

# Homeland Security

By David Radcliff

*A reading based on the Acts 17:1-6, in which the early church is accused of “turning the world upside down” in part due to their claim that Jesus—not Caesar—was their king. For two readers.*

*[Supervisor sitting at a desk as Agent enters room, walking with a sense of urgency.]*

Agent: Sir, we have uncovered a serious threat to homeland security. We must act quickly and decisively if we are to protect Caesar and the Empire.

Supervisor: Is it the Mongols? The Huns? The Tartars? The Turks?

Agent: None of those.

Supervisor: Are they using sophisticated weapons—a new generation of arrows or armor, donkey-mounted WMD launchers?

A: WMD?

S: Warm Milk Duds.

A: Nasty. But we haven't spotted any.

S: Are they led by terrorists or anarchists or bands of youth singing songs and carrying signs, mostly say, “Hurray for our side”?

A: Not that we have heard—although that last one sounds a little familiar.

S: Name that group....

A: (pauses, scratches chin) Buffalo Springfield?

S: Lucky. So if they're not one of the usual suspects, and they're not using the usual weapons, and they're not some radical group—then what's there to be concerned about?

A: Word on the street is that they're “turning the world upside down.” They live by a new set of teachings. And they say they have another king besides Caesar.

S: Ah hah! Another pretender to the throne of Almighty Caesar! And who is he? Someone already on our Most-Wanted list?

A: I don't think we've ever heard of him before. He's a Galilean who seems to have a real following among the masses.

S: Well, we'll make quick work of him. All we need to do is capture him, try him, convict him of treason—and that will be the end of him and his little movement.

A: I'm afraid we can't.

S: What do you mean, “we can't”?! You know where he is, don't you?

A: Well, not exactly.

S: You mean we're monitoring e-mails, camel rentals, library books, cell phone calls, letters soldiers send home to their mothers, and have video cameras at every intersection—and you don't know where he is?

A: It's not that simple.

S: It better not be. Explain yourself, agent.

A: He's been dead for some time.

S: (silence—can't believe what he's hearing)

A: It's a guy named Jesus—we actually already put him to death—and they're saying he's the king—they actually call him the "Lord." And they say they have to do what he says, even if Caesar says otherwise.

S: Agent, I want to be sure I'm understanding this. The Empire is threatened by a Galilean named Jesus who nobody has really heard of, who doesn't have any serious weapons, who is not aligned with any known terrorist or revolutionary group...

A: Oh, and he doesn't believe in fighting.

S: ...who doesn't believe in fighting, and whom we already put to death. Do I have that right, Agent?

A: That's pretty much the situation. And it's very serious.

S: Right.

A: I don't think you understand. Terrorists or radicals or invading armies—we can handle them. A little more firepower, a well-placed bribe—they can be brought into line. But how do we fight ideas? How do we control people who won't give in to our power? How can we get them to buy into the necessity of the Empire and its armies and its economic power—when they say these things aren't important to them?

S: Agent, I think I see what you're saying. And you might be on to something—this could truly be a threat to Caesar. Unless...

A: Unless what?

S: Unless we can find a way to make them want what we have more than what he—this Jesus—has. Contact the royal treasurer's office.

A: I don't think bribes will work, sir.

S: Bribes? No, my friend, not bribes. We're going to mail them all a credit card.

A: I don't get it.

S: It's the perfect counter-measure. At no upfront cost to them, we invite them to join the party. The lure of what we have to offer—and which must only be paid for later, with very favorable terms—will easily overpower whatever that dusty little king has to offer.

A: I don't know—I know it's worked on others—but these people, they're very strong in their beliefs. The last agent we sent to infiltrate them ended up joining them. And he's really changed. The other day I saw him over on the poor side of town handing out food to perfect strangers— weird.

S: Weird indeed. It may take time—even a generation or two. But they won't be able to resist. No one ever has. Then—they'll be devoted to Caesar and his armies and his economic policies—just like the rest of the “civilized world.” Yes, the Roman Empire will be around long after that little group and its “king” are gone and forgotten. And we in Homeland Security can rightfully take a little of the credit. Once again, we have kept the Empire safe...

A: ...from a dead man with no weapons, no army and no interest in fighting us. [*They look at each other quizzically, then...*]

Together: Alright!

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