



Minutes With Messiah

Volume 23, Issue 6

Web Site: <http://www.minuteswithmessiah.com>

April 2022

WHO IS DEMAS?

On the old *Lone Ranger* radio show, and the television show that developed from it, the hero wore a mask. He was a Texas Ranger who had been left for dead in an ambush, and did not want anybody to know he had survived. He clearly learned from surviving the ambush, because he went around saving people (usually damsels) in distress. He would come in and save the day, taking out the bad guys. At the end of most of the shows he would start to ride off into the sunset, and the person he had saved would ask the question. “Who was that masked man?” Then the announcer would say it was “The Lone Ranger,” and he would ride off on his white horse with a “Hiyo, Silver, away.” There are some people in the Bible that we might ask, “who was that masked man?” One of those is a man named Demas.

Demas is only mentioned three, or maybe four, times in the Bible. That doesn’t give us much information about him. Nevertheless, just the fact that he was named means that he bore some significance.

Two of the times he is mentioned it is only in the context of Paul’s sending greetings from people that might be known to the recipients of his letters. “Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.” (Col 4:14) “There salute thee Epaphras, my fellowprisoner in Christ Jesus; Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers.” (Phm 23-24) In both of these letters, Demas is paired with Luke. It is probable, then, that they may have known each other outside of their association with Paul.

The letters in which these greetings occur were both written to the same location. Philemon was from Colossae. (Mention is made of someone named Archippus—presumed to be Philemon’s son—in both the letters to Philemon and Colossae.) Demas was possibly from that city, or was at least well-known to the citizens there. Although Luke is presumed to be from Antioch, he was apparently quite familiar to the Colossians, unlike Paul, who had never been there.

Whether Demas knew Luke from his time in the city or just because they were companions of Paul, they probably hung together. They would have had some shared locations and probably some shared acquaintances to talk about.

The other reference to Demas is seemingly negative. It seems to be one of Paul’s strongest denunciations of a person.

For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. (2 Tim 4:10)

Most translators use the strong words “forsaken” or “deserted”, even though it could simply be interpreted as “left,” as in gone away. If the stronger word is used, then it would also apply to Crescens and Titus, even though Titus had been sent away by Paul himself. Either way, Demas apparently left Paul to return to other business. Paul had reacted negatively to John Mark doing so, and so he does not approve Demas. Considering that this was mentioned in the last letter we have from Paul, it is probably a divide that was never resolved.

One other possible mention of Demas, written much later, casts him again in a favorable light. The apostle John spent his last years in or near Ephesus, which is only 150 miles from Colossae. (At the time, that would be a considerable distance.) In his final letter he mentions a man named Demetrius. Demas is probably a contraction of that name, maybe even a nickname. John says:

Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true. (3 Jn 12)

If that is the same man, and we have no reason to believe he is or is not, then Demas has changed his reputation. In the time from his leaving Paul to his acquaintance with John he has gone from a deserter to an honored man. Would that we could all say that.

CONTENTS

Who Is Demas?	1
Swine	2
Who Do You Say That I Am?	4

All articles Copyright 2022 by Tim O’Hearn unless otherwise noted. The ideas expressed in these articles are those of the authors and are not to be considered the doctrine of any specific congregation or eldership.

SWINE

If you want to start a major argument, order a Hawaiian pizza for a room full of people. Half of them will argue that it is wrong to put ham on a pizza. The other half will argue that pineapple doesn't belong on a pizza. And another half (yes, that makes three halves) will say that neither ham nor pineapple belongs there. On the other hand, in Israel you can't order a Hawaiian pizza. Neither can you order a beef sausage (or any other kind of meat) and cheese pizza. Even if you could mix meat and cheese, ham or pork sausage would be off the menu. Pork is forbidden.

The Bible has a lot to say about swine. And maybe some things that it doesn't say that we can gather from the context.

Swine on the Ark

There is no specific mention of swine on Noah's ark; however, they must have been there. God sent at least

Health cannot be the primary reason for determining clean and unclean animals.

a mating pair of all animals to the ark, clean or unclean, except aquatic life.

Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female. Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth. (Gen 7:2-3)

It is not clear which animals were considered clean, and which unclean. If Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, then it makes sense that his reference to clean and unclean animals would coincide with their designations in Leviticus 11. Thus only one pair of each kind of swine (hippopotami are rabbinically considered swine) would have been on the ark. The number of mating pairs on the ark would not determine how many of any kind of animal would exist later. Unclean rabbits reproduce faster than clean cows. Swine may have thrived after the flood.

Unclean

As indicated in the introductory remarks, pigs are famously considered unclean, even though their hygiene is

much better than most animals. The designation as unclean has nothing to do with how clean or dirty they keep their environment. It probably had little to do with the health benefits or hazards to humans who ate them. There were specific rules to determine an animal's status.

Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is clovenfooted, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that shall ye eat. Nevertheless these shall ye not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the hoof: as the camel, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you. And the coney, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you. And the hare, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you. And the swine, though he divide the hoof, and be clovenfooted, yet he cheweth not the cud; he is unclean to you. (Lev 11:3-7)

There were other rules for additional types of animals, such as insects, aquatic animals, and birds. In some cases, generic rules did not apply and specific animals (ravens, eagles, storks, owls, etc.) were listed.

While in the case of the ark it appears that clean meant good for sacrifice, in Leviticus it has another meaning. Here it means able to be eaten. (Animals appropriate for sacrifice were clean in this sense, but not all clean animals were appropriate for sacrifice; no mention is ever made of sacrificing fish, for instance.) Some have tried to say that the distinctions made in Leviticus 11 were for health reasons. Pigs, for instance, may be infested with trichinosis, which may transfer to people if not prepared properly. (Health regulations in most developed countries have virtually eliminated the health risk.) Since eating cattle may expose people to other serious diseases or parasites, health cannot be the primary reason for determining clean and unclean animals. Instead, it more likely related to the sacrificial practices of the nations surrounding Israel. Generally the laws expressed in Leviticus and Deuteronomy were intended to make a distinction between the Israelites and gentiles. This is possibly most obvious in declaring sheep to be clean, "for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians." (Gen 46:34)

This prohibition on swine has caused a revealing misunderstanding. A number of years ago a list of questions intended to make fun of the Bible made its rounds. It even made it into a script of the television show *The West Wing*. That list contained a number of questions along the line of "I have a neighbor who works on the Sabbath. How do I put him to death?" (Answer: you don't. It requires two witnesses and conviction by a *beit din*, but only if he is Jewish.) One of the questions asked if he

could play football with the “pigskin” if he wore gloves. Such a question shows the ignorance of the asker more than the scriptures. While a football is called a pigskin, all are made from cowhide or rubber. Playing football does not require touching swine unless you are facing the old Washington team’s line nicknamed “The Hogs.”

Beyond declaring swine to be unclean, nothing more is said about them in the Jewish scriptures. There is much more mention in the gospels.

Gospel swine

The Israelites kept dogs, even though they were unclean (in more ways than one). They did not keep swine, because the main purpose of those animals is for food. This makes one of the statements of Jesus even more intriguing. “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.” (Matt 7:6) The first part of the lesson is obvious; you don’t give holy things to the unholy. The second part is interesting because most Israelites avoided any contact with swine; they would only marginally understand the actions of pigs. The comment makes perfect sense. If one casts pearls to swine they will eat them and turn on the feeder for more. Pigs will eat anything, including human flesh. (If you find yourself needing to dispose of a dead body, the best place to do so is a pig sty.) The question is whether the average Israelite at the time would have understood what Jesus intended.

Two other references to swine are clearer. One is an incident in the life of Jesus. The other is a mention in a parable.

One day Jesus and his apostles crossed the Sea of Galilee to the area known as the Decapolis (Ten Cities). They went to a town known either as Gadara or Gerasa. Three of the gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) relate what happened there. Mark, surprisingly because of his reputation for conciseness, gives the most detail. Matthew’s account is the shortest. Luke, who is usually the most precise, leaves out some of the details Mark includes.

One or two men who were demon-possessed lived in the city cemetery. Apparently Jesus had to pass this graveyard to get from where their boat landed to the city. The demon-possessed, who identified themselves as “legion” because of the number of demons, lived among the tombs. They could not be restrained, and often went unclothed. Jesus told the demons to come out. When demons were exorcised they went into “the abyss” or “dry places.” It seems that demons preferred to inhabit any type of body, so they asked to be sent into a herd of swine on a nearby hill. Jesus allowed it. The swine ran down the hill and were drowned in the lake (which seems to negate the demons’ plans).

This is obviously outside of Judea or Galilee. The people of the town were clearly not Jewish. They kept

swine. When they heard that a Jew killed all their pigs, they were not happy, and probably a little afraid. They asked him to leave. Which leads to the question, who were the real swine in the story?

One time Jesus told a story that involved swine. We often call it the story of the lost son or the wasteful (prodigal) son. It is found in Luke 15. A younger son asks to be given his inheritance before the old man kicks off. Now, that was highly unusual, and quite disrespectful. It was also not very smart. If the father lives a while longer and makes good investments, the son would stand to get more money if he waits. But that did not fit his personality. He goes to a distant country, among people who did not understand or care for his Jewishness.

Playing football does not
require touching swine
unless you are facing the
old Washington team’s
line nicknamed “The
Hogs.”

According to his older brother, who obviously knew where he was, he wasted his money on prostitutes. That was in keeping with the self-interest that got him into the situation in the first place. He soon lost all his money. The only job he could find (maybe it was the locals poking fun at him) was feeding swine.

What is a good Jewish boy doing feeding swine? How low can one sink? So low that he wanted to eat the carob pods he was feeding the pigs. Carob pods, to be edible to humans, have to be soaked in water for several hours. Otherwise, they are hard and can break a person’s teeth. He had sunk so low that he was living with swine and even wanted to eat fake chocolate. From the swine he learned that he should go home, even as a servant. (He would have learned not to substitute carob for real chocolate, except that chocolate had not been discovered in the Middle East at the time.)

It is a bit strange that what his brother threw in his face was his wasting his money on prostitutes. He doesn’t even mention the swine. Biblical history has even the patriarchs visiting prostitutes, but they never stooped to feeding swine. You would think pig-herding would be the bigger crime.

For something so forbidden, the Bible says quite a lot about swine. But we will finish with a quote that sounds like Solomon, but is credited to Mark Twain, Abraham Lincoln, or George Bernard Shaw. “Never wrestle with a pig. You both get dirty and the pig likes it.”

WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?

This song was written for the 20th Spiritual Explosion, a youth rally at the Riverside Church of Christ in Albuquerque. That event is scheduled for one day this year, April 19. The theme is "Who Do You Say I Am?"

♩ = 140

There's a ques-tion that's ver-y im - por-tant. Je - sus, is he on - ly a good man? Is he mere-ly just
Pe - ter an-swered the im-por-tant ques-tion. "You are Mes-si-ah, the Son of God." Do you a-gree with

Alto/Tenor

Basses

There's a ques-tion that's ver-y im - por-tant. Je - sus, is he on - ly a good man? Is he mere-ly just

one of the pro - phets? Is he Christ, Son of God, son of man? "Who do you say that I
Pe - ter, and mean it? Will you spread the good news all a - broad?"

one of the pro - phets? Is he Christ, Son of God, son of man? "Who do you

am?" Je - sus asked his di - sci - ples. Who do you say that he is? Je - sus asks you to - day.

say I am?" That is the ques-tion. Who do you say he is? An-swer to - day.

Timothy J. O'Hearn
737 Monell Dr NE
Albuquerque NM 87123