

FAITH REASON

DVD STUDY GUIDE

GOD & IMPERIAL POWER, JESUS & ECONOMIC INJUSTICE

Welcome to this FAITHANDREASON® SEMINAR video, “GOD & IMPERIAL POWER: JESUS AND ECONOMIC INJUSTICE,” by scholars John Dominic Crossan and Joerg Rieger. In this guide you will find suggestions for your own review and preparation for using the video with classes or small groups.

You will find recommended DISCUSSION STARTERS and DISCUSSION QUESTIONS. We encourage you to use your own imagination and creativity in both introducing the video lectures by Drs. Crossan and Rieger and in leading your group in discussion about what new awareness and questions grow out of viewing and hearing the lectures.

QUICK START GUIDE

Here’s something you need to know right up front How you approach the use of this video is entirely up to you. You may be only interested in finding a few suggestions for discussion questions to throw to your class or small group, if this is what you’re looking, great, you’ll find six or seven sample questions on the following pages – use as many as you like:

DISC ONE

Page 3 for John Dominic Crossan’s first lecture, “The Matrix of Jesus: Rome’s Kingdom and God’s Kingdom;

Page 4 for Joerg Rieger’s first lecture, “Christ and Christian Rome: The Creeds as Domination and Liberation”

Page 5 for John Dominic Crossan’s second lecture, “The Life of Jesus: Economic Exploitation and the Sea of Galilee”

Page 7 for Joerg Rieger’s second lecture, “Christ and Christian Europe: Divine Justice and Injustice”

DISC TWO

Page 8 for John Dominic Crossan’s third lecture, “The Matrix of Jesus: Rome’s Kingdom and God’s Kingdom;

Page 9 for Joerg Rieger’s third lecture, “Christ and Christian Rome: The Creeds as Domination and Liberation”

Page 10 for John Dominic Crossan’s fourth lecture, “The Matrix of Jesus: Rome’s Kingdom and God’s Kingdom;

Page 11 for Joerg Rieger’s fourth lecture, “Christ and Christian Rome: The Creeds as Domination and Liberation”

However, if you want to do more extensive preparation, if you want to explore the content of what the two scholars present, read on. You’ll find interesting and helpful suggestions about how to approach the material in the video in a deeper, more provocative way.

WHAT'S ON THE DISCS?

Disc One

- John Dominic Crossan
THE MATRIX OF JESUS: ROME'S KINGDOM AND GOD'S KINGDOM
- Joerg Rieger
CHRIST AND CHRISTIAN ROME: THE CREEDS AS DOMINATION & LIBERATION
- John Dominic Crossan
THE LIFE OF JESUS: ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION AND THE SEA OF GALILEE
- Joerg Rieger
CHRIST AND CHRISTIAN EUROPE: DIVINE JUSTICE AND INJUSTICE
- 30-minute Q&A period with the audience.

Disc Two

- John Dominic Crossan
THE DEATH OF JESUS: NON-VIOLENT AND VIOLENT RESISTANCE TO INJUSTICE
- Joerg Rieger
CHRIST AND THE COLONIAL FANTASY: MODERN CIVILIZATION & ITS DISCONTENTS
- John Dominic Crossan
THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS: PERSONAL OR COMMUNAL VINDICATION
- Joerg Rieger
CHRIST AND THE POST-COLONIAL EMPIRE: ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION AND ECONOMIC HOPE.
- 30-minute Q & A period with the audience.

Lectures run 25 to 30 minutes each.

NOTE TO DISCUSSION LEADERS

For both Dr. Crossan's lectures and Dr. Rieger's lectures, you will find DISCUSSION STARTERS. They are meant to get you thinking about the issues that are involved in each presentation. You can use the DISCUSSION STARTERS at the beginning of the session to set the stage for the DVD presentations. In this guide, the DISCUSSION STARTERS are followed by DISCUSSION QUESTIONS that can be used to help the members of your group "process" what they have heard in the lectures.

As a discussion group leader, you will probably want to preview the lecture and come up with your own discussion questions. Below, are some "Discussion Starters" to help you begin to "frame" your own thinking about the lecture. The starters" are ideas or historical statements that provide some orientation to the content of the lectures. These are followed by "Discussion Questions" to supplement your own.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THESE LECTURES

Dr. Crossan argues that the "program" of Caesar Augustus and Roman Imperial theology was: Faithfulness to the gods, War, Victory and (then) Peace. Then, he states that Jesus, resisting that Roman program, invited first century peasants in northern Judea into a program of resistance that called for Faithfulness to God, Non-violence, Justice and (then) Peace.

Dr. Rieger, tracking the subsequent history of empires in the West and Christianity's relationship to them, maintains that the message of each succeeding empire has been that empire is the only possible way for human civilization to organize itself. He insists that while Christianity has been used by these empires to justify and support imperial control and power, that none of them have been able to completely control and squelch the vision of Jesus and his call to non-violent justice in order to attain peace.

JOHN DOMINIC CROSSAN, his first lecture: “The Matrix of Jesus: Rome’s Kingdom and God’s Kingdom,” (Disc 1, Session 1)

In his first lecture, Dr. Crossan says that we can’t understand historical Jesus unless we understand him as a first century Jewish peasant living within the “matrix” of first century Judaism within the “matrix” of first century Roman Empire.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

Things to tell your class or group to look for in: “The Matrix of Jesus: Rome’s Kingdom and God’s Kingdom”

In this first segment Dr. Crossan states that:

- The term “matrix” is a particular term that Dr. Crossan adopts to make the point that Jewish eschatology, first century Judaism and Roman Empire do not provide “background” or even “context” for Jesus. He uses the example that he could be lecturing with a stage background of a mountain blizzard behind him and he would not feel chill. Or, he could be speaking in front of a hot, tropical beach backdrop and he would not feel warm. Background has no relationship with the person; context suggests a little more interaction, but neither renders a sense of what Crossan wants to convey.

He wants to impart a sense of the deep insertion of an individual in the specific time and place into which he or she is born and in which he or she lives out his or her own existence. For example, one can’t really talk meaningfully about Martin Luther King without the “matrix” of the Civil Rights Movement in the U S in the middle of the 20th century. Or, you can’t get any real sense of the life and work of Ghandi unless you do so within the matrix of British Imperialism in the 20th Century. Remember, time and place are essential as we seek to “get hold of historical Jesus.”

- “Before Jesus existed, and even if he had never existed, there already was in the first century Mediterranean world a human being who was called, Divine, Son of God, God incarnate, God from God, Lord, Redeemer, Liberator and Savior of the world. Those were the titles of Caesar Augustus before Jesus ever existed. When therefore, the titles of the Roman Emperor in a palace on the Palantine Hill in Rome were taken from him and given to a Jewish peasant on the Nazareth ridge in Galilee – is this some kind of a joke?” (lecture #1)

- As described above, Dr. Crossan places historical Jesus within the “matrix” of Jewish eschatological thinking within the “matrix” of first century “occupied” Judea within the “matrix” of first century Roman Empire. He stresses that the “eschatological thinking” to which he is referring is, “not, not, not about the end of the world.” It is, rather, about the “end” of “this present evil” that dominates humankind. He says that, in the tradition of Jewish apocalyptic, God will come and make “a divine

cleanup” of the world and put in its place, “the Kingdom of God.”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION LEADERS AS YOU REVIEW THE LECTURE AND PREPARE

- 1 What’s the difference between applying the “titles” described above to Caesar and applying them to Jesus?
- 2 Why do you think Dr. Crossan wants to make such a strong point of insisting that Jewish eschatological thinking was not about the end of the world, but instead, concerned with “the end of this present evil age?”
- 3 How do you respond to all the discussion about “Empire?”
- 4 What’s your “take” on Crossan’s claim about Jesus’ resistance to “empire?”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These discussion questions suggest an approach to your group discussion. Do not think you must get to all of them. Mix them up; improvise.

- 1 What do you think about Dr. Crossan’s statement, “Before Jesus was born, the “titles” described above were applied to Caesar Augustus. Are you aware of any emotional response?”
- 2 Dr. Crossan makes numerous references to “victory” as the theme of Roman Imperial Theology and Roman program? Does this surprise you? Why, do you think, did the Romans make such a dramatic commitment to “victory?”
- 3 If an election were to be held today between Caesar and Jesus, who would you vote for? Do you think victory is the only sure way to peace?
- 4 How do respond to Dr. Crossan’s statements about “God’s Kingdom” not being about the destruction of the world? Does the “world” have to be destroyed for the Kingdom of God to be established?
- 5 What do you make of Crossan’s claim that Jesus answered the disciples’ questions about when the kingdom would come with, “It’s already here.” Can you imagine the disciples’ confusion? What could he have meant?
- 6 Crossan uses a quotation from Bishop Desmond Tutu, “God without us will not; We, without God, cannot?” What did Bishop TuTu mean by this? What does Crossan make of it?

JOERG RIEGER, his first lecture:

“Christ and Christian Rome: The Creeds as Domination and Liberation” (Disc 1, Session 1)

In his first lecture, Dr. Rieger begins with two primary points:

ONE: “The point of talking about empire is that Christianity has grown up in a context of empire (John Dominic Crossan would say, “matrix”). And since the Roman Empire, each succeeding empire has replaced the one before as it has faded.” He says that it’s an old context for Christianity. Empire and Christianity have been in an ongoing relationship since the late first century.

He follows this with:

TWO: “And don’t take this idea about empire lightly. Empires are not just about ideas; they are about power; not just about politics and economics, but about the sorts of things that will shape you, the way you live, the way you think and even shape the way you believe. [This means] it will shape your Christian Faith and that is the problem we need to address.”

Dr. Rieger asks what many of us will ask? “Well, what’s so bad about Empire? Why focus all this energy on that?” There are two primary problems, Rieger says. First, Empire doesn’t entertain alternatives. Its motto is, “There is No Alternative!” And, secondly, in empire, power flows from the top down. Rieger continues, “Despite all its promises, the majority of people within an empire do not benefit from it.”

One more preliminary thing: Dr. Rieger says that we are used to seeing empire operate using “hard” power, i.e., the use of dominant military power. What is not so obvious is empire using “soft” power, that is, the power of argument, the power of attraction as we saw in Dr. Crossan’s opening lecture in the reference to the “Sebastion,” the three-decked advertisement of Roman Imperial Theology in Aphrodisias (Turkey).

DISCUSSION STARTERS

Things to tell your class or group to look for in: “Christ and Christian Rome: The Creeds as Domination and Liberation”

In his opening lecture, Dr. Rieger gives considerable attention to Emperor Constantine and his participation in the historical Council at Nicea in 325 C.E. You may want to use these points as a “warm up” before your group begins viewing the video.

1 The Roman Emperor Constantine had at least 2 goals when he called for the Council in Nicea: (1) he sought to unify the Empire by assembling various “fighting” Christian factions in one place and pushing for one creed that all would agree to honor; and (2) he wanted to define the Christian God in support of the so-called, “Christian” Empire.

2 When the Bishops of the Church came together at Nicea, Constantine introduced a language that could be used to articulate the Christian God as in support of Empire. He suggested the term (Latin) *homo ousious*, which translates as, “being of the same substance.” He did this to say that Jesus “is of the same substance as The Father.”

3 Rieger says that for Constantine, it was important to “domesticate” Jesus. You can ask yourself, “Why?”

4 You may want to ask a class member to read aloud, or read yourself, The Nicene Creed before watching the video. A copy of the creed follows:

The Nicene Creed *(adopted in its present form, 381 C.E.)*

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father.

Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.

He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1 Imagine yourself as a Bishop of the Church in Eastern Greece at the beginning of the 4th Century, C. E. You get several “letters” in succession over several months bearing the Emperor’s Seal. The first is a letter of congratulation telling you that the aid you applied for to help in your work near Thessaloniki is forthcoming. Next, you get a letter of Invitation, bearing the Emperor’s insignia, inviting you to attend a Church-wide Council in a city

JOERG RIEGER, his first lecture, continued:

“Christ and Christian Rome: The Creeds as Domination and Liberation” (Disc 1, Session 1)

near the Emperor’s summer home at Constantinople. A final imperial letter arrives shortly thereafter, assuring you that the Emperor is covering all your travel expenses and that you will be staying in a 5 Star hotel. What questions do you ask yourself?

2 Does any of the language of the Nicene Creed sound familiar to you? Where have you heard it before? Do you have an emotional response to the notion that Constantine had political objectives in mind when he organized the council?

3 Rieger refers to a “top-down God for a top-down Empire.” What is your response to this? What images does the idea of a “top-down” God bring up for you?

4 Although the Emperor’s champion, old Athanasias and most of the delegates from the Eastern side of the Empire, supported the notion of “*homo ousious*,” demanding that Christ is of the same substance as God, Young Arius, a popular priest from Alexandria (in North Africa) taught his followers that Jesus was the creation of God and though he may be the most perfect of creations, was only a creation of God the Father and therefore not equal with the Father. The battle that ensued in Nicea was fierce.

Were you to have been a delegate at Nicea, would you have taken sides? What would have been “at stake” for you there?

5 Rieger sees hope emerging where historical Jesus is in tension with Empire. He says that it may be helpful to think about what Jesus did in his life; what he stood for; the fact that he took sides, the fact that he seemed to care deeply about people; the fact that he spoke up; the fact that he protested. How do you respond to this? Is this portrait of Jesus a “winning one” for you? Or is another “image” of Jesus more important to you?

6 Rieger then says that when we consider the Jesus of history, we may be seeing something that makes us re-think everything: the foundations of the world; who God is; what Divinity is; who it is that we worship?

7 Rieger concludes his lecture with this statement: “If I’m correct in what I say about Jesus, that he had a different approach to these things, I wonder if we might have to find a different way to look at politics and money?”

So, what do you think? Do you wonder, too?

JOHN DOMINIC CROSSAN, his second lecture:

“The Life of Jesus: Economic Exploitation and the Sea of Galilee” (Disc 1, Session 2)

In his second lecture, John Dominic Crossan describes a bas relief of Cesar Augustus. He is semi-nude (the Roman gods were always depicted nude; Augustus claimed to be divine, therefore he is depicted in this bas relief semi-nude) holding in one hand the orb of the world, while in the other hand he holds the scepter of power. This one image of Caesar Augustus tells it all. Caesar represents the Divine, the Force, the World.

Crossan speaks of “empire” and “eschaton” and suggests we look at the Kingdom of Rome and the Kingdom of God as two giant tectonic plates pushing against each other down below the surface of history.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

Things to tell your class or group to look for in:

1 Herod Antipas, one of the sons of Herod The Great who was Rome’s, indeed, Augustus’ own choice for his official “King of the Jews,” aka, “King of Judea,” was Roman vassal king over Galilee and Perea. Put this into perspective. Herod Antipas was also known as the “Tetrarch,” i.e., he was “king” over a quarter of what his father had held. See any dynamic here? Try this out: “So, Herod Antipas, ruler of a quarter of your dad’s estate, meet

Jesus, man from Galilee, successor to John the baptizer.” Here, you can see the elements coming together from the particular time and place of Jesus’ life.

2 Now, consider “The Sea of Galilee Boat” or the so-called “Jesus Boat” which is an ancient fishing boat dating from the 1st century C.E., i.e., during the time of Jesus. The remains of the boat were found in 1986 by two fishermen brothers, Moshe and Yuval Lufan, from Kibbutz Ginnosar, off the north-west shore of the Sea of Galilee in Israel. The partially disintegrated boat shows the hardship of life for fisherman on the Galilee under the reign of Herod Antipas. The boat’s life has been extended again and again by replacing worn-out boards with various kinds of inferior wood, from its original seaworthiness to ever increasing stages of patched together survival. Finally, the old boat, too worn and too difficult for its owners to repair, is floated into the rushes near the shore where it sinks into the mud and silt and waits to tell its story of hardship and toil on the sea that Antipas stole.

3 Consider what is going on with Herod Antipas, the tetrarch ruler of Galilee, one of the sons of Herod The Great who had been “King of the Jews.” Dr. Crossan draws for us the trajectory

of an arguably desperate Herod Antipas, moving the capitol from the city of Sepphoris, near Jesus' boyhood village, to his newly built city of Tiberius on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, and, consider the trajectory of Jesus, his own migration from Nazareth to Capernaum, the small city at the back door of Tiberius. What is Herod up to? What is Jesus up to?

4 Early in his reign, Antipas had married the daughter of King Aretas IV of Nabatea. However, while staying in Rome with his half-brother Herod (also a son of Herod the Great and Mariamne II), he fell in love with his host's wife, Herodias (granddaughter of Herod the Great and Mariamne I) who was a Hasmonean princess. Antipas and Herodias agreed to divorce their spouses so they could marry.

What do you think? Was this passion, politics or both? NOTE: Back in Galilee, this news caught the attention of John, the baptizer, who thought it newsworthy enough to comment on it in a very loud and public way.

5 Here's what we need to keep in mind as we watch Dr. Crossan address the theme: "The Life of Jesus: Economic Exploitation and the Sea of Galilee" if we are to understand and "grasp" Jesus within the matrix of first century Rome, first century Judea and first century Galilee.

Herod the Great, father of Herod Antipas, had been declared King of the Jews (an official Roman title). Herod Antipas spent his whole life plotting and carefully planning in order that he might one day become King of the Jews. He knew he had to play to the Romans, who were his overlords and this meant, "show them the money." He looked at the resources available to him in his quarter of the land and he saw fish, and fishermen and fish business owners. He knew he had to tax the fishing business just to the point of last tolerance. Then came John; then came Jesus.

6 It's little wonder that Dr. Crossan tells us that the people of Galilee, indeed, of Judea lived in an "eschatological expectation." Remember, "eschaton" is nothing fancy. It is simply a Greek word for "the end," or "the end of something." And, remembering Dr. Crossan's first lecture, "It is not, not, not about the end of the world." It is about the end of this present suffering in injustice. People in Galilee, women and men and children in Galilee re-hearsed again and again the stories in Daniel and encouraged themselves with God's promise to come

and put an end to the suffering, put an end to the injustice, to the cruelty and greed of their oppressors and bring down the house of Rome forever. Imagine the hardship of their lives, their hopelessness, their sorrow, their anger, their anger, their anger.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

"The Life of Jesus: Economic Exploitation and the Sea of Galilee"

- 1** Why is there so much "fishy stuff" in the Gospels? (Boats, nets, fishers)
- 2** Dr. Crossan goes to some length to distinguish the difference between the teachings of John the Baptizer and the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth? What principal differences do you see?
- 3** What happened to the city of Magdalena and how was the lake economy affected? Consider Mary of Magdalena. Can you imagine Mary being at the center of Jesus' work? Imagine this Mary as owner of an inherited family fishing business, running it, "staffing" it, taking care of it in a day to day way, concerned about her employees and their families, concerned about her own. Imagine her meeting Jesus and the others in Capernum.
- 4** Imagine a conversation between Mary, Peter, Judas, Andrew, John and Jesus. Perhaps they are eating a meal together in Mary's home. What do they talk about?

Do they talk about heaven? About salvation?
- 5** "Did the Roman Empire own the "stuff of the earth?" asks Dr. Crossan. Who did Jesus think "owned" the earth and what difference would this make to him? To his friends, to Mary, Peter and Andrew? What are they faced with? They knew what Rome was capable of. What hope can they have in the mean time?
- 6** Watching Dr. Crossan's lectures, have you found anything in them that leads you to want to revise your earlier beliefs? If so, identify any new thoughts. Does the world look any "different" to you? How?
- 7** Revelations, "believes" God will one day destroy those who have oppressed, robbed, raped, exploited and murdered. What do you think? Is that what Christians hope for?

JOERG RIEGER, his second lecture:

“Christ and Christian Europe: Divine Justice and Injustice” (Disc 1, Session 2)

In the opening of his second lecture, Joerg Rieger reminds us that it is the special attribute of empire to insist “there is no alternative” to “business as usual.”

He added that, for a growing number of us, there is an alternative; perhaps there are many. And it is our challenge to figure out what alternative or alternatives there could be.

In “Christ and Christian Europe: Divine Justice and Injustice,” Dr. Rieger focuses on the 11th Century in England because of the particular time and place in English history. The period is one heavily shaped by the recent Norman Conquest of England in 1066, and Professor Rieger chooses this historical “matrix” to further investigate the interdependent relationship that exists between Christianity and empire. In the 700 years following Constantine’s effort to fashion Christianity into the official religion of the Empire, the power of Popes has grown exponentially. Europe is pulled back and forth between the competing powers of Kings and Popes and Christian theology mirrors the tensions of the time.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1 Anselm, a first class mind and author, was Archbishop of Canterbury, actually the second Norman archbishop since the Saxons had been defeated. He created a theological framework that at once gave sanction to the Empire-Church partnership as the legitimate authority in all things and he solved the problem of Divine justice that demanded to be satisfied.

For Anselm, the Christian God was much like a Norman Lord. If the honor or justice of the Norman ruler was violated or offended, the ruler was bound under duty to demand either punishment or satisfaction. Satisfaction was the preferred choice of righting the wrong or addressing the transgression. It was believed that the very order of the society depended on the making of this just satisfaction of the offended ruler.

2 In one account, the people of a nearby village had somehow given offense to the Lord of the region and troops were dispatched there immediately where they set about cutting off the right hand and right foot of all the men in the village. Such drastic measures gave offense to upstanding Norman sensitivities and Anselm sought to use the course of satisfaction.

3 At some point, Anselm believed, God’s honor had been destroyed by human sin and this human sin had serious consequences for all of society. Anselm argued that there had been so much misery in the world, so much cruelty and so much corruption until God had to demand satisfaction. Anselm thought that this explained the crucifixion of Christ, an otherwise guiltless human who, in fact, was God’s son. God’s own binding commitment to his own divine justice demanded that satisfaction be made in order to save and redeem the world.

4 Anselm’s God is not a tyrant, bent on destroying the world. God is bound by God’s own laws and God must deal with the monumental aggregate of human sin.

Anselm knew there was no easy solution to sin. The stakes were too high and God’s justice demanded the order and balance of satisfaction. You can see the legacy of Anselm’s work in popular theology today.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1 Why do you think Professor Rieger wants to insist that empire constantly sends the message, “there is no alternative?”

2 Rieger says that Anselm’s God is a God of empire; what do you make of this claim? Do you agree or disagree? Why?

3 Dr. Rieger describes the challenge made by Jewish and Muslim theologians to Anselm when they say, “How can you claim an all-powerful God if he takes on the weakness and suffering of human flesh?” How does Anselm defend his position?

Does his explanation work for you? If not, why?

4 Rieger describes a dialogue in one of Anselm’s works in which his adversary, Bozo, tells him, “I can cancel the power of sin by merely being penitent.” Anselm responds by saying to Bozo, “You have not considered the weight of sin.”

But Rieger says, “That’s too easy for the structures of sin. “We don’t help ourselves, if we dismiss sin so easily – much more is at stake. The structures of sin in society must be addressed, be taken seriously and addressed.” What do you think about this? Do you agree with Anselm?

5 “Sometimes, some liberals just want to say, ‘Can’t we just all get along.’” How do you respond to this? What would it mean to be hard on sin? What would it mean to be soft on sin?

6 “Abu Ghraib is a good example,” says Rieger. “Empire’s answer is, ‘Well, there are bad apples in every bunch.’” Empire tries to cover the sin structure that is the antecedent of such a prison. It wants to lay the “sins” committed there as being carried out by a few corrupt officials. “But,” says Rieger, “in such a case, something has gone terribly wrong and we must face it. What are your thoughts?”

7 Rieger asks, “What kind of God’s justice are we talking about?” Perhaps, in the words and work of Jesus we find the clues of God’s justice. Empire has often controlled the Church, but it has failed in controlling Jesus. Why do you think this is true? Or do you think it is true?

JOHN DOMINIC CROSSAN, his third lecture:

“The Death of Jesus: Non-violent and Violent Resistance to Injustice” (Disc 2, Session 3)

In this lecture, Dr. Crossan explores the meaning of the death of Jesus of Galilee by first asking a question and then by making an observation. His leading question is an anthropological question, purposefully not a theological one. He wants to postpone theological discussion until later on.

Each of us has his or her own theological opinions about theological issues. And the death of Jesus is traditionally a “hot button” for opinion and argument. In this case, Dr. Crossan wants to focus on ancient cultural and religious understanding and practice. He wants to know “Why did people across various cultures in the ancient world think that the gods (or God) liked carnage [flesh]?” “Why did ancient peoples imagine that the gods were so interested in dead animals?” He asks, “Why sacrifice?” And remember, in this lecture, Dr. Crossan is asking an anthropological question.

Having identified the “Why sacrifice?” question as the primary question to ask about the meaning of the death of Jesus, Crossan now makes a provocative observation about early images depicting the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. After all, we now know that most people in the first century did not read for information. Instead, he tells us, they learned through the images they saw everyday on buildings, on clothing, on coins, on tools and weapons. It is remarkable then, when he tells us that there were no images of Christ before the year 200 C.E., no images of Christ on the cross before 400 C.E. and no images of the resurrection before 700 C.E.

So, in this lecture, Crossan approaches the subject with a question and an observation (or assumption). The question, “Why sacrifice?” invites us to ask, “Why did Christians see the death of Jesus as “sacrifice” and what kind of sacrifice were they thinking about? The assumption is: Early Christianity deliberately avoided making images of Christ for nearly two centuries.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

Dr. Crossan begins his third lecture by making five principal points: four are about the meaning and interpretation of the death of Jesus and the fifth concerns images of Jesus, his crucifixion and his resurrection:

- 1 He says that in the ancient world, “sacrifice” meant “gift.” So, the practice of making sacrifice to the gods involved human beings giving something to the gods with the expectation that they would get something in return.
- 2 He says that there is no record, no example of the idea of “substitution” showing up in the anthropology of the ancients and their practices of sacrifice.
- 3 He says that for a thousand years before Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1093 to 1109, substitutionary sacrificial atonement just was not there. Re Anselm, you may want to review

the “Discussion Starter” material on page 7 in this study guide.

- 4 He says that substitutionary sacrificial atonement is not mentioned in the New Testament. He also says, that the this idea does not show up in the Torah or “Old Testament.”
- 5 He says that images of Jesus did not appear until about 200 C.E.; he says that images of the crucifixion did not emerge until about 400 C. E.; and resurrection images did not show up until about 700 C. E.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 Dr. Crossan describes the “gift” that is meant to maintain or restore good relationship. Think of your own experience. Have you ever given a gift to a friend to confirm and maintain your relationship? Or have you ever prepared or purchased a meal meant to restore a strained or broken relationship? Can you relate your experience to Crossan’s description of the ancient practice of sacrifice?
- 2 Recall the example of the Celtic Prince. What is Dr. Crossan attempting to tell us? Why is the example important to him? Do you see any parallel between the example of the Celtic Prince and the death of Jesus? If so, why? If not, why not?
- 3 What do you make of Crossan’s claim that the kind of interpretation of Jesus death Anselm creates with his notion of substitutionary sacrificial atonement just doesn’t show up anywhere else in ancient practice or in European Christianity before the 11th Century? Why do you think he says such theology is “defective?”
- 4 Describing earliest images of the crucifixion of Christ (dating from the 4th Century in Ireland) Crossan says that these images show Christ with arms outstretched. He says that frequently no cross shows behind him and unless the viewer notices small circles in the palms of the hands, he or she might mistake the image to be one of a Celtic prince addressing the troops. Recall what Crossan said about early Christians wanting to link crucifixion to resurrection. Crossan says that they wanted to say the words run-on, as in, “crucifixion-resurrection.” What sense does this make to you?
- 5 Crossan tells us that in the ancient world, no one thought of sacrifice as making the animal suffer. Can you imagine someone thinking after a great victory, “We need to make sacrifice of an animal and because we had such a glorious victory, we should make the animal really suffer,?” Crossan makes an example out of Mel Gibson’s film, “The Passion of Christ.” His interpretation of the film is exactly this.
Did you see the film? What did you think? Do you see any relevance between it and this whole discussion of the death of Jesus?

JOERG RIEGER, his third lecture:

“Christ and the Colonial Fantasy: Modern Civilization and Its Discontents” (Disc 2, Session 3)

Reviewing the following notes and examples is a good way to prepare yourself and your class members for viewing and then discussing the video lecture.

Professor Joerg Rieger begins his third lecture by making this statement: “It is sometimes assumed that “empire” is a product of the ancient world or the dark ages of the medieval world; that in our modernity we have overcome the hierarchical models of the past.” [For instance, as descendants of colonial Americans who gained national independence from the British Empire, we assume that “empire” is no longer a problem.] Rieger continues, “Modern times in general appear to be much more enlightened than the empires of history that have gone before.” And, to be sure, we can list many examples.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

In this lecture, Dr. Rieger makes reference to several specific individuals whose ideas and actions stand out in the history of “modern” colonization. A little review will be helpful:

1 Dr. Rieger refers to Bartolomé de las Casas, O.P. (1484–1566), who was a 16th-century Spanish Dominican priest, writer and the first resident Bishop of Chiapas (in southern Mexico). As a settler in the New World, he witnessed, and was driven to oppose, the torture and genocide of the Native Americans by the Spanish colonists and advocated before King Charles V on behalf of rights for the natives. Originally having proposed to replace the slave labor of the natives with the importation of slaves from Africa, he eventually recanted this stance as well and became an advocate for the Africans in the colonies.

2 There is a persistent argument in Latin America that it was the conquest of the Americas that began the modern age. The 16th Century Bishop, Las Casas, cited above, protested the treatment of the natives in southern Mexico by colonizing Spaniards and called it “barbarian.” He said that Jesus was very gentle and that to see the face of Christ, one only had to look into the faces of the native Indians.

3 Rieger points out that [the British] Empire was typically not unusually brutal or violent; rather than administrate the colonies with “hard” force, it took a softer path and created the “trading houses,” i.e., The East India Trading Company that was given a Royal Charter at the beginning of the 16th Century. These trading houses, says Rieger, represented a new way for empire to do business first in India and then in China. The military were always present to preserve order.

4 Rieger notes that later, as the industrial age developed, there was a growing pressure for materials that had to be imported from colonies. It is an ongoing feature of modern colonialism, says Rieger, that its wealth has been built with the resources brought from the various colonies around the world.

5 Adam Smith (1723–1790), the acknowledged Father of Free Market economic philosophy, saw many problems in “empire economics” and came to the conclusion that British colonialism was too cumbersome and too expensive. He cited the “standing armies” of clerks that were present throughout the colonies and said that these were representative of large financial investments that would not “pay off.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1 Rieger says, “It is sometimes assumed that ‘empire’ is a product of the ancient world or the dark ages of the medieval world; and that in our modernity we have overcome the hierarchical models of the past.” This may help explain why we can be resistant to the notion that the U. S. has ever functioned as empire or that it may continue to do so today. How do you respond to this idea? Does it make sense to you? Are you offended by it?

2 It can be maddening to recognize that some of the most powerful enterprises of our own time are still rooted in empire. Rieger claims that he is not being pessimistic when he says these things. He tells us, that, in fact, he is quite hopeful however, he says, there is no real hope for evolving a more just society without fully facing up to the realities that compose our modern ones and the implications for economic and political consequences. Can you describe any personal experiences that confirm or challenge Rieger’s claims?

3 Have you ever asked yourself if Jesus was friend to and advocate of the poor of his day, why is there still so much injustice in the world? After all, Christianity has been around for 2,000 years. What keeps us from making more progress in solving problems of starvation, illiteracy and social despair?

4 Rieger tells us that our modern liberal assumptions give us the idea that we are the “models” of what the people at the margins should aspire to. How do you think this is true; how do you think it is false? Think of novels you’re read and movies you’ve seen where European people have been generous to people in under-developed countries by giving them western clothes and teaching them western ways of living.

Do you see any problems arising out of such attitudes and practices?

5 Ask your class to list any ambiguities they see in the role of Christian missionaries in colonial expansion?

6 Ask your class if any one present has had any experience with Christian missionary practice and culture? Ask them to respond to the “ambiguities” question.

7 Dr. Rieger says, “There is something beautiful in a religion that can broaden itself to see God in people very different from ourselves.” Do you agree it’s possible for us to learn from “others” that are not Christian? Do you have any experience with this?

JOHN DOMINIC CROSSAN, his fourth lecture:

“The Resurrection of Jesus: Personal or Communal Vindication”; (Disc 2, Session 4)

“Sometimes,” Dr. Crossan says, “the question is put like this: If you had put the television cameras in front of the tomb on Easter Sunday, would you have seen Jesus come out. Yes or No?” (audience laughs) “Don’t laugh,” he continues, “that was the title of an actual conference on the subject.”

Crossan then says, “The way I put the question is this; why is the western [Christian] tradition so different from the eastern [Christian] tradition.

You might find it useful to check out terms like, Enlightenment,” “Pre-Enlightenment,” and “Post-Enlightenment.”

DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1 “The Harrowing of Hell,” makes use of the old English word, “to harrow” means “to rob.” So, “the harrowing of hell,” means the robbing of hell, particularly in reference to Jesus. It means, “when Jesus liberated the just from hell.” In the Western tradition, this is what Jesus did on Saturday between Good Friday and the Easter resurrection. In the Eastern tradition, The Harrowing of Hell *is* The Resurrection. Here’s a first hint about how the Western and Eastern traditions differ.

2 By now you know that near the beginning of each of Dr. Crossan’s lectures, he shows a brief Powerpoint presentation showing various images he will describe in his lectures to make specific points. While those are not shown here, his descriptions are vivid and provocative.

3 Crossan tells us that in Western art, the resurrection of Christ is always depicted showing Christ alone and majestic, having triumphed over the forces of death; in Eastern art, the resurrected Christ is always with a “crowd” of people.

4 Notice then, that in Western tradition, Jesus is shown in solitary; an individual triumphant in his overcoming death; in Eastern tradition, Jesus is always depicted as being connected to Just people as he liberates them from unjust oppression.

5 Crossan asks, “So what’s being said by early Christians when they say Jesus was “Crucified by Rome,” and “Raised by God.” What’s being said is that God is on a collision course with Rome.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1 Crossan says, “In the first century, if you were responding to someone making the claim that Jesus was raised from the dead, you couldn’t, you wouldn’t say, “Oh, that’s just not possible.” Why do you think Dr. Crossan insists on making this statement so emphatically?

2 Crossan tells us that St. Paul goes around telling people that Jesus has been raised from the dead. First century people are not

going to object that this is impossible. They’re most likely to say, “Well, we know that Caesar Augustus and the imperial family are in heaven, so what?” What is your resurrected Jesus going to do for us?”

3 Paul has to answer such a question. You may think this is silly, but you could get two people to read the little script in which Paul and a new neighbor are talking:

Paul: “Okay, you know the sardine shop where we have lunch a lot?”

Neighbor: “Yeah.”

Paul: “Well, a group of us who think Jesus has done something for us meets there couple of evenings a week.”

Neighbor: “Yeah, and . . .”

Paul: “Well, see, we also believe that God owns the world and has communicated that to us in the way Jesus lived and so we share everything.”

Neighbor: “Everything?”

Paul: “Pretty much. So, why don’t you come and check it out?”

Neighbor: “So, if I come and like it and want to participate, I have to share half?”

Paul: “Yes.”

Neighbor: “And you get people to do that?”

Paul: “Yes.”

Neighbor: “And if I did that and I were to break my wrist, you would feed me until I could work again?”

Paul: “Yes.”

Neighbor: “So, if I come this next Lord’s day, I have to bring half my stuff?”

Paul: “No, we always make at least the first one a freebie; but come and see how we live together?”

Neighbor: “Really?”

Paul: “Really. We live this way because the power of God in the spirit of Christ has made us a community in Christ. If you’re not interested, that’s fine; but if you are, come and see.”

(just for fun, take a look at John,1:35-39)

Now, here’s the question. If you had been the new neighbor, do you think you would go try it out? Do you think you would not be impressed? Do you think Crossan has so missed the point, you’re not even willing to consider it?

4 Crossan says, referring to his little drama above: “That’s the only kind of thing I can imagine Paul arguing for in a pre-

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JOHN DOMINIC CROSSAN, his fourth lecture, continued:

“The Resurrection of Jesus: Personal or Communal Vindication”; (Disc 2, Session 4)

enlightenment world. But you see what we’ve done? We want to argue whether Jesus really came out of the tomb and you could go touchy-feely on him and that’s a perfect, post enlightenment red-herring, because you as a first century person wouldn’t have to ask, then, whether you should take it literally, or whether you should take it metaphorically, as I do. The question for any of us really is, “What does the resurrection do for your life?”

5 Crossan asks, “Why all this [resurrection] emphasis on the body? Couldn’t we just concentrate on the spiritual side? Notice this,” he says, “if you take the resurrection metaphorically, it’s about the body. Or, if you take it literally, it’s still about the body.” Then he says, “It’s all about the body because if you believe that for Jesus, it was about justice and justice was

about everyone having enough, then yes, it’s about the body.” Unpack Dr. Crossan’s statements. See if you can shed some light on the linkage Crossan makes between “resurrection,” “body” and “justice.”

6 Crossan concludes his final lecture with the following: “If I were in a court of law and I had to answer “yes” or “no” to the question, ‘Was Jesus’ resurrection about the body?’ I would have to say, “Yes. And you’re thinking about it literally, your honor, that’s your problem, not mine.”

Where do you stand? Do you agree with Dr. Crossan? If you disagree with him, that’s fine. Will you tell your classmates why you disagree?

JOERG RIEGER, his fourth lecture:

“Christ and Post-Colonial Empire: Economic Exploitation or Economic Hope” (Disc 2, Session 4)

Dr. Rieger begins his final lecture with this statement: “Colonial empire does not need to use fire and sword as it does during periods of conquest; post colonial empire has learned that colonial empire is much too costly and unwieldy. It knows that a softer, subtler power can make much more rewarding transactions through attraction.

He refers again to his third lecture where he described the 19th Century German version of “colonizing interest” that was so fixed in the German consciousness: “We will civilize the world; We will educate the world; We will reap the benefits.”

He then describes the life and work of the Englishman, Cecil Rhodes, founder of the former state of Rhodesia in South Africa (now Zambia and Zimbabwe) who said, “British Imperialism is about nothing more than philanthropy plus 5%, the sort of philanthropy that pays off.”

Cecil John Rhodes (1853 – 1902) was an English-born businessman, mining magnate, and politician in South Africa. He was the founder of the diamond company De Beers, which today markets 40% of the world’s rough diamonds and at one time marketed 90%.^[2] An ardent believer in colonialism and imperialism, he was the founder of the state of Rhodesia, which was named after him. Rhodesia, later Northern and Southern Rhodesia, became Zambia and Zimbabwe, respectively. South Africa’s Rhodes University is named after him. He set up the provisions of the Rhodes Scholarship, which is funded by his estate.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1 Rieger says that perhaps the difference between modernity and post modernity is that back then (19th Century) it used to be 5%; now it’s more like 10% or 20% or more. He reminds us that we have learned from Adam Smith that colonialism proved to be much too expensive. In our own time, we no longer have colonies. Yet, he says, we are still benefiting from our relationships with the descendants of those colonials with whom our great-grandfathers dealt.

2 Rieger says that empire has gone underground. Now it is leaner and meaner and better at negotiating controls and power than it ever was before.

3 Then Dr. Rieger makes what he recognizes could be a touchy example:

Consider the war in Iraq. “If you look at what happened in Iraq, you might expect to find the old “colonial paradigm” at work. But you don’t see it because it’s not there. We do not have an American governor in Iraq; the country governs itself. The oil in Iraq is still owned by the people of Iraq. However,” he says, “we realize that it is more lucrative under this arrangement if they keep owning and we keep managing.”

4 “Unfortunately,” Rieger says, “mainline theology is not addressing this.” He adds, “Oddly enough, mainline economics is not addressing it either. And you would have thought that economists would be more realistic than theologians.”

JOERG RIEGER, his fourth lecture, continued:

“Christ and Post-Colonial Empire: Economic Exploitation or Economic Hope” (Disc 2, Session 4)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1 Dr. Rieger refers to his latest book, *No Rising Tide*, where he challenges the old adage, “a rising tide lifts all boats.” He says that there is tremendous power lodged in today’s economic markets. He says that this power is every bit as potent as the old imperial powers of the past if not more. What do you make of his claim?

Do you agree that there are “colonial” like powers operating within the economy of the present day world?

2 Rieger says that “empires” not only control the great power differentials that effect politics and economy, but empires also shape and form perception, awareness, how we feel, what we care about and how we act. Can you describe such influences in the world? In your own life?

3 Professor Rieger asks “Why is it hard to get people to see that “empire” power is still out there pushing and forming society?” Part of the difficulty, he says, lies in what he calls the “myth of individualism.” He describes the “by one’s own bootstraps” philosophy that we toss around so easily. He said the problem with such philosophy is that it is simply not true. In what ways do you agree; in what ways do you disagree?

4 “All things we have we owe to other people,” says Rieger, “You are not speaking English because you were born with English-speaking genes; you speak English because someone taught you the language. We are never self-made, the reality is something other; our identities, our self images, our self-confidences are built on the backs of others.” Do you think this is true, that we build ourselves on the backs of others? If it is true, is this all bad? Is it evil? Or is something else going on?

When is it wrong; when is it good?

5 Rieger moves to conclude his lecture by saying, “This is not just a movement of new ideas, its an alternative movement of life, movement out of the old sanctions that tell us that there can be no other way.” There is the persistent voice of empire out there; it’s in the media, it’s everywhere we turn. It says, “Listen, all of this “empire” talk is absurd. It’s the great organizing ability of business and free enterprise that gives shape and purpose to society. And, yes, it does have to be organized the way it is. Someone has to be in charge; everybody can’t be a chief. This is the only way we can live.” Is this right? Is this the only way we can live?

Do you see challenges emerging around the world? Are these challenges hopeful?