



Conducted by
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“In Matt. 8:28-34 will be found the description of a miracle performed by Jesus in ejecting devils from two men, while in Mark 5:1-20, and in Luke 8:26-40, where the same miracle is recorded, only one man is mentioned. Your comments please on this apparent contradiction.”

There is certainly the appearance of a contradiction or disagreement in the narratives referred to. Matthew says, “There met him two possessed with devils,” while Mark says, “There met him out of the tombs a man”; and again, in Luke we read, “There met him out of the tombs a man.” We might also say that there seems to be a discrepancy in the name given to the location of the place of the incident, for Matthew says, “into the *country of the Gergesenes*” while Mark and Luke talk of “the *country of the Gadarenes*.” The difference is again only apparent, for Jesus came into the region in which the two cities were situated, and whereas Matthew refers to the one, Mark and Luke refer to the other.

With reference to the matter of the “two men” on the one hand and the “certain man” on the other we can but assume that Matthew is being a little more informative than Mark and Luke. It should be emphasised that Mark and Luke do not say that *there was only one man*—had they done so we would then be faced with the fact that we had a contradiction on our hands. Matthew refers to the fact that two men initially, and actually, came forward to Jesus; but the narratives of Mark and Luke are concentrated upon one of the two men, and concentrated to such an extent that they don’t bother to mention the other man.

One of the Two

This is, I suggest, quite understandable when we consider the man under discussion. He must have been of a terrible aspect physically, and indeed he spread terror amongst the townspeople. He wore no clothes and had no house. He had been possessed of devils for some long time and lurked in the caves and tombs in the locality. He had often been bound with chains and fetters but could not be restrained because of his superhuman strength and the fact that he could thus snap the chains. Often he cut himself with stones and was driven by the devil into the desert. He was so exceedingly fierce that no man dare pass by that way.

This was the kind of man, then, who confronted Jesus. When we read of the way in which Jesus handled the situation and restored this demented and wretched man to

his right mind, we can have little wonder that Mark and Luke fail to mention the fact that another man was there.

Rather than cast doubt upon the veracity of Matthew, Mark and Luke, I think that this "apparent discrepancy" strengthens the integrity of these writers: had they set out to deceive the world they surely would have got together and made sure that their separate accounts tallied in every word and detail. This incident is not, of course, an isolated case of one of the gospel writers speaking in a general way while another speaks in a particular or specific way.

Other Instances

For instance (in Matt. 21:1) the writer says that Jesus sent two disciples into the village where they would find "*an ass tied, and a colt with her.*" Mark mentions the colt but says nothing of the dam with her.

Again (in Matt. 15:30) Matthew says that at the sea of Galilee "*great multitudes* came to him: having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet." While it is true that multitudes came, Mark mentions only one of them and describes the curing of "*one that was deaf and had an impediment of speech.*"

Again (in Matt. 20:30) Matthew says that as Jesus departed out of Jericho "*Behold two blind men* sitting by the wayside when they heard Jesus pass by, cried out . . ." Luke mentions only that "*a certain blind man* sat by the wayside begging." Mark says "*Blind Bartimeus, the son of Timeus, sat by the highway side begging.*" Again (in Matt. 21:20) Matthew, in the case of the withered fig tree, says that, "*when the disciples* saw it they marvelled saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away." Mark says, "*And Peter, calling to remembrance, saith unto him, Master, behold the fig tree which thou curdest is withered away.*"

As a final example of this difference of emphasis we could perhaps quote Matt. 21:34 where, in the case of the parable of the man who planted the vineyard, Matthew says that the master sent *his servants* to the husbandman whereas Mark and Luke say merely that the master sent *his servant* to the husbandman.

The instances quoted above, and the one mentioned by the questioner, are not therefore contradictions, but are merely cases of one writer's being less specific or more general than the other. When we take all the accounts together we have as complete a picture of the incident as is necessary for us. The narratives are not in disagreement at any time but are supplementary and complementary to one another.

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