

89 Legion’s Hill

Names (also known as)

Possibly Tell es S'alib.

Location/Description/History



Christ and his disciples arrived at the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee by boat in the country of the Gadarenes, i.e. those who lived near the city of Gadara.

Some authors give the ruins of Umm Qais as the location of Gadara. Based upon the Gospel accounts, the location of the miracle had to have a nearby port, tombs for the men to live in, an area for pigs to graze, a nearby city to which the men could flee, and most importantly, a steep bank for the herd to rush down.

The site’s topography has high ridges and steep slopes down which the pigs “ran violently down into the sea” (Matthew 8:32). Above the port there are multiple hills which could potentially match up with the biblical

account. The most likely site is found at the end of a chain of hills that has a bank descending into the sea. The bank is the modern site of Tell es S'alib located near the New Testament Gadaran suburb of es-Samrah. A visual representation of the location of this tell can be seen in Mendel Nun’s work ‘The Land of the Gadarenes’. Although this tell may not have had as steep a slope as that found at Kursi, it does have a hill that runs into the sea and could accommodate a “large herd of swine numbering about 2,000” (Mark 5:11). In addition to the slope, other features of the site make it match up well with the Biblical account of the miracle.



In excavations by B. De Vries completed in 1973, a Roman tomb from the time of Jesus was found in a valley nearby es-Samrah. This could account for the tombs in which the demoniacs lived. Also, there is needed a nearby site where the swine would have grazed and “the groves of oak trees on the plateau above would have provided the acorns they favoured” (Walking in their Sandals). Thus, the site of Gadara can align both textually and geographically with the Biblical account of the demoniacs and the herd of swine.

Scriptural references

New Testament

Matt. 8:32; Mark 5:13; Luke 8:33

Famous characters

Christ and his disciples

Legion

The healing of Legion

Legion is a type of the Gentiles, one of three classes Christ came to save. The others are presented with Legion in Mark 5. They are the woman with an issue of blood for 12 years (12 is the number of Israel) who represents the

publicans and sinners of Jewish society who were ostracised and kept from access to temple and synagogue by the diligent efforts of men like Jairus. The other was the daughter of Jairus who died aged 12 representing the religious class in Judea who considered themselves ‘righteous’ and within the pale of salvation.

In the record of Matthew 8 there were two demoniacs – Jew and Gentile. Both Mark and Luke who wrote for Gentiles notice one, namely, Legion who in both contexts is presented as a type of Gentiles and by extension all mankind of every age – hence, the name Legion. There were 6,000 in a Roman legion as there will be 6,000 years of human probation.

Legion suffered from the affliction called Cysticercosis, a tissue infection caused by a young form (cysticercus) of the pork tapeworm. Tapeworm eggs are from the faeces of a person infected with the adult worms, which is ingested by swine and then hosted by humans through eating poorly cooked pork.

People may develop serious neurological symptoms if the brain is affected. The larvae of the tapeworm attach themselves to brain tissue and feed on it. The brain responds by producing fluid which builds up pressure in the cranium leading to the maniacal outbursts evident in Legion.

Legion was not insane. His testimony “What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not” is proof of that. Jesus rarely encountered such perception among his own people.

Naked and dwelling among the dead (Luke 8:27), he is a type of all men who are “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). What was needed was eradication of “the unclean spirit” by returning it to its source – the ‘swine feeding’ – a very apt type of unrestrained human behaviour.

2,000 swine (representing the period of Gentile opportunity from then until Christ returns) plunge into the sea and are drowned. So it is with baptism. The old man with his “unclean spirit” are figuratively put to death that a newness of life may begin in one’s “right mind” (2 Tim. 1:7), and with a Christ given garment covering sin (Mark 5:15).

Sources:

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legion_\(demons\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legion_(demons))

(Compiler – Jim Cowie)