whom God has placed in charge of caring for you nor is it inappropriate to be mindful of the reality that evil angels seek a foothold in the lives of people. What are some "footholds" that you want to surrender and relinquish today? It could be a habit or a form of entertainment. Perhaps it is a relationship that urges you to forget that you are a child of God. Find a tangible way to release your connection to that temptation and cling to the promise of God's plan for your life.

Friday

Read Hebrews 1:14.

Take some time to reflect on how important the angels are in the plan of salvation. Reflect for a while on how they are sent from God's throne room to assist and protect and fight for the rights of humanity to know their Creator and receive the salvation provided by heaven. It is likely the whole of heavenly forces are busy beyond our mind's imagination with moving humanity toward a decision about where they will spend eternity. What is your choice regarding this plan?

this week's reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 31, 32.

**Love Under Fire* is a special adaptation of *The Great Controversy,* created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.