

Luke 8:32

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them.

Analysis

And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them. The presence of "an herd of many swine" (agelē choirōn hikanōn, ἀγέλη χοιρῶν ἵκανῶν) confirms Gentile territory—Jews considered pigs unclean (Leviticus 11:7, Deuteronomy 14:8) and would never raise them. "Many swine" indicates a large commercial herd, suggesting significant economic value. "Feeding on the mountain" (boskomenē en tō orei, βοσκομένη ἐν τῷ ὄρει) places them on hillsides near the sea—the precise geography where swine could rush down steep slopes into water.

"They besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them" (parekaloun auton hina epitrepse autois eis ekeinous eiselthein, παρεκάλουν αὐτὸν ἵνα ἐπιτρέψῃ αὐτοῖς εἰς ἐκείνους εἰσελθεῖν)—the demons negotiate for alternative housing. That Christ permits this ("he suffered them," epetrepse autois, ἐπέτρεψεν αὐτοῖς) raises questions. Why allow demons to destroy valuable property and kill animals? Several answers emerge:

1. This demonstrates Christ's authority—even demons' alternative plans require His permission
2. The swine's destruction provides visible proof of deliverance
3. Economic loss pales compared to one man's salvation

4. God's sovereignty extends even over demonic activity.

The verse also reveals demonic nature—they must inhabit something, whether human, animal, or (per Matthew 12:43-45) wander seeking rest.

Their preference for even temporary swine-habitation over the abyss shows desperation to avoid judgment. Christ's permission demonstrates that Satan operates only within divinely-permitted boundaries (Job 1:12, 2:6).

Historical Context

Pigs were extensively raised in Gentile territories for food and commerce. The Decapolis, being predominantly Greek and Roman in culture, had no Jewish dietary restrictions against pork. A large herd represented significant wealth—Mark 5:13 numbers them at about 2,000, suggesting commercial-scale farming. The economic loss was substantial, explaining the owners' subsequent plea for Jesus to leave (v. 37).

Jewish readers would see symbolic significance in demons entering unclean animals. Pigs epitomized Gentile impurity in Jewish thinking. That demons would inhabit pigs confirms their unclean nature. Some scholars suggest the account contains anti-Roman political symbolism—the Legion (Rome's military might) destroyed in unclean animals that drown, echoing Pharaoh's army drowning in the Red Sea (Exodus 14-15). Whether intentional or not, such imagery would resonate with oppressed peoples.

The swineherds' witness to what occurred (v. 34) becomes crucial—they saw demons leave the man, enter pigs, and watched 2,000 animals rush to destruction. This public, witnessed miracle prevented later denial. Early church apologists (Justin Martyr, Tertullian) cited eyewitness testimony to miracles as evidence for Christianity's truth claims. The multiple witnesses to this spectacular deliverance strengthened the account's credibility.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. What does Jesus' willingness to destroy valuable property to save one soul reveal about the relative value of human beings versus material wealth?
2. How does Christ's permission being required even for demons' alternative plans demonstrate divine sovereignty over all spiritual forces?
3. What symbolic significance might the destruction of 2,000 pigs (unclean animals) containing Legion (Roman military term) hold for oppressed peoples?

Interlinear Text

Ἦν δὲ ἐκεῖ ἀγέλη χοίρων ἵκανῶν βοσκομένων ἐν
there was And there an herd swine of many feeding on
G2258 G1161 G1563 G34 G5519 G2425 G1006 G1722

τῷ ὅρει· καὶ παρεκάλουν αὐτοῖς ἵνα ἐπέτρεψεν
the mountain And they besought him that he suffered
G3588 G3735 G2532 G3870 G846 G2443 G2010

αὐτοῖς εἰς ἐκείνους εἰσελθεῖν· καὶ ἐπέτρεψεν αὐτοῖς
him into them to enter And he suffered him
G846 G1519 G1565 G1525 G2532 G2010 G846

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 65:4 (Parallel theme): Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels;

Isaiah 66:3 (Parallel theme): He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations.

