

## GREATER THAN

### "GREATER THAN OUR ENEMY"

#### MATTHEW 8:28-34

### This Week's Core Competency

**Trinity** – I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.  
2 Corinthians 13:14, *May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

Commentators generally acknowledge that Matthew's Gospel presents Jesus as the son of Abraham and messianic son of David, who was born king of the Jews (Mt 1:1-17; 2:2), and they generally agree that Matthew tells his readers how Jesus performed miracles, healed the sick, and exorcised demons to corroborate that claim. For example, he writes: "When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: 'He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases'" (8:16-17). Then in the following chapter, he records how Jesus healed two demoniacs. This exorcism was particularly remarkable because the men were possessed by so many demons—enough to doom a large herd of pigs that were feeding in the area. And while Matthew specifies neither the number of demons nor the number of pigs, Mark specifies both. Referring to the number of demons, Mark says, when Jesus asked the demonic his name,

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***"Son of God" is messianic; it identifies Jesus as the Christ.***

– Luke 5:40-41

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speaking for his demons, the man said, "My name is Legion for we are many" (Mk 5:9), and referring to the number of pigs, Mark says, the herd numbered "about two thousand" (v. 13).

The demons recognized Jesus and shouted, "What do you want with us, Son of God?" In this context, "Son of God" is a messianic title; it identifies Jesus as the Christ. This is made perfectly clear in Luke's Gospel. Luke tells his readers: "When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, 'You are the Son of God!' But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Christ" (Lk 5:40-41; cf., Peter's confession in Mt 16:16).

The title has its roots in the Old Testament. When God promised to establish David's dynasty, his "proposal included promises concerning David (2 Sam 7:9-11), concerning David's immediate descendant (2 Sam 7:12-15), and concerning a line of David's descendants (2 Sam 7:16)" (Elliott E. Johnson, *A Dispensational Biblical Theology*, 186). To David's immediate descendant, God promised, that "he would be adopted as a son so that God would discipline him if he committed iniquity (7:14)," (cf., 1Ch 17:13), but under no circumstances would "the LORD's loyal love depart from him as it had from Saul" (7:15)" (187). The notion that David's royal descendant is his God's "Son" is reflected in Psalm 2:

The LORD says:

"I have installed my King  
on Zion, my holy hill."

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And the King replies:

"I will proclaim the decree of the LORD:

He said to me, 'You are my Son;  
today I have become your Father.

Ask of me,

and I will make the nations your inheritance,  
the ends of the earth your possession.

You will rule them with an iron scepter;

you will dash them to pieces like pottery.'" (vv. 6-9)

On the identification of this King with Jesus Christ, the same author above writes: "The decree of Ps 2:7 builds upon the pledge of adoption given to the Davidic heir in 2 Sam 7:14, 'I will be his father and he shall be my son.' Psalm 2:7 announces the LORD's decree: one day the Father will beget Him. In the New Testament's application to Christ, it is the announcement of His resurrection (Acts 13:33). He is begotten to eternal life as the Son, and as Heir of an eternal kingdom" (191) (see also, Ac 2:32-36).

The title "Son of God" also reflects the unique relationship of Jesus to the Father, which is what typically comes to mind when Christians hear the term. One theologian writes: "He is not simply a son but the Son (John 20:17) . . . The Son and the Father are one (John 5:19, 30; 16:32) in will (4:34; 6:38; 7:28; 8:42; 13:3) and activity (14:10) and in giving eternal life (10:30). The Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son (10:38; 14:10). The Son, like the Father, has life and quickening power in himself (5:26). The Father loves the Son (3:35; 10:17; 17:23 f.) and commits all things into his hands (5:35), giving him authority to judge (5:22). The title also implies a unity of being and nature with the Father, uniqueness of origin and pre-existence (John 3:16; Heb 1:2)" (Ronald S. Wallace, "Christology," in *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, 119).

## day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

### Matthew 8:28-34

28 When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way. 29 "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?"

30 Some distance from them a large herd of pigs was feeding. 31 The demons begged Jesus, "If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs."

32 He said to them, "Go!" So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water. 33 Those tending the pigs ran off, went into the town and reported all this, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. 34 Then the whole town went out to meet Jesus. And when they saw him, they pleaded with him to leave their region.

### Cf., another translation

28 When he came to the other side, to the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were extremely violent, so that no one was able to pass by that way. 29 They cried out, "Son of God, leave us alone! Have you come here to torment us before the time?" 30 A large herd of pigs was feeding some distance from them. 31 Then the demons begged him, "If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs." 32 And he said, "Go!" So they came out and went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep slope into the lake and drowned in the water. 33 The herdsmen ran off, went into the town, and told everything that had happened to the demon-possessed men. 34 Then the entire town came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw him, they begged him to leave their region. (NET)

## EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

\* Bracket "region of the Gadarenes" in v. 28.

\* Circle "Son of God" in v. 29.

\* Underline "What do you want to do with us" in v. 29.

\* Circle "appointed time" in v. 29.

\* Circle "demons" in v. 31.

\* Bracket "if you drive us out" in v. 31.

\* Highlight "Go!" in v. 32.

\* Box "so" indicating result in v. 32.

\* Bracket "what had happened to the demon-possessed men" in v. 33.

\* Underline "they pleaded with him to leave" in v. 34.

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day **2**

**EXPLORE** – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. How does the *setting* of the exorcism ("the region of the Gadarenes") contribute to our understanding of the story?
2. An *archetype* is an evocative image. What does the *landscape archetype*, "tombs," convey to you?
3. What do you infer from the description of the demoniacs?
4. "Son of God" is a messianic title. How so?
5. Who is doing the shouting in verse 29?
6. Explain what is meant by "the *appointed* time."
7. What does the one-word command, "Go!" indicate about Jesus?
8. Matthew doesn't *explicitly* report "what had happened to the demon-possessed men." Why not?
9. **Discussion:** Talk about why the townspeople would want Jesus to leave.

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## day 3 **EXAMINE** – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

When Jesus' boat landed on the other side of the lake near Gadara, six miles farther inland, he exorcised a legion of demons from two demoniacs. On possession one commentator writes: "The New Testament records many cases of possession. It is as though Satan had concentrated his forces in a special way to challenge Christ and his followers" (*The New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Possession"). Matthew makes it clear that Jesus accepted the challenge and demonstrated that he had authority over Satan by exorcising demons.

In 12:22-29, Matthew tells his readers that a blind and mute demoniac was brought to Jesus, and "Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see" (v. 22). The people who witnessed the exorcism were astonished and speculated perhaps Jesus might be the Son of David. When the Pharisees realized the people had grasped the significance of the exorcism and were toying with the idea that Jesus was the messiah, they desperately declared, "It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons" (v. 24)—a claim that Jesus easily debunked. First, he said, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? . . . But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (vv. 25-26, 28). Jesus' exorcisms indicated that he was the messiah and that the kingdom of God had come in that the king had come. Second, he said, "Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house" (v. 29). Jesus' exorcisms indicated that he had power over Satan in that he had entered his realm, had tied him up, and had plundered his house.

To introduce the healing of the two demoniacs recorded in Matthew 8:28-34, one commentator writes: "After the miraculous calming of the storm, Jesus and the disciples continue their trip across the Sea of Galilee. The next incident focuses entirely on Jesus; there is no mention of the disciples. Matthew draws our attention further to Jesus to help answer the exclamatory question, 'What kind of man is this?'" (Michael J. Wilkins, *The NIV Application Commentary: Matthew*, 352). Matthew's implicit

answer is: the man who has power over Satan, the Son of David, who has entered Satan's realm and overpowered him (12:23, 28-29).

When Jesus arrived on shore, he was met by two demoniacs, who immediately recognized him. The mention of "tombs" cast an ominous pall of death and evil on the scene. The fact that they were "coming from the tombs" suggests they were dead men walking; the description of them suggests they posed a threat to everyone who came near. They were an incarnation of Satan.

Recognizing Jesus was the messiah destined to judge and condemn them at the appointed time, they shouted, "What are you doing here, Son of God?" (v. 29). In the mouths of demons, the title "Son of God" is messianic and "trumpets their recognition that another stronghold of Satan, the sphere of the spirit world, is being invaded and overpowered. These demons apparently know quite well an appointed time when the forces of Satan will be judged" (353). On messiah's role as judge, another commentator explains: "Their second question revealed their knowledge that Jesus would judge them one day. This was a messianic function. Evidently Jesus will cast them into the lake of fire when He sends Satan there (Rev. 20:10). When Jesus cast out demons, He was exercising this eschatological prerogative early. These demons asked if He planned to judge ('torment') them right then and there. He had cast out other demons recently (4:24; 8:16). 'Here' probably refers to the earth, where demons have a measure of freedom to operate, rather than to that particular locale" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Matthew," 2016 ed., 163, [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com)).

The grammar of verse 31 indicates that the demons expected to be cast out. Knowing what was coming, they asked Jesus for permission to enter a herd of pigs feeding in the area. Jesus gave his permission. "Go!" he told them. While the feat performed by Jesus is astonishing and unparalleled, the sovereignty of his one-word command is even more striking and is Matthew's major emphasis here (see Donald A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 33a, *Matthew 1-13*, 228).

The demons obeyed Jesus and entered the pigs, which immediately ran headlong into the lake and died, leading to a somewhat surprising response

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from the townsfolk. One commentator wraps up Matthew's narrative account with these words: "Demons are elsewhere known to cause injury and pain to God's creatures (e.g., 17:14-20), and they do whatever they can to stimulate opposition to Jesus and his invasion of Satan's stronghold. The destruction of the pigs leads the Gentiles of the region to ask Jesus to leave (8:34). This response is a sad commentary on the perversion of their

values, for one would think they would rejoice at a victory over Satan's demons. But as one commentator states, 'all down the ages the world has been refusing Jesus because it prefers the pigs.' The darkness of the scene implies that the legion of demons go from the drowned swine looking for others to inhabit, an ominous thought for these people who have rejected Jesus" (Wilkins, 34).

## *The Message of the Passage*

*Jesus' authority over humanity's archenemy Satan indicates that he is the Son of David, the messiah, who has come to make available the blessings of God's kingdom to those who believe.*

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 "living questions" to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about how God is making himself known to you . . .

–Write about how God wants to change you . . .

–Write about how God is calling you to change your world . . .

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## notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 28 **Gadarenes** Cf., "Gergesenes" (NKJV, et al.). Textual variants appear in the manuscripts. A number of mss read "Gadarenes," preferred by numerous English translations. Many other mss have "Gergesenes" and some have "Gerasenes," which is the reading followed in Luke 8:26. "Gadara may well be more correct historically since Gerasa was more than thirty miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee" (Hagner, 224, see also 226). "Gadara was the regional capital of the Decapolis area that lay southeast of the Sea of Galilee. Its population was strongly Gentile. This may account for the presence of 'many swine' there (v. 30). The Gadara region stretched west to the Sea of Galilee. This was 'the country of the Gadarenes.' Other, less probable, locations are the village of 'Kheras,' near the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, and 'Gerasa,' about 30 miles southeast of the Sea" (Constable, 163). "The region of Gadara extended to the Sea of Galilee and included the town of Sennabris on the southern shore—the town that the herdsmen most likely entered after the drowning of the pigs" (the NET Bible, 50<sup>sm</sup> on 8:28).

v. 29 **Son of God** "The demoniacs hated and feared Jesus. They recognized Him as Messiah, calling Him by the *messianic title* 'Son of God' (cf. 3:17; 16:16; Luke 4:41)" (Constable, 163, italics added). "This title has already appeared earlier in the Gospel (cf. 1:23; 2:15; and 3:17) but interestingly has been explicitly used hitherto only by the devil, the Tempter, in 4:3, 6. The title will become extremely important, not least as a confession of the disciples as the Gospel proceeds (cf., for example, 14:33; 16:16; 17:5; 27:54). The demons here, as elsewhere in the gospel tradition (Mark 1:24; 3:11; cf., Mark 1:34b), sense immediately the identity of Jesus, veiled though it is to human eyes, and know at once that their realm is fundamentally threatened by his presence" (Hagner, 227).

v. 29 **What do you . . .** Lit., "what to us and to you?" Cf., "Son of God, leave us alone" (NET); "Why are You here? Have You come to torture us even before the judgment day, O Son of God? (VOICE); "Why are you bothering us now, Son of God?" (GW). "Their cry, 'What do you want with us?' employs an idiom that might better be translated 'What have you to do with us?' or perhaps even 'Don't bother us!'" (Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 151).

v. 29 **appointed time** "Their second question revealed their knowledge that Jesus would judge them one day. This was a messianic function. Evidently Jesus will cast them into the lake of fire when He sends Satan there (Rev. 20:10). When Jesus cast out demons, He was exercising this eschatological prerogative early. These demons asked if He planned to judge ('torment') them right then and there. He had cast out other demons recently (4:24; 8:16). 'Here' probably refers to the earth, where demons have a measure of freedom to operate, rather than to that particular locale" (Constable, 163). "The demons thus acknowledge that their time is limited; at the consummation of the age they will be punished for having opposed God (see Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10). Their objection is that the time of the last judgment has not yet come. Why are they being subdued 'before the time'? The entreat the Messiah, the one destined to judge them on God's behalf at the final reckoning, not to condemn them to torment in hell prematurely but to allow them in the interim to inhabit unclean animals—surely the Jewish Messiah will not deny them so modest a request!" (Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew*, Interpretation, 97).

v. 31 **if you drive . . .** "When the demons recognize that Jesus will cast them out ('if you drive us out' is a first-class condition almost equivalent to when you drive us out) but will delay their total destruction, they request a new home. Swine, like tombs, defiled Jews but afforded appropriate refuge for evil spirits" (Blomberg, 152).

v. 32 **Go!** "Go ('Begone!' NASB, NEB) orders them out (though we should probably take this as an imperative of permission); it may be held to imply consent for the demons to do as they had requested, though Jesus says nothing about the pigs" (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 210). "The sovereignty of the one-word command, [hupagete], 'go,' spoken by Jesus is striking; it is Matthew's major emphasis here. The feat performed by Jesus is in itself unparalleled and astonishing. The end result, however, is much the same as if Jesus had not first sent the demons into the swine; viz., they are dispersed and rendered powerless. They were not accommodated by Jesus. They gained nothing by their delaying tactics but were cast out—and not into some temporary lodging from which they might be able to do further harm. Beyond this Matthew gives us no information" (Hagner, 228)

v. 32 **what had happened . . .** What happened to the men is implied but not actually reported. "Matthew's interest lies not in the cured demoniacs but in the one who accomplished the feat" (Hagner, 228). "The majestic figure of Jesus entirely crowds out the former demoniacs in the climax of Matthew's version . . . The people do not come to see what had happened (so Mark and Luke). They come to meet Jesus (cf. 25:10, also peculiar to Matthew)" (Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew*, 161).

v. 34 **they pleaded . . .** "They begged him; the verb has a note of respect, but also of imploring; they left no doubt as to what they urgently wanted . . . They asked him to leave their region. Matthew gives no reason for this, nor does Mark; Luke says that they were very much afraid. This may have been fear of further economic loss, or fear of such an authoritative figure" (Morris, 211-12).

## Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

In our series, Jesus Can!, we are teaching kids that Jesus can overcome all of our trials and hurts. In the first week we will tackle our biggest challenge - the enemy. Sometimes, as parents, we want to shield our kids from the knowledge of an enemy who prowls around looking for someone to devour. But 1 Peter 5:8-9 reminds us that we are to stand firm in the faith and resist him. How can we do that? By teaching our kids to pray and put on their armor. Ephesians 6:10-18 describes the pieces of our armor and how they help us. The belt of truth is who we are at our core and what we know to be true. Our breastplate of righteousness is our identity in Christ that guards our heart. Our shoes of peace take us as ambassadors for Christ into a world that needs Him. Our shield is our faith. We trust that the Lord will rescue us because He has in the past and all of His promises are true. The helmet of salvation guards our minds from the enemy's lies. We know who we are in Christ. The sword of the Spirit is God's Word. Reading and memorizing God's Word will help us be ready to defeat the enemy with truth. All of the armor pieces are applied by prayer. Prayer is a powerful weapon against the enemy. He is already defeated so let's teach our kids to live victoriously!

### What Does The Bible Say

**Weekly Verse:** Read Matthew 8:28-34

1. Who did Jesus meet when He came into the region of Gadarenes?
2. Where did the demons say they wanted to go when they left the men?
3. What happened to the pigs?

### What Do You Think

In Matthew 12:30, Jesus said, "whoever is not for me is against me". These men were full of the enemy and against Jesus. Those who love and obey Jesus are for Him. In what ways do you show that you are for Jesus?

### What R U Going To Do

Read Ephesians 6:10-18 and draw a picture of a soldier in his armor. Label the pieces of our spiritual armor. Hang your picture near your closet so you will remember to put on your spiritual armor when you dress each day.

### Core Comp

Trinity - I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### Memory Verse

Psalm 23:1 - *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.*

## KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse \_\_\_\_\_, completed *Scrolls* \_\_\_\_\_, brought Bible \_\_\_\_\_, brought a friend \_\_\_\_\_.

**Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.**

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_ Parent's signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.**

**Questions: Kids@pantego.org**

# 30 CORE COMPETENCIES

## 10 CORE BELIEFS

### **Trinity** 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **Salvation By Grace** Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Authority of the Bible** 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

### **Personal God** Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

### **Identity in Christ** John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

### **Church** Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

### **Humanity** John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

### **Compassion** Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

### **Eternity** John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

### **Stewardship** 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

## 10 CORE PRACTICES

### **Worship** Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

### **Prayer** Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Bible Study** Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

### **Single-mindedness** Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

### **Spiritual Gifts** Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

### **Biblical Community** Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

### **Giving Away My Time** Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Money**

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Faith** Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

### **Giving Away My Life** Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

## 10 CORE VIRTUES

### **Joy** John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

### **Peace** Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

### **Faithfulness** Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

### **Self-Control** Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

### **Humility** Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

### **Love** 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

### **Patience** Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

### **Kindness/Goodness** 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

### **Gentleness** Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

### **Hope** Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

## About the Authors

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**Wendy Hollabaugh** (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you *Belong, Become, and go Beyond* as follower of Jesus Christ through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is [tbulick@pantego.org](mailto:tbulick@pantego.org).