

Did Jesus Kill 2000 Pigs?

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Believe it or not, the Bible appears to say that Jesus killed 2000 pigs.



As we see in Mark 5:13, two thousand pigs drowned after Jesus sends demons into the pigs and the pigs rush off a cliff and drown in the sea.

"Did Jesus kill pigs" is one of the most important questions we can ask. This post will walk through the available evidence and answer the question once and for all.

If this is a literal story, Jesus is taking part in some serious animal cruelty. Before we dive into how this could be, let's look at some of the crazy rationalizations people have come up with to explain this:

- Jesus did not actually kill the pigs himself so Jesus is not accountable
- Pigs don't have souls so it does not matter that he killed the pigs
- Jesus had to show his "sovereign power over demons"
- Jesus could have been rebuking the owners of the pigs if the owners were Jewish since Jews were not allowed to eat or keep unclean animals (Leviticus 11:7)
- Jesus is responsible for killing the pigs and is a moral monster

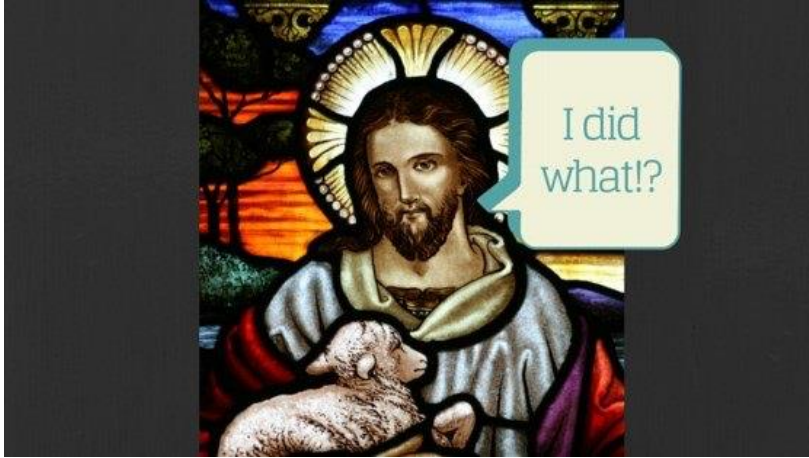
Jesus: Animal Killer?

All of these explanations are not that great once we actually dive into the story and see what the actual story is about.

Reading the whole story as seen in Mark 5:1-13, Jesus clearly sends the demons into the pigs and he is clearly responsible for killing the pigs.

If someone did this today we might find them guilty of animal cruelty and sentence them to prison.

Anyone who loves Christ should investigate what this story means without rushing to judgment.



According to Saint Augustine in the writing *City of God*:

Christ himself shows that to refrain from the killing of animals and the destroying of plants is the height of superstition for, judging that there are no common rights between us and the beasts and trees, he sent the devils into a herd of swine and with a curse withered the tree on which he found no fruit.

Saint Augustine
City of God

As you can see, our interpretation of this story can make all the difference in the world.

It makes the difference between believing a theology rooted in the Bible or a theology justifying harm done to animals.

Using the Synoptic Principle to Acquit Jesus

To determine whether Jesus killed pigs or not, we need to dissect the story using the Synoptic Principle.

Remember, we know that the gospel of Mark was written first and that the author of the gospel of Matthew and the author of the gospel of Luke both used the gospel of Mark as a source.

This means we can retrace the steps for how this story was written.

Thankfully this story occurs in the “triple tradition” meaning it occurs in Mark, Matthew, and Luke and we can see how each author handles the story.

The first thing we realize when we look at each of the synoptic gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke is that the story happens in three different locations.

The author of the gospel of Mark says that the story occurs in the town of “Gerasa”.

The problem with this is that Gerasa is about thirty miles from the sea of Galilee! **It is simply impossible for the story to have taken place here since this is no where near the sea of Galilee!**

Later scribes who were reproducing copies of the gospel of Mark thought that the author of Mark made a mistake and therefore they changed the location of this story to occur in “the country of the Gadarenes”.

Even though these names seem similar, they are completely different towns.



The author of Luke, who does not appear to be familiar with the geography of the area, simply repeats the same mistake of using Gerasa.

The author of the gospel of Matthew, however, realizing the impossibility of this story to have occurred in Gerasa, changes the story to occur in Gadara.

He also changes the story to have two demon possessed men instead of the one that the author of Mark and Luke mention. This is seen in Matthew 8:28.

Finally, later scribes who realized that Gadara itself was about five miles from the shore of the Sea of Galilee, changed the location of the story in manuscripts of all three synoptic gospels to occur in “the country of the “Gergesenes”.

All of this is to say that the author of the gospel of Mark was not intending to tell a historical story, but rather, a political story.

Let me explain.

Roman Army “Legion”

In both the gospel of Mark and the Gospel of Luke, the demons are called “Legion” as we see for example in Mark 5:9.

This is very important because it shows the political reason for the author of Mark to add this story.

During the time this story was written, a Roman army “legion” consisted of up to six thousand Roman soldiers.

Since the author of this story felt that the Romans were using their control of the territory to dominate and exploit its citizens, the author of Mark created this story to display his disgust for the Romans.

Many people reading the story at that time would have realized that the legion stood for the Romans.

By sending the legion or demons into the pigs, it was the wish of the author to send the Romans back to where they came from.



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We could make up some excuse to explain why none of these synoptic stories are consistent in regards to the location of the story or why there is a discrepancy of one or two demon possessed men, but this would be lying to you.

For an even better way to prove why these discrepancies exist, check out Matthew 27:52-53.

The synoptic principle can easily explain why the story in Matthew 27:52-53 only appears in Matthew's gospel and no other ancient writer records such a unique event in history.

A Literal Story or a Political Story?

This should show you enough to know that this story about Jesus and the pigs is **a political story and not a literal story.**

However, there are still other issues with believing that Jesus literally killed 2000 pigs and not just the absurd rationalizations previously mentioned.

One thing we know is that pigs can swim. It would have to be argued that the demons forced the pigs to drown even though pigs can swim.

If these are literal demons, do demons die when their pig hosts die?

Another issue with taking a literal interpretation of this story is that we hear nothing about Jesus feeling any remorse for taking away the man's property.

We could assume that these were Jews who owned the pigs and Jesus was mad with them for breaking the law but there is nothing in the gospels that say this and it is entirely possible (and likely) that these were not Jews who owned these pigs.

If we approximate that each pig was worth the modern day equivalent of two hundred and fifty dollars, this means that Christ took away half a million dollars from the pig farmers!

Did Jesus Kill 2000 Pigs?

Even more important than any monetary value, is the value of the life of the pigs.

Logically speaking, we know that pigs are in many respects smarter than the very dogs we love on as pets and we know that pigs have the ability to feel love and pain just like our dogs do.

So, logically speaking, killing two thousand pigs is no different than killing two thousand dogs.

When we consider the implications, it becomes quite absurd that Jesus would ever harm a pig. Jesus tells us in Matthew 12:11, "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out?"

Do we really believe that the Jesus who says we should help animals out of a pit, even on the Sabbath, wants us to let thousands of animals go into a pit and drown!?

Is Jesus really this inconsistent? Or does this simply represent the unwanted Roman army legion?

When we take this story literally, it is like the blind leading the blind; we ourselves have fallen into the pit.

As Matthew 15:14 says: "Leave them, they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into the pit."

The same Jesus who relates himself to a chicken to describe completely selfless love (Matthew 23:37) would never kill 2000 animals.

Did Jesus kill pigs? No. I would bet my life on that.