

# **All Power In Heaven And Earth – VBS Series**

## **Level III and IV - Teachers' Notes**

### **Lesson 1 – The Stilling of the Storm**

*Text: Mark 4:35–41; parallel: Matthew 8:23–27; Luke 8:22–25*

#### **Theme: Power to Protect**

Our series deals with five of Jesus' miracles—showing His Divine Power to protect, provide, heal and conquer death and Satan. Discuss miracles with the children. A miracle is anything supernatural, beyond man's ability, something only God can do. In the Bible they are also called *wonders* (astonishment of witnesses), *powers* (might of God), *signs* (indicating God's presence) and *works* (as though natural for God). Even some things we call "natural" are really miracles (childbirth, etc.) in this sense that only God can do them. See if the children can name some Old Testament and New Testament miracles.

#### **Introduction**

Who can perform miracles? Only God. However, God at times used His prophets and apostles as His instruments—Elijah, Peter, Paul, etc.

For what purpose did Jesus perform miracles? Not to impress people but to show He was the Son of God. Because of human reason, many modern Bible critics deny the factuality of miracles, treating them as myths or fables. As they did to Jesus on the cross ("If you are the Son of God, come down"), skeptics and unbelievers today still clamor for miracles as "proof." Christ's resurrection is sufficient proof (Matt. 12:38–42). Since miracles served to attest to God's presence and power before the Scriptures were completed and to confirm the deity of Christ, there is no need for similar miracles today (Luke 16:19–31). Yet God may still perform miracles today to meet individual needs.

#### **Background**

This episode took place halfway through Jesus' earthly ministry. It was a short time after He delivered His Sermon on the Mount. He was leaving Capernaum and was traveling across the Sea of Galilee to the land of the Gadarenes.

The Sea of Galilee is 12 ½ miles long and 7 ½ miles wide at its greatest breadth, and 160 feet deep, its surface 700 ft. below sea level. It is also called the Sea of Chinnereth (from the Hebrew) referring to its heart-shape; it is also known as the Sea of Gennesareth from the name of the plain adjoining the sea on the northwest; it is also named Sea of Tiberias after the city of the same name on the southwest shore built by Herod Agrippa to flatter his Roman overlords by naming it after the Caesar Tiberias.

#### **Text Study**

**Power:** The word conjures up thoughts of physical strength. Harnessed natural power—atomic, nuclear, solar power; the power of machines—"horsepower"; mental ability; even a "strong" personality which has power over others. The greatest power in existence is the power (original "dynamite") of God unto salvation. (Romans 1:16) Who or what else has that power? In this event, Jesus showed His power over the mighty forces of nature, the wind and the waves. When we think of nature's wildest upheavals (hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, storms, floods, etc.) we marvel even more at our Lord's power.

**Event:** Early in Jesus' ministry, an evening after a busy day of teaching, Jesus and His disciples boarded a boat to cross the Sea of Galilee to journey to the other side. As often happens on this small and fairly shallow lake, a violent storm or squall came up suddenly. The Greek word used here is also used to designate a hurricane. This gives us an idea of the ferocity of the storm. The Sea of Galilee is subject to such violent

storms, because the surrounding mountains act as gigantic funnels. The winds come down suddenly and often when the sky is perfectly clear.

The ship began to take on water from the high waves. A weary and worn Jesus was asleep in the back of the boat. Finally, even the disciples, experienced sailors themselves, frantically roused Him. "Master, don't you care that we're dying?" Showing His power, Jesus with one word (original) halted the outward storm on the sea and then with a loving rebuke—"Why are you so afraid?" calmed the inner storm within their hearts.

### **Application**

- ☐ Show how this event shows both the humanity and divinity of Jesus.
- ☐ Show children how people may want to help us, but can't because their power is limited in contrast. Jesus' power and His desire to protect and help are unlimited. Parents, friends, pastors and teachers, doctors and nurses, policemen and firemen all help us, but their help is limited; they can only do so much.
- ☐ Discuss children's fears and phobias, e.g. darkness, being alone, strangers, getting lost, war, being kidnapped, etc. Are there any of them God can't handle?
- ☐ Jesus needed to lovingly rebuke His disciples for their lack of faith. So also we need to be strengthened to remember that He is in control of all situations. Nothing catches our God off guard.
- ☐ What is a miracle? Have the children discuss this before showing what it is—anything supernatural or beyond human ability. Literally—"a marvelous event which causes wonder." About thirty-five miracles of Jesus are recorded in the four Gospels. But Jesus undoubtedly performed more (John 20:31). Have the children list as many miracles of Jesus as they can. Discuss why Jesus performed them. (See Introduction.)

### **Bible References**

- ☐ Psalm 91: An excellent Psalm depicting the Lord's protective hand. Read and explain some of the verses.
- ☐ Psalm 46:1-2: Life's storms will not hurt us if we take refuge in the Lord.
- ☐ Psalm 107:23-43: The LORD watches over them that are on the sea as He controls the wind and the waves. May we give thanks to the LORD!
- ☐ Matthew 6:24-34: Discuss worry which is a lack of trust in God and His ability to lovingly control and protect His children. Worry changes nothing; it hurts and doesn't help us. It is useless and sinful.

### **Hymn References**

649, 651, 427, 370

## **Lesson 2 – The Feeding of the Five Thousand**

*Text: John 6:1–13; parallel: Mark 6:30–44; Luke 9:10–17; Matthew 14:13–21*

### **Theme: Power to Provide**

#### **Introduction**

The Power of Jesus is in His Word. Through His Word He creates faith in our hearts. Through His Word He empowers faith to grow and become strong in our hearts. Through His Word He provides for our material needs each day. Jesus' word was the power behind the miracle in this account, providing the evening meal for thousands out of so little. Jesus used His Word to create faith in the hearts of the men, women, and children listening to Him tell of the Kingdom of Heaven that afternoon. His power to provide food for so many was the result of a visible miracle. His power to create faith in the hearts of the listeners was the result of an invisible miracle. The visible miracle, done by the power of His Word, was a means Jesus used to show the people that His power was divine. It demonstrated that if He could feed many out of little, then He could create faith where none had existed before. Jesus also used this miracle to further teach the twelve disciples that His divine power could provide what man's reason thought impossible.

The lesson the twelve learned was that complete trust is necessary for every follower of Christ. Many times we will feel helpless, as did the disciples, as we struggle with our earthly needs. The Lord Jesus can and will provide. Put your faith in His Power. Many times we will feel helpless and despondent, as did the disciples, while we do His Kingdom work and see what appears to be such little progress. The Lord Jesus can and will provide. Put your faith in His Power. Trust Him completely for His Power is in HIS WORD, and His Word is in YOUR POWER.

#### **Background**

The Sea of Galilee is a lake some sixty miles from Jerusalem. It is 80-160 ft. in depth and contains many different varieties of fish in abundance. The Jordan River flows out of the lake on the south. The waters are blue and clean. Busy life surrounded the lake in Jesus' time. There were nine cities (average population of 15,000) that bordered it. It centered a highway of rich trade traffic between Damascus and the Mediterranean Sea. Its hot springs brought many to be healed. Industries thrived there: agriculture, fruit, dyeing, tanning, boat-building, fishing, and fish curing. Fishing and trading were very profitable. Jesus did most of His miracles on and around this lake. Eighteen of about thirty-five miracles were done in this vicinity.

This event took place shortly after the death of John the Baptist.

#### **Text Study**

Vs. 1– During this period of His ministry, Jesus often withdrew from the crowds. Jesus' death was a little over a year away. Opposition to Jesus was growing in Galilee. Jesus rebuked the crowd (in later verses of John 6) for their materialism and demand for more and more miracles. As Jesus continued to preach concerning His Messiahship, many once professing disciples refused to follow Him anymore (see v. 66). The crowds continued to grow more demanding and the opponents of Jesus more insistent on the need for His death. But Jesus' hour had not yet come. Therefore He withdrew out of the public eye more often, so that His enemies could not bring about His death at their choosing but had to wait for His time as preordained by His Father. Seeking a private time out of the public eye, Jesus had crossed the Sea of Galilee from Capernaum to the northeast shore.

Vs. 2 – The people followed for the wrong reason. They could not see the real reason for Jesus' miracles: to prove that He was the Son of God, the Messiah. Rather, they were intent on using His power for their material benefit (i.e. healing, feeding, etc.). It is important to understand why they followed Him around the lake, to further understand why later on that evening their intention was to make Him their king, and why when

He refused to be that king, they would oppose Him.

Vs. 3-4 – Jesus had a few hours alone with His disciples before the crowd reached them. Time for them to report to Him all they had done and taught on their recent mission. John mentioned the Jewish Passover Feast at this time, because after His miracle, it would be the intent of the crowd to kidnap Jesus and carry Him back to Jerusalem and proclaim Him king to all those in that city for the festival.

Vs. 5-6 – Jesus was thinking far ahead of the disciples. He knew there would be a problem concerning feeding all these people, so as He and the twelve saw the crowd approaching in the distance, He asked Philip this question. Jesus already knew what He would do, so this was clearly to test Philip and the others. They would have hours to think about this question and ask Jesus what He was considering doing.

Vs. 7 – In Mark 6:37, Jesus tells the twelve to get something for the crowd to eat. They answered that enough food to feed the crowd would take eight months of a man's wages. Philip had answered Jesus' question in John 6:5 with the answer that eight months' wages would not even be enough for each to have one bite. Philip figured only "dollars and cents." It did not enter his mind that the Almighty Lord was among them. No doubt Philip had passed Jesus' question and his own answer on to the disciples. This was what Jesus had intended, for He wished to test them all. So while He preached and healed, they had time to think about what He meant by His original question.

Vs. 8-9 – All failed the test. Their faith did not come to the correct solution; "Jesus will feed the crowd with His almighty power!" That is what He meant when He asked, "Where should we buy bread?" Their solution was, "This is impossible!" In Matthew we hear them telling Jesus to send the people away to buy bread in the surrounding villages. Then Jesus tells them not to send them away, but to give them something to eat. In Mark we hear Him telling the twelve to search through the crowd and see how much food was available. This is when Andrew came forward with his pitiful find of five small loaves of barley bread and two small fish. Nowhere near enough! Jesus' questions and commands magnified their helplessness, and they still did not see the solution. They were too busy trying to solve this problem from their own human perspective and did not see it from Jesus' perspective, with the eyes of faith.

Vs. 10 – Jesus took the loaves and fish and told the disciples to seat the people on the grass. There were 5,000 men in addition to the women and children, in all probably about 10,000 people. They sat in groups of 100's and 50's with open aisles or lanes left to make distribution of food easier.

Vs. 11 – Jesus gave thanks first! Then He distributed the pieces of bread and fish broken off from the original loaves and fish. The disciples passed the food out to the people, as much as they wanted. The food continued to multiply until no more was needed. How this differed from the comment of the twelve, "not enough for even each to have one bite!"

Vs. 12-13 – Twelve baskets (woven reed baskets) filled with leftover pieces of bread were gathered later. The Lord commanded them not to let any go to waste (good stewardship of the Lord's blessings). What a marvelous bounty was provided out of so little by the POWER of HIS WORD!

## **Application**

Jesus' power to provide was clearly shown to the twelve disciples. Why had they not seen the solution as they searched and searched for ways to solve this problem? They were not looking with eyes of faith, but rather with their sinful reason. The disciples could not come up with the answer Jesus wanted to hear, the answer that was right in front of them all the time. They did not pass the test, but through their failure they learned a valuable lesson about implicit trust in Jesus to provide for their needs. We need to look with eyes of faith when we are confronted with similar "hopeless" situations. Not enough money to pay all the bills and feed and clothe the family? We rush about, worry ourselves sick, and become stressed out, affecting not only our own physical and mental health, but that of our family members. Whether we be father, mother, son, or daughter, worrying about our problems—whether material or spiritual—will only lead to dead-end solutions because our eyes are blind to the real solutions. We need to trust in Jesus' power to provide. He first provides our faith by the Power of His Word, and then provides all earthly needs. Eyes of faith can see this, and eyes of faith know that Jesus is the solution to all problems. The faith that He showed the disciples they needed to use is the same faith that He

shows us we need to use! Trust in His power to provide! "Cast all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." (I Pet. 5:7)

Discuss with the children how Jesus takes care of our physical needs—either directly or indirectly. Jesus uses natural means to care for us: crops growing in the fields, sunshine, rain, ability for seeds to grow, parents providing food, clothes and shelter, strength and talents to be able to earn money for needed goods. Explain the "daily bread" of the Lord's Prayer. Luther's explanation of the Fourth Petition: "daily bread includes everything that we need for our bodily well-being. It includes food, drink, clothes, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money and goods, a godly husband or wife, devout children, good workers, honest and faithful leaders, good government, good weather, peace, health, law and order, an honorable name, faithful friends, trustworthy neighbors and things like that."

Jesus gave thanks to His Father for the food. We should remember at all times to do the same. All good things come from Him. Discuss table prayers.

### **Bible References**

- ☐ Bring to mind that the disciples should have remembered the miraculous feeding of the Children of Israel as they wandered in the desert for forty years. Manna in the morning and quail in the evening every day was not a natural occurrence. Their water supply was often a direct miracle by God through the hand of Moses also (Striking the rock, sweetening the water, etc.). We, too, should be taught to remember the Old Testament and New Testament miracles to calm our fears in times of worry about where the next meal will come from.
- ☐ The Lord very often supplied Elijah with daily bread by unusual means, too. Recall the lesson on the ravens by the brook and the flour and oil jars never emptying while Elijah was living with the widow of Zarephath.
- ☐ Ps. 145:15 – "You give them their food in due season."
- ☐ Ps. 37:25 – "I have not seen the righteous forsaken."
- ☐ Matt. 1:24–34 – "...do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink..."
- ☐ Matt. 15:32–34 – Jesus also fed 4,000 men with seven loaves and a few fish.

### **Hymn References**

567, 569, 31, 429

## Lesson 3 – The Healing of Blind Bartimaeus

*Text: Mark 10:46–52; parallel: Luke 18:35–43; Matthew 20:29–34*

### **Theme: Power to Heal**

### **Introduction**

Close your eyes and pretend you are unable to see. What do we call this when we are not able to use our eyes to see? Have someone point you in the direction of a door and see if you can find your way, without peeking! How easy or hard is it? Still pretending, suppose you hear of a good doctor in town who knows some new facts about blindness and has done some trial experiments on people who are blind, helping them to see. What would you want very much to do? Would anything stop you? Why not?

### **Background**

Jesus was on His final journey to Jerusalem during the last weeks of His physical life on earth, around 30 AD.

This event took place near Jericho—just outside the walls of the town—about 20 miles northeast of Jerusalem. (locate on map) This city is not far from the Jordan River. There is an Old Jericho and a New Jericho (Joshua 6—more about this forthcoming). New Jericho was the site of a Roman custom house (import or export taxes) and was probably the hometown of Zacchaeus (Luke 19).

People in our lesson include Jesus, also referred to as Lord and Master. He is True Man—Son of David, and also True God—showing His Power and worthy of adoration and praise. Bartimaeus is a blind beggar, a poor man, whose father was Timaeus. There is little else known of either father or son.

### **Text Study**

Differences in wording and possible understandings from the other accounts:

1. Matthew says “as they departed from Jericho,” Mark says, “then they came to Jericho.” And as they went out of Jericho, Matthew and Mark (being Jewish) refer to Old Jericho, which Jesus was leaving. Luke notes, “coming near Jericho...” Luke wrote to the Gentiles and speaks of New Jericho which Herod the Great had built on a new site about two miles away. Some scholars feel that the request for healing was made on the way in; the miracle was performed on the way out. Or that a man was healed on the way in, another was healed on the way out. (Augustine)

2. Matthew speaks of “two blind men,” while Luke says, “a certain blind man.” Mark gives the name and writes, “sat by the road begging.” Mark and Luke do not rule out another man; but they are interested only in telling the story of the one. Matthew is very general, while Mark and Luke are more specific. Bartimaeus may have stood out more, perhaps as the spokesman or because he was known to Mark’s readers.

V. 47 – Bartimaeus evidently believed that Jesus was the Messiah. Note the title he gives to Jesus: “Jesus, SON OF DAVID,...” He also believed that Jesus could heal him. He knew he did not deserve help from Jesus, for he cried out for “mercy,” literally “pity.”

V. 48 – He did not give up praying to Jesus, even though the people tried to stop him. The Lord was pleased with his persistence (Matt. 7:7–8, Psalm 50:15).

V. 51 – Jesus spoke directly to him, thereby increasing his faith and providing Bartimaeus an opportunity to publicly testify to his faith by his request. Bartimaeus showed he believed Jesus could heal him, “Rabboni, that I may receive my sight.”

V. 52 – Jesus saw Bartimaeus’ faith and immediately healed Him (Matt. 21:22).

## **Application**

- ☐ We are all to be beggars of God's grace. Jesus is always ready to hear our prayers and needs. In prayer we have the full reserve of God's healing power available to us. Remember Hezekiah—God healed him and lengthened his life. Prayer works (James 1:13–16). The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. The woman of Canaan is an example of persistent prayer (Matt. 15:21; Matt. 7:7,8; Psalm 50:15).
- ☐ Talk to the children about peer pressure. We should not be silent about our faith (Matthew 10:32-43).
- ☐ Discuss the power of faith—the object of faith is Christ. Faith doesn't do the work, but it grabs hold of Him who is all-powerful. Faith rests (leans upon) God.
- ☐ Discuss why sickness comes. It is the general result of sin and not because of any particular sin (John 9).
- ☐ We should remember to glorify God and in so doing we may lead others to do so also. Giving thanks is proper and God-pleasing. (Psalm 103:1-5; Psalm 100:4; Luke 17:16 ff.)
- ☐ God's mercy and kindness never stop. Therefore, like the blind men, we can go to Him again and again for any and all of our troubles and needs. We can ask Jesus for help with any and all problems.
- ☐ Sometimes God doesn't heal us, why? II Cor. 12:7-10 – Paul's thorn in the flesh.
- ☐ The question Jesus asked Bartimaeus, "What do you want Me to do?" was a test of his faith. A question to bring about a response that Jesus could already see in his heart, but the people around him couldn't. What would we answer if Jesus said to us, "What do you want Me to do for you?"
- ☐ The words of Jesus, "go your way" are also a test. What way will we go after all that Jesus has done for us? (John 6:67–69)

## **Bible References**

- ☐ Psalm 50:15, 116:2, 145:18–19;
- ☐ Matt. 7:7–8; See application.

## **Hymn References**

409, 520, 433, 459

# Lesson 4 – The Raising of Lazarus From the Dead

*Text: John 11:1,3,17,20–44*

## **Theme: Power over Death**

### **Introduction**

Shortly before His ascension into heaven Jesus reminded His disciples “All authority (power) has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” We know from Scripture that Jesus had performed many signs and wonders in demonstration of this fact. Through these miraculous signs and wonders all should come to know that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the only begotten Son of God, the King of Kings. While the followers of Jesus take heart and receive great comfort from all of this, there are, however, those who only grow more bitter in their opposition to Jesus.

The following quote is offered to place the miracle of the raising of Lazarus from the dead into perspective. “The fourth Gospel has been called the ‘Book of Signs.’ John groups his account of Jesus’ public ministry before the Passion around six great signs or miracles. Three of these were performed in Galilee: the turning of water into wine in chapter 2, the healing of the nobleman’s son in chapter 4, and the feeding of the five thousand in chapter 6. Three were performed in Judea: the restoration of the sick at Bethesda, chapter 5, the healing of the man born blind, chapter 9, and the raising of Lazarus, chapter 11. These signs may be considered in a climatic or ascending relation, one to the others. The opposition to Jesus waxes greater and more bitter: therefore, His signs become more marvelous and reveal His majesty with an ever greater glory and effulgence. There is a battle, as it were, between light and the darkness. Jesus seeks to save His opponents, but they despise and repudiate Him. Chapter 11 in John forms the transition to the story of the Passion. For His great miracle in this chapter furnishes an opportunity for the most violent outbreak on the part of His adversaries, with the result that they decide to take His life.” Ylvisaker, *The Gospels*, pp.512–513.

Certainly the power of Jesus was demonstrated in a marvelous way when He raised Lazarus from the dead. “Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him.” (John 11:45). But there were others, as the quote from Ylvisaker mentions above, who reacted quite differently. “But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, ‘What shall we do? For this man works many signs. If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.’ (John 11:46–48). Caiaphas the high priest then suggested that Jesus should be put to death, and we hear, “Then from that day on they plotted to put Him to death.” (John 11:53).

That Jesus should be put to death for raising Lazarus from the dead tells us a great deal about those who would so plot. It becomes plainly evident that they were impressed with nothing but their own prominence.

Jesus has power over death. Blessed are those who are turned to Him. Woe to those who turn away from Him.

### **Background**

The raising of Lazarus from the dead took place about two months prior to the time when Jesus was put to death in Jerusalem.

This miracle took place in Bethany where Lazarus and his sisters Mary and Martha lived. Bethany is about two miles east of Jerusalem. At the time Jesus received word from Mary and Martha about the illness of Lazarus, He was some distance away east of the Jordan River (John 10:40). When Jesus told His disciples that He was ready to go back to Judea to the city of Bethany, His disciples were reluctant (John 11:7–16), because shortly before, some in Jerusalem had wanted to stone Jesus (John 10:31–39).



## **Text Study**

Vs. 1, 3 – Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, was stricken with an illness which was severe enough to prompt them to send word to Jesus. It is noteworthy that they knew where Jesus was at this time. From John 10, we know Jesus had left Judea because of the hostile opposition that He had encountered in Jerusalem (John 10:39-40). It is quite evident that Jesus had been previously acquainted with Mary and Martha. In John 11:3, we hear that the sisters sent the following message to Jesus: “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.” It is apparent that Jesus had also developed a close relationship with Lazarus. That this family, wanting to send a message to Jesus, presently knew His whereabouts some distance away is added testimony to their close relationship with Jesus.

Vs. 17 – When Jesus and His disciples arrived in Bethany, Lazarus was already dead and buried. This did not surprise Jesus. The sickness of Lazarus, and what would happen subsequently in connection with the sickness, was completely understood by Jesus (John 11:4-7, 11-16). Jesus had timed his arrival in Bethany to follow the death of Lazarus, and, of course, He had a most important reason for doing so.

Vs. 20-27 – Martha, upon hearing of Jesus’ coming, did not wait for Him to arrive but rushed out to meet Him. How comforting the presence of Jesus must have been for her under the circumstances. Stating that she did not believe that Lazarus would have died had Jesus been there, she also added that she knew that God will give Jesus anything He asked. Martha was grieving for her brother, yet her faith in her Lord and Savior was strong indeed. Jesus replied to Martha that her brother will rise again. Martha thought this to be a reference to the resurrection on the last day, and agreed. Jesus then spoke to her those words which have become so well known: “I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me, though He may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.” What a beautiful testimony from the lips of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to the eternal life His followers shall receive! Jesus asked Martha if she believed this. Martha responded, “Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, Who is to come into the world.” Certainly, a Spirit-worked confession from Martha. As she correctly identified Jesus it was also a testimony to her belief that eternal life can only be found in the Name of the Son of God.

Vs. 28-31 – We cannot doubt that Martha was greatly comforted by her Lord as she had gone out to meet Him. We know that Martha had met Jesus prior to His coming into the city of Bethany (John 11:30). Martha then returned to the city and informed Mary that Jesus was near and wanted to see her. Upon hearing this, Mary went quickly to where Jesus was. Her eagerness, not unlike that of Martha, to see Jesus can be attributed to her longing for the comforting presence of her Lord.

Vs. 32-37 – Mary, too, upon coming to Jesus stated that she believed Lazarus would not have died, had Jesus been there. When Mary had come to Jesus, other mourners had followed her. When Jesus saw Mary and the other mourners weeping, we are told that “He groaned in the spirit and was troubled.” Jesus sympathized with the mourners because of the effect the death of Lazarus had on them. Death needed to be defeated, and Jesus had come to win that victory at no small cost. While winning the victory over death, Jesus felt very deeply for those affected by it. When Jesus inquired about the burial site He was invited to come and see it. Jesus wept. This further shows His compassion for the struggle of humanity in the face of death. Some take Jesus’ weeping as a sign of His great love for Lazarus. We know that Jesus loved Lazarus. Others among the mourners wondered why if Jesus could restore sight to the blind, He could not also have prevented Lazarus from dying. Whether the question is motivated by simple curiosity or hostile intent, the answer would come soon enough. And when it did, it should have been plain to all that Jesus had a reason for what He would do in connection with Lazarus, and when He would do it.

Vs. 38-44 – As Jesus approached the tomb of Lazarus, we hear that He was “again groaning in Himself.” Undoubtedly He was still feeling the burden of death for His friends from Bethany, as well as for all of mankind. But Jesus had come to do something about death as He would soon demonstrate. Jesus now directed that the stone should be rolled away from Lazarus’ tomb. Martha voiced her reluctance in that Lazarus had been dead for four days, not relishing what she believed would be the sight and smell of her brother’s decomposing body. Once again there was a need for her fear to be overcome by the Word of her Lord. Jesus reminded her, “Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?”

It was for this reason that Jesus had delayed coming to Bethany until after the death of Lazarus. What they would now witness would serve to glorify the heavenly Father, and His only begotten Son. They then took away the stone from the tomb. Those standing by saw Jesus giving thanks to the Father for hearing His prayer, especially that those who would now witness this miracle would know that Jesus has been sent from the Father, that He and the Father are One. Jesus then cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" At the command of Jesus, Lazarus who had been dead for four days, was raised from the dead. Alive, Lazarus walked out of the grave. One of Jesus' most notable miracles had now taken place and had been witnessed by many. It is not hard to imagine the joyful reunion that then took place between sisters and their brother. Tears of joy would replace tears of sorrow. We now know why Jesus—when first hearing of the illness of Lazarus—had said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." (John 11:4)

## Application

- ❑ Disciples of Jesus learn through His Word that they are to follow Him in all things. They look to Jesus in times of both joy and sorrow. Mary, Martha and Lazarus were followers of Jesus. How quickly the sisters turned to Jesus when Lazarus became ill! We, too, should quickly turn to Jesus in all things. (Cf. Heb. 4:14–16; I Pet. 5:7)
- ❑ We know that our will is not always God's will. That is why we pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy will be done." As we come to our Lord in prayer, whatever we are asking for, we will want to ask that God's will be done above all else. Jesus heard Mary and Martha's request for help for Lazarus. And Jesus did help, but in His own time and in His own way. Jesus will always be with His people and do what is best for their eventual eternal good. (Cf. Psalm 50:15, Ps. 34:19; Matt. 11:28; Romans 8:28–39)
- ❑ From the time of creation God had warned that death would be the consequence of disobedience to His Holy Will. Now that all are sinners, all die. Death seems to be as much feared as anything in this life. Nevertheless, Jesus brings an answer for the curse of death: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though He may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." JESUS HAS POWER OVER DEATH! (Cf. John 3:16; John 5:24; I Cor. 15:20–23, 35–58; Col. 3:1–3; I Pet. 1:3–5)
- ❑ Martha made a beautiful confession about eternal life to be found in Jesus when she said: "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, Who is to come into the world." With the entrance of sin, physical death and eternal separation from God became reality for mankind. Yet God in His grace and mercy did not abandon mankind to this fate, but gave His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, as the solution to this problem. Martha was correct in confessing that JESUS HAS POWER OVER DEATH, and that eternal life comes through Him. (Cf. John 3:16; John 5:24; John 14:1–6; Acts 4:10–12)
- ❑ The raising of Lazarus from the dead mightily evidences that JESUS HAS POWER OVER DEATH. We know that the Good News of the Gospel, salvation through Jesus Christ, is meant for and needed by all people. May God use us to share this Good News with others. May God grant that we will be able to point people to the Word so that they can hear all about Jesus and believe in Him also.
- ❑ We see the power of the Word of Jesus. He simply said, "Lazarus, come forth!" And Lazarus, by the power of Jesus' word, came alive. This is a good picture of spiritually dead mankind. It is God's powerful Gospel that brings us to faith, not man's own ability to make his decision for Christ.
- ❑ In this Bible lesson we see both the divine and human nature of our Savior united very closely. Jesus knew Lazarus would die, He knew of His own death (omniscience), and He showed His power over death (omnipotence). At the same time we see the human nature of Jesus—He was moved to groaning and tears. One other time in Scripture we are told of Jesus crying when He wept over Jerusalem as they rejected Him (Luke 19:41). Discuss why Jesus had to be both True God and True Man to be our Savior. True God – 1) ransomed all souls by His death as our payment as the perfect sacrifice for our sins 2) overcame death and the devil for us; he conquered all of our enemies. True Man–1) Placed under God's Law and lived a life of obedience as our righteousness. 2) Died on the cross as our substitute.

### ***Bible References***

- ☐ John 5:21-29
- ☐ I Cor. 15
- ☐ I Thess. 4:13-18

### ***Hymn References***

196, 201, 203, 206, 409: 3-4, 602

## Lesson 5 – The Curing of the Demoniac

*Text: Mark 5:1–20; Parallel: Matthew 8:28–34; Luke 8:26–39*

### **Theme: Power over Devils**

### **Introduction**

*Prayer:* Lord Jesus, we thank You for the many testimonies in the Bible which reveal and prove that You are indeed true God. We praise You for the help that You gave to those who needed Your help. Teach us and help us always to appreciate that You are our Lord and Savior who has power to help us in any kind of trouble that may come upon us. Do not let us be ashamed and frightened to tell others in this world what great things You have done, so that they also may believe and be saved from their sin and from the power of the Devil. We ask this in Your saving name, Amen.

Q. How did Jesus' disciples react when He had stilled the storm? A. Amazement.

Q. Little by little, what were they beginning to realize about Jesus? A. That He was indeed the Son of God.

Q. In that episode of the storm, over what forces did Jesus demonstrate He had authority? A. Nature.

### **Background**

*Time:* In the middle of Jesus' public ministry. It happened the same day, right after the calming of the storm on the Sea of Galilee, and about ½ year before the feeding of the 5000. Jesus had found little rest on the other side of the sea, for there was work to be done and souls to be sought wherever He went.

*Place:* Mark calls it the country of the "Gerasenes;" Matthew and Luke, "Gadarenes." It seems likely that the place referred to is Gerasa, a city of Decapolis, about fifty miles SSE of the Sea of Galilee, halfway to the Dead Sea. It is also highly improbable that it was Gadera to which Jesus came, which is a city about seven miles SSE of the Sea of Galilee. The city of Gergesa, however, lay right on the Galilean Sea at about a mid-point on its eastern shore. The whole region or area southeast of the Sea of Galilee was rather indiscriminately called that of the Gaderenes or Garasenes, after the two cities in this area. The whole area or district was known as Decapolis. Decapolis itself was a federation of ten cities conquered by Alexander the Great of Macedon, who had been instrumental in the spread of Greek culture. Its population was mixed and predominantly heathen.

### **Text Study**

Vs. 2 – "man with an unclean spirit" – Matthew says there were two demoniacs. Probably Mark and Luke focus on one because he was the more violent of the two. Maybe he was the spokesman. He was dangerous, exceedingly fierce, attacking and pouncing upon any passerby not careful enough to avoid his territory. He was also so strong that no man had strength to tame him; he repeatedly broke chains and fetters with which he had been bound. His sorry condition is further described for us: he lived completely naked; he frequently struck and cut/mutilated himself with sharp stones; he screamed and made such awful noises to make even the bravest heart shudder with fright.

You have heard of "the devil and all his angels." The demons who possessed this man were Satan's henchmen who do his bidding in order to frustrate and hinder the Lord's work for the welfare of men. They were enemies of Christ. They had so completely invaded and taken control of the personality, body, and soul of this poor man, that they even spoke and acted through him. He did not have control over what he said and did.

Now behold: Jesus is the very Son of God. He had come to earth to challenge the devil and his supernatural world of evil. Q. What was predicted and promised in Gen. 3:15? A. A battle royal between the "Head Crusher" and the "heel-bruise!" Jesus challenged Satan, and the devil responded, helping to explain the

outburst of demon-possession during the time of Jesus' earthly ministry, when Satan tried his utmost to destroy God's plan of salvation through Jesus. The question was, would Jesus be able to handle these demons?

"out of the tombs"— This demon possessed man lived in the hand-hewn or natural caves in the hills and cliffs along the lakeshore. They were places of burial and cemeteries, avoided usually by the general populace, but affording shelter to robbers and outcasts.

Vs. 7 – "What have I to do with You, etc.?" – Even the devil knows that there is a God. And these demons knew well enough that Jesus is the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world. Yet, being Satan's henchmen, they poisoned men's souls. The possessed man fell on his knees. This was not an act of worship, for demons do not worship God. These demons were bowing before the true God in the person of Jesus against their will. They were forced to recognize that God had power over them!

"Have you come here to torment us before the time?" (Matthew 8:29) They "knew" that Jesus was the Son of God, and they "trembled," They were even then awaiting Judgment Day with fearful apprehension. They quivered at the very sight of their appointed Judge, fearing some extraordinary and premature punishment for having tormented these two men. Therefore, they wanted to get rid of Jesus. Hell is their rightful home, but in the time up to Judgment Day they have been given God's permission to torture and afflict creatures on earth (Job). They feared that Jesus would consign them forever to the depths of hellish torment before Judgment Day arrives. What bullies they were, tormenting others but afraid of it themselves! Yet, this is exactly a portion of what Jesus came to earth to do. On Judgment Day their place of torment will become a dungeon from which there is no escape.

Vs. 9 – "What is your name?"— Jesus did not ask the question because He needed to identify the demons, but He asked it so that the possessed victim and the bystanders might profit from the answer which the demons were compelled to give.

"My name is legion"— A legion was a division of the Roman army (about 6,000 men). Roman legions were a common sight in this area. Here the name legion tells us that it was not just one, but very, very many demons which had taken possession of this man. (Jesus had cast seven demons out of Mary Magdalene.) Members of a Roman legion were noted the world over for their fighting ability and 'iron discipline.' This name gives an indication that demons are a most powerful force for evil, although not all-powerful!

"We are many"— Where did these demons come from, anyway? Shortly after his creation, the good angel Satan, rebelled against God his creator and seduced and convinced many other angels to likewise rebel and fight against God. God cast them out of their home in heaven. They came to earth, where Satan tempted Adam and Eve with disastrous consequences for all mankind (original sin), and became the "rulers of the darkness of this world." Jesus, however, is the Light of the world. Does light have power over darkness? Does Jesus have power over evil spirits?

Vs. 10 – "out of the country"— Though the devil walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, these demons begged Jesus for a favor. What a strange thing to see! Perhaps because of the heathen population, these demons found it fertile ground for their devilish activity. They didn't want to be made to leave.

Vs. 11 – "large herd of swine"— The raising of pigs and their use for food was prohibited for the Jews. They were "unclean" animals (Jewish ceremonial law). If the owners of the pigs were Jewish, then they had broken God's laws by not observing the Mosaic Law. If the owners were Gentiles (people not bound by this law), then they were still forbidden to have pigs on Jewish land.

There were 2,000 swine and probably many more demons. Remember, a legion is 6,000 soldiers. Because the legion of evil spirits knew that Jesus would make them come out of the men and would not give permission to enter into and possess another human being, they looked for something else to torture and destroy. Again they begged Jesus to be permitted to enter the poor pigs, anything but to be sent to their future destination: suffering in hell.

Think of how evil Satan is and how he delights in causing pain. If he cannot torture humans, and destroy them, then he even resorts to invading and torturing poor animals. That is all he thinks about—being bad, being

evil, hurting and causing anguish. For the devil is a murderer from the beginning. Q. Who did he kill? A. Adam and Eve. Here the demons first had to ask permission. They cannot do anything without God's permission. Q. What does this tell us? A. They do not have power equal to or greater than God's.

Vs. 13 – “And at once Jesus gave them permission” – Jesus wanted the Gergesene people to realize what a very great miracle was being done and that they were witnessing the power of God in action.

“herd ran violently down the steep place into the sea and were drowned in the sea” – The result of the demons entering the pigs: With a mighty roar and many grunts, squeals and oinks, the herd charged down the steep bank and into the lake. We might wonder if it was not a very stupid request on the part of the demons, i.e., to enter pigs that would drown? But they probably would not have been content to abide in the pigs forever. And look at the eventual result; first, they got to stay in the country from which they did not want to leave; and secondly, Jesus Himself was asked by the people to leave their country.

What about the property rights of the pigs' owners and the loss of their swine? Was not this rather unfair? The fact is that the world belongs to God. He can give and He can take away. And the truth is that the souls of two men are worth more than 2,000 hunks of bacon—on—the—hoof. The two were to be convinced of their delivery; witnesses were to see the power of God over Satan, and perhaps this was also allowed for the sake of the owners. If they were Jewish, they had violated God's law, and destruction of their pigs was deserved as a punishment. If they were Gentiles, the pigs were still on Jewish territory. The loss was again deserved, and should have vividly portrayed them their choice between “stuff and things,” and Jesus who proved His power over devils. It should have jolted them.

Vs. 14 – “Now those who fed the swine fled” – The herders were so terrified at this action of the animals that they fled into the city to inform the owners.

“And they went out to see” – perhaps even with thoughts of revenge on Him who had caused such destruction, certainly with inquisitive minds to see for themselves what had happened. The truth was soon found out. He who had been a terror to the whole country now sat quietly; he who was formerly naked was now clothed; he who had raved and foamed in madness was now sane and of normal mind. The people heard the story and saw the cure and subsequent loss of pigs. They were privileged to behold face to face Him who has power to deliver from the clutches of Satan. They should have been filled with fear and awe and praised the LORD.

Vs. 17 – “They began to plead with Him to depart” – How sad indeed! No one asked the Lord Jesus to stay. No one invited Him home for lunch. Not one of the crowd praised or thanked Jesus for what He had done. They all preferred earthly goods to that heavenly treasure which Jesus offered. Instead of contemplating the miracle and surrendering in faith to God's grace, they proved just how tightly Satan can hold and rule in human hearts. Their eyes were not opened. They remained children of darkness and asked the Light of the world to leave. They rejected their day of salvation!

Vs. 18 – “And when He got into the boat” – Jesus' reaction: He re-embarked. He did not need much urging. Since the people themselves showed such a hostile reaction and did not consider themselves worthy of eternal life, He left them with the dead animals which they loved more than Him. The Gergasenes have numerous followers today, who do not heed the words of truth and wisdom: “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you.”

“begged Him that he might be with Him” – The multitudes wanted Jesus gone, but the cured demoniac asked to stay with Him, to become a regular disciple. He did not fear the return of the demons, for now he knew Jesus was the Healer of body and soul.

“Jesus did not permit him” – Jesus refused his petition, but did not dispense with his services. If the man were a Gentile, the refusal may be explained, that while Jesus certainly did not reject Gentiles—salvation was for them also—yet He first came to people of His own flesh: Jews. The time was not yet when the Gospel should go forth to non-Jews. For this reason no Gentile was admitted into His close band of disciples.

Yet Jesus commissioned the man as the first missionary to the heathen of those parts. He was authorized to tell his family and friends of the great deeds and great blessings of his God and especially of the great mercy God had bestowed upon him.

Vs. 20 – “he departed and began to proclaim...all that Jesus had done for him.” He yielded obediently to Jesus. The population had opportunity to hear about the great Prophet and Healer who had power over devils and who brought the blessings of salvation. The former demoniac gives us an example in the unquestioning obedience of faith, and how one person can affect the lives of many.

## **Application**

- ☐ The devil and his henchmen have power. He is called prince of darkness, ruler of this world. He is a murderer and a liar. He’s deceitful and tricky (temptation in Eden). He’s a roaring lion seeking to devour us. He’s much too strong for us to fight him alone. Q. How especially does he today seek to rule us? A. Unbelief, sin, and his false prophets.
- ☐ Jesus has power and authority over demons because He is the Son of God, and God is almighty. When especially did Jesus take on Satan and defeat Him? How in this event did Jesus force demons to leave and obey? Not by magic, holy water, or trickery, but by the power of His Word. He showed that His Word was powerful over Satan at His temptation by Satan. (Jesus is called The Word.) Since Jesus is True God, He can help everyone with problems. Through His Word we can prevail against Satan when he roars against us. His Word (the Bible) is our armor and shield (Hymn 262:3). Jesus gives His followers strength amid our trials and troubles. He is our shield for protection against the devil and all his wickedness. If Jesus could help the demoniac man, He can also help us. Where does it say that Jesus has all power? (Matthew 28) How did He show it? If Jesus is on our side (262:4) who or what can stand against us? Who can defeat us? If Jesus is on our side, will not all things work for our good? (Romans 8)
- ☐ Mission work—What was the cured man authorized to do? What does almighty God enable all soldiers in His army of grace to do? (Matthew 28)
- ☐ Demon possession today? It is possible, especially in heathen nations and among heathen people who know nothing of the true God and indeed worship animals and idols of wood and stone, which are fronts for evil spirits. This is not very probable in this New Testament age. For what purpose? Satan is doing very well indeed through more subtle methods—lies and false prophets, disobedience, drugs, sexual promiscuity and diseases, etc. Christians should not worry about demon possession. “One little word can fell him.” And yet, Christians should not enter knowingly into that sphere which especially belongs to Satan: the world of Satanism and spiritualism; telling fortunes, witchcraft, sorcery, good luck charms, ouija boards, astrology, etc. It may seem like nothing but fun and games, but in these things one enters the realm in which Satan rules.

## **Bible References**

Psalm 46, Genesis 3:15, Matt. 4:1–11, I Peter 5:8–9, Eph. 6:10–18

## **Hymn References**

262, 263, 209, 292