

# WHAT'S IN A NAME?

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JESUS'S DIALOGUE WITH  
LEGION IN LIGHT OF  
ANCIENT EXORCISMS

# Problem Addressed

- Exorcisms unfamiliar to modern audience
- Mark 5:1-20
  - Most spectacular example
  - One key feature – Dialogue
    - Use of Jesus's name and adjuration formula
    - Jesus seeks name of Demon
- Two views
  - 1. Demon submits
  - 2. Demon attempts to resist
    - Jesus must use demon's name to gain control

# Key Questions

- How would a 1<sup>st</sup> century audience view this dialogue?
- How does Jesus compare to other exorcists?
- Does he use typical exorcism techniques?
- Four assumptions need addressed:
  - 1) knowledge of a name gives you power
  - 2) exorcists typically seek to discover the name of a demon
  - 3) an adjuration formula is a typical feature of exorcisms
  - 4) exorcism techniques were standardized
- Observation – Background material on exorcism not treated with sufficient precision and nuance

# Evidence for Exorcism

- 1. Exorcism Narratives
- 2. References to exorcism
- 3. Formulas/rituals used to expel demons
  
- Distinguish Possession vs. Affliction
  - Numerous types of demonic attack
  - Methods to control demons exist on spectrum
    - Defensive – Expulsion

# Exorcism Narratives: Pre-Christian

## Possession

- The god Khonsu makes “protection” for a possessed Princess (Bentresh Stela)

## Affliction

- David plays the lyre for Saul when he is tormented by a spirit (1 Samuel 16:14-23)
- Tobias causes demon who had killed Sarah’s husbands to flee (Tobit 3, 6, and 8)

# Exorcism Narratives: New Testament

## Possession

- Jesus casts out unclean spirit from man in synagogue (Mark 1:21-28 // Luke 4:31-37)
- Jesus exorcises a legion of demons from man in tombs (Mark 5:1-20 // Matt. 8:28-34; Luke 8:26-39)
- Jesus expels unclean spirit from Syrophenician woman's daughter (Mark 7:24-30 // Matt. 15:21-28)
- Jesus exorcises a spirit that makes a boy unable to speak and causes seizures (Mark 9:14-29 // Matt. 17:14-21; Luke 9:37-43)

## Affliction

# Exorcism Narratives: New Testament

## Possession

- Jesus casts out demon that makes man mute (Matt. 9:32-34)
- Jesus expels demon that makes man blind and mute (Matt. 12:22-28)
- Paul casts out spirit of divination from slave girl (Acts 16:16-18)
- Failed exorcism by sons of Sceva (Acts 19:13-16)

## Affliction

# Exorcism Narratives: 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Cent. C.E.

## Possession

- Jewish exorcist Eleazar draws demon out through nostrils (Josephus, Ant. 8:46-49)
- Indian sage provides letter to exorcise woman's son (Philostratus, Vit. Apoll. 3.38)
- Apollonius casts out demon from young man (Philostratus, Vit. Apoll. 4.20)
- Account of Syrian exorcist's normal practice (Lucian, Philops. 16)

## Affliction

- David plays and sings when Saul is choked by evil spirit (LAB 60:13)
- David plays and sings to provide relief to Saul from troubling demons (Josephus, Ant. 6.166-469)
- Abram prays to remove chastising spirit afflicting Pharaoh and household (1 Qap Gen<sup>ar</sup> XX, 14-29)

# Exorcism Narratives: 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Cent. C.E.

## Possession

- Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai casts out demon from Emperor's daughter (b. Me'ilah 17b)
- Peter casts out demon from laughing man (Acts Pet. 11)
- Andrew casts out demon from Stratocles's slave (Acts Andr. 25)
- Andrew exorcises demon from possessed soldier (Acts Andr. Pap. Utrecht I)

## Affliction

- Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa restricts the movement of demoness Igrath (b. Pesahim 112b)
- Solomon binds demon that is tormenting a boy (T. Sol. 1:1-2:5)
- Thomas helps woman tormented by a spirit for five years (Acts Thom. 42-46 & 49)

# Exorcism Narratives: 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Cent. C.E.

## Possession

- Thomas expels demons from wife and daughter of captain (Acts Thom. 62-65 & 73-77)
- Misdaeus uses dust from Thomas's grave to exorcise his SON (Acts Thom. 170)
- John drives out demons from Antipatros's two sons (Acts John 56-57)

## Affliction

# Observations

- Most exorcism narratives are either Christian or Jewish
- Pagan narratives limited and postdate Jesus
- Apocryphal narratives influenced by Jesus
- Jewish texts are mixed bag
  - Key role of Solomon

# Other sources to consider

- Problem of term “magic”
- Need to Expand Scope beyond exorcism
- Power Rituals - practices that attempt to control or at least influence spiritual forces to achieve particular ends
  - Goals
    - Knowledge of the future
    - Bind a Lover
    - Curse an enemy
    - Heal sickness
    - Protect from demonic attack

# Materials

- Papyrus
- Lead tablets
- Gold and silver lamellae
- Gemstones
- Earthenware bowls

# Power of the Name

- What is there between me and you, Jesus Son of God Most High (Mark 5:7)
- Claims
  - Knowledge of the name give you power
  - Exorcists typically seek name of demon
- Names of Power are important
  - Defensive spells
  - Spells that seek benefit
- Especially secret names
  - Demonstrates knowledge

# Names revealed by gods

- “I am he, NN, who have presented myself to you, and you have given me as a gift the knowledge of your most great name, of which the number is 9,999.”(PGM II.128)
- Without knowing these names “the god will not listen but will refuse to receive you as uninitiated.” (PGM XIII. 56)

# Names in Exorcisms

- Call on benevolent power to cast out demon
- PGM IV. 1227–1264 and 3007–3086 most prominent exorcism spells
  - Both call upon God of the Jews to cast out the spirit.
  - Demon name not mentioned only types
    - “heavenly or aerial, whether terrestrial or subterranean, or netherworldly or Ebousaeus or Chrerseus or Pharisaeus” (lines 3043–3044)

# Mesopotamian spells

- “May a kindly Guardian stand at my side. By Ningirsu, master of the sword, mayest thou be exorcised! ... By Heaven be thou exorcised! By Earth be thou exorcised!”
- “Whether thou art a ghost that hath come from the earth, or a phantom of night that hath no couch, or a woman (that hath died) a virgin, or a man (that hath died) unmarried, or one that lieth dead in the desert ... or a ghost unburied, or a ghost that none careth for, or a ghost with none to make offerings ... or a hag-demon, or a ghoul, or a robber-spirit.”

# Names in Exorcism Narratives

- Testament of Solomon
  - Demon name not used to control
  - Name of angel which thwarts
- Lucian
  - How spirit came to be in person
- Tobit
  - Demon name (Asmodeus) not used to control
- Hanina ben Dosa
  - Encounters Igrath
- Rabbi Yohai
  - Ben Temalion
  - Special case

# Exorcist's Name

- Never used against exorcist
- Bentresh Stela
  - Spirit recognized god
- Hanina ben Dosa
  - Reputation in heaven
- Acts of Thomas
  - Reveals his own name and status

# Summary

- Offensive vs. Defensive power rituals
- Both call upon neutral/benevolent god, goddess, daimon
- Defensive spells - Name of demon not important
- Demon's use of Jesus's name and title
  - Acknowledgement of true identity
  - Not an attempt to exorcise Jesus
- Jesus's question of demonic name
  - Not to force exorcism
  - Jesus's initial command does not fail
  - Name Legion reveals case of multiple possession

# Adjuration Formula

- I adjure you by God, do not torment me (Mark 5:7)
- Claim- ὀρκίζω is a technical term used in exorcisms
- Used in variety of power rituals
- Three parts:
  - 1) the verb ὀρκίζω or ἐξορκίζω
  - 2) the pronoun “you” directly addressing a god, daimon, or spirit
  - 3) and a name(s) of power to induce action
- Part 3
  - Sometimes god or goddesses’s own secret names
  - Name of another supernatural power

# Example 1 – Spell of Attraction

- νεκύδαιμον is adjured “by the powerful and inexorable god and by his holy names” (PGM IV. 2030–2033).
- “Perform the NN deed because the holy god OSIRIS KMĒPHI SRŌ wishes and commands it of you” (PGM IV. 2093–2094)
- Promise of sacrifice and threat of chastisements

## Example 2- Love Spell

- The enchanter adjures a group of gods (tier 2)
- To send the ghosts of those who have died violently (tier 3)
- “By” IAŌ, SABAŌTH, and ADŌNAI (tier 1) with a series of *voces magicae* (PGM IV. 1485).

# Adjuration in Exorcism spells

- PGM IV. 1227–64
  - “Hail God of Abraham; hail, God of Isaac; hail, God of Jacob; Jesus Chrestos, the Holy Spirit, the Son of the Father” (PGM IV. 1231–1234).
  - Address to demon - “I conjure you, daimon, whoever you are, by this god”
  - A series of *voces magicae*
- PGM IV. 3007–86
  - “I adjure you by the god of the Hebrews, Jesus”
  - Followed by a string of *voces magicae* (PGM IV. 3019).

# Silver Lamella

- “I adjure/exorcise every evil and wicked spirit, **by** the greatest god who created the heaven and the earth and the seas and all things in them *to come out of* (ἐξελθεῖν) Allous whom Annis bore—she who has the Seal of Solomon, on this very day, in this very hour, now, now, quickly, quickly.”

# New Testament

- Acts 19:13 - Jewish exorcists use name of Jesus
  - I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul proclaims
- Mark 3:22 – Claim that Jesus casts out demons “by” Beelzebul
- Ephesians 1:21- Christ has the greatest name that one can invoke

# Adjuration in Exorcism Narratives

- Eleazar adjures demon using
  - Solomon's name
  - In addition to root, ring, and incantations
- Lucian refers to adjurations and threats
  - But no details
- Testament of Solomon
  - Solomon says, "I adjure you by the name of the great God Most High: By what name are you and your demons thwarted?"

# Exorcisms by Jesus's Followers

- NT and Apocryphal stories
- No adjuration formula
- Usually direct command invoking Jesus's name
- Acts 16:18 I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out from her.
- Principle is same- call on stronger power to overcome hostile spirit

# Adjuration in Mark 5:7

- I adjure you by God, do not torment me (Mark 5:7)
- Adjuration in Power rituals
  - Defensive spells require stronger power
- Jesus has taken on role of afflicting spirit
- Demon calls on God for help
  - Not to resist exorcism
  - To avoid torment
- Defensive statement in midst of capitulation
  - Terms of surrender
- Reinforces the authority of Jesus

# Exorcism Methods

- “Typical”
  - Spells point to common features
  - Exorcism narratives quite diverse
- Early amulets have no writing
  - Oral component
- Narratives
  - Tobit – Burn heart and liver of fish
    - But angel binds demon
    - Prayers also involved
  - David and Saul
    - Playing of instrument
    - Pseudo-Philo adds song

# Methods- cont.

- Lucian
  - Threats and adjuration
- Abraham
  - Lays on hands and prays for Pharaoh
- Testament of Solomon
  - Ring of power
- Josephus
  - Ring, Root, Name of Solomon, Incantations
- Christian exorcisms
  - Invocation of name Jesus
- Most all share reliance on some external source of power
  - 1 Samuel 16:23 exception
  - Early text, story of affliction

# Power is connected to Exorcist

- Jesus is earliest example
  - No prayer, adjuration, or names of power
- Apollonius
  - Issues command
  - Recorded long after Jesus
  - Focus on philosophy
- Rabbai Yohai
  - Miracle set up by God
- Hanina ben Dosa
  - Reputation in Heaven

# Is Jesus like other exorcists?

- Jesus represents something different
  - Does not use standard exorcism techniques
- Mark 5 highlights Jesus's power as superior to a legion of demons
  - Not successful because of what he knows (Solomon & Apollonius)
  - Or Whom he calls upon
  - But because of who he is
- His name becomes a name of power
  - Names of power were usually supernatural/spiritual entities
  - Ephesians 1:21 – the most powerful name
- The ability to exorcise demons not unique
  - But the way Jesus casts out spirits is not “typical”

# Jesus as Exorcist

- Jesus exorcisms one piece of the larger portrait that paints Jesus as Lord
  - Not that Jesus can perform exorcisms
  - But the way he performs them