

**TUTORIAL**  
**1.43**

# Jesus calmed a storm & released a man from the control of demons

See Tutorial 1.6 notes for overall instructions.

The portions of Scripture referred to in this tutorial are: **Mark 4:35-41, 5:1-20.**

## Last time

Back in Capernaum some people brought a crippled man to the house where Jesus was staying, but when they couldn't get him in because of the crowds they broke through the roof and lowered him down. Jesus healed the man and said his sins were forgiven because of his faith. Jesus went to the house of a tax collector, Matthew, who became his disciple.

The religious leaders became increasingly hostile towards Jesus and conspired to find a way to have Him killed. Jesus chose 12 apostles, companions who He would equip, then send out to teach.

## Jesus calmed a storm on the sea of Galilee

Hanging out with Jesus for the disciples is an incredible experience. Mark describes two incidents from the same afternoon which demonstrate His awesome power and authority for them. It has been a long day already. Jesus has taught crowds of people on the rocky shore of the lake for hours. (Mark 4:35-41) Late in the afternoon Jesus suggests that they go over to other side of the lake, visible a number of kilometres away. They climb into the boat and push off. Obviously exhausted, Jesus lies down in the back and goes to sleep. As they draw away from shore, the fishermen among them are nervous. Conditions are right for one of the storms they know can come so quickly. On a warm day, when cool air is coming down onto the surface of the lake from the nearby eastern mountains, it's a recipe for sudden violent storms. And sure enough, that's what happens. One moment it is fine, the next they're fighting for their lives. The wind has whipped up waves that are threatening to swamp the fishing boat. Everyone is bailing madly but they're losing ground. Incredibly Jesus is still back there asleep. Desperate they call Him, "Teacher, what are you doing? Get up. This is serious. Don't you care if we all drown?"

Now, a little bleary eyed, Jesus is on His feet, facing into the wind. He's saying something. He's not yelling, but it's clearly audible over the wind and waves

and thunder. He's telling the storm to be quiet, to calm down, to be still. What are words going to do at a time like this? The only time people speak to storms on this lake is with curses. But look, what's happened? Before He's finished speaking it stops. The silence is deafening. It's calm, almost eerily still. And Jesus quietly asks them why they were afraid. Haven't they learned yet to trust Him? Don't they have any faith?

No one, including the tough fishermen who've lived beside and on this lake all their lives, can believe what they just saw. What kind of person is this? An hour ago He was clearly exhausted. They were concerned for the Master: all the teaching, the questions, and people's demands for healing...they were glad He could rest, get some sleep.

The next moment that same person has the wind and waves obeying Him! Who can make a storm lie down like a mongrel dog? It's almost more terrifying than the storm, being with someone like this. What Jesus is allowing them to glimpse, the reality they would later be willing to live, and die for - a mystery but no less real for that - was that this man who need sleep and food and air to breath is the Creator God who designed and created the universe he was now a natural part of. He could speak to and be obeyed by the wind and the water because He had spoken them into existence in the first place. But He had also come into the creation and become part of it, allowed Himself to be vulnerable within it - to be hungry, tired, to experience physical weakness and pain - so that He could fulfill the great Rescue Plan for God's lost race that the One-God-Who-Is-Three had put into place.

## **Jesus freed a man from the control of evil spirits**

Mark describes a second incident from the same afternoon that further demonstrates Jesus' authority and must have filled the disciples with awe again. (Mark 5:1-20) Their landfall after the storm is near the village of Gergesa...also often identified by another well-known city nearby, Gadara (modern day Jerash). On the steep hillside running down to the shore were burial caves used by the community. Living among the tombs was a man who had become totally controlled by the spirit beings, formerly God's messengers, now Satan's evil followers.

People had tried to help this man, to subdue him, even to chain him up so he wouldn't harm himself. But under the control of the evil spirits he had the strength to break whatever they used to constrain him. He spent his days and nights in misery, "howling and cutting himself with sharp stones" the text says. The man's condition provides a powerful and confronting analogy of the real state of human beings. The common myth might be that we've got it together and things are improving, but the reality is we live in a society spiralling out of control.

People keep finding new ways to inflict pain on each other, often children are the victims. Marriages have a less than even chance of lasting. Popular culture is obsessed with what's twisted, ugly and dark. There's widespread addiction to video violence and online pornography. People try to escape by getting into the latest thing, by hoarding stuff, by masking reality with alcohol and drugs, or eating themselves to death. Huge numbers of normal people deal daily with overwhelming panic and debilitating depression. Is it any wonder really that so many, often young, take what seems the only escape, suicide?

Satan's role in our society, and its desperate plight as a result, might not be as obvious as it was for the man living among the tombs then, but it is no less real. In fact, the sophisticated packaging of his control today makes it perhaps even more insidious. Certainly people in our society are no less in need of Jesus' liberating, life-giving intervention than that desperate, naked, filthy man on the hillside above the lake that day.

Mark describes how the man runs to meet Jesus. The evil spirits – and they were numerous, it turns out - using the man's voice, identify Jesus as “the Son of the Most High God”. Clearly they're terrified of this one with absolute authority over them. The account of this incident hints at some things about the spirit world which God does not elaborate on...no doubt because we're not equipped to understand. When that happens, and when other parts of His Word don't shed a lot of light, we're best off to just accept His Narrative without too much unnecessary speculation. The spirits, fearful of whatever alternatives Jesus might have planned, beg Him to send them into a herd of pigs feeding nearby. He agrees, but when they come out of the man and enter the pigs, the entire herd – about 2,000 – go thundering down the steep hillside and drown in the lake.

The Narrative does not elaborate on what happened next to the evil spirits, who of course, not having a physical existence, could not drown. Some men who were responsible for the pigs have watched all this happen. Now they run off to tell everyone what they've seen. A crowd soon gathers. They can hardly believe their eyes. Isn't that the possessed man? But this is impossible. He looks so calm and composed. And someone's given him some clothes. He looks normal. The story is retold by the eyewitnesses, each trying to be heard. “I saw the whole thing...It was this man, His name's Jesus, He did it...The man was screaming...suddenly the pigs go crazy...drowned, every one of them.” But the disciples observe that the people are not thrilled, as you might expect, by the man's release from the terrible bondage. Not excited that this notorious crazy man from their neighbourhood is back to normal. And after this incredible demonstration of His authority over the powers of darkness, you'd think they'd want to know more. Ask Jesus questions. Want Him to teach them. Instead, they're obviously fearful. And they plead with him to go...to leave them alone. Whoever He is, whatever He stands for – they don't want any part of it. They don't want to be disturbed, to have their perspectives challenged. They just want to go on with their lives. But the man himself, the one who has been

freed from the torment of possession, he wants to be near Jesus. However Jesus tells him to go home and tell his family about what the Lord has done for him...the mercy he has experienced.

This follows a pattern that emerges from the Narrative. When God saves someone from eternal death, he also gives them a purpose to live. He draws them into His Rescue effort by sending them out to tell others about Him and the good News about what He has done for them.



## DISCUSSION POINTS

*Jesus calmed a storm and released a man from the control of demons*

1. Make any observations you can about the connections between (a) the creative power of God's speech in the beginning ("God said...") (b) the authority of Jesus' commands (to the storm, to evil spirits etc.) and (c) the power of God's Narrative, His Word (Note Jesus' comments to Nicodemus about the role of God's Word in the new – spiritual – birth.)
2. Comment on Jesus' challenge to His disciples about their lack of faith in Him during the storm. Based on the Narrative so far, explain what you understand He meant by this. What might it have looked like if they had trusted Him more in that situation? Reflect on your understanding of the relationship between *faith* and things like: good judgment, careful planning, taking precautions etc.
3. Describe some of the main strategies you feel Satan and his spirit-followers have used effectively in our society to capture people and to keep them from the truth.