

THE GERASENE INCIDENT

By Steve Schmutzer

[Steve's Website](#) [Contact Steve](#) [Steve's Article Podcast](#) [Steve's Daniel Class Podcast](#)

The enormous herd of pigs blanketed the steep hills above the eastern shore of Lake Tiberias. Two thousand sensitive snouts explored every inch of the rocky terrain. Masses of grunting hogs turned over stones, rooted up plants, and searched for crunchy beetles, succulent roots, and unwary lizards.

Here and there amongst the shape-shifting mass, lucky pigs found treats. Shriill squeals followed as opportunists tried to take advantage of the discoveries. Competition on this hillside was fierce, and it was every pig for himself.

A few pig tenders walked around the edges of this herd. They treaded carefully on the soiled ground, and they clutched their cloaks against the fierce wind and gray skies. A couple of them were muttering complaints – they hadn't wanted to come to this place today.

These hills were cursed. Everyone in the nearby town knew that. For starters, this place was just a stone's throw from the tombs, and that was reason enough to stay away.

But making matters much worse were the naked wild men that lived among those limestone graves. They would often cut themselves with sharp stones, and dark bloodstains were visible today on some of the pale markers.

Most people around these parts had seen these wild men at least once, but *everybody* had heard them. Some nights the wild men would shriek with bloodcurdling effect, and the winds off the Sea of Galilee would carry the chilling sounds into darkened bedrooms. It was hard to sleep.

These wild men had even assaulted some of the local residents and travelers, and some victims were lucky to be alive! As a result, the town's leaders had rallied a few brave souls to confront these crazies in the bright light of day. They'd managed to shackle them in chains, but the wild men would break the metal bonds and get free. It was unbelievable!

The whole region was on edge, and the situation was getting worse. Folks were leaving the area and work was hard to find. The herdsman didn't want to be here today, but they were under orders and they felt fortunate to have a job.

Besides - this dreary and windy day was almost done. In a few hours they'd be.....

What was THAT!?

A hair-raising scream sliced through the blustery air. The men all flinched, and hundreds of pigs lifted their heads and shifted restlessly. The men moved around to flank them.

A couple of the herdsmen stopped and looked out over the lake. They talked excitedly and pointed to where a dark storm had been just moments before. Storms were not uncommon over the Sea of Galilee, but this one had just suddenly vanished. The other men took notice too.

In an instant the entire lake had gone from choppy to calm. Its surface was now like glass. The tenacious gusts were gone and the air was perfectly still. Blue sky was seen where storm clouds had been seconds ago, and the warm afternoon sun now bathed the hills in a comforting glow.

Two of the herdsmen pulled off their cloaks and glanced about. A stunted tree jutted from the rocky ground a few paces away. They walked over to it and laid their garments through its upper branches, above the reach of curious noses.

There it is again!?!

Another terrifying scream ricocheted through the hills – *and now another!* It was unbearable – it was an absolutely horrifying sound!

One of the herdsmen wiped his clammy hands across his chest. A few dozen pigs trotted in tight circles. The men looked nervously down the steep slope in the direction of the tombs.

There! Look!

One – no....wait! – *two* gaunt, filthy, naked figures moved brazenly through the graves and markers. They looked like identical twins with their tangled dreadlocks, scraggly beards, and thin blotchy limbs. One of them had a metal cuff and a few links of chain dangling from a wrist. A powerful odor of rotting flesh suddenly infused the still air.

The pig herders watched as the wild men headed for the shoreline. The two bizarre figures growled and moaned and gestured spasmodically towards the calm waters of the picturesque lake. Their faces twitched with grotesque expressions. One of the wild men bent down and picked up a rock with both hands. He started hitting his head against it as he strode forward.

The herdsmen glanced out over the lake. A small fishing boat was visible a few hundred yards away. It was cutting a clean wake towards the near shoreline just below the pigs. Its sail was full, but there was no breeze.

One herdsman coughed and spit on two of his fingers. He rubbed them together and held them up. He looked around at his companions with a strange expression, but they ignored him. One of them slapped his hand down and motioned back out to the lake.

The boat was making excellent progress. Its occupants were easier to see, and they appeared to be average-looking folk. Another herdsman bounced his finger in the air as he tried to count their number.

Some of the boat's passengers could be seen pointing at the two naked wild men who had now reached the water's edge. One was standing quietly, cradling a large rock in his hands, and he was watching the incoming boat. The other one was moaning and writhing on the ground. The metal links on his wrist jangled against the stones as he thrashed about.

The boat had almost reached the shoreline when its sail suddenly fell slack. Ripples bubbled over the stony shallows as the craft drifted forward. Two men stepped over the gunwales and into the knee-deep water. They grasped the boat and pushed it forward.

The pig herders watched as a lone figure rose up from the group of men still huddled in the boat. He stood and gazed straight ahead at the bizarre figures on the shore. As the bottom of the boat scraped against the rocks, he slowly lifted his right arm and pointed at the two disheveled creatures. He made no sound.

The two men who had guided the boat to the shore's edge straightened up. They glanced alternately at each other and at the wild men. One of them gestured back to the boat, and after a moment's hesitation they both climbed into it and sat down with the others.

The man in the boat who had stood tilted his head back and closed his eyes. His right arm remained outstretched, but now he lifted all his fingers so his palm faced the two naked figures.

The wild man with the rock abruptly screamed. He spun and hurled the large stone back in the direction of the tombs. The pig herders involuntarily gasped as the rock flew far and landed high up on a nearby slope. It was an impossible throw!

The thrower turned back around to face the boat once more. He dropped his head onto his chest and all his limbs began to shudder. The other wild man still thrashed about on the ground and clawed the air. A tone of pain infused his moans.

The pig herdsman watched as the man who had stood in the boat lowered his arm and opened his eyes. He looked around at each of his companions, but they kept their own gaze downward. He gathered up his garments and stepped out of the vessel. His companions remained where they were.

He walked up to the two wild men and stopped. He looked down at the one who was thrashing about on the ground and then at the one who'd thrown the rock. The second one was swaying and trembling violently. He was barely standing.

The man from the boat reached out and placed the tip of his forefinger under the reeling figure's chin. He lifted the man's face and stared into it.

The wild man suddenly crumpled to the ground. He shook violently as he gathered himself and kneeled before the man from the boat. "WHAT HAVE YOU TO DO WITH ME, JESUS, SON OF THE MOST HIGH GOD?" the wild man loudly shrieked. His voice was high and thin, but his words were clear.

The herdsmen sucked in a breath. Their eyes were wide as they looked at each other, and hushed questions tumbled out to nobody in particular.

"Did you hear him speak?"

"Have these men ever spoken before?"

"How can this man call to God?"

"Who is this Jesus?"

Nobody had any answers, and it was only seconds till the herdsmen returned all their attention to the strange scene below. The pigs behind them had resumed their foraging and were quickly scattering upslope in the absence of their overseers' care.

Jesus looked down on the shaking figure before Him. His face was grim. He lifted his right hand and held it out over the naked man as one would hold their hand over a campfire. "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit," Jesus commanded. His voice was authoritative.

The wild man flung his head back and stretched his arms wide. "I BEG YOU, DO NOT TORTURE ME!" he cried even more forcefully.

The other wild man had stopped thrashing about and he'd raised himself to his hands and knees. His thin sides were heaving and every rib showed. His head hung down. "HAVE YOU COME HERE TO TORTURE US BEFORE THE TIME?" he loudly wailed. His voice was more guttural than his companion's, but his words were just as plain.

Jesus lowered His hand and looked back and forth at the two wretched and naked creatures groveling in front of Him. He pointed at the kneeling one and asked, "What is your name?"

The wild man's eyes were tightly shut and his face was pained. He issued a wheezing laugh through clenched teeth before replying, "My name is Legion, for we are many."

"Legion, Yesssss!" the other wild man hissed. "We are many, many.....many...." His words gave way to broken chuckles as he crawled over to his companion. He kneeled beside him, clasped his hands together, and looked up at Jesus with fear on his face. "I BEG YOU, DO NOT COMMAND US TO DEPART INTO THE ABYSS," he screamed.

Jesus again lifted his right hand over the two men cowering at His feet, “I command you....”

“AAAAAIIHH!” The wild men screamed. They flung their heads back. Their eyes were wide and they panted heavily.

“WE BEG YOU JESUS, DO NOT SEND US OUT OF THIS COUNTRY,” the one with the shackle screamed. “DO NOT SEND US INTO THE ABYSS.”

The wild man who had thrown the rock was struggling to stand. He’d gained a crouching position, and now he rocked back and forth on the balls of his feet with his hands over his ears. Jesus stood with His arms at His sides and watched him.

The wild man abruptly put his hands down on his knees and snarled. His lips curled back and he bared his teeth. He attempted to push himself up to a standing position, but Jesus gently shook His head. The wild man dropped back down to his knees and cried out as though in great pain.

The wretched figure lifted his head and stared up at Jesus. His face softened and it stopped twitching. “Please,” he begged in a woman’s silky voice. “Do not send us away from here. It is not yet our time.”

The pig tenders furrowed their brows as they glanced at each other again. What was going on? This was all so peculiar! Jesus’ companions were also watching the proceedings. A couple of them were now standing in the back of the boat, but the rest remained seated.

Behind the herdsmen, the pigs continued to scatter uphill. Some of them were finding new foraging opportunities some distance away, and the herd’s usual skirmishes had resumed.

“Yes, we beg of you,” the wild man with the shackle pleaded. His guttural voice was gone, and in its place were the tones of a small child. He sobbed his appeals, “Please....do...do not....do not send us.....away.” Jesus continued to look at them.

Both wild men suddenly gave a great shudder. They began to frantically look around at their surroundings. Their knees rubbed noisily over the stony beach as they hastily pivoted in one direction and then another. They muttered unintelligibly, and their eyes were wide.

“THERE! THERE! YES – OVER THERE!” The wild man with the shackle suddenly screamed.

He pointed up the hill in the direction of the herdsmen. The other wild man turned to look where his companion had pointed, and Jesus did the same.

The pig herders gasped! The two wild men were looking at *them*, and so was Jesus! One of the herdsmen turned and sprinted away up the hill towards the pigs. The rest hunched their shoulders. The color drained from their faces as they gazed down at the ground and sidelong at each other. What was going on?

“Yes. Yes! Send us to the pigs – let us enter THEM!” The other wild man looked up at Jesus, then up the hill, and back to Jesus again. His original voice was back. “Legion” had returned.

Jesus ignored them both. He was still looking in the direction of the herdsmen. He lifted His right hand so His palm faced the wild men. Their pleas subsided to whimpers.

The herdsmen started to panic. Their temples pounded. It was hard to swallow or breathe. They backed up slowly. Something was about to happen, but *what?!?*

Above and behind the herdsmen, the huge mass of pigs kept up their chorus of contented grunts. Life was good.

The men in the boat were watching. None of them had moved.

The air was still, and the lake was glossy and smooth.

Jesus lowered His hand.

“Go,” He said.

Several things seemed to happen at once. There was a “whooshing” sound as though a strong gust of wind had just blown through a stand of trees. Somewhere - far off in the distance - a host of dissonant voices screamed and wailed.

A blast of foul icy air washed over the herdsmen, and they collapsed as their legs gave out. Their limbs were locked to the ground and they were overcome with a strangling fear. They were paralyzed - unable to move or breathe. Darkness flashed over their senses.

An ear-splitting cacophony of squeals suddenly ripped through the air, jarring the men back to their wits. The herdsmen gasped deeply as they scrambled to their feet.

The massive herd of pigs above them was in complete disarray. Some pigs were leaping high into the air while others were laying on the ground and convulsing. Hundreds of pigs were madly running around and violently colliding with each other. Here and there, several catatonic pigs floated quietly in the dusty air a few feet above the herd.

It seemed every pig was loudly squealing as though its very life depended on it. The noise was deafening and the men’s ears pained with the strident assault. Instinctively, they cupped their hands to the sides of their heads and squinted.

Suddenly - in an instant, the entire herd of pigs turned and rushed downhill towards the herdsmen. The dense mass of hogs thundered down the steep slope. They smashed through brush, poured over boulders, and cut off all escape routes.

The men turned to flee, but the pigs were upon them in a flash. They were running faster than the men had ever seen pigs run. The herdsmen dropped to the ground and covered their heads with their arms.

The enormous herd of stampeding swine parted a few yards uphill from the herdsmen and swept around the men in a riotous reeking mayhem. They were close - so close that the men could have reached out and touched them! But - not a single pig even brushed against any of the herders.

The men dared to lift their heads and watch as the last of the pigs dashed by. The squealing, roiling, and frenetic mass raced all the way down the steep slope. The pigs tore across the stony beach and plunged headlong into the waters of Lake Tiberias.

The first pigs in didn't stop. They kept going forward into deeper water. The pigs behind them did the same thing, and the ones further back pushed them all along. The waters of the Sea of Galilee foamed under the onslaught. The entire herd of pigs seemed obsessed with getting to a single spot on the opposite shore, and none of them had slowed.

Everyone - Jesus, the men in the boat, and the herdsmen - watched as the last of the herd splashed into the lake and forged ahead. The leading edge of the large herd grew ragged as hundreds of hogs began to disappear. More and more of them slipped under the water's surface, their rough gasps silenced by the lake.

It wasn't long till the once-massive herd had thinned to a few dozen pigs. They struggled erratically towards the far shore, but one by one, they also disappeared the same way.

One final hog was left. It blew puffs of spray here and there as it gasped and splashed in its desperate throes. Then - it too was gone. The waters closed over it and the ripples gradually faded.

The Sea of Galilee had erased the entire spectacle. Once again, its waters were calm. The air was still and clean. The late afternoon sun washed the entire scene with forgiving warmth.

The herdsmen looked at each other with open mouths. A couple of them started to speak, but they stopped. They looked up the hill and back out to the lake where the pigs had all disappeared. Not a single hog was left!

"What will we say?" one of them muttered. Nobody answered. "What will we say?" the man repeated. The group looked around at each other in silence. It was all too overwhelming.

The men glanced back down the hill. Jesus was motioning for his companions to come out of the boat. The naked wild men were laying on their backs on the stony shore. They were breathing heavily, but they were not moving.

A yell caught the herdsmen's attention and they turned to look uphill. It was their companion who had fled. He was at the top of the hill and he was waving his arms to urgently summon them.

The herdsmen glanced at each other and nodded. No words were needed. They couldn't get away from this awful place fast enough.

They all turned and ran up the hill.

© Steve Schmutzer 2018. All Rights Reserved
