

# *Calming Two Storms*

by David Anderson

## **The Sea of Galilee**

The Sea of Galilee is mentioned in the Bible under three other names:

1. In the Old Testament the Sea of Galilee is called the “Sea of Chinnereth” (Numbers 34:11).
2. The “Lake of Gennesareth” (Gennesaret) found in Luke 5:1.
3. The “Sea of Tiberias found in John 6:1 and John 21:1.  
The modern Arabs retain this name, Bahr Tabariyeh.

The Sea of Galilee is located in northern Israel, a region called Galilee.

- \* It is a freshwater lake
- \* 12 ½ miles long,
- \* 4 miles to 7 ½ miles wide.
- \* The surface of the lake is 682 feet below sea level.
- \* Its depth is from 80 to 200 feet.<sup>1</sup>
- \* It is fed by the Jordan River in the north.

The Jordan actually flows through the sea. It comes from Mt Hermon in the north, flows through the Sea of Galilee, and goes on to the Dead Sea in the south.

## **The Storm on the Sea**

The story tells about a furious squall that came up and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped (Mark 4:37). Such storms result from the conditions around the Sea. Here is how it happens:

There is a valley on the south side of the Sea of Galilee that dramatically drops to 1200 ft below sea level, 70 miles away at the Dead Sea. Hills surround the other three sides, and the ones on the east side go up 2000 feet. The hills are a source of cool, dry air, and the climate around the Sea of Galilee is semi-tropical with warm moist air. This difference causes large temperature and pressure changes. This results in strong winds dropping toward the sea and funneling down between the hills. These same winds are then pulled across the lake and into the valley that heads toward the Dead Sea.

The Sea of Galilee is relatively shallow, just 200 feet at its greatest depth. A shallow lake is “whipped up” by wind more rapidly than deep water, where energy is more readily absorbed. Since the sea is small, these winds can descend directly to the center of the lake with violent results. When the contrasting air masses meet, a storm can arise quickly and without warning, with deadly results for anyone on boat in the middle of the sea. Small boats caught out on the sea are in immediate danger.<sup>2</sup>

## **The Storm within the man**

Christian tradition places the events of this healing at Gergesa, which is modern city of Kursi. This is on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee, directly opposite of Tiberias. They kept pigs because this was the Gentile side of the lake. Those who go there can easily imagine the herd of swine hurtling down the nearby hills into the sea.

This event is recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Matthew's account states that there were two men that were demon possessed. Mark and Luke focus on the more prominent of the two men.

The demon called his name "Legion," which was a Roman army unit of 6,000 men. There were 2,000 pigs on the hill, so there were at least that many demons.

Jesus did not visit this Gentile side of the lake very often because of his mission was primarily to the "lost sheep of Israel." Still, he went there to heal these men who lived in burial caves.

The demons would rather live in the bodies of swine rather than be sent "into the Abyss," but they went there anyway. The pigs and the demons did not want to go into the sea, but the demons found that they could not control the bodies of the pigs as well as they could control the bodies of the men. The swine got panic-stricken with the demons inside and lost control of themselves. Once they were on the move on the precipitous hillside, they couldn't stop until they were in the sea.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew G. Easton

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Donald B. DeYoung

<sup>3</sup> Halley's Bible Handbook, pages 632-633