

*Gadara: The Story of the Gadarene Demoniac is a work of fiction based on the true story of Jesus casting a multitude of demons from a man into a herd of swine. The book involves the life of the former demoniac afterward; full of action, adventure, romance, and emotion with a touch of humor. It was written to be entertaining as well as encouraging.*

## **GADARA: The Story of the Gadarene Demoniac**

By Kaleb Blackmar

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# GADARA

The Story of the Gadarene Demoniac

Fiction

BASED ON A TRUE STORY

KALEB BLACKMAR

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# Chapter One

## The Herdsmen

The afternoon was giving way to evening on the southeast coast of the Sea of Galilee. The bright sun of the day was slowly changing to amber and crimson shades of color playing upon the rocky bluffs, steep grassy slopes, and trees of the landscape. There was a gentle breeze blowing from the west, as it stirred the grass and the trees slightly and brought with it a coolness, as well as the odors from the freshwater sea. The day had been quite warm but was cooling off quickly. A stretch of beach that was part of the harbor of Gadara gave way to an abrupt rise of the landscape from the sea. Atop the slope was a more level area; with rocky outcrops, intermittent oak trees, various bushes, and grass. A vast herd of more than two thousand swine were foraging there and were watched over by many herdsman. For them, the air was dominated by the pungent odor of the swine. Two had stopped for a moment to adjust their clothing and put on their long, warm outer garments. The herdsman had shed them in the heat of the day but were preparing for the coming chill and dampness of the night. The men were Greek and lived near the City of Gadara. They were about to bring their huge herd to market in a few days to supply the temple sacrifices, meat for the city, and for the enormous Roman Tenth Legion Camp near Gadara.

One was a young herdsman, Dimitri, lacking in experience but learning the trade from his elder mentor and friend, Aegeus. The elder herdsman was the leader; responsible for the other herdsman, as well as the herd itself. Dimitri had known Aegeus all of his life, for he had been a friend of his father before he died. Aegeus had become a friend of the family, while helping Dimitri and his younger brother find their way in life. The young man had decided

to follow the vocation of the elder herdsman. Dimitri was to learn the finer details of dealing in the marketplace, as well as hiring and managing men, plus herding and protecting the animals. The old man was also full of stories about encounters with predators and thieves which the young man found exciting. Dimitri sat down on a rock and laid his staff upon the ground, then uncovered his head to push his dark hair out of his face. He watched as the elder herdsman walked closer to the edge of the precipice. Aegeus surveyed the horizon and the sea to get an idea of what kind of weather to expect.

“Very curious,” he said as he observed a group of rather dark, ominous clouds swirling in the distance over the sea, which was backlit by the orange glow of the setting sun. The sky was otherwise clear, except for high, thin wisps of clouds now colored in shades of yellow, crimson, and magenta. The old herdsman stood for some time watching the anomaly while leaning on his staff. Dimitri sat and watched the old man; the light of the sunset reflecting off his weathered face, his gray hair and beard, and his soft, worn clothing. He had become like a father to him.

“Do you think we should seek shelter among the rocks?” the young herdsman asked as he turned to his left, then pointed out one of the larger rock formations. The elder man turned and looked at several dark openings in the rock Dimitri had gestured to. Some were natural features; others were rock-cut tombs, which as he pondered the matter brought a grimace to his face.

“There’s a wild beast that lives in those tombs,” Aegeus said as he gripped his staff tightly. He closed his eyes for a moment while processing memories. “I once had an encounter with it,” he added.

His countenance became somewhat nervous as he continued to scan the openings in the rock. “Not a normal beast,” the elder man said as he turned back to observe the distant weather. It was becoming even more striking: the vibrant colors of the sky and the

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distant storm were now highlighted by occasional traces of lightning within the dark clouds.

It was obvious that the old man was a bit shaken by the issue of the mysterious beast. Changing the subject, he said, "There's plenty of good forage here for the swine; lots of acorns, grass, and low spots with mud too. I don't think we'll be needing shelter. That storm doesn't seem to be moving this way; in fact, it doesn't seem to be moving at all." He continued to look out over the sea.

"Does one ever get used to the smell?" Dimitri jokingly asked as he tried to relieve the tension a bit.

"No, you just learn to live with it," Aegeus said while chuckling. He then said, "We should walk the perimeter."

The men went about drawing the herd together, as they persuaded them firmly with their herding staffs which sent little puffs of dust into the air as they moved. The other forty or so herdsmen were also preparing for the coming darkness. Aegeus wanted to make sure the widely dispersed herdsmen were strategically placed to properly contain the herd overnight. The two were satisfied by their effort, then returned to the same spot which seemed to be a good place to camp. A slightly raised area of erosion deposit that would keep them up away from the animals, and there was plenty of room for the men and a fire. The young herdsman couldn't stop thinking about the beast his friend had brought up.

"What kind of beast is this you speak of?" the young man asked as he naturally wanted to hear a good story. "I've heard people tell of a wild *man* that no one can tame or capture, but I thought it was just a story," he said.

"There are things in this world that are better to be left alone," said the old man as he paused, then returned to looking out over the sea. He continued, "It resembles a man, but it's more beast than man. It seems to take great pleasure in causing fear rather than

anything else, though it will attack and cause injury. I've never heard of it killing anyone, but it can and will cause severe injury, that I can attest to. I don't think it ventures out much at night, as I've experienced. Sometimes at night you can hear it weep and wail somewhere off in the distance." He paused to watch the isolated distant storm, for it was growing more colorful and dramatic as the sky turned to a more royal blue. Aegeus went on, "It has the strength of ten men; I've seen it break iron fetters and chains with its bare hands. It moves more like a twisted animal than a man. My experience with it so many years ago still gives me nightmares. You know, I was a part of a group of men that went out to capture the beast...so was your father."

"He was?" Dimitri asked and was astonished. "He never told us anything about it," he said while anxious to hear more.

"Your father was a brave man, but we were unsuccessful that day," Aegeus said as his eyes trailed off in recollection.

The young man had been sitting on the rock listening intently to his companion. He looked around nervously as his eyes grew wider, then reached down to pick up his staff and held it tightly. He slowly looked over his shoulder, then back at his friend.

"Go on," the young herdsman requested.

"We should start a fire...it will be getting dark soon," the old man responded while trying to change the subject.

The men went about their business for a while, as they gathered firewood and checked the herd one last time before nightfall. A three-quarter moon was rising with a promise of fair visibility through the night. The elder herdsman produced a large tattered cloth from his bag, and with it the two men built an improvised tent. It was held up by two long heavy sticks in the front and secured by stones in the back; a very simple but effective shelter to keep the night dampness away. They had a shelter, a large sitting stone, a place for the fire, and a good view of the herd



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from their slightly elevated position; also appealing was a picturesque view of the Sea of Galilee. Dimitri thought to himself that they had chosen the spot well.

“I’ll start the fire,” the young man volunteered as he reached into his tunic and pulled out a small leather pouch. He opened the pouch and dumped the contents on the ground next to a logical place for the fire.

“I see you got a new one,” observed the elder herdsman as he watched. He didn’t like to admit it, but Dimitri was much faster at starting fires than he was.

“Yeah, I bought two of them from a trader in Gadara,” Dimitri said as he held up his shiny new fire ring.

“Let’s see how it works; it’s getting dark,” the old man said as he gazed back at the tomb openings which were still visible in the waning last vestiges of sunlight.

Dimitri picked up one of several pieces of blackened cloth and a good-sized piece of flint. He arranged the charred cloth next to the edge of the flint and gripped it with his left hand. The young herdsman picked up the C shaped ring, then slipped the fingers of his right hand through and started striking the edge of the flint. Bright sparks were produced, then a small glowing ember appeared on the blackened cloth after just a few strikes. He quickly blew on the ember, while simultaneously setting it down and applied small bits of dry tinder. Dimitri continued to put down dry tinder and blew on the small smoking pile until flames burst forth. Then both men started putting small pieces of wood upon it until they had a growing, comforting fire.

“Not bad, that’s a lot faster than I can do it,” the elder herdsman said. “What have you to eat?” he asked as he started to root through his bag.

“Just some bread,” the young man replied.

Aegeus smiled and said, “I have a few dried fish, as well as some bread, and a little wine. I’m more than happy to share it with you, but you must learn not to travel so lightly. I know you hunger, for we’ve put in a full day; now is the time to rest, and to eat.”

Darkness enveloped the scene. It was a clear and starry night, except for the distant weather disturbance that didn’t seem to affect the weather at their location. The moon had risen high in the sky and provided good visibility, but without much detail. The moonlight was glistening off the ripples of water upon the sea adding to the dramatic splendor of the distant storm. The two herdsmen sat on their stone by the fire as they enjoyed a nice meal and watched the remainder of sunlight disappear behind the western horizon. The strange weather mass appeared to be holding right in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. The storm was growing in intensity and the men could see flashes of lightning and hear thunder. The dark clouds were swirling as under high wind, but the breeze that had been blowing off the sea earlier had calmed; it didn’t make sense to either of the men. They watched for a while, then the young man spoke:

“Tell me more about this *beast*...and my father,” Dimitri requested as he sat by the fire which cast a flickering light upon his face. He began to stroke his beard, which was something he often did while listening to Aegeus’s stories.

The elder herdsman continued to observe the storm; almost entranced by it. “That’s very peculiar,” he offered, but knew that he must once again tell the tale.

Aegeus spoke, “Of your father, I can only say that along with myself and many others volunteered for a very dangerous and difficult task. Many ran away, but he was not among them. He was not seriously injured but shared with all of us in our miserable defeat. Your father was a very brave man. It was several years ago, when you were just a little boy. We joined with a group of men from Emmatha, Gadara, Hippos, and throughout the Decapolis

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Region. Our goal was to capture and deal with this menace once and for all after the Romans failed.”

“The Romans failed?” Dimitri asked with an expression of shock.

Aegeus replied, “It wasn’t much of an effort. A few of us had decided to deal with this beast. Our first choice was to have professional soldiers, the Romans, capture it. That freak of nature has been disrupting travel routes and trade in this area for years. There was one among us who knew a Centurion at the Tenth Legion Camp; his response was to send a handful of soldiers to *arrest* it.” Aegeus paused and chuckled a bit, then continued, “They found it in a tomb not far from here and demanded that it come out and surrender. I wasn’t there, but the story I’ve been told is that the beast came out right away and immediately attacked. It broke their weapons, then stole pieces of their armor and beat them with the chains they were going to confine it with.” The old man paused again, reflecting. He continued, “I don’t like to think of what happened to them when they returned. A larger force was sent after that but was unable to find it after an exhaustive search. The beast seems to have instincts to preserve itself when it knows superior strength is coming against it. The word we received afterward was that Rome didn’t have time to deal with every petty local problem, and to deal with the matter ourselves.”

“So that’s when you, my father, and all these other men gathered against it?” Dimitri asked as he gazed up into the hills in the direction the elder herdsman had gestured to.

“Yeah,” Aegeus answered as he sat down by the fire while warming his hands.

Dimitri threw some of the larger pieces of wood they had collected on the fire, then crawled under the shelter and settled in to listen to the story.

The elder herdsman looked up from the fire and spoke, “It was such a long time ago, but I remember it clearly....”

We gathered thirty men. Some came with swords and spears; others brought heavy chains and fetters that were strong enough to hold a lion. We thought that through our numbers we could overpower this beast. Our plan was to approach quietly and take it by surprise. We arrived near a small row of tombs up in the hills, for we were sure it was hiding there. Our group waited for a long time but saw no movement. One man finally peered into the darkness of the tomb, but it was empty. There were signs of some occupation, but impossible to determine how long ago.

So, we began our search; all of us agreed that we were not to give up easily as the Romans had. We went from one place to another waiting and watching. Hours turned into days, then some of us had to leave due to family commitments or business. Yet we still felt confident that our group had sufficient numbers to accomplish the task. Twice we encountered what appeared to be a wild man but determined that it was not the beast. He wore tattered clothing and demonstrated fear when approached; we could only get so close to him and he would bolt away. We figured him to be just an outcast; perhaps a fugitive, or a hermit. He didn’t seem very dangerous, so we kept looking for the true beast. We would find a cave or a tomb, then approach cautiously and ready. Someone would then look in only to find it empty, except for the bones of the dead. The process was taking its toll on the men, as well as myself; the building of anticipation and fear, then the empty hand and disappointment. There was a growing sentiment among the men to give up the search, or build a trap, but where?

The weather had turned bad with light rain the night before and it was foggy. We were on our way to a cluster of tombs way up in the hills we thought it may be hiding in. Our group was passing through a dense stand of oak trees; a truly eerie environment as

much of the detail was obscured. Suddenly, it ran up before us so fast that we couldn't see or hear it coming. Its body was contorted, like I said before; it used its arms and legs to move around, like an animal but strange. The beast had claws on its hands and feet, which appeared formidable. The odd creature sat or perched with its legs folded at the sides, and its arms straight in front with fists on the ground. Its face was grossly twisted as if a representation of great pain within. It had very long hair and beard, which was filthy and disgusting. The beast wore no clothing, for its hair covered much of its body. One could clearly see, however, that the beast was covered with scars all over, as well as a few fresh, bleeding wounds. I've been told that it cuts itself with sharp stones because it enjoys the pain, but who knows. It had an otherworldly cry that would chill your blood. Some say that the cry comes from the part of the beast that's human. I find it difficult to accept that thing as human. The most striking thing about the beast that I recall was its eyes: very dark and sinister...you can see the evil in its eyes.

We were surprised and shocked. Many ran away; the rest of us just stood there for a moment, as we were stunned by the sight of the beast. We later determined that our numbers at that point were eleven men. It slowly crouched down while sniffing the air, then growled and hissed. We were astonished as it straightened up its head and spoke!

"You have come to capture us? By whose authority do you come?" it asked. Its voice was very strange, like a chorus of deep voices speaking in unison with a kind of ethereal echo to it, but very eloquent and clear. It dropped its head back down before growling and glaring at us as it scanned the face of each man and awaited a response. A very long, very tense moment thickly filled the air.

Then, one man growing angry spoke out, "We come on behalf of all those you've terrorized for years!"

“NOT GOOD ENOUGH!” the beast shouted in response, then released an inhuman, hair-raising, cackling laughter.

The two men that were closest to it jumped on the beast. They were quickly joined by others, only to find that it had slipped away. It reappeared behind us and started attacking one after another; swiping, scratching, kicking, and biting in a flurry of unbridled violence. One man drew a sword and the beast promptly grabbed the blade, then broke it off with one hand and hurled it off into the distance. A spear was thrown, only to be caught by the beast and broken. It continued its cackling laughter as it moved with frightening speed; not only attacking men but ripping garments and breaking everything we had. We realized we would be overcome if we didn't get control of the beast fast. One man yelled, “Hold it down, EVERYONE!” First one, then another, then the rest of us started piling on top of it. With all the strength we could muster we struggled to contain the beast in a writhing mass of sweat, blood, and determination. The smell of the beast was worse than any swine smell; I'll never forget it.

The man who had been carrying the chains moved in and managed to grab one of its feet but lost his grip and was kicked very hard in the face. I remember seeing him come back with a severely swollen nose, bruised face, and blood running down his face and chest. The man regained a grip on the leg and managed to get the restraining device in place amid various pleas to hurry. He wiped the blood out of his eyes and focused on putting the bolt in the device. It seemed like a very long time, as we were starting to lose our precarious hold on the beast. The bloody-faced man jumped off and ran to secure the other end of the chain to a nearby tree. I realized that I was bleeding profusely from my left shoulder and saw that the slippery hold we had was fleeting. The whole time we were being beaten and injured continuously as we struggled and wrestled with this wild beast. Finally, that was it, and the whole pile of us trying to hold it down exploded. Men were flung into the air like dolls by the freakish strength of the vicious creature. We found ourselves scattered all over the hillside.

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The beast just sat there as it sniffed the air, then looked over its shoulder at the tree with the chain wrapped around it and secured. The brave man who secured it lay unconscious beneath the tree; he had held on until the task was accomplished, but apparently succumbed to his kick in the face. The scattered men were slowly rising, while moaning and grunting.

Everyone went still when the beast let loose with that blood-curdling, cackling laughter again, then it paused and straightened its head. It had a mock sorrowful expression on its hideous face while shaking its head, then it proclaimed, "You caught us!" It sat there motionless for a few moments while looking down at the chain, then followed it to the tree and the man beneath it. A couple of the men softly called out to him; just about that time he started coming around. The man came to his senses and realized that he was in a dangerous place. He began to crawl away slowly, as well as other men who realized that they were within reach of the chain. The beast just sat there, as if trying to instill the appearance of compliance with its capture. Then, suddenly, the beast jumped straight up in the air and pounced near the man under the tree, as he quickly tried to run. The creature grabbed the man's foot, as it snapped the straps of his sandal and injured his foot in the process. The beast then sat down under the tree with the sandal in its hand and glared at us once more. Its face was twisted and evil; its hatred for us was clearly demonstrated in its expressions. The beast began to sniff the sandal while staring at the owner, then took a bite from the sandal and ate it. We watched in horror and disgust as the creature consumed the entire sandal, then belched as it glared at us.

We had begun to gather ourselves, while tending to the more seriously wounded. The wooded hillside looked like a battlefield; there were wounded men, clothing, broken weapons and belongings scattered everywhere. One man had a broken arm, and the man who had been attacked under the tree had a dislocated ankle, so he was having trouble walking. I looked myself over and had deep cuts, like claw marks across my left shoulder, which I

managed to wrap up; a few others had similar injuries. I had a lot of scrapes and bruises which seemed to be all over most of us.

Someone spoke up and suggested that we stone the beast, which brought a fervor of enthusiasm and agreement among some of the men. The beast jumped up and shouted with an even greater enthusiasm of its own, "Stone us! Stone us!" It jumped up and down, while flailing about in exaggerated excitement. Just then a man picked up a stone and hurled it at the beast. I and a few others had already thought that it probably wasn't a great idea, but the objections were ignored. The beast caught the stone, as a child catches a ball, then threw it back at the man. He almost jumped out of the way, but the stone caught him by the arm and left a gash as the force of it sent him to the ground. Then the beast hurled itself at us with intense speed, as it ran to the reach of the chain and strained it. Over and over it ran toward us in slightly different directions; it seemed to target a different man each time. Every time the beast pulled the chain tight as a bowstring. The force would flip the beast in the air, then it would come crashing down, only to get back up and repeat the attempt. It was like watching pure madness on display; the whole time that insane, cackling laughter permeated the experience.

Then, it quieted and sat back down in its perched position. The beast stared at the chain and fetter around its ankle while grumbling something indecipherable under its breath. It then straightened its head as it did when it was about to speak.

"You no longer amuse us you pathetic creatures! We destroyed your kind in the old time! BE GONE WITH YOU!" it shouted and then growled and scanned our reactions.

To our collective shock the beast reached down, then we heard a loud CRACK as it broke the fetter off its ankle as if it were a piece of bread. An audible gasp of fear could be heard from the men, but it simply got up, then turned and trotted away in its usual manner.



“We were both defeated and humiliated,” the old man said regretfully as he stood up from the fire, then stretched his back and looked over at his friend. “The beast had only been playing with us,” he lamented.

“Can you tell me what my father did?” Dimitri asked as he was disappointed that his father had not been mentioned more prominently in the story.

Aegeus responded, “I’m sorry, but I can’t think of anything specifically that he did; he was there, sustained some minor injuries and was a great help with the injured afterward. He was the one who helped the man with the injured ankle the most on the way back to Gadara. Your father handled himself well. I think all of the men were narrowly focused during the ordeal. It was the most horrendous event of my life; I imagine it’s the same for the others. I would rather fight a lion than face that creature again.”

“I know that you’re telling me the truth...but it’s so hard to believe,” Dimitri said as he gazed into the fire, then glanced up at Aegeus. He wasn’t sure he wanted to believe.

The old man smiled at his friend and knelt by the fire. He set down his staff and pulled aside his outer garment, then loosened his tunic and pulled it aside to reveal his bare left shoulder. Aegeus leaned forward to illuminate himself by the fire; there were four very distinct deep scars across and over the top of his shoulder. He glanced at Dimitri and noticed his mouth opened a bit.

“Took a long time for that to heal,” the old man said as he put his clothing back in order, then covered his head and slowly rose back to his feet.

“How did the beast come to be?” Dimitri asked as he wanted to engage in a deep conversation.

“Freak of nature I suppose,” Aegeus said as he returned his gaze toward the distant storm. It had maintained its intensity while holding right in the middle of the Sea of Galilee.

“Do you think it’s because of evil spirits?” Dimitri asked as he stared into the fire.

“I don’t think in terms like that,” the old man proclaimed. “I’ve learned to trust in what I see with my own two eyes. Seen a lot of strange things with animals giving birth to freaks. We, as Greek have heard all kinds of fantastic stories about the gods and the heroes of the legends of our people; I’ve never seen proof of such. The Jews believe in spirits and things, as I understand. They don’t have much use for us *Gentiles*,” Aegeus said.

“So, you don’t believe as they do, that their God is the one true God?” Dimitri asked as he shifted position while seeking comfort and indicating that he wanted Aegeus to take the first watch.

“I would believe if something came along to show me strong evidence of such a God,” the old man said as he continued to observe the storm and occasionally glance at the herd. “I don’t see it by observing the Pharisees,” he added.

“Yeah, I feel the same way. I’ve heard a lot of stories from the Jewish traditions,” the young man said as his speech was getting a bit slower, for the night was wearing on. The herd was settled down and the tired young herdsman’s thoughts were giving way to sleep.

“I’ll take the first watch,” Aegeus said as he smiled at his young companion, then added more wood to the fire. “I’m sending you to the marketplace in the morning to get some more food for us; I want to keep the herd up here for another day or two,” he instructed.

“First thing in the morning,” Dimitri mumbled as he drifted off to sleep.

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The old man was now alone with his thoughts. Something inside was tugging at his heart. He really wanted to believe in the God of the Hebrews; one that watched over men as he watched over his animals. The storytelling and the conversation had led Aegeus into deep thoughts about his life, so he decided to voice some of his thoughts under his breath. He glanced over at his young friend, now sound asleep and pulled his blanket up over his hands. Dimitri shifted slightly and breathed deeply in silent appreciation. The elder herdsman sat on the rock close to the fire and watched the distant storm. He thought of what Dimitri had said about the stories from the Hebrew scriptures, which he himself had heard many times. The old man didn't know how to pray, so he just spoke from his heart, while double checking to make sure his young friend was asleep.

Aegeus spoke, "God of the Hebrews, reveal yourself to me if you really exist, so that I might believe. I would learn your ways and live my life by your ways. If I could see with my own two eyes, then I would believe!"

The elder herdsman sat quietly while leaning on his staff and warming himself by the fire. He was lost in thought as he continued to watch the distant storm, when suddenly the storm vanished right before his eyes! He rubbed his eyes in disbelief, for he had never seen such a thing. Aegeus tried to reason within his mind of what he had just witnessed. The storm didn't move off, nor did it dissipate normally; it just melted away into a perfectly clear, starry, moonlit night. The old man couldn't help but wonder about what he had said under his breath moments before. Then he said to himself out loud, "No, just a very strange weather event; just because I've never seen such doesn't mean it was because of that."

Yet he sat and watched, as he contemplated these things throughout the rest of the night. He didn't even awaken Dimitri when the time came time for his watch. A time or two the elder herdsman heard the unmistakable cry of the beast off in the distance. He paid it little mind, though startled a bit. He knew it

was out there but knew there was little threat at night. Still, nothing wrong with keeping a close watch. He pondered deeply what Dimitri had said about the beast coming to be through evil spirits. Aegeus realized that some of what he had witnessed was beyond reason, as he had told the story again. The elder man reviewed his life. He had many friends and looked after Dimitri and his family after his friend had died, but he was lonely at times. His wife had died when they were young, so he had no children of his own. He looked over at Dimitri and realized that he had sort of adopted him and his brother, Argus, as sons. He was very proud of them. Aegeus was fond of their mother, Calista, but kept his distance out of respect. Perhaps there was something more for the life of this old man. The experience of the storm vanishing left Aegeus restless. He shifted to sitting even closer to the fire with his back rested against the sitting rock. He pondered his thoughts way into the night, until finally the old man dozed off.

## The Storm

The late afternoon sun cast a warm amber glow upon the ship and the men as they rowed away from the west coast of the Sea of Galilee. They left behind the multitudes that had gathered there to hear the teaching of their Master. It was a clear, warm, pleasant afternoon with a gentle westerly breeze blowing. They lowered the dingy white sail, as it billowed and pushed the little ship toward their destination. The voyage to the other side, as their Master had requested, seemed as it was going to be an easy trip with lots of good fellowship. Simon looked around the ship as he guided her along at the helm. He thought about their mission and the other men on their journey.

There were himself and his brother Andrew, who owned the ship; the brothers James and John, as well as Philip, all fishermen. The other disciples were Matthew the tax collector, Nathaniel Bartholomew, Thomas Didymus, James the son of Alphaeus, Jude Thaddaeus, Judas Iscariot the treasurer, and Simon the Canaanite. And, of course, Jesus of Nazareth, their Master; the men had a full ship. Jesus had been standing near the bow as they had set off, while making his way to the stern slowly as he spoke to all on board. He ended up sitting at the rear of the ship between Simon and Andrew. Jesus went below the stern deck as the afternoon sun waned, for Simon had told him about the ballast sacks being a good place to take rest. The men were all happy to see their Master lying down, for they had been walking all over the Galilee Region; Jesus had been teaching and performing miracles almost nonstop for days. The men settled in for the evening as they sailed across the Sea of Galilee.

What had been a calm and very pleasant evening had changed to a brisk and damp night. Darkness fell, but the stars and rising moon were obscured by an approaching mass of threatening dark clouds. The surface of the sea had been still, but now had become a bit choppy and there was spray and light rain in the air. They continued on, but the men who had been joyfully conversing with

one another were quiet as they became aware of the coming storm. Most had set about adjusting their garments and covering their heads to prepare for the change in the weather. The brothers Simon and Andrew remained on the rear deck. Simon was sitting on the starboard side, as he guided the little ship along with the fixed helm oar, while Andrew was on the port side with an oar as well. James and John were handling the center oars. They had set sail from the west side in fair weather and had not expected a storm. Still, the men felt confident in their ship. She was new and even after two seasons still had the aroma of fresh cut wood seasoned with fish. All of the rigging, fittings, as well as the sail were in top condition.

Simon was thinking to himself, as he scanned the ship and her passengers. He realized that it would be difficult to return to life as it was before. The excitement of following Jesus had far outmatched any of his experiences in life. The far-reaching importance of their mission had superseded anything else, as it was instantly evident upon the Master's call: *'Follow me.'* Simon secured the helm for a moment and jumped down to speak with his Master about the approaching storm. He found him curled up asleep while using his outer garment as a blanket. He didn't want to disturb him, for the time being. He knew he was exhausted.

Simon returned to his position at the helm. He guided the ship along, as he recalled his visits to the boat builders when he had commissioned the ship a couple of seasons before....

She was a fine specimen of the Galilean lake boats, as they had been built for many generations. She was big enough to carry fifteen passengers, or huge loads of fish. The little ship had one mast and yard with a square-rigged sail. A very sturdy wooden hull was fitted together with mortise and tenon joints; thus, making the need for an internal frame structure unnecessary. Instead, there was a series of lateral pieces applied to the inside of the planking to provide extra strength and were rounded to be walked on. The well-

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fitted joints of the hull had no need of caulking, for the water would swell the joints making them watertight. A straight keel rose at either end of the ship by way of bow and stern posts, as well as the hull planking, and the posts rose higher and curved inward. The bow post was a wave splitter, which sloped forward at the base. The stern post had a slope as well forming a kind of tail or stationary rudder. She had five oars and had oarlocks on the rail of the ship. A sixth fixed oar, or helm was attached to the starboard side of the ship at the stern and had a broader end to steer by. There were two decks at the bow and stern with spaces beneath, but open at the center of the ship. She had a shallow draft, which was excellent for getting close to shore for fishing; not so good in rough seas. The small ships would typically put in at the onset of bad weather.

The disciples found themselves right in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. The two men on the stern deck exchanged glances of concern.

“Not too bad yet; perhaps it will blow over,” Andrew stated as he looked up at the ominous, dark sky.

“Yes, perhaps,” Simon responded as he also looked up, then at the men in his boat, as they were faintly visible in the dim light of the two lamps burning on board.

Simon realized that there was nothing he could do to improve their situation, for he felt responsible for everyone on board. Deep down he wondered how anything bad could happen to them with Jesus on board, so he decided to focus on that and not the storm. It still wasn't that bad, as the westerly wind had picked up a bit to their advantage; they were moving along at a good pace. Simon was thinking to himself how fortunate they were that he had invested in a new boat for his family's fishing business. Their old large boat had been around since before he was born. He had grown up and learned to fish on that boat, but there came a time

when it just couldn't be repaired anymore. He remembered how sad he felt when he let it go to the boat builders, but they had made a more than fair offer for it. It did help with the final payment when he took possession of the new boat. Watching it go was like losing a friend. He knew, however, that times being what they were under heavy Roman taxation, that parts from the old boat would help other struggling fishermen keep their boats in service. There were now more serious things to consider, as it all seemed like such a long time ago. Their ship had a new much more important mission than catching fish; Jesus had told them they were now fishers of men.

Gradually, the ship began to creak and groan, as the wave action increased. The men started to hunker down and hold onto something. Suddenly, a big gust of wind hit from the south tossing the ship slightly as it began to rain harder. The men looked up, for there were traces of lightning mingled in the dark clouds; the rumble of thunder was adding to the anxiety of the men facing the growing threat. There was a bit of murmuring among the disciples as they covered themselves the best they could. The powerful wind gusts started to come from all directions it seemed. The waves were breaking over the sides and pouring water into the little ship.

Simon found himself struggling increasingly with the helm to keep the ship perpendicular to the waves and keep her from rolling over. The waves had become whitecaps the height of a man and growing. Andrew was struggling himself and called out to man all the oars. The brothers James and John remained at the center oars; the men at the bow got their oars in the water as well. Now, they were fighting for their lives as the little ship pitched and rolled like a toy.

"Pull up the sail!" Simon shouted as he continued to wrestle with the helm.

Nathaniel and Judas took the task, as Judas untied the rope to pull up the sail by way of a pulley at the top of the mast. They



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fought to hoist the heavy, rain-soaked sail, then a very strong gust of wind blasted them from the southwest. The rope holding the end of the yard steady on the starboard side snapped and torqued the sail sideways. The men gathered themselves and continued the attempt to raise the sail, but they found the rope was jammed in the pulley and was unable to free it. The sail was less than halfway up, and the wind was tossing the ship about violently. The others not involved with fighting the storm with the oars were busy bailing water with empty clay jars that had been stowed beneath the bow deck.

Thomas was bailing water, but he saw the trouble his friends were having with the sail and acted. He grabbed the dangling, broken rope hanging from the yard, then tied it around his waist and shimmied up the mast. The man hung on for his life and wrapped his legs around the mast as he tugged the rope with both hands back and forth until managing to pull the snag free. He started to descend, but the ship abruptly rolled over to a very steep angle on the port side. Thomas lost his grip, then flew off the mast out over the sea. He quickly clutched the rope, for the man was staring death in the face; he didn't know how to swim. Fear began to creep into his mind, but the ship quickly righted itself. The motion slung him back into the ship, and he landed on his feet. He was stunned and looked around for a moment at the faces of the men on the stern of the ship, for they had witnessed what happened and were all astonished. Thomas looked at the other men with a very curious expression as he collected his senses, then staggered back to find a jar and started to bail water again.

Those who were bailing water seemed to be fighting a losing battle. They would gain a little, only to see another wave crash over the side of the ship and dump more water in than they had fought to remove. The effort was beginning to seem hopeless, as there was a growing fear and frustration among the men. The disciples realized that they would likely be lost if the storm continued much longer. The storm had grown to a greater intensity than any of the men had ever encountered at least while at sea. The thunder and lightning

were becoming more intense than ever, as well as the wind gusts. The little ship was pitching and rolling to such a degree that the men thought at any moment the ship would capsize or fill up with water and sink. Despite all of this the ship kept righting itself, and the battle continued.

Simon was straining to see as the lamps on board had gone out; the rain and spray were constantly blowing in his face. He was thinking of how he had failed his Master and all the men who had come aboard his boat. His thoughts went toward Jesus, now more than ever they needed to look to him. They had been preoccupied with the storm and dealing with the emergency by their own efforts. It had all developed so quickly that the disciples had failed to believe and have faith in him. Simon wondered how anyone could sleep through all of this.

The ship had taken on a lot of water despite the efforts of the men constantly bailing. The rain had been coming down very heavy and they were all soaked, cold and growing more and more weary from battling the storm. Suddenly, the ship rose up at a very steep angle by the stern. It simultaneously rolled over on the starboard side, while creaking violently as the ship was not designed for such stresses. The men let out a collective gasp as they found themselves looking down at the water, while holding on to keep from falling out of the ship. They were expecting to crash down sideways and sink. The water that had filled the ship rushed out over the starboard side by the bow, and over the men clinging to whatever they could. One man, Philip, was washed out, but miraculously the ship slipped back and righted itself once again. Philip ended up near the stern, then quickly swam up and grabbed an oar as the others pulled him from the water.

Simon secured the helm and jumped down. He entered the space beneath the deck and was joined by two other men outside the space as they had decided to wake their Master. One said, "I don't know how much longer we're going to last out here!"

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The space beneath the deck was dark, since the lamps on board had been extinguished by the wind and the rain. The men's eyes adjusted as they could barely see that the space had been swamped, but the top of the ballast sacks had remained dry. The now frequent lightning flashes allowed brief glimpses of their Master, as he was still curled up sleeping. Simon firmly touched him.

*"Master, we perish!"* he said rather loudly as he tried to wake him.

*"The storm is overwhelming us!"* shouted one of the men close by.

The only response was Jesus pulling his cover over his head.

*"Master, we perish!"* Simon shouted louder this time while pushing vigorously on his Master's shoulder.

Slowly he awoke, then sat up and stretched his arms a little as he ran his hands through his hair to push it out of his face. He opened his eyes, then looked down realizing that he had put his feet in water.

*"Master, don't you care that we're going to drown?"* one of the frightened men pleaded.

Another said, *"The water is overtaking us again!"*

Jesus stood up, then put on his outer garment and covered his head. He gently parted the men clinging to the edge of the stern deck and emerged from below.

The scene on the ship was frantic: men bailing water and fighting the storm to keep the ship steady with the oars. All went silent upon the appearance of Jesus.

*"Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?"* their Master shouted with a stern and authoritative voice.

He stood there for a moment as he looked out at the sea and up at the storm. The ship was violently swaying, for the men were unable to stand without clinging onto something. Most had been hunkered down or bracing their bodies to keep from falling over. Jesus was just standing there, as he seemed unaffected by the reality that they had been immersed in. Everyone on board was amazed by this, so much so that they all stopped whatever they were doing, and all eyes were upon him.

Jesus then raised his arms as he shouted out over the sea and up at the storm with thunderous authority:

*“PEACE BE STILL!”* he commanded.

Instantly, there was no movement anywhere. The dark clouds that had been so menacing simply melted away into a clear, starry sky with a bright three-quarter moon. The scene was bathed in soft moonlight revealing an unusual stillness upon the surface of the water. All the men were intensely and thoroughly shocked. Jesus lowered his arms and turned to his disciples. His countenance had returned to his compassionate and loving way.

*“Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?”* he asked as he scanned the faces of his chosen companions. He smiled and then turned to view the distant, now visible shoreline and hills beyond. A very small flicker of light could be seen near the shore on one of the lower hills. Jesus pointed to it while glancing at Simon, as he acknowledged his direction. Jesus then bent down and returned to the space beneath the stern deck. The men could see their Master, once the lamps on board were lit again, as he knelt upon the ballast sacks and prayed as he often did. Most of the men couldn’t take their eyes off of him, until finally he climbed back upon the ballast sacks and went back to sleep.

Murmuring began to slowly develop among the men as they tried to come to grips with what had just happened.

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One asked, *“What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”*

No one responded. Quiet resumed as some of the men went about bailing the remainder of the water out of their little ship. Simon sat at his place on the stern deck, where he had been fighting for their lives a very short time ago. Now, he sat there guiding the ship effortlessly and felt very foolish. Why hadn't they awakened Jesus sooner? Why had they doubted? Where was their faith? A gentle westerly breeze began to blow, as it had at the beginning of their journey. Simon asked Andrew to help him lower the sail once more. The sail caught the breeze and billowed as it pushed them forward. Andrew got up and grabbed a spare piece of rope from below, then tied it to the broken rope on the yard and secured it to its place on the rail of the ship. He told Simon that it was the only damage he knew of.

The men continued on, as they quietly reflected on what they had been through together. Simon once again gazed at the faces of the other disciples softly lit by the ship's lamps. He knew that they had all grown in faith and stronger fellowship. He looked out at the Sea of Galilee as the moonlight glistening off the gentle ripples of the water. Then he looked up at the tiny flicker of light that his Master had pointed to. Simon continued to guide the ship along and introspected just how the experience had impacted him personally. He drifted into a time of silent prayer, as he recalled what had been spoken of Jesus. What manner of man was this? He watched the men who were exhausted from their ordeal, as they slowly settled in and dozed off. Simon felt a blessing wash over him. He knew what manner of man Jesus was. He was much more than a man.

## The Tomb

Darkness had fallen upon the rocky bluff. The pale moonlight revealed only a slight suggestion of the grassy slopes, trees, and rock formations overlooking the Sea of Galilee. The area was typically only visited during the daylight hours, for the rocky bluffs contained many tombs. It had become very quiet, and it was a lonely, desolate place. Very few ventured into the area to honor the dead anymore. People had been frightened and attacked. Stories were told of something evil lurking there. The tombs had become overgrown and neglected as a result.

One of the tombs, however, was not abandoned. In the dark recesses of the ancient tomb there was a dim glow, and movement. He made his nest behind a large stone sarcophagus shrouded in cobwebs. It was near the back wall of the tomb beneath a row of carved niches, where he kept his treasures. Legion slept on a pile of old, dirty clothing and things that he had stolen over the years. He liked the spot due to the steady availability of vermin and insects to eat. There were symbols and depictions on the wall around his nest; depictions of an ancient world known only to him, and those within. Spirals, horned gods, giants, hideous beasts, and long forgotten languages that only had meaning to Legion; all written in his own blood.

They liked keeping things that reminded them of their exploits; bits of cloth, strands of hair, broken pieces of pottery, and broken weapons all made them feel alive. They would relive the moment; the fear, the pain, and the shame their victims would feel intoxicated them. Legion also kept a collection of swords, daggers, pieces of armor, and even arrows from the many attempts to capture him. His lamp was a badly dented Roman helmet, which had been filled with animal fat with a bit of cloth stuck in for a wick. They needed none of these things, except to feel alive.

They referred to themselves as Legion. Multitudes of ancient evil spirits had entered the poor unfortunate man early in life, for

he had been left vulnerable through the worship of false gods and witchcraft. Legion had no understanding of what it was like to be alone; therefore, the demoniac had no concept of loneliness. He was a complete hermit and defended his solitude with vigor. What was left of the man was deeply buried beneath layer upon layer of demonic entities. The man was no longer allowed to think, or remember his name, or where he came from. This *Legion*, as they called themselves had very simple objectives: To kill, steal, destroy, to cause misery; and to wait for a time in the distant future when they would have free reign in the world, for a time.

Legion jumped upon the ornate lid of the stone sarcophagus and let out a screeching wail to welcome the night, which was followed by crying. Something deep inside brought an intense sadness; an inner conflict never resolved, and crying was the only way to release it. Legion perched upon his roost and had a clear view of the tomb entrance, so he could look out for a possible meal, or perhaps something or someone to torment. Legion didn't usually venture out much at night; not out of fear, which was an emotion that had become meaningless to them, but simply the lack of visibility. Legion preferred to stalk during the day, so they could see clearly all the nuances of the horror they would perpetuate. They refrained from killing anyone; not because they didn't want to, but for self-preservation. Legion understood that murder would bring a more determined quest for their capture. They knew better than to exceed their limitations, for the survival of the host was a higher priority.

The top of the sarcophagus was stained with Legions own blood. There were several pieces of flint scattered about fashioned into blades to cut himself with. Through doing this, Legion would feel powerful and at times would see images or visions of things to come. These evil spirits had driven the man into the wilderness and driven the humanity out of the man. Even the animals of God's creation have a code of behavior according to their kind. What Legion had become was a creature devoid of any virtue; a creature that just shouldn't be.

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Legion was rather short in stature, because of the twisted, contorted nature of his development from the demonic possession and the way he carried himself. His muscles were bulged and rippled abnormally, as well as his face. His eyes were unusually dark and piercing. He folded his legs on either side and put his arms in front, like an animal when he sat or perched. He never wore clothing, which was something all people did. They had an intense hatred for anything human. Legion was covered with filth, for they didn't like water to touch them. To Legion, water represented cleanliness and purity; they found the concept repulsive. His hair had grown very long and was tangled, matted, and full of debris. His finger and toenails had grown into thick, sharp claws.

The most frightening thing about his appearance was that his entire body was covered with horrible scars following years of mutilating himself. Legion would cut himself and the wounds wouldn't heal properly, then they would fester. They would be gratified by the pain, which was reflected in his overall appearance. He never cut his face or neck for some reason, but his arms, legs, torso, and his back as far as he could reach all showed evidence of his long-term self-abuse.

Legion perched, as a memory of an exploit long ago emerged in his mind....

It was early afternoon. Legion had just returned to the tomb seeking the cool darkness. They felt it wise to hide, for they had witnessed a few Roman soldiers in the area searching. They conversed within his mind. Were they looking for us? Legion sought insight by making a small cut upon his leg. Yes, they were looking for Legion. Would they find us? The demoniac wanted to avoid an encounter with the Romans, if possible. Legion decided that if they found them, this group of Romans would curse the day because of it. They didn't want to leave this tomb, for it suited their



needs. Legion could sit in the darkness all day and watch from within. Many creatures shared the tomb with Legion; tasty creatures. The demoniac heard sounds from outside: the sounds of beasts and men. Legion could see outside the tomb entrance as the soldiers dismounted their horses. The Romans then tied them to some trees and approached the entrance of another tomb. They knew the soldiers were coming, so Legion moved to the entrance, for they were prepared to defend their lair.

The Roman soldiers were done searching the other tomb quickly, then approached. Legion was visible just inside the tomb entrance, which startled a couple of the soldiers. The one in charge: a large, muscular, young man, stepped up and pulled a small scroll from under his armor. He opened the scroll and read the proclamation in Latin:

He shouted, “By order of the Commander of the Tenth Legion Camp at Gadara, I hereby announce this order to place you under arrest for various crimes against the Roman Empire. Disrupting trade routes, hindering free travel and various accusations of attack, theft, and injury. You are to come with us.” He finished speaking, then two of the soldiers approached with chains they had brought from the horses.

Legion moved up to the entrance. The sunlight caught his hideous appearance as he sniffed the air. From Legion’s point of view men appeared to move in slow motion. He viewed them as clumsy, lumbering creatures despite their shiny armor and well-fitted apparel. Legion issued a proclamation of his own in a deep, echoing voice in Latin:

“I will not go with you, you stinking dung beetles. I live by the authority of the god of this world. Your empire has no authority over us. Go back and tell this *commander* of yours to stop annoying us. You are outnumbered. We may not harm you, if you leave quickly. Now, BE GONE WITH YOU!” he commanded.

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The large soldier threw the scroll to the ground and drew his sword. The other soldiers followed his lead. Legion ran up and grabbed the sword away from the large man before any of them knew what had happened. Lightning fast, Legion ran over to where the horses were tied and frightened them. He cut the reigns and swatted them on the rear with the flat side of the sword, then chased them away. The demoniac began to release an insane laughter; a cackling that wrought fear to those who heard it. Legion ran up to face the soldiers, for they now had swords drawn. Sword fighting ensued until the demon-filled man grew tired of it and complained about how slow they were. He then began breaking the blades of the swords as they came at him and threw them into the distance. Legion went at the large man, as he ripped his breastplate off with his left clawed hand. The man yelled out as the motion left deep wounds across his torso from Legion's claws. The demoniac kept going after the large man; beating him, ripping and tearing at his clothing and equipment all with his left hand. The soldiers were attempting to help their commander, but Legion flipped the sword around in his right hand and began knocking helmets off with the handle. This either severely stunned the men or left them unconscious. The soldiers were completely unprepared for the supernatural strength and speed of Legion.

The battle continued, but the large man was down and unconscious. The others kept trying to confine Legion with the chains, as the demoniac kicked and swiped with his claws. One of the soldiers came at Legion with the chain, which resulted in the demoniac kicking him in the face and taking the heavy device. Greatly amused, Legion began swinging it over his head, while he continued cackling. The chain had quickly become a very effective weapon and the remaining soldiers were simply trying to survive the battle. The large man rose up and shouted an order to retreat. The beaten and bloody soldiers ran away in different directions, as they cried out to their pagan gods to protect them.

Legion looked around still snickering a bit. The demoniac ended up glad they had found them. Legion once again retreated to

the cool darkness of his tomb, after gathering some of the more useful bits of armor and weapons. The memory began to fade, as they sensed a disturbance....

Legion heard a slight noise outside of the tomb. He glared at the tomb entrance, then sniffed the air like a snake sensing prey. He saw nothing but knew that someone was there. He quickly scurried back behind his perch into his nest, then peeked out from around the corner of the sarcophagus. He waited some time, then a human head appeared around the side of the entrance and peered in. The figure cautiously crept in through the entrance and sniffed the air. Legion had encountered this one before.

He was another demon-possessed man. The man was filthy like Legion, and wore an old, tattered cloak. For years he had shadowed Legion, for reasons only known to him. The man would attempt to sneak up on them but was always unsuccessful. They shared a mutual obsession with places of death. This one was far less powerful, wicked, or cunning as Legion. Having but a few demons, this man's struggle was closer to the surface as he fought to retain selective attributes of his humanity. He had been rejected by society; an outcast, and was seeking interaction, or some sort of acceptance. Legion considered this man unworthy to share space or anything else with. They had all the companionship they needed within.

The man crept closer to his lair. Legion suddenly jumped up in the air and landed on top of his perch. He released a loud, cackling laughter that continued as he glared at the man with his dark, sinister eyes. The man jumped only a slight bit in surprise as he slowly backed up toward the tomb entrance. Legion's laughter died away for the moment, but he continued glaring at the intruder. He hurled an old dagger unexpectantly that he had picked up while lying in wait. The weapon shot across the tomb and grazed the man's ear. The mysterious man didn't move but stood there and

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grunted a little under his breath, as a trickle of blood ran down his neck. Legion released his insane laughter once more, then jumped down and ran up to the man with frightening speed. Legion stood in front of the weaker possessed man and sniffed him up and down, then let out a blood-curdling screech right in the man's face. The intruder continued to stand there, for he knew better than to fight; Legion could easily tear him to pieces. The demoniac retrieved the dagger, then returned to his perch with it in his clawed hand and jumped up. Legion calmly licked the blood from the old rusty weapon as he glared at his intruder, then threw the dagger back at the man. It stuck it in the ground between his feet.

He then shouted with his deep, echoing voice, "Be gone with you! You have no place with us! We are Legion, we are many, we are the mighty ones from the old time before the waters came and took our world away! We are here to destroy this creation of God! How dare you come in here seeking us! BE GONE WITH YOU!"

Legion reached behind his back, where he had laid a large human leg bone on the edge of the sarcophagus lid. The man had turned to run. He barely cleared the entrance of the tomb, then the bone flew against the lintel of the entrance and smashed into a thousand pieces. The cackling laughter of Legion followed the man as he ran off into the darkness of the night.

Legion looked down, only slightly distracted by the intrusion, and picked up one of the flint blades laying on top of his perch. He held it up, while looking at it in the dim light from his lamp. He turned and held it, so the flame of the lamp was behind it. They admired the thinness and translucence of the blade, as well as the incredible sharpness. He sniffed the blade and then tasted it; the taste of the dried blood brought back prior experiences. Legion closed his eyes in a moment of euphoria.

The demoniac made a long cut on the underside of his left forearm. He perched quietly awaiting a vision as the blood flowed out. He began to pass into a light trance, as he recalled many past

exploits, and sought ways to have even greater ones. They had occasional dim memories of the times of old and the mighty ones. A vision slowly began to manifest in his mind....

Legion began to see a boat on the water. They had grown accustomed to living with little fear of anything; suddenly, they found themselves filled with terror. The vision ended because of the shock. There was something about that boat that threatened them, but how could a boat threaten Legion in these hills on dry ground? They couldn't make sense of it, as much as they tried. He made a similar cut on the other arm and called upon powerful dark entities for greater understanding. He became motionless, as they awaited a vision once more.

A long time passed, then Legion saw the boat on the water again, like the boats they had seen on the Sea of Galilee. There was a man on the boat with many others, but this man was different than the rest. The spirits within started to feel very troubled. They thought at first it was because of their disdain for water. Then, the man who was unique began to glow and transformed into a blinding white light, until the brightness was all they could see. Legion tried to open his eyes, but the vision continued, for all he could see was white. Then a strange new image emerged from the whiteness: it was the Son of God sitting upon a throne with honor and glory and his name was Jesus! Legion lost consciousness as he fell back off of his perch and into his nest. He slowly came around, then they went into a complete panic.

Legion ran out of the tomb and around the bluff to survey the Sea of Galilee. It was a clear night, except for a strange looking storm over the sea. They decided that the storm was there because of the boat. Legion raised his hands as he called upon powerful spirits to destroy it. He scanned the sea and strained his eyes trying to see the boat but knew he wouldn't unless it was close. They assumed it was there based on the panic boiling in his gut. He scanned the coast but saw no boats, only the glimmer of a small fire off in the distance; up the coast to the north. Legion figured it was

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the swine herders they had watched earlier in the day. They had thought about attacking them and stealing one of the animals, but now had more serious matters to deal with.

Legion began to collect stones in the darkness and made a circle in a place that couldn't be seen by the swine herders, but still in view of the sea. The demoniac started collecting leaves, sticks, small pieces of wood and threw them into the circle. Legion perched by the circle and drew symbols in the dirt with his claw next to each stone. He got up and started to dance around the circle, while calling upon demonic spirits as he danced. Legion called out for fire. The pile he had created within the circle started to smoke, then burst into flames. The demoniac let out his laughter which eased the panic.

Legion continued to dance, while calling upon wicked spirits of the earth to bring up a whirlwind to stop and destroy the boat they had seen. The demon host danced, as he could hear distant thunder and paused for a moment. Legion looked out over the Sea of Galilee, and could see the dark, swirling clouds that were laced with fingers of lightning. He let out his cackling laughter once again, but deep inside the panic remained, for the demons within knew the vision to be true. Legion resumed dancing frantically way into the night. He stopped to see that the storm had disappeared; they tried to convince themselves that the storm had destroyed the boat. The gut-wrenching reality was that the fear and panic endured. Legion continued to dance. He danced for there was fear within they couldn't cope with. He danced due to there being a very small part of them, which opposed everything that they were, and Legion could never understand it. He danced because there was a very annoying emotion which kept rising that Legion had not dealt with for a long time. They kept subduing it with their twisted logic. That emotion was hope.

## Chapter Two

### The Deliverance

It was a clear and beautiful morning as the rays of the sun were breaking over the hills and rocky bluffs on the southeast coast of the Sea of Galilee. Many features of the landscape were still in shadow, but the morning sun shone down on what appeared to be a beach straight ahead. Simon let go of the helm and asked Andrew to help him raise the sail. Everyone had been dozing off until daybreak, for they had been worn out from the storm. Even Simon had fallen asleep at the helm a couple of times but woke to find the ship was still on course. The morning had brought good feelings among the men as they sat around Jesus, while talking and laughing. There was an undeniable joy and confidence in the men and their mission; these men would follow their Master to the ends of the earth.

The sail was raised, and those who had been rowing grabbed the oars and started working their way to the shore. Simon knew how fortunate they were, since much of the coast in the area was rocky and steep; too rough to land a boat. He thought they might have to travel up and down the coast to find a suitable place to land. He had steered in the direction of the flickering speck of light his Master had pointed to until it was no longer visible, then used landmarks after that. He took no credit for any navigational expertise; somehow, he knew they were exactly where they needed to be. Simon figured they were near the northern portion of the harbor of Gadara.

The men rowed enthusiastically toward the beach. It was bathed in the early morning warm sunlight and was a welcome sight to all, after the storm of the previous night. Simon stood up and strained his eyes as he shaded them with his hand against the

intense morning sun. He was trying to make out the details of the shoreline as they approached. Simon noticed what appeared to be a very large herd of animals to the left upon a steep grassy slope with trees. He saw what appeared to be caves in the rocky bluffs. He was unable to make anything out distinctly, so he sat down and went back to rowing. They were getting close within a short time. The men not occupied with the oars stood and prepared to disembark. Nathaniel was holding a rope attached to the bow to help pull the boat up onto the beach. Simon secured the helm and stood up again to survey the landscape.

Simon scanned to the left and up the slope while shading his eyes from the intense sunlight, then grimaced. He looked away toward his fellow disciples, as many had noticed the same thing. He again turned his shielded gaze toward the slope and muttered under his breath, "Swine." This was not something the Jewish men found appealing; they considered swine unclean animals that they wanted nothing to do with. He thought to himself that at least the breeze seemed to be taking the stench up into the hills. Simon also noticed a column of smoke rising from within the herd. He identified it as, most likely, the source of the flickering light he had followed last night. A gentle swoosh brought the little ship to a stop. The men eagerly jumped off into the shallow water and pulled the boat up onto the beach. Jesus jumped out and walked across the beach with many of his disciples following. He scanned the landscape for himself while paying particular attention to the rocky bluff above....

The elder herdsman awoke and found his young companion had already left for Emmatha to obtain needed supplies for a prolonged stay in the area. Aegeus took a drink from his waterskin and washed his face, then dug through his bag for something to eat. He was unsatisfied with the remnants of dried out bread that he found, so he decided to walk around the herd and round up strays. He got up and grabbed his staff, then immediately noticed that a



ship had landed down on the beach. He was curious, so he walked a bit closer to see the group of men that had gathered there. A few of them were tying off the ship to some rocks. "They must have just arrived," he mumbled to himself.

As he moved closer, Aegeus determined they appeared to be Jewish fishermen with passengers, so he held his place. He was herding swine and smelled like swine. Everyone knew that Jewish people considered swine unclean and had a disdain for them. Still, he was compelled to watch these men, but didn't think he would be received well. Aegeus noticed one of the men was looking up at the rocky bluff. He had determined the day before that the beast was possibly hiding there, for he had tried to avoid it when they passed through. He was a tall man, and his clothing was definitely Jewish. He was intrigued by this man somehow; probably because he felt like warning him not to go up there. Aegeus wondered if they had landed here to travel to Hippos, for he would offer to move the herd and let them pass. A couple of the men noticed Aegeus and waved, which left him surprised at their friendly gesture. The elder herdsman hastily returned the wave.

For now, the men were just standing around talking, so the old man went back to check on his herd and the other herdsman. He determined there were minimal strays, as the forage in the area was plentiful. There were also low spots here and there with mud for the swine to wallow in. He decided that they would move the herd farther up into the hills for fresh forage when Dimitri returned. After a good meal, as the elder herdsman thought to himself.

There was now little movement at the site of Legion's ritual that lasted through the night. The fire that had been raging the night before was reduced to a small pile of ashes, still smoldering and sending out wisps of smoke. Legion had collapsed from exhaustion and overwhelming panic from the vision they had seen, as well as seeing the storm vanish. It all brought about fervent, intense

dancing. The morning sun was beating down and causing him to stir a bit. His first waking thought was to retreat to the cool, dark recesses of the tomb. The memories of the previous night came crashing back as he awoke; was the ship destroyed?

The demoniac jumped up suddenly, then looked around and sniffed the air. They realized their worst fear, as Legion let out an ear-splitting screech that echoed throughout the landscape. He jumped upon a large rock that was obstructing his view of the coastline below, and what they saw invoked a panic like they had never experienced before. It was the ship they had seen! They had projected and imagined it destroyed in a myriad of ways through their magic, yet there it was. They saw the men standing on the beach, and one was staring straight up at them!

Legion's countenance began to change; the fear, rage, and defiance that had permeated their existence the night before melted away into acceptance. They knew this was the Son of God; for the first time there was no escape. A strange curiosity was developing among them: why was he here, now? They knew the end of days were far off, and they would have their time before the judgment. He perched upon the rock for a moment while preparing for the inevitable surrender. Legion then jumped down. The demoniac looked around while sniffing the air, then ran down the slope toward the men on the beach in their usual animal-like way.

One of the disciples noticed him approaching and proclaimed, "Behold Master, a wild man!"

He ran to within a short distance before Jesus, then dropped to his knees and bowed his head in worship. The disciples of Jesus drew near to their Master on either side ready to defend him in case this wild beast decided to attack. Simon rested his hand on the pommel of his sword; Jesus didn't move at all.

Then Legion spoke in their deep, guttural, echoing voice, *"What have I to do with you, Jesus, Son of the most high God? I adjure you by God, that you torment me not."*

Jesus calmly asked him, “*What is your name?*”

Legion responded, “*My name is Legion: for we are many.*”

Jesus slowly raised his right hand, and in a booming voice of authority commanded, “*COME OUT OF THE MAN, UNCLEAN SPIRITS!*”

The demoniac instantly recoiled, then let out a screeching wail. Panic once again consumed Legion, for he had been extremely weakened and disoriented by the command of Jesus. Thinking quickly, they formulated a negotiation:

“*We adjure you, Lord, that you would not cast us into the abyss, but allow us to enter the swine nearby,*” Legion pleaded in a weakened state.

Jesus glanced up at the vast herd of swine for a moment, then looked back at Legion and responded with the same voice of authority, “*GO!*”

The beast at the feet of Jesus collapsed with his head down, while covering his head with his clawed hands. Immediately, the men noticed changes taking place in the strange man. His contorted, abnormal body began to re-shape. It was only a short time, and his appearance became that of a normal man. He appeared to be a bit thin, but muscular; however, it was apparent that his body was, and remained covered with horrible scars. One of the disciples took off his outer garment and put it around him. He remained motionless for the moment.

Peace and absolute serenity. How can one be thrust into an entirely new reality so quickly? The Holy One, the Son of God has had mercy and compassion upon me, but why? How can he be flesh? I am filled with an overwhelming love that has extinguished everything I had come to be. The only remnant left is a spark of

humanity I thought to be long dead. I can feel his love for me, this Jesus, and my love for him...it defies explanation. My love for him is growing like a raging fire unbridled from the darkness that had destroyed me. Me, not us, but me! I feel like a seed long hidden in the recesses of a dark cave; a seed brought forth into the sunlight, then planted by a beautiful stream and instantly flourishing. The feeling of being born must be this way; I have been blessed to receive a second birth. I'm overwhelmed by the freedom to choose, to think, to express. All the oppression that has overshadowed my miserable existence for so long has vanished. I've been set free by the Son of God! He loves me more than I can understand! I want to hold this moment forever, like a precious treasure, but already I feel it slipping away. Memories are flooding in with the emotions. Memories of a life snuffed out early by wickedness. The entities that had enslaved me would not allow acknowledgment of wickedness. Through twisted logic they would translate evil into feelings of strength, superiority, and a kind of dark virtue. The knowledge of having done every foul thing under the sun has begun to filter in and crush the joy I have experienced. I am at the feet of Jesus: the personification of love, compassion, and truth. There must be a reason he saved me. Can I reconcile? I must reconcile. I must confess. The things that have made up my life are incompatible with his kingdom. I confess, as my sins are like the grains of sand upon this beach. I am a sinner! I know the Lord Jesus is aware of every thought in my mind...but I can no longer contain myself!

"I HAVE SINNED LORD!" the former beast shouted, then proceeded to weep.

The elder herdsman was watching the men on the beach, then heard the unmistakable screech of the beast. He was very startled, for he had been lost in thought; that terrifying sound cut right through to his memories. He was immediately concerned about the men below and began to scan the hillside, for the sound wasn't that

far away. Aegeus instinctively grabbed his staff with both hands. He spotted the beast, as he had jumped up and perched upon a huge rock at the top of the slope. Without a second thought he shouted as loud as he could, "RUN!" He was afraid he was too far for them to hear. Aegeus slowly started off toward the men, as he walked down the slope toward the beach. The herdsman looked up again at the beast but noticed it had vanished from its rocky perch. He quickly surveyed the hillside, then saw the beast loping down the slope toward the men.

"RUN!" he shouted over and over, "RUN!" The old man quickened his pace as the beast drew near to the men. The elder herdsman saw the beast drop to its knees at the feet of the tall man. The herdsman watched, as he saw this horrific beast bow its head before him in worship! Aegeus could not believe his eyes; he stopped dead in his tracks and just stared. Beyond the group of men on the beach the elder herdsman could see his young companion. Dimitri had just rounded the bend on the road from Emmatha and witnessed the same thing Aegeus had. The young herdsman was just standing there, as he was, and they were both staring at what was happening before them. Dimitri was holding a sack of supplies over his shoulder; just as Aegeus saw him the sack fell to the ground. The elder herdsman could see even at a distance that the young man was looking at the men, then at him, and wasn't sure what to do. Aegeus thought to himself that it was too late to do anything to help the men, so they just kept watching for the moment to see what would happen. Aegeus hadn't noticed, but a couple of the larger swine had walked up behind the elder herdsman and moved up on either side of him.

A deep voice grunted to his left, "Leave us."

A quickly growing commotion erupted within the vast herd behind him. He slowly turned to his left, after almost responding to the voice, and met the glare of the swine standing beside him. Its eyes were very dark and sinister; something the old man had encountered before, long ago. Fear rushed through every fiber of

his being as he involuntarily fell backward into a seated position. The second swine that had been to his right joined with the other, as both animals glared at the herdsman; they seemed to be feeding on the old man's fear. He noticed the second swine's eyes were dark also, as it moved in closer to Aegeus's face.

It spoke with a similar deep grunting voice, "I would run if I were you."

In response, and quite by instinct, the old man quickly brought his staff around and jabbed at the second swine. The swine promptly grabbed onto the end of his staff with its mouth as it bit down and broke it off, then spit the piece into the herdsman's lap. Aegeus looked down at the piece, then back at the evil faces of the two swine. The elder herdsman was unable to get up, so he began kicking his feet as he tried to scoot himself away from the horror before him. From his low perspective Aegeus couldn't see much of the herd, but there behind him was absolute chaos.

The swine were not just acting out violently, but they appeared to be trying to kill each other! Aegeus saw them biting and ramming each other hard enough to draw blood. Some were jumping straight up in the air, then attacking. Some were hurling profane insults at each other before attacking. Just then, one of the swine crashed to the ground beside him with a bloody face. It immediately scrambling up to run at another, then violently rammed into it. The instinct to survive slowly began to battle with the fear in the old man's mind, as he managed to get up to his feet.

The herdsman arose and could see over a good portion of the herd. A few of the other herdsmen that he could see were running away. The pandemonium taking place around him was spread throughout the entire herd! Almost as far as he could see was a herdsman's hellish worst nightmare. He was frozen with fear and shock, as the old man could see a massive movement off in the distance. The swine started to stampede down the slope right into the sea, like a vast flock of migrating birds. Aegeus felt a sharp

pain on the backside of his calf, then looked back to see a trickle of blood running down to the heel of his foot as he realized he had been bitten. The last thing the elder herdsman saw was an enormous disturbance at the foot of the slope where the land met the sea. Drowning swine were flailing about, as more were running in on top of them!

Aegeus simply couldn't take anymore; he turned around and ran as fast as he could down the slope toward the beach. His staff was still in his hand, though quite a bit shorter. The herdsman ran by the men on the beach, as a few of them glanced at him curiously. He saw a brief glimpse of the beast who now appeared normal, while on its knees with its head down. This frightened the old man even more, as he continued to run toward Dimitri. Aegeus kept shouting, "RUN" over and over. Aegeus reached the younger herdsman who could see the terror in the old man's face. He ran also; however, Dimitri could not keep up with his elder companion. They kept running until they were half-way to Emmatha. They stopped and collapsed alongside the road, for they were completely out of breath. Both men dropped to their hands and knees gasping for air.

"The swine! The swine!" he cried. It was all the elder herdsman could get out.

"There is a Great One among them," the young herdsman proclaimed while gasping, as he had been closer to the men on the beach. He was able to see the exchange and heard the beast submit to Jesus. He continued, "The beast called him the Son of the most high God. Then, this *Jesus* turned the beast into a man; I saw it!" He continued to gasp for air.

"The swine! The swine must be stopped!" the elder man said as he had more difficulty speaking between gasps. "I know it sounds crazy, but they want to kill us!" Aegeus shouted the best he could.

The two herdsmen continued on over the stone bridge on the Yarmuk River, as soon as they caught their breath. The road changed to cobblestone there before reaching the marketplace just outside the small City of Emmatha. Rows of tents and small structures where all manner of trade goods and food were sold. The marketplace was bustling with activity; carts and animals, merchants hawking their wares, and many people from Emmatha and Gadara browsing. None of the other herdsmen seemed to have arrived yet. Aegeus and Dimitri had seen a few scatter but were unsure of their current whereabouts. The men didn't hesitate as they made their way down through the main street of the marketplace.

“THE SWINE HAVE GONE MAD! THE BEAST HAS BEEN TAMED! COME AND SEE!” they shouted.

One man, a Greek named Alexander, well-groomed and wearing costly apparel was shopping for fresh produce. He heard the men and took notice when hearing the elder herdsman shout about the swine. He was one of the more prominent members of the community: a local merchant and landowner. Alexander decided he was going to find out what had happened, for he was invested in that herd. A few had gathered around the herdsmen that were curious and wanted to see something exciting. The elder herdsman saw the well-dressed merchant, then looked at him and said humbly, “Come and see.” Alexander had been joined by Eustace: business owner and another of the community leaders.

Only thirty or so gathered to go with them, for many had refused to believe the men. It had become popular opinion that the herdsmen were drunk; one of the wine merchants disclosed that the young man had purchased wine early in the morning. There was one among them who was particularly curious about the claim that the beast had been tamed. A woman who had attended the marketplace with friends coaxed them into walking to the beach with her.



One asked her, “Alethea, why do you want to see that creature?”

She replied, “Somehow, I just want to see it again, if it’s been tamed.”

The group walked to the end of the open-air marketplace and started down the road toward the beach.

The man who had previously declared his identity as Legion was still motionless at the feet of Jesus. He had been curled up with his head down for some time. The swine herdsman had run away. The disciples of Jesus were amazed at the violent behavior of the swine. There had been as many demons in this man as there were swine; perhaps more. They had been acting out quite violently but showed no signs of coming their way. The swine herdsman had fled, for they were full of fear. No one had ever seen anything like this before. The entire vast herd in a veil of increasing dust had all turned at once and started to run straight into the sea. Some of the men moved closer to observe the spectacle; others stayed by the side of Jesus, for he never took his focus off of the man.

The commotion on the slope went silent after a short time. The horrified men watched, as the last bit of movement died down at the water’s edge with the dust still in the air. There had been two thousand or so swine feeding upon the slope and under the trees, now reduced to a floating mass of lifeless carcasses upon the surface of the Sea of Galilee. The enormous loss of life was somewhat disturbing to the men, even though they were swine. However, they knew that given the state of the beasts, what had happened was understood as merciful.

The man at the feet of Jesus began to weep, which grew into deep, mournful wailing. He lifted his head to reveal a handsome man’s face. The man appeared to be a Greek with deep blue eyes. Despite the horrible appearance of his hair and beard, now he

looked nothing like the wild man that had run up to them a short time ago. The disciples had witnessed their Master cast out demons before, but never with this dramatic of a physical change. He cried, as he fumbled with the garment that had been put around him. He carefully wrapped the garment around his body exhibiting modesty. Suddenly, he almost startled some of the men as he let out a cry in a very human voice:

“I HAVE SINNED LORD!” he cried loudly, then proceeded to weep again while lowering his head.

Jesus dropped down right in front of the man, as if this was the moment he had been waiting for. Jesus embraced him despite the filth and held him for a long time. He was then ministered to by the Master, and slowly the weeping stopped. The disciples of Jesus were amazed; not by the casting out of the demons, but the level of love and compassion demonstrated by Jesus.

Simon touched him on the arm and gestured for the man to come with him. He arose to his feet slowly and accompanied Simon to the boat. The man stood much taller and straighter than before. He moved strangely and slowly at first, for he hadn't walked as a man for many years. Philip and Andrew followed. The men stopped for a moment at the water's edge, for the man was afraid and very hesitant to enter the water. Philip waded into the shallow water followed by Andrew. The disciples gave the man a look of encouragement as they beckoned him to follow. Simon smiled and gestured forward, then the men slowly waded into the shallow water of the beach. Simon grabbed the side of the boat, then swung a leg up and jumped into the boat. He quickly returned with a piece of cloth and a small cake of goat soap, then gestured for the man to take off his garment. Andrew held it for him, as Simon and Philip helped the man start washing; he seemed somewhat disoriented. Simon jumped back into the boat, then quickly returned with a cloth sack and set it on the stern deck. The former beast had taken over, for he appeared to enjoy ridding himself of the years of filth. Philip and Simon disrobed themselves,

then handed their garments to Andrew. Simon gestured for the man to go into deeper water. After washing the former demoniac eagerly went forward with his new companions into the waist-deep water beyond the boat.

Simon looked at the man in the eyes and said, “This is for your baptism; you leave the old man behind in the waters, then come out clean, renewed, and living for God.” He looked at the former demoniac and asked, “Do you understand?” The man looked Simon in the eyes and smiled while nodding in agreement.

“I baptize you for the remission of sins,” Simon proclaimed as he gently put his hand on the man’s back and gestured for him to submerge. He was a little hesitant but nodded and allowed Simon to lay him back in the water. He emerged and was smiling broadly. The three men returned to the stern of the little ship. Simon reached into the cloth sack and pulled out a long clean cloth, which was an undergarment. He handed it to the former demoniac who watched the other men, then he wrapped it around himself and secured it in the appropriate fashion. Simon picked up the sack from the stern deck, then the four men walked up onto the beach. Andrew distributed the men’s garments, then Simon reached into the sack and pulled out a slightly frayed old tunic. He handed it to the former demoniac, then watched and smiled as he slipped it on.

He looked at Simon and said, “Thank you.” He spoke in Aramaic, and his response was very emotional and sincere.

“Just some spare clothing I keep on the ship,” Simon told him as he handed him the sack. It also contained an old pair of sandals, two pieces of cloth to be used as a head covering or a sash, smaller pieces of cloth, and the sack had a strap for carrying. The four men walked across the beach and joined the others.

“You can keep the coat as well,” James spoke out as he had been the one who lent the garment to the man.

The former beast spoke again as he warmly said, “Thank you.” He looked at James and smiled. Andrew handed him the outer garment and he put it on, then sat down quietly at the feet of Jesus as before.

Simon asked, “What’s your name?”

The man’s face became troubled, then he closed his eyes. He was doing the best he could to function, but everything was new and strange. He was unaccustomed to the freedom he now enjoyed, as well as the overwhelming sensation of peace. The man had been heavily oppressed for so long that remembering his name, family, or anything else from the original man would bring emotional torment. The former demoniac was beginning to feel a new strength coming through an inner peace that had enveloped him more completely than his new garments. He had been forgiven. He could feel the love Jesus had for him and he loved Jesus and his disciples like a new family. They had accepted him, even though he had come from a very dark place.

He suddenly spoke out boldly, as if his newfound strength wished to make an appearance, “Jason, my name is Jason! I’m Greek! I’m from Gadara!”

The time passed quickly when the communication picked up, as they were able to overcome the language barriers. Jesus and his disciples spoke mostly Aramaic but understood Greek. Most men spoke Greek, as it was necessary for conducting business in the region. Jason’s primary language was Greek, although he understood Aramaic somewhat, as well as Hebrew. He understood Latin very well, he just couldn’t remember how. The former demoniac also had knowledge of forgotten languages, which he had to disregard, for they added confusion to his now clear mind. As time went on, Jason was surprisingly well-spoken as his long-subdued spirit emerged. He was asking the men many questions about how they came to follow Jesus, and about their mission. He wanted to know all their names, as well as a little about them. He

was amazed at the diversity of the stories, as it began with Matthew the tax collector. They shared a laugh when the brothers James and John, the sons of Zebedee and burly fishermen were telling their story. Jesus referred to them as Boanerges, which meant the sons of thunder. Jason felt a bit awkward when he spoke with Judas Iscariot, but he couldn't understand why. He just smiled and listened, while keeping the matter to himself. Jason knew Jesus was aware of his thoughts. Just a misrepresentation of character, as he thought to himself. When he glanced at Jesus, however, his expression was that of acknowledgment. He had done well to keep his thoughts to himself. It was becoming obvious that Jason wished to go with Jesus and his disciples.

The sun was high in the sky and the day was growing warm. There was talk of moving on toward the city and possibly finding a shady spot to eat a meal before continuing. Just then, the voices of many people could be heard approaching. They began to appear, and Jesus, as well as Simon, James, and John went forth to meet them. Jesus and his disciples approached the people and most of them stopped. A few continued on to see the slope, as well as the water's edge and the expanding mass of dead swine upon the waters of the Galilee. The remainder of the disciples stayed with Jason, for he had become very quiet and reserved. He recognized some of those who had come from Emmatha.

They watched the meeting, as one of the more prominent looking men from town could be heard saying, "*Depart from us!*" He was a large man with a strong presence and spoke in Greek. His well-dressed counterpart seemed to be having an argument with the elder herdsman who had run by them earlier. A handful of people walked closer to Jason and his new friends; they seemed shocked and amazed but fearing to get too close.

Jason couldn't help feeling annoyed, for he could hear Jesus being rejected as five men and women were staring at him. He sensed mostly fear from the people; however, one of the women seemed to be looking upon him with a measure of compassion and

curiosity, and even smiling once. It was enough to set her apart from the rest. She was quite beautiful; wearing what appeared to be a very fine outer garment made of deep blue linen with white clothing underneath. Her head was covered with the outer garment and a white covering, but he could see her dark wavy hair a little. Still, these people had no idea of who Jesus was, or what had taken place. Jesus had performed a great miracle; he realized that he himself needed to tell and demonstrate what Jesus had done for him. Jesus and his disciples turned and slowly walked back to join them. The people from Emmatha held their place, and the few that had come closer retreated to the main group. The elder herdsman and the well-dressed man from the city were still engaged in an argument by the sea. They seemed oblivious to everything else at the moment.

Jesus returned and looked at Jason with a serious but peaceful expression. He then informed Jason and the disciples that they were to leave the area immediately.

Jason had the immediate impulse to plead with him to stay but understood the authority of Jesus and held his place. He began to hope.

“I want to go with you!” Jason exclaimed.

Jesus responded, “*Go home to all those you knew, and throughout the city, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you and has had compassion on you.*” He then embraced Jason once more.

Jesus looked around at his disciples, then gestured toward the ship. The men quickly gathered themselves and started to board. Many of the disciples expressed regret to Jason that they couldn’t spend more time with him and encouraged him. Jesus was the last to walk toward the ship but veered off to approach the two herdsman standing by the water’s edge. They had been discussing the exchange with the merchant, as well as surveying the floating mass of swine. Jesus walked straight to the elder herdsman and

looked at him for a moment. Tears started to form in the old man's eyes. Jesus embraced him. Aegeus then dropped to his knees and said, "My Lord." Jesus looked him in the eyes and smiled. He embraced Dimitri as well, then turned and walked to the ship just past the bow and jumped aboard.

The men who remained off the ship untied the bow rope, then pushed her off the beach. Jesus could be seen speaking to Judas. They called out to Jason and tossed to him a small leather pouch, which he caught. Within a few moments the little ship was underway. The men swung the ship around with the oars, then slowly rowed away from the beach. Jason walked up to the water's edge and raised his hand in a gesture of farewell. Jesus and his disciples returned the gesture; waving at Jason, the herdsmen, and the others on the beach.

Jason stood there as he intended to watch the ship until he couldn't see it anymore. He watched as the men lowered the sail of the ship, then it quickly became difficult to see any detail. A short distance away the two herdsmen were watching Jason, as were the rest of the people on the beach. Slowly, the elder herdsman walked over to Jason while leaving his younger companion behind. All eyes were upon Aegeus as he attempted contact with the former beast. Jason sensed the fear and uncertainty of his approach, so he spoke first while keeping his eyes upon the ship. He now spoke in Greek:

"My name is Jason. I'm very sorry to have caused you pain and fear. Jesus has restored me from a long captivity of demonic spirits. I deeply regret your loss," he said as he looked over at Aegeus.

"My name is Aegeus," he responded while astounded by the calm, well-spoken man. He had looked right into the face of the beast many years earlier with its black eyes and twisted features. He was shocked when Jason looked at him, for his blue eyes spoke

genuine sincerity. He searched for the appropriate response, then simply said, "I forgive you."

Jason smiled and held eye contact with Aegeus for a long moment. "I really do regret your loss, what are you going to do?" he asked with authentic concern.

"Something different," the elder herdsman responded. "I've lost everything. The man I was speaking with was heavily invested in that herd, so they're going to take my house as compensation," he lamented.

"If there was some way I could help," Jason offered.

"You already have," the old man replied as he smiled and extended his hand. Jason was surprised, then glanced down and took it slowly and carefully with his clawed hand in a friendly gesture. The herdsman smiled at Jason, then turned and walked back toward Dimitri.

"What are you going to do?" asked the young herdsman.

"I'm going to the other side," Aegeus replied. "I'm going to follow Jesus. I spoke a prayer last night while you were sleeping, and it was just answered. I made a promise; I intend to spend the rest of my life trying to keep that promise," he stated.

"Can I come with you?" Dimitri asked.

"You have to come. I need you to start the fires!" Aegeus said as he faced Dimitri and placed his hands upon his shoulders.

The two men laughed at each other and started back toward Gadara together. They reached the sack Dimitri had dropped earlier, then the young man picked it up and ran over to Jason. They didn't exchange any words; Dimitri set the sack close to Jason, as well as his waterskin. They smiled at each other, then the young man ran back to join Aegeus.



Jason stood at the water's edge and looked off in the distance as the ship passed from view. He was alone except for a diminishing group of people. Among them was the representative from the city who had spoken with Jesus and was now walking toward him. He was expecting to be told to depart as well. The man walked close and stopped.

He cautiously spoke, "I come on behalf of the others. They're still very frightened of you. Jesus told us you've been set free, and in your right mind; I wanted to see for myself."

Jason responded, "I'm very sorry for all the things I've done, but you must understand who it is that you've chased away. Jesus is the Son of God, and he gave my life back to me; I will forever be in his service. The one true God has had mercy and compassion upon me. I have no intentions of causing harm ever again. I intend to go throughout this region and proclaim this." Jason paused for a moment, then continued, "I'm still trying to arrange my thoughts; I haven't had any of my own for a very long time."

The man stood there studying Jason. The men made eye contact. Eustace couldn't help feeling compassion for Jason and could see his sincerity. He spoke, "Some of us have heard of this *Jesus*; it is feared that our city is not worthy of his presence. Rumors abound that our society is not compatible with his teaching. Our city could be cursed, for there are stories from Chorazin and Bethsaida of such."

Jason responded, "Yes, when the Lord teaches the truth, and sin is preferred over the truth with no repentance, then a curse could be necessary to bring about such repentance."

Eustace was intrigued with Jason, as he acknowledged within himself that this wisdom was coming from a man who, hours ago, would have bitten him. There was no question Jesus was directly responsible for this transformation. Eustace bore responsibilities for his community, but he felt increasingly troubled; he felt as though he had made a terrible mistake.

“I want to help,” he said. “I own a caravansary just outside Emmatha, on the eastern side of the city. My name is Eustace: everyone in the city knows me; come, and I will give you a place to stay for a while,” he offered with a voice of compassion.

“My name is Jason. I thank you,” Jason responded as he was very surprised. “I need some time alone first to gather my thoughts and do a few things. I would be honored to accept your generous offer. I’ll be along in a day or two,” he said.

Eustace replied, “Very well, I must return to my affairs. I’m very happy to have met you, Jason.”

Jason responded, “I’m very happy to meet you as well, Eustace. Peace be with you.”

Eustace smiled and turned to walk back to the remnant of people that had watched from a distance. He rejoined the group, then they departed and disappeared around the bend of the road.

Jason was alone now with his thoughts, and with his past. Alone with a new inner strength that he felt assured would help him cope with this strange, wonderful, new existence. He knew that very soon he would be seeking his family, and perhaps friends that he hadn’t seen for most of his life. What would they think of him? It was all such a very long time ago. He raised his garments and looked down at his legs, then his arms, which had the heaviest scarring on his body. Jason was experiencing a new self-awareness that had been previously absent. He found himself absolutely disgusted by his claw-like finger and toenails, as well as his long, matted hair and beard. Simon, Philip, and Andrew had helped immensely with his washing and the experience of the baptism was even more cleansing to the spirit. However, he determined that he had a lot to do before he would voluntarily present himself to anyone again.

It was late afternoon as Jason turned to face the slope that he, as Legion, had previously run down to meet Jesus. It was a surreal

sight to him, as he came to the obvious conclusion that if he ran down like that now he would most likely kill himself. It was as if he had been transplanted into a new body, so strange. He looked up at the huge rock he had perched on before descending; it took his breath away and frightened him. Legion had easily jumped upon that rock and then jumped down just hours before. It seemed like something from a dream, or very long ago. The new sensations were overwhelming him until a different aspect of the sight offered a new perspective. The waning sun was casting a slightly amber color to the landscape, as well as the many fluffy clouds that had accumulated across the sky. He paused for a moment to appreciate the color as if he had never seen it before. He turned to view the Sea of Galilee, then back to the slope; the grass, flowers, trees, and even the rocks were so vivid and rich with color. He then closed his eyes and offered a prayer of thanksgiving to God.

Jason decided to return to the only home he knew and temporarily abide there. He was thinking of the flint blades and visualizing a new use for them. He gathered his new belongings, then started to make his way up the slope to the tombs above.

This was beyond a strange feeling for Jason. He thought to himself as he ascended the slope, that in many ways he didn't know what he would find. Slowly he climbed, as he second-guessed his decision when he got closer to the rocky bluff. Jason first encountered the circle and ash heap from the wicked ritual the night before. He took a deep breath and felt as though he had been a spectator. What struck him the most was he was looking at his own footprints in the dirt. The site brought back vague memories of the evil, fervent dance. He stood there for a moment, as he reflected upon his moments of deep repentance. Jason then spit upon the pile of ashes and walked on. He prayed on the way that God would be with him in what he was about to do. "It all seems like it was such a long time ago, even though it was just this morning," he mumbled under his breath. Jason walked around the bluff and approached the entrance of the dark, foreboding tomb.

He was a bit apprehensive about going inside and chuckled to himself, "This is how one is supposed to feel about this." He forced himself to go in. To Jason, it was somehow very important to face what was within. He felt a surge of spiritual strength as he passed through the entrance. He sniffed the air, then felt a presence; an ugly manifestation of doubt and fear attempted to enter his mind. Jason sniffed the air again; a habit that would be hard to break. He kept detecting movement as shadowy specters in the corner of his eye that seemed to be evading direct visual contact. Jason was unimpressed, and in confidence he spoke boldly, "In the name of Jesus, be gone from this place. The Lord rebuke you!" Almost instantly, he felt only peace and tranquil quiet. It was at that moment that Jason demonstrated to himself that the name of Jesus, spoken in faith, was authority over such entities; they had to obey. Jason was wise about their ways and the things these wicked principalities intended for his inevitable destruction. He realized that his knowledge, through God, could be used against them.

Jason approached the sarcophagus where Legion used to perch and gathered all of the flint blades they had accumulated, then took out his waterskin and poured a little water on them. Jason grabbed a piece of cloth from the floor, then cleaned the blades and dropped them into his sack. He looked over the surface of the sarcophagus and poured out more water, then looked around and saw the symbols upon the walls around the bedding. They were written in blood and were unknown to man; Jason wanted to keep it that way. Some time passed as the tomb grew darker. He scrubbed the blood stains from wherever he knew them to be until none remained. Jason gathered all the junk they had accumulated over the years and made a pile outside the tomb entrance, then dusted out the niches and surfaces the best he could. He attempted to move things back into place where they had been when he first started dwelling there.

Jason went outside and knelt to pray; he asked God to forgive him for desecrating a place of the dead, and that the families would return and be comforted. He went about and picked some flowers,

then took them into the tomb and laid them on top of the sarcophagus. Jason walked out, and he intended never to set foot in there again.

Once outside, Jason walked over to a grove of oak trees where a shallow pit was located and looked into it. Legion had used it from time to time to have clandestine fires. He carried all the items that he had brought out of the tomb and threw them into the pit. Jason was tossing things in but paused a moment and picked up a Roman short sword from the many old weapons they had collected. Some had rusted, but the sword was still in fair condition, as it was still in its original scabbard. Jason threw the scabbard back and chose a sheepskin one instead with a leather belt. He then gathered some tinder and pulled one of the larger flint blades out of his sack. Jason looked through the pile and chose an old broken dagger to strike on. He retrieved a piece of charred material from the bottom of the pit, then held it next to the flint. Jason managed to get an ember started after many strikes, and in a short time had a small fire. Within moments a raging fire slowly consumed the pile of his tormenting memories.

It was truly a healing moment for Jason as he prayed and deeply repented, while asking God for help adjusting to his new life. He settled back against a tree near the fire as he feasted his eyes on what turned out to be a gorgeous sunset. He felt as if it was God responding to his prayer. The sun passed behind the bluffs, as the sky and the clouds became alive with a deep rich crimson and violet of every shade. Jason couldn't remember ever seeing anything so beautiful, except when he opened his eyes and beheld his deliverer. He sat there for a long time and watched the fire, as well as the wondrous colors of the sky until darkness fell. He reviewed the day and wanted to relive every moment, as he thought about how much he loved Jesus.

Two things were becoming apparent to Jason: he was getting tired and hungry. He suddenly remembered the sack that the young man had left for him, then picked it up and brought it beside the

fire. Jason opened the sack and looked inside; there were four loaves of fresh bread, many dried fish, a small sack of dried figs, another small sack of dates, a bundle of lintels and a skin of new wine. It had been many years since Jason had a good meal. He had to fight off the memories of the disgusting things the demons had caused him to grow accustomed to eating. Jason feasted as he sat and watched the fire dwindle down, for it had turned the remnants of his past into ashes, embers, and red glowing metal. Jason threw some large wood on the fire; thus, crushing the remnants of his memories to oblivion and replacing them with a simple warm fire.

Jason settled back into his comfortable place beneath the tree, as he felt a good honest weariness that comes at the end of the day. All Legion had known was pushing himself to unconsciousness, for there had been no peace in his life. He hadn't been able to fall asleep like most people, since there had been chaos in his spirit constantly. A new sensation of peace his Lord had bestowed upon him, as well as the weariness was very pleasant. He closed his eyes and enjoyed every moment until he drifted off....

Jason dreamed of building a house. He was arranging a chaotic mass of stones into a structure. Each stone was like a lost memory, as some were flawed and couldn't be used; some were great but too large to lift by himself. He was frustrated, so he called upon Jesus. He suddenly appeared, and with a wave of his hand the structure was completed. The discarded stones were still lying around, however. Jason marveled at the organization and beauty of the structure. The Lord was pointing to the base and the stone upon which the structure stood. Jason realized that Jesus was his rock, his foundation, his stone footing. He remained troubled by the disorganized, flawed stones scattered about the structure. Jesus smiled and picked up one of the stones, then cast it away. He picked up a stone and handed it to Jason. Jesus then began to glow as he had in Legion's vision and became a bright white light....

## *Chapter Two: The Deliverance*

He awoke with the morning sun breaking over the ridge as it beamed down upon his face. He sat up a little but stayed in place contemplating the dream. Eventually, he had to get up. Jason spoke a proclamation out loud when he returned, “Lord Jesus, I will always trust in you no matter what! You are my rock! My stone foundation! I will trust you no matter the circumstance!”

Jason had the knowledge and faith to believe. His interpretation of the dream was that Jesus had given him the power and authority to rid his own life of these unwanted memories and traits, but it would take time. Jason realized he had knowledge that most did not have; knowledge of spiritual wickedness and entities bent on the destruction of mankind. He thought of a time far off when this evil would inevitably rise once more. An attempt to destroy mankind as in the old world, before the great flood would come in the last days. Most would not understand or believe, but Jason knew that those who believe in Jesus and hold to his teaching would be able to stand against this evil.

He considered his wounds. Jason knew he had two fresh bleeding wounds on his arms. After his encounter with Jesus they were healed just like the older of the scars. There were festering sores in diverse places also, but for the first time in his recent memory all had been healed. The absolute power of Jesus to restore and heal was his, through God, to demonstrate; his testimony was his own body and spirit. He knew that if he held on to Jesus, this wicked multitude of spirits that had been his former masters would not be able to take control again. They would attempt to harass, intimidate, persuade, and twist the truth, which had already been demonstrated in the tomb. Jason did not take his new life for granted, as he acknowledged that he had received a very precious gift; all he could do was share that gift. He knew that others face the same dismal fate that could have been his. How could he not be eternally grateful?

Jason decided the first task of the day was to complete the burial of his former life. He picked up a large cloth he had set aside

to drag material with. Jason then began to remove some of the loose dirt and rocks at the base of the bluff and transported it to the still smoldering pit. He filled the pit until it was slightly mounded, then dug a small hole in the center for the cloth he had used and buried it. Jason stood for a moment and looked upon the grave he had created.

He spoke, "Here lies Legion. They still roam in the dry places, but their manifestation in this man has ended. May they wander aimlessly in the darkness, as I have, until the judgment. Let this moment mark the end and a new beginning in the name of Jesus."

He returned to his comfortable place beneath the oak tree. Jason pulled his bag over, then removed the flint blades and lined them up. He picked up one of the blades, then drew his feet in as close as he could and started cutting the huge claw-like growth off each toe. Jason completed the cutting, then went back and trimmed until they looked human again. His feet now appeared to be normal, except for the rough, dry callous on his feet from years of walking barefoot. He got up and walked around a bit, while flexing his toes into the ground. It felt good.

Jason sat back down beneath the tree and started on his hands. The blade slipped when he cut his left thumb claw and sliced deep into the cuticle. He experienced a waking nightmare as the blood flowed out. Jason immediately flashed back to the bloodstained perch in the tomb. The bloodletting ritual was in progress, as they were searching for visions and dark spiritual power; he had inadvertently fallen into a demonic trap. The influence of powerful evil that rushed into his mind attempted to arrest his freedom and independence. Jason was absolutely paralyzed with fear, as he desperately clutched the recent memory of his deliverance within his spirit. He gathered all his strength, then managed to speak the name: "Jesus." The vision instantly stopped. The first thing he did was cover the wound with his other hand. Jason was trembling from the experience, so close after the burial. Doubt tried to creep into his mind.



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Recognizing it for the foul spirit it was he cried out, “The Lord rebuke this spirit of doubt; make this bleeding stop in the name of Jesus!”

Jason sat there for a while, as he clutched his hand with his eyes closed. He knew he had to wrap the wound to avoid another festering problem, so he opened his eyes and looked down. Jason slowly released his left hand and was quickly overwhelmed with emotion. The blood was gone! What was a very deep cut was reduced to a tiny scar as if it had healed years ago! He closed his eyes and bowed his head in prayer, thanking God. He had been shown that, in the name of Jesus, he had the authority to heal; it had been demonstrated to him with his own body! It took time to contemplate this before he could resume the effort; his confidence had been restored even stronger than before.

Jason finally completed his claw-cutting task while sitting beneath the tree. He held out his hands and was rather pleased with the new appearance. Jason reached into his bag, then pulled out the old pair of sandals Simon had given him and put them on. Easy enough to figure out, but they felt a little awkward. Jason could walk just fine without coverings on his feet, which had become toughened; he wanted to get used to them for appearance.

Jason sat beneath the tree once again and ran his hands through his hair. He Picked up one of the blades, then began to pull some hair with his left hand and cut with the right. He worked his way around until the excessive length, as well as most of the mats were cut off. Then he started pulling hair from either side and cut to match the length, as he worked his way around his head. He did the same thing by feel where he couldn't see. Jason performed the same practice with his beard, as he touched to check the consistency of the length. Finally, he ran his fingers through his hair looking for any remaining mats, then removed a couple of small ones. Jason had no surface to see his reflection, but knew his appearance had to have greatly improved. He remembered a few

isolated pools of water at the beach and decided to see how he looked later.

Jason gathered the huge amount of hair and debris, as well as all of the flint blades and took them over to Legion's grave. He dug a deep hole, then dropped everything in and buried it. That was the last remnants of his past of a physical nature, except for his scars. Jason knew there were many people whose lives had been affected by Legion's abuse. All he could do was pray about it. He would share what God had done for him and pray for these people whenever he would encounter them, as Jesus had instructed. His sorrow and remorse were great, but his new inner peace overcame it. The guilt and shame from his previous life would always be there, for his inner scars were as bad as the ones on the outside. Jason realized he had been given a supernatural peace from Jesus that transcended his understanding of the things of this world. He knew he would never have to carry the burden alone.

He scanned the area for any further evidence of Legion's presence, then spotted a familiar figure. It was the same demon-possessed man who had crept into his tomb the night before last. The man peeked around a large stone but froze when he noticed he had been spotted. "Come here!" Jason called out, but there was no response. Jason felt compelled to reach out to him, since he was aware of how Legion had treated him. He took one step in his direction, then the man bolted off. He knew to chase him was a waste of time; the man was fast, as fast as legion had been. Jason prayed that the man would be delivered also. Jason felt very grieved in his spirit, for he knew the power of Jesus could heal him and deliver him. "That man has a strong spirit of fear; I'm coming back for him soon," Jason said as he realized that he spoke out loud, even though he was alone. He concluded that he was never alone. He was learning to pray without ceasing; to speak to God who was always with him.

Jason decided he was going to stay another night, as the midday sun waned a bit. He still had things to do, so he decided to

take a walk. Jason went around the bluff and down to where Legion had danced. He stood by the circle with the ash pile in the center as he contemplated his transformation. The stark contrast of the spot to his new life inspired Jason to spend some time discovering who he was. He prayed and asked forgiveness for the evil that Legion had performed there. He then proceeded to throw the stones from the circle down the slope. Jason discovered that the strength he had as Legion was gone, for the effort involved in throwing the heavy stones was challenging. Also, the work he had performed in the tomb, as well as at the pit had left him feeling tired. He realized, however, that his strength was more than adequate to live as a normal man. Jason looked at the rock that he, as Legion, had jumped upon effortlessly yesterday morning. He found he had to climb with great difficulty to get to the top, then sat in the exact spot where he had beheld his deliverer and remembered the submission. Jason had been there, but only as a tiny inert portion of Legion. He again identified the fact that these powerful wicked spirits had no choice but to submit to and obey Jesus. He was the example; there was no place in the world so deep, or dark, that Jesus could not reach into and save that which was lost.

He sat upon the rocky outcrop and looked out over the Sea of Galilee. Jason could also see the land of the Galilee beyond. He imagined Jesus and his disciples were out there, somewhere. He longed to be with them, but understood he was to be his representative in a land that had feared and rejected Jesus. Jason smiled and accepted his new identity and vocation.

The afternoon sun was developing the amber tones that warmed Jason's heart as he continued to sit and retrospect. Who was Jason, as a man? He tried to remember back to an earlier time, while calculating the seasons and years. After some time, Jason concluded that he had been seventeen years old when the demons had taken control and forced him into the wilderness. He was fourteen or fifteen at his first recollection of their presence. A bit of sadness passed through his mind as he concluded his age: Jason had been a prisoner of multitudes of demonic entities for twenty-

five years! His last memories as a normal human being were those of a boy, now he was a man of forty-two years! Jason silently lamented all those wasted years. He didn't know how much life was left to him, only God knows, but he wanted to spend the remainder of his life in the service of his Lord.

Jason imagined his role in society as he was. He thought about the woman he had noticed at the beach. The result was a realization that a normal life had passed him by. The inescapable fact was that he had a mutilated body with scars on his mind as well. Jason was free of the demons that had tormented him, but the memories remained. He remembered the dream and encouraged himself with the hope that it provided. Another aspect, however, was the accumulated knowledge was also there. Jason had come away with a unique understanding of a great many things. What would his role in all this mean? Would he be able to convince people of the evil in this world, and Jesus being the only way to stand against it? Jason was going to dedicate the rest of his life to this cause.

He climbed down from the rock, as afternoon transformed into evening and prepared to go back to his place under the oak tree. Jason paused to enjoy another sunset. Not as colorful as yesterday, for the sky was clear. He grabbed a fallen limb near a tree, then went about brushing the ground where the fire had been to remove the footprints and all traces of the ritual. He picked up a few fragments of charred wood, then proceeded back to his campsite. Jason walked by his old tomb and picked up a large piece of flint from the base of the bluff, as well as gathering a bit of tinder. He walked over to the tree, then dropped down and placed a thin, flat piece of charred wood on top of the flint he had picked up and held it in his left hand. Jason drew his sword, then stuck the tip of the blade into the ground and began striking the side of the blade with the flint, which produced sparks. It took some effort, but he soon had a glowing ember. He had a fire quickly, for there was fire material set aside from the previous night.

## *Chapter Two: The Deliverance*

Jason was curious. He drew his sword once more and held it for a moment feeling the weight and the balance. He tried a couple of moves, as he slashed and jabbed at the air; it seemed very natural. He stood there, then flipped the sword over the back of his hand and caught the handle securely. Then he did it again perfectly, and it was easy. In the diminishing light he set a piece of firewood next to the tree, as it was illuminated by the fire. He returned his sword to its sheath and walked several paces. Quickly he turned, then he drew his sword lightning fast and threw it with one fluid motion. The sword sunk into the wood dead center and knocked it over. Then he did it again, perfectly. Jason picked up a piece of charred wood, then made a small mark on the firewood. He set it against the tree and walked twice as far. He turned quickly, then drew his sword and threw it. The sword sunk deep into the wood within the small mark. He retrieved his sword and returned it to its sheath. Jason was a little stunned and afraid. He discovered that this thing that had developed in Legion remained, and the thought disturbed him. He prayed that his ability would never be needed, except by the will of God. Jason knelt by the fire, then drew his sword and held it out with both hands.

He prayed, "Lord God, in the name of Jesus, I ask that you take that which the demons intended for destruction and turn it for good. Not only this thing but all things. I pray that this weapon is for the protection of the innocent and of righteousness. Let it never be used in anger or hatred. Keep my mind at peace and let no temptation enter therein. Thank you, Lord."

Jason settled back into the comfortable spot beneath the tree, as he enjoyed another nice meal from the sack the young herdsman had blessed him with. He was feeling much more adjusted to his new existence, as he prepared for tomorrow by going through his belongings. He placed the piece of flint in his bag. Legion had made blades from it, but it was just a useful piece of stone. He pulled out the small leather bag that Judas had tossed to him and opened it. It contained several coins: mostly silver with a couple of gold ones. Jason knew nothing about money and would need some

help managing it. He thought about Eustace and wondered if he could trust him. He thought about the people he would encounter in Gadara. Jason felt almost overwhelmed by these thoughts, but his faith and confidence overruled. He fell into a peaceful sleep, after stoking the fire for the night.

Morning came early for Jason, so he gathered his belongings and prepared to leave the only home he had known for years. Jason pulled a piece of cloth out of his bag and tied it around his waist for a sash, as he wanted to cover the leather belt and conceal the sword a bit. It was a clear and sunny morning that promised a warm day. He was disappointed that he didn't have a vivid dream as he had the night before, for he slept so soundly that the night seemed very brief. Jason stopped and stood in front of the tomb one last time before leaving the memories of this place behind. Jason was pleased there were no signs the ritual had ever taken place when he passed the site.

The morning sun was breaking over the ridge as Jason started down the slope toward the beach. He couldn't help remembering running down to submit to Jesus, for even then the human remnant within did so joyfully. Jason never took for granted how fortunate he was, that in no other way could he have been salvaged. The demons had no choice but to submit to the authority of Jesus. Jason now had a rock-solid understanding of how that name, spoken in faith, was authority. He was praying that he would get another opportunity to engage the mysterious man, for Jason felt confident he could see him delivered as well.

He walked down the slope with joy in his step, and a partial smile on his face that just wouldn't go away. Jason arrived at the beach where he found even more reason to be joyful. Jason set down his bags, then walked over to a pool of water nearby and looked in. He had been prepared to see a mess, for he was unsure what his grooming efforts had produced.

“Not bad,” he observed as he beheld his reflection. His dark, now curly and slightly graying hair turned out just shy of shoulder length. It looked well groomed, even and clean. His beard also looked much shorter and appeared normal. Jason’s joy was short-lived, however, as he considered his scars. His clothing effectively covered most of them, until he raised an arm, or lifted his leg a certain way. What would people think? Jason remembered the group of people that had approached him but kept their distance. They stared at him like a caged wild animal for the theater, except one. Jason couldn’t forget the woman that had looked upon him with curiosity, and her smile. Jason realized he had been sitting with an outer garment wrapped around him, and his scars were hidden. He accepted that he would try to be a blessing to others, but he would, most likely, be alone. He would be satisfied with a daily meal and a place to sleep, so long as he could effectively fulfill what Jesus had asked him to do.

Jason sat down in the same place where Jesus had ministered to him, as he contemplated his own ministry. Jesus had told him to tell people throughout the city about what God had done for him, but he was very concerned about how he would be received. Jesus himself had been rejected, after all. Jason had spent most of his life in darkness, and he would need help adjusting to life as a man. Was it even possible? Jason thought again about Eustace: the man who had nervously offered to help him. Could he trust him? He decided he was going to try.

Jason looked around at all the faded footprints, as well as the marks the ship had left on the beach. He had so many questions he would ask if they were still here, only disappearing marks of the event that saved his life remained. He looked around and sniffed the air. A few of the swine remained and were floating near the northernmost portion of the beach. One appeared to have been drug partially out of the water and left. Jason approached it, and it was quickly evident as to why. The swine had a grotesque appearance upon its face that was shocking; the pungent smell of death was in the air. Jason took that as the moment to depart and start his new

life. He gathered his belongings, then arranged his bags for walking and left the beach behind. He looked up at the ridge and scanned the rocky bluffs one last time for a sign of the mysterious demoniac. Jason was shielding his eyes from the intense morning sun, as he prayed to get a glimpse of the man. He remembered the way Legion dealt with him in the tomb, so it wasn't difficult to understand why he may be hiding. He would return and devise a cunning method to attract him. Jason started down the road to Emmatha and Gadara. He prayed as he walked asking for strength and wisdom. He also asked for greater humility, and to never lose sight of where his new life flows from.

Jason decided to stop before going too far down the road and pray for the man hiding in the hills. He could sense that he was up there, somewhere, watching him. There was a burden on his heart for the man, as he realized his compassion for others was growing. Jason suddenly felt a need to offer praise to God, for he knew of the majesty and beauty of the most high God. He had never been able to behold the knowledge through worship, but instead through fear and resentment. This ended up being quite an experience for Jason, as he could feel a growing strength within his spirit. Jason bowed his head and imagined the seraphim above the throne. They were in steady continual worship, and crying *holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory!* Jason felt a cleansing within his soul, like purification as with fire; he remained there for some time. He prayed once more that he would encounter the mysterious man before rising, but there was no sign. He gathered his things and walked on.

Walking the wide path to Emmatha was a welcome experience in many ways. Legion would never use paths or roads but would watch them for potential victims. It felt good to walk down the road like a normal man in contrast to creeping around and lying in wait. The feeling of joy and anticipation was returning stronger than ever as he walked along. Jason couldn't help imagining if Jesus had not departed. He would be walking with Jesus and his disciples, as opposed to walking alone. Then a thought entered his mind, that



through the power of his testimony Jesus was very much walking with Jason. This profound reality greatly encouraged him and increased his sense of purpose as he walked. Jason found himself at an arched stone bridge passing over the Yarmuk River, after walking for some distance. He gazed down at the crystal-clear water as faded boyhood memories emerged in his mind that brought a smile to his face. The road also changed to cobblestone at that point; all sure signs of Roman engineering and civilization.

Jason looked up, after some time of walking, and in the distance saw a busy marketplace. There were tents, smaller mud-brick structures, carts, animals, and lots of people. He could also see the striking edifices of buildings beyond the marketplace. The temples impressive columns rising to hold friezes and cornices depicting the legends of the gods and heroes of old, as celebrated in finely crafted statuary and relief. The grandeur and the distant memories made his mission clear, as Jason identified the concepts behind these temples as the thing he was there to oppose. He reflected on his distant past, and how these concepts were instrumental in him putting his faith in false gods. Jason now walked with the one true God; he walked in authority over deceptive and wicked spirits in the name of Jesus. He knew that many of these people would be unwilling to listen to the truth, for the sake of their long traditions. Jason understood what these false gods really were, as well as the heroes, the mighty men, the men of renown; he was very aware of them.

Jason arranged his outer garment to cover his head and body as much as possible. He entered the marketplace, then he looked up and unexpectedly a young girl ran up to him holding a chicken by the feet. He instinctively sniffed the air. She looked at him a bit strangely, then asked in very bad Aramaic if he wanted to purchase the bird. Jason smiled, for he immediately realized that she had mistaken him for a Jew because of his clothing. He answered her in Greek, "No, but thank you and God bless you." The little girl smiled and skipped off. She looked back at him once with a curious expression, then disappeared into one of the booths.

Jason looked up once more to behold the City of Gadara, which sat upon a flat hill just to the south of Emmatha. The buildings, the theater, and all the memories were flooding in. Memories of what he now knew to be sin. He remembered his last moment in the presence of Jesus and what he had been instructed to do. "I'm home," he said as he wiped a tear from his eye.

Jason heard a man shouting, though the noise and activity of the marketplace was loud and distracting. He looked to his left and saw a withered-looking figure emerge from the crowd. The old man was very thin and gaunt; with long white hair, long white beard, and dark eyes. His clothing was old and tattered, but most notable was his outer garment; dark, dusty, rotten fabric covering everything except his wrinkled hands and face. His posture was very poor, as he walked hunched over. He appeared weak and feeble, for he walked slowly and carefully with a stubby, crooked stick. Jason had noticed the old man briefly when he had arrived as he appeared to be begging but paid little attention at the time. As the two men made eye contact, now Jason was giving full attention to the mysterious old man as he hobbled his way toward him. Jason sniffed the air as he drew near and stopped.

"We know who you are!" the old man shouted as he glared at Jason.

Jason was taken by surprise with the deep, strong, guttural voice coming from such a frail-looking old man. He quickly identified the nature of the verbal assault, then closed his eyes for a moment and responded:

"Be silent, old man," Jason said calmly, which seemed to infuriate the man. He raised his stick and pointed it at Jason.

"Leave this place! We don't want you here!" the withered old man yelled even louder as he shook his stick at Jason in a threatening manner. The confrontation had attracted the attention of just about everyone in the marketplace. Jason, thinking quickly, saw this as his moment and responded:

“In the name of Jesus, be silent!” he said. His voice emerged calm but commanding with authority; he shocked himself. He was astonished even more as the old man instantly dropped his stick and sat down. He lowered his head and refused to look up at Jason. Again, he recognized the opportunity and spoke, “IN THE NAME OF JESUS, COME OUT OF HIM!” Jason shouted boldly, loudly, and not so calm this time.

Suddenly, the old man threw his head back and let out an ear-splitting scream, then lowered his head again and started to weep. Jason threw off his bags and dropped to his knees before the man, then embraced him. The old man responded by returning the embrace and continued weeping.

“Today, the one true God has had mercy and compassion upon you,” Jason said softly to the old man. He continued, “You are free from the wickedness that has consumed you in the name of Jesus.”

The two men arose. The old man looked at Jason and he could see that his eyes had changed from almost black to a normal gray color. His overall appearance was not quite as withered, and his face seemed more vibrant and healthier. The old man attempted to refrain from weeping as he smiled at Jason, then looked into his eyes. He spoke in a normal voice:

“What must I do?” he asked.

Jason responded, “Seek the one, true, living God with all your heart; seek the teachings of the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, for he is the only way to eternal life. I was as you were, but much worse just a short time ago. The Lord Jesus himself found me and set me free. He told me to tell of this throughout the city, that’s why I’m here. I once dwelled in the City of Gadara long ago. I’ve come home to share this.” He then asked him, “What’s your name?”

“I am Orpheus...can I come with you?” the old man asked with hope in his eyes.

“My name is Jason,” he responded, and thought to himself that a short time ago he was in a similar situation. It filled Jason with compassion for the old man. He then asked, “Do you have a place to sleep, my friend?”

Orpheus responded, “Yes, the entire world is where I sleep,” he said while grinning. “But I don’t currently have a place with a roof, if that’s what you mean,” he added as his grin grew into a smile.

Jason smiled at old Orpheus as he immediately realized he had a new friend. He said, “Right now, I’m as you are, for I have no place to dwell. Go your way and tell all those you know what God has done for you. I’ll be around, and perhaps we will meet again if God wills it.” As the men were standing there, Jason noticed that Orpheus was standing straighter, appeared taller, and didn’t bother to pick up his stick. He smiled broadly at Jason as he initiated an embrace.

“I will do as you say. Thank you, Jason, thank you!” Orpheus exclaimed.

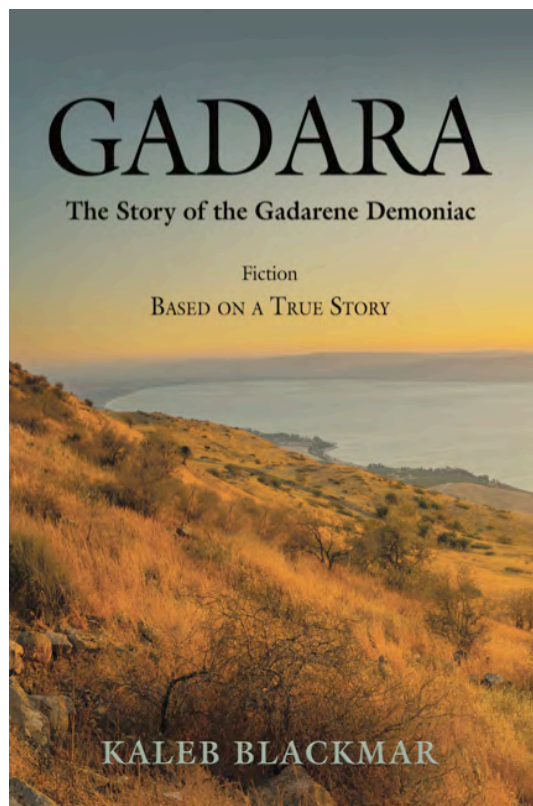
“Thank God, for I am but the messenger,” Jason replied while smiling at the old man. He watched as Orpheus disappeared into the crowd.

He had to pause for a moment as he gave thanks to God and praised him. He acknowledged that without God he would still be Legion and condemned to an eternity of darkness. He was now Jason of Gadara: servant of the one true God, and disciple of Jesus.

Jason picked up his bags, then covered his head and walked away. He realized that he and Orpheus had become quite a spectacle. All eyes were upon him as he made his way through the marketplace. Jason recognized one person right away as the woman he had noticed at the beach. She appeared to be browsing some of the fine fabrics on display. His eyes met hers as she smiled at him and he returned the smile. He thought to himself that she probably

didn't recognize him. He was almost compelled to speak with her but realized that if she knew about the scars concealed within his garments she would be repulsed. Unknown to Jason there was someone else who had taken interest in the name spoken, as well as what was said and done. A young Rabbi from the local synagogue hurried away to report what he had seen; one anxious for recognition.

Jason continued into the city upon the cobblestone street, as he sought the man who had offered to help him. His joy and purpose were strong. He felt that Jesus was walking with him after the encounter in the marketplace. Jason looked around and thought to himself that his adventures were just beginning....



*Gadara: The Story of the Gadarene Demoniac is a work of fiction based on the true story of Jesus casting a multitude of demons from a man into a herd of swine. The book involves the life of the former demoniac afterward; full of action, adventure, romance, and emotion with a touch of humor. It was written to be entertaining as well as encouraging.*

## **GADARA: The Story of the Gadarene Demoniac**

By Kaleb Blackmar

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