

Mark 5: Jesus casts out a legion of demons - a critic takes a look

We are going to look at a story where Jesus helps a man but it looks like something darker was actually going on. Jesus does not come out of the story looking good.

The story in question is of Jesus casting out a pile of demons and putting them into a pigs is recounted by the gospel of Mark. This is important for as Mark was the first gospel that was the earliest version we have. Others copied it.

New International Version (NIV)

They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. 2 When Jesus got out of the boat,

THE GERASENES WAS ABOUT 60 KM INLAND SO JESUS COULDN'T HAVE GOT THERE BY BOAT.

a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him.

THE MAN GOES TO MEET JESUS - STRANGE BEHAVIOUR FROM ONE THAT WAS POSSESSED. IT MAKES AS MUCH SENSE AS ONE WHO WANTS TO BE SICK GOING TO THE DOCTOR.

3 This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain.

4 For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him.

IMPLIES THE MAN WOULD NEED TO BE KILLED IN SELF-DEFENCE. THAT GOD ALLOWS A POSSESSION TO GO THAT FAR IS WORRYING.

5 Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

6 When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him.

HOW DID THIS MAN KNOW THAT JESUS WAS TO BE WORSHIPPED? THE DEMONS MUST HAVE TOLD HIM THAT THAT COULD PROVE THEY AND JESUS WERE PUTTING ON AN ACT AND THAT JESUS WAS THEIR CRONY.

AGAIN HE IS EXPERIENCING POSSESSION AND STILL RUNS TO JESUS AND HONOURS HIM BY GOING ON HIS KNEES!

7 He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God's name don't torture me!"

8 For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you impure spirit!"

JESUS TELLS THE SPIRIT TO DEPART. THE MAN NOT THE SPIRIT REPLIES. HE REPLIES THAT EXORCISM IS CRUEL AND TORMENTS HIM. HE MAY HAVE MEANT THAT IT TORTURES HIM, NOT JUST THE DEMONS.

RELIGION DOES NOT WANT TO ADMIT THAT EXORCISM IS VIOLENT AND ABUSIVE. SO IT SAYS THAT THE MAN SOMEHOW IS THE DEMONS AND YET THEY ARE DISTINCT FROM HIM. THEY SEEM TO BE DISTINCT BUT NOT SEPARATE. IT HOPES THEN TO ARGUE THAT THE DEMONS ARE SAYING THAT TO JESUS AND NOT THE MAN WHICH ALLOWS THEM TO INSIST THAT EXORCISM IS NOT ABOUT HURTING. BUT WE MUST REMEMBER IT IS SAID THAT IT IS THE MAN WHO PROTESTS ABOUT THE PROSPECT OF TORTURE. AND IT WOULD BE VINDICTIVE TO FEEL THAT THERE IS NO PROBLEM WITH JESUS DELIBERATELY TORMENTING DEMONS!

THE SIMPLEST INTERPRETATION IS THE ONLY ONE WE NEED. JESUS WAS A THREAT TO THE MAN.

9 Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?"

“My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.”

10 And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

IT COULD BE ARGUED THAT THE HE HERE DOES NOT MEAN THE MAN PERSONALLY - IT MEANS THE MAN AS POSSESSED. IT IS NOT THE MAN TALKING HERE. OR YOU COULD SAY THAT MAN IS THE DEMONS IN SOME WAY.

JESUS EVEN GOES AS FAR AS TO SAY IT WAS A DEMON AND THEN THAT IT WAS DEMONS - IT IS AS IF YOU HAVE SOMETHING LIKE THE TRINITY HERE WHERE ONE PERSON IS THREE PERSONS AT THE SAME TIME.

JESUS ASSUMES THERE IS ONE DEMON.

THE "HE" IN HE REPLIED HAS TO BE THE MAN HIMSELF. HE DIDN'T WANT RID OF THE DEMONS. HE WAS SPEAKING IN THEIR NAME.

IT IS INTERESTING THAT JESUS TELLS THE SPIRIT TO COME OUT AND THEN AFTERWARDS FINDS OUT THAT THE SPIRIT IS STILL THERE AND NOT ONLY THAT BUT HAS A LEGION OF DEMONIC COMPANIONS. DOES HE NOT KNOW WHAT HE IS DOING? DID MORE DEMONS ENTER WHEN HE TOLD THE DEMON TO LEAVE? MAYBE JESUS WAS ONLY PRETENDING TO WANT IT OUT.

EXORCISTS ARE SUPPOSED TO FIND OUT HOW MANY DEMONS IF ANY ARE THERE FIRST. IT SEEMS THAT JESUS DOESN'T EVEN HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO ATTEMPT DIAGNOSIS.

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BUT THE MOST SENSIBLE INTERPRETATION IS THAT INSTEAD OF THE DEMON OBEYING JESUS WHEN HE TOLD HIM TO LEAVE IT SUMMONED HUNDREDS OF OTHER DEMONS.

IT IS STRANGE THAT THE DEMONS WANTED TO STAY LOCALLY. IF JESUS REALLY HAD POWER OVER THEM SURELY THEY WOULD HAVE WANTED TO PUT AS MUCH DISTANCE BETWEEN HIM AND THEMSELVES AS THEY COULD.

11 A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside.

12 The demons begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.”

13 He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

OBVIOUSLY, JESUS' PERMISSION DECIDES WHO IS GOING TO BE POSSESSED OR NOT! IT IS REALLY JESUS WHO SHOULD BE EXORCISED FROM PEOPLE NOT DEMONS! ALSO, THE MESSAGE IS CLEAR THAT DEMONS CAN KILL OR THAT GOD KILLS POSSESSED ENTITIES TO SAVE THEM. THE IMPLICATION IS THAT IT COULD BE RIGHT AT LEAST SOMETIMES, IN PRINCIPLE, TO MURDER POSSESSION VICTIMS.

A CATHOLIC BOOK CLAIMS THE PIGS DID THIS BECAUSE THEY SAW THE DEMONISED MAN AND IT SCARED THEM. THAT IS RUBBISH. THEY DID IT BECAUSE THE DEMONS WERE IN THEM. IF THE MAN HAD SCARED THEM THEY MIGHT HAVE DROWNED THEMSELVES ALREADY AND WHY DID THEY ALL DROWN? MERE FEAR CANNOT ACCOUNT FOR THAT.

ANOTHER VIEW IS THAT POSSESSION BY SOMETHING SO EVIL MAKES YOU WANT TO KILL YOURSELF. IT COULD BE A STAB AT VICTIMS OF SUICIDE.

14 Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened.

THE PIG TENDERS WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN THERE IF THE MAN HAD BEEN AS DANGEROUS AND ROAMING FREE AS THE START OF THE STORY WOULD LEAD YOU TO BELIEVE. AND IF THEY ARE SO

SURPRISED AT THE MAN BEING NORMAL THAT WOULD IMPLY THAT HE WAS CONSTANTLY POSSESSED BEFORE. HE MUST HAVE BEEN POSSESSED WHEN HE WORSHIPPED JESUS TOO.

15 When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid.

16 Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well.

17 Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

NO WONDER! HE HAD DONE BLACK MAGIC AND NEEDLESSLY HURT THE PIGS. WHY DIDN'T THEY EVER BEG THE POSSESSED MAN TO LEAVE? WHAT WAS IT ABOUT JESUS THAT UNSETTLED THEM? THE ANSWER IS OBVIOUS!

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

19 Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you."

AGAIN THE SEA WAS MILES AWAY. THIS IS A LIE. AND GOD IS THE ONE WHO CAUSED THE POSSESSION BY NOT GRANTING MERCY.

20 So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

ALL THE PEOPLE MUST HAVE BEEN GULLIBLE. EVEN IF THE STORY WERE TRUE, IT DOES NOT MEAN THAT ALL THE PEOPLE SHOULD HAVE BEEN SO UNCRITICAL AND SO AMAZED.

MORE THOUGHTS

JESUS CAST DEMONS OUT OF A MAN. THE NEW TESTAMENT SAYS THAT DEMONS WHEN EXPELLED WILL RETURN IF THEY CANNOT GET ANOTHER HOST. SO JESUS PUT THE DEMONS INTO PIGS. THE PIGS THEN DROWNED THEMSELVES. THIS IS SOMETIMES SAID TO BE A SIGN OF HOW DEMONS DESTROY WHATEVER THEY INHABIT. IF SO, IT WAS EVIL OF JESUS TO PUT THE DEMONS IN THE PIGS FOR THEM TO KILL HIM AND HE IS AS MUCH TO BLAME AS THEY ARE. NO HE WAS MORE TO BLAME - HE PUT THEM IN. IT WAS KIND OF SICK TO GIVE INTO DEMONS WISHING TO DESTROY FOR WHAT WAS SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN TO THEM AFTER THE PIGS DIED? WHAT WAS THE POINT?

I WONDER DID THE DEMONS THEN RETURN TO THE MAN AFTER ALL? JESUS' EXORCISMS ARE TOO SHOWY. IF DEMONS WANT TO STAY IN A MAN WHY DO THEY ABUSE HIM AND MAKE THEIR PRESENCE OBVIOUS? DEMONS THAT ACTED NICE IN ORDER TO SEDUCE PEOPLE TO DESTRUCTION WOULD HAVE MORE SUCCESS.

THE STORY SEEKS TO SHOW JESUS' POWER OVER DEMONS. BUT IT DOES NOT DO THIS VERY WELL. HE DOES BIZARRE THINGS AND DOESN'T SEEM TO KNOW IF IT IS ONE DEMON OR MANY.

HE CURES POSSESSION BY SENDING THE DEMONS TO POSSESS SOMETHING ELSE!

AND THIS AFTER ONE OF THE DEMONS HAILS HIM AS THE HOLY ONE OF GOD!

THE DEMONS DID NOT NEED TO POSSESS THE PIGS. THEY WANTED BODIES TO INHABIT AND DIDN'T WANT THE PIGS DEAD. IT IS THOUGHT THAT THE PIGS WENT MAD BECAUSE THEY COULDN'T HANDLE THE DEMONIC PRESENCES AND THAT THAT WAS WHY THEY KILLED THEMSELVES. BUT WHAT IF THE DEMONS MADE THE PIGS KILL THEMSELVES TO SHOW OFF AND POPULARISE JESUS? TO STUPID PEOPLE, IT LOOKED LIKE JESUS PUT DEMONS INTO PIGS AND GOT RID OF THEM FOREVER WHEN THE PIGS RUSHED TO THEIR DEATHS. BUT THAT WOULD ONLY LEAVE THE DEMONS FREE TO POSSESS PEOPLE ELSEWHERE! JESUS DIDN'T SAVE THE PIGS DESPITE HAVING THE POWER TO DO SO AND HIS ALLEGED POWER COULD STOP DEMONS DRIVING THE ANIMALS MAD. THE WHOLE THING WAS ABOUT FOOLING PEOPLE TO GET FOLLOWERS FOR JESUS.

THE STORY SHOWS THAT THE DEMONS WERE PUTTING ON A SHOW IN ORDER TO GET FOLLOWERS AND PRESTIGE FOR JESUS. IT HAS ALL THE HALLMARKS OF A SETUP. THE STORY DOES NOT CARE ABOUT

GIVING US A NICE EXAMPLE BUT CARES ONLY ABOUT SHOWING THAT JESUS HAS THE RIGHT AND POWER TO BOSS DEMONS AROUND.

THE STORY IS NOT THE STORY OF THE SON OF GOD BUT THE STORY OF A BLACK MAGICIAN OR MALE WITCH!