



WHEN GOD TAKES A STAND AGAINST EMPIRE

More than Meets the Eye – Part 2

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1. EXPANDING THE CIRCLE OF GOD'S CONCERN

- ☐ General facts about story

What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God's name don't torture me! Mark 5.7

- ☐ The condition of the demoniac

According to the Talmud there were four characteristics of madness: walking abroad at night; spending the night on a grave; tearing one's clothes and destroying what one was given. This man demonstrated all four characteristics."

- William L. Lane, The Gospel of Mark NICNT, p. 182



"My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." Mark 5.9

"Jesus is not confronted by one demon, but by an army of them." - R.T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*

❑ That's a lot of pork chops!

"... the wanton destruction of other people's property is a misdemeanor of evil example." - Aldous Huxley

"But that the swine were driven into the sea was no work of the divine miracle, but was the work of the devils..." - Thomas Aquinas

I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, "Here am I, here am I." All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations—a people who continually provoke me to my very face, offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on altars of brick; who sit among the graves and spend their nights keeping secret vigil; who eat the flesh of pigs, and whose pots hold broth of impure meat; who say, "Keep away; don't come near me, for I am too sacred for you!" Isaiah 65.1-5

2. THE IDENTITY OF JESUS IS EVERYTHING IN MARK

❑ Who is He?



- Disciples uncertain

Who is this man who even the winds and seas obey him?
Mark 4.41

- Demons certain

❑ Two reactions to Jesus' healing

- Negative - The reaction of the townspeople

Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man – and told about the pigs as well. Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.
Mark 5.16-17

- Positive - The reaction of the demoniac

As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Mark 5.18



This is the first time in the Gospel of Mark that Jesus does not order the participant of a miraculous event to keep quiet.

"The miracle story is not just about a personal exorcism. It is about the promise of God's ability to defeat and re-order the disordered powers that afflict individuals and communities." - Jeffrey Johns, The Meaning in the Miracles

The least acceptable turns out to be the most accepting of what Christ has to offer.

3. DEVILED HAM AND MOCKING THE ROMAN EMPIRE

❑ The Devil and the State (in Scripture)

The king of Tyre in Ezekiel 28 and the king of Babylon in Isaiah 14

"Imperial propaganda spoke of Augustus as the savior of the world, who would bring a new age of peace and prosperity to Rome. A calendar inscription from the town of Priene even proclaims that the birth of Augustus marked the 'beginning of the gospel.' Augustus had a gospel; he spoke of himself as good news and a savior, because he would conquer and subdue the unruly and untamed wilderness and usher in an era of peace."
- John Allen, Political Theology Network

The word gospel, in Greek euangelion, was not invented by Christians or the writers of the New Testament.

❑ The balance of power has shifted

“...pigs are an independent bunch. They tend to scatter when frightened rather than stampede. This is no longer a herd of pigs but an army marching together.” - Duncan Derrett

“The victory of Jesus is total. He humiliates the world's strongest fighting force with absolute ease. With but a single command he turns the violent urges of the opponent against itself, causing it to self-destruct.... (Just as) God drowns a mighty army in the sea; here the Son of God does the same.” - Joshua Garroway

❑ Christ turns the Empire's power against itself

“Act like this person did, and this is how you will end up.”
- Paula Fredricksen

The word “excruciating” comes from this form of punishment because it literally means “out of crucifying.”



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Jesus takes on demonic forces in Mark chapter 5. Do you feel you've ever had a personal encounter with a demonic spirit?
2. In the message, a parallel is drawn between demonic forces and the powers and state of the world. What's your reaction to this parallel?
3. As a small groups re-read Mark 5:18-19 from the book of Acts, and answer these three questions:
 - 1). What does this passage mean to me personally?
 - 2). What does this passage say about the world I live in?
 - 3). What about this passage is weird, cool, or confusing?

