

Mark 5:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:

Analysis

The demoniac's dwelling 'in the tombs' emphasizes isolation and death-association. The detail 'no man could bind him, no, not with chains' stresses supernatural strength. Human restraints failed—physical bondage couldn't contain spiritual problem. This demonstrates demonic oppression's power and human helplessness apart from Christ. The emphatic 'no man...no, not with chains' (οὐδὲ...οὐδὲ) shows repeated, failed attempts. Society tried controlling symptoms without addressing spiritual cause. Only Christ can liberate from demonic bondage. The imagery foreshadows Jesus binding 'strong man' (Satan, Mark 3:27) to plunder his goods.

Historical Context

Ancient world attempted restraining violent individuals with chains—earliest form of institutionalization for mentally ill or violent persons. Greco-Roman and Jewish societies recognized some maladies as demonic. Exorcisms were attempted through various means—incantations, rituals, amulets—usually ineffective. Jesus' simple, authoritative word contrasts with elaborate ancient exorcism rituals. The detail about broken chains emphasizes both demonic power and human impotence. Early church encountered similar cases, consistently demonstrating Christ's superior authority (Acts 16:16-18; 19:13-16). Church history records demonic activity continuing but defeated through Jesus' name.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does society today try controlling spiritual problems through physical means, and why does this fail?
2. What chains (sin, addiction, bondage) seem unbreakable apart from Christ's liberating power?
3. How does this passage demonstrate that spiritual problems require spiritual solutions?

Interlinear Text

ὅς	τὴν	κατοίκησιν	εἶχεν	ἐν	τοῖς	μνήμεοις·	καὶ
Who	G3588	his dwelling	had	among	G3588	the tombs	and
G3739		G2731	G2192	G1722		G3419	G2532
οὐτε	ἀλύσεσιν	οὐδεὶς	ἡδύνατο	αὐτὸν	δῆσαι		
no not	with chains	no man	could	him	bind		
G3777	G254	G3762	G1410	G846	G1210		

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 65:4 (Parallel theme): Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels;

Luke 8:29 (Parallel theme): (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)

