

The Madman of Gadara

Key Verse:
“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.”

2 Corinthians 4:4

Level 5 lesson 5

Extra: Find more evidence of God's power over evil spirits.

Read Mark 5:1-20

Further reading: **Matthew 8:28-34;**
Luke 8:26-37

Many people today treat the Devil and his demons as a joke, or not actually real; some even consider it ‘fun’ to experiment with ouija boards and conduct seances. New Age gurus encourage us to consult or listen to ‘spirit guides’ and it’s portrayed as harmless - even helpful. Thousands of young people fill their minds with music which glorifies Satan, death and evil.

Don’t be fooled! You may ‘play’ with the Devil - but he doesn’t play with you! He ‘plays for keeps’ - ruining human lives and ensuring that people spend eternity separated from God, in Hell. 1 Peter 5:8,9 describes him as “a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour!” and tells us to “resist him.” Ephesians 4:27 reminds us “not to give him a foothold in our lives.” Even Christians sometimes treat him lightly and let sinful habits develop in their lives. Look at this man’s terrible condition - see what the Devil really wants to do in our lives! This man had no self-control (a fruit of the Holy Spirit, Gal 5:22) or self-respect. He was a dangerous menace, feared by everyone. He lived among the tombs, often naked and with no rest night or day, always screaming out and cutting himself with sharp stones. What a mess – and no-one, it seemed, could help.

THE MIGHTY DELIVERER

However, a mighty Deliverer was at hand - Jesus Christ! As He stepped off the boat, this ‘madman’ ran and fell at His feet. In response to Jesus’ command to leave the man, the demon cried out, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Promise that you won’t torture me!” The demons [see v7 & 8] knew Jesus was God, with authority over them. They know their day of judgement is coming (Matt 8:29). The Devil is powerful - but Christ is all-powerful!

THE DECEITFUL ENEMY

Demons don’t care about their victims - only themselves. Jesus wanted to free this man from his terrible bondage, but the demons wanted to continue their ruinous hold on him. Satan still does this today. He blinds the minds of unbelievers [Key Verse] so that they regard Jesus as an enemy and not a Friend and Saviour. He tells them if they become Christians they will lose their ‘freedom’ - they won’t have any fun. Of course, Jesus only wants what is BEST for us! He sets us free from Sin, to live in harmony with Him. This often means our behaviour changes when we accept Christ as Saviour; we just don’t enjoy our old lifestyle any more. Now we have far greater joys and pleasures. Don’t believe Satan’s lies; Jesus is no tormentor - but our loving Saviour!

THE CHANGED MAN

Jesus allowed the demons to enter a herd of pigs feeding nearby. Immediately, they rushed down a steep hill into the sea and drowned! We can see two things clearly from this; 1] the demons had to do as Jesus commanded. 2] The true nature and intent of the demons - to destroy and ruin. What a difference to the work of Christ in this man’s life! Delivered from the demons, the townspeople arrived to find him “sitting at Jesus’ feet, dressed, and in his right mind.” What a transformation – all through Jesus’ mercy and power!

THE FOOLISH PEOPLE

Incredibly, these foolish people pleaded with Jesus to leave! They seemed blind to the wonderful deliverance Jesus had brought this man and were concerned only for their pigs. The man begged to stay with Jesus but Jesus told him to go home and tell his friends what great things the Lord had done for him. We read that he did this all around the area. If you have been saved from sin, will you too, tell others “what great things the Lord has done for you?”

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. Why did Jesus cross the Lake of Galilee?	.....
2. Why did the man think Jesus would torment him?	.....
3. Mention one of the great things that Jesus did for the man?	.....
4. What did the Lord tell the man to do after he had been healed?	.....
5. Why do you think the people wanted Jesus to go away?	.....

My Name is Age

A Woman and a Girl Healed

Key Verse:
“Your faith has healed you.”

Mark 5:34

Extra: What contrasts and similarities do you find between these two events?

Level 5 lesson 6

Read Mark 5:21-34

Further reading: **Matthew 9:18-26;**
Luke 8:41-56

The Lord returned by ship from Gadara, and was soon surrounded by a crowd of people. Among them was Jairus, a ruler in the Jewish synagogue. His 12 year old daughter was lying at home, near death. Desperate, this highly respected and important man fell humbly at Jesus’ feet, pleading with Him, “Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live!” Graciously the Lord responded to his faith by going with him. The crowd followed, eager to see what would happen.

A WOMAN’S FAITH

As Jesus made His way to Jairus’ house, a poor woman who had suffered with a horrible bleeding illness for over 12 years, came to seek His help. She was a pathetic case; although she had spent all her money on doctors, she “was no better, but rather, grew worse.” However, when all hope was gone, she heard of Jesus! Confident He could help her, she thought to herself, “If I can just touch His clothes, I will be well.” Overcoming her natural shyness and fear, she pressed through the crowd until she could reach out her hand and touch the hem of His cloak. Immediately “she was healed of her suffering.” What a contrast! The doctors had cost her everything for nothing - Jesus, the great Physician, gave her everything for nothing!

THE SAVIOUR’S RESPONSE

Having been healed, perhaps she hoped to go quietly home, thinking no one had noticed. Jesus had noticed though; He would not let her go without acknowledging her faith. Stopping for a moment, He asked, “Who touched me?” At first, no-one admitted it, perhaps fearing that Jesus was angry. Even Peter said, “Master, you can see the people crowding against you; many have touched you - and yet you ask, “Who touched me?”

True, many were touching Him, but Jesus meant this woman’s touch - the touch of faith. Finally, the woman stepped forward and fell trembling at His feet. She blurted out her sad story and explained how she had been instantly healed. Jesus of course, was not angry with her! “Daughter,” He said tenderly, “Your faith has healed you: go in peace, and be freed from your suffering!” Oh how often in our guilt, we too, fear to draw near to Jesus, thinking He will only punish! We forget how much He longs to forgive and restore. That’s why He said, “Those who come to Me, I will not turn away.” John 6:37) It’s just the same today. Jesus still responds to the genuine cry of faith in love and compassion.

A GIRL’S HEALING

While Jesus was speaking to the woman, messengers came to Jairus with sad news. “Your daughter is dead, why trouble the Master any more?” Poor Jairus! This news must have broken his heart. Jesus however, knowing his thoughts and grief, encouraged him, “Fear not, only believe and she will be healed.” As they reached the house, a great crowd of people were there, weeping. Death is a very sad thing. However, our Lord told them, “The child is not dead but asleep.” Some laughed out loud at Him - they knew the girl was certainly dead! Jesus though, was the One who could say, “I AM.. the Life!” He put them all out and entering the room where the girl was lying He said to her, “Little girl, arise.” Instantly she sat up, restored again to life and full health by the power of God! The humble, trusting faith of both Jairus and the sick woman, led to healing and new life. Today too, faith is still the vital link between us and God. He can do nothing for us if we have no faith. Faith admits our need and receives the help and blessing offered. Our greatest need is found within our hearts - a need for forgiveness of sin and strength to live upright lives. If we trust Jesus as Saviour and Lord we too can know His power to save and keep.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What statement proves that Jarius had faith in the Lord’s power?	.....
2. Why did the Lord ask “Who touched me?”	.....
3. What did the Lord say had made the woman well?	.....
4. What encouraging message did Jesus give to Jarius?	.....
5. What may we receive from the Lord through faith in Him?	.....

A Funeral Procession Halted

Key Verse:

“I am the Resurrection and the Life: He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies.”

John 11:25

Extra: Find some reasons why the funeral was so traumatic for the mother

Level 5 lesson 7

Read Luke 7:11-23

Further: Isaiah 29:18-19; 35:5-6; 61:1

A Jewish funeral procession in the Lord’s Day was very different from one today. Graveyards were always outside the city, and when someone died, the corpse was carried on a ‘bier,’ or open coffin, to the gravesite. Women always walked at the head of the procession, then came the hired mourners, or other family members, then the coffin, and behind that came the people of the city who were joined by other mourners as the procession passed along.

SORROWING

Once, as Jesus and His disciples entered Nain, a city near the Sea of Galilee, they met such a procession. A young man, a poor widow’s only son, was being carried out for burial, and a large crowd mourned with the widow in her grief. Of course, for a widow in those days, to lose her only son was especially tragic as he would have been her means of support and protection. Now she was alone and helpless.

REJOICING

Jesus, saw the poor woman leading the procession and knowing her situation, felt such pity for her. “Don’t cry,” He said to her kindly. Going up to the coffin, He told the pallbearers to stand still. Then, He spoke to the corpse, “Young man, I say to you – ARISE!” In front of all the amazed onlookers, the dead man sat up and began to talk. The LORD OF LIFE had spoken, bringing the young man to life again! It is hard to imagine the widow’s surprise and joy as Jesus gave her back her only son. All the people who saw this miracle feared and glorified God saying, “A great prophet is risen up among us; God has visited His people.”

It is worth mentioning that Scripture doesn’t record any comments made about the ‘afterlife’ by this young man, or any of those in Scripture raised back to life. In Luke 16:19-31 Jesus told a parable, which gives us a small glimpse into the life after death. In that story, messengers were not permitted to send messages back to relatives; - instead people are told

to believe the message of “Moses and the prophets” – God’s Word the Bible. Why? God intends that we should live by FAITH, (Habakkuk 2:4.Rom 1:17) depending entirely upon His Word for all information concerning this life, and life after death.

God expressly forbade His people from consulting Spirit mediums or those who claim to tell the future (Deuteronomy 18:14). Instead they were to listen to God as He spoke through His prophets. Read this whole portion of Scripture if you like (Deut:18:9-22) It is also interesting to note that most supposed ‘messages’ from people who have died, say they are ‘happy, comfortable and not to worry.’ This is **very different** to the message the rich man wanted to send back to his family! Remember our enemy, Satan, is a liar and deceiver.

DOUBTS ANSWERED

The news of this miracle spread far and wide - even John the Baptist in prison, heard about it. He had thought Jesus was the promised Messiah but now, imprisoned and alone, it seems he began to wonder, “If Jesus is the Messiah – why doesn’t He come and rescue me?” John sent two of his disciples to Jesus. They told Him, “John the Baptist has sent us to You asking; are you the One who was to come, or should we expect someone else?”

Jesus had been working all sorts of miracles, even as they approached Him. He simply replied, “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised, and the Gospel is preached to the poor.” These were all proofs that he was the Messiah, the Son of God, as prophesied in Scripture. He added this personal word for John, “Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of Me.”(v23). Jesus knew that John’s faith in Him would soon be sorely tested. What a comfort to John this promise would be, as he faced the executioners sword! His unwavering faith would receive a rich reward. John’s doubts were answered.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. Why was this widow so terribly sad?

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2. What did Jesus say to the dead man?

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3. What has God given us to inform us about life after death?

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4. What proof of His Messiahship did Jesus give to the disciples of John?

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5. What do you think Jesus meant in verse 23?

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The Easter Message

Key Verse:
“Like cold water to a weary soul, is good news from a distant land.”

Proverbs 25:25

Extra: Comment on Easter’s significance for you personally

Level 5 lesson 8

Read Corinthians 15:1-20

Further: John 18, 19, 20

It will soon be Easter time, when people seem to focus on Easter eggs and hot-cross buns – but is that what Easter is really about? Judge for yourself: you can read the Easter story in its entirety in the three chapters mentioned in ‘Further reading.’ Though sad, it is the most wonderful story in the whole Bible! A sad story is seldom called “Good News” - yet that’s what Paul called it in 1 Cor:15.

Yes, the ‘Gospel’ (good news), which he preached everywhere, was this very story; the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The truth of this story changed the Apostle Paul’s life: from someone who hated Jesus and persecuted Christians who believed in Him, to someone who would willingly die for Him. There’s more to it than eggs and buns!

THE SUBJECT – JESUS CHRIST

It is important to know WHO the story is about. It is about the most wonderful person who ever lived on Earth. A person infinitely greater than any other human being; One who was divine as well as human - God in human form, the LORD JESUS CHRIST. The ‘good news’ is what He has done for us. Firstly,...

HE DIED FOR OUR SINS

Sin is a terrible, vile thing. We see its effect throughout our world, in wars, hatred, conflict and death. We see it in our own hearts and lives too. Genesis tells us that Sin entered the world when Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s instructions and ‘did their own thing.’ Immediately their perfect relationship with God their Heavenly Father and Creator, was ruined. Now they were scared and guilty in His presence (Gen:3:8). Worse still, all their descendants have inherited their sinful nature also! (ever noticed you never have to *train* children to be naughty?) We sin because we’re sinners - it doesn’t matter if we’re ‘really bad sinners’ or ‘not-so-bad sinners.’ We are all NOT GOOD ENOUGH! (Rom:3:23) Sin separates us from God and makes us subject to God’s righteous judgement - death! (Rom:6:23) Not just physical death, but spiritual death, which is that God is perfect and holy and hates sin. He must punish it. But it also tells us that God is Love. In love,

He thought of a way to save sinful Mankind from their terrible position, restore them to friendship with Him, and still punish Sin as He must. His own perfectly holy and righteous Son Jesus, could come and die in our place, taking our punishment! That’s what He did at Calvary’s cross. No human can imagine what Jesus suffered on our behalf. He was punished, even forsaken by God, so we could be blessed and accepted by God forever! Yes, Jesus died for sin - yours and mine!

HE WAS BURIED

Paul’s next point is the fact that Christ was buried. He *really* died. (Even today, some claim He only ‘passed out’). Yes, those who loved Him took that sacred, battered body from the cross and laid it tenderly in the tomb. There they wrapped it in linen cloth and spices, and rolled a great stone across the doorway. Shortly afterwards the chief priests and Pharisees sealed the stone and even set Roman soldiers to guard the tomb.

HE ROSE AGAIN

Did all this keep Jesus in the tomb? NO! Death could never hold Him beyond God’s appointed time. On the third day, linen wrappings, sealed tomb, watching guards - all made no difference! Our Lord rose from the grave - a mighty victor over Sin, Satan and Death! God raised Him from the dead by His mighty power, satisfied that Sin had been dealt with and adequately atoned for. Satan was defeated; Death conquered. Jesus was seen alive after His crucifixion, by many people including Peter, the twelve disciples, and then by more than 500 people at once! James saw Him and all the apostles too. Lastly, Paul saw Him on the road to Damascus. The Gospels tell of other appearances to Mary Magdalene, the two walking to Emmaus, the seven at the lake of Galilee and to the apostles on Ascension Day. Acts 1:3 tells us of many reliable resurrection proofs. Praise God - Jesus did truly rise from death! That is why He can say, “Because I live, you also will live” and offer forgiveness and eternal life. Believe in Him and be saved today!

ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES

Paul repeats this phrase twice; it is further proof of the truth and reliability of the Scripture record which predicted that Christ would be crucified, buried and rise again - centuries earlier in the Old Testament Scriptures! (Psalm:22:16; Isaiah:53:9; Psalm:16:10) Believe and thank God for the ‘Good News’ of Easter; Jesus died, was buried and rose again for our salvation! Read the story of Calvary often.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What is the meaning of the word “Gospel” and who is it about?

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2. Mention the three great facts of the Gospel.

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3. What do we learn from the resurrection?

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4. What does the expression ‘According to the Scriptures’ mean?

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5. What are your thoughts about Jesus resurrection?

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