

MYSTERIES OF THE MESSIAH

Mini-Vol. 9: Units 09, 10 & 11

William H. Heinrich

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Categories of Topics

Unit 09 – Turning Point in the Ministry of Jesus

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09.02 Jesus Announces Woes; Leaders Attempt Entrapment

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09.03 Prophetic Parables and Actions

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Unit 10 – Conflicts Increase; Ministries of the Disciples Begin

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***“It is good to be highly educated; it is better to be educated from on high;
but it is best to be both.”***

- Author Unknown

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Unit 09

Turning Point Of The Ministry Of Jesus

Chapter 01

Rejection Of Jesus And His Message



09.01.00.A. JESUS FORETELLS THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM by James Tissot. While the Jewish leaders rejected Jesus, those who knew Him from childhood also rejected Him. Others weighed carefully His words and actions in relation to the prophecies given in centuries past by the prophets.

09.01.01 Introduction

Until this time, the leading Pharisees were extremely anxious about Jesus because He obviously did not fit into their preconceived ideas of a political-messiah. He frequently challenged their theological and doctrinal arguments which they constantly lost and made them to look foolish to

bystanders. If the trend continued, they knew it would be only a matter of time until their honor, social status, and affluent lifestyle would be lost. They probably wondered if He planned to take over one of their positions in the synagogues and temple. Furthermore, since He performed so many miracles, He had immense popularity and obviously the power to do whatever He wanted to do. Therefore, they observed every move He made to determine how they could best eliminate Him.

09.01.02 Mk. 3:20; Mt. 12:22-24 (See also Lk. 11:14-23) Capernaum

IS JESUS A DEMON OR SON OF DAVID?

Mk. ²⁰ Then He went home, and the crowd gathered again so that they were not even able to eat.

Mt. ²² Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and unable to speak was brought to Him. He healed him, so that the man could both speak and see. ²³ And all the crowds were astounded and said, "Could this be the Son of David!"

²⁴ When the Pharisees heard this, they said, "The man drives out demons only by Beelzebul,¹ the ruler of the demons."

Just as there are many denominations in Christianity today, so likewise there was a variety of sects in first century Judaism. Among the Pharisees there was a charismatic group known as the *Hasidim*, meaning, *the godly people*, who performed healings, and exorcisms (see Jn. 12:27; Ac. 19:13).² Today, some scholars believe the *Hasidim* were the closest to biblical Judaism of all the religious sects.³ It is believed that they used a variety of chants and verbal formulas that were amazingly similar to chants and verbal formulas of neighboring pagan cultures.⁴ They had the gift of exorcism and they cast out demons "in the name of Yahweh" (Heb. "God"), or more commonly "in the Name of Yahweh, and the seal of Solomon."

The Jewish people believed there were three unusually powerful demons, each known as *chief* or *prince of devils*.⁵ They were:

1. Beelzebul is also known as Beelzebub, Baal-Zebul, Baal-Zubub, or Baal-Zebub.

2. Bruce, *New Testament History*. 65-67.

3. Safrai, "The Jewish Cultural Nature of Galilee in the First Century." 180.

4. See Ex. 7:22; 8:7; Mt. 24:24; Jn. 12:27; Ac. 19:13.

5. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:114-16.

1. The angel of death who is the prince of all satans.
2. *Asmodeus*, the chief demon of antagonism known primarily from the book of *Tobit*, a popular book at the time of Jesus.⁶
3. *Beelzebub*, described below

Jesus demonstrated He had superior power over all other powers, an act that, no doubt, that challenged the *Hasidim*. He demonstrated life over death, health over sickness, and peace over confusion and anarchy.

“Blind and unable to speak.” Jewish exorcists were able to deliver an oppressed person from demonic control by first requiring the demon to identify itself and then demanding the evil spirit to leave. However, if that person was unable to speak, they were unable to perform the exorcism. So the rabbis told the people that when the messiah comes, he will be able to perform this kind of deliverance. Therefore, this miraculous exorcism, known as a “messianic miracle,” proved that Jesus was indeed the messiah. For more information, see “messianic miracles”⁷ as well as “binding and loosening.”⁸ The audience was stunned, because in various Inter-Testamental writings, the advent of the Messiah meant that evil would be defeated.⁹

“Could this be the Son of David?” They had just witnessed a messianic miracle. Therefore, they were asking if He could be the *expected* son of David, because if He was, then he would be their messiah.¹⁰ Jesus repeatedly demonstrated, as recorded by the gospel writers, that He was the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant.¹¹

6. The book of *Tobit* was written in the Inter-Testamental Period. Aramaic and Hebrew fragments of this book were found in 1952 among several Dead Sea Scrolls in Cave 4. See 02.02.03. It is in a class of books known as the Apocrypha.

7. Research on the “Messianic Miracles” is credited to Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, a Messianic scholar and director of Ariel Ministries in San Antonio, TX, formerly of Tustin, CA. For more information, see <http://ariel.org/>. Retrieved September 26, 2013. See also 06.03.08.V (Video), 06.01.03 and the comparison of Dead Sea Scroll fragments 4Q278 and 4Q521 with Luke 4:16-30 at 06.02.02; See also Fruchtenbaum, *Messianic Miracles*. 4; Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context*. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 10, Session 2.

8. For further study on binding and loosening see 08.06.03; 11.02.08; 10.01.29; 12.01.03; See also Foster and King, *Binding and Loosening: Exercising Authority over Dark Powers*.

9. 1 *Enoch* 55:4; *Jubilees* 23:29; *Testament of Simeon* 6:6; *Testament of Judah* 25:3; *Testament of Moses* 10:1, and the *Testament of Solomon* 20:16-17.

10. It must be noted that the Jewish people did not believe that their messiah was deity, therefore, in their thinking messiah is spelled with a lower case letter “m.” In terms of Jesus as Him functioning in His role, Messiah is spelled with an upper case letter “M.”

11. The messianic title *Son of David* appears in the following three groups of passages in the gospels where it is always reflective of the Davidic Covenant: 1) In various healings by Jesus – Mt. 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; Mk. 10:47-48; Lk.

But they had a serious problem: As previously stated, their expectation of the coming *Son of David* was as a military victor who would lead them to political independence and economic prosperity, and establish an international superpower, as King David had done a thousand years earlier. This was the description they read in the *Psalms of Solomon*, a recent first century B.C. book. But when the people saw Jesus heal the demon-possessed man, they realized this was not anything King David had done. In fact, the terms *Son of Man*,¹² or *Bar Enosh* in Aramaic,¹³ and *Son of David* became synonyms for *Messiah* by the first century.¹⁴ The expectations were that this “Son” would excel David’s triumphs.¹⁵ So they questioned if He really was from the house of David. It obviously was not the mission of Jesus at this time to rebuild the Davidic Empire, but to bring deliverance and salvation to every soul afflicted by sin and, thereby, usher in the Kingdom of God into their life.

But a few leading Pharisees (not the Hasidim) believed that, if this kind of a demon had been cast out of a person, this could have been done only by a more powerful demon. More specifically, it could only have been accomplished by Beelzebul, the prince of demons (Satan) who ordered one of his subjects out of this man. They concluded that Jesus was possessed by Beelzebub, and therefore, had to die. Jesus, knowing their thoughts, turned the issue around so they would have to realize that if He cast out the demon by the Spirit of God (and He did), then they had a problem of how to deal with the Kingdom of God which was now confronting them. But this conversation caused another problem: They either overlooked or refused to recognize how Jesus could have known their thoughts unless He was a prophet of God? Demons do not have this gift.

“Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons.” This phrase was well known and appears in the *Testament of Solomon*. Jewish writings had numerous references to Satan such as this one:

I am Beelzebul, the ruler of demons.

18:38-39. 2) In connection of the harassment the religious leaders gave Jesus – Mt. 22:42-43, 45; Mk. 12:35, 37; Lk. 20:41, 44, and 3) The praise the crowds gave Jesus at His entry into Jerusalem – Mt. 21:9, 15; Mk. 11:10. See Rogers, “The Davidic Covenant in the Gospels,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*. Part 1 of 2. 158-78.

12. The phrase *Son of Man* in the Book of Enoch is a figure, who is waiting in heaven until God sends him to earth where he would establish his kingdom and rule over it. This book was common knowledge to the Jewish people, so when Jesus used the phrase about Himself, He was clearly claiming to be the long-awaited Messiah. See Bruce, *New Testament History*. 167; Tenney, *The Gospel of John*. 105.

13. Wijngaards, *Handbook to the Gospels*. 44.

14. Richardson, “David.” 59-60.

15. *Psalm of Solomon* 17; *ben Sirach* 47:11; *1 Macc.* 2:57; See also Farrar, *The Life of Christ*. 245-47.

Testament of Solomon 3:6¹⁶

Some believed that the Philistine god Beelzebul¹⁷ (2 Kg. 1:2-6), was the chief demon who lived in the Abyss located at the bottom of the Sea of Galilee.¹⁸ His name meant *Lord of the heavenly dwelling*, or *Lord of the royal palace*, in the ancient Philistine law. However, by a slight alteration of letters, the Jews changed the name to mean the *god of dung*, or the *god of flies*. In Syria, it meant *Lord of the manure pile*.¹⁹ Word plays like this were common and it clearly reflects their offensive attitude toward their Gentile neighbors.²⁰ Baal-Zubub was also a god of the Phoenicians that Jesus identified as Satan when He said, “If Satan drives out Satan” (Mt. 12:26; next section) Satan was believed to have his evil work accomplished by subordinate demons. The name Baal, in its various forms, appears 84 times in the Hebrew Scriptures. This indicates that there was a long historical encounter with this god in Jewish history.²¹

Many rabbis believed that King Solomon prescribed the directives on how to perform an exorcism. In fact, Josephus quoted some of Solomon’s directives that were being used by Jewish exorcists of his time.²²

09.01.03 Mt. 12:25-28; Lk. 11:20; Mt. 12:29-32 (Mk 3:28-30)

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

Mt. ²⁵ Knowing their thoughts, He told them: “Every kingdom divided against itself is headed for destruction, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. ²⁶ If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? ²⁷ And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, who is it your sons drive them out by? For this reason they will be your judges. ²⁸ If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.

Lk. ²⁰ If I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.

16. Quoted by Evans, “Exorcisms and the Kingdom.” 168 n38.

17. a/k/a Baal-Zebul, Baal-Zubub, or Baal-Zebub.

18. Or any sea, John. 2:2-3.

19. Gilbrant, “Luke.” 353; Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 140; Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:114-16; Geikie, *The Life and Works of Christ*. 2:141-43.

20. Major, Manson, and Wright, *The Mission and Message of Jesus*. 64.

21. Vine, “Baal, Master.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 1:12.

22. Josephus, *Antiquities* 8.2.5; See also 09/01/05 and 10.01.06.

Mt. ²⁹ How can someone enter a strong man's house and steal his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house. ³⁰ Anyone who is not with Me is against Me, and anyone who does not gather with Me scatters.

³¹ Because of this, I tell you, people will be forgiven every sin and blasphemy, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. ³² Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him. But whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the one to come.

In this narrative Jesus identifies Beelzubel as Satan. This was common knowledge and is also found in the Jewish writings of *Testament of Solomon* 2.8-35 and 6.1-11. Therefore, Jesus did not introduce new knowledge into this discussion, but quickly got to the point of identifying Himself as the One who introduced the Kingdom of God to them by the performance of miracles. Therefore, it was the Kingdom of God and not Satan that performed the powerful miracle. Obviously, this idea was not accepted very well.

When the Jews accused Jesus of being demonically possessed, and that He performed miracles by the power of Beelzebub (Satan), they not only committed blasphemy but also the unpardonable sin. The leading Pharisees did not deny that Jesus performed mighty miracles; rather, they concluded that He was using demonic powers. Therefore, He offered them four proofs to verify that His identity was not of a demonic nature:

1. His first argument was that if Jesus was of Satan and used His power against the evil one, He would in effect be using His power against himself.
2. There was a common belief that the ability and power to cast out demons was a gift of God. When the Jewish leaders suggested that Jesus cast out demons by using demonic powers, they obviously brought into question the source of their own power to perform exorcisms.
3. The Jews had always recognized that certain individuals functioned with a divine gift to cast out demons. To this situation Jesus said that since He spoke of the Kingdom of God, then He too was functioning with some divine gift to cast out demons. Conversely, if Jesus really was of Satan, He would not be teaching and preaching the Kingdom of God. Therefore, He must be who He said He was.
4. Finally, Jesus presented an allegory of a robber who desires to rob someone of his possessions. Clearly, the robber would have to first overpower the guard (strong man) and tie him up before he could begin his theft. The inference here is that Jesus entered

the demonic domain and freed people who were under Satan's bondage and control. Jesus is obviously stronger than Satan since Jesus described Himself as the robber who tied up the guard (Satan) and freed captured people.

“If Satan drives out Satan.” Today there is a controversy by some theologians concerning the ability of non-Christians and non-Jews who performed exorcisms: How did they accomplish it without the power of Christ? Is it possible to cast out demons with an authority other than the power of Jesus? This is a theological issue that is beyond the scope of this writing. However, a brief response is that some non-believers think they have the power to cast out demonic forces. It has been suggested that in some cases, demons are not cast out, but they simply relocate or remain quiet, thereby giving the illusion of having been removed. Evil men giving the appearance of casting out demons will be among the “great signs and wonders” of Matthew 24:24. It is only by the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that one can effectively and permanently deal with demonic forces. On the other hand, at the three temptations, Jesus had victory over Satan by citing only Old Testament Scriptures. The question then is why were some Jewish exorcists not successful in casting out demons using only the name of God? The answer is unknown, but what is known is that some apparently were successful in performing exorcisms.

“Who is it your sons drive them out by?” This question clearly indicates that Jesus knew the Pharisees were successful in their exorcisms. Likewise, Luke gave them credit for successful exorcisms (Acts 19:13) as did other writers.²³ The procedure was to:

1. Communicate with the demon,
2. Determine his name, and
3. Cast him out of his victim.

However, the source of power the Jews used is questionable. Jesus suggests that it was by the power of Beelzebul. Satanic miracles and healings were possible and led many astray (Ex. 7:22; 8:7; Mt. 24:24). It should be noted that among the Jewish people, there were those who had a reputation of healing and casting out demons. Two examples are these:²⁴

1. In the year 63 B.C., the popular miracle worker by the name of Onias, also known as “Honi, the circle-drawer,” was killed.²⁵ He was believed to have the divine power to cause the clouds to rain (see 03.05.14).

23. *Tobit* 8:1-5; Josephus, *War* 7.6.3 (185) and *Antiquities* 8.2.5 (45-49; see quotation 09.01.05.X2).

24. Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context*. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 9, Session 1.

25. Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 121.

2. Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa was known for performing many miracles, especially healing.²⁶

Jesus never denied that these men performed miracles; He did not even question their source of power. Jesus did, however, question the source of the power *your sons*, meaning, *your students*,²⁷ of the Pharisees used. Amazingly, the Pharisees accused Jesus of performing exorcisms by using demonic powers. However, they believed that the ability to perform exorcisms was a gift of God – a direct violation of their accusations against Jesus.

“Finger of God.” The same phrase was used by Matthew in the parallel verse as “the Spirit of God” (cf. Mt. 12:28). Everyone was aware how weak a single finger (Gk. *daktulos* 1147)²⁸ is, and Luke used this figure of speech to demonstrate the incredible strength of God that is visible to man. He stated that God is so powerful that demons were expelled by His finger and, furthermore, the Kingdom of God was now in their presence meaning the Hebrew prophecies of the Messiah were being fulfilled in their presence.²⁹

However, there is another aspect to this passage. The fact that Jesus referred to the finger of God also is reflective of the hardness of heart the Pharaoh had at the time of the Exodus. The Jewish leaders would have clearly understood that Jesus was connecting the Pharaoh’s attitude with theirs.³⁰ Little wonder then, that they grew increasingly angry at Him.

“Kingdom of God.” This phrase is synonymous with “Kingdom of Heaven,” and both terms have three elements of definition.

1. A king reigns over the realm.
2. It is the people over which He reigns, as in Revelation 5:10 where the people are clearly the kingdom. In fact, in this passage, Luke 13:29 and Revelation 1:6 the people share the reign.

26. Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 121.

27. Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 121.

28. Vine, “Finger.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:239.

29. Gilbrant, “Luke.” 357.

30. Evans, “Exorcisms and the Kingdom.” 171-73.

3. The actual reign is both in a present state and in one of the future. Jesus offered the kingdom first to national Judaea (Israel) because the Jewish people were the rightful heirs to the promises of God (Mt. 8:12). However, the religious leaders rejected Him and encouraged others to do likewise (Mt. 23:13). At the same time many Jews, including the destitute of society, accepted the words of Jesus and became the first century church. But the nation was doomed to destruction because of the rejection of Jesus by her leaders and those who followed them. In a future sense, the kingdom will be introduced when Christ returns to reign over the world.³¹

The phrase “Kingdom of God” had come into common usage in the two centuries preceding Jesus as is evident in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha.³² However, the popular Jewish understanding of this kingdom was different from Jesus’ idea, as the people and their rabbis believed the following,

1. The tiny nation of Israel would triumph over her enemies with the help of the Messiah, and
2. The kingdom was one of ethics and wisdom, clearly the influence of Hellenism in the latter part.
3. Finally, the understanding of the kingdom was one of universal expanse, not just control of the nation of Israel.

The “Kingdom of God” issue was the most important teaching of Jesus, with an emphasis much greater in the gospels than in the Old Testament, extra-biblical books, or in the balance of the New Testament. The kingdom is often the subject of parables because Jesus not only had to teach what the kingdom was about, but He also had to teach what it wasn’t. He had to change their concept of His kingdom because He certainly was not going to overthrow the Roman Empire at His first coming. This paradigmatic shift was accomplished, in part, by His demonstration of miracles, teaching, and explicit fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies.³³ Add to the theological chaotic mix the ideas promoted by those with a nationalistic passion, and the challenges Jesus faced become clearer. The revolutionary Zealots followed the Maccabean tradition and believed that the kingdom would come through their heroic endeavors and military might. They expected God to fight for them as He did during the Maccabean Revolt. They

31. Ladd, “Kingdom of God.” 9:1123-24.

32. Quotations from the Apocrypha are from the New Revised Standard Version, Bruce M. Metzger, ed. Quotations from the *Pseudepigrapha*, James A. Charlesworth, ed.

33. Saucy, “Miracles and Jesus Proclamation of the Kingdom of God.” 285.

believed at some point during this freedom fight against Rome, the messiah would appear and lead them to victory. On the other hand, there were the apocalyptists who believed the present age was about to end, they taught that the kingdom would come in accordance with God's timing, and the Romans would be destroyed by thousands of angels and archangels (i.e. book of *Enoch*). The Pharisees, Essenes, and Apocalyptic writers held to this position. Ironically, they did not believe the kingdom would be won by human intervention, but by the son of man, that is, a "son of man" according to *their* definition of the phrase.³⁴



09.01.03.A. A PEACEFUL SEA OF GALILEE AT SUNSET. The natural lake was a major source for fish and fresh water throughout history. To ancient pagans it was also a mystical body of water because of the sudden storms. They believed that (1) only the gods could control the winds and waves, (2) that demons lived in its depths, and (3) the bottom of the lake was one of the three entrances to hell. Photograph by the author.

“How can someone enter a strong man’s house?” This phrase is problematic to today’s readers because it suggests that Jesus approves the entering of someone’s home for the purpose of theft. He specifically said that one must overcome and tie up the owner, meaning the strong man, and only then can the theft be successful as stated in the next sentence.

34. It appears that the term “Son of Man,” was believed to be a heavenly being of some kind, but not necessarily a being associated with Deity. Therefore, the phrase is not capitalized.

However, the context of this statement is that the owner, or “strong man,” is none other than Satan himself. All that the evil one has was stolen from others. Therefore, Jesus said that in spiritual warfare, one must “bind up” up Satan and then the stolen goods can be returned to their rightful owners.³⁵

At this point it is good to have a brief understanding of houses. They had essentially three areas, one of which was the bedroom where everyone slept on a mat, usually over a bed of hay. The husband/father of the family slept by the door, so if anyone entered, they would have to struggle with him first before doing any harm to the family. This is further explained by Majd Shufani in the video filmed at the reconstructed Nazareth Village (see 04.07.01.V1 and V2):

“Anyone who is not with Me is against Me.” With Jesus, there is no middle ground. One must decide whether to follow Him. In the mind of Jesus, either one is *totally* committed to Him, or one is against Him, but there is no room for indifference to His message. Here Jesus called upon His listeners to make a decision to be either for or against Him. Those who rejected Him and chose to side with the Pharisees eventually suffered horrible consequences. They never changed their minds as to where Jesus obtained His power to cast out demons. They believed He was demonically possessed and, therefore, they rejected of the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. They said Satan was responsible for the miracles performed by Jesus!³⁶

The English word **blasphemy** or *blaspheme* is from the Greek term *blasphemia*, meaning to insult. But it also suggests that the one who blasphemes has placed himself in the place of God and thereby, degrades Him.³⁷ That includes insulting Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit as well. Hence, it is an incredibly serious charge.

“But whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit.” The warning about speaking against the Holy Spirit is emphasized by the repeated theme in Matthew 12:32-33. Often the significance of an idea is repeated in poetic parallelism, but this case is an exception. The example of one who blasphemed is the Egyptian Pharaoh who deliberately hardened his heart and would not listen to God (Ex. 8:19). He was eventually destroyed because of his continuous opposition to God. Those who blaspheme against God do what the Pharaoh did – continually harden their hearts against the voice of God, and the results do not change. Man makes the choices, but the consequences have been established by God from the foundations of the earth. Therefore, decisions determine destiny.

35. See additional comments on 10.01.29 “Bind on earth ... loose on earth” and 11.02.09 on “Binding and Loosing.”

36. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 259.

37. Barclay, *A New Testament Wordbook*. 51; See Appendix 26.

In the New Testament era, the term *Holy Spirit*, is derived from the Greek *Paraclete*, and *Parakletos* means *someone who stands by to help*.³⁸ This is a classic example of where the passage must be understood in the Jewish cultural context, and not with a Christian understanding of the Holy Spirit (which is much broader).

1. The Holy Spirit enlightens mankind to God's truth.
2. The Holy Spirit enables mankind to recognize and understand Divine truth.

Therefore, the reason Jesus was condemning the leading Pharisees and their co-conspirators, is that they clearly recognized and understood Him, His ministry, and His message. The Holy Spirit enlightened them, yet they rejected Him and the Kingdom of God.

As stated previously, the Pharisees willfully decided that Jesus was demonically possessed and, therefore, they rejected of the work of the Holy Spirit. That was their unpardonable sin. However, generally speaking, throughout history all men and women have spoken out against God at some point in their lives. Yet God, in His divine grace and mercy, is patient with His human subjects until repentance comes by the call of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, there are many individuals who constantly reject that call and the day finally comes when God decides that they had sufficient opportunity to accept Jesus and that door of opportunity is closed. That final rejection is also known as the "unpardonable sin." It is the sin of refusing the gift of salvation so frequently that it is no longer offered.

Sometimes people ponder if they are guilty of the unpardonable sin. The answer lies in the simple fact if there is a concern for having committed this sin, it is inherent proof that it was not committed. Once the Holy Spirit has been grieved numerous times and no longer invites one to salvation, all concern of committing sin is gone and the truly reprobate person feels no remorse. Those who desire forgiveness from God will always find it.³⁹ However, for those who reject the final calling of the Holy Spirit to come to Christ, there will be no forgiveness.⁴⁰ They are the ones who have no concern for any kind of sin and God, who is gracious, will give them what they want – a life of sin – but the final consequence will be theirs as well.

38. Barclay, "Luke." 162.

39. Isa. 45:22; Mt. 11:28; Jn. 3:16.

40. Jenney, "The Holy Spirit and Sanctification." 413; Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 207.

09.01.03.Q1 What was the significance of the Beelzebub discussion (Mt. 12:25-32)?

At this point the religious leaders clearly recognized that Jesus had supernatural powers, and they attributed His miracles to the demonic forces of Beelzebub – and that was the point of their official rejection of Jesus. It was the proverbial “line in the sand,” a turning point in His ministry of how He would respond to various individuals.⁴¹ The trials and crucifixion that came later would be the consequence of this rejection. Note the differences in the chart below.

Their accusation was clearly a rejection of their Messiah which was a major turning point in the ministry of Jesus. After this rejection He healed only individuals, not groups or multitudes, and only on the basis of faith. Furthermore, when He healed someone, if that person was a Jew He told him not to tell anyone, but if he was a Gentile this command was not given.

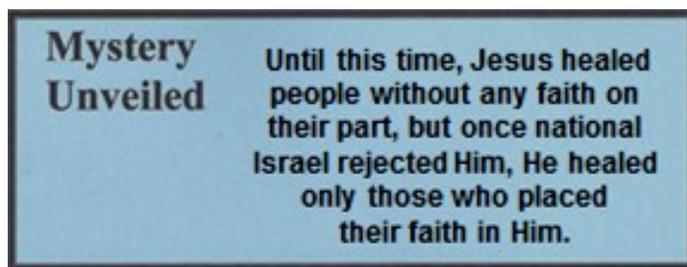
<u>Before His Rejection</u>	<u>After His Rejection</u>
Jesus healed:	
Persons & groups	Only individuals
Faith	
Not needed	Required
Purpose of miracles (signs)	
Reveal Jesus to Israel	Train future apostles
To tell others of the Miracle	
Go tell everyone	Jews told not to tell anyone
Teaching method	
Plain instruction	Taught with parables

09.01.03.B CHART OF COMPARATIVE ACCEPTANCE – REJECTION ATTITUDES OF JEWISH LEADERSHIP TOWARD JESUS⁴²

41. Adapted from Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor's Manual*. Class 10, page 17.

42. Adapted from Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor's Manual*. Class 10, pages 16-17 and Class 12, page 8.

It must be noted that if this eBook was written in a chronological order, it would be easier to discern the time of His rejection.



Finally, the matter of miracles in the name of Beelzebub, or Beelzebul, would come up again during the trials of Jesus. It was the most damning accusation they leveled at Jesus. Furthermore, witchcraft was not appreciated by the Romans any more than it was by the Jews. In fact, Emperor Tiberias had a hundred and thirty sorcerers and sorceresses executed in the years A.D. 16 and 17.⁴³ That was about a decade before Jesus began His ministry. So the accusation of Jesus of being Beelzebub or using Beelzebub's power was just as damaging politically as it was spiritually.

09.01.04 Mt. 12:33-37; Mk. 3:20-21

WORDS REFLECT THE HEART

Mt. ³³ “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. ³⁴ Brood of vipers! How can you speak good things when you are evil? For the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart. ³⁵ A good man produces good things from his storeroom of good, and an evil man produces evil things from his storeroom of evil. ³⁶ I tell you that on the day of judgment people will have to account for every careless word they speak. ³⁷ For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

Mk. ²⁰ Then He went home, and the crowd gathered again so that they were not even able to eat. ²¹ When His family heard this, they set out to restrain Him, because they said, “He's out of His mind.”

The condition of a person's heart can be recognized by the words he speaks. That was clearly evident in this case and Jesus recognized it. The accusation of blasphemy arose by the Pharisees, and it consists of the following:

43. Welch, “Miracles, Maleficium, and Maiestas in the Trial of Jesus.” 373. See also 16.01.05.

1. To insult or degrade God.
2. To willfully deny God and/or the gospel when the Holy Spirit has clearly revealed its truth to someone.
3. To attribute the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan or his demons.

These three points were the accusations against Jesus. While the religious leaders were passing judgment on Jesus, in reality, judgment was passing on to them.⁴⁴ The term can also mean *reviling* and *evil-speaking* in general (Mk. 7:22),⁴⁵ but in the context of this passage it refers only to Deity.

“Every careless word they speak.” Jesus was speaking of the careless words spoken against God (and the Holy Spirit) as well as degrading words pointed to other people. The Hebrew word *lashshaw* means *to uselessness* or *to no good purpose*.⁴⁶ This does not include common humor, unless that humor is intended to injure someone. To speak in this manner about another person is one matter, but to direct such comments toward God is a grave error although both are serious. In the Middle Eastern culture as well as the Bible, there is a huge emphasis on affirming the character of others, so degrading someone as in a character assassination, is a major issue of concern before God.

“He’s out of His mind.” Simply said, the blood relatives – His half-brothers and half-sisters – thought He was crazy; suffering from a mental illness of some kind.

09.01.05 Mt. 12:38-42; (See also Lk. 11:29-32)

THE SIGN OF JONAH; REFLECTIONS UPON KING MANASSEH AND KADESH-BARNEA

³⁸ Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.”

³⁹ But He answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation demands a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰ For as Jonah was in the belly of the huge fish three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in

44. Archer, “Crimes and Punishment.” 1:1032.

45. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:203.

46. Archer, “Crimes and Punishment.” 1:1032; Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 150.

the heart of the earth three days and three nights. ⁴¹ The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at Jonah's proclamation; and look — something greater than Jonah is here! ⁴² The queen of the south will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and look — something greater than Solomon is here!

It is interesting that Jesus made a reference to Jonah because this prophet was a weak, stubborn, and disobedient individual who experienced a profound theological and attitudinal adjustment. With a new God-given outlook on life, he completed the calling to bring repentance to the Assyrian royal court in Nineveh. Furthermore, Jonah is symbolic of the resurrection and his book sets forth the entire story of salvation because it prophetically foreshadows God's relationship with man, from the first advent of Jesus to His return. That may be why he is the only prophet with whom Jesus directly compares Himself.

09.01.05.Q1 What was the sign of Jonah?

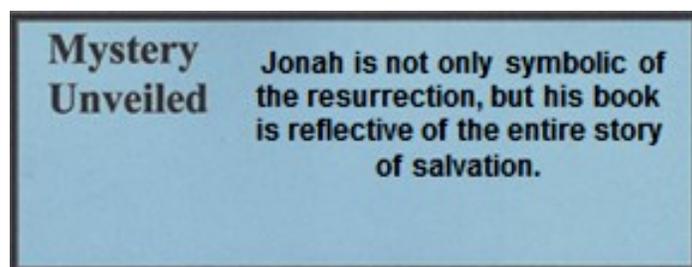
Jesus mentioned the sign of Jonah, but did not say what it was. He didn't need to, because everyone understood what He was speaking about; it related to both time and resurrection. In fact, there are four features or aspects to the sign:

1. Just as Jonah was entombed in the belly of the great fish for the proverbial “three days and three nights,” so likewise Jesus was entombed in the earth for the same time.⁴⁷
2. The ancients believed the bottom of both the Mediterranean Sea and the Sea of Galilee was the abyss or place for the dead. Some believed it was also the entrance to hell. In the logic of first century listeners, just as Jonah went down to the place of the dead, Jesus did likewise going to the entrance of hell.
3. Just as Jonah was resurrected to life when the mighty fish regurgitated him on the shore, so Jesus was resurrected to life from the tomb (see Acts 1:7).⁴⁸ In fact, the entire book of Jonah is a story of salvation that prophetically foreshadows God's dealing with man – from the first coming of Jesus to His return.
4. Just as Jonah preached in Nineveh for forty days concerning the coming judgment, so likewise the gospel was preached to the Jews for forty years before judgment fell. The

47. See the use of this figure of speech in 09.01.05.Q2 below.

48. Garr, *Restoring Our Lost Legacy*. 59-60.

destruction of Jerusalem and the temple occurred exactly forty years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. Those forty years were a probationary period for the nation of Israel and its leadership, a “prophetic type of Jonah,” which Jesus said would be a sign to validate His Messiahship.



But the leading Pharisees demanded that **“we want to see a sign from You.”** According to the Jewish Bible, a sign is “an outward compelling proof of divine authority.”⁴⁹ This was an incredible request since Jesus had already performed so many miracles, including the messianic miracles. However, by stating that they were a wicked and adulterous *generation* that was looking for a sign, He did not mean everyone. That statement was directed only to those who had seen Him perform signs and wonders and still refused to believe. Now they had the audacity to make this request. What would another miracle prove? It was a point of rejection.

The religious leaders represented “national Israel.” When they rejected Jesus, in effect, “national Israel” rejected Him, and in response Jesus was going to reject national Israel. As such, He began a new phase of His ministry focused solely on those who put their faith in Him.⁵⁰ In addition to His instruction about the purpose of the Torah, as it is applied to life, Jesus performed three messianic miracles⁵¹ plus one.

1. The healing of a Jewish leper (Mk. 1:40-45; 06.03.08).
2. Casting a demon out of a mute person (Mt. 9:32-34; 08.06.08).
3. Healing a man who was born blind (Jn. 9:1-12; 11.02.21).
4. These profound messianic miracles were surpassed by the grand finale of all miracles – raising Lazarus to life after three days of death. A miraculous performance of the Divine!

49. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 224-25; Ex. 4:8-9; Deut. 13:1; Isa. 7:10-17, 38:7.

50. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 208-10.

51. For more information on the messianic miracles, see 06.03.08.Q2.

However, in the course of time, the Sadducees and Pharisees responded by presenting three signs that they rejected the “sign of Jonah.”

1. They rejected the resurrection of Lazarus from the grave (Jn. 11).
2. They rejected the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 1:7).
3. They martyred Stephen

Since Jonah is symbolic of a resurrected life, the rejection of the “sign of Jonah,” is therefore, the rejection of the message of salvation. That rejection of Jesus was a national decision and the nation would suffer the consequences of it. As previously stated, decisions determine destiny.

“An evil and adulterous generation.” The word *adulterous* (Gk. *moichalis*, 3428) means *one who has unlawful intercourse with the spouse of another*,⁵² which, in this case, also means *apostate*.⁵³ Since God desires a close relationship with His people that is both a covenant and mirrors a marriage covenant, departure from faith and obedience is seen as adultery and apostasy.

In this passage, Jesus did not refer to the entire generation of *all* Jews, but only to the generation of religious leaders who were demanding that hardworking, honest Jewish people keep laws never endorsed by God. The Sadducees and the leading Pharisees had broken the covenant (marriage tie) between Jehovah God and His people. The term *adultery* was also frequently used by the prophets to describe the spiritual prostitution of Israel’s leaders.⁵⁴ With this phrase, Jesus applied all the words of condemnation spoken by the prophets to the religious elite. They were fully aware of His power and did not need to see another sign, but needed to repent. They had become so arrogant, that, in their thinking, they could do no wrong if they followed their own moral religious code. However, God intended them to be a chosen people to serve Him, a mission in which they failed miserably. Both Jesus and Jonah were delivered from death. The reason why the men of Nineveh will someday stand in judgment against unrepentant Israel is because Nineveh repented, but national Israel did not.⁵⁵

52. Vine, “Adulterer (-ess), Adulterous, Adultery.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:14.

53. Barclay, “Matthew.” 2:49.

54. cf. Isa 57:3ff; 62:5; Ezek. 23:27; James 4:4; Isa. 50:1; 57:3; Jer. 3:8; 13:27; 31:32; Ezek. 16:15, 32, 35-42; Hos 2:1-7, 3:1, et. al.

55. Carson, “Matthew.” 8:297.

The phrase greatly angered them because it connected them to horrific events in their history; several periods of cultural and spiritual decadence when their forefathers were an “evil and adulterous generation.” Two examples are:

1. In the sixteenth century B.C., shortly after Moses led the Israelites out of the Egypt, they arrived at Kadesh-Barnea. From there he sent twelve spies to appraise the land of Canaan. Their mission was not to determine *if* they could defeat the Canaanites, but *how* to plan a military strategy. As the story goes, they went on a forty day mission and upon their return, only Caleb and Joshua reported the land could be conquered (Num. 13:13-33). The other ten spies convinced the Israelites that conquest was impossible. In essence, Caleb and Joshua had faith that God would help them, but the others did not. Consequently, the Israelites worried they would be defeated if they confronted the Canaanites, so they murmured and complained against Moses and God. For that reason God sent them back into the desert for forty years until that “wicked and adulterous” generation passed away (Num. 14). Therefore, when Jesus used the phrase “a wicked and adulterous generation,” He connected to the sins of their forefathers who were sent back into the desert. The statement had profound ramifications.

2. In the 7th century B.C., King Manasseh who, for fifty-five years, led the Jewish people into idolatry (2 Kg. 21; 2 Ch. 28) in a number of ways.

a. According to the American Standard Version, Manasseh “practiced augury, and used enchantments, and dealt with them that had familiar spirits and with wizards” (2 Kg. 21:6).

b. He practiced, “augury,” which the pagans believed was an effective method of determining the will of the gods by studying the sounds and flight patterns of birds.

c. He had his own son and many other children burned alive as an offering to their god Molech in the Hinnom Valley.

Manasseh was one of the most wicked monarchs in Israel’s history, yet at the end of his life, he repented and returned to the Lord. However, the Jewish people at the time of Jesus considered the generation of this king as “a wicked and adulterous generation.” But the implications of the phrase did not end with Manasseh.

A Lesson in First Century Hermeneutics:

09.01.05.X1 Figures Of Speech. Figures of speech are not to be taken literally, but have a meaning that is culturally understood. The difficulty is, of course, that those who read figures of

speech centuries later may not understand the meaning, or conclude the writer was in error. The assumption that figures of speech are to be interpreted literally has given fuel to critics, such as posed in the following question:

09.01.05.Q2 Is the phrase “three days and three nights” to be interpreted literally or is it a figure of speech (Mt. 12:40)? Likewise, was Jesus buried for three literal days and three literal nights (Mt. 27:57-28:6)?

This has been and continues to be a subject of debate among Christians. This question is an excellent example as to why it is important to understand the cultural issues of the first century Jewish people. The answer is “yes,” but only in Jewish thinking. The phrase “three days and three nights,” is not a literal phrase but a Hebraism for saying, “in three days...” The modern method of reckoning the time from Friday evening to Sunday is certainly not three days. The ancient Hebrews counted a part of a day as a whole. Therefore, any time before sunset was considered a day. A new day began at sunset, generally at 6:00 p.m., or when the first three stars were visible in the sky. Friday afternoon when Jesus died is counted as the first day, Saturday is the second until sunset, and Saturday night is the beginning of the third day. Time was reckoned likewise for Sunday morning, and hence, with Saturday, they counted three days.⁵⁶

For further detail, consider this: This phrase has been used by critics to illustrate errors in the Bible. However, an examination of the Hebraic use of the term clarifies the mystery. At issue is this phrase: **“For as Jonah was in the belly of the huge fish three days and three nights.”** While this passage is a reference to the time period that Jonah and Jesus would be entombed, Hebraic scholars say that the focus is not on the number of days in the entombment (Jon. 1:3, 17), but on the resurrection that followed. Below are four examples of the phrase “three days and three nights,” used as a figure of speech.⁵⁷

1. Rehoboam told the people to see him *after* three days (2 Ch. 10:5, KJV), but in fact, he met with them *on* the third day (2 Ch. 10:12, KJV). The difference between the words “after” and “on” is significant. Unfortunately, at times the fine details of meaning are lost in translations. Matthew himself used “after three days” (27:63-64) demonstrating that he considered the equivalent to “on the third day.”⁵⁸

56. Bivin, “How Long was Jesus in the Tomb?” *Yavo Digest*. 2:4, 1, 3.

57. Typical Old Testament references include passages such as Isaiah 53. However, for an interesting study on ten examples of resurrection typology, including third day typology in the book of Genesis, see Nicholas P. Lunn, “Raised on the Third Day According to the Scriptures’: Resurrection Typology in the Genesis Creation Narrative.” 523-35.

58. Pickup, “‘On the Third Day’: The Time Frame of Jesus’ Death and Resurrection.” 514 n14.

2. Esther fasted three days and nights (Esther 4:16), but on the third day she went to meet her king (5:1). She did not see him after fasting three complete days and nights. The phrase, “three days and three nights” is a figure of speech signifying ideal time rather than a literal time.⁵⁹ The number three means “ideal” when used in Hebraisms, as is evidenced by the frequency a concept is mentioned. Likewise when a word is reported three times, such as “holy, holy, holy,” it is given the highest Hebraic significance possible. Rarely is anything repeated three times in the Bible.⁶⁰

3. In the book of *Tobit* (3:10-12), a woman by the name of Sara prays for three days and three nights, but on the third day (v. 12), she ends her prayer. Obviously the Jewish audience understood that the time frame was not a literal three day and three night ... seventy-two hour ... period.

Mystery Unveiled The phrase “3 days and 3 nights” is an example of the differences between ancient Jewish and modern interpretations. The number 3 reflects ideal time rather than literal time.

4. The Apostle Paul counted this as three days when he said that Jesus was buried and was raised on the third day according to Scripture (1 Cor. 15:3-4). So if the apostle said that Jesus was raised on the third day, the obviously He could not have been buried the entire third day.

The emphasis should not be on the number three, but on the resurrection since that is the main point of the comparison. The problem arises when modern students read that Matthew also said that Jesus was raised to life “on the third day” (Mt. 16:21, 17:23, 20:19) and “after three days” (27:63). Furthermore, Matthew 12:39-40 stated that Jesus will rise after three days *and* three nights. It is difficult to believe that Matthew, who was at one time employed as a tax collector and skilled tax accountant, would make such an error in counting days and nights. As previously stated, the term “three days and three nights,” regardless of the “on,” “after,” or “and,” the term was an idiom for any time touching three days.⁶¹ Scholars today almost universally agree that the three day formula is a figure of speech that never intended to have any literal interpretation.⁶²

59. Lunn, “Raised on the Third Day According to the Scriptures.” 526.

60. Jeffrey, *Unveiling Mysteries of the Bible*. 181-84.

61. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 25, page 21.

62. Pickup. “‘On the Third Day’: The Time Frame of Jesus’ Death and resurrection.” 514.

There is also another point to be considered: In the Jewish tradition, a day and a night was known as an *Onah*, and a full 24-hour *Onah* or part of an *Onah* was considered a whole unit.⁶³ Likewise, parts of three days and three nights are treated as a whole, even if it was only 36 hours (the time from death to resurrection). In modern Western thinking, readers separate the day from the night and count them separately. But this was not so in biblical times.⁶⁴

Since the life and death of Jesus was reflected in Hebrew typology,⁶⁵ His death occurred when lambs were slain on Friday in the temple and His resurrection when the high priest stood in the temple and waived the grain offering (of barley) before our Lord on Sunday morning declaring “Blessed are you O Lord, who brings forth the bread of life from the earth.”⁶⁶ The time of the events strongly suggests that it was then that Jesus walked out of the tomb. The period of “three days and three nights” was understood to fit within these two sacrificial events in the temple.



A Lesson in First Century Hermeneutics:

09.01.05.X2 Clarification Of Old Testament Passages

At times a New Testament passage brings clarification to a passage in the Old Testament. An example is this: “**The men of Nineveh ... the queen of the South.**” When Jonah went to the Assyrian city to preach the message of repentance, the Gentile men of Nineveh recognized him as a prophet of God, accepted his message, and repented. Likewise, the Queen of Sheba, also a Gentile, recognized that the divine wisdom possessed by Solomon was of God.⁶⁷

Jesus was now before the Jewish leaders and the proud descendants of Abraham were assured of their religious knowledge, but failed to recognize Who was standing before them. Jesus, in essence, said that the Queen of the South traveled a great distance to hear Solomon but the Pharisees were not at all interested in hearing anything of the Kingdom of God. In the first century the Kingdom of Sheba no longer existed and, therefore, Jesus used the Hebrew word for

63. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 2:210.

64. See also 17.02.02.Q8.

65. Typical Old Testament references include passages such as Isaiah 53. However, for an interesting study on ten examples of resurrection typology in the book of Genesis, see Nicholas P. Lunn, “Raised on the Third Day According to the Scriptures”: Resurrection Typology in the Genesis Creation Narrative.” 523-35.

66. Garr, *Restoring Our Lost Legacy*. 145.

67. 1 Kg. 10:1-13 = 2 Chron. 9:1-12; Josephus, *Antiquities* 8.6.5-6 (165-175); Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 260-61.

“south” (*teman*). This word is the origin of the name of modern country of *Yemen* located in the southern corner of the Arabian Peninsula. Jesus continually interpreted and clarified Scripture. All sages and rabbis did this, and the student of biblical history must be aware of this hermeneutic. This method of first century clarification explains some of the so-called errors that critics identify in Scripture.⁶⁸



“Something greater than Solomon is here.” A better translation is “One greater than Solomon is here,” because Jesus was referring to Himself.⁶⁹ This was a profound statement. Solomon had immeasurable wisdom, power, and wealth, but what Jesus said of Himself surpassed that of the former king. The historical context of this passage is that first century Jews relied upon Solomon’s wisdom for the discernment needed concerning demons, as well as his power to cast them out. There is nothing in Scripture that indicates that Solomon ever cast our demons. However, since he was deemed to be the most brilliant man who ever lived, first century Jews believed that he knew how to cast out demons and also had the power to do so. Whether Solomon was able to do that is not the issue, the issue is that the Jews believed that he had that power and ability. Jesus did not argue the point; He simply stated that Someone, meaning Himself, was present who was greater than Solomon.

It is quite significant that wisdom was not considered a miraculous sign. When Jesus was twelve years old He sat on the temple steps and dumbfounded the priests with His superior wisdom and knowledge, yet this was not considered a miracle. His first miracle occurred later when He turned the water into wine in Cana. He repeatedly awed the audience with His insights, knowledge, and wisdom, and at no time were any of these conversations considered miracles.

When the Pharisees requested a miraculous sign, they did not want to hear another comment about His wisdom. Every time they attempted to trap Him with a trick question, He turned their question around and made them look foolish. They wanted a “sign,” meaning a miracle such as a healing or exorcism, but not wisdom in insight. Therefore, most certainly one who had received such divine blessing of wisdom would know how to successfully cast out demons. Jesus had just healed a demon-possessed man (Mt. 12:22-30) and the conversation continued in that particular theme. Therefore, the discussion of One who is greater than Solomon is actually built upon the discussion of exorcism, and ancient writers preserved abundant clues to enhance modern understanding. Among these writers, Josephus not only preserved the extra-biblical evidence of historical exorcism, but also recorded that he personally witnessed a successful exorcism by one called Eleazar using the name of Solomon as his source of power. The historian’s understanding

68. Bivin, “The Queen of Teman.” *Yavo Digest*. 2:3, 19.

69. Perkins, “Greater than Solomon.” 207-17.

of Solomon explains why Eleazar and others called upon the name of Solomon for wisdom and power to cast out demons.

He also composed books of odes and songs – a thousand and five; of parables and similitudes – three thousand; for he spoke a parable upon every sort of tree from the hyssop to the cedar; and in like manner also about beasts, about all sorts of living creatures, whether upon the earth, or in the air; for he was not unacquainted with their natures, nor omitted inquiries about them, but described them all like a philosopher, and demonstrated he had exquisite knowledge of their several properties.

God also enabled him to learn that skill which expels demons, which is a science useful and sanative (healing) to men. He composed such incarnations also by which distempers are alleviated. And he left behind him the manner of using exorcisms by which they drive away demons so that they never return and the method of cure is of great force unto this day; for I have seen a certain man of my own country whose name was Eleazar, releasing people that were demoniacal in the presence of Vespasian, and his sons, and his captains, and the whole multitude of soldiers. The manner of cure was this: He put a ring that had a root of one of those sorts mentioned by Solomon to the nostrils of the demoniac, after which he drew out the demon through his nostrils; and when the man fell down immediately, he adjured him to return into him no more, making still mention of Solomon, and reciting the incarnations which he composed. And when Eleazar would persuade and demonstrate to the spectators that he had such power, he set a little way off a cup or basin full of water and commanded the demon, as he went out of the man, to overturn it and thereby let the spectators know that he had left the man. And when this was done, the skill and wisdom of Solomon was shown manifestly; for which reason it is, that all men may know that vastness of Solomon's abilities and how he was beloved of God, and that extraordinary virtues of every kind with which this king was endowed may not be unknown to any people under the sun; for this reason, I say, it is that we proceed to speak so largely of these matters.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 8.2.5 (44-49)

However, what the first century exorcists did not realize is that, if Solomon did cast out demons, he truly would have had divine wisdom and would not have used first century rabbinic incantations and methods. Nonetheless, Josephus clearly believed that:

1. Solomon had the divine knowledge and power to cast out demons, and

2. Solomon's power was transferred to future generations to continue the same.

His wide range of wisdom and expertise was connected with every known science and philosophy by the second century B.C. Furthermore, Josephus linked the creation of effective casting rituals and incarnations to Solomon. The historian did not believe this activity was a form of mythology, but a serious event in one's life.

The unknown author of the extra-biblical book titled, *Wisdom of Solomon*, also described the reflections and a functional knowledge of Solomon's wisdom.⁷⁰ This book, written in the first century B.C., reveals the popularity of Solomon as related to the exorcisms of demonic spirits in chapter 8. In the passage below, note the phrase in Hebraic poetry "the violent force of spirits," and that it is associated with the "reasoning of men."⁷¹ This book is in a class of writings that comprise the Apocrypha, and was written in the first person.⁷²

**For both we and our words are in his hand, as are all understanding and skill in
crafts. For it is he who gave me unerring knowledge of what exists,
To know the structure of the world
and the activity of the elements;
The beginning and end
and middle of times,
The alterations of the solstices
and the changes of the seasons,
The cycles of the year
and the constellations of the stars,
That natures of animals
and the tempers of wild beasts,
The powers of spirits
and reasonings of men,
The varieties of plants
and the virtues of roots;
I learned both what is secret
and that is manifest,
For wisdom, the fashioner of all things, taught me.**

70. The *Wisdom of Solomon* was written in the first century B.C. See Appendix 22 for more information on "Major Prophecies Of The Last Days And The Second Coming Of Jesus."

71 See 02.02.01.V for more information on this subject.

72. The reader is reminded that quotations from non-biblical sources are not to be understood as being of equal authority with the biblical narratives. See 01.02.04 and 02.02.01.V.

Wisdom of Solomon, 8:17-22⁷³

When reading the *Wisdom of Solomon*, the reader may conclude that the author enhanced the image of the ancient king. Yet, Scripture precisely indicates that King Solomon was, in fact, the wisest man upon the earth and no other would ever be like him (1 Kg. 3:12). Therefore, is it possible that modern scholars have failed to consider that Solomon may have had the knowledge to expel demons? There is a growing body of scholars who, after reading ancient documents, believe that Solomon was frequently referred to as a powerful authority in exorcisms and incantations.⁷⁴ It has been suggested that the writer of the *Wisdom of Solomon* exaggerated the activities of famous king, but many Jews of the first century fully believed this book to be historically accurate.

Another source is the *Testament of Solomon* which is in a class of books known as the Pseudepigrapha and was written sometime between the first and third centuries A.D. It is literary evidence of how much Greek paganism influenced Judaism. While this book is of late date, it reflects the thinking common during the life of Christ as well as that of the Essene community, as noted in their Dead Sea Scrolls. The *Testament* is a folktale about Solomon's building activity concerning the temple, as well as ancient lore concerning magic, demonology, and primitive medicine. Below is a quotation concerning exorcism. It is noteworthy that the source of spiritual power and authority is God followed by the secondary source, Solomon. When Jesus said He was greater than Solomon, He was placing Himself equal with God.

Testament of Solomon, Son of David, who reigned in Jerusalem and subdued all the spirits (demons) of the air, of the earth, and under the earth; through them he also accomplished all the magnificent works of the temple; what their authorities are against men, and by what angels these demons are thwarted.

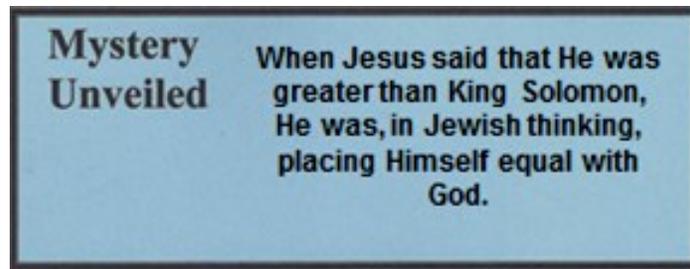
Blessed are you, Lord God, who has given this authority to Solomon. Glory and power to you forever. . .

Testament of Solomon, Prologue⁷⁵

73. Cited by Metzger, *The Apocrypha of the Old Testament*. 110. The *Wisdom of Solomon* belongs to a classification of extra-biblical books known as the Apocrypha. See 02.02.03 "Apocrypha;" 08.04.07.Q2 "Why did Jesus teach with parables?" and "Apocalyptic Literature" in Appendix 26 for more information.

74. Perkins, "Greater than Solomon." 211.

75. Cited by Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 1:960.



According to the Dead Sea Scrolls, powers to manipulate demonic spirits and create spells are first credited to God, then to Solomon.⁷⁶ This priority of authorized power and authority (i.e., God first) is also found in a magical papyrus document dated between second century B.C. and A.D. 70. It is similar to the portion of a much later date found in the *Apocryphal Psalms*. Note the following reading:

Of David. Concerning the words of the spell in the name of YHWH...of Solomon, and he will invoke the name of YHWH to set him free from every affliction of the spirits, of the devils, Liliths, owls and jackals. These are the devils, and the prince of enmity is Belial, who rules over the abyss. [Text missing] to [text missing] and to magnify the God of wonders [text missing] ... the sons of his people have completed the cure, ... [those who]... have relied on your name. Invoke ... guarding of Israel. Lean on YHWH, the God of gods, he who made the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, who separated light from darkness....

Dead Sea Scroll, *Apocryphal Psalm of Exorcism* (11Q11[11QPsAp]), 2:2-12⁷⁷

⁷⁶ See 02.02.01.V for more information on this subject. The book of *Tobit* illustrates how Jewish people in the Inter-Testamental Period understood demons, the importance of prayer, fasting, and giving alms. This is especially important relative to Matthew 6.

⁷⁷ 2:2-12 = Column 2, lines 2-12; Martinez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*. 376.



09.01.05.A. THE ANCIENT SEAL OF SOLOMON CARVED IN STONE.
 RIGHT: The Seal of Solomon (early 4th century A.D.) is an encircled 5-pointed star, like this one at Capernaum. It is believed by some scholars to have originated in Greek art and became known as the Star of Solomon. Photograph by the author.

This is clear evidence that exorcism was common in the days of Jesus, and the spiritual power was attributed to YHWH (God) and the ancient king.⁷⁸ Now Jesus stood before them and boldly stated that, **“Something (or One) greater than Solomon is here.”** This had a profound effect as He had cast out demons without any special incantations, root or herbal remedies, or references to Solomon, but simply by the authority of His spoken word. Therefore, Jesus demonstrated that He was greater than Solomon.⁷⁹

09.01.06 Mt. 12:43-45; Lk. 11:27-28

NEED FOR MORAL REFORM

78. Today, some have claimed that the 5-pointed star originated with the occult and other pagan religions. However, it is because Solomon was said to have had mystical powers, that his symbol was eventually used in cultic rituals. Other scholars say that the Seal of Solomon, like the 6-pointed Star of David, did not originate in the first century, but were developed in later centuries.

79. Neither Solomon nor Moses left any writings on how to deal with demonically possessed individuals. Beliefs and superstitions related to Solomon appear to have originated with Inter-Testamental rabbis, not the famous king.

Mt. ⁴³ “When an unclean spirit comes out of a man, it roams through waterless places looking for rest but doesn’t find any. ⁴⁴ Then it says, ‘I’ll go back to my house that I came from.’ And returning, it finds the house vacant, swept, and put in order. ⁴⁵ Then off it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and settle down there. As a result, that man’s last condition is worse than the first. That’s how it will also be with this evil generation.”

Lk. ²⁷ As He was saying these things, a woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, “The womb that bore You and the one who nursed You are blessed!”

²⁸ He said, “Even more, those who hear the word of God and keep it are blessed!”

In this narrative Jesus spoke with dual imagery. While a literal reading of “**a man**” is correct, there is also the national imagery where the “**house**” is Israel. The Jewish people were removed from their land because they had failed to observe the Sabbath (2 Chron. 36:21), which is why the religious leaders were so incredibly adamant about observing the Sabbath. They did not want to be removed from their land again. Many scholars have also noted that when they returned from Babylon, there were no idols among them.⁸⁰ The exile experience not only removed their interest in idols, but they also observed the Sabbaths.

However, with the advent of the Greeks and advancing Hellenism, paganism without idols entered the land. This was especially true under the reign of King Antiochus IV Epiphanes.⁸¹ Idols and all other evidence of idolatries were removed from the Holy City after the Maccabean Revolt, but the countryside was not cleansed very well. And while Jerusalem itself remained free of spiritual pollution, even from the time of Jesus, archaeologists have uncovered various idols outside the city walls, such as a statue of Asclepius found by the Pool of Bethesda (see 07.01.04). Many commentators have said that when the Jews returned from Babylon, they no longer served idols. That is true for orthodox Jews, but there were many aristocrats and Hellenized Jews who enjoyed the Greek culture. Herod the Great promoted his statues of the Roman gods and all forms of Hellenism. Add to the spiritual mix, the legalism of the religious leaders, and one can recognize the theological chaos that existed. A growing number of scholars now believe that Gentiles, living in and around Jerusalem, had idols in their homes. This would be expected since Jerusalem was a cosmopolitan city where many foreign merchants and businessmen resided.

80. Idols are not mentioned in the gospels because these statues to pagan deities were not permitted within Jewish communities. They were, however, prominent in Gentile communities within the Jewish regions and are mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament. Vine, “Idols.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:317.

81. See 03.04.17-21.

“Seven other spirits.” In all probability Jesus did not mean seven literal spirits. The number seven had a meaning of “perfection” and “completeness” in issues that related to both God and Satan throughout all ancient Near Eastern cultures. God gives perfect and complete peace, comfort, and joy while Satan gives perfect and complete deception and death. Those involved in demonic worship also use the phrase. For example, in Calcutta, India, is the statue of Kali that depicts the goddess of death who has seven arms and with each hand she is holding a human head. Worshipers of this goddess beg with utter fear for mercy from death. Jesus probably referred to seven spirits because of the complete control they had over this man, which would have been a worse situation than he previously had experienced.

“This evil generation.” The generation that rejected Jesus was given forty years to repent. They not only refused, but instead, they persecuted the church. Consequently, forty years later Jerusalem, the Sadducees, and the temple were destroyed.

09.01.07 Mt. 12:46-50 (See also Mk. 3:31-35; Lk. 8:19-21)

JESUS TELLS TRUE KINSHIP

⁴⁶ He was still speaking to the crowds when suddenly His mother and brothers were standing outside wanting to speak to Him. ⁴⁷ Someone told Him, “Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to You.”

⁴⁸ But He replied to the one who told Him, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?” ⁴⁹ And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! ⁵⁰ For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven, that person is My brother and sister and mother.”

“Who is My mother, and who are My brothers?” This statement would almost imply that Jesus spitefully broke the commandments concerning compassion and honor due His parents, not to mention His apparent loss of respect for His half-brothers.⁸² Nevertheless, such was not the case; He was very respectful. He was not speaking of His earthly family but of the larger family of God. He identified Himself with His “family of believers;” those who do the will of His Father in heaven are His “mother and brothers.” This eliminates those who say they are believers but their lives do not reflect any desire to live according to biblical principles.

82. Concerning the number of brothers and sisters Jesus had, see 10.01.02, “and the brother of James, Joses...”

Unit 09

Turning Point Of The Ministry Of Jesus

Chapter 02

Jesus Announces Woes; Leaders Attempt Entrapment



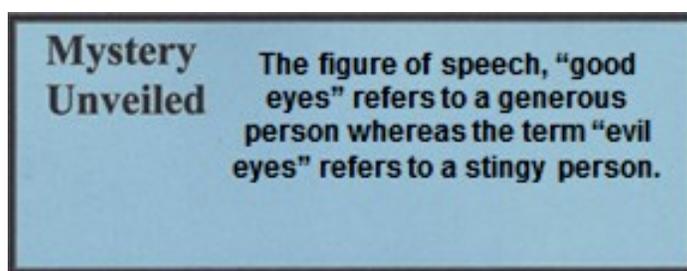
09.02.00.A. JESUS DISCUSSES THE LAW WITH THE PHARISEES. Artwork by William Hole of the Royal Scottish Academy of Art, 1876. Jesus challenges the religious leaders on the issues of their Oral Law and their hypocrisy. Such discourses were usually in a public forum, which added to the humiliation of the leaders.

09.02.01 Lk. 11:33-36

INNER RIGHTEOUSNESS

³³ “No one lights a lamp and puts it in the cellar or under a basket, but on a lampstand, so that those who come in may see its light. ³⁴ Your eye is the lamp of the body. When your eye is good, your whole body is also full of light. But when it is bad, your body is also full of darkness. ³⁵ Take care then, that the light in you is not darkness. ³⁶ If, therefore, your whole body is full of light, with no part of it in darkness, it will be entirely illuminated, as when a lamp shines its light on you.”

“When your eye is good ... But when it is bad.” These two phrases are examples of colloquialism, with meanings similar to those of neighboring cultures. A person with “good eyes” is a generous person and one with “bad eyes” is stingy.⁸³



09.02.02 Lk. 11:37-52

SIX WOES: HYPOCRISY CONDEMNED AMONG LEADING PHARISEES

³⁷ As He was speaking, a Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He went in and reclined at the table. ³⁸ When the Pharisee saw this, he was amazed that He did not first perform the ritual washing before dinner. ³⁹ But the Lord said to him: “Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and evil. ⁴⁰ Fools! Didn’t He who made the outside make the inside too? ⁴¹ But give from what is within to the poor, and then everything is clean for you.

⁴² “But woe to you Pharisees! You give a tenth of mint, rue, and every kind of herb, and you bypass justice and love for God. These things you should have done without neglecting the others.

83. See Mt. 6:19-24; 08.04.01; 12.03.10.

⁴³ **“Woe to you Pharisees! You love the front seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces.**

⁴⁴ **“Woe to you! You are like unmarked graves; the people who walk over them don’t know it.”**

⁴⁵ **One of the experts in the Law answered Him, “Teacher, when You say these things You insult us too.”**

⁴⁶ **Then He said: “Woe also to you experts in the law! You load people with burdens that are hard to carry, yet you yourselves don’t touch these burdens with one of your fingers.**

⁴⁷ **“Woe to you! You build monuments to the prophets, and your fathers killed them.**

⁴⁸ **Therefore, you are witnesses that you approve the deeds of your fathers, for they killed them, and you build their monuments. ⁴⁹ Because of this, the wisdom of God said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,’ ⁵⁰ so that this generation may be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world — ⁵¹ from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary.**

“Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible.

⁵² **“Woe to you experts in the law! You have taken away the key of knowledge! You didn’t go in yourselves, and you hindered those who were going in.”**

The leading Pharisees who repeatedly confronted Jesus were extreme legalists who had no care for the common people, but only desired to provide for their own lucrative welfare. However, many other godly Pharisees desired to have a spiritual renewal among the people. They preached this message and there is little question they were a major influence for the overwhelmingly positive response John the Baptist had in his ministry. It is always a challenge to remember these two extremes of the Pharisees. They were not a homogeneous group, but rather, there was a group of corrupt aristocrats on one end of the spectrum while at the other there was the majority who had a true concern for the spiritual welfare of the people under their charge.

“Did not first perform the ritual washing before dinner.”⁸⁴ The Pharisees had disagreements among themselves concerning the application of various oral laws and regulations to daily life. These were subjects of debate between the two major schools of religious interpretation: the

84. The evening meal was the “chief” meal of the day, usually held in the evening. It was the primary meal during the feasts, such as the Passover meal and marriage feast.

School of Hillel and the School of Shammai. The Mishnah records the philosophy of each as it pertained to the issue of washing before meals, which in the first century was a hotly debated subject.

These are the things wherein the School of Shammai and the school of Hillel differ in what concerns a meal. The School of Shammai says: “(On the Sabbath or a Festival-day) they say the Benediction first over the day and then over the wine.” And the School of Hillel says: “They say the Benediction first over the wine and then over the day.”

The School of Shammai says: “They wash the hands and then mix the cup.” And the School of Hillel says: “They mix the cup and then wash the hands.”

The School of Shammai says: “A man wipes his hands with a napkin and lays it on the table.” And the School of Hillel says: “(He lays it) on the cushion.”

The School of Shammai says: “They sweep up the room and then wash the hands.” The School of Hillel says: “They wash the hands and then sweep up the room.”

Mishnah, *Berakoth* 8.1-4⁸⁵

The washing of hands became more than a physical act of rubbing the wet fist of one hand in the palm of the other; it had developed into a ceremonial ritual as follows: The hand was defined as that portion of the arm that was between the finger tips and elbow, including that area that today is known as the “forearm.” To wash properly, the tips of the fingers were joined together and lifted up so the water ran down to the elbows, then turned down so that the water could run off to the ground. The joined hands were lifted up again as fresh water was poured on the hands and the process was repeated three times. The water basin that was used was first held on the right side, then on the left; the water that was poured on the hands was first poured on the right side, then on the left.⁸⁶ When finished, the following prayer was recited, “Blessed art Thou who hast given us the command to wash the hands.”⁸⁷ Jewish scholars today debate whether, in the first century, the cup of blessing came first or the hand-washing ritual; whether the towel was placed on the table or elsewhere, etc. Furthermore, the rabbis from various schools of theology, such as Hillel and Shammai, had slightly different versions of the ritual.

85. Danby, ed., *Mishnah* 8-9; Mishnah, *Tohoroth* 4.1 – 4.7.

86. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 2:203.

87. This quotation may be a 4th century A.D. modification of the 1st century prayer, but regardless, it is essentially the same.

It is interesting though, that the issue of cleanliness has continued for us today in the form of a common cliché, “Cleanliness is next to Godliness.” Just as the Pharisaic theology of cleanliness failed to make them holy before God, the modern expression has the same non-effect. There is no law in the Torah that requires this extreme level of hand washing. The rabbis had created “rabbinic Judaism” out of their traditions and thought that in doing so, they were worshiping God. And there is nothing in Scripture that affirms the cliché. It is only the blood of Jesus that brings one to Godliness.

“Woe to you Pharisees.... Woe also to you experts in the law!” The term *woe* is a dirge, a lament for the dead.⁸⁸ Clearly this was a sorrowful term of judgment. The leading Pharisees and the scribes were essentially of the same theological mindset in that they created their own Oral laws which they held in superior position to their Hebrew Bible. In addition, they selected choice verses and applied them to daily lives with extreme legalism. For example,

You must distinguish between the holy and the common, and the clean and the unclean.

Leviticus 10:10

In response, Jesus gave them dire warnings of impending consequences with the term *woe*. The phrase *woe*, which in Greek is *ouai*, and refers to both *anger* and *sorrow*.⁸⁹ Clearly Jesus was *extremely* upset with them,⁹⁰ and spoke forth a single word of pending judgment.

“Unmarked graves; the people who walk over them don’t know it. One of the reasons for whitewashing tombs was that they could be easily avoided by travelers. If one walked near a tomb or touched a dead body, he would be ceremonially defiled and could not participate in the religious celebrations such as Passover⁹¹ This was especially important for the priests and Levites who served in the temple. Therefore, two weeks prior to Passover, families would whitewash all tombs.

“Your fathers killed them.” Like their fathers, they too killed the “prophets.” From Abel in the book of Genesis to Zechariah in 2 Chronicles 24, which is the last book in the Jewish Bible

88. Smith, *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew*. 157, 274.

89. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 182.

90. See also 08.01.02, 11.02.05, and 13.05.02-05.

91. Freeman, *The New Manners and Customs of the Bible*. 507; Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 2:149-51.

(due to a different sequence of books than in Christian Bibles).⁹² Jeremiah was persecuted endlessly to the point that he was driven into exile in Egypt, but eventually was recognized and honored.

Now, these men whom Jesus was addressing, would continue the sins of their fathers. The first martyr would be Jesus Himself, then Stephen, who was followed by James. While these three died in Jerusalem, they didn't do the Apostle Paul any favors either. He was repeatedly scourged five times and often beaten up during his ministry. Eventually, ten of the twelve disciples died as martyrs. Unfortunately, the church has at times done likewise to its reformers.

“You build their monuments.” Literally: “You build their tombs.”⁹³ The question raised by scholars has been in reference to what tombs or monuments did Jesus refer to in this passage? It has been suggested that He referred to the Machpelah,⁹⁴ a huge tomb Herod built in Hebron over the graves of Abraham and the patriarchs. This was truly a monument of honor.⁹⁵

The negative connotation of this passage suggests the tomb of Zechariah,⁹⁶ or the tomb of another righteous prophet or priest who was killed by the religious establishment. Many Jewish leaders of the Old Testament era had been violent against God's prophets. Likewise in the Inter-Testamental era, both the leading Pharisees and Sadducees were violent against those who preached righteousness. Jesus said that the Jews tried to appease their guilt by the construction of memorial tombs⁹⁷ to honor one, and possibly others as well, whom they did not respect in life.

A Lesson in First Century Hermeneutics:

09.02.02.X Quoting The Overview Of Scripture

Today students are sometimes asked to read a book and, in a sentence or two, give a brief statement on what the book is about – an overview. A modern academic term is “thesis statement” – a one sentence summary sentence at the end of the first paragraph of an essay. First century rabbis also used summary statements. When Rabbi So-and-So “said” something, that

92. The name Zachariah is at times spelled Zacharias. See also Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:127. See also 13.05.05.Q1 concerning the identification of Zachariah/Zechariah.

93. Green, *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*; Berry, *Interlinear Literal Translation of the Greek New Testament*.

94. The Machpelah is a huge building (see 03.05.31.A), exceedingly larger than any other massive tomb.

95. Buried there are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, and Leah. Missing is Rachel who died in childbirth near Bethlehem, where she was buried. See 03.05.31.A.

96. This may be a reference to the tomb of Zechariah (see 09.02.02.A).

97. Some scholars believe this may possibly include the tomb of Zechariah; see 09.02.02.A.

does not mean a quotation, but it is a brief statement of the *meaning* or *summary* of what was said. Not understanding this basic principle leads observant Bible students to ask the following question:

09.02.02.Q1 Why did Jesus refer to passages in the Bible that do not exist?

A case in point is this statement: **“Because of this, the wisdom of God said.”** These words from Luke 11:49, but there are no clear references to His quotation. Critics have highlighted such passages as proof of numerous errors in the Bible. But the appropriate response is found in the context of the Hebraic mindset.⁹⁸ When Jesus spoke to the Jews, they understood the *context* of the conversation,⁹⁹ meaning, they understood what Jesus was saying in the broad scope of Scripture. Obviously, if the context was not understood, those in His audience as well as the Pharisees would have been quick to identify the error that has been touted by modern critics. But they didn’t! Jesus referred to the Scriptures of the Old Testament in three ways:

1. Directly,
2. Indirectly and,
3. In a broad general manner.

In Jewish thinking, there was no field of study more important than theology, which far outpaced the second most important field of study – a vocational trade.¹⁰⁰ When men gathered for a festival, after a synagogue service, or other social event, the subject of discussion was often theology, or the impact of Hellenism upon their world. Therefore, the average Jewish person was well grounded in both the Old Testament and Oral Tradition. As a result, it was easy for Jesus to make broad over-generalizations, as in John 17:12 and His listeners understood Him. Today, some 2,000 years later, scholars must reconstruct the setting and context of the event. Yet while the historical connections at times are difficult to put together, the theological meaning remains secure.

“This generation will be held responsible.” This phrase is a statement of promised judgment, yet God in His mercy gave the religious leaders the span of an entire generation to repent before judgment would be executed. A **“generation”** is generally recognized as a 40-year period even though women were married and began having children while in their mid-teen years. They

98. A partial list of other problematic passages is found in Appendix 13.

99. See the Law of Context (Part 1, No. 2) in Appendix 30.

100. See 02.03.04 “Education.”

were often grandmothers by their early thirties. The compassion of Jesus to withhold judgment against the religious leaders who knew and taught the Old Testament prophecies is quite evident. Therefore, they were entirely responsible for what they knew and what they rejected:

1. The ministry and message of John the Baptist
2. The ministry, miracles, and message of Jesus
3. The miracles of nature at His death
4. The resurrection and appearances of more than five hundred people
5. His ascension
6. The work of the Holy Spirit after the resurrection, namely on Pentecost
7. The message and miracles of the apostles
8. The testimonies of the first Jewish Christians

God gave them 40 years to repent, just as God had given the Israelites 40 years of punishment in the desert. Again, His mercy was demonstrated. However, this judgment was not just for the sake of Jesus but also for the other prophets God sent whom they rejected and killed previously. While previous Jews were punished by banishment and natural disasters, this time they associated Jesus with Beelzebub and punishment would be as no other in history. The discussion wherein Jesus condemned the hypocrisy of the leading Pharisees was the turning point for His ministry. The Kingdom of God was lost to them until the future Millennial Reign comes, but now His focus would be upon the soon-to-come Gentile church.

Until now Jesus often healed multitudes without their faith, but as His focus changed He required faith on the part of those who desired healing. In the meantime, some of His disciples were beginning to realize that He was, in fact, the Messiah. Knowing this, Jesus told them not to declare His Messiahship. Likewise, His teaching style was about to change. Rather than giving clear teachings, He began to teach in parables (i.e. Mt. 13 ff.), sometimes leaving His accusers more confused than angry.



09.02.02.A. THE TOMB OF ZECHARIAH. Tradition says that the ornate tomb, located in the Kidron Valley between the Mount of Olives and Jerusalem's eastern gate, was built for Zechariah as a recompense for his murder. However, the tomb reflects the architecture of two pagan cultures, Greek and Egyptian that Zechariah repudiated. In fact, the tomb is of an anonymous person who was a wealthy and prominent Jerusalemite, but not for Zechariah. Photograph by the author.

09.02.03 Lk. 11:53-54

LEADERS TRY TO TRAP JESUS

⁵³ When He left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to oppose Him fiercely and to cross-examine Him about many things; ⁵⁴ they were lying in wait for Him to trap Him in something He said.

09.02.04 Lk. 12:1-12

WARNING AGAINST HYPOCRISY

¹ In these circumstances, a crowd of many thousands came together, so that they were trampling on one another. He began to say to His disciples first: “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. ² There is nothing covered that won’t be uncovered, nothing hidden that won’t be made known. ³ Therefore, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in an ear in private rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.

⁴ “And I say to you, My friends, don’t fear those who kill the body, and after that can do nothing more. ⁵ But I will show you the One to fear: Fear Him who has authority to throw people into hell after death. Yes, I say to you, this is the One to fear! ⁶ Aren’t five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God’s sight. ⁷ Indeed, the hairs of your head are all counted. Don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows!

⁸ “And I say to you, anyone who acknowledges Me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God, ⁹ but whoever denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God. ¹⁰ Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

¹¹ Whenever they bring you before synagogues and rulers and authorities, don’t worry about how you should defend yourselves or what you should say. ¹² For the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what must be said.”

Hypocrisy is always an attempt to hide the truth of one’s life. Hence, the hypocrite has within himself a life of falsehoods which cannot co-exist with the believer who is to worship God in spirit and truth. Truthfulness and hypocrisy are the fruit of two different spiritual worlds.

Jesus realized that the common peasants – the multitudes – and even many rabbis were in a difficult position. They had to decide whether to listen to their leaders in Jerusalem and stay within their religious system, or follow Him. The major point of difference was that the leaders focused on their Oral Laws, while Jesus focused on the Kingdom of God as the fulfillment of the Old Testament Covenant. This was a most difficult process and the leading Pharisees threatened those who considered leaving traditional Judaism to follow Jesus. The more who followed Jesus, the weaker the Pharisees became. And that was a concern.

“**Private rooms....housetops.**” Obviously at this point, a brief description of a first century house is needed. In the mountain regions of central Israel and the Galilee area, houses were built from stone. In the rolling hills and plains by the Mediterranean Sea sun-dried mud bricks were

used.¹⁰¹ It was possible that a thief could literally dig his way into a house and steal choice possessions, such as food jars. An interior room was the most private room, as it had no windows or openings for fresh air for security and privacy reasons. Since glass windows did not exist, windows were nothing but small openings in the wall for light and fresh air.

“Fear Him who has authority to throw people into hell after death.” The word “hell” clearly means the place of eternal fire of the damned (literally, the *hell of fire*).¹⁰² Jeremiah used the phrase as the place of a future judgment (Jer. 7:32-34, 19:6-9).¹⁰³

“Aren’t five sparrows sold for two pennies?” In ancient times, as in many areas of the Middle East today, an object for sale had no set price. An interested buyer had to negotiate a purchase price. Therefore, there is no conflict with two different but similar prices in the gospels. Incidentally, “pennies” are English coins used in this passage for the smallest unit of currency, pennies were not coins associated with biblical times.

“The one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.” The English word *blasphemy* or *blaspheme* is from the Greek term *blasphemia*, meaning to insult. But it also suggests that the one who blasphemes has placed himself in the place of God and, thereby, degrades Him.¹⁰⁴ That includes insulting Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit as well. Hence, it is an incredibly serious charge.

“The Holy Spirit will teach you.” The phrase is better translated, “The Holy Spirit will reveal to you,” or “direct you.” It has on occasion been interpreted to mean that there is no need for deep biblical study, for the Holy Spirit will impart whatever knowledge is needed at the time. This is hardly the meaning. The disciples had been with Jesus for more than three years and had received the best education possible. Jesus meant that from their vast foundational knowledge and experiences, the Holy Spirit would direct them as to what to say when being confronted by various authorities. Likewise today, students are to study the Word to obtain a foundational knowledge so they can make appropriate judgments with the help of the Holy Spirit to guide them in that process.

101. Smith, *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew*. 115.

102. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:40.

103. The term “fire” was frequently used by Old Testament prophets: Isa. 29:6; 66:15; Ezek. 38:22; Amos 1:4; 7:4; Zeph. 1:18; 3:8; Mal. 3:2; 4:1. The term is also found in numerous extra-biblical books such as *Jubilees* 9:15; 36:10 and in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

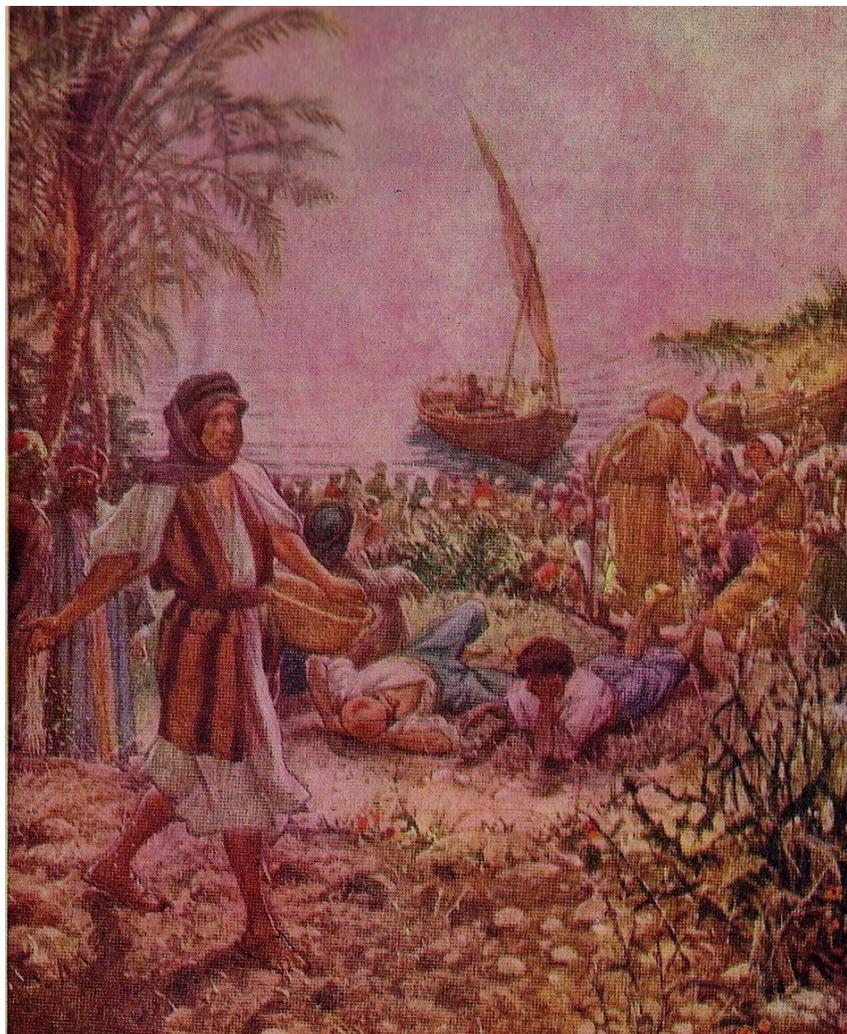
104. Barclay, *A New Testament Wordbook*. 51.

Unit 09

Turning Point In The Ministry Of Jesus

Chapter 03

Prophetic Parables And Actions



09.03.00.A. JESUS TEACHES AS A SOWER SOWS. Artwork by **William Hole** of the **Royal Scottish Academy of Art, 1876**. Jesus is depicted teaching along the Sea of Galilee as a sower throws his seeds. Jesus often used real-life illustrations to reveal unseen spiritual truths. See Mark 4:1.

09.03.01 Introduction

The words of Jesus were not prophetic, as is commonly thought of today in terms of the proverbial “end times,” but rather, these were prophetic relative to the future of those who do not follow Him. In essence, any other way than His will eventually lead to destruction. That message is repeated constantly, but with the love and compassion of calling people to Himself.

09.03.02 Lk. 12:13-21

FAITH OF THE FOOLISH RICH MAN

¹³ Someone from the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

¹⁴ “Friend,” He said to him, “who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you?” ¹⁵ He then told them, “Watch out and be on guard against all greed because one’s life is not in the abundance of his possessions.”

A ¹⁶ Then He told them a parable:
“A rich man’s land
Was very productive.

B ¹⁷ He thought to himself,
What shall I do,
since I don’t have anywhere to store my crops?”

C ¹⁸ I will do this,’ he said.
‘I’ll tear down my barns and build bigger ones,
and store all my grain and my goods there.

B’ ¹⁹ Then I’ll say to myself,
“You have many goods stored up for many years.
Take it easy; eat, drink, and enjoy yourself.”

A’ ²⁰ “But God said to him, ‘You fool!
This very night your life is demanded of you.
And the things you have prepared — whose will they be?’

²¹ “That’s how it is with the one who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

Literary Style.¹⁰⁵ The poetic parallelism of verses 16-20, reveal matching ideas. In stanza A, the rich man spoke to himself, but in A,' God spoke to him. In the same stanzas, crops produced by the fertile land are acquired in A, while in A' these are left behind upon the man's death. In stanza B, this rich fool describes his problem while in B' he believes he has the perfect solution to it. The theme or focus is stanza C, where he is building to secure his life for the future, but God concludes with the general principle that gathering earthly treasures is not gathering treasures in heaven.

In this discussion of inheritance, Jesus refused to get involved because both men were worshipers of the same God, were members of the same family, but were separated because of a dispute over a piece of property. They were dominated by their self-interests which crippled their ability to see the principles of God that pertained to their lives. A court judge or rabbi was not what was needed, but a realization of the greed that was evident in their family. The narrative reveals how well social justice was developed at this time.

“Divide the inheritance.” It was not uncommon for people to take their problems and conflicts to a respected rabbi, or, if a rabbi could not be found, a carpenter was asked to resolve the problem.¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, it was a common practice for itinerant rabbis to travel from village to village where they would serve in a judicial capacity and render decisions on civil and religious matters.

The Romans had given the Jews sufficient autonomy concerning judicial matters with the authority to enforce compliance of a decision if necessary. In this case, the man *did not* request Jesus to act as a fair judge in a family matter of inheritance, but rather, be his advocate and have the inheritance divided (verse 13). The issue appears not to be of fairness, but of greed. While some rabbis would have accepted the offer, Jesus refused to render a decision, not because He was unqualified or unconcerned, but because in this situation, He focused on those who have no right to judge others.

<p>Mystery Unveiled</p>	<p>The fact that someone came to Jesus to settle a family dispute is indicative that Jesus was recognized as a highly respectable rabbi.</p>
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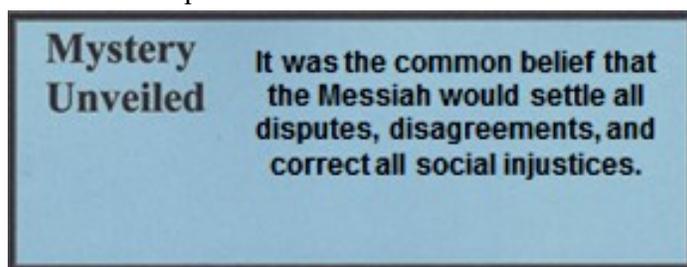
105. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*. Part II, 57; Fleming, *The Parables of Jesus*. 76; Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 299.

106. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:53.

“You fool!” This man failed to think wisely. When security for the future is placed in material possessions, Jesus calls the man a *fool* (Gk. *aphron* 878), which signifies *without reason*, one who was *reckless*.¹⁰⁷ The Pharisees, scribes, and Sadducees had their confidence for a secure future placed in various assets.

Jesus spoke Hebrew and Aramaic, and in Hebrew the term (*ewil* 191) means one who mocks guilt (Prov. 14:9), despises wisdom and discipline (Prov. 1:7; 15:5), and any attempt to give a fool instruction is futile (Prov. 16:22).¹⁰⁸ In essence, a fool is one who has rejected the knowledge of God and, therefore, is damned to hell. When Jesus called this man a fool, He most certainly had a greater realm of Hebraic meaning than Greek. Jesus condemned them for this and warned the disciples not to do likewise. Wealth is not to be a god but a tool to be used wisely to expand the Kingdom of God.

In Hebrew, the most common word for *righteous*, *righteousness*, and *charity* is *tzedakah* (Gk. *dikaioisune* 1343). The acts of charity in the giving of offerings and alms, in addition to the regular tithes, are considered as righteous. Furthermore, one was not considered righteous if he failed to demonstrate charity. For this reason, when Jesus recognized a true heart for charity, He identified the individual as righteous and that salvation was brought to him. The issue of whether to give tithes was never a question.¹⁰⁹



09.03.03 Lk. 12:22-34

TRUSTING GOD’S PROVIDENCE

²² Then He said to His disciples: “Therefore I tell you, don’t worry about your life, what you will eat; or about the body, what you will wear. ²³ For life is more than food and the body more than clothing. ²⁴ Consider the ravens: They don’t sow or reap; they don’t have a storeroom or a barn; yet God feeds them. Aren’t you worth much more than the birds? ²⁵ Can any of you add a cubit to his height by worrying? ²⁶ If then you’re not able to do even a little thing, why worry about the rest?”

107. Vine, “Fool.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:246.

108. Vine, “Fool.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 1:85 and “Stupid Fellow.” 1:251.

109. See additional rules on tithing in the Mishnah, *Ma’aserot* 1.1 and *Moed Shabbath* 4.7.

²⁷ “Consider how the wildflowers grow: They don’t labor or spin thread. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these! ²⁸ If that’s how God clothes the grass, which is in the field today and is thrown into the furnace tomorrow, how much more will He do for you — you of little faith? ²⁹ Don’t keep striving for what you should eat and what you should drink, and don’t be anxious. ³⁰ For the Gentile world eagerly seeks all these things, and your Father knows that you need them.

³¹ “But seek His kingdom, and these things will be provided for you. ³² Don’t be afraid, little flock, because your Father delights to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Make money-bags for yourselves that won’t grow old, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

“Consider the ravens.” No one ever considered ravens as objects of God’s concern because these birds of prey were considered unclean. Yet this statement could have been a reflection upon Psalm 147:9 and Job 38:41, where young ravens are the subject of God’s care. In essence, Jesus said that if God nurtures such rapacious, unclean birds, then how much more will He nurture you? Jesus then closes His discussion with two rhetorical questions (vv. 25-26): Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? Such questions were popular in the first centuries (B.C. and A.D.) between the sages and rabbis.

“Sell your possessions and give to the poor.” Giving to the poor and other acts of charity were considered acts towards perfection and becoming “fully righteous.” However, by the time of Jesus the latter term included observing the entire Torah.¹¹⁰ It always played an important function in Jewish piety – and was carried over into Christianity. Rabbi Hillel once said,

The more charity, the more peace.

Mishnah, *Aboth* 2.7

“No moth destroys.” One method of holding wealth in ancient times was in the form of expensive fabrics and clothing, but these were subject to moth destruction.

110. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 127.

09.03.04 Lk. 12:35-40**PARABLE OF WATCHFUL SERVANTS FOR WEDDING BANQUET** ¹¹¹

³⁵ “Be ready for service and have your lamps lit. ³⁶ You must be like people waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet so that when he comes and knocks, they can open the door for him at once. ³⁷ Those slaves the master will find alert when he comes will be blessed. I assure you: He will get ready, have them recline at the table, then come and serve them. ³⁸ If he comes in the middle of the night, or even near dawn, and finds them alert, those slaves are blessed. ³⁹ But know this: If the homeowner had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁰ You also be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect.”

The parable of Luke 12:41-48 is similar to this one. It is the same theme with two points and was probably given to a different audience. The points are:

1. The return or Second Coming of Jesus, and
2. Encouraging people to be prepared to meet their God.

This is clearly a reflection on the words of the prophet Hosea:

**What will you do on a festival day,
on the day of the LORD's feast?**

Hosea 9:5

National Israel had rejected the message of the Kingdom of God and thereby postponed the heavenly wedding banquet for Jesus and the children of Abraham as promised in the ancient covenant. Now Jesus was going to include the Gentile nations as wedding guests, but first He

111. The significance of the messianic banquet was very important to Jesus (Heb. *Yeshua*) as the subject was discussed and recorded several times. See the following as well: Wedding garments needed at the wedding in Mt. 22:1-14 (13.03.07); discussion of the “best place” in Lk. 14:7-14 (12.02.05); the great messianic banquet in Lk. 14:15-24 (12.02.06); the wise and foolish virgins in Mt. 25:1-13 (14.01.07); only the father knew Mt. 24:36 (14.01.05); the preparation of a new home in Jn. 14:1-4 (14.02.14). Also, see the video 09.03.04.V1 by Rabbi John Fischer who discusses the first century wedding imagery as reflective of the relationship between Jesus and His church, and a second video 14.02.05.V2 where Professor John Metzger discusses the purity of the (L)lamb during the Passion Week and the related imagery of the bride and groom to the Messianic Wedding Banquet.

was going to leave, without indicating when He will return. When He does return, there will be a wedding feast for all those who placed their faith in Him.¹¹² Be sure to see the video 14.02.05.V2 where Professor John Metzger discusses the the purity of the (L)lamb during the Passion Week and the related imagery of the bride and groom to the Messianic Wedding Banquet.

Video Insert >

09.03.04.V1 *First Century Wedding Imagery*. Messianic Rabbi John Fischer, discusses first century Jewish wedding imagery as reflective of the relationship between Jesus (Heb. *Yeshua*) and His church. (21:45) Click here if Internet connection is available.

In Luke 12:41-48, Jesus used the typical first century wedding feast. The guests had to be dressed and have their lamps lit because the bridegroom normally came to the bride's home to "steal" his bride. The bridal party never knew for certain when the bridegroom would appear, so they had to be ready to leave at a moment's notice. This was generally a time of great celebration.

Jesus also illustrated this lesson with the story of a homeowner who should have guarded his home and anticipated a thief. If the owner had been watchful, he would not have been robbed; if the bridal party is watchful, they will not miss the bridegroom. The focus of the story is that Jesus wants His followers to be watchful for His return. There can be little question that the wedding banquet narratives give hints of the coming messianic banquet in which Jesus will be the central figure and His saints will be the guests.

In this parable, it was the master of the house who was gone and expected his servants to open the door for him when he returned. It is assumed that his return would be at night, or at a time when he was least expected. Those who will be awake when he returns will be blessed. The implication is that those servants who would not be ready for him will miss the wedding banquet.

09.03.05 Lk. 12:41-48

EXHORTATION TO WATCHFULNESS.

⁴¹ "Lord," Peter asked, "are You telling this parable to us or to everyone?"

112. For more information on wedding customs, see 04.03.08.Q1.

⁴² The Lord said: “Who then is the faithful and sensible manager his master will put in charge of his household servants to give them their allotted food at the proper time? ⁴³ That slave whose master finds him working when he comes will be rewarded. ⁴⁴ I tell you the truth: He will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁵ But if that slave says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and starts to beat the male and female slaves, and to eat and drink and get drunk, ⁴⁶ that slave’s master will come on a day he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers. ⁴⁷ And that slave who knew his master’s will and didn’t prepare himself or do it will be severely beaten. ⁴⁸ But the one who did not know and did things deserving of blows will be beaten lightly. Much will be required of everyone who has been given much. And even more will be expected of the one who has been entrusted with more.

This is an illustration of a wealthy home owner who had servants manage his household. If a manager demonstrated faithfulness and responsibility, he would be trusted with greater responsibilities (Lk. 12:44). If he failed to function as expected, he would be punished; likewise with the servants of Christ. Those who are faithful to their task will be rewarded and those who fail will be punished.

“**Much will be required of everyone who has been given much.**” Jesus clearly stated that the more one has – money, knowledge (of the Bible), authority, etc. – the more he is responsible before God. Therefore pastors, teachers, and life-long Christians will one day be held to a high accountability before God than one who just came into the faith. This passage ought to be humbling and sobering to all who are called to the ministry.

09.03.06 Lk. 12:49-53

DIVISION PREDICTED.

⁴⁹ “I came to bring fire on the earth,
and how I wish it were already set ablaze!

⁵⁰ But I have a baptism to be baptized with,
and how it consumes Me until it is finished!

⁵¹ Do you think that I came here to give peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division!

⁵² From now on, five in one household will be divided:
three against two,
and two against three.

⁵³ **They will be divided,
 father against son,
 son against father,
 mother against daughter,
 daughter against mother,
 mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law,
 and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”**

Literary Style: This passage was given in typical poetic style, which gives understanding of the text. In the first stanza, notice that **“fire”** is associated with **“baptism,”** but it is in the context of judgment. Likewise, the word **“wish”** on line 2 is associated with **“consumes”** on line 4.

The statement by Jesus, **“I came to bring fire,”** appears to relate to the day of Pentecost when the “tongues like fire” fell from heaven. John the Baptist said that the One who would come would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire (Mt. 3:11). The question is whether the fire mentioned by John is the same as the “tongues like fire” on the Day of Pentecost. It may not be, since Jesus Himself never mentioned fire concerning the coming day of Pentecost. He mentioned only the Holy Spirit coming to the believers, therefore, the “fire” mentioned in this case does *not* relate to Pentecost. Jesus spoke to a Jewish audience in a Jewish context where fire was almost always symbolic of judgment.¹¹³

Fire is like a double edge sword: it utterly destroys what is not permanent and purifies what is permanent. It divides the righteous and unrighteous, or brings destruction of the unrighteous. Isaiah said that the Lord would come to bring the fire of judgment. Jesus said He would bring fire and division instead of peace to the earth. The context of the narrative in Matthew is the same and it does not permit an allusion to the day of Pentecost.¹¹⁴ It should be noted that on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fell *like* tongues of fire; the fire itself did not fall. The words of John the Baptist were reflective upon the book of Isaiah:

¹⁵ **Look, the Lord will come with fire
 His chariots are like the whirlwind
 to execute His anger with fury
 and His rebuke with flames of fire.**

¹⁶ **For the Lord**

113. Barclay, “Luke.” 169.

114. This interpretation is presented by Bivin and Blizzard, *Understanding the Difficult Words*. 87-93.

**will execute judgment
on all flesh with His fiery sword,
and many will be slain by the Lord.**

Isaiah 66:15-16

“But I have a baptism to be baptized with.” This was not a literal water baptism, but a clear reference to His death and resurrection. Baptism is symbolic of death to one’s sinful nature and a resurrection of new life in Christ.

“Do you think I came here to give peace on earth? No.” (See also Mt. 10:34-39.) This passage is explained in light of the reputation that Jesus is the “Prince of Peace.” His listeners had to decide whether to follow Him or to surrender to peer or family pressures. When one follows a path different from other family member, there is conflict. It was such times that Jesus referred to when He said that He brought division and not peace. There will always be those who reject His message of love, holiness, and living a life in covenant with Him.

09.03.07 Lk. 12:54-59

DISCERN THE TIMES CORRECTLY

⁵⁴ He also said to the crowds: **“When you see a cloud rising in the west, right away you say, ‘A storm is coming,’ and so it does. ⁵⁵ And when the south wind is blowing, you say, ‘It’s going to be a scorcher!’ and it is. ⁵⁶ Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why don’t you know how to interpret this time?**

⁵⁷ **“Why don’t you judge for yourselves what is right? ⁵⁸ As you are going with your adversary to the ruler, make an effort to settle with him on the way. Then he won’t drag you before the judge, the judge hand you over to the bailiff, and the bailiff throw you into prison. ⁵⁹ I tell you, you will never get out of there until you have paid the last cent.”**

“A storm is coming.” While Israel has five distinct climate zones, the entire region essentially has storms and showers in the winter rainy season from December to March and complete dryness from May to October. The exception, of course, is the Negev Desert region to the south. The winter rains come from the Mediterranean Sea in the west while the hot dry summer sirocco

winds¹¹⁵ come from the Arabian Desert to the east¹¹⁶ or Negev Desert to the south. Forecasting the weather has always been rather easy. Those who lived close to the land, such as farmers and fishermen, observed the sky and easily predicted the weather.

The Pharisees were aware of the many Old Testament prophecies pertaining to the Messiah. Jesus had given many signs (i.e. miracles and teachings) as predicted by these prophets to verify who He was, yet they failed to recognize Him. They could predict the weather but chose to be blind to the prophecies which they had studied. Jesus urged them to think and judge these prophetic matters carefully, as judgment was about to fall upon them. In essence, decisions determine destiny.

“Why don’t you judge?” The word does not have reference to judging people in terms of condemnation, but rather, is a reference to the gift of discernment.¹¹⁷ The important aspect of this passage, namely verses 57-59, is that Luke made a reference to the future of the Jewish nation. He spoke more of that future than any other New Testament writer with the exception of the Apostle Paul in Romans 9-11. The context in Luke 12:57-59 is not to any individual, but to the nation – a storm is coming.¹¹⁸ The parable of one standing before the ruler anticipates a brutal judgment, but also a restoration for Israel.¹¹⁹

09.03.08 Lk. 13:1-5

URGENCY OF REPENTANCE.

¹At that time, some people came and reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. ² **And He responded to them**

**“Do you think that these Galileans
were more sinful
than all Galileans because they suffered these things?”**

115. Levy, *The Ruin and Restoration of Israel*. 89.

116. In the first century, the area of today’s modern Jordan was considered to be the northern edge of the Arabian Desert. For a study of historical maps of this region, see Nebenzahl, Kenneth. *Maps of the Holy Land*. New York: Abbeville Press. 1986.

117. See the discussion on hypocrites/hypocrisy in 08.03.04 (Mt. :5-15) and in “Pharisees” in 02.01.14.

118. This writer suggests that in today’s world that is rapidly decaying and becoming anti-Christian, pastors and teachers need to do the same – judge for yourselves and become like the sons of Issachar who understood the times and knew what to do.

119. For further study, see Kinman, “Debtor’s Prison and the Future of Israel (Luke 12:57-59).” 411-26.

**³ No, I tell you;
but unless you repent,
you will all perish as well!**

**⁴ Or those 18 that the tower in Siloam fell on and killed –
do you think they were more sinful than all the
people who live in Jerusalem?**

**⁵ No, I tell you;
but unless you repent,
you will all perish as well.”**

This discussion was another attempt by the Pharisees to trap Jesus. The conversation is about two separate incidents.

1. An incident in which Pilate’s soldiers killed a number of Galilean worshipers in the temple who were offering sacrifices.¹²⁰
2. A tower construction accident at the pool of Siloam that resulted in 18 deaths.

The leading Pharisees thought they had created the perfect trap. Since Jesus lived most of His life in the Galilee area, it was expected that He would be sympathetic to those Galileans who were murdered by Pilate. Had He demonstrated such emotions and feelings, the Pharisees would have reported Him as a seditionist against Rome.

On the other hand, there were others who died in a construction accident. It was the common opinion that such accidents were an act of God in response to some horrible sin for which victims were supposedly responsible.¹²¹ Were Jesus to express sympathy for the eighteen who died, He would come against God who cursed them. The idea that an accident or illness could be the natural result of a fallen world had never occurred to them.

If He failed to express emotion and concern for any of them, He would be hardhearted toward the victims and their families. But Jesus was not about to be trapped by their cunning plans or by their misunderstanding of divine judgments. He simply informed them that they too needed to repent or they would perish. The crowds marveled at His response while His critics simply became even more frustrated.

120. Pilate was known for his cruelty and corruption. Later, after he massacred a group of Samaritans, he was recalled to Rome, and is reported to have committed suicide in exile.

121. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 17, page 6.

“The Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.” Josephus recorded that the Galileans were especially susceptible to a revolt because they were supportive of the rebellious Zealot movement.¹²² The historian essentially said that Herod the Great had built an aqueduct to bring water to the temple area for washing the blood away from the altar and for personal use by the Sadducees,¹²³ but he died before the project was completed. For more than two decades it was at a standstill until Pilate came to power, he continued the construction. However, since he believed it was for religious use, the temple should pay for it. So Pilate raided the temple treasury to finance the completion of the project.¹²⁴ The Jews considered the theft a sacrilege and revolted. Pilate’s militaristic response was reflective of his sadistic character as noted in the historian’s account:

So he (Pilate) called a great number of his soldiers, who carried daggers under their garments. And sent them to a place where they might surround them (the Jews). He asked the Jews himself to go away, but they boldly protested against him. He gave the soldiers that signal which they had beforehand agreed on. They laid upon the Jews much greater blows than Pilate had commanded them, and equally punished those who were tumultuous, and those who were not, nor did they spare them in the least since the people were unarmed . . . There were a great number slain by this means, and others of them ran away wounded; and thus an end was put to this sedition.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.3.2 (61-62)¹²⁵

Numerous scholars have stated that this horrific massacre may have caused the immense hostility between Pilate and Herod Antipas mentioned in Luke 13:1. There was enmity between them until Jesus was brought to trial during the Passion Week.¹²⁶

122. Josephus, *The Life of Flavius Josephus* 92.17.

123. See photo of Herod’s Aqueduct pipe at 09.03.08.A. According to author of *Pseudo-Aristeas* 90, the pipe was sealed with lead and lime mortar.

124. See also Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.4.1-2.

125. Parenthesis mine.

126. See 15.04.05 for more information.



09.03.08.A. HEROD'S AQUEDUCT PIPE. A water line that once served the temple now protrudes from the hillside of a busy Jerusalem street between the Hinnom Valley and the Old City. Herod the Great is credited for bringing to the temple fresh and continuous flowing water from a spring near Bethlehem. This pipe, only 10-12 inches in diameter, snaked along hillsides for ten miles from Bethlehem to the temple and has a vertical drop of only 200 feet – an incredible engineering accomplishment. See also 10.01.20.A. Photographed in 2001 by the author.

The maintenance of the infrastructure of Jerusalem – the walls, water-channels, towers, storm sewers, maintenance workers and street sweepers¹²⁷ – were all paid for by the temple.¹²⁸ The irony is that when Pilate raided temple funds to complete the construction of the aqueduct, he essentially finished the work that the religious aristocrats were supposed to do in the first place.

“Tower in Siloam.” Scholars have often wondered about the identity of the “tower.” Since there was no military post at the tower, it is believed that it may have been one of the many columns or towers that carried an overhead aqueduct. There are two possible explanations:

127. Since Jerusalem was considered to be a Holy City, the streets were swept every day (Babylonian Talmud, *Baba Metzja* 26A and *Pesahim* 7A). The Valley of Hinnom had a dump site by the dung gate where all the filth was thrown. With the exception of rose gardens, gardens were not permitted in the city because they required dung (Mishnah, *Maaseroth* 2.5; Babylonian Talmud, *Baba Kamma* 82B). This illustrates to what measures the laws of purity were taken by the time of Jesus.

128. Mishnah, *Shekalim* 4.2.

1. A construction accident. Towers and temporary scaffolding were necessary to construct masonry buildings.
2. Destruction as the result of the earthquake of 31 B.C., which killed an estimated 10,000 people.¹²⁹ However, the context suggests the accident was a recent event – certainly within the lifetime of Jesus.

Most scholars seem to lean toward a construction accident, as any other event would have had higher casualties that would have been mentioned in this passage.

“Unless you repent.” The word *repent* in Greek is *metanoias*, which literally means *to change one’s mind*. However, in biblical terms as well as first century Jewish culture, to change one’s mind also meant to change one’s lifestyle to match his new way of thinking.¹³⁰ This phrase was a warning to national Israel and was mentioned twice in poetic style. This predicted judgment is in reference to the judgment of eternal punishment, but is also of prophetic light to the Jewish-Roman era of A.D. 66-70. Two Hebrew prophets, Hosea (9:10) and Joel (1:7) also gave similar warnings. Joel gave his warning in the 9th century B.C. and about a century later Hosea gave his. Since these two prophets spoke, the people refused to repent and destruction fell upon them in 722/21 B.C. and again in 586/585 B.C.¹³¹ Now it was time for judgement to fall a third time, but it would come in greater measure. Therefore, their proleptic prophecies (prophecies that have been partly fulfilled, but will be completely fulfilled in the future) were fulfilled.

As was previously stated, this was after the turning point of His ministry. He would no longer heal hundreds or give clear teachings; he would heal individuals and teach in parables. The focus was on training His disciples and the coming Gentile church. In this parable Jesus said that life is uncertain, no one knows when they will pass on and therefore, one needs to be ready to meet his Creator at any time.

09.03.09 Lk. 13:6-9

UNFRUITFUL FIG TREE.

⁶ And He told this parable: “A man had a fig tree that was planted in his vineyard. He came looking for fruit on it and found none.” ⁷ He told the vineyard worker,

129. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:294.

130. Barclay, “Mark.” 26; Richardson, “Repent.” 191-92.

131. For more information, read about the Samaritans in 02.01.17, the Assyrians in 03.02.04-05, and the Babylonians in 03.02.08-10.

**‘Listen, for three years I have come looking for fruit
on this fig tree and haven’t found any.
Cut it down! Why should it even waste the soil?’**

⁸“But he replied to him,

**‘Sir, leave it this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it.
⁹ Perhaps it will bear fruit next year,
but if not, you can cut it down.’”**

It normally takes three years for a fig tree to mature and produce fruit. After that there are three seasons of fig production every year.

1. The early fig. The *bekurah* fig ripens at the end of June, sometimes earlier, in the Jerusalem area. This tasty fruit is said to be the forerunner of the main crop in Isaiah 28:4.
2. The summer fig which is the main crop ripens in August and is preserved in the form of fig cakes.
3. The *pag* is the winter fig or unripe fig. It ripens only after the leaves have fallen off the tree.¹³²

The fig tree has always been symbolic of national Israel,¹³³ and Israel had been God’s chosen people for centuries, yet this “tree” remained fruitless. The “fruit” that Israel was to produce was to declare the wonders of God to the world, to be evangelistic, and to spread the news of the divine covenant to the entire human race. Instead, Israel became smug and conceited as being God’s only chosen people. Those Gentiles who did convert to Judaism became just as evil as many of their mentors. Jesus would reveal His plan later when He was in Caesarea Philippi (Mt. 16:18) and again in Jerusalem (Mt. 21:43). This new plan would be the fulfillment of ancient prophecies through which God would minister to humanity through the present church age. It should be noted that even though some Pharisees were very evangelistic, Jesus apparently did not give any credit for this. In fact, He condemned it saying that the converts were as bad as they were (Mt. 23:15). One Jewish scholar said this zeal for evangelism was based upon Isaiah 2:20

132. Geikie, *The Life and Words*. 2:640.

133. Isa. 60:21; Jer. 45:4; *Jubilees* 1.16; 7.34; 21.24; *1 Enoch* 10:16; 84.6; 93.2; 1 QS 8.5; 11.8; CD 1.7. See discussions on the fig tree in 02.03.04 “Education,” and 13.02.01.

and Jeremiah 16:18 and peaked in the Hasmonean period (c. 165 – 37 B.C.).¹³⁴ Therefore, by the time Jesus spoke on the issue, the Pharisees had a long history of evangelism that Jesus considered to be “bad fruit.” His message was understood by all.

“A man had a fig tree that was planted in his vineyard.” Vineyards at this time included more than grapevines, they contained fruit trees as well. The word “vineyard” encompassed the definition for “orchard.” The tradition began in Egypt where the winemaker included other fruits in his wine to modify the flavor.¹³⁵

The tree had no fruit which indicated that it was useless in light of its purpose – to have fruit. Likewise, the unbelief of the Jews could not “make of none effect” the faithfulness of God. In essence, it was as if they abolished (Gk. *katargeo*, 2673) God’s Word.¹³⁶

“For three years I have come looking for fruit.” The length of the ministry of Jesus is unknown but has generally been assumed to be three and one-half years in duration. This time period is problematic because it compresses too many events into the final six months of the life of Christ. Some scholars have suggested that this parable offers a logical solution in that Jesus implied that He would have a four and a half year ministry.¹³⁷ Regardless, the fig tree in Scriptures has been symbolic for national Israel similar to the vine of Isaiah 5:1-7. In this sense, the people are given additional time to receive the Word from the Lord.¹³⁸

09.03.10 Lk.13:10-17

STOOPED WOMAN HEALED

¹⁰As He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath, ¹¹ a woman was there who had been disabled by a spirit for over 18 years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. ¹² When Jesus saw her, He called out to her, “Woman, you are free of your disability.” ¹³ Then He laid His hands on her, and instantly she was restored and began to glorify God.

134. Kaufmann, *Matenot Ha-Kodesh* 101-15; Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 125.

135. Freeman, *The New Manners and Customs of the Bible*. 508.

136. Vine, “Abolish.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:3.

137. Cheney, *The Life of Christ in Stereo*. 226-28.

138. In an historic sense, two trees have symbolized Israel, the fig and the date palm. The image of date palms is seen on ancient coins and relief carvings. However, only the fig tree has any biblical references and symbolism to the people and nation.

¹⁴ But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, responded by telling the crowd, “There are six days when work should be done; therefore come on those days and be healed and not on the Sabbath day.”

¹⁵ But the Lord answered him and said, “Hypocrites! Doesn’t each one of you untie his ox or donkey from the feeding trough on the Sabbath and lead it to water? ¹⁶ Satan has bound this woman, a daughter of Abraham, for 18 years — shouldn’t she be untied from this bondage on the Sabbath day?”

¹⁷ When He had said these things, all His adversaries were humiliated, but the whole crowd was rejoicing over all the glorious things He was doing.

Scholars believe this is the last recorded synagogue incident in the life of Jesus. In the audience there was a woman who apparently had a curvature of the spine. Her condition would appear to have been a purely physical problem, but she was bound by Satan. Such a combination of illness and demonic oppression was recognized in Judaism.¹³⁹ Jesus said, **“Woman, you are free of your disability,”** then she was freed from her disability, and He laid hands on her. This suggests a demonic stronghold because Jesus never laid hands on anyone under demonic oppression or possession. If He touched the person, it was only after that individual was “loosed” or “restored” from the oppressor. Jesus did not come to heal the sick, heal the blind, raise the dead, or do other miracles *per se*, but He came to destroy the works of the devil which cause sickness, blindness, and death so that man would be restored into the image of God. Amazingly, the synagogue leader was incensed at the healing and, thereby, displayed complete lack of compassion for her infirmity.

“She was bent over.” Some medical scholars believe this woman suffered from *spondylitis ankylopoietica*, an ailment that is a fusion of the spinal joints.¹⁴⁰ Her bones were not only inflexible, but they were a long rigid mass of bone in a bent-over position.

The synagogue leader, or president, is a clear illustration of the problem Jesus had with national Israel. The woman was referred to as a “daughter of Abraham,” and, as such, was a rightful heir to all of the blessings promised by the Abrahamic Covenant.¹⁴¹ Yet the restrictive Oral Laws of “national Israel” kept her from receiving what was rightfully hers. Into the life of Israel came

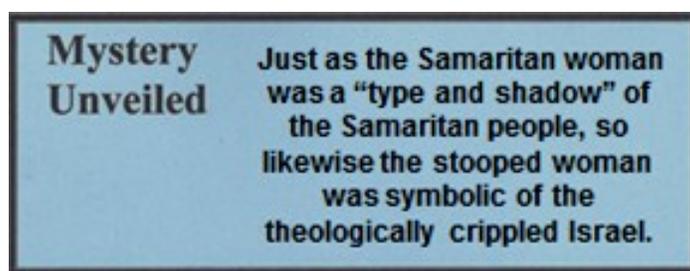
139. See Dead Sea Scroll 1QapGen 20:16-29.

140. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 317.

141. For a study of Jewish covenants from a messianic Jewish perspective, see Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*.

Jesus, to set people free from their oppression – but the religious leaders opposed Him. They were as rigid and inflexible as she had been.

The nation was given the laws of God so that the Jewish people would live holy lives and tell other nations to do the same. Israel failed to do this; consequently, the nation was invaded, tribes taken captive, and the land plundered by foreign armies.¹⁴² Once they returned to the Promised Land, they had a host of invading armies: the Persians, the Greeks, and finally the Romans.¹⁴³ Just as the stooped woman had lived a crippled life, so Israel had become spiritually crippled. Jesus called her to Himself and healed her, just as He desired to call Israel to Himself and heal the nation. But rather than accepting Him or His healing, national Israel rejected Him as represented by the ruler of the synagogue who rebuked Him for performing a healing on the Sabbath Day.¹⁴⁴ Jesus then informed the ruler that it was permissible for him to untie a donkey and give it water on the Sabbath, yet this woman who was heir to the covenant of Abraham could not receive a blessing on the holy day. Jesus demonstrated compassion while her rabbi showed only religious legalism, which is why Jesus was merciless toward him. The lesson is simple: Anyone who desires compassion from Jesus must be compassionate to others.



09.03.11 Mt. 13:10-17 (See also Mk. 4:10-12; Lk. 8:9-10)

PURPOSE OF PARABLES

¹⁰ Then the disciples came up and asked Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?”

¹¹ He answered them, “Because the secrets of the kingdom of heaven have been given for you to know, but it has not been given to them. ¹² For whoever has, more will be given to him, and he will have more than enough. But whoever does not have, even

142. See 03.02.04 and 03.02.08.

143. For the Persians see 03.04.02, the Greeks see 03.04.07, and the Romans see 03.05.24.

144. An excellent resource for further study is Hagner, “Jesus and the Synoptic Sabbath Controversies.” 270-88.

what he has will be taken away from him.¹³ For this reason I speak to them in parables, because looking they do not see, and hearing they do not listen or understand.¹⁴ Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in them, which says:

You will listen and listen;

Yet never understand.

And you will look and look,

Yet never perceive.

**¹⁵ For this people's heart has grown callous;
their ears are hard of hearing,
and they have shut their eyes;
otherwise they might see with their eyes
and hear with their ears,
understand with their hearts**

and turn back—

and I would cure them (Isa. 6:9-10).

**¹⁶ “But your eyes are blessed
because they do see,
and your ears
because they do hear!**

**¹⁷ For I assure you:
Many prophets and righteous people longed to see the things you see
yet didn't see them;
to hear the things you hear
yet didn't hear them.**

Because Jewish leadership rejected Jesus, He began to use parables in His public teaching, and privately explained their meaning to His disciples and followers (Mt. 13:10). The parable, or the Hebrew term *mashal*, was a teaching method familiar to them since the days of the Judges.¹⁴⁵ His critics who had hardened their hearts against Him would not be able to understand; so they continued in their determined unbelief.¹⁴⁶ But His teachings His disciples and followers were to understand pertained to the Kingdom of God / Heaven.

145. See Judges 9:7, Ezekiel 13:11, Isaiah 5:1 and others.

146. See Appendix 10, “The Parables of Jesus.”

“Because the secrets of the kingdom of heaven.” Some scholars use the word *mysteria* instead of *secrets* translated from the Greek word *mysterion*. The word appears only in this passage and its parallels; a technical term that refers to the divine revelation that was hidden until the proper time for its revelation.¹⁴⁷ It does not refer to anything that is complicated, difficult, mystical, or related to a mystery religion, but refers to that which is clear to the insider but not to the outsider.¹⁴⁸ The *mystery* of the Kingdom of God is the character and personality of God renewed in the life of every believer that extended to all Jews and Gentiles.

“You will listen and listen.” This quotation from Isaiah 6:9 indicates that the religious leaders did not want to understand and, therefore, the truth was hidden from them. God does not force anyone to understand His truths. He provides clarity of mind to those who wish to understand and if His word is rejected the unbeliever is given what he desires – darkness of truth.

Parables are figures of speech and explain divine principles by comparing a known realm to an unknown realm. That is why Jesus often used the literary formula phrase, “The Kingdom of God is like . . .” Parables always have a single theme or single answer to a question, but are never to be used to develop doctrine. They are short stories that often include a key figure, such as a king, farmer, or shepherd who is representative of God. He used a variety of figures of speech such as puns, riddles, and hyperboles (exaggerations) in his parables as seen in Appendix 11.¹⁴⁹

A Lesson in First Century Hermeneutics:

09.03.11.X The First Principle Of A Parable.

Generally, the first principle *in* a parable is the only principle *of* the parable. Other details are not to be stressed, but they “paint the picture” for ease of memorization. Most of the parables that Jesus presented have these qualities:

1. The term *parable* is translated from the Greek word *parabole* (3850) which literally means *to place side by side* or *comparison*.¹⁵⁰ By using parables, Jesus set human events and affairs aside spiritual concepts so these could be compared. He essentially taught the Kingdom of God by beginning with the “known” (human experiences) and going to the “unknown” (spiritual concepts).

147. Hendry, “Mystery.” 156-57; See also Col. 1:26-27; 2:2;4:3; 2 Thess. 2:7; 1 Tim. 3:9, 16; Rev. 1:20; 10:7 17:5, 7.

148. Barclay, “Mark.” 91; Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 237.

149. See “Kinds of Poetic Parallelisms used in the Gospels” in Appendix 11.

150. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 241; Herbert, “Parable.” 162; Vine, “Figure.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:236, and “Parable.” 2:457.

2. Parables contain less than holy human characteristics and are presented to warn the audience.
3. Parables reveal a principle of God to men and the world. Essentially, these describe the conduct that is desirable or a characteristic of God and His relationship with humanity.¹⁵¹ Many of the parables of Jesus convey a truth that could not be communicated in any other way.
4. In nearly every parable, there are two characters that appear to be significant, but one is ignoble and the other is always noble.

The poetic style of a parable is a memory device children learned at home and in the synagogue school. Hence, everyone knew how to speak and think poetically. When listening they did so with a degree of anticipation because parables have predictable patterns of ideas. Jesus and His parables are inseparable. To understand the parables is to understand Jesus and vice versa.¹⁵² Thinking, speaking, and teaching with parables were common at this time. The use of parables was certainly not new to the listeners of Jesus as there are many in the Hebrew Bible and other literary sources. To understand the parables of Jesus, one should understand rabbinic literature as well, since Jesus taught in the typical rabbinic style.¹⁵³ Possibly the most amazing feature of the parables of Jesus is that the religious leaders did *not* understand them.

The Jewish people looked upon Jesus with wonder and full expectation that He would re-establish the Davidic Empire of His famous forefather. Knowing this, Jesus proceeded to give seven prophetic parables concerning His heavenly kingdom. These parables summarize the contrasts between the expectations of the Jews and what Jesus was about to institute in His Kingdom of God.¹⁵⁴

There are essentially four reasons why Jesus used parables.¹⁵⁵

1. People were already familiar with parables since there are 58 of them in the Hebrew Bible. The most famous one is of the prophet Nathan and King David (2 Sam. 12:1-7). Furthermore, the rabbis used them frequently in their teaching. The Talmud and other

151. Metzger, *The New Testament*. 141-43.

152. Marshall, "Parables." 3:1154.

153. Young, *Jesus the Jewish Theologian*. 75.

154. Richards, *The Bible Reader's Companion*. 615.

155. For further study see two excellent works by Brad H. Young. *Jesus and His Jewish Parables*. (Tulsa, OK: Gospel Research Foundation, 1989) and *Jesus the Jewish Theologian*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995).

Jewish writings contain some five thousand parables, many of which originated in the Old Testament era.¹⁵⁶

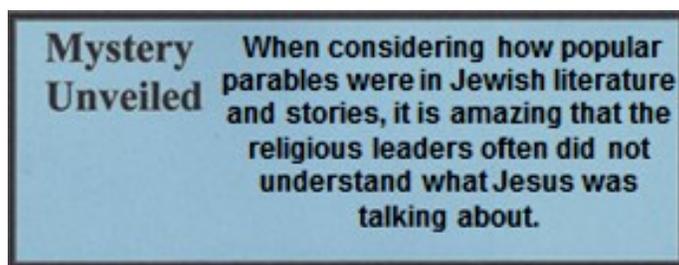
2. These were learning tools. When Jesus used parables, He structured them around events or stories that people already knew. This helped them to remember them.

3. A parable is an excellent tool with which to describe an abstract idea in a pictorial form. They already thought pictorially since Hebrew is a pictorial language.¹⁵⁷ Little wonder then, that the Apostle Paul once said the following comment about God:

For His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what He has made. As a result, people are without excuse.

Romans 1:20

4. Finally and possibly most important, a parable forces a person to think for himself. Someone is more likely to accept a new idea, such as the Kingdom of God concept, if he thinks through it and accepts it. While it seems that Jesus deliberately cloaked His message within the secrecy of a parable, He in fact challenged and compelled listeners to think for themselves and then render a decision. His critics were blinded because they permitted their own ideas to dominate what they heard from the Savior.



09.03.12 Mk. 4:33-34; Mt. 13:34-35

PARABLES FULFILL PROPHECY

156. Bivin and Blizzard, *Understanding Difficult Words*. 73-78.

157. An example of pictorial imagery is the Genesis account of Eve being created from Adam's rib. This is an ancient Hebraic way of saying that God took the rib from Adam's side to make him complete. This interpretation has no reflection upon the actual physical event of what or how it occurred.

Mk. ³³ He would speak the word to them with many parables like these, as they were able to understand. ³⁴ And He did not speak to them without a parable. Privately, however, He would explain everything to His own disciples.

Mt. ³⁴ Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables, and He would not speak anything to them without a parable, ³⁵ so that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled:

**I will open My mouth in parables;
I will declare things kept secret
from the foundation of the world (Ps. 78:2).¹⁵⁸**

09.03.13 Mt. 13:1-9 (See also Mk. 4:1-9; Lk. 8:4-8) Sea of Galilee

PARABLE OF THE SOWER

On that day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea. ² Such large crowds gathered around Him that He got into a boat and sat down, while the whole crowd stood on the shore. ³ Then He told them many things in parables, saying:

“Consider the sower who went out to sow.

⁴ As he was sowing,

A some seed fell along the path,

and the birds came and ate them up.

B ⁵ Others fell on rocky ground,

Where there wasn’t much soil,

C and they sprang up quickly,

Since the soil wasn’t deep.

D ⁶ But when the sun came up

C’ they were scorched,

and since they had no root, they withered.

158. Concerning parables, see the reference to Isaiah 6:9-10 Jesus made in Matthew 13:15.

B' ⁷ Others fell among thorns,

And the thorns came up and choked them.

A' ⁸ Still others fell on good ground

and produced a crop:

some 100, some 60, and some 30 times what was sown.

⁹ Anyone who has ears should listen!"

Because some synagogues were closed to Him, some scholars have suggested that He may have been excommunicated from them. For example, He was welcomed to speak in His Nazareth congregation, but after the sermon that He gave, they wanted to throw Him over a cliff. Does anyone think that He was ever welcomed back?

Messianic scholars say that this parable (Mt. 13:1-9) is a reflection of Isaiah 55:20-11, because Isaiah's passage is a comparative narrative relating the rain and the sower to the word of God and its intended divine purpose. For memory purposes, there are three kinds of losses that are balanced with three kinds of abundance. The losses were seeds that were devoured by birds, scorched by the sun, and others choked by thorns and weeds. But those that grew were beyond abundant – some a hundred fold, some sixty fold, and others thirty fold abundance. Note the parallel themes in the following two verses:

**¹⁰ For just as rain and snow fall from heaven
and do not return there
without saturating the earth
and making it germinate and sprout,
and providing seed to sow
and food to eat,**

**¹¹ so My word that comes from My mouth
will not return to Me empty,
but it will accomplish what I please
and will prosper in what I send it to do."**

Isaiah 55:10-11

There are two views on how farmers sowed their seed throughout history.

1. They sowed their seed on the ground and then plowed the soil.
2. They plowed the field, sowed the seed, and then plowed perpendicular to the direction first plowed.

When the seeds were sown they were either,

1. Cast by hand¹⁵⁹
2. Or a sack with small holes was tied to the back of a donkey and the beast was walked back and forth across the field.

Regardless of the method of casting seed, it was a highly inefficient method of planting crops. Seeds often fell in areas that were rocky, full of thorns or along a pathway where they could not sprout. This method of sowing did not change until the beginning of the agricultural revolution in England in the early 1700s.

Critics have commented on the multiplication of seed “a hundred, sixty, or thirty times” as being an exaggeration. However, a non-Jewish witness of this era confirms the accuracy of the words of Jesus. Marcus Terentius Varro (116 – 27 B.C.) was a Roman scholar thought to have been of the equestrian rank and, as such, had the finances for extensive travel and the establishment of his own library. He produced 74 literary works on numerous topics, including agriculture. In his work, *Agriculture*, he identified three areas in the Roman Empire where crop yields were one hundred fold:

1. In Sybaris located in Italy,
2. Near Gadara in the district of Syria, and
3. In Byzacium located in Africa

Of interest in this study is Gadara that Varro mentioned as being in Syria because this region was under the Roman governmental district headquarters in Damascus, Syria.¹⁶⁰ More specifically, he wrote,

159. To “cast by hand” means to take a handful of seeds and throw them by hand over a desired area.

160. It should be noted that the tetrarchs, puppet kings, and other rulers of Galilee, Judea, Samaria, Perea, and Baniyas were also under the control of district headquarters located in Damascus at this time.

Around Sybaris in Italy the normal yield is said to be even a hundred to one, and a like yield is reported near Gadara in Syria, and for the district of Byzacium in Africa. It also makes a great difference whether the planting is on virgin soil or on what is called restibilis— land cultivated every year — or on vervactum, which is allowed sometimes to lie fallow between crops.

Varro, *Agriculture* 1:44:2¹⁶¹

The area Varro described near Gadara is in the region southeast of the Sea of Galilee. It has the same soil composition as the Galilee area. Therefore, when Jesus spoke of a hundred fold increase, it was not an exaggeration; it was a multiplication factor with which the Galileans were well acquainted.

In addition to Varro, another author who described the bounty of this land is Herodotus. He said that,

In grain, it is so fruitful as to yield commonly two-hundred fold; and when the production is the greatest, even three-hundred fold.

Herodotus, *The Histories* 1.93

The three ancient witnesses concerning the abundant crop yields clearly testify that the biblical narrative is not an exaggeration.

“Anyone who has ears should listen.” The Greek literally translated reads, “He who has ears, let him hear.”¹⁶² It means emphatically to “pay attention!”¹⁶³ This strange passage hardly makes any sense to the modern reader, but to the first century Jew it was an invitation to seek the deeper meaning of what Jesus was speaking. In essence, Jesus said that there are many who hear but they do not understand or perceive His words. However, they should understand.

09.03.14 Mt. 13:18-23 (See also Mk. 4:13-20; Lk. 8:11-15)

PARABLE OF SOWER EXPLAINED

161. http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Varro/de_Re_Rustica/1*.html Retrieved July 9, 2011.

162. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:80.

163. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 204.

- 18 “You, then, listen to the parable of the sower:**
- 19 When anyone hears the word about the kingdom
and doesn’t understand it,
the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart.
This is the one sown along the path.**
- 20 And the one sown on rocky ground
this is one who hears the word
and immediately receives
it with joy.
21 Yet he has no root in himself, but is short-lived.
When pressure or persecution comes because of the word,
immediately he stumbles.**
- 22 Now the one sown among the thorns
this is one who hears the word,
but the worries of this age and the seduction of wealth choke the
word, and it becomes unfruitful.**
- 23 But the one sown on the good ground
this is one who hears
and understands the word,
who does bear fruit and yields:
some 100, some 60, some 30 times what was sown.”**

Parables illustrated His teachings through careful thought and discovery and, therefore, listeners were challenged to make a decision. To get them to change their ideas was difficult for several reasons:

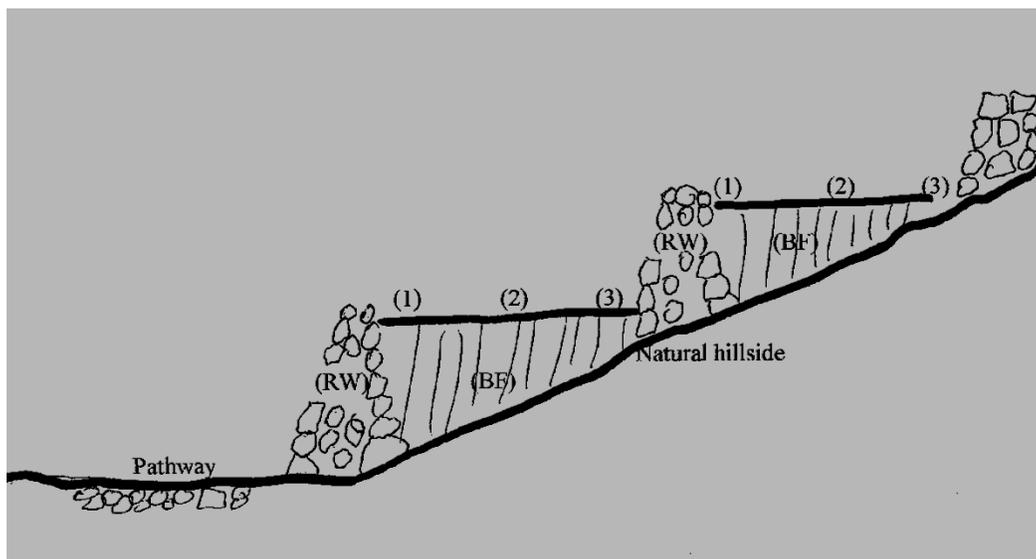
1. Everyone had preconceived ideas of the messiah.¹⁶⁴
2. Many had preferred the cultural popular Hellenistic lifestyle rather than obedience to God.
3. Many preferred a materialistic life over a sacrificial one.

164. See 12.03.01.Q1 “What ‘Messianic problems’ did the Jewish leaders have with Jesus?” and 12.03.01.A “Chart of Key Points of the Messianic Problems.” See also 02.03.09 “Messianic Expectations”; 05.04.02.Q1 “What were the Jewish expectations of the Messiah?” and Appendix 25: “False Prophets, Rebels, Significant Events, and Rebellions that Impacted the First Century Jewish World.”

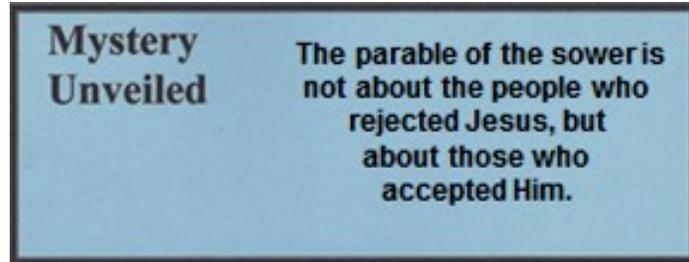
An example is found in the Parable of the Sower, where Jesus mentioned four types of soil:

1. Soil along a walkway, common path or road represents those persons who hear the Word but are indifferent to it.
2. Stony ground represents seeds that sprouted, those persons who heard the message but quickly forgot it.
3. Thorny ground represents seeds that sprouted but got choked out because the thorny bushes over took them. It represents those who received the message but permitted the “thorns” of worldly affairs choke the Word of God out of their lives.
4. Good ground represents seeds that produced a plentiful harvest as well as a believer who did likewise.

These types of soil were commonly found on hillside terraced farms. For centuries peasant farmers terraced their land to prevent erosion and produce bountiful crops. A terraced area was created when a stone retaining wall, usually three to four feet high, was erected parallel along the side of the hill and backfilled with fertile ground to create a level area (see illustration 09.03.14.A below). Where the filled-in area met the natural hillside, there was generally little or poor quality dirt and only weeds and thorns could grow there. It was here that another terraced retaining wall was built with its backside also filled in. Therefore, while the large area of the terraced land was highly productive, soil near the top of one retaining wall was stony, as was the soil near the bottom of another retaining wall, but the area between could produce a hundred fold.



09.03.14.A. AN ILLUSTRATION OF TERRACED LAND. Retaining walls (RW) were built about two to four feet high and backfilled (BF) with dirt brought in from other areas to create a level area. Soil near the top of a retaining wall (1) was stony. While soil near the large center area was fertile and productive (2), the soil near the bottom of the next retaining wall was poor thorny soil (3). Consequently, a hillside that had poor agricultural prospects was changed into highly productive land. Illustration by the author.



The parable is not concerned about preaching the Word, but rather, the attitude and response of the people who hear the gospel; not about people who reject Jesus, but those who accepted Him. Obviously not everyone who accepted Jesus stayed with Him. Therefore, in a very real way, this parable is one of productivity for the Kingdom of God. The seed will always be ready to grow, regardless of how it is received.



09.03.14.B. OLIVE TREES ON TERRACED HILLSIDE. A grove of olive trees grows on a terraced hillside where the retaining walls are in poor condition due to a lack of maintenance. Photograph by the author.

Some seeds may fall along the rocks, such as along the terraced wall or the hill country north of Galilee and close to the Golan Heights. Some may fall along the Roman roads like the *Via Maris*, and some may fall among thorns that resulted from the ground being cursed, some may fall in the rich fertile valley of Galilee where the most bountiful wheat in Israel grew. Every Jew who heard Jesus speak was very well aware of these illustrations; word-pictures of the seed are in reality the Word of God with the intent of a bountiful harvest. Jesus referred to four types of disciples who were involved with Torah studies. The message of Jesus was the fulfillment of the Torah. All disciples are expected to produce a harvest of some type, whatever their calling. However, any potential harvest is dependent upon the condition of the soil, meaning the condition of the heart of the one who hears the Word (receives the seed), and how that Word is nurtured, cultivated, and disciplined into a mature believer who brings forth bountiful fruit.

This parable follows the illustration given by Isaiah who spoke of the rain and snow that prepared the soil for seed, so the seed would sprout and eventually provide for bread (Isa. 55:10). The prophet then used this pictorial illustration to say that in a similar manner the Word of God will go forth, be productive, and accomplish its intended purpose (Isa. 55:11). In the days of Jesus, this passage was understood as describing the study of Torah. However, while many chose to follow Jesus, others became quite hostile and for this reason He quoted Isaiah 6:9-10:

⁹ And He replied:

Go! Say to these people:

**Keep listening,
but do not understand;
keep looking,
but do not perceive.
¹⁰ Dull the minds of these people;**

**deafen their ears
and blind their eyes;
otherwise they might see
with their eyes
and hear
with their ears
and understand with their minds,
turn back, and be healed.**

Isaiah 6:9-10

Neither Isaiah nor Jesus desired people to have clouded minds; both gave a clear illustration of the Word of God. But some people chose not to follow and, as a result, they stumbled. As every pastor knows all too well, not everyone in his congregation is willing to listen and obey, because every church has the “four types of soil.” In this case, Jesus not only gave the parable but also its explanation. In the Parable of the Sower, which might be better called the Parable of the Soils, Jesus described the various responses to His ministry. Nonetheless, there are three important points about the farmer that pertain to the sowing and reaping narrative.

1. The sower reaps what he sows
2. The sower will reap after he sows, in a different season
3. The sower always expects to reap more than he has sown.

**⁷ Therefore, brothers,
be patient until the Lord’s coming.
See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth and
is patient with it
until it receives the early and the late rains.**

**⁸ You also must be patient.
Strengthen your hearts, because the Lord’s coming is near.**

James 5:7-8

If the word of God is considered a seed, it will be rejected by some people (the poor soil). Others will accept it for a while but then return to their worldly ways. Still others will decide to accept it and permit it to transform their lives. They will produce a bountiful crop, as demonstrated by the good works and ministry that will come from their lives. The harvest imagery is a common figure representing the final gathering of souls for God’s kingdom (Joel 3:13; Rev. 14:14-20). However, there is also a counterfeit sower who sows evil in the hearts of men. For that reason, the parable of the wheat and tares follows the parable of the sower above.

“Pressure.” The Greek term *thlipsis* (2347), means *anything which burdens the spirit*. The term includes extreme pressure that results from the calamities of war (Mt. 24:21, 29).

“Understands the word.” The term *understand* is not related solely to intellectual knowledge, but includes the understanding that to be a follower of Jesus there will be times of suffering and persecution.

Jesus and other orthodox rabbis based their teachings on various Old Testament passages. Therefore, it can be expected that many of their parables and stories were similar. Jesus, being a Master Teacher, built upon various stories and life experiences that His audience already knew. The four soils parable was one that was common knowledge, but a version of it was recorded by a Rabbi Haggai bar Eleazar who is believed to have lived a century or two after Jesus.

There are four types [of people] among those who sit in the presence of the rabbis: the sponge, the funnel, the strainer, and the sieve. “The sponge,” which soaks up everything. “The funnel,” which takes in at this end and lets out at the other, “The strainer,” which lets out the wine and retains the dregs. “The sieve,” which removes the chaff and retains the fine flour.

Mishnah, *Pirke Avot* 5:15¹⁶⁵

It is generally assumed by scholars that Rabbi Haggai and other rabbis had basic knowledge of Jesus, but they certainly did not mimic Him. They and Jesus did, however, share a common cultural context and all based their teachings upon the Hebrew Bible and connected the character of God with His people.

Finally, in a note of trivia, the method of planting seeds as described in this parable did not change for centuries until 1701. At that time Jethro Tull (1674 – 1741), an English agricultural pioneer, invented the horse-drawn grain drill that placed seeds in neat rows.¹⁶⁶ This invention was followed by his second invention of the horse-drawn hoe after which he made improvements to the horse-drawn plow (plough). His ideas helped initiate the agricultural revolution. Until his inventions, readers easily identified with the parable, but as agricultural methods changed and people became more distant from farming, modern readers find themselves with challenges of understanding this parable.

09.03.15 Mt. 13:24-30 (See also Mk. 4:26-29)

PARABLE OF THE WHEAT AND TARES

²⁴ He presented another parable to them:

**“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man
who sowed good seed in his field.**

**²⁵ But while people were sleeping, his enemy came,
sowed weeds among the wheat, and left.**

165. Cited by Young, *The Parables of Jesus*, 59.

166. <http://inventors.about.com/library/inventors/bljethrotull.htm>. Retrieved September 15, 2013.

²⁶ When the plants sprouted and produced grain, then the weeds also appeared. ²⁷ The landowner's slaves came to him and said, 'Master, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Then where did the weeds come from?'

²⁸ "An enemy did this!" he told them.

"So, do you want us to go and gather them up?" the slaves asked him.

²⁹ "No," he said. 'When you gather up the weeds, you might also uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At harvest time I'll tell the reapers: Gather the weeds first and tie them in bundles to burn them, but store the wheat in my barn.'



09.03.15.A. WHEAT AND TARES. Wheat (left) and tares grow together in the same field, are similar in appearance, and usually only the farmer can distinguish the difference between them. But by harvest time, the wheat has a full head of grain while the tares fall to the ground as shown. Tares also have a root system that intertwines with the root systems of the wheat, thereby stealing strength from them. Photographed by the author.

The Parable of the Wheat and Tares is a parable of those who call themselves “Christians” and are regular attendees in the local church. Everyone knows that some take their faith much more seriously than do some others. This parable is one of separation – a separation of those who are

truly believers from those who simply mimic the Christian faith. It is one of several parables of separation and is explained in Matthew 13:36-43. Notice the list of characters:

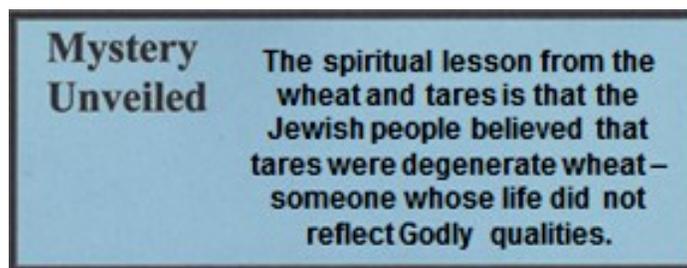
Cast of Characters

Field	The local church
Wheat	Believers who resisted temptations by the evil one
Tares (weeds)	Believers who accepted temptations by the evil one
Son of Man	Final Judge assisted by angels

Tares are known botanically as the “bearded darnel” (*Silium temulentum*) and are, in fact, a poisonous rye grass that if eaten, will cause nausea, convulsions, diarrhea, and frequently death. Its appearance is identical to wheat until its ears (the seed pods) appear.¹⁶⁷ Tares are found throughout the Middle East and in ancient times were not considered to be a different kind of plant, but a form of degenerated wheat.¹⁶⁸ For that reason it was also known as a *bastard wheat*.¹⁶⁹

The listeners understood the “tare” to be a degenerate believer who maintained the image of a faithful follower. As the wheat and the tares are indistinguishable in the field until each produces its own fruit, so likewise those in the congregation are indistinguishable until the fruit of their lives becomes evident.¹⁷⁰ The essence of the message is that one day Jesus Himself will judge the church and separate the true believers from those who claim to be His followers, but have not lived by faith and obedience.

“Tie them in bundles to be burned.” Jesus now begins to use the powerful judgmental law of John the Baptist. Those who faithfully attend church but also maintain a worldly lifestyle will receive their just reward. Decisions determine destiny.



167. Geikie, *The Life and Words*. 2:628.

168. Jerusalem Talmud, *Kiliam* 26d.

169. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 216.

170. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 216; Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 406.

09.03.16 Mt. 13:36-43

PARABLE OF THE WHEAT AND TARES EXPLAINED

³⁶ Then He dismissed the crowds and went into the house. His disciples approached Him and said, “Explain the parable of the weeds in the field to us.”

³⁷ He replied: “The One who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; ³⁸ the field is the world; and the good seed — these are the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the Devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. ⁴⁰ Therefore, just as the weeds are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather from His kingdom everything that causes sin and those guilty of lawlessness. ⁴² They will throw them into the blazing furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father’s kingdom. Anyone who has ears should listen!

This parable indicates that there will be those who are not serious about their faith and, therefore, will not be accepted into the heavenly kingdom. When the Apostle Paul said that salvation was by the confession that Jesus is Lord (Rom. 10:9) he immediately connected that with a heartfelt serious belief. The confession is not to be a shallow and meaningless saying. The early church drew many people into its fold (2 Cor. 9:13; Phil. 1:27) but, of those, there were many who refused to change their sinful way of life. They were the tares of the parable since they looked like true believers but are not.¹⁷¹ Jeremiah spoke of the “uncircumcised ear” (6:10), identifying those who hear the message but chose not to obey the warnings of God. Discipline in the form of excommunication was practiced but is almost unheard of today in Western churches.¹⁷²

“**Blazing furnace.**” The term *furnace* (Gk. *kaminos* 2575) was used for smelting metal and pottery kiln, and was the hottest fire known in biblical times.¹⁷³

09.03.17 Mt. 13:31-32 (See also Mk. 4:30-32; Lk. 13:18-19)

PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

171. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*. 55.

172. See 1 Cor. 5:3-5; Tim. 1:19-20; 2 Jn. 9-10; cf. 2 Cor. 2:5-11.

173. Vine, “Furnace.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:259.

³¹ He presented another parable to them: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. ³² It’s the smallest of all the seeds, but when grown, it’s taller than the vegetables and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the sky come and nest in its branches.”

The mustard plant that Jesus referred to is generally considered to have been black mustard. It is the same plant as found in the United States although the soil and climate conditions in the Jordan Valley permit it to grow near the height of a horse.¹⁷⁴ Scientifically, it is known as *sinapis nigra*, a member of the cruciferae family of plants that has four-petaled flowers. In Jewish writings the term “mustard seed” was an idiom or proverbial meaning anything that was very small, especially if that small item was unclean.¹⁷⁵

“It is the smallest of all the seeds.” Critics have maintained that the mustard seed is not the smallest, but, rather, the orchid seed is. While this is true biologically and globally, Jesus was speaking in a local context to local people, not to a delegation of international botanists. Why would Jesus have made reference to an orchid plant that does not grow in Israel and His listeners would not know anything about it? Since orchids did not exist in this region. Jesus was teaching that the black mustard seed was the smallest without discrepancy. In the Hebraic idiom, the smallest weight and dimensional measurement that could be made was the weight and diameter of a mustard seed.¹⁷⁶ The only reason critics can claim error in this passage is because they examined it through a sterile microscope while ignoring the influences of culture, history, social issues, and the Law. Nonetheless, the mustard seed was the smallest seed known to anyone in the ancient Middle East. A Talmudic writer describes the mustard plant as a tree that grew large enough to cover a potter’s shed.¹⁷⁷ That certainly would have been sufficient for a number of bird species.

Jesus said is that His word and His ministry are like that seed; His kingdom, represented by a few disciples, would expand to a global force. This is essentially a prophecy in parable form because, by the end of the first century, Christianity was a major force throughout the ancient Middle East. Furthermore, He said that before He returns, His words would be spoken to every nation (Gk. ethnic group).¹⁷⁸

174. Geikie, *The Life and Words*. 2:627.

175. Mishnah, *Niddah* 5.2 and *Tobarot* 8.8.

176. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 217.

177. Mishnah, *Niddah* 5:2 and *Toboroth* 8:8.

178. Kaiser, Davids, Bruce, and Brauch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible*. 381-82.

“The birds of the sky come and nest in its branches.” This imagery is reflective of the biblical passages where a great kingdom was as a large tree with birds nesting in its branches.¹⁷⁹ Each of these prophets used the allegory of a tree where birds could find rest and shelter. They likened the tree to a large kingdom that would protect many people and insure their lives. Jesus used the illustration of a mustard seed as it germinated out of the smallest particle and grows to a height of about ten feet.¹⁸⁰ The imagery of a plant to depict God’s people is common in Judaism.¹⁸¹ The rabbis often used expressions related to the smallest seed in the Middle East as a figure of speech for its miniature size.¹⁸² Likewise, the Kingdom of God would germinate out of work of His disciples but would grow to an enormous size (Jn. 17:18).

Finally, and this is an important point, in the Old Testament empires were symbolized by trees. Examples are found in Daniel 4, Ezekiel 7 and 31. Every great empire such as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, began small and grew to massive size. Likewise, the Kingdom of God is as small as a mustard seed, but it will grow to a massive size.



09.03.17.A. YOUNG MUSTARD FLOWERS. Young mustard flowers bloom by the rocky roadside and look like ordinary wild flowers until fully mature, when they become larger than most flowering plants in Israel. Photograph by the author.

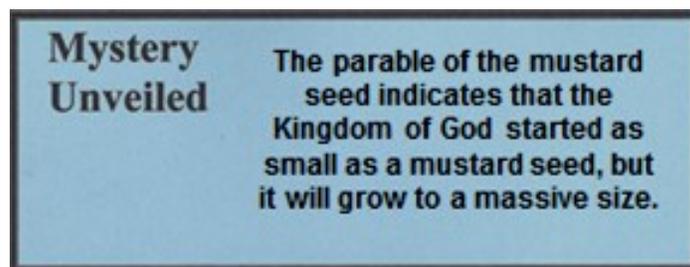
179. Judg. 9:15; Ezek. 17:22-24; 31:3-14, 22-24; Dan. 4:7-23.

180. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 206.

181. Isa. 60:21; Jer. 45:4; *Jubilees* 1.16; 7.34; 21.24; *1 Enoch* 10:16; 84.6; 93.2; 1 QS 8.5; 11.8; CD 1.7.

182. *B'rakhot* 31a and *Leviticus Rabbah* 31:9 on Leviticus 24:2.

On the other hand, in some parables, birds are symbolic of servants of Satan. If this interpretation is correct, then what Jesus was saying was that as the mustard seed grows birds will come to rest in its branches. These birds represent various false teachings and religions that will be attached to or claim to be “Christian.” Jesus repeatedly warned His disciples about false teachers as indicated in Luke 12:1 and Matthew 24:4.



09.03.18 Mt. 13:33 (See also Lk. 13:20-21)

PARABLE OF THE YEAST

³³ He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into 50 pounds¹⁸³ of flour until it spread through all of it.”

Just as Jesus illustrated his ministry with a mustard seed, He also used yeast as the metaphor. Everyone understood how quickly yeast could spread throughout bread dough. In a similar manner, His Word would spread throughout the world. While at times yeast is symbolic of evil,¹⁸⁴ the use here is obviously in reference to the predicted rapid growth of the church.

09.03.19 Mk. 4:21-25 (See also Lk. 8:16-18)

PARABLE OF THE LIGHTED LAMP

²¹ He said to them, “Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don’t you put it on its stand?”

**²² For nothing is concealed
except to be revealed,
And nothing hidden**

183. Literally, “three measures” of flour, which scholars believe would be about 50 pounds. See Green, *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*; Berry, *Interlinear Literal Translation of the Greek New Testament*.

184. Mt. 16:5-12; Lk. 12:1; cf. 1 Cor. 5:6-13.

except to come to light

²³ If anyone has ears to hear,
He should listen!”

²⁴ Then He said to them, “Pay attention to what you hear.
“With the measure you use,
it will be measured
“By the measure you use,
it will be measured and added to you.

²⁵ For to the one who has,
it will be given, and
From the one who does not have,
even what he has will be taken away.”



09.03.19.A. FIRST CENTURY HERODIAN OIL LAMP. This first century Herodian style lamp is easily identified by its fan-shaped spout and fits in the palm of one’s hand. These were molded of clay and fired in a pottery kiln for hardness. The fuel was olive oil and a wick was inserted in the small spout. The

short wick absorbed the oil, then was lit and provided minimal lighting in the home. Jesus used common events and objects of daily life to convey his message. Photograph by the author.

09.03.20 Mk. 4:26-29

PARABLE OF THE SEED GROWING

²⁶ “The kingdom of God is like this,” He said. “A man scatters seed on the ground; ²⁷ he sleeps and rises — night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows — he doesn’t know how. ²⁸ The soil produces a crop by itself — first the blade, then the head, and then the ripe grain on the head. ²⁹ But as soon as the crop is ready, he sends for the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

09.03.21 Mt. 13:44

PARABLE OF HIDDEN TREASURE

¹³ “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure, buried in a field, that a man found and reburied. Then in his joy he goes and sells everything he has and buys that field.

Why would Jesus have referred to a treasure buried in a field? Commercial banking systems did not exist as they do today. People of means had to protect their money from thieves and tax collectors. A thief could quickly dig his way through a house if it was constructed with mud bricks near the Mediterranean coast instead of stone, as was done in the mountain region. Tax collectors carefully searched homes to look for hidden wealth – so the next best place to hide it was in a field, or take it to Jerusalem to be stored in the temple. The Mishnah states that this method of keeping money safe was common at the time.¹⁸⁵ If an invading army came through the area, the family would often bury their wealth. But if those who buried the family’s treasure got killed, the treasure would be lost. The parables of Jesus connected with everyday life events of the first century.

Some scholars have suggested that this parable reflects deceitfulness.¹⁸⁶ However, Jewish law stated that if the owner did not know of the treasure, he did not own it – it was ownerless. But he did own the land.¹⁸⁷ One of the Dead Sea Scrolls, known as the Copper Scroll, is not a literary

185. Mishnah, *Baba Mev’al* 3.11.

186. Issler, “Exploring the Pervasive References to Work in Jesus’ Parables.” 327.

187. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament*. 3.

scroll but refers to temple treasures that were buried in various places prior to the Roman destruction. However, the identifiable landmarks described in the Scroll that would lead to the buried treasures, have long been removed and today no one knows where the treasures were hidden.¹⁸⁸



09.03.21.A THE TREASURES OF THE COPPER SCROLL. The Copper Scroll is one of the Dead Sea Scrolls (3Q15) that was discovered in 1952. Shown above is an electroformed facsimile section of the scroll that describes where the treasures of the temple were hidden prior to the Roman siege in A.D. 70. The account of the Copper Scroll reflects the cultural characteristics of the parable of Jesus. Photographed at the Jordan Archaeological Museum by the author.

09.03.22 Mt. 13:45-46

PARABLE OF VALUABLE PEARL

188. The Copper Scroll can be seen in the Jordan Archaeological Museum located in the Citadel of Amman in Amman, Jordan. A few scholars believe that some of the temple treasures were accidentally discovered by the Crusaders and carried back to Europe. For more information, see Grant Jeffrey, *Unveiling Mysteries of the Bible*. 153-60.

45 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. 46 When he found one priceless pearl, he went and sold everything he had, and bought it.

In this parable, the Kingdom of Heaven is found as the result of a search, whereas in the previous parable (Mt. 13:44) the Kingdom is found by accident. In the Old Testament, Israel is at times referred to as God’s “treasured possession”¹⁸⁹ and the field is symbolic of the world. But in the New Testament the treasure is God’s people who accepted the words and work of Jesus. Unlike the previous treasure that is reflective of Israel, any connection of the pearls to the Jewish people or Israel is unknown. It may be that since pearls come out of the sea, the imagery is representative of the Gentile nations (Dan. 7:1-2; Rev. 17:1, 15).¹⁹⁰ John wrote that the gates of heaven are made of pearl (Rev. 21:21) indicating of their immense beauty and value. This underscores the value of the treasure that someone searched for in the parable.

The parable does illustrate, however, that common people had knowledge of objects and places far beyond the world in which they lived. Ancient countryside farmers would normally never encounter pearls, yet they were sufficiently aware of their existence that Jesus made reference to them as an ordinary fact. Jerusalem, with its many wealthy citizens, had pearls and other rare and expensive commodities that normally are not considered to have been part of first century Jewish culture. Only some of those living in a “big city could afford a pearl, which is why the Mishnah says that its price increases when it is brought into a city.”¹⁹¹

“When he found one priceless pearl.” In this short parable, Jesus said that the merchant sold everything that he had to make the purchase, since the pearl was of “great value” or “great price.” In the book of Acts (4:36) is the account of Barnabas who sold property, gave the funds to the apostles, and became a leader in the church. He gave all that he had, including his life.

09.03.23 Mt. 13:47-50

PARABLE OF THE DRAGNET

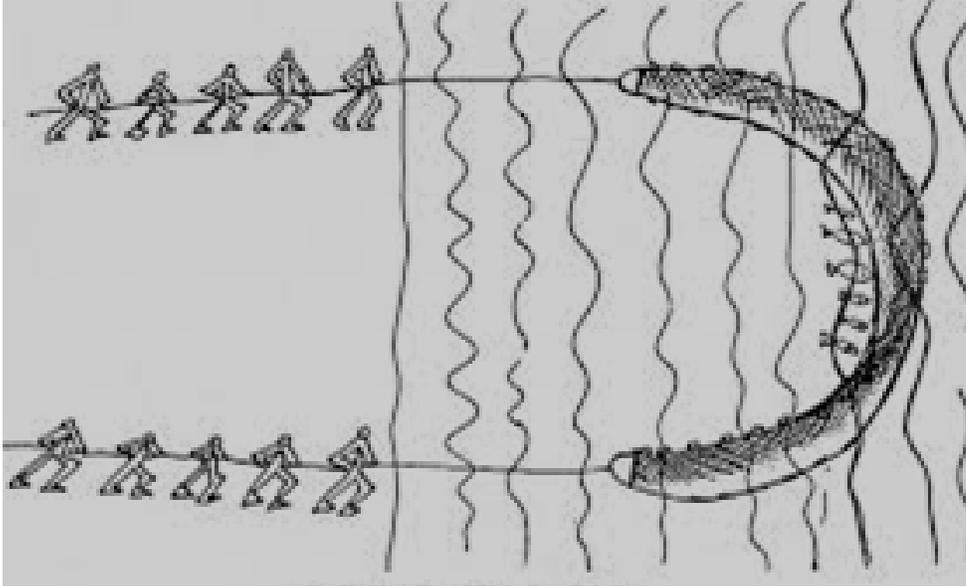
47 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a large net thrown into the sea. It collected every kind of fish, 48 and when it was full, they dragged it ashore, sat down, and gathered the good fish into containers, but threw out the worthless ones. 49 So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out, separate the evil people from the righteous, 50 and throw them into the blazing furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

189. Ex. 19:5; Deut. 14:2; Ps. 135:4.

190. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. (Video “B”).

191. Mishnah, *Arakin* 6.5.

This is another parable of separation. Fishermen worked together to cast a large net in the Sea of Galilee, then men at both ends would drag it to shore. When the entire dragnet was out of the water, the bad fish were separated from the good ones.



09.03.23.A. DRAGNET. This net is 750 to 1,000 feet long, and with one end on the shore several fishermen in a boat take it out in the water about 300 feet and loop around and return to the shore in a semi-circular manner. The net has floats along one edge and weights on the other edge that sinks along the bottom. The ends are then pulled on shore until the entire net is out of the water and the fish are sorted. Google image.

The following is another parable of separation. It is not about those outside of the church, but about those inside. Notice the list of characters:

Cast of Characters

The Sea	= The local church
Good fish	= Believers who resisted temptations by the evil one
Worthless fish	= Believers who accepted temptations by the evil one
Angels	= Agents for the final Judge

Some interpretations indicate that the sea represents all the people of the earth, as this is the accepted interpretation of the “sea” in Revelation. However, this parable refers to the fish in the net (church) not all the fish in the sea (world).

The Greek term for dragnet is *sagene* (4522) and appears only once in the New Testament (Mt.

13:47).¹⁹² The *sagene* net is a long net with each end attached to a boat. The boats are maneuvered in a circular pattern toward the shore while the drag net literally sweeps the bottom of the sea (hence its name).¹⁹³ It obviously captures everything within the encircled area.¹⁹⁴

Homer, in his *Odyssey* (12:384-389), states that the slain suitors in the halls of Ulysses were like the fish on the shore caught by nets with a myriad of meshes, meaning dragnets.¹⁹⁵ But this type of net also has a tendency to catch round river stones which are pulled unto shore along with the fish. This is why Jesus asked, “If your son would want a fish, would you give him a stone?” Yet related to this is the fact that the Jews lived according to kosher dietary rules described in Leviticus 11. The good fish collected in baskets were those with fins and scales, such as the fresh water sardine and musht (now called St. Peter’s fish). The undesirable fish was the catfish that had fins but no scales.

“Throw them into the blazing furnace ... there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Again Jesus used the judgmental language of John the Baptist, insisting that those who reject His message will be damned to an eternal hell. The subject of hell is mentioned more frequently in the New Testament than the subject of heaven.

09.03.24 Mt. 13:51-53

PARABLE OF TREASURES

⁵¹ “Have you understood all these things?”

“Yes,” they told Him.

⁵² “Therefore,” He said to them, “every student of Scripture instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who brings out of his storeroom what is new and what is old.” ⁵³ When Jesus had finished these parables, He left there.

A landowner, or in today’s terminology, a homeowner goes to the pantry to get some food. The implication is that sometimes old food must be thrown out first. Likewise Jesus said that one must cling to the good and discard the bad.

192. See also Isa. 19:8 and Ezek. 26:8; Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 243; Vine, “Net.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:430.

193. Nun, *The Sea of Galilee and its Fishermen in the New Testament*. 16-22.

194. <http://studybible.info/trench/Net>. Retrieved December 8, 2013.

195. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. 111.

“When Jesus had finished these parables.” Matthew placed this quotation in his gospel as an indicator to the end of this particular teaching. It is a literary tool. The apostle wrote his gospel as a textbook for Jews to study the Messiahship of Jesus and His Kingdom of God in five teaching sections. Since chapter divisions were unknown at that time (these divisions were added about the year 1250) he used this phrase as a literary device to end one of these sections. Another literary device is the phrase, “When Jesus had finished saying all these things ...” found in 11:1; 19:1; and 26:1.¹⁹⁶

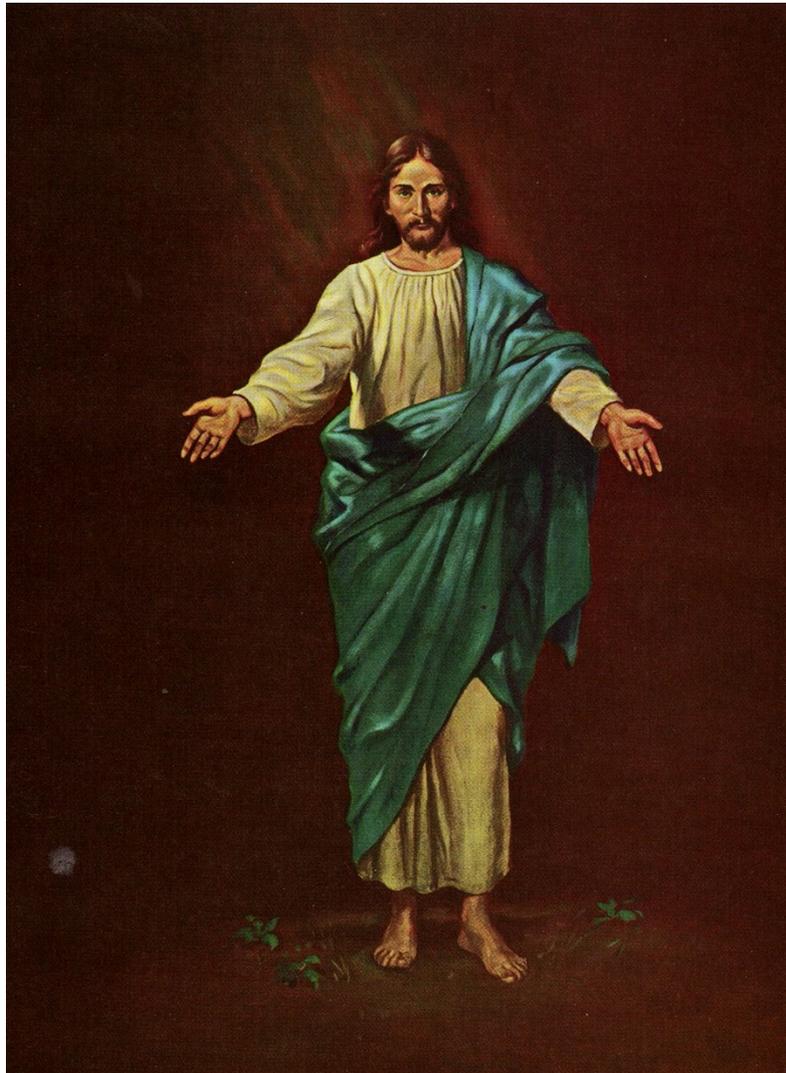
196. Ladd, “Matthew.” 29.

Unit 09

Turning Point In The Ministry Of Jesus

Chapter 04

The Cost Of Following Jesus



09.04.00.A. JESUS SAID, “COME UNTO ME.” Painting by Heinrich Hofmann. Jesus invited all people to be His followers, and He continues to call all those who desire inner peace and a relationship with Him.

09.04.01 Mt. 8:18-20 (See also Lk. 9:57-59)

THE COST OF FOLLOWING JESUS

¹⁸ When Jesus saw large crowds around Him, He gave the order to go to the other side of the sea. ¹⁹ A scribe approached Him and said, “Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go!”

**²⁰ Jesus told him,
 “Foxes have dens
 and birds of the sky have nests,
 but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head.”**

There are two possible interpretations to this parable.

1. The most common interpretation is that Jesus did not own a home and, therefore, is often identified with the foxes and birds who made a temporary home somewhere in nature.
2. A minority viewpoint is that Jesus is the ruler of the Kingdom of God. His reference to the fox was most likely a reflection upon the Roman ruler Herod who, because of his sly and evil ways, was referred to as “that fox.” The “birds of the air” refer to the eagle that was carried high on a standard when a Roman army was on the march; the eagle was a powerful image of the Roman Empire.

In the first account, the creatures of the wild have homes, but Jesus had no home. In the second, the powerful rulers of the world had their palaces, but the Prince of Peace had no palace on earth. Both interpretations are correct.

09.04.02 Lk. 9:59-62; (See also Mt. 8:21-22)

“LET THE DEAD BURY THEIR OWN DEAD”

**A ⁵⁹ Then He said to another,
 “Follow me.”**

B “Lord,” he replied, “first let me go

C bury my father.”

C’ ⁶⁰ But He told him, **“Let the dead bury their own dead,**

B’ but you go

A’ and spread the news of the kingdom of God.”

⁶¹ Another also said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go and say good-bye to those at my house.” ⁶² But Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Literary style. Lines A and A’ are similar in that to follow Jesus is to proclaim the Kingdom of God. Lines B and B’ both reflect the command “go.” The first is to go and bury a father and the second is to go and proclaim the Kingdom of God. Lines C and C’ refer to the burial customs of the day, but Jesus told the man to give that responsibility to someone else. This is a typical Hebraic “Chiastic literary structure,”¹⁹⁷

There were three kinds of bone-gathering in the last century or century and a half of the second temple period:

1. The *met mizvah*, or the burial of bones of a criminal who did not deserve proper interment.¹⁹⁸
2. The gathering of human bones that were occasionally found outside of tombs.¹⁹⁹
3. The common family practice of burial.²⁰⁰

The discussion Jesus had referred to the common practice of burial of the dead. In that context, the phrase **“Let the dead bury their own dead,”** is unique as well as problematic. The mystery lies in the fact that the statement portrays Jesus as one who breaks the 5th commandment concerning the lack of honor due to one’s parents, which was highly inconsiderate and uncompassionate. Others have suggested that Jesus was stating that the “spiritually” dead should bury the “physically” dead. While this is true, it does not address the problem of disrespect. Since a word study does not clarify this, a cultural explanation must be sought.

197. See “Chiastic Literary Structure” in Appendix 26.

198. Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 6:5-6; Jerusalem Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 6:5-6; Tosefta *Sanhedrin* 8:9.

199. Genesis Rabba 79:2 (<https://archive.org/details/RabbaGenesis>); Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 47B.

200. Mishnah, *Pesahim* 8:8; Jerusalem Talmud, *Pesahim* 8:8.

The burial custom varied greatly from the early Old Testament era to the days of Jesus. Embalming was never practiced with the exception of Jacob and Joseph, who were probably mummified. Burial was on the same day of death, due primarily to the rapid decay of a corpse in the hot climatic region of the Middle East. It appears that the earliest burials were in individual graves. Three examples are:

1. Aaron was buried on Mt. Hor
2. Moses was buried in a valley in the land of Moab
3. Rebekah's nurse, Deborah was buried near an oak tree

Eventually, families had family tombs that were carved from caves and when a person died, the body of the deceased were placed in the family burial chamber of a tomb.²⁰¹ Over time there was a large pile of bones that became known as a *charnel pile*.²⁰² For this reason, there are expressions such as "bury me with my fathers" (i.e., Gen. 49:29) or "sleep with your fathers" (i.e. Deut. 31:16).

The collection of bones became a matter of utmost care after Ezekiel prophesied that one day God would restore flesh upon the bones of the deceased (Ezek. 37:1-14).²⁰³ But by the first century there was a two-step process of burial.

1. The body was laid in a *nich* of a shaft tomb on the day of death where it decayed.²⁰⁴
2. Approximately a year later the bones were gathered and placed in a box called an *ossuary*.²⁰⁵ Only then was the burial considered complete. It is noteworthy to mention that the rabbis taught that the flesh had to decay in order to obtain forgiveness.²⁰⁶ However, some scholars believe that this is a later rabbinic teaching.

201. Figueras, "Jewish Ossuaries and Secondary Burial." 41.

202. Figueras, "Jewish Ossuaries and Secondary Burial." 46; Crossan and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*. 237-38.

203. Fine, "Why Bone Boxes?" 38-44, 57; Boyd, "Burying their Own Dead." 121-30.

204. See photograph of a *nich* of a shaft tomb at 17.02.02.B.

205. See photograph of a wooden ossuary at 09.04.02.B and the ossuary of the High Priest Caiaphas at 15.03.07.A.

206. Babylonian Talmud, *Sanbedrin* 47b.



09.04.02.A. A RECONSTRUCTED FAMILY CAVE-TOMB. This reconstructed cave-tomb at the Rockefeller Museum in East Jerusalem depicts the phrase “he slept with his fathers.” It reflects the burial custom typical of the Old Testament. But by the first century, the deceased were placed in a different type of family tomb and, after a year, the bones were gathered into a bone box known as an *ossuary*. Photograph by the author.

After the Greek conquest, wealthy Jewish people used Greek style graves, which were uniquely different from the common graves. It is believed that at some point after the Maccabean Revolt that the custom of collecting the bones of the deceased and placing them in a box came into practice.²⁰⁷

But in the days of Jesus, as it was in centuries past, the eldest son was responsible that his parents were properly cared for in their old age and in death and that there was an honorable parent’s funeral.²⁰⁸ That included the application of spices and perfumes just as today flowers

207. Pilch, *The Cultural Dictionary of the Bible*. 44.

208. *Tobit* 4:3; 14:10-11; Mishnah, *Berakoth* 3:1; Gen. 25:9; 35:29; 50:13.

are presented in honorarium.²⁰⁹ When the man said, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father,” he may have been addressing one of two situations.²¹⁰

1. He was the oldest son and as such was responsible for the care of *both* of his parents. If the eldest son could not care for his parents, he was obligated to assign his responsibility to someone who could. This was demonstrated when Jesus was dying on the cross and He, as the oldest son, passed His responsibility to John when He said to His mother, “Dear woman, here is your son.” To John He said, “Here is your mother” (Jn. 19:26-27). In the parable the disciple may have simply stated that he had responsibilities to his parents, who probably were elderly at the time, and hence, a concern to him.

Honor and respect of parents and elders has always been a core value at the heart of the Jewish faith. It was a sacred duty (Micah 7:6) for the eldest son to care for his elderly parents and to bury them when they died. Failure to do so resulted in incredible condemnation. Josephus referred to the law concerning the passing of one’s parents, they,

Should be honored immediately after God himself, and delivers that son who does not requite them for the benefits he has received from them, but is deficient on any such occasion, to be stoned.

Josephus, *Against Apion* 2:28 (206)

2. It was the custom that a person’s body is to be buried on the day of death in a family tomb where it would decompose.²¹¹ This was followed by a week of intense mourning known as *shiv’ah*, followed by another but less intense mourning period known as *shloshim*.²¹² A year later the bones were carefully collected by the eldest son, placed in an ossuary (bone box), and reburied. In the discussion that Jesus had, the man’s father appears to have died in the past year but the burial process was not completed until the bones were collected. Only then was the rite of burial complete. However, if his father had recently died and the family was still in mourning, this conversation would not have taken place.

When Jesus said, “Let the dead bury their own dead,” He meant that someone else in the family should assume the responsibility of parental care and honor. Jesus called him with all due

209. See the chapter titled “Spices in Funerary Customs” in Dayagi-Mendels, *Perfumes and Cosmetics in the Ancient World*. 125-33.

210. McCane, “Let the Dead Bury.” 83:31-43.

211. The Mosaic Law even required the body of an executed criminal not hang on the tree overnight (Deut. 21:22-23).

212. Franz, “Let the Dead Bury Their Own Dead.” 55.

respect to his parents. The cost of following Jesus is not always easy.²¹³ Jesus was again saying that priorities of life must be correct: serving Him takes precedence over cultural and family norms and affections.

The core issue is that it was difficult for the disciples to understand, that to be a follower of Jesus they had to surrender themselves unconditionally to the will of God. Furthermore, they had to devote themselves unconditionally to the work of the Kingdom without any lingering connections to the world they left behind. In essence, His command for them not to take anything along was a physical picture of their future spiritual ministry. This was the same message given when Jesus sent out seventy disciples (Lk. 10:1-16).



09.04.02.B. A WOODEN OSSUARY. After the Maccabean Revolt it was the custom was that after a person died, the body was placed in a tomb and a year later, after the flesh decayed, the family gathered the bones and placed them in a bone box called an ossuary. Photographed by the author at the Hecht Museum, University of Haifa.

The custom to which Jesus most likely referred to was preserved in the Jerusalem Talmud. Note the following passage:

213. McCane, "Let the Dead Bury Their Own Dead: Secondary Burial and Matthew." 31-43; Franz, "Let the Dead Bury Their Own Dead." 54-57.

When the flesh had wasted away, the bones were collected and placed in small chests called ossuaries. After the flesh had gone from the bones, and the bones were placed in the ossuaries, the son stopped mourning.

Jerusalem Talmud, *Quantan* 1:5²¹⁴

It should be noted that not all peasant families could even afford a wooden ossuary. Often a body was buried in a grave and covered with dirt and stone.²¹⁵ Burial customs varied from region to region. However, in Israel, and especially in Jerusalem, the degree of wealth determined whether one's bones would be placed in a stone ossuary or a wooden one.²¹⁶ But this burial custom ended with the destruction of the temple, although a few have been found dating to the third century (A.D.).²¹⁷ A few wooden ones were found near the desert oasis of Jericho where they would have endured centuries of dryness; wooden bone boxes in the mountain regions of Jerusalem or Galilee would not have survived centuries of damp winters.²¹⁸



214. See also the Mishnah, *Sanbedrin* 6.6.

215. Zondervan New International Version Study Bible, 1688.

216. Boyd, "Burying Their Own Dead." 122-25.

217. Dayagi-Mendels, *Perfumes and Cosmetics in the Ancient World*. 128.

218. Kloner. "A Tomb of the Second Temple Period at French Hill, Jerusalem." 108.

09.04.02.C. LIMESTONE OSSUARIES IN A FAMILY TOMB. Limestone ossuaries are shown as they were discovered in a first century tomb. Wealthy families used stone ossuaries to store the bones of their dead whereas common peasants used wooden ossuaries. Photo courtesy of Israel Antiquities Authority.

“No one who puts his hand to the plow.” Jesus again made a reference to the commitment His disciples were expected to make. The phrase refers to the call of Elisha (892-832 B.C.) and the decision he made to become a disciple of the prophet Elijah. The account is as follows,

¹⁹ Elijah left there and found Elisha son of Shaphat as he was plowing. Twelve teams of oxen were in front of him, and he was with the twelfth team. Elijah walked by him and threw his mantle over him. ²⁰ Elisha left the oxen, ran to follow Elijah, and said, “Please let me kiss my father and mother, and then I will follow you.”

“Go on back,” he replied, “for what have I done to you?”

²¹ So he turned back from following him, took the team of oxen, and slaughtered them. With the oxen’s wooden yoke and plow, he cooked the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he left, followed Elijah, and served him.

1 Kings 19:19-21

Elisha lived at a time when a typical farmer owned one or two donkeys that were used for plowing and other agricultural purposes. A wealthy farmer owned one or two oxen. However, Elisha owned a dozen pair – twenty-four oxen. To plow with twelve teams of oxen required a staff of hired hands and a large area of land. Obviously he was a very wealthy individual. Upon making the decision to become a disciple of Elijah, Elisha not only said good-bye to his family, but he also hosted a party on a grand scale. The slaughter of twenty-four oxen would have been enough to feed hundreds of people for several days. (Weddings of wealthy brides and bridegrooms lasted seven days.) Elisha could have given the oxen and plows to the poor or he could have sold them. Rather, he made a decision without recourse, to follow God’s calling upon his life.

Once he became Elijah’s disciple, he lived with his mentor for the rest of his life. Discipleship was not an academic exercise, but a way of life and personal transformation. In the course of time, the mentor became closer to Elisha than were his own parents. Therefore, Elisha would have called Elijah “my father” and Elijah would have considered his disciple to be “my son.”²¹⁹ It was within this relationship that Elisha learned to recognize the voice of God. Unfortunately,

²¹⁹ Some believe this is the origin of the Western tradition where an adult of a family is designated as a “God father” or “God mother” of a child – usually a nephew or niece.

some English Bibles are translated to read that Elisha became Elijah's "attendant," (1 Kg. 19:21) which negates the rich meaning of the text. When the Lord was about to take Elijah to heaven, Elisha repeatedly said he would not leave him. But when that time came and Elijah was gone, Elisha cried out "My father! My father!" This was the same message of commitment and discipleship that Jesus conveyed.

Following Jesus is to be a one-way direction. One is not to turn back or look back to reconsider. When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians, he said that he was forgetting his past and straining to what lay ahead of him (Philip 3:13). That is precisely what Jesus meant.

Unit 10

Conflicts Increase As The Disciples' Ministry Begins

Chapter 01

The Disciples Begin To Function As Apostles



10.01.00.A. JESUS WALKS ON WATER AT NIGHT. Artwork by William Hole of the Royal Scottish Academy of Art, 1876. The wind was unpredictable and the disciples had rowed all night long. In the fourth watch (between 3:00 and 6:00 a.m.) they saw what appeared to be a ghost walking toward them on the water. It was Jesus.

10.01.01 Introduction

As Jesus ministered to the people, He prepared His disciples to continue His work. Part of that preparation was not only for them to realize who He was and the full dynamics of His word – work that they would continue, but also for them to realize they would be persecuted. His hometown village of Nazareth became a microcosm of Israel. Some believed in Him but many rejected Him. He was limited in the number of miracles due to their unbelief and rejection, and so likewise Israel would one day reject Him as well. The disciples would experience the same, though in the process, many would come to faith.

10.01.02 Mk. 6:1-6a (See also Mt. 13:53-58) Nazareth

JESUS REJECTED AGAIN

¹ He went away from there and came to His hometown, and His disciples followed Him. ² When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard Him were astonished. “Where did this man get these things?” they said. “What is this wisdom given to Him, and how are these miracles performed by His hands? ³ Isn’t this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And aren’t His sisters here with us?” So they were offended by Him.

⁴ Then Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown, among his relatives, and in his household.” ⁵ So He was not able to do any miracles there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. ⁶ And He was amazed at their unbelief.

Jesus returned to Nazareth, the village of His youth and young adulthood. It was here where He spent many years working with Joseph as a carpenter. His neighbors and friends could not believe that this exceptional carpenter was more than a carpenter.

“**Isn’t this the carpenter?**” After many miracles, Jesus returned to his hometown of Nazareth, where the local folks of the community still considered Him the son of a carpenter, one who built various objects of wood and possibly stone (see 04.07.01.). Many of them probably employed Jesus at one time or another. Carpenters were highly respected master tradesmen.²²⁰ However, the *carpenter*, or *tek-ton*,²²¹ was not a carpenter in the modern sense of the word, but one who

220. Batey, *Jesus and the Forgotten City*. 74; Packer, “Carpenter, Builder, Workman, Craftsman, Trade.” 1:279.

221. Bookman, *When God Wore Sandals*. CD Trac 12; Issler, “Exploring the Pervasive References to Work in Jesus’ Parables.” 327.

built with wood, and at times, stone and even metal.²²² Nonetheless, the fact that a son of their village could perform mighty works of God was beyond their comprehension, especially one who was born out of wedlock. They chose not to believe. The two highly acclaimed first century Jewish rabbis, Hillel and Shammai, were both master carpenters.²²³

The second century church father Justin Martyr (100 – 165) lived in Samaria, a short distance from Nazareth. He was a strict defender of the faith and in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, he stated that Joseph and Jesus made “ploughs and yokes.”

And when Jesus came to the Jordan, He was considered to be the son of Joseph the carpenter; and He appeared without comeliness, as the Scriptures declared, and He was deemed a carpenter for He was in the habit of working as a carpenter when among men, making ploughs and yokes; by which He taught the symbols of righteousness and an active life.

Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 88

“**And the brother of James, Joses,**²²⁴ **Judas and Simon?**” There are three views of the relationship of these four men to Jesus.

1. They are sons born naturally to Mary and Joseph after the birth of Jesus and, therefore, they would be considered half-brothers. Jesus is the firstborn (cf. Lk. 2:7; Mt. 1:25) of five sons and there were at least two sisters.
2. These brothers were the sons of Joseph by a previous marriage, and
3. The church father Jerome theorized that they were distant cousins of Jesus. The latter two views were developed in the third and fourth centuries to support their doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary in the Roman Catholic Church.

Protestants believe that there are no biblical sources to support the second and third interpretations.²²⁵ In light of the fact that the gospel writer makes a clear connection to Mary and His brothers in verse 3, there is no other interpretation acceptable other than Mary and Joseph had at least seven children (Jesus, four brothers, and two or more daughters).

222. Campbell, “What was Jesus’ Occupation?” 512.

223. Santala, *The Messiah in the New Testament*. 90.

224. Joses is often translated as Joseph.

225. Tasker, “Brethren of the Lord.” 1:207-08; Wessel, “Mark.” 8:665.



10.01.02.A. A TYPICAL FARM PLOW. Agricultural tools like this plow were among many implements built by carpenters. This design of a simple tool did not change from the days of the Egyptians 2000 B.C. until the industrial revolution. It is believed that the carpentry trade included not only the manufacture of a wide variety of wooden objects, but also masonry works, since buildings were constructed of stone. Photographed at the Philistine Museum in Ashkelon by the author.

“Prophet is not without honor except in his hometown, among his relatives, and in his household.” Jesus was not only rejected by His hometown community, but even His family had difficulties accepting Him and His ministry, though they were obviously aware of His virgin birth. In fact, his half-brother James failed to realize His true identity until after the resurrection. This underscores the fact that tensions must have existed in the family. They would bear unjust shame from friends and neighbors who could not accept the message and miracles of Jesus (see commentary on Jn. 19:25-27). That conflict sheds light on what Jesus said: whoever does the will of His Father in heaven is truly His brother and sister (Mt. 12:48-50).

Jesus must have left His hometown in great sadness knowing what His family’s future would eventually be. These were people He loved, His neighbors, also His friends, with whom He spent many years. It saddened Him because **“he was not able to do any miracles.”** Wherever the gospel writers said Jesus could not perform any miracles, it was not because He had any limitations or His divinity, but because He refused to cast pearls before swine; to heal those who

had ulterior motives. Yet Nazareth did not receive the same fate as Capernaum, Chorizim, and Bethsaida.

10.01.03 Mt. 9:35-38 (See also Mk. 6:6b)

NEED FOR WORKERS

³⁵ Then Jesus went to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness. ³⁶ When He saw the crowds, He felt compassion for them, because they were weary and worn out, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. ³⁸ Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.”

Finding good employees has always been a problem for employers throughout history. Again, Jesus used a common phrase later recorded in the Mishnah: “One rabbi said, ‘The day is short and the task is great, and the laborers are lazy; but the wages are high, and the master of the house is urgent.’”²²⁶ The common people, known as *the am-ha-arets*, meaning *the unlearned*,²²⁷ were uneducated by Jerusalem standards, but were well educated in biblical knowledge.

“**Their synagogues.**” Matthew used this phrase several times,²²⁸ as if to suggest a future separation between Jesus and traditional Judaism (although a break was never the intent). He also spoke of “their” scribes (Mt. 7:29) and “their” cities (Mt. 11:1). Even though followers of Jesus functioned within Judaism throughout most of the first century, by the end of the Second Revolt in A.D. 135, there was a clear separation.

“**Harvest.**” The term is symbolic of *fullness of time, in-gathering, ripeness*, as well as *judgment*.²²⁹ But now is the time of gathering the proverbial crops, those lost souls who have not heard of the Kingdom of God. Then will be the separation of the sheep from the goats (Mt. 25:31-46).

226. Mishnah, *Aboth* 2:15.

227. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 292; Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 2:348.

228. Mt. 4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54; 23:34.

229. 4 *Ezra* 4:28-32; Jer. 51:33; Hos. 6:11; Joel 3:13; Mt. 3:12; 13:30, 39; Jn. 4:35; Rev. 14:15.

10.01.03.Q1 Concerning Matthew 9:38 and Luke 10:2, who is the “Lord of the harvest?”

The Lord of the Harvest is none other than God the Father. It is Jesus who sows the good seed²³⁰

and an angel that will be the harvester. Jesus has been given the authority by God the Father to give blessings to His children and to execute judgment upon those who have rejected Him.

10.01.04 Mt. 10:1-4; Mk. 6:7 (See also Lk. 9:1-2)

DISCIPLES GIVEN POWER TO HEAL

Mt. ¹ Summoning His 12 disciples, He gave them authority over unclean spirits, to drive them out and to heal every disease and sickness. ² These are the names of the 12 apostles:

**First, Simon, who is called Peter,
and Andrew his brother;
James the son of Zebedee,
and John his brother;
³ Philip and Bartholomew;
Thomas and Matthew the tax collector;
James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;
⁴ Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot,
who also betrayed Him.**

Mk. ⁷ He summoned the Twelve and began to send them out in pairs and gave them authority over unclean spirits.

“**Disciples...apostles.**” In verse 1 Jesus refers to the Twelve as “**disciples**” and in verse 2 as “**apostles.**” Later they are called “disciples” again. Jesus, the Master Teacher, knew that learning is most comprehensive when occasionally put into practice. These men were not being trained for the sake of learning, but trained for a purpose of expanding the Kingdom of God.

The ministry of the disciples was the same as that of their Master – to speak the Word and perform the works of the Kingdom of God. They were to be dependent on the hospitality of the villagers wherever they traveled, expecting God to provide for all their needs as they journeyed throughout the land.

230. See 09.03.15, the Parable of the Wheat and Tares. Mt. 9:38; Lk. 10:2.

10.01.05 Mt. 10:5-15; Mk. 6:11b (See also Mk. 6:8-11a; Lk. 9:3-5)

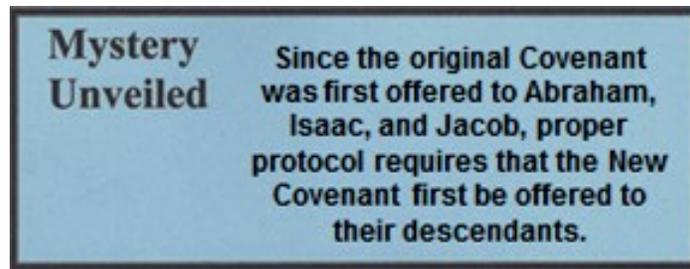
DISCIPLES INSTRUCTED

⁵ Jesus sent out these 12 after giving them instructions: **“Don’t take the road leading to other nations, and don’t enter any Samaritan town. ⁶ Instead, go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ As you go, announce this: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ ⁸ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those with skin diseases, drive out demons. You have received free of charge; give free of charge. ⁹ Don’t take along gold, silver, or copper for your money-belts. ¹⁰ Don’t take a traveling bag for the road, or an extra shirt, sandals, or a walking stick, for the worker is worthy of his food.**

¹¹ **“When you enter any town or village, find out who is worthy, and stay there until you leave. ¹² Greet a household when you enter it, ¹³ and if the household is worthy, let your peace be on it. But if it is unworthy, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴ If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that house or town...Mk. ¹¹ as a testimony against them.... Mt. ¹⁵ I assure you: It will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.**

“Don’t take the road leading to other nations.” Literally, Jesus said do not go among the Gentiles; do not minister to them. This hard saying must be observed from the covenant viewpoint of Jesus. While He did come to bring salvation for all humanity, proper protocol required that message to be given first to the Jews because it was the fulfillment of the promises in the Jewish covenant with God. Thereafter, the message was to go to the Samaritans (who had a modified edition of the books of Moses), and then on to the Gentiles (Acts 1:8). After the religious leaders refused the words and ministry of Jesus, the message of the gospel was to be carried worldwide by the Church. Hence, Matthew gave the prophetic statement that not only would the gospel be preached throughout the world, but also that He, Jesus, would be with all believers (Jews and Gentiles) “to the very end of the age” (Mt. 28:20).

It has been suggested that Matthew had an anti-Gentile bias since his gospel was written to the Jews. However, this is hardly the case since he previously presented details of the magi, who were obviously Gentiles. He concluded his work by stating that the message of Jesus would be preached throughout the world to all nations (cf. Mt. 24:14, 28:19). The fact that Matthew recorded praise for the Roman centurion (Mt. 8:5-13) and condemned the religious Jewish leaders also negates the theory of any anti-Gentile Bias.



Finally, Jesus did not give instructions for them to go the synagogues. This may have been for two possible reasons:

1. They were not confident enough to preach publicly, therefore, their mission at this point was limited to house to house evangelism.
2. Jesus and His group were not permitted to preach in synagogues. If the leading Jews threatened the man Jesus healed at the Jerusalem pool with excommunication, they may have threatened the same to Jesus.

“Go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” The Greek order of words places the emphasis on *lost* rather than on *sheep*. Jesus used the term *lost* more frequently than the term *led astray*.²³¹ Centuries earlier, when the Assyrians invaded the ten northern tribal area, some realized they had to quickly leave or face destruction. So they moved south into Judah (1 Kg. 12:16-20; 2 Chron. 11:16-17). Thus, Judah became the embodiment of all 12 tribes. The New Testament does not assume that the 12 tribes were lost.²³² So when Jesus spoke of ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, He meant all 12 tribes.

“Don’t take a traveling bag ... extra shirt, sandals, or a walking stick.” In contrast to the other itinerant rabbis with their disciples, there were also traveling Gnostic, Cynic and Stoic philosophers who were attempting to evangelize the Jews to their ideas. The Greek word for *bag* is *pera*, which means *beggar’s collection bag*.²³³ For many common folk, it was a *bread bag*.²³⁴ These itinerant philosophers not only carried their own supplies, but were also begging as they traveled from village to village. Obviously they were not welcomed in the local synagogue. The point that Jesus and the early Church fathers made, was that their missionaries and rabbis were not to have any resemblance to these philosophers.²³⁵ Neither were believers to have these

231. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:58.

232. See Mt. 4:13, 15; Lk. 2:36; Acts 4:36; 26:27; Phil. 3:5; Jas. 1:1.

233. Barclay, “Matthew.” 1:367.

234. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*. 108.

235. Kaiser, Davids, Bruce, and Brauch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible*. 422-23.

philosophers in their homes. Jesus warned against the appearance of pagan Gnostic, Cynic and Stoic philosophers at least twice:

1. When Jesus sent out the disciples on a missions trip (Mt. 10:5-15), He instructed them not to take any traveling bags as this would give the impression they were Gnostic teachers.
2. When Jesus told them to be as shrewd as serpents, harmless as doves, and watch out for wolves, He also said that all secrets would be uncovered and whispers would be heard (Mt. 10:16-33).²³⁶

In addition to not having the appearance of these false teachers, neither were the disciples to take extra clothing because they were to be like the peasant people to whom they would minister (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-23). Roman tyranny and high taxes had reduced the common Jew to a state of dire poverty and, therefore, the average person had only one tunic.²³⁷ If they would have entered a village dressed as wealthier men, they would have been suspected of being dishonest and corrupt, attributes commonly associated with being wealthy. Notice that Jesus did not ask the disciples to give away their extra clothing, but simply to set them aside so these items would not interfere with the message.

Furthermore, literary documentation and archaeological evidence all point to the fact that village synagogues provided the traveling Jew with accommodation and food. An example is the “Jerusalem Synagogue Dedication Inscription”²³⁸ quoted below.

“Shake the dust off your feet.” Shaking the dust off one’s feet was a strong body language announcing discontentment. The dust of a heathen country was considered defilement, and the Jews of Israel could not wait to leave the foreign country and visibly and literally shake the dust off their feet.²³⁹ Ironically, when Jews from foreign countries came to Jerusalem to observe the festivals, they often encountered the same snobbish attitudes from the locals. This was also the case whenever traveling Jews exited the Samaritan region. They had such great disdain for the Samaritans, that they considered themselves defiled if there was even a speck of Samaritan dust on their sandals.

236. For more information, see 02.02.10 Gnosticism, 02.02.10 Romans, commentary on “The Word” in 04.01.03, and “Gnosticism” in Appendix 26.

237. Babylonian Talmud, *Moed Katan* 14a (Mid-Festival Days).

238. Llewelyn, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*. 7:89-90.

239. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:59; Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 2:185-87.

Throughout the Middle East, in ancient times and today, feet were and still are considered defiled.²⁴⁰ The reason is that roads and walkways were always dirty and dusty. Throughout most of history, wherever anyone walked, livestock also walked and, therefore, stepping into animal dung was unavoidable. In Samaria there was the additional factor of ethnic hatred. Common people wore sandals; the wealthy wore shoes. Both were removed when entering a home so feet could be washed. Only the lowest of servants or slaves untied sandals for visitors, and if there were no servants or slaves, then it was the woman's responsibility to do so.

In this case, Jesus spoke to His disciples, telling them that if Samaritans did not accept the plan of salvation, shake the Samaritan dust off their feet and go elsewhere. As previously stated,²⁴¹ there was a long history of animosity between the two groups for both theological and social reasons. A few are as follows.

1. The Samaritans had modified the Mosaic Law to suit their needs, but amazingly, they constructed a temple patterned after the one in Jerusalem.
2. In the days of the tyrant Antiochus IV Epiphanes (160s B.C.), they claimed no religious or cultural affiliation with the Jews so as to escape his persecution.
3. Later they joined the Romans (63 B.C.) and Herod the Great (40-37 B.C.) to fight against the Jews.²⁴²

These actions, as well as theological differences, created great anger and hatred between the two groups. As a result, the Jews insisted there be no trace of the Samaritan soil on their sandals after walking through the land. Jesus instructed His disciples that they were to have a similar attitude toward those who reject the gospel. As to His attitude toward the Samaritans, He demonstrated love and compassion towards them numerous times (cf. Jn. 4). To those who did not know of the Divine plan or were curious, He taught with love and compassion. If His message was rejected then the relationship was broken.

240. Bailey, *Jesus through Eastern Eyes*. 246. The ultimate act of humiliation was to place a foot on the neck of an enemy (Ps. 110:1) or to throw a shoe at him (Ps. 60:8). David Rubin (*The Islamic Tsunami: Israel and America in the Age of Obama*. 134) reports that in December of 2008, when U.S. President Bush was in Baghdad, a reporter threw a shoe at him. The Western media reported the incident but failed to understand its meaning (or failed to report its meaning). However, the people of the Middle East understood the grave insult very well. On the contrary, one always removed shoes or sandals when a holy site was entered (Ex. 3:5). The practice continues today, as when entering a mosque See also "Defiled" in Appendix 26.

241. See 02.01.17 for more details on the Samaritan-Jew controversy.

242. For more details, see "Samaritans" 02.01.17.

About two centuries before Jesus, a rabbinic teacher, Yose ben Yoezer, commented on the actions of a good student (disciple). He said,

“Let your house be a meeting place for the rabbis, and cover yourself in the dust of their feet, and drink in their words thirstily.”

Mishnah, *Aboth* 1:4

An abbreviated form of this verse became the following proverb,

“Follow the rabbi, drink in his words and be covered with the dust of his feet.”

Mishnatic Proverb

Mark added the legal terminology **“as a testimony against them”** which was not a curse, but shaking dust off one’s feet was ancient body language declaring the relationship was broken and there would be no further contact – an action of which there is no modern equivalent.

The consequence of rejecting God’s Word has always been severe. The old phrase, “decisions determine destiny,” was true for the residents of Sodom and Gomorrah and would be true for any other community or persons as well. The disciples were God’s messengers who were rejected by the Samaritans. Quite possibly this is why James and John were quick to call destruction from heaven (Mk. 10:35-36). The pattern of rejection would not only continue with them in the future, but the Apostle Paul would also face repeated rejection, beatings, and scourgings.²⁴³

“It will be more tolerable on the day of judgment.” This passage (v. 15) provides clear evidence that there are various levels of punishment in hell. In Matthew 11:24-24 Jesus clearly affirmed that while Scripture is inspired, some laws have a higher priority than others (cf. Mt. 23:23-24; 22:38-39). He never said that every law has equal weight to every other law.²⁴⁴

<p>Mystery Unveiled</p>	<p>Jesus not only affirmed the inspiration of Scripture, but He also clarified that some laws have a higher priority than others; not every law has equal weight.</p>
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243. See Acts 13:46 and 2 Pet. 2:6.

244. See also Mt. 23:23-24 in 13.05.03.

10.01.05.Q1 Which is correct: “To take a staff, or nothing . . . except a staff (Mk. 6:8-9 vs. Mt. 10:9-10; Lk. 9:3)?”

One of the difficulties in this passage and the parallels is whether Jesus said a walking staff should be taken along on a missionary journey. Mark recorded (Mk. 6:8-9) that Jesus told His disciples to take nothing, only a walking staff. But Matthew and Luke said (Mt. 10:9-10); Lk. 9:3) that the staff was not to be taken. Even though the difference may be a minor point, it is worthy of study.

In the three and a half year ministry of Jesus, there was sufficient time for several missionary trips. In fact, it is difficult to conclude that there was only one missionary journey. Therefore, the occasion recorded by Mark cannot be the same as the one(s) recorded by Matthew and Luke. The early ministry of Jesus was restricted to Jews who lived in the three small provinces of Galilee, Perea, and Judea. One could easily walk to any of the districts in a few days. As to why a staff was to be taken on one journey and not another, that may never be known. Therefore, it must be concluded that the gospel writers reported on two or more trips for which Jesus gave different instructions. Yet, other early documents also preserved valuable insights.

In the early second century, Church leaders recorded instructions for Church life and service. This document, known as the *Didache*, applied the instruction of Jesus. The overall tenor of the directives follows:

Let every apostle who comes to you be received as the Lord. He shall stay only one day, or, if need be another day too. If he stays three days, he is a false prophet. When the apostle leaves, let him receive nothing but enough bread to see him through until he finds lodging. If he asks for money, he is a false prophet.

Didache 11:4-6²⁴⁵

Not everyone who speaks in the Spirit is a prophet but only the one whose Savior is the Lord’s. So the false prophet and the prophet will be recognized by their behavior. No prophet who orders a meal for himself in the Spirit eats of it himself; if he does, he is a false prophet. If any prophet teaching the truth does not do what he teaches, he is a false prophet....You shall not listen to anyone who says in the Spirit, “Give me money or something,” but if he is asking that something be given for others who are in need let no one judge him.

245. The *Didache* is a book on church order that was written within a century of the life of Jesus. For more information, see 02.02.08.

Didache 11:8-10, 12

The instruction of Jesus was continued by the first century Jewish believers. However, there is considerable documented evidence to suggest that synagogues, especially those in Jerusalem, provided traveling Jews with food and accommodations. One of those surviving documents makes specific mention of the intended use of a new first century synagogue in Jerusalem. It states,

Theodotos, son of Vettenus, priest and *archisynagogos*, son of an *archisynagogos*, grandson of an *archisynagogos*, built this synagogue for the reading of the Law and for the teaching of commandments, as well as the hostel, the rooms and the water fittings (?), as a lodging for those coming from a foreign country, which his father established as well as the presbyters and Simonides.

Jerusalem Synagogue Dedication Inscription²⁴⁶

Jesus sent His disciples out into the Jewish communities knowing that they would be cared for.²⁴⁷ Later, Luke mentioned that the Apostle Paul stayed in private homes and, thereby, followed the same principle.²⁴⁸

10.01.06 Mt. 10:16-33

DISCIPLES WARNED

¹⁶ “Look, I’m sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as serpents and as harmless as doves. ¹⁷ Because people will hand you over to Sanhedrins and flog you in their synagogues, beware of them. ¹⁸ You will even be brought before governors and kings because of Me, to bear witness to them and to the nations. ¹⁹ But when they hand you over, don’t worry about how or what you should speak. For you will be given what to say at that hour, ²⁰ because you are not speaking, but the Spirit of your Father is speaking through you.”

246. Llewelyn, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*. 7:89-90.

247. As this writer has experienced, one does not understand hospitality until invited in a Middle Eastern Home, whether Jewish, Arab, or Samaritan.

248. That the apostles stayed in private homes is illustrated in Acts 21:4, Tyre; Ptolemais in Acts 21:7; Caesarea in Acts 21:8; and in Jerusalem, Acts 21:16.

²¹ **“Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will even rise up against their parents and have them put to death. ²² You will be hated by everyone because of My name. But the one who endures to the end will be delivered. ²³ When they persecute you in one town, escape to another. For I assure you: You will not have covered the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. ²⁴ A disciple is not above his teacher, or a slave above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for a disciple to become like his teacher and a slave like his master. If they called the head of the house ‘Beelzebul,’ how much more the members of his household!**

²⁶ **“Therefore, don’t be afraid of them, since there is nothing covered that won’t be uncovered and nothing hidden that won’t be made known.**

²⁷ **What I tell you in the dark,
 speak in the light.
What you hear in a whisper,
 proclaim on the housetops.**

²⁸ **Don’t fear those who kill the body
 but are not able to kill the soul.
Rather, fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.**

²⁹ **Aren’t two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father’s consent. ³⁰ But even the hairs of your head have all been counted. ³¹ So don’t be afraid therefore; you are worth more than many sparrows.**

³² **“Therefore, everyone who will acknowledge Me before men,
 I will also acknowledge him before My Father in heaven.
³³ But whoever denies Me before men,
 I will also deny him before My Father in heaven.**

As the Christian faith spread, persecution increased. It began as Jewish anti-Semitism; Jews persecuting other Jews for their faith in *Jesus*, (Heb. *Yeshua*,)²⁴⁹ during which time the primitive church prayed for boldness (Acts 4:23-31). Those who suffered frequently quoted Psalm 2 as they realized they were witnessing the fulfillment of the prophetic words of Jesus.²⁵⁰ It is striking how these words of warning expressed the solidarity of Jesus with the early believers and these believers with Jesus.

249. Mills and Michael, *Messiah and His Hebrew Alphabet*. 7.

250. Gilbrant, “Luke.” 563.

“Sheep among wolves.” Sheep are peaceful creatures while wolves were among the worst predators in the biblical period. Shepherds were not the only ones who feared wolves; travelers and villagers did as well. Jesus said that believers ought to be similar to sheep in that they are peaceful, causing no harm to anyone.

However, Jesus also told them to **“be as shrewd as serpents and as harmless as doves”** meaning to be fully aware of their spiritual and social environment including the “wolves” around them. Their enemies were both human and demonic. At no point did Jesus express any comments that ignorance of them is a virtue, but rather He said believers should be knowledgeable and discerning (i.e. shrewd).²⁵¹ Christians are to be honest and harmless, but use wisdom with the gift of discernment. In many countries today true believers are being persecuted for their faith in Christ Jesus. They need to be like the sons of Issachar who, understood the times and knew what Israel needed to do (1 Chron. 12:32). Today snakes are seen as being symbolic of Satan; imagery derived from the Garden of Eden narrative. However, during the biblical period, snakes were seen as symbolic of eternal life because they shed their skin every year. That is why Moses placed a bronze serpent on a pole in Numbers 21:4-9. Farmers and shepherds knew from experience that snakes are shrewd and smart.

“Because people will hand you over to Sanhedrins.” The fact that the disciples were to be harmless as doves and as shrewd as snakes did not mean they would not face persecution. Being an evangelist in a pagan world is a life of danger, but one that has its eternal rewards. Jesus was very clear that difficulties would come. And since they had spent three years of training with Him, the promise of the Holy Spirit would give them the wisdom of the right words at the right time.²⁵² The term “Spirit” (Gk. *parakletos*) meaning “counselor” would help the believer live victoriously in a world full of dangers and difficulties.²⁵³

In villages and small cities that had a minimum population of 120 men, there were local councils or tribunals of three judges. In a larger community there was a council of 23 judges known as a “Small Sanhedrin.” Jerusalem, of course, had the “Great Sanhedrin” with 70 members plus the high priest as president. Considering how the Great Sanhedrin treated Jesus and His apostles, it is clear that the disciples would be in for some ill treatment. In fact, except for Judas and John, all were eventually martyred. Persecutions have always separated the true believers from those who preferred luke-warmness.

251. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 443.

252. Mt. 10:19-20; Mk. 13:11; Lk. 12:11-12.

253. Cressey, “Counselor.” 1:325.

An examination of the Old Testament reveals that nearly all the great leaders and prophets had been persecuted. Jesus said those who would be persecuted because of righteousness would be blessed (Mt. 5:10-12). The famous “Faith Hall of Fame” of Hebrews 11 is awesome in terms of faith, and challenging in terms of the difficulties and persecutions these men experienced. This writer believes that those challenging days have returned to many countries and will be worldwide before Jesus comes for His Church. The citizenship of true followers of Jesus has always been in heaven (Philip. 3:20; Gal. 6:14).

“When they persecute you in one town, escape to another.” This was a clear promise of persecution. Those who trust and obey God have always been in conflict with the systems of this world. It was intense immediately after Jesus, and it appears to this writer that it will be intense immediately before Jesus returns. While difficulties and challenges will come, wisdom and divine guidance are to be applied to life situations. One should not seek persecution or martyrdom for the sake of persecution or martyrdom. Obedience, love, and faithfulness are to be the hallmarks of those experiencing such trials, and those who endure to the end will be saved (Mt. 10:22). They will receive the crown of life (Rev. 2:10), which is encouraging news that none will lose heart or become weary (Heb. 12:3).

“You will not have covered the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.” This passage has been interpreted to mean that Jesus promised to return to earth before the disciples completed their ministry to all the communities throughout Israel, implying a very soon return. By the time the apostles died, Jesus obviously had not yet returned. Was there an error as some have suggested? Hardly! The word “You,” was interpreted to refer to the evangelists individually, but evidently, Jesus meant that they would be part of a larger group of individuals who would preach throughout the cities. The passage simply means that Israel would not be evangelized prior to the end of the present age (the Church Age) when Christ returns to establish His kingdom in Jerusalem.

As stated previously, and this point is critical, the phrase *Son of Man*, or *Bar Enosh* in Aramaic,²⁵⁴ in the book of *Enoch* is a figure who is waiting in heaven until God sends him to earth where he would establish his kingdom and rule over it. This book was common knowledge, so when Jesus used the phrase about Himself, He was clearly claiming to be the long-awaited Messiah. That is quite interesting, because the book of *Enoch* was written in the Inter-Testamental Period, and the expressions of “Son of Man” and “Son of God,” foretell the deity of Jesus,²⁵⁵ but the former title also asserts His humanity.²⁵⁶ How did the writer of *Enoch* know this? This mystery continues to be hidden Galatians 4:4.

254. Wijngaards, *Handbook to the Gospels*. 44.

255. Jn. 3:13; 5:27; 6:27; cf. Mt.26:63-64; Tenney, *The Gospel of John*. 105.

256. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:312.

“A disciple is not above his teacher.” Jesus again made reference to the disciple – rabbi relationship. As previously stated, the title “rabbi” literally means “my teacher” or “my master.” This phrase, of course, was in effect as long as the disciple was under the mentorship of his rabbi. Once the student-disciple became recognized as a rabbi in his own right, then they became peers although the mentor-rabbi was always held in highest esteem.

The position of rabbi carried expectations of those who followed him. For example, disciples were always expected to do whatever the “master” requested of them (cf. Lk. 6:46). This was also illustrated when Jesus asked His disciples to buy food (Jn. 4:8) and make Passover preparations (Lk. 22:8). The master-disciple relationship has not changed over the centuries.

“Beelzebul.” Also spelled *Beelzebub*, the name reflects the interesting and sarcastic attitude the Jews had for their pagan neighbors. This Philistine god was the “lord of the royal palace.”²⁵⁷ The politically correct name is Baal-Zebul meaning *Exalted Baal* or *Prince Baal*. But by a slight change of pronunciation to Beelzebub the meaning was changed to *Lord of the Flies* (cf 2 Kg. 1:2), referring to flying insects that thrive in summertime manure.²⁵⁸ There is also a second pun to the change of pronunciation. The word *zibbul* means sacrificing to idols. Beelzebul meant “chief of idolatrous sacrificing.”²⁵⁹ Jesus is the rightful “Head of the house,” and He turned that around and said that the head of the house for the Jews was the chief of idolatrous sacrificing to swarming flies upon a manure pile.²⁶⁰ This illustration demonstrates how puns were used and occasionally had more than one meaning. In Scripture Beelzebul is the prince of demons, meaning Satan.²⁶¹

Between the mentioning of Beelzebul and the warning to fear him who is able to destroy soul and body, is the warning against gnostic teaching. Gnostic teachers claimed they had secret teachings of wisdom and of Jesus not found in the Scriptures. While Jesus did not identify them by name, He did identify them by how they spoke – using terms such as “uncovered,” “hidden,” and “whisper.” He clearly said not to be afraid of them but simply speak His truth so that everyone will hear it.

257. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 10, page 11.

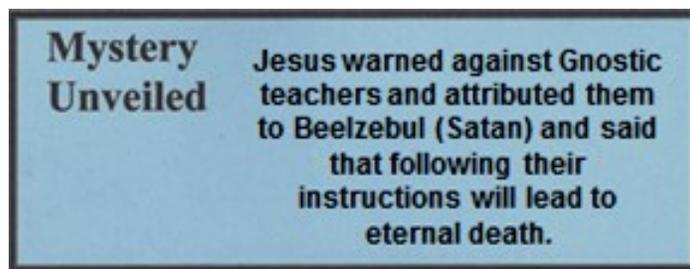
258. *New International Version* Study Bible footnote for Matthew 10:25; See also 09.01.02.

259. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 446.

260. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:60-61.

261. Smith, *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew*. 149.

²⁶ **“Therefore, don’t be afraid of them, since there is nothing covered that won’t be uncovered and nothing hidden that won’t be made known.”** ²⁷ **What I tell you in the dark, speak in the light. What you hear in a whisper, proclaim on the housetops.** In these two verses Jesus clearly indicated that all sin will be revealed – nothing can be hidden from God. However, verses 26 and 27 are a clear defense against the growing Gnosticism that was beginning to take hold in the land. It promoted so-called secrets of deeper spiritual knowledge. This influence of wandering Greek philosophers and mystics is often overlooked in the studies of Jesus.²⁶²



“Fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” While it is natural to fear those who would harm or kill us, Jesus clearly stated that He, Himself, should be feared because He is the One who is able to ultimately send unbelievers into the lake of fire. This statement had a profound allusion for the audience, and the word for “hell” has reference to the Valley of Hinnom, a/k/a the *Valley of Ge-henna*.²⁶³ It was in this valley centuries earlier Manasseh offered living infants in a fiery sacrifice to the god Molech.²⁶⁴ This is a shameful period in Jewish history. Yet Jesus used this imagery to underscore the deadly powers of Satan. Jesus warned against the appearance of pagan Gnostic, Cynic and Stoic philosophers at least twice:

1. When Jesus sent out the disciples on a missions trip (Mt. 10:5-15), He instructed them not to take any traveling bags as these would give the impression they were Gnostic teachers.
2. When Jesus told them to be as shrewd as serpents, harmless as doves, and watch out for wolves, He also said that all secrets would be uncovered and whispers would be heard (Mt. 10:16-33).²⁶⁵

262. See “Gnosticism” in Appendix 26 and “Gnostic” in 02.02.10.

263. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*, 41; Miethel, *The Compact Dictionary of Doctrinal Words*. 97.

264. Lev. 18:21; 2 Kg. 21:1, 6; Jer. 7:31-32; Zeph. 1:5; Acts 7:43.

265. For more information, see 02.02.10 Gnosticism, 02.02.10 Romans, commentary on “The Word” in 04.01.03, and “Gnosticism” in Appendix 26.

“Aren’t two sparrows sold for a penny?” This phrase indicates the minimal value of two common birds. Yet elsewhere the price may be different from that stated here. This is not a mistake in Scripture, but rather in ancient times, as in most areas today in the Middle East, the purchase price of any item is frequently the subject of bargaining. Hence, two buyers may make similar purchases and pay different prices. A “penny” is the smallest coin in the British currency, and not an ancient coin. The word is used in this verse to denote the smallest minted coin.

“Everyone who will acknowledge Me.” The phrase literally means “anyone who will confess *in me*,” which is to identify himself with Christ.²⁶⁶ The language used by Jesus is not exclusive to the New Testament. Matthew again demonstrated that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament.

**^{9b} If you seek Him,
He will be found by you;
But if you forsake Him,
He will reject you forever.**

I Chronicles 28:9b

**^{2b} If you seek Him
He will be found by you;
But if you abandon Him
He will abandon you.**

2 Chronicles 15:2b

To acknowledge Jesus after His resurrection was and continues to be a confession of His deity, that He is God of creation and, therefore, He is the Messiah.²⁶⁷ Believers confess that Jesus, in human form, is the Son of God.²⁶⁸ They believe that He came to earth in human form²⁶⁹ and confess the reality of His resurrection and ascension.²⁷⁰ To confess Jesus Christ as Lord, God, and Savior will inherently make one realize who he or she is and result in the confession of sin. One looks to Jesus for forgiveness (1 Jn. 1:5-10). He receives a cleansing, is renewed, and

266. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:61-62.

267. Mt. 16:16; Mk. 4:29; Jn. 1:1-14, 41; 9:22.

268. Mt. 8:29; Jn. 1:34, 39; 1 Jn. 4:15.

269. Some translations use the word “flesh” for human form. See 1 Jn. 4:2; 2 Jn. 7.

270. Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3; Phil 2:11.

receives eternal life. This greatest of miracles occurs with a simple prayer. Thereafter, Jesus is the believer's advocate before the Father who tells Him we are members of His kingdom whenever that accuser, Satan, lies about us. Conversely, just as confession of Christ leads to eternal life, rejection of His love and forgiveness leads to eternal damnation in the lake of fire known as Hell. However, the central focal point of Scripture is one of restoration; the restoration of man to the image of God – the *imago dei*.

“But whoever denies Me before men.” The Apostle Paul underscored this important thought when he said that if we deny Him, He will deny us (2 Tim. 2:12). The Greek phrase *arneomai* is translated *deny* meaning *to refuse* or *to say no to*.²⁷¹ The English terms *denies* or *denial* are often understood as a legalistic terms that one would outright declare he is not a follower of Jesus. While that is true, the Hebraic meaning is much broader and includes several forms. Four of them are:

1. Luke-warmness is reflected when one has lost his desire to pursue the desires of God.
2. Missed opportunities to speak truth or pray when appropriate.
3. To live a hypocritical life where, as in Western culture today, beliefs and lifestyles do not matter in the name of “tolerance.”²⁷²
4. Actions and words spoken that do not reflect His instructions on how to live a life that honors Him.

On the other hand, whatever one does for someone else in the name of Jesus, is equal to doing it personally to Jesus (Mt. 10:40-42; 25:40). Yet the Jewish leadership looked upon Jesus with great disdain, although some admired His ability to perform miracles. This is evidenced by two interesting accounts that happened later – possibly in the second or early third century. In both stories someone is sick and another offers to pray in the name of Jesus, but it is a prayer in the name of Jesus, the son of Pandira, also known as the son of Parthera. Jewish critics claimed that Jesus was not born of a virgin, but of Mary who was a harlot and His true father was a Roman soldier known as Pandira or Parthera.²⁷³ Therefore, these examples of the healing power of Jesus are of particular interest.²⁷⁴

271. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 127.

272. See the discussion on hypocrites/hypocrisy in 08.03.04 (Mt. :5-15) and in “Pharisees” in 02.01.14.

273. See 04.03.08.Q4 “Can the concept of the virgin birth be supported historically?”

274. Adapted from Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:150.

1. Rabbi Joshua ben Levi had an ill grandchild with a life-threatening disease in the throat. Someone came and mumbled a prayer “In the name of Jesus, the son of Pandira” and the child was healed.
2. A certain Rabbi Eliezer ben Damah was bitten by a poisonous snake and a Jacobus Capharsamensis came to visit him. Jacobus offered to pray a prayer of healing in the name of Jesus the son of Pandira, but Rabbi Ishmael denied Jacobus the opportunity to pray. Consequently, the sick rabbi died.

While these accounts occurred long after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, they reflect two important insights:

1. The power associated with the name of Jesus
2. The ongoing struggle the Jewish people had with the identity of Jesus.

The core issue was that they did not want to admit who Jesus was, even though He had demonstrated all the signs and wonders they expected the messiah to perform with the exception of overthrowing the Romans – an expectation obviously not cited in the Hebrew Bible.

10.01.07 Mt. 10:34-39 (See comments on Lk. 12:49-53)

CONFLICT AND SACRIFICE.

³⁴ **Don’t assume that I came to bring peace on the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.** ³⁵ **For I came to turn**

**A man against his father,
 a daughter against her mother,
 A daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law
³⁶ and a man’s enemies will be the members of his household (Micah 7:6).**

³⁷ **The person who loves father or mother more than Me
 is not worthy of Me;**

**The person who loves son or daughter more than Me
 is not worthy of Me.**

³⁸ **And whoever doesn’t take up his cross and follow Me
 is not worthy of Me.**

³⁹ **Anyone finding his life will lose it,**

**and anyone losing his life because of Me
will find it.**

“I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.” Jesus, who is often known as the Prince of Peace, said, “Don’t assume that I came to bring peace on the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.” What did He mean when He said He came to bring a sword?

Those who accepted Him were rejected by family members who did not accept Him. Complete dedication will be opposed by others in the family who do not agree to such a commitment. This imagery is based upon Micah 7:6.²⁷⁵ For two thousand years many Jews who did come to faith did so at the great cost of being permanently separated from the families whom they dearly loved. The sword is clearly symbolic of the division within many families concerning the identity of Jesus. For example, in the Muslim world today, those who come to faith in Christ Jesus are often confronted with the option of renouncing Christianity and returning to Islam, or face death. Another example is a personal one. Once, when this writer taught ministry students in the Middle East, one day a student was missing from class. Then there was a knock on the door and two men were looking for him. He fled for his life and I never saw him again.

In this passage, the Greek word for *peace* (Gk. *eirene* 1515) simply does not do justice to the statement of Jesus. As a Jewish rabbi, He spoke Hebrew and Aramaic, although He was certainly fluent in Greek as well. But His teaching language was the common language of the people – Aramaic. The Hebrew word (*shalom* 7965), like that of its sister language Aramaic, means *peace, completeness, good health and welfare*.²⁷⁶ Since Jesus would have thought and spoken as a Jew, not as a Greek, this is a classic example where word-study students conclude that Jesus meant the Greek definition of the term, rather than the Hebraic meaning. In fact, the Greek meaning most likely had nothing to do with Jesus.²⁷⁷

“The person who loves father or mother more than Me.” The absolutism of Hebrew idioms is more than a mere challenge to the modern reader. Parents were highly respected since they brought forth life into this world. Jesus required a commitment of devotion that was beyond their customary understanding. Teachers – including sages and rabbis – were held in higher esteem than parents because they taught man how to live and how to prepare for the world to come. The Oral Law gives an example of this prioritized devotion:

275. See also *Jubilees* 23:16, 19; Mishnah, *Sotah* 9.15.

276. Vine, “Peace.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 1:173-74; 2:464.

277. The difficulty that has been revealed here with the word “peace” extends to many other words, such as the word “law,” where the Hebrew definition emphasizes “instruction” which is completely missed in the Greek.

If his father and his teacher each bore a burden, he must first relieve his teacher and afterward relieve his father. If his father and teacher were each taken captive, he must first ransom his teacher and afterward ransom his father; but if his father was also a Sage he must first ransom his father and afterward ransom his teacher.

Mishnah, *Baba Metzia* 2.11

“And whoever doesn’t take up his cross.” This phrase was not a Jewish proverb nor was it a form of Jewish execution, but everyone was were all too familiar with this horrific form of capital punishment. The word “cross” not only meant execution, but it was also the universal symbol of an agonizing death. Jesus demanded His disciples follow Him even if their decision would result in martyrdom upon a cross. In the early first century, it symbolized death, but within a few years of the resurrection, it symbolized eternal life.

“Anyone finding his life will lose it.” There is a deep internal desire in everyone to continue life eternally; no one desires death. Jesus here emphasized the need of commitment in carrying His cross in a different way. Anyone who determines to find his own way to salvation will fail. Jesus is the only way to obtain eternal life.

10.01.08 Mt. 10:40-42 (See also Mk. 9:41)

RECEIVING DISCIPLES

⁴⁰ **“The one who welcomes you
welcomes Me,
And the one who welcomes Me
welcomes Him who sent Me.**

⁴¹ **Anyone who welcomes a prophet
because he is a prophet
will receive a prophet’s reward.
And anyone who welcomes a righteous person
because he’s righteous
will receive a righteous person’s reward.**

⁴² **And whoever gives just a cup of cold water to one of these little ones
because he is a disciple
I assure you: He will never lose his reward!”**

“And whoever gives just a cup of cold water.” The giving of a cold cup (*poterion* 4221)²⁷⁸ of water was a sign of hospitality – an incredible important virtue in biblical times. Many of the sayings of Jesus were known by the Jewish people for two reasons.

1. His sayings were reflective of the Old Testament and cultural idioms, therefore,
2. They had been taught previously by many rabbis.

Jesus, the Master Teacher, used ideas found in stories, sayings, parables, daily events of life,²⁷⁹ and used them to teach His message of the Kingdom of God.²⁸⁰ Walking righteously, which is the same as living a life according to the directives of God, is the principal idea behind giving a cup of water, which is identical to clothing a naked person, as shown in the Babylonian Talmud:

Is it possible for a human being to walk after the *Shekinah*;²⁸¹ has it not been said: For the Lord thy God is a devouring fire? But the meaning is to walk in the ways of the Lord. As he clothes the naked so do you also clothe the naked; as he visited the sick, so do you also visit the sick; as he comforted the mourners; so do you also comfort the mourners.”

Babylonian Talmud, *Sotah* 14a

Jesus taught that every act done in His name is important, and that every moment has an extraordinary occasion that will have guaranteed blessings in the world to come.

“I assure you.” This phrase is a pledge that is almost as strong as an oath, although some have suggested that it is as strong as an oath.²⁸² It was said to affirm to His audience the sincerity of His teaching. Yet the disciples at this point still did not realize His divine nature, perfect humanity, or His mission to save man from his sins.

278. Vine, “Cup” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:141.

279. See Mt. 5:14-16; 6:26-30; 7:6; 9:16-17; 10:24-25; 12:25; 13:31-33; 24:43-51; et.al.

280. The concept that intellectual teaching is based upon what is previously known to the person taught has generally been credited to Aristotle, in *Posteriora Analytica* 1.1. However, the concept, although not described in this manner, is elementary and was practiced by the Jewish rabbis and prophets for centuries.

281. The word *Shekinah* refers to the presence of God and means *that which dwells*. See Appendix 26.

282. Bookman, *When God Wore Sandals*. CD Trac 5.

10.01.09 Mt. 11:1; Lk. 9:6; Mk. 6:12-13**DISCIPLES IN ACTION**

Mt. ¹ When Jesus had finished giving orders to His 12 disciples, He moved on from there to teach and preach in their towns.

Lk. ⁶ So they went out and traveled from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing everywhere.

Mk. ¹² So they went out and preached that people should repent. ¹³ And they were driving out many demons, anointing many sick people with olive oil, and healing them.

“Anointing many sick people with olive oil, and healing them.” Olive oil was used widely for medicinal purposes. It is interesting that Jesus chose natural healing oil for miraculous divine healing.²⁸³ Only later did olive oil become symbolic of the Holy Spirit.

10.01.10 Mk 6:14-16; Lk 9:9b (See also Mt. 14:1-2) Perea**HEROD ANTIPAS CURIOUS ABOUT JESUS**

Mk. ¹⁴ King Herod heard of this, because Jesus’ name had become well known. Some said, “John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that’s why supernatural powers are at work in him.”

¹⁵ But others said, “He’s Elijah.”

Still others said, “He’s a prophet — like one of the prophets.”

¹⁶ When Herod heard of it, he said, “John, the one I beheaded, has been raised!”

Lk. ^{9b} (Herod speaking) “Who then, is this I hear such things about?” And he tried to see him.

Jesus was obviously well known at this point, but His identity remained a subject of controversy. His miracles were of the nature that some who were prone to being suspicious, like Herod Antipas, believed He was the resurrection of John the Baptist.

283. Isa. 1:6; Lk. 10:34; Jas. 5:14.

“King Herod.” This king was Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great and his fourth wife Malthrace, a Samaritan. His official title was the *tetrarch* (5076) of Galilee and Perea,²⁸⁴ but he is mentioned as king because he was the ruler. Technically, he was not titled “king of the Jews,” but a *tetrarch* meaning *ruler of the fourth part*.²⁸⁵ In this case, the “part” was the districts of Galilee and Perea. Nonetheless, he resented not having the same title as his father. His vain attempt to receive the official title of king led to his downfall in A.D. 39 under the rulership of Emperor Caligula.²⁸⁶ The name “Herod” appears 44 times in the New Testament in reference to three individuals.

The narrative below concerning the death of John the Baptist is a parenthetical story in the biblical narrative. It may seem out of place to the ordinary reader since the previous passage refers to him being dead, but now he is being executed. The events that led to his execution are as follows:

Herod Antipas was married to Zollerias, the daughter of the Arabian King Aretas IV of the Nabataeans (cf. 2 Cor. 11:32). Such marriage arrangements were common forms of peace treaties, and many scholars believe that this marriage was a classic example of such an alliance. Then Herod went to Rome to visit his brother Philip and while there, he fell in love with Philip’s wife Herodias. The two men made an agreement and Herod returned home with a new wife. However, to comply with Roman law which prohibited bigamy, he quickly divorced Zollerias. He then sent her to live in the Machaerus Fortress while he and Herodias lived in Tiberias. Zollerias immediately became a woman of intense wrath. But no matter how angry she was, it was nothing compared to that of her father who was a Nabataean king and lived in the natural fortress of Petra.²⁸⁷

Since the Herodians were Roman citizens, they could marry and divorce as often as they pleased. (His father, Herod the Great had ten wives, although he killed more than he divorced.) He divorced Zollerias in order to marry Philip’s ex-wife Herodias. In a case as this where the marriage was made for a peaceful alliance, to divorce a daughter of a king was more than just a divorce; it was a break of a peaceful alliance. Antipas may not have intended to begin a military conflict, but he did precisely that. His actions eventually led to war with King Aretas as well as

284. In the days of Jesus, Perea was often referred to as the “region of Judea across the Jordan.”

285. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:82.

286. Wessel, “Mark.” 8:668.

287. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 208.

a profound rebuke by John the Baptist, whose outspoken words of rebuke to the king were instrumental in the loss of his life.²⁸⁸

10.01.11 Mk. 6:17-29 (See also Mt. 14:3-12a)

DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

¹⁷ For Herod himself had given orders to arrest John and to chain him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married. ¹⁸ John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife!" ¹⁹ So Herodias held a grudge against him and wanted to kill him. But she could not, ²⁰ because Herod was in awe of John and was protecting him, knowing he was a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard him he would be very disturbed, yet would hear him gladly.

²¹ Now an opportune time came on his birthday, when Herod gave a banquet for his nobles, military commanders, and the leading men of Galilee. ²² When Herodias's own daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests. The king said to the girl, "Ask me whatever you want, and I'll give it to you." ²³ So he swore oaths to her: "Whatever you ask me I will give you, up to half my kingdom."

²⁴ Then she went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?"

"John the Baptist's head!" she said.

²⁵ Immediately she hurried to the king and said, "I want you to give me John the Baptist's head on a platter — right now!"

²⁶ Though the king was deeply distressed, because of his oaths and the guests he did not want to refuse her. ²⁷ The king immediately sent for an executioner and commanded him to bring John's head. So he went and beheaded him in prison, ²⁸ brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother.

²⁹ When his disciples heard about it, they came and removed his corpse and placed it in a tomb.

288. Kaiser, Davids, Bruce, and Brauch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible*. 433-34.

In the meantime, Herod not only constantly appeased his Roman overlords, but he also tried to outperform them in every manner possible. His parties were the talk of the empire, and it was often said that if one did not attend one of Herod's galas, one has never attended a true party. Therefore, when Herod Antipas was enjoying his birthday party, Herodias and her daughter Salome planned their revenge for what John had said.

“Herod himself had given orders to arrest John.” Herod Antipas had John the Baptist arrested because the Baptist gave a scathing rebuke on his marriage with Herodias, especially since Herodias was previously married to his half-brother Philip.²⁸⁹ In addition, since John was immensely popular, Herod feared that the itinerant preacher might stir the people to revolt. This was a serious threat since there were 13 revolts from the time the Romans arrived in 63 B.C. until the so-called “First Revolt” of A.D. 66-70.²⁹⁰

“Wanted to kill him.” In today's speech it could be said that Herodias literally “had it in for him,” and in the worst way possible. He was to be killed for personal reasons, although according to Josephus, the public charges were for political reasons. She carefully schemed his death just as Jezebel once had opposed Elijah.²⁹¹ Note the following similarities between Jezebel and Herodias, outlined in Hebraic style:

1. John ministered with the image of Elijah the prophet and had a unique ministry to prepare the people of God for the coming of their Lord.
Just as Elijah had a unique ministry, demonstrating the power of God.
2. A woman named Jezebel, however, terrorized Elijah, and
A woman named Herodias confronted the Baptist.
3. Jezebel was the wife of the pagan Sidonian King Ahab (1 Kg. 16:31) and
Herodias was the wife of pagan King Herod Antipas.
4. Jezebel promoted Baal worship (1 Kg. 16:32-33), opposed Elijah (1 Kg. 19:1-2), and
killed the prophets of the Lord (1 Kg. 18:4, 13).

289. Marriage to an aunt or uncle is forbidden in Leviticus 18:12-16 and 20:19-21. Since John the Baptist applied the Mosaic Law to the Herodian family who was not Jewish, this is proof that all humanity will be judged by God's Word, not just Christians and Jews.

290. See Appendix 25 for a listing of false prophets who had messianic expectations and for a partial listing of revolts and social disturbances from 63 B.C. to A.D. 70.

291. Earle, “Mark.” 3:84.

Herodias, as the queen of the royal court, would have promoted the king's religion; she opposed John the Baptist and eventually succeeded in his martyrdom.

5. John the Baptist ministered with the Spirit of Elijah, but was opposed by the spirit of Jezebel.

“Opportune time.” The phrase in the Greek is *eukairos* (2121) meaning *well-timed*, and signifies *ideal timely opportunity*, and *convenient*.²⁹² The statement suggests that if the birthday banquet had not occurred at this time, John the Baptist may not have lost his life.

“On his birthday, when Herod (Antipas) gave a banquet.” The royal families celebrated birthdays, dates of ascension, and anniversaries with festivals and great fanfare. For example, the Egyptian pharaoh celebrated his birthday with a feast for his royal court (Gen. 40:20) and the Persian King Xerxes had a banquet for his nobles (Esther 1:1-8) while his Queen Vashti had a similar banquet for her court (Esther 1:9), possibly for the third anniversary of Xerxes' reign (Esther 1:3). As grand as these royal banquets were, parties and banquets hosted by the Herodian family were so superior to others that they won the envy of Rome.

These became so well known that Aulus Persius Flaccus (A.D. 34 – 62), a Roman satirist commonly referred to as Persius, described the extravagance of Herod's birthday festivals that became known as “the days of Herod.” While some scholars believe he referred to Herod's accession day, most agree the writer referred to the famed birthday parties which were popular with both the Greeks and the Hellenized Jews. Persius was loved by the popular crowds because he degraded and mocked the aristocrats.²⁹³ Notice his cunning and insulting words about Herod Antipas:

Or when the days of Herod the Jew are here, and the lamps, wreathed with violets, set in the greasy window, vomit oily vapour, and the tunny fish tail swims, encircling the red bowl, when the white jug brims with wine, and you move your lips silently, grown pale at the Sabbath of the circumcised.

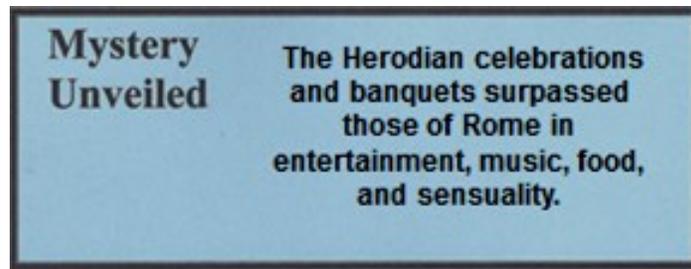
Persius, *Satire 5:180-184*

He highly criticized the extravagance and abuses of his contemporaries, and even called Herod a Jew, which was an insult to both the Jews and to the Herodians. Needless to say, the aristocrats of Roman had no great love for him. It was one of these extravagant celebrations that caused the

292. Vine, “Convenient, Conveniently.” *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:228.

293. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/452897/Persius>. Retrieved September 29, 2013.

demise of the Baptist preacher. It was said that the Herods had perfected the art of entertainment and it was an honor to have been invited to any of their events. They represented the ultimate in Hellenistic materialism, hedonistic pleasures, and philosophy.²⁹⁴



“Nobles, military commanders.” To insure loyalty of subordinates and impress the rich and powerful, Antipas invited nobles, who were the *chief men*, and military commanders, who were the *commanders of thousands*, to a festive birthday gala.²⁹⁵

“Herodias’s own daughter came in and danced.” Normally, royalty employed professional dancers who were known for their sensuality and seductiveness. But this time everyone was in for an unexpected surprise. As the birthday banquet was under way, Herodias had her daughter Salome dress in the most seductive wardrobe of the palace. At such parties, music began quietly but soon heightened into a frenzied pitch as dancers in scant clothing danced between the attendees. The sensual dancing performed by the Greeks and Romans was without any moral or religious values. This was in sharp contrast to the dancing style of the Jews, a type of religious folk art and an expression of worship of God. Jewish focus was on God with no hint of sexuality.

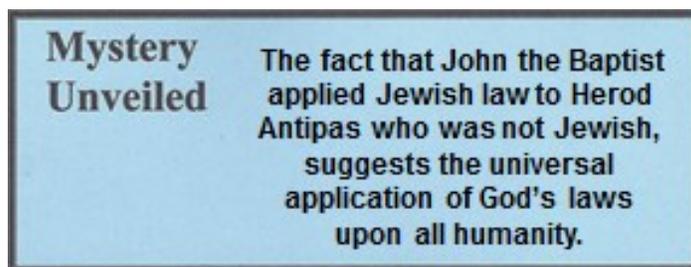
In the Herodian family, however, belly dancing was the beginning of the licentious and sexual performance that thrilled Herod and his guests greatly. Typically, the lead dancer, in this case Salome, danced *The Dance of Eros*, in which one piece of translucent silk clothing was removed after another. When she was finished, all she wore was a small piece to the applause of the drunken crowd. In the minds of the drunken guests, this was the best performance they had undoubtedly ever witnessed, so the offer was made by Herod to give Salome whatever she wanted, up to half of his kingdom. Clearly, he was intoxicated even to consider giving her half of his kingdom, yet he had to stand by his word.

Herodias anticipated that in this context, her lustful husband would offer Salome anything she wanted, and that is precisely what happened. He offered her anything, up to half of his kingdom. Little did he realize what the request would be. Because John the Baptist had accused Herodias

294. Kitchen, “Birthday.” 1:199. For “Hedonistic pleasures,” see Appendix 26.

295. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:193.

and Herod of adultery, even though they were not Jews but Romans, Herodias was determined to have the prophet killed.



“Up to half my kingdom.” This is a figure of speech indicating immense generosity and was never taken literally. The Persian King Xerxes (Esther 5:3, 6) used the same expression. There is no record of any king ever giving up half of his reign as the result of such an offer, but kings did at times become extremely generous to favored subjects.

“Because of his oaths.” The translation is accurate – “because of his oaths” – the Greek clearly states that Herod, in his mad excitement, confirmed his promise with *repeated* oaths. These were actions he would surely regret.²⁹⁶ However, Herod Antipas was king and as such, some scholars believe he could have denied the request.²⁹⁷ They cite a passage of the Mishnah as the reason.²⁹⁸ Even though that is a Jewish book and Herod was of mixed Arab blood, the Jewish writing reflects a common practice in most if not all Middle Eastern cultures of the time.

It should be noted that this marital arrangement concerning Herodias and Herod Antipas was typical for the Herodian family. In another case, his brother Archelaus also divorced his wife Mariamne to marry Glaphyra, the widow of his half-brother Alexander. However, a few days after the wedding, she died.²⁹⁹ By the end of the first century, divine judgment wiped out the entire Herodian dynasty.

The death of John the Baptist was indicative that, Jesus likewise, would be killed. Just as John’s message was rejected, so was the message of Jesus. Throughout the life of Jesus, there are numerous indicators that He would be rejected. Finally, it is an irony of history and a work of the grace of God, that Manaen, a close friend of Herod Antipas, became one of the prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1).

296. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:84.

297. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 215.

298. Mishnah, *Nedarim* 3.1; 9.4.

299. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.13.4; Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 1:273; Schurer, *A History of the Jewish People* (First Division), 2:40-42.

10.01.11.Q1 What is the mystery of John the Baptist?

The mystery of John the Baptist is, “What happened to his body?” Where was he buried? The traditions are interesting and, admittedly, of no theological value. But these are interesting as the Middle East is full of traditions.

1. One tradition says that he was buried in Samaria. However, moving his body from the Machaerus to Samaria would have taken three days, when the custom was that a body be buried the same day of death. The transport of the body was possible, but highly unlikely. Furthermore, why in Samaria? No orthodox Jew ever wanted to be buried in Samaria, and no Jew would have permitted a friend or relative to be buried there as well.
2. Another tradition says that only John’s body was buried in Samaria, but his head was taken further northeast to Damascus where it was placed in the Church of St. John the Baptist – later known as the Mosque of John the Baptist.
3. But another tradition claims that the Russian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem has his head.

Finally, some scholars have suggested that this act of beheading John was too violent for the times. History, however, suggests that it was typical of ancient monarchs. Three examples are as follows:

1. The fifth century B.C. Greek historian Herodotus recorded the demand made by Amestris, the wife of King Xerxes, at his birthday festival. She demanded that the wife of Masistes die, as she was incredibly jealous of her. Xerxes put her to death.³⁰⁰
2. In another case, in 53 B.C. the Parthian King Orodes enjoyed both a victorious battle of Karrha and the marriage of his son Pacorus. In the festive celebration, an actor brought on stage the half-wasted head of King Crassus, who lost the battle.³⁰¹
3. Finally, Rome was no less violent and savage. Emperors Nero and Caligula both had men tortured for the entertainment of guests at various feasts. Caligula had swordsmen demonstrate their skills of beheading prisoners and Nero burned Christians at night to illuminate his court.

The great work of John the Baptizer was over. Just as Samuel had centuries earlier presented and consecrated King David, so the last prophet presented and consecrated the Greater King.

300. Herodotus, *Histories* 9.108-112. *Histories* was written about 460 to 420 B.C.

301. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 1:431.

John was a beloved son and so was Jesus. Just as John was rejected and died a martyr, so would Jesus. No one knows what happened to the prophet who came as Elijah. The proverbial “bottom line” is that the true location of his grave is known only to God.

10.01.11.Q2 What political and military ramifications resulted from the divorce actions of Herod Antipas?

Not only did God send an incredible punishment upon Herod Antipas, but everyone recognized it. Josephus recorded a summary of the marriage of Antipas to the daughter of the Nabataean king Aretas, and the divorce that followed several years later (after he fell in love with Herodias). Since there were already some conflicting issues between Herod Antipas and Aretas, the divorce was the deciding factor for Aretas to go to war. Josephus wrote the following:

About this time Aretas (the Nabataean king of Arabia, Petra) and Herod (Antipas) had a quarrel on the account following: Herod the tetrarch had married the daughter of Aretas (a Nabataean king), and had lived with her a great while. But once he was in Rome he lodged with Herod (Philip), who was his brother indeed, but not by the same mother, for this Herod was the son of the high priest Simon’s daughter. However, he fell in love with Herodias, the last Herod’s wife, who was the daughter of Aristobulus their brother, and the sister of Agrippa the Great. This man ventured to talk to her about marriage between them, which she accepted, an agreement was made for her to change her habitation and come to him as soon as he should return from Rome. One article of this marriage also was this, that he should divorce Aretas’s daughter . . .

Accordingly Herod sent his wife away, as thinking she had not perceived anything. Now she had sent a good while before to Machaerus (Fortress), which was subject to her father, and so all things necessary for her journey were made ready for her by the general of Aretas’s army. And by that means she soon came to Arabia under the conduct of the several generals who carried her from one to another successively. And soon she came to her father and told him of Herod’s intentions. So Aretas made this the first occasion of his enmity between him and Herod who had also some quarrel about the limits (of their land) at the country of Gamalitis. So they raised armies on both sides and prepared for war, and sent their generals to fight instead of themselves. And when they had joined battle, all Herod’s army was destroyed by the treachery of some fugitives, though they were of the tetrarchy of Philip (who) joined with Aretas’s army.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.5.1 (109-114)³⁰²

302. See Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.05.02 below for additional information on this narrative. Parenthesis mine.

The Machaerus Fortress was located east of the Dead Sea, mid-way between Jerusalem and the nomadic Bedouins and Nabataeans of the Upper Arabian Desert that is commonly known today as the Kingdom of Jordan. Pliny suggests that the fortress offered Herod a first line of defense of any possible invasion from the east.³⁰³



10.01.11.A. RUINS OF THE MACHAERUS PALACE-FORTRESS. The fortress was known as “the Diadem” from its crown-like mountaintop setting, as well as “the Black Tower” of its dark basalt stone construction. These are the ruins of where John the Baptist was beheaded.

Some critics have stated that since the account by Josephus is somewhat different than the gospels, there is an obvious conflict. However, Josephus, as he often does, presents details that would have been otherwise lost in history. His comments do not oppose the gospel narratives, but compliment them. The gospel writers wrote from a religious perspective while Josephus wrote from a social and political perspective.³⁰⁴

303. Pliny, *Natural History* 5.16; Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 1:347.

304. Webb, “Jesus’ Baptism by John.” 107.



10.01.11.B. THE BURIAL SITE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST IN SAMARIA.

To the left of the fallen column is a metal door that is the entrance to an empty tomb said to have once held the body of the famous Baptist. However, a Russian church in Jerusalem and a mosque (formerly a church) in Damascus also claim to have his tomb. Photograph by the author.

When the Nabataean King Aretas prepared for war against Herod Antipas, Aretas was surprised to find that some disgruntled fugitives from Philip the Tetrarch (Herod's half-brother) wanted to help him fight Antipas. This reflects the deep hostility that existed between the half-brothers of the Herodian family.³⁰⁵ When the battle was over, King Aretas soundly defeated the army of Herod Antipas. Josephus recorded the event as a divine indictment:

Now, some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God and that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John that was called the Baptist; for Herod slew him, who was a good man.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.5.2 (116)

305. Each son had a different mother.

The defeat caused a great stir in Rome, as the Romans had no tolerance for military losses. Consequently, Herod Antipas eventually lost his throne and was exiled to Lugdumin in Gaul, not far from the Spanish frontier. He and Herodias died in obscurity and dishonor.³⁰⁶

10.01.12 Lk. 9:10a; Mk. 6:30-34; Lk. 9:11; Jn. 6:4 (See also Mt. 14:12-14) Bethsaida

THE DISCIPLES RETURN AND JESUS TEACHES THE MULTITUDE

Lk. ^{10a} When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus all that they had done.

Mk. ³⁰ The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to Him all that they had done and taught. ³¹ He said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a remote place and rest for a while.” For many people were coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. ³² So they went away in the boat by themselves to a remote place, ³³ but many saw them leaving and recognized them. People ran there by land from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. ³⁴ So as He stepped ashore, He saw a huge crowd and had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Then He began to teach them many things.

Lk. ¹¹ When the crowds found out, they followed Him. He welcomed them, spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and cured those who needed healing.

Jn. ⁴ Now the Passover, a Jewish festival, was near.

It was now Passover, a year prior to His crucifixion. Instructing the disciples became increasingly more important than teaching the crowds, although His popularity was exploding. As a result, it was becoming increasingly difficult for Jesus to find peace and quiet. Ironically, the more popular He became, the more difficult it was for the disciples to understand that He would die.

10.01.12.Q1 Is there a “wilderness” near Bethsaida (Mk. 6:31)?

Some English translations associate the word “wilderness” or “desert” with this small town of Bethsaida. The difficulty is that Bethsaida was located along the northern edge of the Sea of Galilee, far from any wilderness or desert. The Greek word in Mark 6:31 that describes it is

306. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 230.

eremos (2048), an adjective signifying a *remote, lonely, and unpopulated*.³⁰⁷ At times the word “wilderness” is translated as “desert,” but this term was not always a reference to climate, but lack of population. A wilderness can also be a very solitary area as were some regions near Bethsaida. Bethsaida was definitely not a desert area, but a village in an unpopulated area.

The town was referred to as the “house of fishing” by Josephus³⁰⁸ although it could also imply hunting with the use of a snare.³⁰⁹ The town was known for its beauty and became known as Bethsaida Julias, in honor of Caesar’s daughter. Scholars believe it was located within the territory controlled by Herod Philip on the eastern side of the Jordan River, upstream from where the river flows into the Sea of Galilee.³¹⁰

“They were like sheep without a shepherd.” Scholars have offered two possible interpretations for this phrase:

1. The Jewish people did not have spiritual leaders who loved and cared for them. There is no question that the leading Pharisees, and most certainly the Sadducees, were worthless and a majority of scholars believe the phrase was directed toward them.³¹¹ The term **“sheep without a shepherd”** is found in a number of Old Testament accounts,³¹² but few prophets were as dynamic in their use of this term as was Ezekiel in 34:1-10. So when Jesus used it, there was a powerful connection.
2. However, there is also another possible meaning to this term. Some scholars have suggested it is a reference to the followers of John the Baptist who no longer had him as their spiritual guide. He had been preaching for at least two years at this point, and he had established quite a following of disciples and listeners. When Jesus spoke these words, He was not speaking of the general population of the Jewish people, but rather of those who had been following John. He had mercy on them, and soon they became His followers.

When John was in prison, the guests of the Herodians were feasting on the good food, but his disciples and followers, who were for the most part poor peasant farmers, had little or nothing to eat. When they heard the news of John’s death, they became discouraged. There clearly existed a

307. Vine, “Wilderness.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:676.

308. Josephus, *Wars* 3.3.5.

309. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 464 n1.

310. Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.2.1.

311. For example, see Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 170-71.

312. Num. 27:17; 1 Kg. 22:17 = 2 Chron. 18:16.

spiritual vacuum. They had looked to John as the new Elijah who would in some way prepare the way for the Messiah.

When they came into the presence of Jesus, He performed the most profound miracle. He multiplied fishes and loaves of bread until everyone was full. Clearly, this was a reflection of the manna that fell from heaven during the times when their forefathers wandered in the desert wilderness. Moses had prayed for a shepherd for Israel (Num. 27:17; cf. Ezek. 34:5) and God provided Joshua (whose name in Greek is “Jesus”). Both Moses and Jesus were leaders with a shepherd’s heart for leading sheep through the wilderness. Now, however, not only were their stomachs being filled, but they also heard Jesus preach hope and life to them. He became their new shepherd.

So many of the people really were like sheep without a shepherd. The religious establishment had become corrupt in every conceivable manner and some leaders believed there were those who were simply unteachable. The famed Rabbi Hillel, whose grandson was the teacher of the Apostle Paul, said the following:

A brutish man dreads not sin, and an ignorant man cannot be saintly, and the shamefast man cannot learn, and the impatient man cannot teach, and he that engages overmuch in trade cannot become wise; and where there are no men (you ought) to be a man.³¹³

Mishnah, *Aboth* 2.6

Poetic parallelism like this was typically used as a memory device, as this helped the ancients to memorize word for word large portions of both the written and Oral Laws. Mark considered the life of Christ so important for his audience that he wrote in an accepted manner to help them memorize what Jesus taught. To the gospel writer, this was more significant than recording detailed events for which modern critics search.³¹⁴

Evidently, not all followers of John the Baptist became followers of Jesus. A few of them banded together and formed their own religion and today they are known as the “Mandaeans,” or “Mandaeans.”³¹⁵ Their name *Mandaeen* is Aramaic meaning *knowledge*, a translation from the

313. Bracketed insert mine for clarification.

314. The gospel writers not only recorded various events and teachings of Jesus, but each writer applied his own style to emphasize the importance of his message. Mark not only wrote ideas in poetic style, but also themes – a writing technique that helped his audience memorize his message. See an example of the poetic themes of Mark 6:31 – 8:30 in Appendix 11.

315. The name “Mandaeans” is also spelled “Mendaeans.” Today there are only a few thousand who practice their religion of Mandaism. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mandaeism> Retrieved December 9, 2012. See also K. Kessler.

Greek word *gnosis*.³¹⁶ They have also been called “Christians of Saint John” even though they consider Jesus to have been a false prophet. Since John was a baptizer, they practice frequent baptisms as Christians practice communion.

Scholars believe the Mandaeans left the Jordan Valley at the time of the Second Revolt (A.D. 132-135), moved eastward and relocated to where they are living today, namely in Iran and Iraq in the cities of Wasit, Nasiriyya, Basra, and in Chuzistan along the eastern shore of the Tigris River.³¹⁷ Arab Bedouins at one time called the Yarmuk River the River of the Mandaeans, where John the Baptist preached east of the Jordan River.³¹⁸

10.01.13 Mk. 6:35-36; Jn. 6:5-7; Lk. 6:13; Jn. 6:8-9; Mk. 6:39-43; Jn. 6:14; Mk. 6:45; Jn. 6:15 (See also Lk. 9:12-17) **The Sea of Galilee near Bethsaida.**

FIVE THOUSAND FED

Mk. ³⁵ When it was already late, His disciples approached Him and said, “This place is a wilderness, and it is already late! ³⁶ Send them away, so they can go into the surrounding countryside and villages to buy themselves something to eat.”

Jn. ⁵ Therefore, when Jesus looked up and noticed a huge crowd coming toward Him, He asked Philip, “Where will we buy bread so these people can eat?” ⁶ He asked this to test him, for He Himself knew what He was going to do.

⁷ Philip answered, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread wouldn’t be enough for each of them to have a little.”

Lk. ¹³ “You give them something to eat,” He told them.

Jn. ⁸ One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to Him, ⁹ “There’s a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish—but what are they for so many?”

Mk. ³⁹ Then He instructed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ So they sat down in ranks of hundreds and fifties. ⁴¹ Then He took the

“Mandaeans.” *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*. New York, Toronto, London: Funk & Wagnalls. 1891. 3:1467-69; Mould, *Essentials of Bible History*. 494.

316. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 10, pages 2-4.

317. Kessler, “Mendaeans.” 3:1467-69.

318. Pixner, *With Jesus through Galilee*. 110.

five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke the loaves. He kept giving them to His disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. ⁴² Everyone ate and was filled. ⁴³ Then they picked up 12 baskets full of pieces of bread and fish. ⁴⁴ Now those who ate the loaves were 5,000 men.

Jn. ¹⁴ When the people saw the sign He had done, they said, “This really is the Prophet who was to come into the world!”

Mk. ⁴⁵ Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He dismissed the crowd.

Jn. ¹⁵ Therefore, when Jesus knew that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He withdrew again to the mountain by Himself.

It was springtime in A.D. 29, as John 6:4 indicates that the Passover was near. So this miracle occurred at the beginning of the last year His ministry. By now His popularity was incredible, and after this miracle, it would be even more so.

The disciples realized that there was neither enough food to feed the massive crowd nor enough money to buy food.³¹⁹ It is doubtful that even if they did have enough money, there was any place where such a large quantity of food could be purchased with limited notice. The disciples looked at solving physical needs in a physical manner, and thereby, were forced to be completely dependent upon Jesus for a miracle. It is interesting that Jesus asked Philip where bread could be purchased. Philip was from Bethsaida, a village known for excellent bread.

The Bread of Life Discourse can be divided into three parts.

1. The Jews reflected upon the time when their forefathers were given bread from heaven. Jesus had to remind them that it was God, not Moses, who had fed them.
2. Jesus told the gathered assembly that He was the Bread who came down from heaven (Jn. 6:22-40). With this statement, He revealed His incarnation.
3. Jesus stated that His sacrificial and atoning death would be as the “bread” to be broken in the fleshly body.³²⁰ Herein the imagery of the future communion begins to emerge.

319. See Appendix 20 concerning currency values.

320. See Appendix 6 concerning Old Testament sacrifices and Jesus. Appendix 9 reveals the New Testament plan of salvation as presented in the Old Testament.

Today at Tabgha, there is a mosaic commemorating the miracle of the multiplication that was discovered in the ruins of a Byzantine church.



10.01.13.A. MOSAIC OF THE MIRACLE OF THE MULTIPLICATION.

The church with this mosaic commemorates the miracle of Jesus at a so-called traditional site near the village of Tabgha. Count Yosipos, a Jewish believer, built a church here in 350, which was later destroyed in 614 by the Persians. Not until 1932, was it rediscovered by German archaeologists and later rebuilt. Only four loaves are shown and fish in the Sea of Galilee do not have dorsal fins. Photograph by the author.

This miracle reflects upon two similar miracles of the Old Testament. However, since the Jews have a history with God and His care for them, this miracle also reflects upon two similar miracles of the Old Testament.

1. Elisha's miracle was that he fed a hundred men with only twenty loaves of barley bread (2 Kg. 4:42ff). Those loaves were circular, flat and thin, similar to modern pizza dough bread. Twenty loaves may have been enough for four or five men, but most certainly not for a hundred. Elisha prayed that these would be multiplied. The Lord provided enough for everyone and there was some left over.
2. The miracle of Moses was that God's people were wandering in the desert, every day God supplied them with fresh food (Ex. 18:25). Just as Moses, the first redeemer, had given bread (manna) from heaven to the people, so Jesus gave them bread as they listened

to Him speak. However, the manna by Moses fell from the sky and after a day or two, it perished. Jesus said that He was the *true Bread from heaven* that only the Father could give, and in fact, He was precisely that!

This miracle by Jesus demonstrated that He was the bread of life for the Jews. It was both a reflection and a projection. It was a “projected reflection” also known as a “type and shadow” of a shepherd feeding his sheep upon the green grass. The prophets Ezekiel (34:23-31) and Isaiah (25:6-9) mentioned a future event when God’s people will enjoy a feast with Him. By performing these miracles, Jesus performed a “foretaste” of that Messianic feast that was spoken of and is yet to come.

As such, Jesus clearly stated that His position was far higher than that of Moses whom the first century Jews had held in a near god-like position. There is also an implication with the statement “from heaven,” and that is, that what Jesus said is beyond the power of Satan and his demons.

“You give them something to eat.” The disciples now had become an integral part of the miracle. As Jesus fed both physical and spiritual hunger, He was training His disciples to do the same.

“Five barley loaves.” The phrase literally means *five small barley loaves*. Barley was known as the *poor man’s wheat*, and was commonly used for cattle feed.³²¹ This demonstrates that Jesus was in fact ministering to the very poor of the nation. John recorded this to connect with the miracle of Elisha, who also multiplied loaves of barley bread.

“Two fish.” The phrase literally means *two small fish*. The Greek word for the small fish is *opsarion*, which was eaten raw, pickled, or salted, but always with bread.³²² It is commonly believed to have been the popular sardine, as the Sea of Galilee has the only freshwater sardines in the world. Pickled sardines were well-known throughout the eastern Roman Empire; soldiers, shepherds, everyone carried some in their pockets for an afternoon meal or snack.

“Green grass.” This seemingly unimportant piece of trivia is significant in that grass is green for only a few months of the year. In the winter when it rains it is too cold for the grass to be green and the spring is relatively short, but that is basically the only time when grass is green. John also recorded (6:4) that this miracle took place near the coming Passover (March-April) when the weather would have been warm enough for an outdoor meeting.

321. Barclay, “John.” 1:202-03.

322. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 468.

“In ranks of hundreds and fifties.” There was a specific reason Jesus requested the people to be seated in such groups. This was not a lesson in administration as much as it was a reflection of what their forefathers had done in the Sinai Desert (Ex. 18:25; Num. 31:14).³²³ The unspoken message was profound and most certainly was the subject of many conversations. By such subtle connections to significant events of the past, Jesus made profound statements of His identity.

“He blessed and broke the loaves.” Some translations read that Jesus blessed the food, but the question is, “Would an orthodox Jew have asked God to bless the food?” This is the Christian practice. Why is there a difference in these prayers? In the early 1600s, when King James of England had the Bible translated into English, his translators had some difficulties with the conveyance of meaning into English. In the Greek language there is no direct object that follows a verb. Therefore, when they came to words such as “broke,” “blessed,” or “gave,” they added the word “it” behind the verb. This changes the blessing from being directed toward God and redirects it at a subject. Once the King James translators accepted this practice, years later other translators were forced to follow the same pattern or be criticized for changing Scripture.

Most Bibles read in verse 16 that Jesus took five loaves of bread and two fish and *blessed them*, and then He *broke them*, after which He *gave them* to His disciples to distribute to the multitudes. A careful look at the Greek meaning will render that Jesus *blessed for them* the bread, meaning He blessed God for the food, after which He broke and gave it to His disciples to distribute to the people.

Therefore, it is easy to understand how the focus of our prayers may be misdirected from the great Creator to various objects of His creation. No orthodox Jew, including Jesus, would ever pray as most Christians do today. The question that obviously follows is whether our prayer language needs to be corrected. The answer may be more of a forced change of habit than a theological issue.

Historically, a Jewish person prays a blessing upon God before and after a meal.³²⁴ In essence, Jesus prayed twice at mealtime. The second prayer is based upon Deuteronomy 8:10. The contemporary prayer of an orthodox Jew may be worded slightly different from the first century counterpart, but it is similar to this:

“Blessed is He who brings forth bread from the earth.”

323. Among the writings of the Essenes, see Dead Sea Scroll fragments 1QS 2:21-22 and CD 13:1.

324. Mk. 6:41; 8:6; 14:22ff; Lk. 24:30; Jn. 6:11, 23.

Jewish Prayer Prologue³²⁵

Some scholars believe this phrase was changed around 500 A.D. when the Talmud was written to read as follows:

“Blessed are you, O Lord, King of the universe who brings forth bread from the earth.”

Jewish Prayer Prologue³²⁶

The significance of the miracle is this: Jesus, who became known as the “Bread of Life,” performed a miracle with enough leftovers to fill twelve baskets. The number twelve was always significant to ancient Israel as representative of the twelve tribes. The miracle reflected upon the days of Moses when manna fell from heaven every day, but their forefathers didn’t have any leftovers (Ex. 16; Num. 11). Now Jesus was, in effect, repeating the desert miracle for the descendants of those twelve tribes with an abundant amount of food leftover. Those in attendance could not miss the connection between Moses with his manna from heaven and this profound miracle. Jesus is the abundant bread of life for the Jewish nation.

The term *blessed* in Hebrew is *baruk* and in Greek is *makarios*. The word means to praise God with a sense of happiness and joy upon man.³²⁷ More specifically, it refers to a quality of spirituality that is already present.³²⁸ Therefore, the blessing that is commonly prayed today in orthodox and messianic congregations is of the Talmudic tradition. It has also been the tradition to bless God for His provision before *and* after eating, a custom that originated in Deuteronomy 8:10 that says, “When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land, which He has given you.” The “good land” is associated with “a bountiful supply of food.” However, note that it is not the food or the land that was blessed, but God. Since the land was so intricately a part of the Jewish culture, this verse was used as a justification to bless God for nearly every other occasion as well. In the recorded Oral Law is this passage, “Anything that is enjoyed requires a blessing.”³²⁹ Such prayers would generally begin with something like this: “Blessed is He who...” So by the first century, the Jews even blessed God for their ability to go to the bathroom, at which time they prayed,

325. Gilbrant, “Mark.” 173; Spangler and Tverberg, *Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus*. 81-83, 95-96. Compare with Bivin, “Jesus and the Oral Law” 2:2, 8.

326. Gilbrant, “Mark.” 173; Spangler and Tverberg, *Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus*. 81-83, 95-96.

327. Weasel, “Blessed.” 1:201.

328. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 66-68.

329. Babylonian Talmud, *Berachot* 35a.

“Blessed is He who formed numerous orifices and cavities. It is revealed and known before the throne of your glory that if even one of them should be opened or if even one of them should be obstructed, it would be impossible to exist and stand before you.”

Jewish Prayer Prologue³³⁰

But the focus is still to bless God and not the object. When one had to endure calamity or hardship, he would pray a prayer to bless the great and true Judge of the universe (possibly with a touch of revenge in mind). It is clear that the Jews blessed their God and not their food or objects, so the obvious question arises: Why do Christians bless their food and a variety of objects as well as people, but seldom bless God?

“Then they picked up 12 baskets.” This seemingly unimportant bit of trivia is, in fact, highly important. When Jesus performed the miracle in this Jewish community, there were 12 baskets full of leftovers after everyone was finished eating. When Jesus performed a similar miracle in the Gentile region to the east there were 7 baskets full of leftovers. The 12 baskets in Jewish community was representative of the 12 Jewish tribes and the 7 baskets in the Gentile community were representative of the 7 Gentile tribes, descendants of the Canaanite tribes who originally lived there.³³¹

These 12 baskets, called *kophinos* (2894), were smaller narrow-necked, flask-shaped baskets,³³² and were commonly used when traveling. They were much smaller than the huge baskets, called *spuridas* or *sphurides* (4711), or *sargane* (4711)³³³ that were filled at the feeding of the 4,000.³³⁴ Jesus again demonstrated His divine attributes in the role of *Jehovah Jirah* – our Lord God who is our Provider.³³⁵

Decimus Iuvenalis (c. A.D. 55-127), more commonly known as Juvenal, authored sixteen satires in which he ruthlessly criticized the moral vices and corruption of Roman society. He likewise

330. Bivin, “Jesus and the Oral Law” 2:2, 8.

331. Josh. 3:10; cf. Deut. 7:1; Acts 13:19.

332. Barclay, “Mark.” 158; Vine, “Basket, Basketful.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:51.

333. Both terms are interchangeable for the same kind of basket. A large basket can be made from ropes or twigs; Vine, “Basket, Basketful.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:51.

334. Barclay, “Matthew.” 2:127; Vine, “Basket, Basketful.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:51.

335. See “Jesus, the Fulfiller of Selected Names of God” in Appendix 32 for additional attributes; Evans, *Praying the Names of God*. 123-24.

degraded the Jewish people, but a point of interest to this study is that he said that when the Jews traveled, they did so with a basket and a truss of hay.³³⁶ Note his words when he said,

... [the] Jews who possess a basket and a truss of hay for all their furnishings.

Juvenal, *Satire 3:14*³³⁷

No sooner has that fellow departed than a palsied Jewess, leaving her basket and her truss of hay, comes begging to her secret ear;

Juvenal, *Satire 6:542*³³⁸

Clearly, the *kophinos* was a small traveling basket, ideal for a light lunch and some personal items for anyone traveling.

“Now those who ate the loaves were 5,000 men.” Literally, “those who had eaten were five thousand men.” It was not unusual for a census to count only men. However, even the ancients realized that if there were so many men present, the total number of people must have been huge. Families at that time were considerably larger than today and, therefore, when including women and children the total could well have been in excess of 20,000 as a conservative estimate. This indicates, along with the 4,000 fed later, that the ministry of Jesus had an immense following. The largest nearby villages were Capernaum, Chorizim, and Bethsaida, which some archaeologists have determined had only a population between two and three thousand each.³³⁹ Therefore, the remainder of the people came from other fishing villages that encircled the sea or traveled a great distance to see and hear Jesus. However, a new capital called Tiberias was under construction that required a large labor force. Some scholars have proposed that if the miraculous event took place near the end of the day, many laborers and craftsmen coming off from work would have been there. If that was the case, then the number of women and children would have been rather minimal.

Years later, when the early church celebrated communion, the believers had bread and fish at their communion meals, along with wine. Since Jesus had a Passover-communion meal and not

336. A “truss of hay” was the bedding material, often in a sack, that was placed under a sleeping blanket at night. It was the earliest form of a bed mattress. See Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:85.

337. <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/juv-sat3eng.asp> Retrieved August 21, 2013.

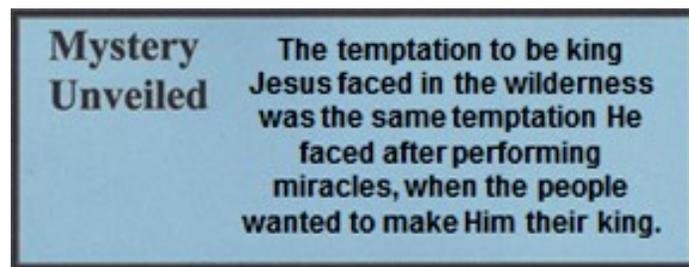
338. http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/juvenal_satires_06.htm Retrieved August 21, 2013.

339. *New International Version* Study Bible footnote on Mark 6:44.

only the “elements” of bread and wine/grape juice, early Christians had a menu that reflected this miracle.³⁴⁰

“Take Him by force to make Him king.” Clearly, the people were at a point of desperation. They believed their long-awaited prophet had finally come and they wanted make Him their political-messiah, even by force if needed. They looked to Jesus as a miracle worker rather than a spiritual Savior, and wished to be healed and fed rather than have communion with His Spirit. What irony! Usually Jesus had to watch out for the religious leaders, but now He had to watch the common people as well. Social pressure was upon Him and He had to retreat to the mountain to pray. With this incredible popularity, it is easy to understand why the Sanhedrin and Herodians were also observing His every move.

In Luke 9:12ff is the narrative of the feeding of five thousand along the shores of the Sea of Galilee. The site was known in biblical times for its seven hot springs in and nearby the lake, thereby making it a popular winter fishing area. Since the Crusader Period, pilgrims were told this site was the actual place of the miracle of the loaves and fishes, due to great difficulty of crossing a swamp to get to Bethsaida. Only since the twentieth century have roads made comfortable passage possible, but the tradition remains.



It should be noted that the words “city” and “village” at times are interchangeable. Mark calls Bethsaida a “village” (8:23-27) while Matthew and Luke refer to Capernaum, Gadara, and Bethsaida as “cities.”³⁴¹ Modern students might conclude that the gospel writers saw very little significance between the two words, but in reality, each was the size of a city but had the character (meaning government) of a village.³⁴²

Finally, tourists who visit the ruins of the so-called Bethsaida today are surprised to find the site to be more than a mile from the Sea of Galilee and on top of a hill. Obviously, it does not make sense to have a fishing village so far inland. Some scholars believe that the explanation is in the

340. Guinness, *Mysteries of the Bible*. 345.

341. Mt. 8:34; 9:1; 11:20-23; Lk. 6:31; 9:10.

342. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*. 129-33.

past two thousand years, there have been many earthquakes that changed the face of the Jordan Valley.³⁴³ In addition, the ever winding Jordan River that enters the Sea of Galilee in the north and exits in the south had changed the delta of the inlet. Therefore, some geologists say, it is not surprising that the northern shoreline has changed over time.³⁴⁴ However, what they have not addressed is that in the 1980s, after a lengthy drought, an archaeologist by the name of Mendel Nun discovered fifteen fishing harbors around the perimeter of the Sea of Galilee.³⁴⁵ If earthquakes and geological changes caused such a massive restructuring of the land at Bethsaida, then how could these fishing harbors have been so well preserved at a natural water level. Furthermore, the reason the harbors have been hidden in recent decades is that in the 1930s, a dam was built at the lower end of the Sea of Galilee. This raised the Sea level about one meter and increased the water supply for the national water carrier. It is the opinion of this writer that the so-called Bethsaida site (10.01.13.A) of today is inaccurate, and the true location of Bethsaida is yet to be discovered closer to the Sea of Galilee.

343. See <http://israel-tourguide.info/2011/01/10/earthquakes-history-archaeology/> Retrieved August 25, 2014. The Jordan valley is one of the most active earthquake zones in the world. There have been hundreds of minor earthquakes and major earthquakes have dammed the Jordan River repeatedly, sometimes for days, in 1160, 1267, 1534, 1834, 1906 and 1927. At such times, the river often redirects itself as a new riverbed is formed. This faultline is part of the Syrian-African Rift, the largest fault in the world. It runs from the east coast of Africa up the Red Sea, through the Gulf of Aqaba between Israel and Jordan, north through the Dead Sea and Jordan Valley, through the Sea of Galilee and on to Damascus and into Turkey.

344. Danny Ben-Tel, *The Washington Post*, April 1, 1998; *Bethsaida*, Israel National Parks brochure, 1998; "The City of Andrew and Peter: Bethsaida," *Bible and Spade* 11:2 (Spring, 1998). 45-46.

345. Franz, "Ancient Harbors of the Sea of Galilee." 35-36; Nun, *The Sea of Galilee and its Fishermen in the New Testament*. 15.



10.01.13.B. THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE AT BETHSAIDA. The location of the fishing village of Bethsaida remained a mystery until the late 1990s. But the site archaeologist identified as Bethsaida is about a mile from the Sea of Galilee and has been dated to the time of the Assyrian invasion when it had a city wall. However, other scholars believe site has been incorrectly identified. Shown is a trail going through the active archaeological site at the so-called Bethsaida. Photograph by the author.

10.01.14 Jn. 6:16-18; Mk. 6:48a; Jn. 6:19a; Mk. 6:48b-52; Jn. 6:21b (See also Mt. 14:23b-27)
Sea of Galilee

JESUS WALKS ON WATER

Jn. ¹⁶ When evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, ¹⁷ got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. Darkness had already set in, but Jesus had not yet come to them. ¹⁸ Then a high wind arose, and the sea began to churn.

Mk. ^{48a} He saw them being battered as they rowed, because the wind was against them. Around three in the morning ...

Jn. ^{19a} After they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea ...

Mk. ^{48b} ... and wanted to pass by them. ⁴⁹ When they saw Him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out; ⁵⁰ for they all saw Him and were terrified. Immediately He spoke with them and said, “Have courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” ⁵¹ Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. They were completely astounded, ⁵² because they had not understood about the loaves. Instead, their hearts were hardened.

Jn. 6:21b And at once the boat was at the shore where they were heading.

This had to have been an incredible moment. The disciples were rowing across the Sea of Galilee in the middle of the night when a storm arose. They were struggling against the wind when suddenly they saw a figure of a man walking across the water. Who would not have been scared to death in that situation?

“Around three in the morning.” Literally, “about the fourth watch.”³⁴⁶ According to Roman reckoning, the night was divided into four segments. The fourth watch observed the dawning of the sunrise, but the day began at 6:00 p.m. according to the Hebrew reckoning.³⁴⁷

This walk on the water no doubt left an indelible impression on the disciples. While God previously performed miracles through Moses and Elijah, in the first century the Jews believed that incredible feats were performed by the prophets themselves. God had divided the waters through Moses so the Hebrew children could escape from the pursuing Egyptians (Ex. 14). Likewise, God performed a similar miracle through Elijah, dividing the waters of the Jordan River so he, Elijah, and Elisha could cross on dry ground (2 Kg. 2:8). Now Jesus performed a greater miracle.

“Walking on the sea.” Both the ancient Jews and their Greek neighbors believed that only God (or gods) had control over the winds and waters.³⁴⁸ It is understandable then that some became confused about Jesus’ identity. Certainly, no mere mortal could do such a thing! To any Greek observers, if Jesus could tell the winds to be still and walk on the waters, then certainly He was more powerful than Zeus, the Greek god of the winds, as well as Poseidon, the Greek god of the waters and earthquakes. In the 8th century B.C., the Greek poet Homer wrote a play with this description of Poseidon driving a chariot across the sea.

346. See Appendix 16 for additional details on the time divisions of the day.

347. Wessel, “Mark.” 8:676; Barclay, “Matthew.” 2:105.

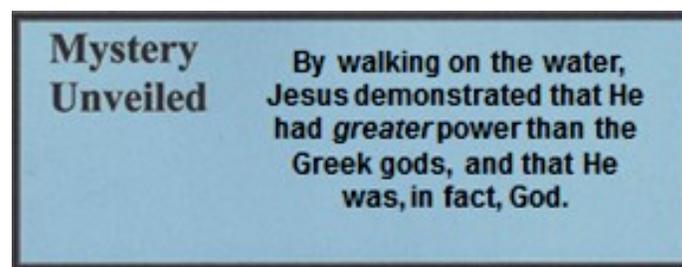
348. cf. Job 9:8; 38:16; Ps. 77:19; *Ben Sirach* 24:5-6.

As he went on his way over the waves the sea-monsters left their lairs, for they knew their lord, and came gamboling around him from every quarter of the deep, while the sea in her gladness opened a path before the chariot. So lightly did the horses fly that the bronze axle of the car was not even wet beneath it; and thus the bounding steeds took him to the ships of the Achaeans.

Homer, *The Odyssey* 13:20-31

The Greeks knew the literary works by Homer as well as the Jews knew the Scriptures. In his writings, Homer created adventure stories in which there was great conflict that caused the gods and goddesses to take sides and intervene. Therefore, the personality and character of these pagan deities were well preserved by the first century. Greek and Roman theaters had countless performances of his plays and the characteristics of the gods had permeated into the daily conversation of the common people.

Therefore, when Jesus walked on the water or calmed the sea, the Greeks who may have witnessed these events were just as stunned as were the Jews. The stroll that Jesus took across the water was even more profound when considering that all of them believed that the abyss was right below Him – the bottom of the sea was one of the three gates to hell because it was believed that the place of the dead and demons was on the bottom of and sea.³⁴⁹ In their thinking, that was paramount of having the ultimate authority over dead and the demons. Obviously, whoever this Jesus was, He most certainly had a firm command over Poseidon and the sea monsters of the deep. Today we know that there are no demons on the bottom of the Sea, but the fact remains that Jesus exercised His power over demons whether they were real or imagined.



349. Finegan, *Myth and Mystery*. 159. As mentioned previously, there was a wide range of theological opinions on just about everything among the various Jewish sects. Some believed the three gates to hell were 1. Baniyas, the most pagan worship site in Israel, 2. the desert (Num. 16:33), and 3. the bottom of any sea (Jonah 2:20). Others believed that one of those gates was in Jerusalem (Isa. 31:9) instead of Baniyas. See also Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 2:110.

As if the influence of the Greek culture upon the Jews was not enough to cause great consternation, the Jews remembered the words of Job who referred to God walking on the water. Note the English translation as well as the Septuagint edition.

**He alone stretches out the heavens
and treads on the waves of the sea.**

Job 9:8

When the Septuagint translators worked on this passage, they wrote it as follows:

**The one who alone has stretched out the heavens,
and who walks on the sea as on firm ground.**

Job 9:8 (LXX)

Without speaking a single word that He was God, this action profoundly declared that Jesus was God. He did not have to proclaim it because the disciples could see it. In addition, He performed the messianic miracles that the Jews believed only the Messiah could do. His daily life, character, actions, kindness, and compassion all revealed the characteristics of the expected “Anointed One” the rabbis had been teaching for years. Amazingly, it appears that James, the brother of Jesus, and Thomas continued to have difficulties believing that Jesus was Deity until after the resurrection.

Then Jesus said in verse 50, **“It is I.”** These three small words in English are not identification, but an awesome formula of revelation for the disciples, literally “I AM” (Gk. *ego eimi*).³⁵⁰ Jesus did not have to claim His divinity; He demonstrated it in contrast of what everyone understood.

Critics have said that the claims of divinity by Jesus were typical of various political figures of that time. They point to Caesar who not only claimed to be a god, but also claimed to have been born of a virgin and endowed with supernatural powers. For all the claims pertaining to his so-called deity, there were no witnesses who received a healing by him. Jesus, on the other hand, had hundreds if not thousands of healings and countless witnesses. As with any good emperor, the very egotistical Augustus claimed to have a variety of supernatural powers that were recorded by Philo, including the ability to calm torrential storms.

This (Augustus) is the Caesar who calmed the torrential storms on every side, who healed the pestilences common to the Greeks and barbarians, pestilences which

350. Smith, *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew*. 187.

descending from the south and east and coursed to the west and north sowing the seeds of calamity over the places and waters which lay between. This is he who not only loosed but broke the chains which had shackled and pressed so hard on the habitable world. This is he who exterminated wars both of the open kind and the covert which were brought about by the raids of brigands. This is he who cleared the sea of pirate ships and filled it with merchant vessels. This is he who reclaimed every state to liberty, who led disorder into order and brought gentle manners and harmony to all unsociable and brutish nations ... He was also the first and the greatest and the common benefactor.

Philo, On the Embassy to Gaius 145-149

Philo (15 B.C. - A.D. 50), who lived during the life of Christ, described Caesar Augustus as the savior of humanity, one who would control nature as if he were god himself. The Romans and Greeks knew their leaders made such claims, but it is difficult to know how many seriously believed their emperors were deified. No doubt many superstitious people did. Jesus, however, performed miracles beyond the claims of Caesar. Consequently, His reputation quickly spread internationally, especially since many caravans traveled along the *Via Maris* that went through Capernaum.

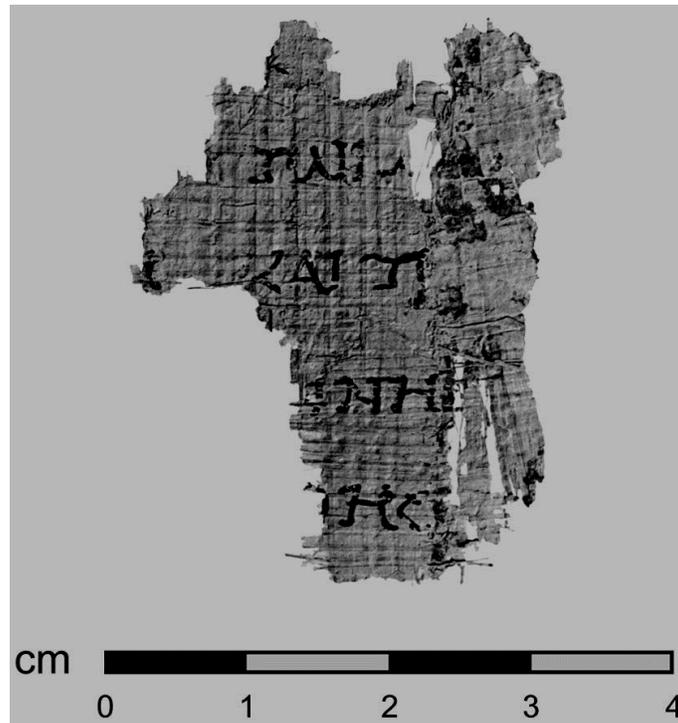
“And at once the boat was at the shore where they were heading.” This phrase is truly a mystery because of the phrase “at once,” also means, “immediately.” Nearly all miracles were accompanied either by a teaching of the lordship of Jesus or an association of His lordship, but not in this case. Some scholars have suggested that possibly the trip was unusually short due to favorable winds after a long day.³⁵¹ That may be the best answer. Regardless, they landed at the plain of Gennesaret, a few miles south of Capernaum.³⁵²

Finally, a Dead Sea Scroll fragment discovered in cave 7 has been the subject of academic debate. Known as DSS 7Q5, and at times referred to as the “Jesus Papyrus,” the small papyrus fragment is the size of a man’s thumb. Some scholars believe it contains a portion of Mark 6:52-53, while others believe it is too small to make that determination. Scholars who argue for the position of Markian copy state that there are no other possible passages the fragment could match. Others disagree.³⁵³ Until related fragments are identified that once were a part of 7Q5, and thereby a larger portion of the text to be revealed, no clear conclusion will be attained.

351. Henry, “John.” 3:171.

352. Gilbrant, “Matthew. 309.

353. http://www.preteristarchive.com/BibleStudies/DeadSeaScrolls/7Q5_mark.html Retrieved November 15, 2012. There are numerous websites and articles on DSS 7Q5. It appears that all too often the opinions expressed by writers are based (or biased) upon their theological viewpoint of the Bible. In 1972 Jose O’Callaghan, a Spanish papyrologist made



10.01.14A. THE DEAD SEA SCROLL FRAGMENT 7Q5, KNOWN AS THE “JESUS PYPYRUS.” The “Jesus Papyrus” DSS 7Q5, is of Mark 6:52-53. It is believed this Dead Sea Scroll fragment was written shortly before the Romans destroyed the Essene community of Qumran. Critics argue that the fragment is too small to calculate a definitive date of its writing since the entire translation depends on the reading of one questionable letter. However, if authentic, it is one of the earliest portions of the gospels. Hence, the mystery continues. Photograph courtesy of Wikipedia Commons.

10.01.15 Mt. 14:28-33 Sea of Galilee

PETER WALKS ON WATER

²⁸ **“Lord, if it’s You,” Peter answered Him, “command me to come to You on the water.”**

the original association of 7Q5 to Mark 6:52-53, a view that a decade later was supported by German scholar Carsten P. Thieder. Thiede then published *The Earliest Gospel Manuscript? The Qumran Fragment 7Q5 and its Significance for New Testament Studies* (London: Pasternoster, 1992).

29 “Come!” He said. And climbing out of the boat, Peter started walking on the water and came toward Jesus. 30 But when he saw the strength of the wind, he was afraid. And beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me!”

31 Immediately Jesus reached out His hand, caught hold of him, and said to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” 32 When they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

33 Then those in the boat worshiped Him and said, “Truly You are the Son of God!”

“**Lord, if it’s You.**” What was Peter thinking when he said this? Who else did he think could have been out there walking on the water? Peter’s statement or question, however humorous it may seem, had a serious intent.

It must be remembered that the Jews were neighbors to many Gentiles. Each group knew what the other believed. And the Jews knew that the Greeks believed that before a sailor died on the sea, he would see his ghost walk across the water. So Peter wanted to make sure that figure out there was Jesus, and not his own ghost. After living more than two centuries with Greek neighbors and involved in daily commerce and personal activities, this myth had entered Jewish folklore as well. Hence, when the disciples were struggling to fight the storm and they saw a human figure on the water, they most certainly wondered if there was any truth to the Greek legend. Furthermore, the Jews believed there were three doors to the Abyss (Gehenna),³⁵⁴

1. The desert (Num. 16:33),
2. Any sea (Jonah 2:2),
3. Baniyas, where the Jordan flowed out of Mount Hermon (common folklore)
4. Jerusalem (Isa. 31:9)

However, since there were numerous Jewish sects and factions, it cannot be said that all Jewish people believed these were entry ways to the Abyss. No doubt, this walk had a most chilling effect on the entire crew as they pondered whose ghost was out there, and which one of them was about to die. Today’s reader may wonder if Peter came to Jesus because he was brave or because he was scared to death. The other disciples were evidently also horrified. As Peter took his eyes off Jesus and he saw the stormy sea, he began to sink. While he is often criticized for his lack of faith, it must be remembered that he was the only one out of twelve who got out of the boat. When fear gripped and terrorized him, Jesus reached His hand out and rescued him.

354. Most Jews believed there were only three gates to the Abyss, but they debated the three, which is why four are listed.

It is easy to forget that the first century Jews did not live in a homogenous Jewish culture. They had Roman overlords and Greek neighbors. Since Galilee, Perea, and Judea lay on the land bridge that connects the continents of Europe, Africa and Asia, they interacted and traded with many foreigners – those who traveled along the international highways and those who lived among the Jewish peoples.³⁵⁵ They knew what non-Jews, especially the Greeks and Romans, believed. All this is foundational to understanding the words of Peter.

“The wind ceased.” The winds upon the Sea of Galilee generally come from the eastern Arabian Desert or from the Mediterranean Sea to the west. Immediately to the east is the mountain plateau of the Golan Heights that is some 2,600 feet above the lake and the mountains to the west are of lesser height. However, both have deep valleys that funnel the wind across the water. Either way, the winds accelerate down the valleys and across the water. These cloudless winds are known for coming unsuspectingly upon the fishermen, endangering both men and equipment. Hence, the cessation of these winds by Jesus had a profound event because disciples and boat were immediately safe with Jesus in their presence. But the irony is that in biblical history, a storm often preluded divine revelations;³⁵⁶ now they experienced a life-threatening storm and the revelation that Jesus is their God hit them.

Now after that exciting event, no wonder Peter declared, **“truly You are the Son of God!”** At this point, Peter recognized Jesus as *the Son of God*, but that recognition probably did not include the element of deity. The word *Son* is capitalized because the phrase was addressed to Jesus, not because Peter recognized Jesus as Lord and Savior. The term *son of God* was in common usage throughout all ancient Middle Eastern cultures. Even within the Hebrew Bible there are a number of descriptions of the term.

1. The angels are called the sons of God (Gen. 6:2) and in the oldest book of the Bible the sons of God presented themselves before the Lord (Job 1:6). It appears to have been a common title for angels.
2. The nation of Israel is referred to as a son of God (Hosea 11:1; Ex. 4:22).
3. The king of the Jewish nation is a son of God (2 Sam. 7:14)
4. Any good Jewish man is a son of God, as written in the Inter-Testamental Period (*Ben Sirach* 4:10)

355. Josephus, at times makes a passing comment on foreigners living in the land, such as their presence in Galilee. See *Wars* 3.3.2 (41).

356. Ex. 19:16-20; 1 Kg. 19:11-12; Ps. 29; Ezek. 1:4.

Therefore, anyone who made this statement of Jesus said so because Jesus was a good man who performed incredible miracles. Jesus was not seen as God Incarnate as Christians do today, until *after* the resurrection.

10.01.16 Mk. 6:53-56 (See also Mt. 14:34-36) Plain of Gennesaret or Galilee

MIRACLES AT GENNESARET

⁵³ When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and beached the boat. ⁵⁴ As they got out of the boat, people immediately recognized Him. ⁵⁵ They hurried throughout that vicinity and began to carry the sick on mats to wherever they heard He was. ⁵⁶ Wherever He would go, into villages, towns, or the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged Him that they might touch just the tassel of His robe. And everyone who touched it was made well.

10.01.17 Jn. 6:22-59

THE MYSTERY OF JESUS' CROSSING

²² The next day, the crowd that had stayed on the other side of the sea knew there had been only one boat. They also knew that Jesus had not boarded the boat with His disciples, but that His disciples had gone off alone. ²³ Some boats from Tiberias came near the place where they ate the bread after the Lord gave thanks. ²⁴ When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor His disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

²⁵ When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, “Rabbi, when did You get here?”

²⁶ Jesus answered, “I assure you: You are looking for Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled. ²⁷ Don’t work for the food that perishes but for the food that lasts for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal of approval on Him.”

²⁸ “What can we do to perform the works of God?” they asked.

²⁹ Jesus replied, “This is the work of God — that you believe in the One He has sent.”

³⁰ “What sign then are You going to do so we may see and believe You?” they asked. “What are You going to perform? ³¹ Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, just as it is written: He gave them bread from heaven to eat.”

³² Jesus said to them, “I assure you: Moses didn’t give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the real bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is the One who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

³⁴ Then they said, “Sir, give us this bread always!”

³⁵ “I am the bread of life,” Jesus told them. “No one who comes to Me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in Me will ever be thirsty again. ³⁶ But as I told you, you’ve seen Me, and yet you do not believe. ³⁷ Everyone the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will never cast out. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do My will, but the will of Him who sent Me. ³⁹ This is the will of Him who sent Me: that I should lose none of those He has given Me but should raise them up on the last day. ⁴⁰ For this is the will of My Father: that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

⁴¹ Therefore the Jews started complaining about Him because He said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” ⁴² They were saying, “Isn’t this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can He now say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?”

⁴³ Jesus answered them, “Stop complaining among yourselves. ⁴⁴ No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the Prophets: And they will all be taught by God. Everyone who has listened to and learned from the Father comes to Me — ⁴⁶ not that anyone has seen the Father except the One who is from God. He has seen the Father.

⁴⁷ “I assure you: Anyone who believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. ⁵⁰ This is the bread that comes down from heaven so that anyone may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever. The bread that I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.”

⁵² At that, the Jews argued among themselves, “How can this man give us His flesh to eat?”

⁵³ So Jesus said to them, “I assure you: Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you do not have life in yourselves. ⁵⁴ Anyone who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day, ⁵⁵ because My flesh is real food and My blood is real drink. ⁵⁶ The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood lives in Me, and I in him. ⁵⁷ Just as the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on Me will live because of Me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven; it is not like the manna your fathers ate — and they died. The one who eats this bread will live forever.”

⁵⁹ He said these things while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

How did Jesus elude the crowds; how did He cross the lake? It is a mystery that remains hidden. He wanted them to realize that He was not there to provide miraculous healings and free dinners. They wanted entertainment, a free meal, but not worship; they wanted food that perishes while Jesus desired to give them “food” that endures. They followed Him to see what they could get for themselves. However, it was not our Lord’s desire to give handouts, but rather, to remove what ought not to be in the heart of the believer and recreate a new person in His image. While this is far more significant than a miracle of multiplied bread along the shores of Galilee, it is the true Bread of Life that many people *say* they want, but they *choose* to reject. It is important that the student of Scripture understands this dialogue that Jesus had with the people and His disciples before reading John 6:53-57. There He spoke of “eating His flesh” and “drinking His blood” and this passage can only be understood in the context of the entire incident above: the Bread of Life discourse.³⁵⁷

“**Real bread from heaven.**” This was a direct reflection that He, Jesus, was the one who provided bread, which meant life and not starvation - to the Hebrews when they were in the desert (Ex. 3:14). A constant theme in the gospels is that Jesus is life; abundant and eternal life. The phrase “**real bread from heaven**” was a significant statement because of the concern people had for famine or invading armies that could bring immediate devastation. Jesus said He is the “true bread of heaven” (Jn. 6:32); the “bread of God” (Jn. 6:33); the “bread of life” (Jn. 6:35, 48); and the “living bread that comes down from heaven” (Jn. 6:51). Jesus went on to teach “He (God) gave you manna to eat, which you and your fathers had not known, so that you might learn that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.” (Deut. 8:3). Jesus used this type of metaphor³⁵⁸ because the prophets used metaphors to describe God. Examples are “the Lord is my rock and my fortress” (2 Sam. 22:2) and “You have been a shelter for me” (Ps. 61:3).

357. See 10.01.13.

358. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*. 735.

“The One who comes down from heaven.” Jesus did not make a *direct* statement, “I came down from heaven,” but *indirectly* demonstrated that He was the Messiah who came down from Heaven for two reasons:

1. This statement was for the specific reason that He did not want the people to make Him the political-messiah king to overthrow the Romans. His claim was eventually clearly stated in John 6:33, 38, 41, 50-51, 58.
2. He wanted people to discover for themselves who He was.

“I am the bread of life.” John underscored the deity of Jesus by recording seven “I am” statements that are unique to His gospel. Jesus revealed His deity yet did not make a direct claim that He was the Messiah or God, as that would have produced severe negative consequences. The other six statements are,

1. “I am ... before Abraham was” (8:58)
2. “I am the door” (10:7)
3. “I am the good shepherd” (10:11)
4. “I am the resurrection and the life” (11:25)
5. “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (14:6), and
6. “I am the true vine” (15:1, 5)

John clearly connects the actions of Jesus with the attributes of God *Jehovah*. In this case, Jesus functioned as *Jehovah Jirah* – our Lord God who is our Provider.³⁵⁹ Just as John emphasized the deity of Jesus with these statements, so likewise he mentioned seven miracles Jesus performed.³⁶⁰ The number seven represents wholeness and completeness, which John connected in this Hebraic manner to the life and ministry of Jesus.

359. See “Jesus, the Fulfiller of Selected Names of God” in Appendix 32 for additional attributes; Evans, *Praying the Names of God*. 123-24.

360. The Seven Signs: Water into Wine (Jn. 2:1-2); Healing the Nobleman’s Son (Jn. 4:46-54); Healing the Paralytic (Jn. 5:1-17); Feeding the 5,000 (Jn. 6:1-14); Calming the Storm (Jn. 6:15-21); Healing Man Born Blind (Jn. 9:1-14) and Resurrection of Lazarus (Jn. 11:17-45).

“Everyone the Father gives Me.” Some translations say that “all that the Father gives me.” The word “all” literally refers to everything that Father has put under the control of Jesus. In the vertical human-God relationship, the definition of this word is all encompassing. This is noticeably different from the use of the word in horizontal human-human relationships where it is often used as hyperbole; an exaggeration to enhance the truth.³⁶¹

“The Jews.” This phrase should not be understood as meaning every Jewish person, but the context of the passage points to only those who were challenging him, namely the aristocratic leadership representing national Judaism.

“Stop complaining among yourselves.” Jesus confronted the leading Jews just as Moses earlier had confronted the Israelites who had murmured against him in the desert (Ex. 17:3, 7; Num. 17:14). Not only did Jesus speak to them personally, but He also spoke against the Sanhedrin to which they belonged, an organization they believed was almost as sacred as the temple itself. Finally, in this seemingly harmless statement, in their eyes, Jesus equated Himself with Moses. They could not miss the imagery. They detested the comparison.

The words, **“Anyone who eats My flesh and drinks My blood,”** were hard to understand even at the time of Jesus. Even at the time of Jesus, there were those who thought it to be grotesque. However, the Hebrew language is a pictorial language that presents a hint to the correct interpretation. For anyone familiar with ancient sacrifices, as the Jewish people were, it really was not that unusual. There are two interpretations of which the second one is generally seen as the most acceptable.

1. All the sacrifices of the Old Testament were, in some way, symbolic of the life and ministry of Jesus. When the Passover lamb, for example, was sacrificed at the temple, it was roasted and then taken home to be eaten. When Jesus said, “Anyone who eats My flesh and drinks My blood,” He was saying that He is that sacrifice – the sacrificial lamb – that the Jewish people were eating. While they did not drink blood, Jesus was speaking of the entire sacrifice as pointing to Himself – He will be the sacrifice for the sins of humanity. The phrase “blood of Jesus” is to be understood as the atoning death of our Savior.³⁶²
2. This phrase was a figure of speech that Jesus used to dramatize the point that the essence of *Him* has to become the essence of each of us. An Old Testament example that shed light on this was spoken by God to the prophet Ezekiel. In 3:1, God said to him, “Eat this scroll, then go and speak to the house of Israel.” Obviously, that did not mean a

361. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 127.

362. Morris, “Blood.” 1:202.

physical scroll, but it did mean Ezekiel was to “internalize” the Word of God thoroughly, understand it completely, and then speak to the Hebrew people. Likewise, when Jesus said “eat the flesh of the Son of Man” it was His intent for the people to internalize His words. He meant that His followers ought to consider Him the bread of eternal life. Just as physical food becomes a part of the human body, likewise spiritual food is to become part of the spiritual body.³⁶³

He deliberately made some statements knowing these would be challenging, and thereby, He forced the people to think and debate His words and His identity. As has been often stated, the primary challenge Jesus had was to convince the Jews that He was radically different from their preconceived ideas of the messiah.

Not only is this a difficult saying for us today, it was also difficult for some disciples. John recorded that some who heard these words decided to leave. Yet this was not the first lesson they failed to understand. Jesus was surprised that they did not grasp the significance in the feeding of the five thousand (Mk 6:51-52). The gospel writer said their hearts were hardened and their minds were closed. It is important not to separate this passage from the multiplication miracle, but consider it an extension of that event.

One scholar condensed the meaning as follows: When the Israelites were wandering in the desert, they would have died without manna and water. So likewise without Jesus in their lives, people have no hope. Just as manna and water were essential to physical life, so Jesus is essential to spiritual life.³⁶⁴

10.01.18 Jn. 6:60-66

OFFENDED DISCIPLES TURN AWAY

⁶⁰ Therefore, when many of His disciples heard this, they said, “This teaching is hard! Who can accept it?”

⁶¹ Jesus, knowing in Himself that His disciples were complaining about this, asked them, “Does this offend you? ⁶² Then what if you were to observe the Son of Man ascending to where He was before? ⁶³ The Spirit is the One who gives life. The flesh doesn’t help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. ⁶⁴ But there are some among you who don’t believe.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning those who would not believe and the one who would betray Him.) ⁶⁵ He said, “This is

363. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 498.

364. Bookman, *When God Wore Sandals*. CD Trac 9, 10.

why I told you that no one can come to Me unless it is granted to him by the Father.”

⁶⁶ From that moment many of His disciples turned back and no longer accompanied Him. ⁶⁷ Therefore Jesus said to the Twelve, “You don’t want to go away too, do you?”

The phrase, **“This teaching is hard! Who can accept it?”** clearly reveals that some listeners took it literally, and did so for good reason. Take note of the events of human sacrifice in Jewish history:

1. Abram (Abraham) took his only son Isaac to be offered as a sacrifice, but in the last moment an angel appeared and stopped him, and provided a ram instead. Why would Abram consider doing this horrific deed? It is because in the culture in which he lived, child sacrifice was common. God tested Abram to determine how strong his love and faith was for God. It also was an outstanding moment in history for God to say that he did not approve of human sacrifice.
2. There are Old Testament accounts where the Israelites were told to wipe out their Canaanite enemies – every man, woman, and child had to die. Why? It is because they practiced child sacrifice. God knew that if any survived, sooner or later child sacrifice would be adopted by His people. So therefore, the Israelites were God’s hand of judgment against those who destroyed innocent lives.³⁶⁵
3. No doubt one of the most wicked of all Jewish kings was Manasseh, who was more wicked than were the Amorites who at one time also practiced child sacrifice (2 Kg. 21:11). Not only did Manasseh set up an idol to Ashtoreth and Baal, but he also instituted child sacrifice (2 Kg. 21).

Therefore, when Jesus spoke of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, some in the audience thought of the horrors of Jewish history rather than becoming united in Him with this figure of speech. They chose to reject Him rather than to stay and learn the allegorical form of expression.³⁶⁶ But what He really meant was the His followers are to be fully consumed by Him.

365. Nelesen, *Yeshua; the Promise, the Land, the Messiah*. (Video Tape 2).

366. Nelesen, *Yeshua; the Promise, the Land, the Messiah*. (Video Tape 2).

10.01.19 Jn. 6:67-71**PETER AFFIRMS FAITH**

⁶⁷ Therefore Jesus said to the Twelve, “You don’t want to go away too, do you?”

⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered, “Lord, who will we go to? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ We have come to believe and know that You are the Holy One of God!”

⁷⁰ Jesus replied to them, “Didn’t I choose you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is the Devil!” ⁷¹ He was referring to Judas, Simon Iscariot’s son, one of the Twelve, because he was going to betray Him.

10.01.19.Q1 Why did Jesus chose Judas Iscariot (Jn. 6:71)?

This question has been pondered for centuries. Certainly there was a prophecy to be fulfilled. Jesus called Judas to be a leader in the early church and gave him the same opportunity to be a great disciple as He did for all the others. But Judas chose, under his own free will, to become a traitor. Jesus, on the other hand, had foreknowledge of what Judas would do. Jesus understood that He would be handed over to the temple authorities who would turn Him over to the Romans for crucifixion.

This foreknowledge did not limit Judas to his act. Jesus knows what every one of us will do today, tomorrow, and in the rest of our lives. On the other hand, Jesus also knew that every prophecy about Himself was to be fulfilled and that He was to be the ultimate sacrifice for the sins of humanity; He had to die a sacrificial death. To accomplish this objective, someone was needed who would, in his complete free will, decide to become a traitor.

10.01.20 Mk. 7:1-13 (See also Mt. 15:1-9) Spring, A.D. 29**TRADITIONS OF THE ORAL LAW CONDEMNED**

¹ The Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Him. ² They observed that some of His disciples were eating their bread with unclean—that is, unwashed—hands. ³ (For the Pharisees, in fact all the Jews, will not eat unless they wash their hands ritually, keeping the tradition of the elders. ⁴ When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they have washed. And there are many other customs they have received and keep, like the washing of cups, jugs, copper utensils, and dining couches.) ⁵ Then the Pharisees and the

scribes asked Him, “Why don’t Your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders, instead of eating bread with ritually unclean hands?”

⁶ He answered them, “Isaiah prophesied correctly about you hypocrites, as it is written:

These people honor Me with their lips,
but their heart is far from Me.

⁷ They worship Me in vain,
teaching as doctrines the commands of men (Isaiah 29:13).

⁸ Disregarding the command of God, you keep the tradition of men.” ⁹ He also said to them, “You completely invalidate God’s command in order to maintain your tradition!” ¹⁰ For Moses said:

Honor your father and your mother (Ex. 20:12; Deut. 21:5:16) and
Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death (Ex. 21:17;
Lev. 20:9).

¹¹ But you say, “If a man tells his father or mother: Whatever benefit you might have received from me is Corban” (that is, a gift committed to the temple), ¹² “you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. ¹³ You revoke God’s word by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many other similar things.”

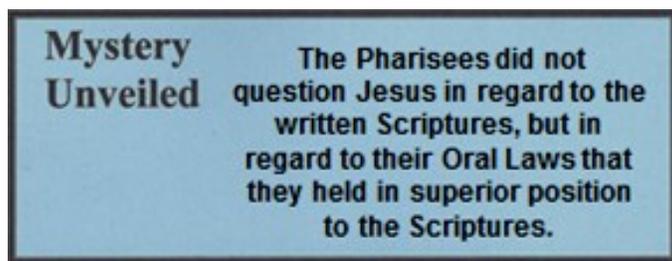
The gospel of Mark was written to Roman believers who were not familiar with Jewish customs.³⁶⁷ Therefore, he explained that the Jews confronted Jesus because they had placed their traditional rites and laws in a position superior over the written Scriptures. This is revealed in the Talmud that states these words, “My son, give more heed to the words of the Rabbis than to the words of the [written] law.”³⁶⁸

Some issues of the Oral Law were hotly debated. Various issues such as hand washing were argued between two schools of theological interpretation: The School of Hillel and the School of Shammai. The Pharisees did not question Jesus or His disciples in regard to their conformity to the sacred Scriptures, but with regard to their Oral laws and traditions. Here Jesus dealt His heaviest blow to the Oral Law, not that the entire Oral Law was evil, but major portions of it made the Mosaic Law void. The leading Pharisees could not tolerate Jesus giving them counsel

367. The gospel writers not only recorded various events and teachings of Jesus, but each writer applied his own style to emphasize the importance of his message. Mark not only wrote ideas in poetic style, but also themes – a writing technique that helped his audience memorize his message. See an example of the poetic themes of Mark 6:31 – 8:30 in Appendix 11.

368. Cited by Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 241.

on any matter. In their opinion, since Jerusalem was the seat of the Sanhedrin, the city was considered the seat of all knowledge.



“From Jerusalem.” Herod the Great had restricted the legal authority of the Sanhedrin to the province of Judea.³⁶⁹ Hence, when Jesus was anywhere else, they sent delegates from Jerusalem to observe and question Him.

“His disciples were eating their bread with unclean — that is, unwashed — hands.” The subject of cleanliness was commanded in Leviticus 11-15 and Numbers 5:1-4 and 19. However, the ritual required by the rabbis was not a biblical requirement, but a rabbinic creation. According to them, so serious was the matter of hand washing, that those who failed to wash properly were said to be subject to the attack or influence of a demon named Shibta.³⁷⁰ This ritual was to illustrate the purity of one’s life, but Jesus pointed to the fact that, while they observed the legalistic ritual, their lives were corrupt.

An example concerning this kind of ritual is found in the life of Eleazar ben Enoch that illustrates how passionate the Pharisees were about this matter. Enoch was known to oppose the washing of hands and his peers condemned him for it. In fact, after his death he was immediately excommunicated (in essence, condemned to hell). The Mishnah provides this interesting account:

Eleazar ben Enoch, because he threw doubt on [the teaching of the sages concerning] the cleansing of hands and when he died the court sent and laid a stone on his coffin; whence we learn that if any man is put under a ban and dies while yet under the ban, his coffin must be stoned.

369. When the gospel writers used terms such as “Jews from Jerusalem” or “Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem” or similar statements ending with “from Jerusalem,” these persons were generally representatives of the Sanhedrin who came to listen, observe, and eventually challenge both John the Baptist and Jesus. Bookman, *When God Wore Sandals*. CD Trac 5.

370. Barclay, “Mark.” 165.

Mishnah, *Eduyoth* 5.6³⁷¹

The custom of washing may have begun with Solomon when he washed his hands prior to a sacrificial offering.³⁷² However, the earliest written evidence of this ritual washing is found in the *Sibylline Oracles*, written in 160 B.C., about five years after the Maccabean Revolt when the temple was cleansed. Speaking highly of those who ruled the temple, the writer said they were men who:

At dawn they lift up holy hands toward heaven, from their beds, always sanctifying their flesh with water.

***Sibylline Oracles* 3:591-595³⁷³**

However, the purpose of the Laws of Moses was fulfilled in the New Testament with various instructions for believers to be separate from unbelievers and their sinful activities. Believers are no longer under the Law of Moses but under a new law, the Law of Messiah because Jesus was the fulfillment/goal/purpose of the Law of Moses.³⁷⁴

Since the resurrection of Jesus, the gospel continues to spread to both the Jewish and Gentile people. No longer are believers to be separated from pagan cultures *per se*, but they are to be a force for change, bringing the Kingdom of God to those who do not know Jesus.

“From the marketplace.” The marketplace was filled with Jewish and Gentile merchants and, therefore, the area was ceremonially unclean. The washing of hands and food was not for physical cleaning, but for ritual-religious purposes.³⁷⁵ The washing of hands was a well-established practice (2 Kg. 3:11) and was connected with prayers of thankfulness.³⁷⁶ Verses 3 and 4 are parenthetical in that the gospel writer Mark inserted them to explain Jewish customs to a Gentile audience.

371. The Mishnah has more than twelve treatises on this kind of uncleanness.

372. Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbath* 14b; Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 484.

373. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 1:375.

374. Rom. 7:5-6, 10:4; Heb. 7:11-19, 8:13; Col. 2:14; Eph. 2:11-3:6; Gal. 3:17-19.

375. *New International Version* Study Bible footnote on Mark 7:4.

376. 1 Sam. 9:13; Mt. 15:35; Lk. 22:17.

“The tradition of the elders.” This phrase is clearly referred to as the Oral Law.³⁷⁷ In this passage Mark identifies some of these traditions (verses 3-5, 7-9, 13) and the Apostle Paul made a parallel comment in Colossians 2:8, 22.³⁷⁸ The Mishnah has some thirty chapters devoted to the cleansing of various vessels and hands, and reflects the excessive compulsion the Jews had for ritualistic cleanliness.³⁷⁹

“You completely invalidate God’s command in order to maintain your tradition!” Jesus delicately confronted His accusers with sarcastic irony³⁸⁰ when He distinguished the contrast between the commands of God and the traditions of men. The religious leaders, however, had this command reversed. Instead, they said,

It is more worthy of punishment to teach against the ordinances of the scribes than against the Torah itself.

Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 11.3

The Mishnah phrase describes precisely what Jesus meant – the leading Pharisees held their laws, and the violation of breaking them, in higher position than their Bible. This was the basis for nearly all conflicts between Jesus and His adversaries. Traditions that support the Bible and benefit mankind have always been considered good and useful. Yet Christianity has developed its own traditions (1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 2:15).

“Corban.” (Gk. *korban* 2878; Heb. *qorban*). The word means *dedicated to God, set aside for God, or dedicated to God.*³⁸¹ In this narrative, the Corban is money that was *officially given to God*, for various uses, but the person who dedicated the money actually retained it.³⁸² Jesus was concerned about priorities. In this discussion (7:1-13) He had a disagreement with the leading

377. For additional study on the accuracy of oral transmission of commentary and biblical knowledge, see Gerhardson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity*, especially the section on Techniques of Repetition (page 163). The importance of this lies in the fact that the gospel narratives are believed to have been transmitted orally in the same manner until the gospel writers recorded them.

378. See also Flusser, “The Jewish-Christian Schism (Part I).” 47.

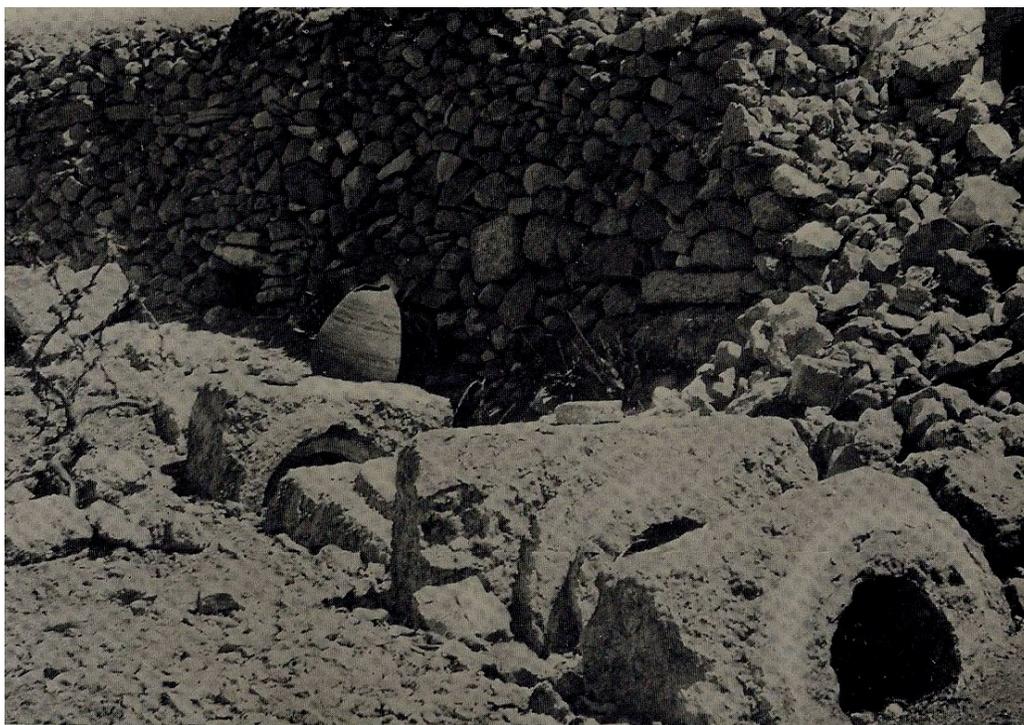
379. See Oral Law 02.02.18, Mishnah, 02.02.16, and Oral Tradition 02.02.20.

380. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*. 811. Sarcastic irony is a figure of speech used by Jesus only to the worst religious leaders.

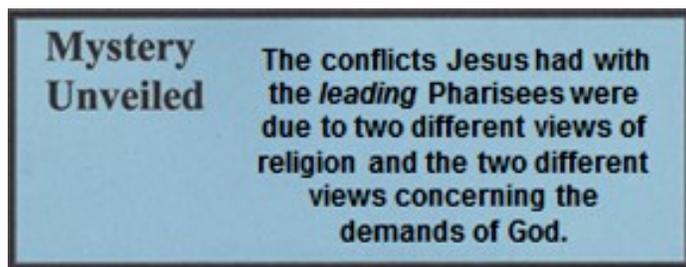
381. Lev. 1:2-3; 2:1; 3:1; Num. 7:12-17; Barclay, “Matthew.” 2:115-16; Vine, “Corban.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:129.

382. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 1:221-22.

Pharisees concerning the Mosaic Law and the Oral Law. More specifically, the law forbade the giving of dedicated money for parental support to the temple.



10.01.20.A. THE REMAINS OF PILATE’S AQUEDUCT. The ancient aqueduct is shown as seen in the 1920s. The pipe sections were hand cut from stone as to fit tightly and joints were sealed with materials such as asphalt from the Dead Sea. This photo differs from Herod’s aqueduct shown on 09.03.08.A, indicating different methods of construction. Photo: Mary Morton/ Public Domain.



In biblical Judaism, the highest human duty was to honor and respect one’s parents.³⁸³ Resources that were to be used for the support of one’s parents were “dedicated to God,” and therefore, *no one else* could use them – but the original owner could still use them and not care for his

383. *Sirach* 3:7-8, 12-15; Josephus, *Against Apion* 2:28 (206).

parents.³⁸⁴ In essence, the leading Pharisees created a way to circumvent the biblical law by making a Corban vow but neglected the commandment to honor father and mother, which included financial support in their later years.³⁸⁵ As previously stated, the leading Pharisees broke some of the Mosaic laws by creating their own religious traditions that were held in higher priority. In this challenge, Jesus declared war on the Oral Laws and those who supported them.

The Corban became famous in history because Josephus recorded that Pontius Pilate at one time raided the temple treasury and stole the Corban. He used the funds to complete the aqueduct system that supplied water to the temple. It was one of the construction projects that had remained unfinished after the death of Herod the Great.³⁸⁶



10.01.20.B. INSCRIPTION OF THE CORBAN. The meaning of the word “Corban” remained a mystery until an inscription with the etched images of two sacrificial birds was discovered. The word was a reference to an offering of two doves. Photo by Jeff Herot.

10.01.21 Mk. 7:14-16; Mt. 15:12-16; Mk. 7:18b-23

DEFILEMENT CONTRASTED

384. Mishnah. *Nedarim* 1.2-4; 3.2; 9.7.

385. Wigoder, “Corban;” Bivin and Blizzard, *Understanding the Difficult Words*. 36; Tenney, ed., “Corban.” 4:431; Shanks, *Jerusalem: An Archaeological Biography*. 157.

386. Josephus, *Wars* 2.9.4.

Mk. ¹⁴ Summoning the crowd again, He told them, “Listen to Me, all of you, and understand: ¹⁵ Nothing that goes into a person from outside can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him. [¹⁶ If anyone has ears to hear, he should listen!]”

Mt. ¹² Then the disciples came up and told Him, “Do You know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard this statement?”

¹³ He replied, “Every plant that My heavenly Father didn’t plant will be uprooted. ¹⁴ Leave them alone! They are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both will fall into a pit.”

¹⁵ Then Peter replied to Him, “Explain this parable to us.”

¹⁶ “Are even you still lacking in understanding?” He asked.

Mk. ^{18b} Don’t you realize that nothing going into a man from the outside can defile him? ¹⁹ For it doesn’t go into his heart but into the stomach and is eliminated.” (As a result, He made all foods clean.) ²⁰ Then He said, “What comes out of a person—that defiles him. ²¹ For from within, out of people’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immoralities, thefts, murders, ²² adulteries, greed, evil actions, deceit, promiscuity, stinginess, blasphemy, pride, and foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within and defile a person.”

Again Jesus emphasized the importance of being separated from the evils of this world. In the Old Testament Period there were various activities by which one could become “defiled.” The leading Jews had taken the Mosaic laws of cleanliness to a high stress level of religious legalism. Jesus challenged this doctrine and taught that the source of all uncleanness is the unrepentant heart. There is no parallel to defilement in the New Testament era, but the message is just the same – true believers are to be separated from the evils of this world, and at times from those self-proclaimed Christians who clearly are not true believers. For this reason the heart of man needs to be changed by faith and obedience in Him.

“Nothing that goes into a person from outside can defile him.” In this discourse, Jesus said that it was not what went into a man’s mouth that made him unclean, but what came out. This was a significant statement in that it indicated a change from the cultural-religious division that separated Jew from Gentile. The strict observance of eating only kosher foods (Lev. 11) was intended to prevent the social interaction and, hence, the potential pollution of the Jewish faith by pagan cultures. However, the ceremonial traditions of the elders never met the requirements

of God's laws. Not only did Jesus introduce an enhanced understanding of God the Father but He also set the world stage for the spread of the gospel to all peoples. No longer was there to be a division between Jew and Gentile.

“But the things that come out of a person are what defile him.” This graphic statement clearly connects, especially with verses 19-23, bodily excrement with the evil thoughts that come from within a person. It emphasizes the differences between the believer and unbeliever.³⁸⁷ In a similar manner just as kosher foods are not important to His followers, they are to have “kosher” hearts. The concept of *kosher* is for the people of God to be a holy people, separated from the lifestyle and worldview of the world. In fact, not only the words of Jesus, but the entire New Testament requires believers to live a life separated from the world – the precise purpose of *kosher foods* of the Hebrew Bible. The goal is that what comes out of a person is clean and pure due to a transformed life. Note the following examples:

1. You formerly walked in the ways of this world (implies that now you don't; Eph. 2:2)
2. Do not be bound with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14)
3. Keep yourself unstained by this world (Jam. 1:27)
4. Do not be conformed to this world (Rom. 12:2)
5. Come out of their midst and be separate (2 Cor. 6:17)
6. Do not love this world, nor the things in the world (1 Jn. 2:15)
7. If anyone loves this world, the love of the Father is not in him 1 Jn. 2:15)
8. Demas (an associate of Paul) having loved this world has deserted me (2 Tim. 4:10)
9. A friend of this world is an enemy of God (Jas. 4:4)
10. Gain the world and forfeit your soul (Mk. 8:36)
11. He who loves this life in this world will lose it (Jn. 12:25)
12. Our struggle is against the darkness of this world (Eph. 6:12)

387. See the differences noted in Colossians 1-4, Ephesians 5, and Galatians 5.

The term greed is separated from all the other vices because the Greek definition is considerably more profound than its English translation implies. In the Greek it is *pleonexia*, meaning to possess things which are forbidden and should not be desired whatsoever.³⁸⁸ Furthermore, it is usually in conjunction with *aselgeia* that refers to a sheer animal lust. The gospel writer continues with evil actions, deceit, typical characteristics that accompany greed. Deceit (Gk. *dolos* 1388) is defined as *craftiness, a bait, snare, trickery*, and is associated with *lusts of deceit*.³⁸⁹ These characteristics, therefore, would not be obviously noticeable. The believer is to have an attitude of purity and holiness.

10.01.22 Jn. 7:1

MINISTRY IN GALILEE

¹ After this, Jesus traveled in Galilee, since He did not want to travel in Judea because the Jews were trying to kill Him.

The religious establishment of Jerusalem was delighted that Herod Antipas had killed John the Baptist. They figured that since John was executed, now it should be easier to do the same to Jesus. Rumors had spread far and wide that they “**were trying to kill Him,**” as John mentioned this ten times in chapters 7 and 8.³⁹⁰ Decades earlier Herod the Great limited the arresting power of the Sanhedrin to Judea. They could not pursue Jesus into Galilee and arrest Him there or anywhere else. Therefore, Jesus left Capernaum and traveled toward the Mediterranean Sea where He escaped the hostilities of the religious leaders. They would not dare to defile themselves by going into a Gentile community. There He had time to teach the Twelve and minister to the local people. Amazingly, the rabbis never challenged Jesus on the Written Law, which He faithfully observed. Rather, they pursued Him for breaking their Oral Laws.

10.01.23 Mk. 7:24-26a; Mt. 15:22b-28 Tyre and Sidon

CANAANITE MOTHER PLEADS WITH JESUS

388. Barclay, *A New Testament Wordbook*. 27.

389. Vine, “Deceit, Deceitful, Deceitfully, Deceitfulness, Deceive, Deceivableness.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:151.

390. John 7:1, 13, 19, 25, 30, 32, 44; 8:37, 40, 59.

Mk. ²⁴ He got up and departed from there to the region of Tyre and Sidon. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it, but He could not escape notice. ²⁵ Instead, immediately after hearing about Him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit came and fell at His feet. ^{26a} Now the woman was Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and she kept asking Him...

Mt. ^{22b} “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is cruelly tormented by a demon.”

²³ Yet He did not say a word to her. So His disciples approached Him and urged Him, “Send her away because she cries out after us.”

²⁴ He replied, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

²⁵ But she came, knelt before Him, and said, “Lord, help me!”

²⁶ He answered, “It isn’t right to take the children’s bread and throw it to their dogs.”

²⁷ “Yes, Lord,” she said, “yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table!”

²⁸ Then Jesus replied to her, “Woman, your faith is great. Let it be done for you as you want.” And from that moment her daughter was cured.

This narrative parallels the account of the Gentile centurion (Mt. 8:5-13) and, like the centurion, her attitude is completely opposite of the religious leaders in Jerusalem. But amazingly, the response by Jesus appears to be totally out of character – cold-hearted at best. Obviously the gospel narrative does not reveal the entire story, so readers are left to ponder why Jesus responded in this manner. Two possibilities have been offered:

1. Jesus may have desired to test the feelings of His disciples. They, like so many other Jewish people, had a sense of exclusiveness. While Jesus had previously healed the servant of the Gentile centurion who some scholars suggest may have been a Jewish proselyte, but this woman was a descendant of the cursed Canaanites. Would the disciples endorse a cold-heart attitude or would then respond with the compassion that was expected of Jesus?

2. Jesus may have desired to further test the woman’s faith. In doing so, she might discover a deeper understanding of who Jesus is – much more than the title by which she called Him.

As the story concludes, it appears evident that she certainly did discover the real Jesus, and the disciples witnessed His compassion upon a hated people group.

Matthew called her a “Canaanite woman” while Mark referred to her as a “Syrian-Phoenician” woman. There is no discrepancy as the Syrian-Phoenicians were a sub-group of the Canaanites. These people, like the Jews, were of Semitic origin and, therefore, their languages were similar. Therefore Jesus could converse with her.³⁹¹

According to Matthew’s genealogy, one of his ancestors is Rahab, a prostitute of Jericho at the time of Joshua’s conquest (Josh. 2). Jericho was part of the larger Canaanite people group. His journey into Gentile areas began the fulfillment of Isaiah 49:22, that is, a call to the Gentiles.

10.01.23.Q1 Why did Jesus go to the regions of Tyre and Sidon and later to the Decapolis cities (Mt. 15:22-28; Mk. 7:24-26)?

By this time, Jesus made His second withdrawal into Gentile areas, and He did this for these reasons:

1. By this time His popularity was exploding while confrontations were also intensifying. There was no longer a place in Judaea or Galilee where He and the disciples could enjoy some privacy.
2. Another reason is that these regions lay within original covenant promised to Abraham.
3. While Tyre and Sidon were considered Gentile cities, they had a significant Jewish population as well.
4. However, the main reason Jesus went to Tyre and Sidon was probably because of an event that occurred more than seven centuries earlier.³⁹² One noted Israeli scholar who studied ancient highways and military campaigns, identified the route used by Tiglath-Pileser III in his conquest of the Upper Galilee region (730s B.C.).³⁹³ This Assyrian king

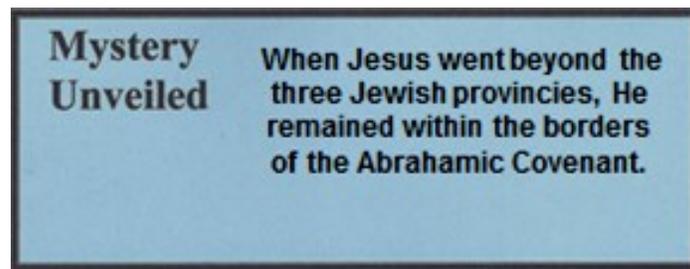
391. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. 125.

392. See 03.02.03 and 03.02.04.

393. This writer is grateful to his professor, the late Dr. Anson Rainey, who passionately translated various ancient texts in various languages in order to better understand the Bible in its context. See Rainey and Notley. *The Sacred Bridge*. 229-33.

brought unimaginable suffering, death, and destruction to Phoenicia and Israel – especially to the tribal areas of Zebulun and Naphtali. His lived up to the horrible reputation among the ancients, that no people group was crueller to their enemies than were the Assyrians. When Jesus went to the regions of Tyre and Sidon, He brought fulfillment to Isaiah’s prophecy as He retraced the route of Tiglath-Pileser III and, by contrast, brought life and healing to both Jews and Gentiles.³⁹⁴

While Jesus was interested in bringing salvation to the Gentiles, He was first going to fulfill the promise that Abraham would be a blessing to all the people of the world (Gen. 12:3). This blessing would begin with all the Gentiles and Jews who lived within the Promised Land (Gen. 17:8). Therefore, Jesus traveled beyond the borders of the three Jewish provinces of Galilee, Perea, and Judea and into the lands promised to Abraham. He did not, however, travel beyond the borders of the Abrahamic Covenant.



“The region of Tyre and Sidon.” There is no record that Jesus went into the cities, but to the regions. Specifically where He traveled in these areas is unknown, although the roads He walked on retrace the military march of Tiglath-Pileser III of ages past.³⁹⁵ But what is known, is that Jewish people lived throughout the Roman Empire, including Tyre, Sidon, and the Decapolis cities.

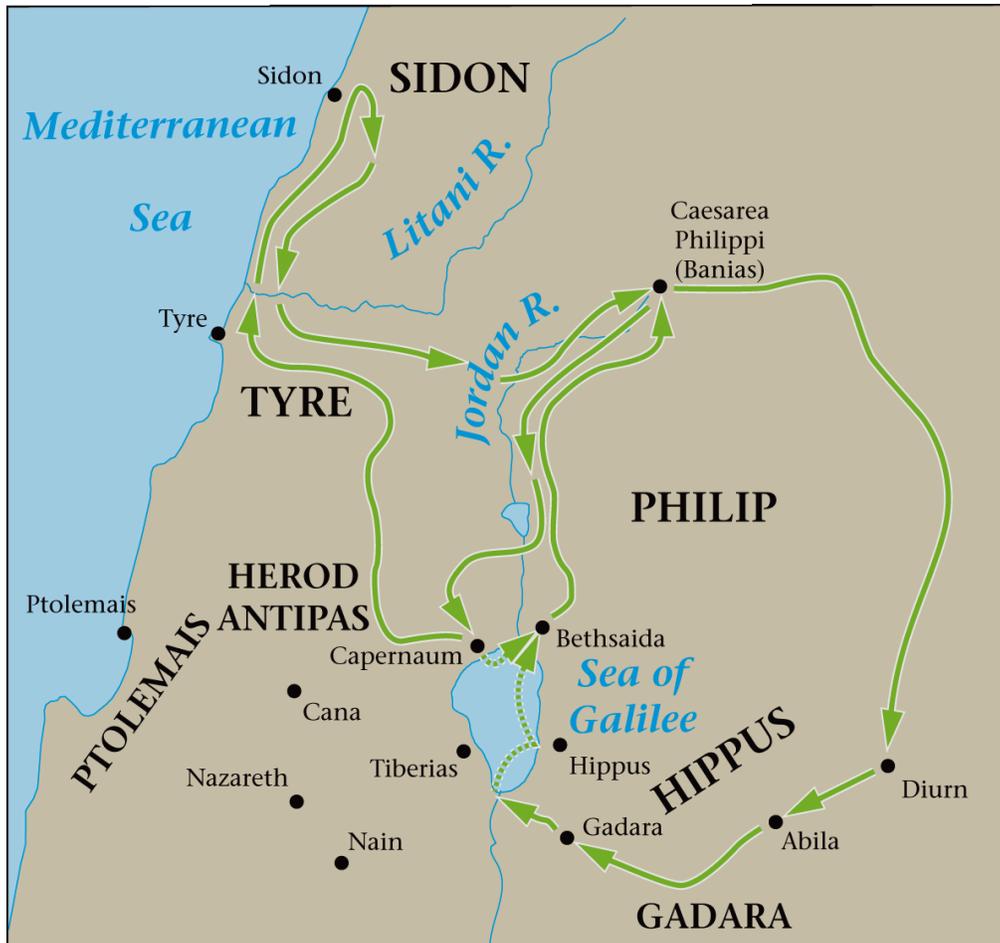
Josephus provided a lengthy description of this region indicating that it covered a vast expanse between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River north of the Sea of Galilee.³⁹⁶ It was there that Jesus again demonstrated His healing power and taught the principles of the Kingdom of God – the concept that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob desires to rule in the hearts of all men. These Gentile people were of Canaanite descent and worshiped a number of deities, including Ashtaroth, Baal, Beelzebub, the chief god of Tyre, and Eshmun (or Eshmoun), the Phoenician god of healing who was considered to be the “holy prince” of Sidon. Their

394 Franz. “Jesus at Hazor.” <http://www.lifeandland.org/2010/10/jesus-at-hazor/> Retrieved October 5, 2015.

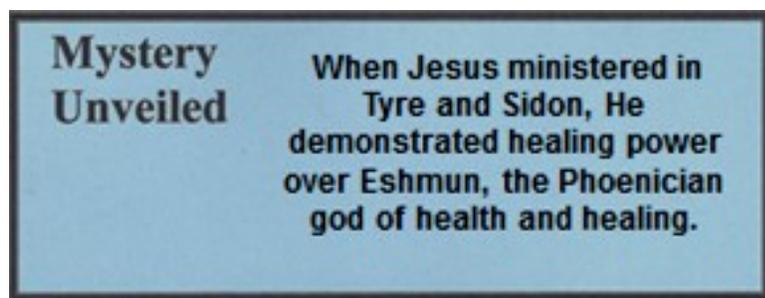
395 Franz. “Jesus at Hazor.” <http://www.lifeandland.org/2010/10/jesus-at-hazor/> Retrieved October 5, 2015. See also the video 05.05.03.V “The Strategic and Economic Significance of Capernaum.”

396. Josephus, *Wars* 3.3.1.

forefathers practiced child sacrifice and often led the Israelites into sin. Now the God of the Israelites was among them, teaching them the principles of the Kingdom of God with power and glory.



10.01.23.Z. MAP OF THE TRAVEL ROUTE OF JESUS THROUGH THE DECAPOLIS. Map of Jesus' visit to Tyre, Sidon and Caesarea Philippi. While His early ministry was focused upon the Jewish people, in due time He included the Gentiles. Courtesy of International Mapping and Dan Przywara.



“Syro-Phoenician” Mark gave a clear geographical description so his readers would not confuse it with Libya-Phoenicia along the North African coast. Today Syria-Phoenicia is known as Lebanon and is under Syrian control while Libya-Phoenicia is part of Libya.³⁹⁷ This narrative gives a clear understanding that Jesus was concerned about the Gentiles.

“Lord, Son of David.” The woman addressed Jesus with a double Messianic title, but it offended Him. Why? These words were spoken by a Gentile woman, who was from the ancient Canaanite tribes, and Jesus was not her Lord. She was speaking to him as if she were a Jewess. In today’s counterpart, it would be as if a foreigner called the President of the United States “My President.” In the ancient world, her address was totally inappropriate. Therefore, it was not right for this Canaanite woman to address Jesus as, “Lord, Son of David.”

“I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” The difficulty with this statement is that if Jesus was truly sent only to Israel, why was He outside of the country? The passage would be better translated to say that He was sent *primarily* to the Jews. Yet while in the land of the Gentiles He did not give away His healing gifts lightly. He wanted to illustrate to the Jews that the Gentiles were desirous of the blessings of God. It was not that Jews were more important than Gentiles, but that since the covenant of God was made with Abraham, the father of the Jews, it was only proper protocol that salvation be offered first to the Jewish people. That does not diminish the significance of a lost Gentile soul; Jesus died for everyone. Romans 2:11 states that “God does not show favoritism,” but God does all things in order.

“It isn’t right to take the children’s bread and throw it to their dogs.” The word **“children”** is a reference to the descendants of Abraham, the Jews, whereas the common word **“dogs”** refers to the Gentiles. Ordinary street dogs were straggly animals that roamed from rubbish heap to rubbish heap. The Jewish people referred to Gentiles as this kind of dog.

However, the word the woman used for *dogs* is *kunaria*, which is not a straggly street dog but an affectionate household pet.³⁹⁸ There is a huge difference between the two.³⁹⁹ To call someone a straggly street dog was an insult that could have been potentially deadly. Therefore, the conversation did not have a tone of aggression, but a plea of kindness. The woman probably had a *kunaria* because at this time people did not have silverware as is common today. When eating they took food from a common bowl with a piece of bread wrapped in the palm of the hand.

397. Earle, “Mark.” 3:87.

398. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:89; Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 71.

399. Barclay, “Matthew.” 2:122-23.

When finished eating, the bread was tossed to the *kunaria*.⁴⁰⁰ She noted that family pets receive the benefits of the crumbs from the master's (Mt.) or children's (Mk.) table; suggesting that she should receive the benefit from the Jewish messiah.⁴⁰¹

Jesus came to bring the gospel first to the Jews in fulfillment of the promises of the ancient Hebrew prophets. These words that appear to be offensive today were not considered as such in the first century. When the Jews began to reject the gospel, Jesus took the message of His kingdom to the Gentile world. He said that people are to worship Him in truthfulness. It was this issue at which the Canaanite woman failed; she did not address Him in truthfulness, yet she had faith in Him for the healing she desperately needed. Jesus is not a respecter of persons, but He is a respecter of attitudes and motives.

10.01.24 Mk. 7:31-37; Mt. 15:31 Galilee and the Decapolis

DEAF MUTE HEALED

Mk. ³¹ Again, leaving the region of Tyre, He went by way of Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, through the region of the Decapolis.³² They brought to Him a deaf man who also had a speech difficulty, and begged Jesus to lay His hand on him.³³ So He took him away from the crowd privately. After putting His fingers in the man's ears and spitting, He touched his tongue.³⁴ Then, looking up to heaven, He sighed deeply and said to him, "*Ephphatha!*" (That is, "Be opened!").³⁵ Immediately his ears were opened, his speech difficulty was removed, and he began to speak clearly.³⁶ Then He ordered them to tell no one, but the more He would order them, the more they would proclaim it.

³⁷ They were extremely astonished and said, "He has done everything well! He even makes deaf people hear, and people unable to speak, talk!"

Mt. ³¹ So the crowd was amazed when they saw those unable to speak talking, the deformed restored, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they gave glory to the God of Israel.

"The region of the Decapolis."⁴⁰² Jesus now made His third withdrawal from the Jewish communities to preach to the Gentiles, although these cities did have a small Jewish population.

400. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 71.

401. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 221-22.

The fact that Jesus went into the heart of the Gentile cities must have astounded the leading Pharisees because, in their arrogant eyes, a devout Jew would not defile himself by going into a pagan city.

There was no great love between the orthodox Jews and their Hellenistic Jewish and Greek neighbors, as contention went deep on both sides. Attitudes were secured by age-old hostilities. The Greeks established a trade embargo against the Jews in the year A.D. 1. They also were the oppressive people who, with Antiochus IV Epiphanes, persecuted the Jews prior to the Maccabean Revolt.⁴⁰³ Furthermore, they took strong opposition against the Hasmonean rulers of Judea, not to mention that they considered the pig to be their sacred animal. There is no question that the Jews hated them as much as the Samaritans. Into these cities, Jesus boldly walked preaching *the* good news of the Kingdom of God.

By this time Jesus had already established a favorable reputation and a news of His visit spread, large crowds came to Him for healing (Mt. 4:25). Upon His arrival, He was given an outstanding welcome because the Greeks were not encumbered with the religious traditions of the Jews. While they did have their gods, they had never seen a man like Jesus who was a healer beyond anything they believed Asclepius, Apollo, or Caesar could do. Yet Gentile writers like Philo made comments of both Apollo and Caesar:

But no doubt he with great felicity gave new representation of the medical skill of Apollo, for this god was the inventor of healing medicines, so to cause health to men, thinking fit himself to heal diseases which were inflicted by others, by reason of the excessive mildness and gentleness of his own nature and habits.

Philo, *On the Embassy to Gaius* 38⁴⁰⁴

This is Caesar, who calmed the storms which were raging in every direction, who healed the common diseases which were afflicting both Greeks and barbarians.... This is he who gave freedom to every city, who brought disorder into order, who civilized and made obedient and harmonious nations which before his time were unsociable, hostile, and brutal.

Philo, *On the Embassy to Gaius* 38⁴⁰⁵

402. See "Decapolis" in Appendix 26.

403. Pellett, "Decapolis." 1:811.

404. Yonge, C. D., ed. and trans. *The Works of Philo*. 784.

405. Yonge, C. D., ed. and trans. *The Works of Philo*. 770.

Jesus demonstrated Himself to be greater than Apollo or Caesar. When Mark described this to his Gentile audience, he described various Jewish customs (7:2-4; 15:42) and Aramaic words (3:17; 5:41; 7:11, 34; 15:22) so they would understand the context of the events. He is the only gospel writer who recorded this account because it took place in a Gentile community and he demonstrated that Jesus is also the God of the Greeks and Romans. They believed Asclepius and Apollo were great healers of mankind, but Jesus demonstrated otherwise.

“After putting His fingers in the man’s ears and spitting, He touched his tongue.” Jesus not only fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, but also demonstrated that He, and not man-made gods, healed eyes and ears as the Hebrew prophet who said,

**Then will the eyes of the blind be opened
and the ears of the deaf unstopped.**

Isaiah 35:5

For information as to why Jesus may have used spittle or spit and mud, see 11.02.21.Q1, and the reason for the two-step healing of a blind man is covered in 10.01.28.Q1.

He did this again in Mark 8:23. The ancients healed with creams, salves, and oils. It is interesting that Jesus, to a limited degree, appears to have mimicked the methods used by Greek and Roman healers, but demonstrating that He was the true Healer. He healed hundreds, if not thousands, who testified of Him, whereas the pagan healers had only legends and no living persons who testified of a healing. In John 9:32 the Jews specifically stated that, throughout history, no one had ever heard of a blind person being healed.

“Tell no one.” Jesus was not interested in self-promotion. His acts should speak for themselves. That is why He once again told those whom He healed not to tell anyone of this incredible miracle. It has been suggested, and this writer agrees, that since Jesus told them not to tell anyone, this indicates that the recipient of the healing was Jewish. Jesus told Jewish people not to tell anyone but He did not say this to healed Gentiles. The reason behind this strange request was because, while both Jews and Gentiles were looking for a political-messiah, but the Jewish perception of a political-messiah threatened the Romans. Jesus did not want them to think He was that person.⁴⁰⁶

406. See comments on Mt. 8:1-4 and the *Psalms of Solomon*.

The Jews had absolutely no idea that the messiah would come in the form of Jesus because they were expecting a military-figure who would overthrow the Romans. Since the Romans were aware of this, they were quick to kill anyone who might be considered a messiah by the people, hence, the cautionary words not to tell anyone. For further study on their expectations and studies, see 05.04.02.Q1 “What were the Jewish expectations of the Messiah?” and 03.05.19.Q1 “What biblical prophecies were the rabbis studying at this time and why were they expecting the Messiah?”

10.01.25 Mk. 8:1-10 (See also Mt. 15:29-39) Northeast Hills by the Sea

FOUR THOUSAND FED

¹ In those days there was again a large crowd, and they had nothing to eat. He summoned the disciples and said to them, ² “I have compassion on the crowd, because they’ve already stayed with Me three days and have nothing to eat. ³ If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, and some of them have come a long distance.”

⁴ His disciples answered Him, “Where can anyone get enough bread here in this desolate place to fill these people?”

⁵ “How many loaves do you have?” He asked them.

“Seven,” they said.

⁶ Then He commanded the crowd to sit down on the ground. Taking the seven loaves, He gave thanks, broke the loaves, and kept on giving them to His disciples to set before the people. So they served the loaves to the crowd. ⁷ They also had a few small fish, and when He had blessed them, He said these were to be served as well. ⁸ They ate and were filled. Then they collected seven large baskets of leftover pieces. ⁹ About 4,000 men were there. He dismissed them ¹⁰ and immediately got into the boat with His disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.

The miracle Jesus performed in the western side of the Sea of Galilee was replicated on the eastern side. Jesus was now in the heart of the Gentile area, not far from the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee near the area when He had healed the demoniac. He had already become a sensation in the eastern Mediterranean area, as evidenced by people coming to Him from many areas. Previously, when Jesus healed the demoniac, the community asked Jesus to leave when they realized their herd of 2,000 pigs drowned in the Sea of Galilee. Since then the former

demoniac had become a local evangelist, and told everyone what they had already heard concerning this man called Jesus and the miracles He was performing. Therefore, many Greek Gentiles came to hear Him, including some who had previously asked Him to leave.



10.01.26.A. A MEMORIAL TO THE FEEDING OF THE 4,000. Shown is a memorial to Jesus for feeding 4,000 men, plus their families along the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. These people were primarily from the Decapolis cities. Because of His reputation, sick people traveled great distances to be healed by Him. Photograph by the author.

The memorial (above) to honor the miracle by Jesus is located on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee where it does not interfere with various agricultural and commercial enterprises. The exact location of the miracle is still debated, but there is little doubt that it is closer to the northeast end of the Sea. The fact that Mark said in 7:31, that Jesus went into the borders of the Decapolis suggests that He went to or possibly slightly inside the borders, but not deep into the Greco-Roman region.⁴⁰⁷

“A few small fish.” The fish have been generally identified as *barbel* fish, a small fish described in Matthew 15:34. The fish may also have been of the *sardine* variety, as the Sea of Galilee is

407. For further study on this subject, see <http://www.levitt.com/essays/feeding4000>. Retrieved January 6, 2014. See the map concerning the travels of Jesus in the Decapolis, 10.01.23.Z.

the only fresh water lake to have fresh water sardines.⁴⁰⁸ This miracle and the feeding of the 5000 was reminiscent of the great prophet Elijah who multiplied the last bit of flour and oil for a widowed woman and her son who were about to starve to death (1 Kgs. 17:12-15). While the prophet of yesteryear was well remembered for his miracle, what Jesus did twice not only outshone what the prophet did, but also played on the words that He was the “Bread of Life.” Jesus again demonstrated that He had all the attributes of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In this case, He functioned as *Jehovah Jirah* – our Lord God who is our Provider.⁴⁰⁹

Mosaic designs of baskets filled with bread and fish have been found at Kursi in a Byzantine church. The site of this miracle has become a subject of debate in recent years. There is strong evidence to suggest it occurred near the ruins of the ancient Kursi church, not far from where the swine ran down the hill and into the water. The two miracles of multiplication were so profound to the early church, that the Last Supper was observed with bread, wine, and fish.⁴¹⁰

When the miracle was over and everyone had eaten as much as they wanted, they had enough leftovers to fill “**seven large baskets.**” The Greek word for “basket” in this passage is *spuridas* or *sphurides*, which is a vessel large enough to hold a person (cf. Acts 9:25).⁴¹¹ The amount of bread that was left over was massive, enough for hundreds of people. This basket was huge compared to the twelve smaller narrow-necked, flask-shaped baskets, called *kophinos*, that were filled at the feeding of the 5,000.⁴¹²

Again, as in the feeding of the 5,000, there is a significance that reaches beyond the multiplication that produces seven baskets of leftovers. These people were descendants of the seven nations that were removed from Canaan by Joshua.⁴¹³ The seven baskets full of bread are symbols for the seven Canaanite tribes, the Gentiles. With a silent message, Jesus demonstrated that He was the abundant Bread of Life to all nations.

“Went to the district of Dalmanutha.” Two names for a geographical location were not uncommon, as was the custom that some men had two names. Matthew called this site by the Hebrew name of Magadan (15:39) while Mark called it by the Aramaic name of Dalmanutha,⁴¹⁴

408. Kranz, 118-20.

409. See “Jesus, the Fulfiller of Selected Names of God” in Appendix 32 for additional attributes; Evans, *Praying the Names of God*. 123-24.

410. Snyder, *Archaeological Evidence of Church Life Before Constantine*. 16, 22.

411. Gilbrant, “Matthew.” 335; Barclay, “Matthew.” 2:127.

412. Barclay, “Matthew.” 2:127.

413. Josh. 3:10; cf. Deut. 7:1; Acts 13:19.

414. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 520; Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud*

meaning, *the place of widowhood*.⁴¹⁵ This fishing village along the Sea of Galilee was the site of a great sea battle between the Romans and Jewish Zealots during the Jewish War (A.D. 66-70). The Jews thought they could escape from the Romans in boats but were horribly wrong.⁴¹⁶ Tourists today visit this historic site, which is known as Kursi.

10.01.26 Mt. 16:1-4; Mk. 8:13; Magadan

PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES ASK FOR SIGN

Mt. ¹ The Pharisees and Sadducees approached, and as a test, asked Him to show them a sign from heaven.

² He answered them: “When evening comes you say, ‘It will be good weather because the sky is red.’ ³ And in the morning, ‘Today will be stormy because the sky is red and threatening.’ You know how to read the appearance of the sky, but you can’t read the signs of the times. ⁴ An evil and adulterous generation demands a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.” Then He left them and went away.

Mk. ¹³ Then He left them, got on board the boat again, and went to the other side.

Again, his accusers questioned Jesus. There was hardly any privacy in his life, as he and his disciples were followed and spied upon continuously. As a Roman gladiator would entangle his victim with a net before a kill, so the Pharisaic spies attempted to entangle Jesus with trick questions in order to kill him. One can therefore understand the attitude of the disciples at the time of crucifixion. If the powerful Jesus was finally put to death, they would be also.

“**The Pharisees and Sadducees.**” Amazingly, Mark refers to the Sadducees only once by name while Luke refers to them five times, but only in his book of Acts. John never calls them by name at all. Yet they were the primary instigators that led to the crucifixion. The leading Pharisees clearly challenged Jesus numerous times and even planned His death, but eventually they stepped aside and let the Sadducees do their dirty work.

“**Asked Him to show them a sign from heaven.**” What was the reason for their request? Did they really want to know if Jesus was the Messiah? Or were they looking for another reason that

and Hebraica. 1:239-40.

415. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 1:242.

416. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 520-21.

could be charged against Him? Jesus, as the true Divine, would not condescend to their arrogant requests, trickery, and criticisms. They had already made their decision; a decision of rejection. Yet, there would be one more sign that would be absolutely stunning.

“An evil and adulterous generation.” Jesus, no doubt filled with righteous anger, again called the Jewish leaders an adulterous generation (Mt. 12:39; Mk. 8:38). The word *adulterous* (Gk. *moichalis*, 3428) means *one who has unlawful intercourse with the spouse of another*,⁴¹⁷ which, in this case, also means *apostate*.⁴¹⁸ Since God desires a close relationship with His people that is both a covenant and mirrors a marriage covenant, departure of faith and obedience is seen as adultery and apostasy.

10.01.26.Q1 Does Mark 8:12 conflict with Matthew 12:39 and 16:4?

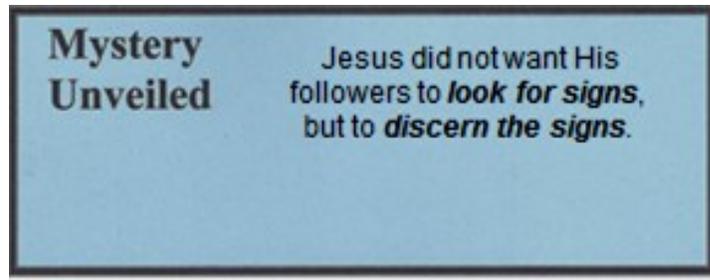
At the center of this conflict is this statement, **“No sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.”** When the critics wanted a sign, Matthew and Mark each stated that there would not be any more. Note that Matthew’s writing style is somewhat more detailed than Mark’s. In 12:39 and 16:4 Matthew said that there would be no sign with one exception - the sign of Jonah the prophet. Mark, on the other hand, did not include the exception (see 8:12). There is no error here, simply a difference in writing styles.⁴¹⁹ Jesus did not want His followers to *look for signs*, but to *discern the signs* that were to come. Yet there would be three signs for them to consider:

1. The resurrection of Lazarus
2. The resurrection of Jesus
3. The resurrection of the two witnesses (Rev. 11).

417. Vine, “Adulterer (-ess), Adulterous, Adultery.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:14.

418. Barclay, “Matthew.” 2:49.

419. The gospel writers not only recorded various events and teachings of Jesus, but each writer applied his own style to emphasize the importance of his message. Mark not only wrote ideas in poetic style, but also themes – a writing technique that helped his audience memorize his message. See an example of the poetic themes of Mark 6:31 – 8:30 in Appendix 11.



The religious leaders, who most certainly remembered when 12-year old Jesus was asking them questions at the temple steps, had carefully observed His every move throughout His ministry. Their request for another miracle was not to see His divine nature, but to entrap Him. If they did not accept what was already obvious and readily known, including the messianic miracles, and they certainly would not accept any other signs. Therefore, the phrase “wicked and adulterous generation,” describes them perfectly. It did not mean every person of that generation. But the sign of Jonah, in this context, is clearly the sign of the resurrected Jesus.

As confrontations with the religious establishment increased, Jesus directed His journey in a manner that would eventually lead Him to Jerusalem at Passover. He lived the life of a fugitive; ministering in areas where people needed Him while giving His disciples additional instruction.

10.01.27 Mk. 8:14-15; Mt. 16:7; Mk. 8:17-21a; Mt 16:11-12

YEAST IN BREAD AND PHARISEES

Mk. ¹⁴ They had forgotten to take bread and had only one loaf with them in the boat. ¹⁵ Then He commanded them: “Watch out! Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod.”

Mt. ⁷ And they discussed among themselves, “We didn’t bring any bread.”

Mk. ¹⁷ Aware of this, He said to them, “Why are you discussing that you do not have any bread? Don’t you understand or comprehend? Is your heart hardened? ¹⁸ Do you have eyes, and not see, and do you have ears, and not hear? And do you not remember? ¹⁹ When I broke the five loaves for the 5,000, how many baskets full of pieces of bread did you collect?”

“Twelve,” they told Him.

²⁰ “When I broke the seven loaves for the 4,000, how many large baskets full of pieces of bread did you collect?”

“Seven,” they said.

^{21a} And He said to them...

Mt. ¹¹ Why is it you don’t understand that when I told you, ‘Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees,’ it wasn’t about bread?” ¹² Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the yeast in bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

It is difficult to comprehend the popularity Jesus had from the crowds, while at the same time He was concerned about three frontal attacks. Those three challenges were the false teachings, or “leaven,” that were told to the people about Him. They were:

1. The Pharisees said that Jesus was demon-possessed.
2. The Sadducees said Jesus was against the temple worship system, which they controlled.
3. The Herodians claimed that Jesus was against the House of Herod, meaning that He was against the governmental authorities.

There could not have been enough books to record His miracles and words, while the rumors and false accusations must have been exponential in numbers.

“We didn’t bring any bread.” Bread was very common in the Galilee area. Both Greeks and Jews had plenty of it, which could be easily purchased anywhere. Jesus and His disciples were in the Greek communities where they could not purchase kosher bread. It may be difficult for modern Christians to accept the fact that Jesus was a Jew who followed the Jewish dietary laws.

“Don’t you understand or comprehend?” There were five points the disciples had not yet learned:

1. Jesus would provide for them
2. They failed to recognize that the miracle of feeding the 5,000 Jewish men and their families demonstrated that Jesus was the Bread of Life to the twelve tribes of Israel.

3. They also failed to recognize that Jesus was the Bread of Life to the Gentiles as represented by the seven Gentile tribes that had established the Decapolis centuries earlier.
4. They saw the growing popularity of Jesus but failed to see the growing tide against Him. Things were not as they seemed to be in the eyes of the disciples.
5. Throughout His ministry the disciples did not comprehend that He was both God and man. They wanted to follow Him but they could not understand why He would have to suffer and die. When Jesus spoke of His kingdom, they always thought of a resurrected Davidic Empire, not the spiritual kingdom. Miracles, teachings, and preaching were all essentially the workings of God upon the disciples from the outside, even though the Spirit worked upon their hearts.

Is your heart hardened? The hardening of the heart begins with one's own desires, until the day comes when our Lord gives one what he wants – a life without God. The Greek word is *peporomene* that describes a callused hardness and blind insensitiveness that refuses to learn a lesson.⁴²⁰ No matter how much Jesus tried, He simply could not make an impression on these people. Hence the rhetorical question, is your heart hardened?

10.01.28 Mk. 8:22-26 Bethsaida

BLIND MAN HEALED WITH SPIT AND THE LAYING ON OF HANDS

²² Then they came to Bethsaida. They brought a blind man to Him and begged Him to touch him. ²³ He took the blind man by the hand and brought him out of the village. Spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, “Do you see anything?”

²⁴ He looked up and said, “I see people – they look to me like trees walking.”

²⁵ Again Jesus placed His hands on the man's eyes, and he saw distinctly. He was cured and could see everything clearly. ²⁶ Then He sent him home, saying, “Don't even go into the village.”

420. Barclay, *A New Testament Wordbook*. 100-102.

A question often asked is why did Jesus use spit or spit and mud to heal the blind man.⁴²¹ See Rabbi John Fischer's response in 10.01.28.V, as well as 11.02.21.Q1.

This is the only recorded miracle that was performed in two stages. Just as the blind man had attained partial sight, so likewise the disciples understood only in part. The blind man was reflective of both the disciples and national Israel. Later, after Pentecost, the disciples fully understood and after the resurrection of the two witnesses (Rev. 11) Israel will fully understand the work and message of Jesus.

The unique feature of this miracle is that it was a two-part miracle. How could Jesus perform a healing that, for whatever reason, did not result in a complete healing in His first attempt? **“Spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him.”** Jesus healed this man in a double treatment. After the partial healing the man said, “I see people,” but they were blurred. The healing was obviously not complete. Yet the fact that he recognized people and trees indicates that he was not born blind. The only other incident that is similar to this is recorded in John 9 where the blind man's eyes were coated with clay and he was told to wash in the Pool of Siloam (see 11.02.21).

There is, however, extra-biblical literary evidence that suggests the application of saliva for the healing of the eyes was an accepted healing method. A certain Rabbi Meir stated that a woman was famous for her ability to heal sick eyes with her saliva.⁴²² Since he accepted this as a legitimate medical practice, it was not looked upon as any kind of charm or magic. Furthermore, the Babylonian Talmud confirmed it.⁴²³ However, healing with saliva on the Sabbath was forbidden unless it was thought to save a life.⁴²⁴

The point of interest in this Jewish account is that since it was perceived as a legitimate medical procedure and not some form of witchcraft, the actions of Jesus would have been likewise understood as a legitimate and not witchcraft.⁴²⁵

421. There were four kinds of people that were considered as good as dead, and it was believed that in all four situations their situation was a divine judgment. They were the blind, the leper, the poor, and the childless.

422. Jerusalem Talmud, *Sotah* 16, 4.

423. Babylonian Talmud, *Sanbedrin* 101a.

424. Babylonian Talmud, *Sanbedrin* 101b.

425. For more information on this interesting subject, see 11.02.21.Q1 “Why did Jesus use spit and mud to heal the blind man in John 9:1-12?”

10.01.28.Q1 What was the purpose of the two-step healing process in Mark 8:22-26?

The two-step method of healing a blind person has been problematic for students of the Bible. The unspoken issue is, of course, if Jesus is the all-powerful Healer, why wasn't the man healed the first time? Since it is the only two-step miracle in the gospels, there may be a prophetic element hidden in this event. While there is no clear answer, it has been suggested that this is parallel to the following:

1. The two-step healing is parallel to the understanding of the disciples. They had been with Jesus all this time but still had a *limited understanding* of His message and ministry – but their *full understanding* or “second healing of understanding” was to come after His resurrection.
2. Another parallel pertains to national Israel. The religious leaders had a *limited understanding* at this time, but after their rejection of Jesus, they would be blinded for a while. Israel's vision for the plan of God will be “healed” after the fullness of the Gentiles is completed. At that time, all Israel will have *full understanding* and be saved as the Apostle Paul stated in Romans 11:25-27.

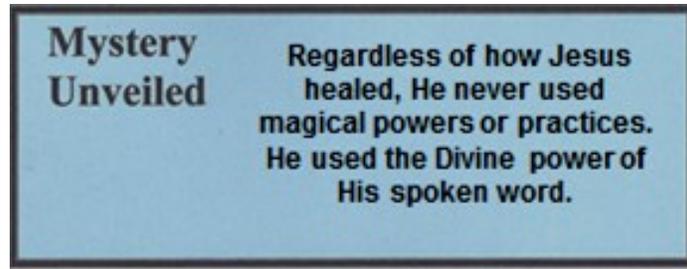
Therefore, the blind man was a “type and shadow” of both the disciples and national Israel.

Video Insert >

10.01.28.V Clarification of Yeshua's Unusual Healing Methods. Messianic Rabbi John Fischer, discusses two healing methods of blind men that have challenged Bible students. Why did Jesus (*Yeshua*) heal with spit and the laying on of hands in John 9:1-12, and what was the purpose of the 2-step healing process in Mark 8:22-26? [Click here if Internet connection is available.](#)

“Don't even go into the village.” Again, Jesus desired that the news of His miracle not be spread throughout the community.⁴²⁶ Jesus was aware of the fact that the villagers were about to reject Him, yet He was willing to meet the needs of anyone who personally came to him. After the man was healed, he was instructed not to return to the village, presumably because of their hostility and unbelief.

426. See comments on Mt. 8:1-4 and the *Psalms of Solomon*.



10.01.29 Mt. 16:13-20 (See also Mk. 8:27-30; Lk. 9:18-20) **Caesarea Philippi**

PETER ACKNOWLEDGES JESUS AS THE ANOINTED ONE

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”

¹⁴ And they said, “Some say John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

¹⁵ “But you,” He asked them, “Who do you say that I am?”

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!”

¹⁷ And Jesus responded, “Simon son of Jonah, you are blessed because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the forces of Hades will not overpower it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth is already bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth is already loosed in heaven.”

²⁰ And He gave the disciples orders to tell no one that He was the Messiah.

“**The region of Caesarea Philippi.**” Caesarea Philippi, a/k/a Baniyas, was an ancient city of demonic worship at the base of Mount Hermon. On the side of a mountain, which is a huge cliff, is a cave out of which flowed the Jordan River until the mid-1800s when an earthquake changed the discharge of the river.⁴²⁷ The Canaanites had two important beliefs concerning their god Baal and this cave.

427. Part of the cave collapsed in the mid-1800s due to an earthquake and the Jordan River now flows out of another opening in the mountain.

1. They believed that Baal went to Hades every fall, stayed there for the winter, and returned in the spring.⁴²⁸ The mountain cave at Caesarea Philippi was not only the “gate” for Baal to enter and leave Hades, but it was also his place of authority, as represented by the water flowing out of the mountain.

2. They also believed that Baal, their fertility god, lived in that cave. To appease him, they and their descendants practiced child sacrifice for centuries until the Greeks terminated the practice in the fourth century B.C.

Banias was sacred to gods such as Baal-Gad or Baal-Hermon in Old Testament times because the river that flowed out of the cave gave life to the surrounding land.⁴²⁹ It was here where the Canaanites offered ritual sacrifices, and if the victims disappeared in the water that was a sign that the gods accepted the sacrifice. If, however, signs of blood appeared in a nearby spring, that was a sign that the sacrifice was rejected. A short distance to the west is the archaeological site of Tel Dan, where the Israelite tribe of Dan set up their own place of worship to the pagan deity Ashteroth.⁴³⁰ But Israelite idolatry in this area went far beyond that.⁴³¹

The ancients believed that certain caves were entrances to hell and the underworld of demons. This was especially true during the centuries of Greek and Roman domination.⁴³² Since they also believed that Pan lived in the cave on the bottom of Mount Hermon, they not only built a temple to worship him, but had his image on various mosaics and coins.⁴³³

In this passage, Jesus took His disciples to the most pagan place in Israel – a place known as Banias where the ancient Canaanites once offered live infants to their god. Since then it was a shrine of the Greek god Pan, a pagan deity said to be half human and half goat. In Greek mythology, Pan kept order among the other gods who often fought among themselves. Into this sinful place Jesus brought the disciples and asked them, “Who do you say that I am?” They acknowledged that He was the supreme Son of God. Then Jesus responded to Peter and said that

428. The Canaanites lived in the land at the time when Joshua and the Hebrew children invaded the area in the 15th century B.C. It is believed that they, the Canaanites, originally established the pagan worship center in Caesarea Philippi.

429. Josh. 11:17; Judges 3:3; 1 Ch. 5:23.

430. In Judges 18:27-29 the site is called Laish, but after Joshua’s conquest it was called Leshem (Judges 19:47).

431. For example, it was at nearby Dan and Bethel where Jeroboam erected two golden calves to be worshiped as gods (2 Kgs. 10:29; 2 Chron. 13:8).

432. Another example of a cave the ancients believed was an entrance to Hades, or hell, was uncovered by Italian archaeologists in early 2013. At the site of Hierapolis in Turkey, they discovered one of the ancient “Gates of Hades” by a cave, which, like Caesarea Philippi, was also a site of significant pagan worship. See “Gate to Hell Found at Hierapolis.” *Artifax*. (28:2) Spring 2013. 9.

433. Hendin, *Guide to Biblical Coins*. 130.

the forces of Hades would not overcome the church. Some translations state that the gates of hell would not overcome the church.

The term “gates” suggests a place of authority, because in ancient Israel the city gate was where the local government council met and where businessmen conducted their affairs. By the first century, government buildings were established and the gates no longer functioned as locations of authority, but the imagery remained the same. That is why Jesus told Peter that he (Peter) would receive the keys of the kingdom – meaning the authority of the kingdom of God.

After Alexander the Great conquered the region, the pagan sanctuary to Baal was rebuilt and the name of the god was changed to Pan, a Greek deity.⁴³⁴ He was the god of wild animals and sexual pleasures. In fact, it was so indulgent in every imaginable sexual pleasure that it was known as “the Corinth of the East,” and “the Gate of Hades (Hell or Death).” It was also one of the few cities in the empire where homosexuality was celebrated. Little wonder then, that the Jewish people said it was one of the three gates to hell (some sources say “gates of death”).⁴³⁵ Years later the sanctuary was enlarged by Herod the Great who also built a temple with imported white marble that featured a godhead of Caesar. After the passing of Herod, his son Herod Philip continued the expansion of the city and renamed it in honor of Caesar. However, since his father had built another city along the Mediterranean Coast in honor of Caesar, Philip also gave the city a last name to honor himself.⁴³⁶ Hence, the name *Philippi* means *of Philip* or *Caesarea Philippi*.⁴³⁷ During Roman occupation, Caesarea Philippi was a favorite place for soldiers to rest, relax, and enjoy a festive vacation.

Pan, or *Panias*, according to Greek mythology, kept peace among the other gods and, therefore, the palace of the gods was known as the “Pantheon.” Today, the site is known as “Bania” because the Arabs who moved into the region in A.D. 636, could not pronounce the letter “P.”⁴³⁸ Pan was pictured as a goat-demon (Heb. *sair* 8163),⁴³⁹ the half-man and half-goat god who lived in the woodlands, mountains, and lush green stream of the Jordan River. In Old Testament times, Gentiles from all nearby regions came to worship him, as did the Israelites at times (Lev. 17:7; 2 Chron. 11:15; 2 Kgs. 23:8).

434. Carter, *13 Crucial Questions*. 14.

435. Some Jews believed the three gates to hell were 1. Bania, the most pagan worship site in Israel, 2. the desert (Num. 16:33), and 3. the bottom of any sea (Jonah 2:20). Others believed that one of those gates was in Jerusalem (Isa. 31:9) instead of Bania. See also Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 2:110.

436. Carson, “Matthew.” 8:364.

437. Barclay, “Matthew.” 2:135.

438. Crossan and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*. 98-99.

439. Vine, “Goat-Demons.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 1:96.

Jesus had led His disciples to this shrine of Pan, the supreme god of the Greeks. It was there where Jesus presented them with the single most important question of all humanity – **Who do you say that I am?** Decades later, after Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70, he traveled up the Jordan River to offer thanks to Pan for his victory over the Jews and their God.

At this time Jesus looked ahead to the time He would face His ultimate challenge – dying on the cross. So He took the disciples from the Galilee area and walked north about twenty-five miles along the Jordan River into Gentile territory where the Jordan River flowed out of a cave at the shrine of Pan. It was there, in the midst of the worst pagan place of His day that Jesus challenged Peter and the chosen Twelve with the question, “Who do you say that I am?”

“Who do you say that I am?” Undoubtedly this is the most important question anyone is ever asked. He did not ask, what do people think of what I am teaching or what do they think about my miracles? “Who do you say that I am?” is a question that forces one to acknowledge or deny His deity. Jesus wanted to know if the faith of His disciples was deeper than that of crowds. An answer of uncertainty or doubt simply underscores one’s lack of knowledge or faith. Only an affirmative answer is acceptable. When Jesus asked this question, it was done in the shadow of multiple gods in a pagan culture where Judaism was obviously the minority religion. The question was not addressed to Peter, as is often thought, but to the group. The word for *you* is plural – meaning everyone in the group.⁴⁴⁰ But only Peter had the courage to give the answer, and it was the right answer as he acknowledged both the words and work of Jesus. As to the identity of Jesus, there were a number of popular answers among the people. Some believed that,

1. He was John the Baptist raised from the dead, but functioning under a different name.
2. He had the *spirit* of John the Baptist
3. He was Elias, who like Enoch, never died
4. Some believed He was Jeremiah who returned to reveal the Ark and sacred vessels which supposedly he hid on Mount Nebo.⁴⁴¹
5. Or He was one of the other prophets

When Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Who do you say I am?” Peter responded with, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” The statement was said at the pagan shrine of Pan, where

440. Smith, *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew*. 198.

441. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 2:239.

demonic influences were supreme. In this spiritual environment, when Jesus said, “the gates of Hades (Hell) will not overcome it [the church],” He clearly meant that the authority and power of Satan would not overcome the believers of His church (cf. Isa. 38:10).⁴⁴² Jesus had a second motive with His question. He affirmed the fact that He was not the military messiah that many were expecting, but rather, He was speaking of a heavenly kingdom.⁴⁴³

It may surprise the modern student of biblical studies that the teachings of Jesus did not differ much from those teachings of orthodox rabbis who loved their people and were committed to serving God in the best way they could. But all too often their teachings are lost with the writings of many diverse opinions of other rabbis. The difference between Jesus and the rabbis who taught His message was His identity – and that was an issue all had to grapple with. That is why Jesus asked, “Who do you say that I am?” and not, “What do people think of my teaching?”⁴⁴⁴

It should be noted that at times some characteristics or qualities of words are lost in translations. While the statements “**Who do you say that I am?**” and “**You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God**” are accurately translated, the full tone or emphasis is lost in translation.⁴⁴⁵ The Greek is stronger in tone and emphasis than is the English, so the the response to the question would literally be, “You are *the* Messiah, *the* Son, of *the* living God,”⁴⁴⁶ that in Hebrew is *Antah Meschicha*.⁴⁴⁷

Peter could hardly emphasize his response any more than he did by this statement. The first and second century church fathers recognized that it was Peter’s confession and not Peter personally, that was the foundation of faith.⁴⁴⁸ They also recognized that the entire conversation reflected upon how Jesus related to Exodus 3:14 as well as other “I am” statements in the book of John.⁴⁴⁹

442. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 231.

443. The response to the question, “Who do you say I am?” is further given in 04.01.03.Q1, “Was/is Jesus God?”

444. See video 02.02.16.V by Messianic Rabbi John Fischer who discusses this subject briefly from a first century Jewish perspective.

445. Green, *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*; Berry, *Interlinear Literal Translation of the Greek New Testament*.

446. Words are capitalized for emphases. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 14, page 2.

447. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 2:240.

448. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*. 49.

449. The Seven “I AM’s”: Bread of Life (Jn. 6:35, 41, 48, 51); Light of the World (Jn. 8:12); Door of the Sheep (Jn. 10:7, 9); Good Shepherd (Jn. 10:11, 14); Resurrection and the Life (Jn. 11:25); the Way, the Truth, the Life (Jn. 14:6) and the True Vine (Jn. 15:1, 5).

He was and continues to be the *Malka Meschicha* – the King Messiah – to those who know Him best.⁴⁵⁰

Peter made this profound statement because he realized that Jesus was functioning prophetically in accordance with Old Testament Scripture. Jesus finally acknowledged to the disciples that He was the expectant Messiah.⁴⁵¹ It is noteworthy that Jesus seldom used the term “Christ” in reference to Himself due to the incredible strong political overtones associated with it. Only in His later ministry would He use it, and then with a defined meaning (Mk. 8:31).

“Simon son of Jonah, you are blessed because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father in heaven.” Jesus tells Peter that he finally got it right (he has a long history for saying the wrong words at the wrong time). This response by Jesus is a “thematic statement”⁴⁵² in which there is a theme, the first statement, which is then followed by two parallel lines that expand and expound the theme. This is followed by a complimentary theme statement.

**“Simon son of Jonah,⁴⁵³
you are blessed because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you,
but My Father in heaven.”**

The thematic statement above is balanced by the following thematic statement:

**“And I also say to you that you are Peter,
and on this rock I will build My church
The forces of Hades will not overpower it.”**

“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church.” The two key words in this statement are “Peter” and “church,” and both need to be carefully examined. As to the name Peter, as is often the case in Jewish literature, there is a play on words in this passage. The word play *Petros* and *petra* are word plays that are puns on both Greek and Hebrew – in that the Greek words became loan words⁴⁵⁴ in Hebrew as found in the *Midrash*.⁴⁵⁵ What

450. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 2:241.

451. *New International Version* Study Bible footnote on 8:31.

452. Smith, *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew*. 199-200.

453. Peter is the son of John, and “son of Jonah” may be a variant. Smith, *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew*. 199.

454. A “loan word” is a word taken from one language and placed in another, usually with the same meaning.

455. Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context*. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 4, Session 2.

Jesus really said to him was, you are *petros*, and on this *petra* (meaning *rock*)⁴⁵⁶ will build my church. The difficulty arises because the name *Peter* in Aramaic means *little stone*.⁴⁵⁷ Therefore, it is quite easy to assume that Jesus used a play on words in this passage, and that Peter was to be assigned a prominent role in the future church.⁴⁵⁸ However, when the grammar is carefully examined, this interpretation cannot be considered relevant, since *Peter* is in the masculine form and the word *rock* is in the feminine form.⁴⁵⁹ For Jesus to have applied the feminine form to address Peter, would have been highly insulting, especially after He had just made this famous declaration.⁴⁶⁰

Isaiah (51:1-2) told Israel to look to the rock from which you were hewn and the quarry from which you came. The prophet meant that the rock was Abraham and the quarry was Sarah who gave birth to Isaac.⁴⁶¹ Furthermore, rabbinic sources sometimes understood the “rock” as Abraham on which God founded the entire world.⁴⁶² Throughout the Old Testament, the word *rock* is symbolic of Jesus (Isa. 28:16). This symbolism was carried over into Peter’s conversation with Jesus. The *rock* was therefore, the confession of Peter, who said that Jesus was *the* Christ. This would ultimately point to Jesus’ being the Rock Himself, as recorded in 1 Corinthians 10:4, and the “Cornerstone” in Ephesians 2:20b.⁴⁶³ But Peter, at this point, was clearly too much of an unstable person. It would not be until after the resurrection and the breath of the Holy Spirit that Jesus breathed upon him on Resurrection Day (Jn. 20:19-23), an event known by theologians as the “Johanne Pentecost,”⁴⁶⁴ that his inner man would be completely recreated. Only then did he become an effective apostle and was able to preach a powerful sermon *before* the Holy Spirit fell on the Day of Pentecost.

456. In the Greek language *Peter* is *Petros* and *rock* is *petra*, as in the ancient city of Petra in modern Jordan.

457. Barclay, “Matthew.” 2:139; Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:91-95; Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 296-98.

458. On an interesting side note, the leadership of the church is patterned after the leadership of Judaism. What was once structured as high priest, priest, and Levite in the temple became bishop, priest (pastor) and deacon in the church.

459. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 298-300.

460. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. (Video “D”); Kaiser, Davids, Bruce, and Brauch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible*. 383-385.

461. Smith, *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew*. 200.

462. Smith, *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew*. 200.

463. See “Cornerstone” in Appendix 26.

464. https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=887 Retrieved February 7, 2015.

It should be noted that those who believe that Peter personally was the foundation upon which the church was built do so based upon Ephesians 2:20a that reads, "... built on the foundations of the apostles and prophets."⁴⁶⁵ However, this too does not refer to them personally or their leadership, but the term *foundations* is a reference to their teaching and testimony that was the same message spoken by Jesus. Therefore, it agrees with the above interpretation that the *rock* is the spoken word of Christ Jesus (Mt. 21:42; 1 Cor. 3:11). The interpretation expressed herein is the viewpoint of the Protestant Church. Historically, believers in the early church have strongly defended this position. The Roman Catholic Church, on the other hand, has used this Scripture as a foundation of the Pope and related doctrines.

It is quite interesting that Jesus made this statement in light of the fact that He was a Jew and had focused His ministry on the Jewish people. He did not tell Peter He was going to build a new synagogue or branch within Judaism. The first Christian community was not a separate faith but functioned within Judaism. There is nothing more that Jesus would have preferred than to see His brothers and sisters spread His gospel of the Kingdom of God throughout the world. The statement to Peter was prophetic in the sense that Jesus understood that He would be rejected and a church would grow out of Judaism.

The word "**church**" is translated from the Greek word *ekklesia* (1577) and it appears only here and in Matthew 18:15-20. It is better translated to mean *congregation* (Gk. *qadam* 6923), or *assembly*.⁴⁶⁶ The Hebrew word almost certainly would have been *quahal* which is used throughout the Hebrew Bible to mean *the congregation of Israel*.⁴⁶⁷ Since there was no concept of a "church" at this time, did Jesus create a new word? If He did, how is it that His disciples understood it? Only in the book of Acts, after the day of Pentecost, is the word for *church* is used with regularity. It should be noted, however, that Jesus did not invent a new word for *church* but used an existing word meaning an *assembly*.⁴⁶⁸

The term is *ecclesia*, and it originally it meant *an assembly of citizens who were regularly assembled*.⁴⁶⁹ That was the definition in ancient Greece, but in the Jewish world it meant *congregation*.⁴⁷⁰ The term *congregation* is a better term than *church*, as the latter means *House of*

465. See also Gal. 2:9 and Rev. 21:14.

466. Coenen, "Church." 1:291; Barclay, *A New Testament Wordbook*. 33-37; Vine, "Assembly." *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:42, and "Congregation." 1:45; 2:122.

467. Barclay, "Matthew." 2:143.

468. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:93.

469. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*. 103, 112; Mould *Essentials of Bible History*. 537.

470. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:92-93.

the Lord.⁴⁷¹ The true word for *church* is generally not derived from *ekklesia* or *ecclesia*, but from the Greek word *kyriake*, as is found in 1 Corinthians 11:20 (our Lord's supper) and Rev. 1:10 (our Lord's Day).⁴⁷² On the other hand, the word *kyriake*, which means *belonging to the Lord*, is never used in relation to an assembly of believers except here.

Concerning the Greek word *ecclesia*, it is found in earlier Greek writings by Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Plato, and Euripides, whose works go back five centuries.⁴⁷³ In Greek society, it was an assembly of free voting citizens. Furthermore, *ecclesia* is in the second century B.C. Septuagint translation – meaning “congregation of Israel.”⁴⁷⁴ While the word “church” clearly is an assembly, it was not the best translation in this passage. How then did this occur?⁴⁷⁵

When the King James translation was being written, the King had ordered the word “church” to be used instead of the more accurate “assembly” in spite of the protests of his translators. Since then the King James Version has been the powerful icon in evangelical Christianity, so much that recent translations have been resistant to use the more accurate word in fear of criticism from the faithful who, not understanding Greek or British history, would say that these translations are leaning away from biblical truth.⁴⁷⁶

“The forces of Hades will not overpower it.” Literally, this phrase literally means *the gates of Hades will not prevail*,⁴⁷⁷ or *the gates of hell will not overcome it*.⁴⁷⁸ The words *Hades* and *hell* have at times become interchangeable. The *forces of Hades* or *gates of Hades*, in the Old Testament refer to physical death.⁴⁷⁹ The term *sheol* has at times been incorrectly translated as *hell*. The Old Testament concept of *sheol* is not a place of torment, but a temporary condition

471. William Tyndale (1494-1536) is credited with translating the Greek New Testament into English. Until that time, all clergy read the Bible from a Latin translation. He was the first to properly translate *ecclesia* into *congregation*. The term *church* is believed to be of Greek origin from the word *kyriakon*. See Miethe, *The Compact Dictionary of Doctrinal Words*. 59.

472. Coenen, “Church.” 1:291-93; Barclay, *A New Testament Wordbook*. 33-37.

473. Erickson, *Christian Theology*. 1031.

474. *New International Version* Study Bible footnote on Matthew 16:18.

475. Heijkoop, *The Assembly of God*. 9-10; Tenney, ed., “Church.” 4:419.

476. Heijkoop, *The Assembly of God*. 9-10.

477. Another example of a cave the ancients believed was an entrance to Hades, or hell, was uncovered by Italian archaeologists in early 2013. At the site of Hierapolis in Turkey, they discovered one of the ancient “Gates of Hades” by a cave, which, like Caesarea Philippi, was also a site of significant pagan worship. “Gate to Hell Found at Hierapolis.” *Artifax*. (28:2) Spring 2013. 9.

478. Green, *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*; Berry, *Interlinear Literal Translation of the Greek New Testament*.

479. See Ps. 9:13; 107:18; Isa. 38:10.

during the Old Testament Dispensation.⁴⁸⁰ For that reason the patriarchs are described in Hebrews 9:16 as looking for a better heavenly place. The New Testament understanding of heaven and hell is not related to *sheol*.⁴⁸¹

Video Insert >

10.01.29.V *The Gates of Hades as an Image of the Tomb of Christ*. Dr. John Soden discusses the imagery of the “Gates of Hades” from which Jesus would arise. (5:45) Click here if Internet connection is available.

As to the term, “gates,” city gates of prior centuries served a military function as well as a place to hold business meetings or to discuss issues of government. When “Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city” (Gen. 19:1), he was not relaxing but held a prominent seat in the local government and/or the business community. Abraham was “at the city gate” when he negotiated and purchased a parcel of land, which was observed by many witnesses (Gen. 23:10-18). If a man accidentally killed another, he was to go to the city of refuge and discuss the matter with the elders at the city gate (Jos. 20:4). Before Boaz could marry Ruth, he had to settle certain kinsman-redeemer issues with her relatives and this was done at the city gate in the presence of ten witnesses (Ruth 4:1-12). It was the place where social decisions, business transactions, and public punishment were executed.⁴⁸² The city gate was representative of the supreme authority of the community.⁴⁸³

However, in the fifteen centuries between Moses and Jesus, some changes developed. For example, governments had their own buildings and punishments for religious violators were meted out at the temple or synagogue. The Sanhedrin had its own courtroom and the local monarchs had their own palaces where they discussed the affairs of state. Yet in smaller cities, business people signed contracts and resolved issues in the rooms adjacent to the city gates.

480. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:94.

481. Barclay, “John.” 2:91-92.

482. Deut. 17:5; 21:19-21; 22:23-24.

483. Dever, “Monumental Architecture in Ancient Israel.” 82-84.



10.01.29.A. THE CITY GATES OF MEGIDDO. Tourists stand where in ancient times the city council members would gather to render judgment on legal cases and resolve community problems. The city gate was often the place of legal authority in ancient times. Photograph by the author.

Hades, according to Greek mythology, was the god of the underworld. The Greek writers created him with two brothers, Poseidon, who ruled the seas and earthquakes while Zeus ruled the skies and weather.⁴⁸⁴ Zeus was said to control the rain and, therefore, was the fertility god. Poseidon was the earth shaker and holder of the earth. But Hades was deemed to be the most hateful toward people as described by Homer.

Let him then yield - it is only Hades who is utterly ruthless and unyielding - and hence of all the gods the one most hateful to mankind.

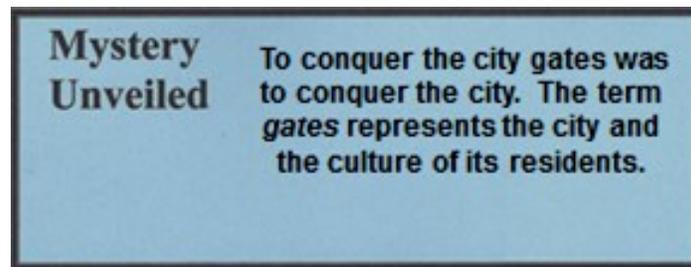
Homer, *The Iliad* 9:160-162

While Jesus used the phrase *gates of Hades*, in this discussion, the same expression is found in Greek mythology, *Hades of the Gates*, which alluded to the gate of death or hell from which there was no return. Furthermore, the River Styx is the river that flowed into Hades at the Gate.⁴⁸⁵ According to Greek mythology, when someone died, he or she would have to cross the

484. Butler, ed. *The Iliad of Homer and the Odyssey*. 225.

485. Butler, ed., *The Iliad of Homer and the Odyssey*. 91.

River Styx to enter paradise. However, the river flowed into hell (literally, the *hell of fire*),⁴⁸⁶ and could not be crossed without help. That helper was a ferryman named Charon to whom the deceased had to pay a fee to take him or her on his ferry and cross the river to enter paradise. Otherwise, eternity in hell was a certainty.⁴⁸⁷



The journey to Caesarea Philippi most certainly had a profound impact on the disciples, all of whom would have been very familiar with the myths and religions of their Greek neighbors. Jesus alluded to the River Styx that flowed into hell while standing in front of the most pagan shrine in northern Galilee where the Jordan River flowed out of a cave. The Greek writer Homer preserved the imagery when describing the conflict between the gods:

He would weep until his cry came up to heaven, and then Zeus would send me down to help him. If I had any sense to foresee all this when Eurystheus sent him to the house of Hades, to fetch the hell-bound from Erebus, he would never come back alive out of the deep waters of the River Styx, and now Zeus hates me.

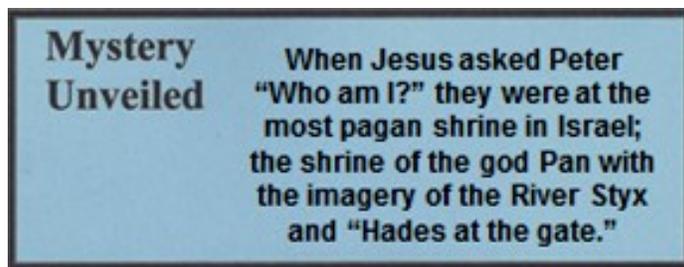
Homer, *The Iliad* 8:366-369

Clearly, the mental picture Jesus painted for His disciples was far more profound than is normally considered today. The confrontation of demons in the biblical narrative has, unfortunately, been overlooked all too often. Jesus asserted His dominion over each of these demons.⁴⁸⁸

486. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:40.

487. Read the account in 15.03.07, of a woman named Yehochana, whose remains were discovered with a coin in her mouth. She was a member of the Caiaphas family.

488. Finegan, *Myth and Mystery*. 159-60.



“The keys of the kingdom of Heaven.” The *key* was always the symbol of authority (Isa. 22:20-22) and Jesus clearly used it in reference to spiritual authority. Just after He told the disciples that the supreme authority of hell and the demonic forces would not prevail against them, He also told them that they had the authority of heaven.⁴⁸⁹ This was simply another way of saying they had the authority of God. The phrases *keys of the kingdom*, and *keys of Hades*, were clearly understood in a spiritual sense because the word *keys* was often used as a standard element in spiritual warfare in exorcisms or magical charms.

While some critics claim this phrase was not of a spiritual dimension, but of later legislative action for the synagogue and church, it is interesting that many magical writings have been discovered to clearly point to a spiritual warfare context. One such writing was found in Egypt. It is on a rolled-up lead tablet hidden in a clay vase along with a clay statuette of a kneeling woman, hands bound behind her back and full of piercing needles. While the text was complete and a rare find, only a portion is needed to affirm the use of *keys* as used by Jesus. The magical text reads as this:

Anubis the strong, who holds the keys of Hades, divine demons of the underworld, youths and maidens who died before their time, year by year.... Drag her by the hair, tear at her guts, until she does not reject me....

Egyptian Magical Text⁴⁹⁰

Ironically, this Egyptian magical text affirms two points:

1. The ancients believe that it was Satan who stole, killed, and destroyed (see Jn. 10:10).

489. For further study on binding and loosening see 08.04.07.Q1 “What verbal formulas did exorcists use when casting out demons?” the account of the demoniac whom Jesus cleansed in 08.06.03; the phrase “Bound in heaven . . . loosed in heaven,” in 11.02.08; the phrase “Bind on earth . . . loose on earth” in 10.01.29; and the phrase “Lord, even the demons submit to us in Your name,” in 12.01.03. An excellent resource for further study was written by Foster and King, *Binding and Loosening: Exercising Authority over Dark Powers*. See also Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 1:254-55, and Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 236.

490. Cited by Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*. 1:33-34.

2. The ancients believed there were keys of authority to the underworld.

There can be no question that Jesus had reference to spiritual warfare in this discussion.⁴⁹¹ On a related issue, the keys to royal chambers were entrusted to the chief steward, who carried them upon his shoulder (Isa. 22:22). To be entrusted with keys was not only a reflection of rank and honor before the king, but also of the authority to function *for* the king, which alludes directly to the Hebraic idiom of “binding and loosing/loosening.”⁴⁹²

For Peter “the key” had significant metaphorical meanings as follows. After Jesus gave Peter the key of divine authority,⁴⁹³ He then proclaimed the gospel to the Jews (Acts 2). Philip went into Samaria to evangelize (Acts 8), but the Jerusalem church sent Peter and John to him (Acts 8:14-17) to receive the Holy Spirit. Hence, the keys of authority were transferred to Philip. In Acts 9 Paul was saved and in Acts 10 Peter was sent to the house of Cornelius, and the keys of authority were transferred again. According to Acts 1:8, the gospel was to go first to the Jews, then to the Samaritans, and then to the whole world. Peter opened the door of the gospel to all three groups in that precise order. First Corinthians 12:13 went into full effect.

“Bind on earth ... loose on earth.” This Hebraic idiom was used to express the rabbinical authority to either forbid or permit various activities in the synagogue. The rabbis functioned as if they were entrusted with a limited degree of divine authority concerning the affairs of the people under their ministry. This concept was continued in the early church and is demonstrated in Acts 15:1-11 with the following three examples:

1. Peter gave a stinging rebuke to Ananias and Sapphira for their deceitfulness.
2. Paul functioned with this authority in I Corinthians 5:3 when he stated, “And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this.”
3. Finally, when the Jerusalem Council met to consider issues related to Gentile believers (Acts 15:1-29), they invoked this rabbinic tradition that was endorsed and extended by Jesus when they decided that their decision was based on what “seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us.”

491. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 252.

492. Heijkoop, *The Assembly of God*. 9-10; Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:96; See comments 11.02.09 on “Binding and Loosing.”

493. Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, eds., “Keys.” *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. 476.

The phrase “Bind on earth ... loose on earth,” does not mean that Satan was completely defeated and destroyed, because the work of the cross did not change the status of the earth and humanity to the pre-fall innocence of the Garden of Eden. It does mean, however, that Satan’s power is broken and his activity is curbed.⁴⁹⁴ A definition summary is presented for each term:

“To loose.” (Gk. *luo* 3089; Heb *mutar*).⁴⁹⁵ “Freeing of those in prison”⁴⁹⁶ “The opening of things that are closed.”⁴⁹⁷ “To loose, release, to free, to dissolve, to dismiss or set aside.”⁴⁹⁸ By the sacrificial blood of Jesus a person can be loosed from sin (1 Jn. 1:9), attacks and bondage created by Satan (Lk. 13:12, 16; 1 Jn. 3:8), bondage of the tongue (Mk. 7:35), debt (Mt. 18:27), unjustifiable imprisonment (Acts 22:25-30), and sickness (Lk. 13:12).⁴⁹⁹

“To bind” (Gk. *deo* 1210; Heb *asur*)⁵⁰⁰ “To wrap up,” “to bind together,” or “to chain.” The word is also related to “imprisonment, supernatural binding, declaring forbidden or permitted, imposing or removing an obligation, imposing and removing a ban.”⁵⁰¹ Some scholars present a modern definition of “overcoming” meaning to be victorious.⁵⁰²

The terms are illustrated in the Hebrew Bible in both physical and spiritual senses. In Psalm 105:17-22, Joseph is bound and sold into slavery, then freed from his imprisonment, and became a ruler with the authority to bind others (cf. Gen. 41).⁵⁰³ While some have applied this physical

494. Ladd, “Matthew.” 3:42.

495. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 14, page 4; Vine, “Loose.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:379.

496. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. 2:60-61; See also Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:96-97.

497. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. 4:328.

498. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. 4:328.

499. Foster and King, *Binding and Loosening*. 16-17; See comments on “loosed in heaven” at 11.02.09.

500. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 14, page 4; Vine, “Bind, Binding.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:66.

501. Foster and King, *Binding and Loosening*. 16.

502. Foster and King, *Binding and Loosening*. 142.

503. Ironically, Joseph is a prophetic picture or “type and shadow” of Jesus. See Appendix 3 for comparisons.

illustration to the spiritual world,⁵⁰⁴ a clearer example of the domains was written by a later prophet. When writing of true fasting, Isaiah said that it will,

**Loose the chains of injustice and
untie the cords of the yoke ...
Set the oppressed free
and break every yoke**

Isaiah 58:6

The chains of injustice and freedom of the oppressed could have both a physical and spiritual interpretation. However, the context suggests a strong spiritual interpretation. Often the authors of extra-biblical books wrote their opinions reflective of the Hebrew Bible. In essence, the authors tell modern scholars that they believed in a literal interpretation of Isaiah concerning loosening and binding. Two examples based upon Isaiah are:

**For no one takes plunder away from a strong man,
so who is going to take (anything) from that
you have done, unless you give (it)?**

*Psalms of Solomon 5:3*⁵⁰⁵

**And he shall open the gates of paradise;⁵⁰⁶
he shall remove the sword that has threatened since Adam,
and he will grant to the saints to eat of the tree of life.⁵⁰⁷
The spirit of holiness shall be upon them.
And Beliar shall be bound by him.
And he shall grant to his children the authority to trample on wicked spirits.
And the Lord will rejoice in his children;
he will be well pleased by his beloved ones forever.**

*Testament of Levi 18:12*⁵⁰⁸

504. Foster and King in *Binding and Loosening* (75-77) make reference to Matthew Henry, A. F. Kirkpatrick, and Charles Spurgeon who held to this interpretation.

505. This passage is based on Isaiah 49:24-25. See Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 2:656.

506. According to Charlesworth, the primordial paradise is restored, its entrance guarded with a sword (Gen. 3:24). Charlesworth 1:795, note d.

507. See Gen. 2:9; Rev. 22:2, 4, 19.

The dates of these writings are significant. The *Psalms of Solomon* is believed to have been written in the mid-first century B.C.,⁵⁰⁹ only a few years before Christ⁵¹⁰ and reflects public opinion of the time. It also has many parallels with *I Baruch* of the late first century. On the other hand, the *Testament of Levi*, a part of a larger work known as the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, is older, possibly as early as the mid-third century B.C., as determined by its use of the Septuagint.⁵¹¹ The fact that it is believed to have been written in Galilee, suggests that its popularity spread quickly.⁵¹² Therefore, both passages frame the time of Christ, clearly indicating the common opinion that the children of God had authority over demonic forces. This interpretation of these passages is rather simple, and, to use an age-old rule of hermeneutics: “If the literal sense makes common sense, use no other sense.”

There are other writings as well. In *Tobit* 8:1-3 an angel bound a demon and demanded it to leave. The author of another book also believed that certain angels were assigned to the task of binding as illustrated in *I Enoch* 10:4-12,⁵¹³ but the most notable is verse 4 which reads:

And secondly the Lord said to Raphael,⁵¹⁴ “bind Azaz’el hand and foot (and) throw him into darkness.”

***I Enoch* 10:4⁵¹⁵**

Jesus did not make reference to “loosening and binding” *per se*, although He demonstrated this frequently in the performance of exorcisms. When He commanded spirits to leave the demon-possessed or spoke healing to those afflicted, He was fully exercising the divine powers in “loosening and binding.”

508. This passage is based on Isaiah 24:21-22. See Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 1:795.

509. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 2:640, 2:647-49.

510. See the two quotations from the *Apocryphal Psalm of Exorcism* in 08.04.07.

511. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 1:777. Some scholars believe that since there are allusions to the New Testament there must have been some editing done in the second century A.D. by Christian writers.

512. Mould, *Essentials of Bible History*. 493.

513. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*. 2:193-94, 2:200-01, 2:226-28, 2:235, 2:535; Foster and King, *Binding and Loosening*. 25-28.

514. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 1:17, n. G.; Raphael is an angel whose name, according to Charlesworth, means “God is a healer.”

515. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 1:17; Parenthesis by Charlesworth.

The only authority the believer has is that which is God-given and, therefore, it is imperative to be in covenant with God and operate in His wisdom, and spiritual discernment. When Paul wrote to the Colossians he stated that the believer is established and complete in Christ (Col. 2:6-7, 9-10) and that Christ has dominion over every other power and authority (Col. 2:10b). Therefore, because the believer has put off his sinful nature, he is alive in power with Christ (Col. 2:13). All influences exerted by believers, whether by loosening and binding, or by prayer, are most effective when the believer is in right relationship with God. Ancient writings do not mention “right relationship,” *per se*, but this was an assumption for any effective religious function. That is why there was an extremely heavy emphasis on purity in the life of an observant Jew in the time of Christ.

Some scholars believe that only Jesus could bind the “strong man,” as this has specific reference to Jesus who did the binding. It is only because of Jesus, however, that the believer can also bind the “strong man.” Furthermore, the effectiveness of the believer is based upon his obedience to live in covenant with God, prayer, fasting, and the prayer support of other believers. Peter is an example of one who received the authority to bind and loose (Mt. 16:19) *before* the death and resurrection of Jesus, and obviously before Pentecost. Likewise, empowerment was given to the disciples specifically to heal every disease and sickness and drive out evil spirits (Mt. 10:1). But some theologians believe this authority was limited to the disciples and possibly a few others, and as they died out the authority likewise ended. There is, however, no predictive biblical evidence that this would occur. In fact, in his letter to the Ephesians Paul specifically said that our struggle was against demonic powers (Eph. 6:12). Because believers are “in Christ,” whatever authority they have exists only when they function “in the name of Jesus” (Acts 16:18).

Didn’t Jesus bind the “strong man?” When Jesus confronted Satan after forty days in the desert wilderness, Jesus had victory over His tempter and the evil one left for another opportune time to attack (Lk. 4:13). When Jesus died on the cross Satan was condemned (Jn. 16:11). All the demonic forces thought they had won, but were surprised on Resurrection Day. When Jesus defeated Satan, He did not restore the earth to its primordial day of the Garden of Eden. He not only paid the sacrifice for the sins of humanity, but also empowered believers to be His effective agents to spread the Kingdom of God. Eventually there will be a final binding of Satan and his evil angels (Rev. 20:2) after which they will no longer have any influence upon those who are in Christ. It is critical for believers to know that only what has been bound in heaven can be bound on earth.⁵¹⁶ As the Church seeks the guidance of our Lord, believers will be responsive to what has already been established in heaven. Hence, the phrase from our Lord’s Prayer, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Anything else is foolishness.

516. Prince, “Aggressive Prayer.” 7, 24.

A significant point to remember is that binding and loosening is not indiscriminate any more than prayer is indiscriminate. Just as both originate in heaven, believers are expected to be directed by the Holy Spirit in the function of both.⁵¹⁷



10.01.29.B. BANIAS AND THE CAVE OF PAN. The Baniyas River flows mightily from the Cave of Pan at the foot of Mount Hermon and is one of the three tributaries of the Jordan River. Jesus said that Peter was like a little rock in the river, but His church would be like the massive rock (cliff). Photograph by the author.

Conclusion: Today both messianic and Christian scholars continue to debate the meaning of “binding and loosening.” Some believe the term refers to legislative actions of the church while others believe there is a spiritual dimension that, of course, has to agree with biblical doctrines. Those who believe the term is a reference to legislative actions appear to base their opinions largely upon the work of seventeenth century scholar John Lightfoot.

517. Foster and King, *Binding and Loosening*, 175.



10.01.29.C. NICHEs FOR THE IDOLS OF PAN AND OTHER GREEK GODS. In these niches, the idols of pagan gods once stood when Jesus asked His famous question, “Who do you say that I am?” From a large cave in the base of Mount Hermon flowed the River Banias, the major source of water for the Jordan River. In 1837, an earthquake collapsed a portion of the cave and the river now gushes from a nearby opening in the mountain. Photograph by the author.

John Lightfoot (1602-1675)⁵¹⁸ was a Protestant scholar who wrote a huge commentary on the New Testament after studying the Talmud and other Jewish writings. His work has contributed greatly to those who attempted to connect Christianity to its Jewish roots. In His study of Matthew 16:19,⁵¹⁹ he presented numerous quotations all of which support his interpretation that loosening and binding, as well as the keys to the kingdom, are related to legislative actions in the synagogue. This would clearly remove any possibility of these passages referring to binding or restricting of spiritual forces. Since he truly was a highly respected scholar, and continues to deserve this honor, many students of Scripture have accepted his conclusions. Teachers and pastors today who hold the understanding that Matthew spoke of legislative actions (in 16:19; 18:18) based their theology on his study of the Jewish writings. Furthermore, some point to Isaiah 45:11 and correctly state that God is not to be at the command of His creation.

518. John Lightfoot was a British scholar among scholars whose works are still quoted today by pastors and seminary students.

519. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 2:235-40.

Unfortunately, Lightfoot examined later rabbinic writings and failed to investigate the earlier manuscripts which reflected the common opinions of the first centuries B.C. and A.D. Furthermore, many magical papyri have been discovered in the past two centuries that he was obviously not aware of. There are several writings in the time frame of Christ that clearly defined an interpretation of spiritual dynamics. Today, at the other end of the theological debate are those who bind and loose almost everything in sight and have taken the doctrine of loosening and binding to the point that God is their servant rather than they be the servant of God. Somewhere in the middle are those churches that believe that binding and loosening is reserved for members of the clergy. A smaller number believe that this doctrine is for all believers, but that it must be properly used and the believer must understand some basic spiritual principals that are involved. This paper will examine this doctrine within the limits of Matthew 12:29; 16:19; and 18:18.

All agree that Jesus, a Jewish rabbi, thought, acted, and ministered within the cultural norms of the day in communicating His message of the Kingdom of God and the plan of salvation. The ancient writings of the primitive first century Jewish church provide overwhelming evidence to the interpretation that the phrase not only had specific reference to spiritual warfare, but that it was common in the Jewish world of Jesus. Yet evidence to any other interpretation is remarkably absent and does not appear until several centuries later in church and synagogue doctrines.

There is little doubt that after the resurrection of Jesus, the disciples reflected upon this discussion and the response Peter gave to Jesus' question. They would remember that He not only cast out demons, but He led his disciples into the center of demonic activity and there proclaimed who He was – King of kings, Lord of lords, and He had absolute power and authority over evil spirits. It was here at the sanctuary at Pan that Jesus said that his church would be victorious over the demonic strongholds. The supreme authority of the underworld would be under the foot of the church.

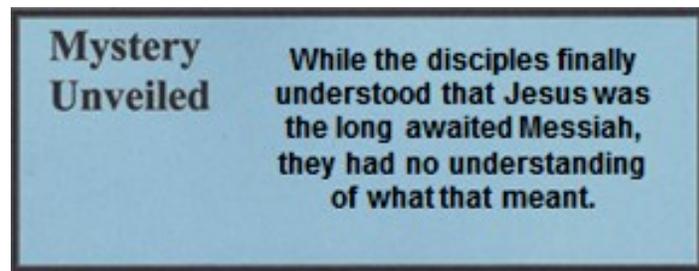


10.01.29.D. MOSAIC OF THE GOD PAN BEFORE THE TIGER-DRAWN CHARIOT OF DIONYSIS. This 3rd century A.D. Roman mosaic depicts the god Pan with two goat horns, goat legs, and human torso, head and arms. He was considered to be the supreme god of all Greek and Roman deities, which is why the Greeks named the Pantheon in his honor. Today's image of Satan may have originated with the image of Pan. Courtesy of the Bardo Museum, Tunis, Tunisia.⁵²⁰

“And He gave the disciples orders to tell no one that He was the Messiah.” Jesus was not interested in self-promotion. His acts should speak for themselves. The ongoing problem He had to contend with was the fact that the sons of Herod had their spies at all public gatherings expecting Jesus, or anyone else for that matter, to declare Him to be “The Christ.” The Herodians and Romans were quick to crush any expectant messiah who would attempt to liberate the Jews. Therefore, while the disciples knew Jesus to be the long expected Messiah, the Jewish populace at large remained unaware of this. As previously stated, the challenge He faced was that the people had radically different expectations of what the Messiah would do and who he would be. If Jesus had made an outright public announcement that He was the Messiah, His declaration would have resulted in a Roman assault on Him and the disciples. Hence, He only

520. www.theoi.com/Gallery/Z22.5. Retrieved October 27, 2012.

alluded to His Messiahship. It also permitted the Jewish people to rethink their ideas of the messiah.



10.01.30 Mt. 16:21-23 (See also Mk. 8:31-33; Lk. 9:21-22) **Caesarea Philippi**

SUFFERING FORETOLD

²¹ **From then on** Jesus began to point out to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and be raised the third day. ²² Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, “Oh no, Lord! This will never happen to You!”

²³ **But He turned and told Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me because you’re not thinking about God’s concerns, but man’s.”**

“**From then on.**” This was the first of four discussions Jesus had with the disciples concerning the future events in Jerusalem. Most scholars believe this is the beginning point of a major shift of emphasis in the ministry of Jesus. Others believe it began earlier when the leading Pharisees accused Jesus of using the power of Beelzubub (Mt. 10:16-33; 12:22-28). Regardless, no longer did He focus on teaching the crowds with parables, but rather, He prepared His disciples for His coming afflictions and death in Jerusalem. He specifically said,

1. He had to go to Jerusalem
2. His rejection would intensify resulting in suffering from the elders, chief priests and scribes, (and the high priest).
3. He must be killed
4. He will rise on the third day, Marks says that “after three days.”

The disciples heard but did not understand these four points until after His crucifixion and resurrection. Notice that every time Jesus said that He would die, He also said that He would be raised on the third day.⁵²¹ However, the disciples could not comprehend that a messiah who could do the profound miracles that Jesus performed, would die – it was not in their theology.

At this point the disciples were beginning to wonder if Jesus truly was the messiah. And for good reason – in the Old Testament the messiah brings an eternal kingdom, so how could it be possible for Him to die? It has been suggested that for the purpose of encouraging their weakening faith, God the Father then orchestrated the Transfiguration – an event in which the Shekinah glory was profoundly displayed.

“Get behind Me Satan!” These words spoken by Jesus were harsh because He was tempted by Satan in the wilderness and understood that He would have to die. Jesus did not mean that Peter was demon-possessed or unsaved but rather that it was Satan’s plan not to have Jesus die for the sins of humanity. The name *Satan* literally means *Adversary*.⁵²² Peter, by his ignorance, was being used by Satan in an attempt to derail this divine plan by keeping Jesus from going to the cross where He would become the sacrifice for the sin of the world. The core issue is that Peter, of course, did not want Jesus to die. However, Satan did not want Jesus to die either. Peter and the other disciples still did not realize that Jesus would have to die, or there would be no resurrection; no victory over death and its power; and no divine sacrifice for the sins of those who would place their faith in Christ Jesus. One must wonder if Jesus had previously changed Simon’s name to Peter because of the firmness of his faith, or because of the hardness of his head.⁵²³

It should be noted that some translators have translated this passage slightly differently.⁵²⁴ It should be noted, however, that the variation does not matter and, in fact, Luke (9:21-27) does not even record the rebuke. The key point is that discipleship in the Kingdom of God has no room for compromise. Every believer must be both committed and obedient.

521. The first time Jesus predicted His death was in Mt. 16:21-28; Mk. 8:31-35, and Lk. 9:21-27. The second time was in Mt. 17:22-23; Mk. 9:30-32 and Lk. 9:44-45. And the third time was in Mt. 20:17-19; Mk. 10:32-34 and Lk. 18:31-34.

522. Barclay, “Matthew.” 2:149.

523. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 298-300.

524. Stoutenburg, “‘Out of My Sight!’, ‘Get Behind Me!’, or ‘Follow After Me!’: There is No Choice in God’s Kingdom.” 173-88.

“You are an offense to Me.” Jesus, who called Peter a rock, now used a word play and called him a stumbling block, a different kind of rock.⁵²⁵ Peter had good intentions but they were not in line with the message or mission of Jesus.

10.01.31 Mk. 8:34-9:1 (See also Mt. 16:24-28; Lk. 9:23-27) Caesarea Philippi

BURDENS OF DISCIPLESHIP

³⁴ **Summoning the crowd along with His disciples, He said to them, “If anyone wants to be My follower,**

he must deny himself,

take up his cross,

and follow Me.

³⁵ **For whoever wants to save his life**

will lose it,

but whoever loses his life because of Me and the gospel

will save it.

³⁶ **For what does it benefit a man to gain the whole world**

yet lose his life?

³⁷ **What can a man give in exchange**

for his life?

³⁸ **For whoever is ashamed of Me and of My words**

in this adulterous and sinful generation,

the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him

525. Foster and King, *Binding and Loosening*, 164.

when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”

¹ Then He said to them, “I assure you: There are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God come in power.”

“Deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” Jesus now discussed the cost of discipleship. The Jews had seen many of their fellow countrymen crucified along the seven roads leading into Jerusalem.⁵²⁶ The phrase was a figure of speech that was known all too well. Often the executioner would have the victim or criminal carry the crossbeam to the tree or post to which the condemned person would be secured and die an agonizing death. Jesus clearly stated that being one of His followers would not be easy, and whoever would follow in His teaching and lifestyle should be willing to die.

Jesus taught that while salvation is free, the Christian life would have a cost and commitment. He made essentially three points.

1. His disciples had to deny themselves of their personal rights and liberties and commit themselves to His way of life.
2. His disciples would have to take up the proverbial cross, meaning they were expected to pass the test of obedience during both the affluent and persecution times.
3. Finally, to follow Him meant that they were expected to work in the Kingdom of God in whatever ministry or occupation they were called. Just as Jesus would suffer and die a martyr’s death, so would all of the disciples (John and Judas were the exceptions).

“Whoever loses his life for me.” This statement was given the greatest emphasis by Jesus. The disciples, after they eventually became the apostles, followed this teaching carefully to their deaths.

“Will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God come in power.” There are two interpretations concerning this passage.

1. This phrase is in reference to the disciples seeing Jesus return in His full glory and splendor, but it was a reference to the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit fell on the believers.

526. Kloner and Zissu. *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period*. 22-23.

2. Others believe this passage has direct reference to the transfiguration that followed immediately after this account.

Unit 11

The Transfiguration, Miracles, And Disciple Training

Chapter 01

The Transfiguration



11.01.00.A. THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS. Artwork by **William Hole** of the **Royal Scottish Academy of Art, 1876.** Peter, James and John encountered Moses and Elijah in a most profound manner on a high mountain. Moses represented the Law and Elijah represented the prophets.

11.01.01 Introduction

About a week after Jesus challenged the disciples at the temple of Pan, (a/k/a Baniyas) located at Baniyas, a/k/a Caesarea Philippi. The disciples were obviously aware that the life of Jesus, from a human perspective, was profoundly unusual. Their limited understanding of Him as Deity was understandably questionable and sometimes in doubt, because, what mere mortal can understand God? Whatever they did comprehend would be further complicated by His crucifixion. Jesus was now preparing them for the events that lay ahead – His rejection, death, and resurrection. Consequently, from this point on, the dynamics of Jesus as Lord God Almighty intensified.

11.01.02 Mt. 17:1-8; Lk. 9:28-36a (See also Mk. 9:2-8) Mount Hermon

JESUS IS TRANSFIGURED

Mt. ¹After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and his brother John and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. ² He was transformed in front of them, and His face shone like the sun. Even His clothes became as white as the light. ³ Suddenly, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.

Lk. ³¹ They appeared in glory and were speaking of His death, which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. ³² Peter and those with him were in a deep sleep, and when they became fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who were standing with Him.

Mt. ⁴ Then Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it’s good for us to be here! If You want, I will make three tabernacles here: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

⁵ While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said:

This is My beloved Son.
I take delight in Him.
Listen to Him!

⁶ When the disciples heard it, they fell facedown and were terrified.

⁷ Then Jesus came up, touched them, and said, “Get up; don’t be afraid.” ⁸ When they looked up they saw no one except Him – Jesus alone.

History seems to connect great men of God with great mountains. Moses climbed Mount Sinai to receive the tablets of the Law (Ex. 31:18). Later he climbed Mount Nebo where he died and God buried him. Then Elijah climbed Mount Horeb to hear the still small voice of God (1 Kgs. 19:9-12). Now, Moses and Elijah came to another mountain, although its name is not mentioned, to meet with Jesus.

Following the Great Confession of Peter, Jesus went up a high mountain with Peter, James, and John. There He was transfigured (Gk. *metamorphoo* 3339)⁵²⁷ and shone in brilliant white. As such, Jesus was mysteriously changed into another form that has often been associated with His heavenly body.⁵²⁸ He then spoke with Moses and Elijah while the disciples were absolutely stunned. He told them of His coming sacrificial death (Lk. 9:31), that is, His coming “departure” (Lk. 9:30-31), which in the Greek word is *exodus* meaning, *to liberate one from death*, which was also a euphemism for *death*.⁵²⁹ All this, so mankind would have a way of escape from the world of sin and into the Kingdom of God. By that sacrifice, God was about to fulfill the promise of salvation (represented by Moses) and restoration of mankind (represented by Elijah). The Transfiguration was the dynamic presence of God in the affairs of man, but it also was an anticipation of His death, resurrection, and ascension.

11.01.02.Q1 Did the Transfiguration occur on Mount Tabor or Mount Hermon (Mt. 17:1-8; Mk. 9:2-8; Lk. 9:28-36)?

This issue is seldom a question of students unless they are trying to retrace the steps of Jesus in the land of the Bible or are studying historical geography. But they are not the only ones, as scholars and historians in recent years have debated the same issue. Matthew said they went up on “**on a high mountain by themselves.**” Mount Tabor was first identified as such by the Byzantines as early as the 4th century, for easy travel by the European pilgrims. North of the Sea of Galilee was the Hula Lake,⁵³⁰ a massive swampy area that made travel to Mount Hermon most unpleasant. Several centuries later the Crusaders affirmed the Byzantine tradition.⁵³¹ But were they right? A discussion of each site is as follows:

1. **Mount Tabor.** This mountain is only 1,800 feet above sea level and has an incredibly small crest. It has been described as being dome-shaped when viewed from the north or south, but from the east or west its appearance is incredibly narrow like the sharp edge of

527. Vine, “Transfigure.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:639.

528. Vine, “Transfigure.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:639.

529. Young, “The Meaning and Purpose of the Transfiguration.” 7:3, 11-15; Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 14, page 11.

530. Also known as the plain of El Huleh, or the Sea of Merom,

531. Payne, “Tabor, Mount.” 3:1513; Barclay, “Mark.” 209-11.

a knife. Therefore, the crest area is amazingly small – smaller than a football or soccer field.

Possibly the greatest argument *against* Mount Tabor is that the village of Atabyrion occupied the entire crest area. It had been continuously occupied for more than two centuries. The very narrow summit was a strategic lookout from which distant travelers and marching armies could be seen. Note the strategic importance over the previous three centuries.

- a. Josephus mentions its military importance three times.⁵³²
- b. In 313 B.C., the Syrian Greek General, Antiochus the Great captured Mount Tabor and fortified the village of Atabyrion that was on its tiny crest.⁵³³
- c. Later, it was conquered and fortified again by Antiochus III in 218 B.C.
- d. In 102 B.C. Alexander Jannaeus, captured a city on the mount⁵³⁴ and
- e. In 53 B.C., the Romans had another battle at this small mountain ridge.
- f. During the lifetime of Jesus, the village of Atabyrion was fully occupied. It was also captured in the early days of the First Revolt in A.D. 66, by none other than the historian Josephus. He was then commander of a Jewish brigade in that area. He would not have “captured” it, if it was not occupied.

Local tour guides are quick to point out the stone wall fortification uncovered by archaeologists that was built by Josephus and the military unit he commanded – fortification the historian mentions in his writings.⁵³⁵ Therefore, since the village of Atabyrion and a Roman garrison covered the entire top of this small narrow mountain ridge, Jesus could not possibly have been there to be alone in the presence of God.

532. Josephus, *Wars* 2.20.6; 4.1.8 and *Antiquities* 13.15.4.

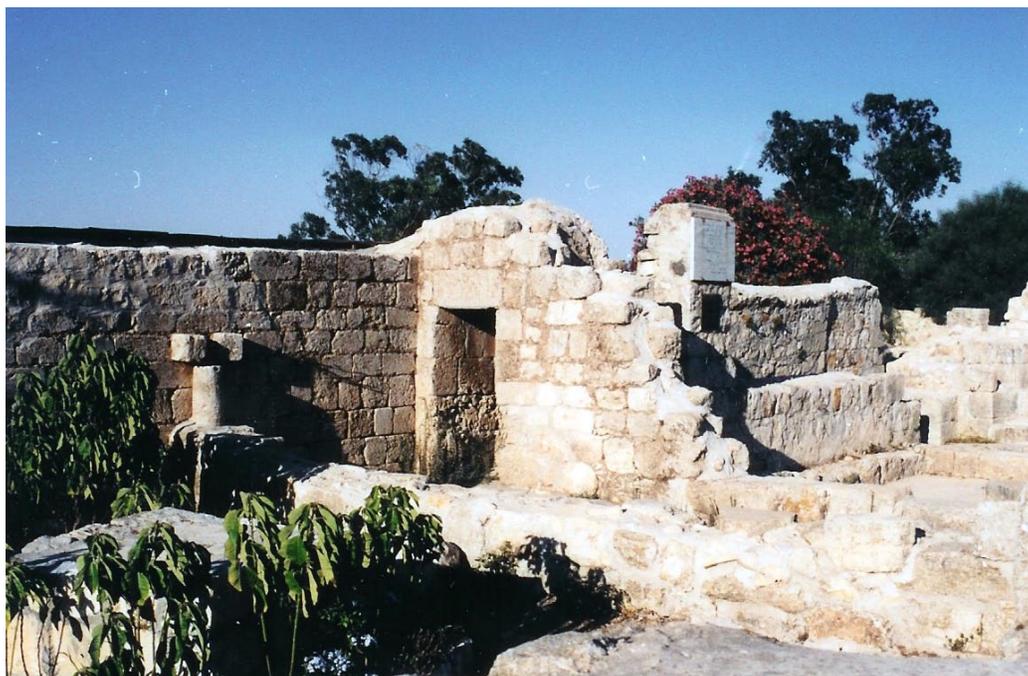
533. Jung, “Mount Tabor.” 4:714.

534. Jung, “Mount Tabor.” 4:714; Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.15.4.

535. Josephus, *Wars* 2.20.6; 4.1.8 and *Antiquities* 13.15.4.



11.01.02.A. FORTIFICATION RUINS BUILT BY JOSEPHUS ON MOUNT TABOR. Low walls are all that remain from the once mighty fortification built by Josephus when he was a commander of a Jewish military unit. Photographed in 2000 by the author.



11.01.02.B. RUINS OF THE VILLAGE OF ATABYRION ON MOUNT TABOR. The ruins of the village upon the narrow ridge of Mount Tabor and the eyewitness report by Josephus are evidence to the summit occupancy at the time of Jesus. The ridge itself is barely a hundred meters wide and three hundred meters long, meaning there would not have been a place where Jesus could have been alone with His two disciples. The Byzantines and Crusaders incorrectly identified it as the Mount of Transfiguration for the convenience of the visiting pilgrims. Photograph by the author.

2. **Mount Hermon.** Mount Hermon is not a single mountain peak but a mountain range that is about 10,000 feet above sea level, and snow-capped for half of the year. For that reason it has never been inhabited. It would appear to be a rather unlikely place because it would have been a strenuous hike, in possibly cold weather. It takes about six hours for an ascent and four to return, hence, an entire day. Generally, one must carry his own food, water, and extra clothing.⁵³⁶ However, since Caesarea Philippi and its temple of Pan were located on its southern base, Jesus and His three disciples were close by to make the ascent. Since Jesus made His journey in the springtime, the mountain streams supplied plenty of refreshing water.

The argument *for* this mountain as being the site of the Transfiguration is that Matthew said that Jesus went up “*a high mountain,*” as opposed to have gone up “*the mountain.*” The high altitude of nearly 10,000 feet fully meets the demands of the Greek adjective *hupselon*.⁵³⁷ Literally, the Greek text reads *a high mountain apart*.⁵³⁸ In essence, the internal biblical evidence – the phrase “a high mountain by themselves” – is the clue that strongly argues for this mountain. Furthermore, the literal Greek reads simply “privately,”⁵³⁹ which could not have occurred upon Mount Tabor.

The multiple peaks of the Mount Hermon range, at the southern edge of the Lebanon Mountain range, are the perfect description because on one in the ancient world would ever have referred to it as “*the mountain.*”

536. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 539.

537. Johnson Jr., “The Transfiguration of Christ.” 135 n3.

538. Bookman, *When God Wore Sandals*. CD Trac 10. See also Green, *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*; Berry, *Interlinear Literal Translation of the Greek New Testament*.

539. Green, *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*. 56.



11.01.02.C. SNOW-CAPPED MOUNT HERMON IN LATE SPRING. The Transfiguration most likely occurred somewhere on this distant mountain range. It has no distinctive peak and the highest point rises to more than 10,000 feet above sea level and is snow-covered about six months of the year. Photograph by the author.

Finally, in ancient times, high mountains were used by various cultures to worship their deities. For example, in Babylon, the Tower of Babel was an artificial mountain constructed for the worship of a pagan deity. In the Bible, Abraham offered Isaac on Mount Moriah,⁵⁴⁰ later known as the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Moses met God on Mount Sinai. Jesus ascended to, and will return from heaven, upon the Mount of Olives. The concept of meeting God at a high place carries with it that His subjects ought to be always looking up toward Him. Hence, there is little question that the quiet, remote area to where Jesus retreated was upon mountain of grandeur, Mount Hermon. It should be noted, that a few scholars have suggested Mount Meron in upper Galilee as the possible site, only because the ruins of an ancient village and synagogue have been found there.⁵⁴¹ However, the same argument against Mount Tabor applies for Mount Meron.

“He was transformed.” The language Luke and Matthew used in describing this event reflects the audiences to which they were writing. Matthew used the Greek word *metamorphothe*,

540. The Hebrew word for Mount Moriah is *bar ha-bayit* meaning *mount of the house*. See Mills and Michael, *Messiah and His Hebrew Alphabet*. 7.

541. Gilbrant, “Matthew.” 363.

meaning *transfigured*, while Luke stated that the face of Jesus “became different” or “was altered.” Luke, writing to Greeks may have feared that his readers would reflect how Jesus was similar to their gods who assumed different appearances. But the Jewish audience of Matthew had no problem with the word *transfigured*, although they were probably astounded by it.⁵⁴² As such, Jesus was before the three disciples wearing a brilliant white garment, glistening like the sun.⁵⁴³ They saw a glorified Jesus they could never have imagined – an image they would not see again until their life’s work was finished. This preview of our Lord’s glorification was not just for them, but for all believers.

“I will make three tabernacles here.” The fact that Peter wanted to build three tabernacles suggests to some scholars that this event may have occurred during the Feast of Tabernacles.

“A bright cloud covered them.” This was the Shekinah Glory of God⁵⁴⁴ and was reflective of the Glory of God at the Tabernacle (Ex. 24:15-18), when the temple was dedicated (1 Kg. 1), to the shepherds when Jesus was born, to Stephen (Acts 7:55-56), to Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:3; 22:6, 11; 26:13), and to the Apostle John (Rev. 21:23).⁵⁴⁵ The “cloud” in the Hebrew Bible and rabbinic writings has also been associated with eschatological expectations⁵⁴⁶ or with the Exodus.⁵⁴⁷ The Voice from the cloud united the Psalms (2:7), the prophets (Isa. 42:1), and the law (Deut. 18:15) in an authoritative testimony to His Sonship and Messiahship.⁵⁴⁸ The Transfiguration was a “down payment” or “deposit” of the physical glory that Jesus is going to possess when He reigns as the kingly Messiah.

Mystery Unveiled **The Transfiguration was a “down payment” or “deposit” of the physical glory that Jesus is going to possess when He reigns as the kingly Messiah.**

542. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 300-302.

543. See Dan. 7:9; 12:3; 2 *Baruch* 51:3, 5, 10, 12; 1 *Enoch* 38:4; 62:15-16; 104:2; Rev. 3:5, 4:4, 7:9.

544. See Ex. 13:21-22; 14:19-20; 33:9-10; Num. 9:15-23; Lev. 16:2; Isa. 6:4-5; 2 *Macc.* 2:8.

545. The Shekinah Glory appeared four times in the life of Jesus: 1) to the shepherds (Lk. 2:8-9), 2) at His baptism (Mt. 3:16), 3) at the transfiguration (Mt. 17:5) and, 4) at His ascension (Acts 1:9).

546. Ps. 97:2; Isa. 4:5; Ezek. 30:3; Dan. 7:13; Zeph 1:15; see also 2 *Baruch* 53:1-12; 4 *Ezra* 13:3; 2 *Macc.* 2:8; Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 98a; Lk. 21:37; 1 Thess 4:17.

547. Exodus 13:21-22; 16:16; 19:16; 24:15-18; 40:34-38; See also Carson, “Matthew” 8:386.

548. Johnson Jr., “The Transfiguration of Christ.” 138.

It was an incredible event that Moses and Elijah appeared before them – and that they recognized the two historic figures. But that was not enough, for then a voice from the midst of the cloud said, **“This is My beloved, I take delight in Him. Listen to him!”** It must have been an incredible experience. Years later Peter said,

¹⁷ For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, a voice came to Him from the Majestic Glory:

**This is My beloved Son.
I take delight in Him!**

¹⁸ And we heard this voice when it came from heaven while we were with Him on the holy mountain.

2 Peter 1:17-18

Jesus brought His inner circle of disciples up the mountain to witness the heavenly Shekinah glory envelope Jesus, the Son of Man. Then came a Voice from heaven, “This is my Son” followed by either “my beloved,” or “my chosen.” After this Jesus spoke openly of His coming death in terms of “his beloved son,” as found in Genesis 22 concerning the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham. Abraham – “take your son, your only son” who is Isaac. The word *only* also means “my beloved” or “my chosen.” Abraham took his beloved son and was willing to sacrifice him on the altar to honor God. These words, repeated in 2 Peter, were an echo of the divine approval of the baptism of Jesus earlier in the Jordan River. This was a moment that transformed their lives. In a similar manner, God did sacrifice his Son Jesus for the sins of humanity.

There are two points of interest in this passage.

1. Jesus took Peter along, even though He certainly knew that His disciple was going to deny Him.
2. It is noteworthy that there is nothing in rabbinic literature that parallels the Transfiguration or implies an expectation of such. Therefore, this event added to the list of difficulties the Jews had with Jesus.

Scholars have noted several more important aspects to this incredible event. Each one points directly to the passion and ministry of Jesus.⁵⁴⁹

549. Johnson Jr., “The Transfiguration of Christ.” 139-43.

1. The Transfiguration is the authentication of Jesus as the Messiah.
2. The Transfiguration is the anticipation of the Kingdom of God that is to come.
3. The Transfiguration is an illustration of the citizens or inhabitants of the kingdom that is to come.
4. The Transfiguration is an illustration of the personal resurrection
5. The Transfiguration is a confirmation of the Old Testament prophecies of Jesus
6. The Transfiguration is a proclamation of the cost of His sacrifice for sin
7. The Transfiguration is the evaluation of the strength of His passion for the souls of men.

11.01.02.Q2 What is the significance of Moses and Elijah coming to the mountain with Jesus (Mt. 17:3)?

This is a theological question, but is addressed here in a limited sense. Moses was the first of the great prophets. He received the Law personally from God on Mount Sinai, and his ministry included dramatic miracles as part of the exodus story. He has always represented “the Law” (although “Law” better translated as *the Instruction*) of the Old Covenant and promise of salvation. Elijah was an unusual miracle worker who represented “the prophets,” and his significance is that he was the restorer of all things (Mal. 4:5-6; Mk. 9:11-13). Neither Moses nor Elijah died a normal death. The former was buried by God and Elijah was personally taken away by God.

In Exodus 24:15-18, Moses went up the mountain and a cloud covered it. Now Jesus had taken his three closest disciples with Him up the mountain and again a cloud covered it. The cloud was the glory of God that appeared to His people in various times in their history. The cloud, a/k/a the Shekinah Glory, went before them to guide and protect them (Ex. 13:21). In Numbers 12:5, a cloud descended with the Lord, and the cloud appeared again above the tabernacle (Deut. 31:15). The Lord made His presence known in a cloud in Exodus 19:9, and again some four centuries later when King Solomon dedicated the temple and the cloud filled the temple. Most

certainly, these historic events were in the minds of the disciples when they saw the cloud that enveloped Jesus, and the voice of God commanded them to obey Jesus.

The reason Peter may have suggested three shelters (one each for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah) was that they would observe the Feast of Tabernacles that commemorated Israel's deliverance out of Egypt and also their desert experience. This was the tradition of a coming prophet that the Essenes held in Qumran. Furthermore, they felt that they were living in the last days when the messiah would come, judge the world and destroy their enemies. Then they would then live with him forever. The second tradition of a coming messenger is in Malachi 3:1: "See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me." In 4:5 we read, "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes."⁵⁵⁰

Another significant point to the appearance of Moses and Elijah is that this entire event points to life beyond the grave. In this context, Moses who died and was buried by God Himself, is a "type and shadow" of the saints who have died and will one day be resurrected. On the other hand, Elijah never died, but was translated (or raptured) and is a "type and shadow" of future saints who will be raptured prior to the Tribulation Period.⁵⁵¹

"Peter and those with him were in a deep sleep." It is only natural that they were extremely tired after climbing the highest mountain in Israel – approximately 10,000 feet high.

"Three tabernacles." The abundantly enthusiastic and courteous Peter proposed a private tabernacle, or shelter of comfort, for each of the three heavenly beings. Obviously, he still had no understanding of the mission of Jesus or of the horrific event that was to occur in the near future. However, after the resurrection and when Jesus breathed on him (Jn. 20:22) his enthusiasm was propelled *before* the Holy Spirit fell on Pentecost, as he was boldly preaching as the Spirit came upon everyone.

Finally, there are two witnesses in Revelation whose names are not given. One will be given the power to shut the heavens to prevent the rains from falling, and the other will have the power to turn water into blood. These actions describe those miracles performed by Elijah and Moses. Consequently, their work on earth is far from over. The mystery that remains is how Peter and the other disciples recognized them.

550. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 259.

551. See Appendix 2 as well as "Type and shadow" in Appendix 26.

11.01.02.Q3 Did the Transfiguration occur in six days or eight?

Matthew and Mark recorded that this event occurred “after about six days,” while Luke said it occurred “after about eight days.” As stated previously, the apparent difference can be simply explained in that there were two methods of counting days: exclusively and inclusively. “Inclusively” would count the six days between the events while “exclusively” count the six days plus the eventful days of travel at either end of the six day period. Luke counted time inclusively while Mark and Matthew counted time exclusively.⁵⁵²

11.01.03 Mt. 17:9-13; Lk. 9:36b; (See also Mk. 9:9-13) Mount Hermon

APOSTLES ASK ABOUT ELIJAH

Mt. ⁹ As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, “Don’t tell anyone about the vision until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.”

¹⁰ So the disciples questioned Him, “Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?”

¹¹ “Elijah is coming and will restore everything,” He replied. ¹² “But I tell you: Elijah has already come, and they didn’t recognize him. On the contrary, they did whatever they pleased to him. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.” ¹³ Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them about John the Baptist.

Lk. ^{36a} They kept silent, and in those days told no one what they had seen.

“Don’t tell anyone about the vision.” Literally, “Don’t tell anyone what you have seen.” At this point Jesus was still concerned that the Jews were expecting Him to be a political messiah. He is totally against anyone promoting Him. It was one of the many features that made Jesus distinctively different from others who claimed to be the messiah – they told everyone to spread the news about themselves. Jesus didn’t. His identity was the subject of countless debates as Jesus performed miracles of greater power than did Elijah.

The Pharisees asked Jesus, **“Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?”** Jesus confirmed that “Elijah,” of whom Malachi (4:5) spoke, came in the form of John the Baptist. They were correct in saying that Elijah would come before the Messiah, but they believed him to

552. Hiebert, “Transfiguration.” 16:2-61; Stein, R. *Jesus the Messiah*. 167.

literally return from heaven as the same physical person he was centuries earlier. Furthermore, they believed that he would function with the messiah to purify Judaism from the Greek influences and restore the Jewish people to the political greatness associated with King David. This steadfast mindset prevented many from recognizing the identity of both John the Baptist and Jesus. This also explains, in part, why Jesus was so careful in demonstrating His identity to the Jews rather than making a public announcement.

Now the darkest hour of Jesus and the disciples lay before them. The previous discussion at the Shrine of Pan at Baniyas resulted in Peter's profound confession. Now the experience of the Transfiguration would build their faith for the coming painful and agonizing trial and crucifixion. The mountaintop experience was a prelude of what was to come. They had seen Jesus as they had never seen Him before. Yet, unknown to them, they would see Him again in a similar manner after the resurrection. But a fuller meaning of the Transfiguration would not be realized until after the resurrection when Jesus would again walk among them again.

An example of the misunderstanding of "Elijah" is found in the *Mishnah*. The author believed Elijah would be a man who would bring peace to the descendants of Moses.

Rabbi Joshua said: "I have received as a tradition from Rabban Johanan b. Zakkai,⁵⁵³ who heard from his teacher, and his teacher from his teacher, as a *Halakah* given to Moses from Sinai, that Elijah will not come to declare (what is) clean or unclean, to remove afar or to bring nigh, but to remove afar those (families) that were brought nigh by violence and bring nigh those (families) that were removed afar by violence."

Mishnah, Eduyoth 8.7

From this quotation it is clear that the teacher believed that Elijah, when he would return, would not change the Torah, but would restore justice to human relationships. Yet both John and Jesus underscored the Torah and, in so doing, they challenged the Oral Law.

All this illustrates the difficulties Jesus had to overcome in preparing the disciples for what was before them. They were under His continuous teaching and had often heard of His death and resurrection, either directly or indirectly. Even so, they still failed to comprehend what they were about to witness.

553. Rabbi Zakkai was the last disciple of the famous Rabbi Hillel. See Parry, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Talmud*. 38-39.

Unit 11

The Transfiguration, Miracles, And Disciple Training

Chapter 02

More Miracles And Discipleship Training



11.02.00.A. JESUS AND THE ADULTEROUS WOMAN. Artwork by **William Hole of the Royal Scottish Academy of Art, 1876.** Who is without sin among you? Jesus forgave the woman accused of adultery and confronted her accusers, one of whom was probably as guilty as she and, with the others, “set up” this event to challenge Jesus. See John 7:14-16.

11.02.01 Lk. 9:37; Mk. 9:14-28; Mt. 17:20-21 (See also Lk. 9:38-43a; 17:5-6) **Near Mount Hermon**

THE “EPILEPTIC” BOY HEALED

Lk. ³⁷ The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met Him.

Mk. ¹⁴ When they came to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and scribes disputing with them. ¹⁵ All of a sudden, when the whole crowd saw Him, they were amazed and ran to greet Him. ¹⁶ Then He asked them, “What are you arguing with them about?”

¹⁷ Out of the crowd, one man answered Him, “Teacher, I brought my son to You. He has a spirit that makes him unable to speak. ¹⁸ Wherever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I asked Your disciples to drive it out, but they couldn’t.”

¹⁹ He replied to them, “You unbelieving generation! How long will I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring him to Me.” ²⁰ So they brought him to Him. When the spirit saw Him, it immediately convulsed the boy. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. ²¹ “How long has this been happening to him?” Jesus asked his father.

“From childhood,” he said. ²² “And many times it has thrown him into fire or water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.”

²³ Then Jesus said to him, “‘If You can’? Everything is possible to the one who believes.”

²⁴ Immediately the father of the boy cried out, “I do believe! Help my unbelief.”

²⁵ When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly coming together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You mute and deaf spirit, I command you: come out of him and never enter him again!”

²⁶ Then it came out, shrieking and convulsing him violently. The boy became like a corpse, so that many said, “He’s dead.” ²⁷ But Jesus, taking him by the hand, raised him, and he stood up.

28 After He went into a house, His disciples asked Him privately, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

Mt. 20 “Because of your little faith,” He told them. “For I assure you: If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will tell this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you. [21 However, this kind does not come out except by prayer and fasting.]”

“**The next day, when they came down from the mountain.**” Jesus and the disciples stayed on the mountain overnight – probably because climbing to the high summit was exhausting. The foot trails are winding and near the summit are huge rocks. Climbing up or down is not for the light hearted.

“**My son ... has a spirit.**” Matthew used the word *seleniazesthai*, a verb that means *to be moonstruck*.⁵⁵⁴ This term offers two suggestions:

1. That the illness was of demonic origin or
2. That the people believed it was of demonic origin when it could have been a physical illness.

Some scholars have attributed the symptoms to be descriptive of epileptic seizures because demons take on the appearance of various diseases. Others say that in a superstitious culture, illnesses that cause strange body movements were attributed to demons due to the ignorance of the common people. However, for them to declare that the boy simply had the disease of epilepsy is to say that Jesus did not know the difference between a disease and demonic oppression. This was hardly the case.

As previously stated, demons are synonymous with unclean spirits,⁵⁵⁵ who are connected with Satan,⁵⁵⁶ and are in total opposition to God and the work of God⁵⁵⁷ and as such, promote all forms of idolatry.⁵⁵⁸ They oppose the faith of believers,⁵⁵⁹ and attempt to influence and disturb

554. Barclay, “Matthew.” 2:166.

555. Mk. 5:12, 15; 3:22, 30; Lk. 4:33.

556. Lk. 10:17-18; 11:19-20.

557. 1 Cor. 10:20-21.

558. Rev. 9:20; 16:13-14.

559. 1 Tim. 4:1.

the physical, mental and emotional well-being of people.⁵⁶⁰ However, while certain ailments may be connected with demonic powers, the laws of Moses that pertain to sanitation clearly indicate that good health is also a matter of cleanliness – meaning that many diseases are not related to demonic influences but can be prevented.

Many in the ancient world believed that epilepsy was caused by demonic activity. For example, Aretaeus of Cappadocia (c 130-200 A.D.) was a Greek physician who practiced in Alexandria and Rome. He is noted for having written eight medical books in which he detailed symptoms and diagnostic characteristics of various diseases.⁵⁶¹ His most noted work is the identification of a disease well known today, that he named *diabetes*.⁵⁶² Concerning epilepsy, he said it was known as “the sacred disease” and believed a possible cause was demonic activity.⁵⁶³

“He foams at the mouth.” The term *foam* (Gk. *aphrizo* 875) denotes *to foam at the mouth*,⁵⁶⁴ and was considered a confirmation of demonic possession.

“You unbelieving generation!” These stinging words were not directed toward the leading Pharisees, but to His own disciples! Clearly, Jesus was frustrated with them! Previously they had been given the power to cast out demons and perform healings, (Mt. 10:1) but here they failed. These words were also reminiscent of the critical comments Moses made in Deuteronomy 32:5 and 20 to the Israelite forefathers. Unbelief was the reason the disciples failed to cast out the demons they encountered even though they had been successful previously. The boy’s father recognized his difficulty and said, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” With this, Jesus freed the son from the demonic oppression. Then the disciples approached Jesus privately and asked why they had been unsuccessful. Jesus gave them two reasons:

1. It was the matter of faith, and
2. They needed to pray.

“You will tell this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move.” Mountains were symbolic of kings and kingdoms, as indicated in the book of Revelation that has many references to mountains being kingdoms. In this case, Jesus spoke of the power that was available to His

560. Lk. 13:11, 16; Mk. 5:2-5; 7:25; Mt. 12:45.

561. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aretaeus_of_Cappadocia Retrieved December 7, 2013.

562. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/33531/Aretaeus-Of-Cappadocia> Retrieved December 7, 2013.

563. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:346.

564. Vine, “Foam.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:244.

disciples to move demonic kingdoms (“mountains”). But telling a mountain to move was also a proverbial statement for accomplishing a difficult task.⁵⁶⁵

Everyone knew that these words had the imagery of the famous Herodian, the summer palace-fortress built by Herod the Great. To build it, his slaves and servants relocated the top of a small mountain and had it placed on the top of another nearby mountain, thus making it higher and in the shape of a volcano. Hence, Jesus essentially said that by faith His disciples would be able to perform greater feats than Herod.



11.02.01.A. THE MOUNTAIN MOVED BY HEROD THE GREAT. The volcano-shaped Herodian Fortress-palace was created when Herod relocated one mountaintop and placed it upon another, and then built his palace-fortress upon it. Located only about two miles south of Bethlehem, this architectural achievement was built with slave laborers and was the backdrop to the words of faith spoken by Jesus. Photograph by the author.

11.02.02 Mk. 9:30-32 (See also Mt. 17:22-23; Lk. 9:43b-45) **Galilee**

DEATH PREDICTED AGAIN

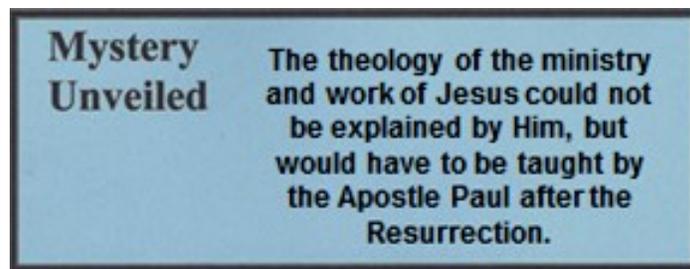
³⁰ Then they left that place and made their way through Galilee, but He did not want anyone to know it. ³¹ For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, “The Son

565. See. Isa. 41:15; 54:10; Hab. 3:10; Zech. 4:7; Babylonian Talmud, *Berakot* 63b.

of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill Him, and after He is killed, He will rise three days later.”³² But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask Him.

Jesus again spoke of His coming death and resurrection.⁵⁶⁶ Even though He was very clear about this issue, the disciples still failed to understand. They must have questioned how it could be possible that the Messiah would die, especially Jesus, the One who healed the sick and raised the dead. The thought of His death was completely illogical.

Yet, it was not until after His resurrection that the purpose of the crucifixion began to make sense. The Apostle Paul’s most distinctive doctrines are expositions of the meaning of two great facts – the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus and the mission of the Spirit by the glorified Redeemer. It is obvious that these incredible details could not be fully explained by Jesus personally, as they had not yet taken place. However, to suppress the inspired explanation of them would be to extinguish the light of the gospel and rob Christ Jesus of His crowning glory.



11.02.03 Mt. 17:24-27 Capernaum, March, 29.

COIN FROM THE MOUTH OF A FISH

²⁴ When they came to Capernaum, those who collected the double-drachma tax approached Peter and said, “Doesn’t your Teacher pay the double-drachma tax?”

²⁵ “Yes,” he said.

When he went into the house, Jesus spoke to him first, “What do you think, Simon? Who do earthly kings collect tariffs or taxes from? From their sons or from strangers?”

²⁶ “From strangers,” he said.

566. The first time Jesus predicted His death was in Mt. 16:21-28; Mk. 8:31-35, and Lk. 9:21-27. The second time was in Mt. 17:22-23; Mk. 9:30-32 and Lk. 9:44-45. And the third time was in Mt. 20:17-19; Mk. 10:32-34 and Lk. 18:31-34.

“Then the sons are free,” Jesus told him.²⁷ “But, so we won’t offend them, go to the sea, cast in a fishhook, and take the first fish that you catch. When you open its mouth you’ll find a coin. Take it and give it to them for Me and you.”

This event refers to the half-shekel temple tax that was instituted by Moses⁵⁶⁷ and, according to the Oral Law, it had to be paid by the 15th day of Adar (March).⁵⁶⁸ Only men who were aged twenty or older were required to pay the tax. This tax supported the tabernacle in ancient times. Later it supported Solomon’s temple followed by the second temple. Those who did not pay in Jerusalem could do so at a city such as Capernaum.⁵⁶⁹

The required coinage for payment of the temple tax (Mt. 17:24-27) is an excellent example to highlight the depraved and decadent nature of the Sadducees. In the days of Jesus, Caiaphas had a small army of tax collectors who secured funds to defray the expenses of the temple. Messengers, known as *shelihim*,⁵⁷⁰ were sent out from Jerusalem to collect the required taxes. The collection in the Holy Land began on the first day of Adar, which is in the modern February and March calendar. The collection continued until Passover in Nisan. Money exchangers also went to the various towns and exchanged foreign currency for shekels that were minted previously by Simon the Maccabee. In foreign countries, every city where there was a Jewish population, a central collection point was established where the taxes could be paid. These funds were later shipped to Jerusalem and used for temple maintenance. Whether one gave a drachma or other coin, the Sadducees always demanded the Tyrian silver shekel.⁵⁷¹ Neither Jewish nor Roman coins were acceptable, but only the Tyrian silver half-shekel because of its silver purity and consistent weight.⁵⁷² It did not matter that the coin had the image of the Phoenician deity Melkhart (or Melqarth-Herakles) on the obverse side and on the reverse side, appeared an eagle on the bow of a ship with the legend: “Tyre the Holy and City of Refuge,” and the date of issue. This greatly offended righteous Jews as well as a great many Pharisees. They had to pay two taxes.

1. A tax was due to the Roman Empire, and included the funding for Herod the Great and/or his sons.

567. Exodus 30:11-16. See also 2 Kings 12:4; 22:3-7 and Nehemiah 33-34.

568. Mishnah, *Shekalim* 1:1; Smith, *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew*. 212-14.

569. Franz, <http://www.lifeandland.org/2009/02/the-tyrian-shekel-and-the-temple-of-jerusalem/> Retrieved October 10, 2014; Franz, "Does Your Teacher not Pay the Temple Tax?" 81-82.

570. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 2:264.

571. Franz, "Jesus Celebrates Hanukkah." 116-19.

572. Kadman, "Temple Dues and Currency." 1:9-10.

2. A temple support tax of a half-shekel (Ex. 30:11-16).



11.02.03.A. THE TYRIAN SILVER HALF-SHEKEL. The Tyrian Silver shekels were minted in the Phoenician cities of Acco and Tyre between 126 B.C. and A.D. 66 and replaced the Greek coins of Alexander the Great. Tyrian shekels had a minimum of 92 percent silver content, had images of pagan kings (deified), an aggressive eagle, and Marduk, a/k/a Melqarth-Herakles, the Tyrian god, and were the coins of choice by the Sadducees. Some scholars believe that only after the Romans shut down the Phoenician mint in 18 B.C. did the Jews mint their own silver shekels near or in Jerusalem.

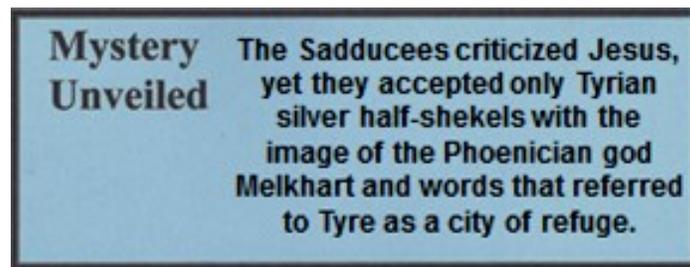
However, there was a problem: To circumvent the first and second commandments (Ex 20:3-4; Deut. 4:16-18, 5:8), that Sadducees was said that the pagan stigma was removed if the coin was placed in a box rather than conveyed personally to a priest or other temple official. Those who had other currencies, including Jewish coins from the Maccabean Period, had to exchange currencies with money changers who charged a set 8% fee.⁵⁷³ Ironically, it was this conflict of Jewish vs. Greek values that had previously sparked the Maccabean Revolt. Now the Jewish leaders required coins with the image of a pagan deity and statement that Tyre was the holy city, not Jerusalem.

The disrespect for the biblical commandments goes beyond merely accepting the pagan shekel of a foreign nation. Nonetheless, the Sadducees wanted their silver shekels, probably so they could charge high conversion rates to the thousands of Jews who did not have them. To compensate for the loss, a new mint suddenly appeared. Some scholars believe that a Jewish mint opened near Jerusalem where Tyrian shekels were produced between the years 18 B.C. and A.D.

573. Hendin, *Guide to Biblical Coins*. 114-16.

69/70.⁵⁷⁴ Not only did the Sadducees demand Tyrian shekels, but it appears that they had their hands in the production of them as well. How extensive their participation was is unknown, but the level of corruption is beyond imagination.

Jesus again demonstrated a lesson in humility. He was King of kings and Lord of lords and yet recognized those who held religious power and authority. Because priests and prominent rabbis were exempted from the tax, neither He nor His disciples were required to pay the tax either. However, for the purpose of preventing a conflict with the temple tax collectors, the tax was paid anyway to a religious system that had become corrupt and spiritually dead.



“Double-drachma.” A Greek drachma was the wage paid for two days of labor. In terms of monetary exchange, a half shekel equaled two drachma and a drachma was equal to the Roman Denarius.⁵⁷⁵

11.02.04 Mk. 9:33-35; Lk. 47-48; Mt. 18:5 Capernaum

APOSTLES DISPUTE ABOUT RANK

Mk. ³³ Then they came to Capernaum. When He was in the house, He asked them, “What were you arguing about on the way?” ³⁴ But they were silent, because on the way they had been arguing with one another about who was the greatest. ³⁵ Sitting down, He called the Twelve and said to them, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.”

Lk. ⁴⁷ But Jesus, knowing the thoughts of their hearts, took a little child and had him stand next to Him.

⁴⁸ He told them,

574. Franz, <http://www.lifeandland.org/2009/02/the-tyrian-shekel-and-the-temple-of-jerusalem/> Retrieved Oct. 20, 2014. Not all scholars agree on the date of minting coins near the Holy City in this time frame, as others believe it was during the First Revolt (A.D. 66-70), and possibly in the city at that time.

575. Gilbrant, “Matthew.” 369; Appendix 20.

“Whoever welcomes this little child in My name

welcomes Me.

And whoever welcomes Me

welcomes Him who sent Me.

For whoever is least among you—

this one is great.”

Mt. ⁵ And whoever welcomes one child like this in My name welcomes Me.

This discussion occurred shortly after the transfiguration. Peter, James, and John witnessed the event while the other nine disciples were some distance away and felt left out. Their feelings of disconnect were heightened after the three returned and told what they saw. Naturally the feeling that certain individuals had become the favorite disciples of Jesus intensified.

Jesus makes the comparison of a child to a believer who has his faith in Him. The common opinion or interpretation is that children are innocent – which is incorrect. The correct interpretation is that children have absolute faith in their parents and so likewise believers are to have absolute child-like faith in God. Furthermore, a child understands that he is under the authority of his parents, so likewise, believers are under the authority of God. In Luke’s version the children come to Jesus while in Matthew’s rendering the children have faith in Jesus. While there is a difference in the English between the two gospels, to the Jews reading these two gospels there was no difference – both gospels report the same concept.

“What were you arguing about on the way?...who was the greatest.” They were too embarrassed to reveal the truth, but since Jesus already knew it, He spoke on the issue they were thinking: “Who would be the greatest in His kingdom?” This was a point of contention because the disciples still thought that in some manner Jesus would destroy the Roman Empire and establish His Kingdom of God as a political entity. This was an on-going issue and obviously, they were far from understanding who Jesus was. He responded by giving them a lesson on servant-hood. In the ancient Middle East culture, as today, social position and dignity were highly important. An example is found in the Messianic Rule of the Dead Sea Scroll:

And the (Mess)iah of Israel shall come,

And the chiefs of the (clans of Israel) shall sit before him,

Each in the order of his dignity

According to (his place) in their camps and marches.

Dead Sea Scroll, *Messianic Rule* 1QSa 2:11⁵⁷⁶

It is easy for modern readers to conclude this was simply a matter of greed and position. That is not to say these issues were not present, but the issue of rank was important in their hierarchical culture of honor.⁵⁷⁷ Even today, persons of advanced age and visitors are honored to a much higher degree there than in Western countries.

11.02.05 Mt. 18:6-9; Mk. 9:43-50 (See also Mk. 9:36-37, 42; Lk. 17:1-3a) Capernaum

STERN WARNING ABOUT CAUSING OTHERS TO SIN

Mt. ⁶ “But whoever causes the downfall of one of these little ones who believe in Me – it would be better for him if a heavy millstone were hung around his neck and he were drowned in the depths of the sea!

⁷ Woe to the world because of offenses. For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes.

Mk. ⁴³ And if your hand causes your downfall,

cut it off.

It is better for you to enter life maimed

than to have two hands

and go to hell – the unquenchable fire,

[⁴⁴ where Their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.] (Isaiah 66:24).⁵⁷⁸

⁴⁵ And if your foot causes your downfall,

cut it off.

It is better for you to enter life lame

than to have two feet

576. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*. 121; Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*. Part II, 90. Words/letters in parentheses were added since these are missing in the damaged manuscript.

577. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 240.

578. A reference to eternal punishment for rebellion against God.

and be thrown into hell –

[the unquenchable fire,⁴⁶ where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.] (Isaiah 66:24).⁵⁷⁹

⁴⁷ And if your eye causes your downfall,

gouge it out.

It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye

than to have two eyes

and be thrown into hell,

⁴⁸ where

**Their worm does not die,
and the fire is not quenched. (Isaiah 66:24).⁵⁸⁰**

⁴⁹ For everyone will be salted with fire. ⁵⁰ Salt is good, but if the salt should lose its flavor, how can you make it salty? Have salt among yourselves and be at peace with one another.”

While Scripture is adamant about not causing others to fall into sin, Jesus is profoundly strong on those who cause children and others who are young in the faith to fall. To emphasize this, He uses repeating concepts, ideas, and phrases as a learning tool. Note that verses 44, 46, and 48 in Mark are identical. The triple repeat was a literary device to express maximum concern and impact to the reader and listeners.

“But whoever causes the downfall of one of these little ones.” The consequence of causing emotional, spiritual, or physical injury to children is immense. Jesus said it would be better for a millstone to be around their neck and to be thrown into the sea. (The bottom of the Sea of Galilee was also known as the Abyss, where legend said the demons lived.) In effect, Jesus said that if anyone caused a little child to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the lake of demons than to receive judgment on Judgment Day.

The passage continues to say that it would be better if that person had a **“heavy millstone”** around his neck and tossed into the sea. At this time there were two kinds of millstones:⁵⁸¹

579. A reference to eternal punishment for rebellion against God.

580. A reference to eternal punishment for rebellion against God.

1. A small pair of millstones (Gk. *mulos* 3458) for household use to grind wheat or barley into flour (see 06.03.02.C).
2. A large heavy millstone (Gk. *onikos*) was turned by a donkey or person and its primary use was to crush olives (see 11.02.05.A).

Jesus used the term of the larger millstone as He emphasized anger and judgment on those who would willfully cause injury others. It was a common phrase in the ancient world. For example, when Emperor Augustus punished some slaves, he could have had them crucified or fed to the lions. But rather, he had heavy stones (not mill stones) tied to their necks and tossed in the river. The ancient writer Suidas quoted Aristophanes⁵⁸² as having said,

**Lifting him up, I'll plunge him to the deep
A stone around his neck.**

Suidas, *Equites of Aristophanes* 1361⁵⁸³

As stated previously, the Master Teacher used the common language and ideas of the people to convey His message.

“Woe to the world.” Dire judgment is coming not only to these “false shepherds,” but also to those who follow them. The phrase *woe*, which in Greek is *ouai*, refers to both *anger* and *sorrow*.⁵⁸⁴ It is a funeral dirge; a lament for the dead.⁵⁸⁵ Scholars have two interpretations to this statement:

1. Because of the sins of these “false shepherds,” they are leading their people into a destiny of destruction which is why Jesus is both angry and sorrowful.
2. This warning was focused directly at the religious leaders who had absolutely no desire to serve their synagogues or God in any capacity, but held their positions for personal

581. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:103; Vine, “Millstone.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:408.

582. Aristophanes (446 – 386 B.C.) was a Greek dramatist some literary historians say was one of the greatest Greek comedy writers. Most of his 40 writings are lost, but a certain Suidas quoted him in *Equites of Aristophanes*.

583. <http://biblehub.com/tsk/matthew/18-6.htm> Retrieved February 22, 2014; Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:177.

584. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 182.

585. Smith, *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew*. 157, 274; See also 09.02.02.

financial gain and power.⁵⁸⁶ They were concerned only about their social status, power, and wealth. However, not all Pharisees had this arrogant attitude. Clearly, Jesus was *extremely sorrowful* with the leading Pharisees and with a single word He promised a coming judgment which will be followed by eternal damnation.⁵⁸⁷ Such a warning should put any pastor, teacher, and other leader of the church today in humility and prayer.



11.02.05.A. A MILLSTONE. A millstone was a large circular stone, a rotary crusher that was used for crushing olives that would then be placed in an olive press. The stone was about four or five feet in diameter with a beam through its center. At the other end of the beam a slave, mule, or donkey was tied in order to turn the stone in a circular motion, thereby crushing the olives. After the olives were crushed, they were squeezed under immense pressure in a beam olive press (15.02.01.B) Photograph by the author.

“Gouge it out.” This statement is not a teaching of self-mutilation, but is a figure of speech known as hyperbole;⁵⁸⁸ a deliberate exaggeration to emphasize the point that drastic measures need to be taken to remove sin. Jesus said that nothing is to tempt the believer and have him fall into the eternal lake of fire.

586. See also 08.01.02, 09.02.02, and 13.05.02-05.

587. Carson, “Matthew.” 8:398.

588. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*. 423.

“Salt is good.” The followers of Jesus are to be like salt, a preservative in society.⁵⁸⁹ However, critics have said that salt is a chemical compound and, therefore, cannot lose its saltiness. While this is true of ocean salt, it is not true of salt derived from the Dead Sea, which is ten times saltier than the ocean or Mediterranean Sea. Dead Sea salt was used in the temple and for the salting of dried fish along the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Dead Sea salt can lose its concentration and, therefore, lose its savory quality. Pliny the Elder noted that Dead Sea salt could quickly become worthless.⁵⁹⁰ Jesus was obviously not speaking of ocean salt, but of Dead Sea salt.

Furthermore, Dead Sea salt did not come from the sea itself, but was removed from the salt mountain (that is 98% pure) located at the southwestern side of the sea. At times as it was being shipped in or near Samaria, the Samaritans contaminated it by throwing dirt on it. This changed the taste of the precious commodity and rendered it useless.

11.02.06 Mk. 9:38-41 (See also Lk. 9:49-50)

WORKS DONE IN THE NAME OF JESUS

³⁸ John said to Him, “Teacher, we saw someone driving out demons in Your name, and we tried to stop him because he wasn’t following us.”

³⁹ “Don’t stop him,” said Jesus, “because there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name who can soon afterward speak evil of Me. ⁴⁰ For whoever is not against us is for us. ⁴¹ And whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of My name, since you belong to the Messiah – I assure you: He will never lose his reward.

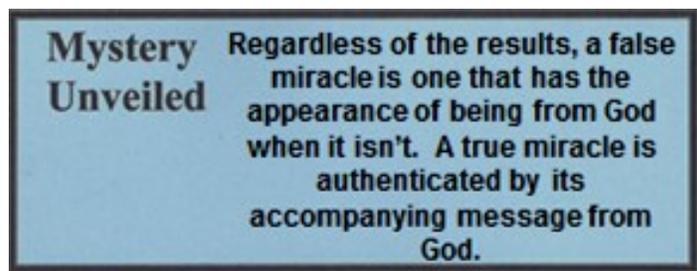
“No one who will perform a miracle in My name.” A miracle can be understood only in light of the message that accompanies it. A miracle can originate from God through Jesus only by the message that is spoken by the one praying for the miracle. The pagan priests in Pharaoh’s court performed miracles when they threw their rod to the ground and it became a snake. These miracles were not of God, but of Satan. To determine if a miracle is of God or Satan the accompanying message must be discerned. The message authenticates the miracles and the miracles authenticate the message of the Almighty God, but the message generally comes before the miracle (Acts 2:22).

Anyone who performs a miracle in the name of Jesus and then speaks evil of Him or against His teachings is one who does a false miracle. The word “false” is defined as a miracle that has the

589. See discussion on “You are the salt of the earth” in 08.01.03.

590. Pliny the Elder, *History Natural*. 3.31.34.

appearance of being from God, when in fact, it is from satanic power. If any miracle was truly of Jesus, then the messenger through whom Jesus performed the miracle will also preach the truth of Scripture. Hence, the warning is obvious: be aware of those who perform miracles but do not preach the full truth of the gospel.



The phrase **“perform a miracle”** literally reads *a work of power*. There are three primary words in the New Testament that have been translated to *miracle*.

1. The word *dunameis* (meaning *mighty works, powers* or *acts of power*)
2. The word *semeia* that is translated as *signs* – especially by John, and
3. *Terata* meaning *wonders*.⁵⁹¹

All three terms were used by the gospel writers for their audiences with the understanding that belief in God (according to the biblical definition of “belief”) as the source of all power. For that reason, Jesus is the *dunamis* of God. Throughout the New Testament, the mighty works of Jesus are denoted by five different words that reflect different situations and viewpoints of the writers. A miracle may be as follows:⁵⁹²

1. An act of extraordinary wonders as in Acts 7:36 as well as the incredible wonders performed by Moses in Egypt.
2. A sign pointing to something beyond itself such as a mark of grace or power by the miracle worker that reveals his connection with God; as in Matthew 7:38.
3. As a demonstration of the glory of God as recorded in Luke 13:17.
4. As a strange or wonderful event that makes people ponder. See Luke 5:26 and Matthew 21:15.

591. Richardson, “Miracle, Wonder, Sign, Powers.” 152-54.

592. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:66.

5. A demonstration of divine power as in Matthew 11:20

On the other hand, disbelief in miracles performed by Jesus is a disbelief in God as described in the Bible and that was the problem in Nazareth, and even more so in the villages of Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Chorizim.

11.02.07 Mt. 18:15-17

DISCIPLINE OF A BROTHER

¹⁵ “If your brother sins against you, go and rebuke him in private. If he listens to you, you have won your brother. ¹⁶ But if he won’t listen, take one or two more with you, so that by the testimony of two or three witnesses every fact may be established. ¹⁷ If he pays no attention to them, tell the church. But if he doesn’t pay attention even to the church, let him be like an unbeliever and a tax collector to you.”

“If he pays no attention.” Here Jesus spoke to his disciples about a sinful brother who refuses to correct his life. The brother obviously had been warned repeatedly and then it was time for a final three-step solution:

1. To show him his fault privately.
2. If he refuses to listen and accept this counsel, repeat the conversation with two or three witnesses (Deut. 17:6).
3. Finally, if he still refuses to obey commands of our Lord, he is to be presented to the corporate body and, hopefully, he will correct his ways. However, if he remains steadfast in his pagan lifestyle, he is to be removed from the fellowship. At this point, he has crossed the line for compassionate love and moved toward a more hardened attitude that will be required from the church as a disciplinary measure (cf. Rom. 16:17; 2 Thess. 3:14). This was the directive for appropriate judgment and discipline in the church.⁵⁹³

A similar warning of discipline to a sinful brother was given twice by Ezekiel (3:16-21; 33:1-9) and the Essenes had already incorporated the same three-step procedure recorded by Matthew.⁵⁹⁴

593. Wisdom always needs to be applied to situations as this. In today’s world of law suits, the three-step process is still essential although the latter part of the third step may need to be private for legal reasons.

594. See the Dead Sea Scrolls 1QS 5:25-6:1; CD 9:23.

“An unbeliever and a tax collector.” In essence, Jesus said that a defiant brother is to be treated as a social outcast, as one of the untouchable unbelievers and tax collector. For a more serious violation, there was excommunication (explained in 1 Cor. 5:1-7).

11.02.08 Mt. 18:18-20

APOSTLES GIVEN AUTHORITY

¹⁸ I assure you: Whatever you bind on earth is already bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth is already loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ Again, I assure you: If two of you on earth agree about any matter that you pray for, it will be done for you by My Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there among them.”

“Bound in heaven . . . loosed in heaven.” There are two interpretations of this subject of loosening and binding and what Jesus intended for His disciples and His church.⁵⁹⁵

1. Binding and loosening as understood in punishing or absolving men in the synagogue relative to religious law.⁵⁹⁶
2. Binding and loosening is understood in a spiritual context, that is, to bind and loose the spirits that motivate, manipulate, or control people.⁵⁹⁷ But what it does not mean is that either the disciples or the church have the authority to forgive sins or to send anyone to heaven or hell – that is reserved for God alone.

The interpretations of the phrase vary among biblical references as well as among church denominations today and certainly will not be resolved here.⁵⁹⁸ However, understanding this phrase has a direct implication as to how the disciples would deal with those who were possessed

595. For further study on binding and loosening see 08.04.07.Q1 “What verbal formulas did exorcists use when casting out demons?” the account of the demoniac whom Jesus cleansed in 08.06.03; the phrase “Bound in heaven . . . loosed in heaven,” in 11.02.08; the phrase “Bind on earth . . . loose on earth” in 10.01.29; and the phrase “Lord, even the demons submit to us in Your name,” in 12.01.03. An excellent resource for further study was written by Foster and King, *Binding and Loosening: Exercising Authority over Dark Powers*. See also Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 1:254-55, and Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 236.

596. For students who examine the policies of the two leading rabbis and their schools in Jerusalem at this time, Rabbi Hillel would have been the looser and Rabbi Shammai, the binder. See Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 1:226-27.

597. See “to loose” and “to bind” in 10.01.29 for additional information.

598. A wide range of meanings to the term “binding and loosing” are found in Judg. 16:6, 13; Job 38:31; Isa. 22:21, 66:1; Ezek. 20:37; *Tobit* 3:13, 7:11; *1 Enoch* 6:4; Mt. 22:23, 23:4; Lk. 8:29; Acts 20:22, 22:4 Rom. 7:1; and 1 Cor. 7:39.

or controlled by demonic forces. It has been said that Jesus clearly gave limited authority to His disciples to control the spiritual dynamics in their environment.

One interpretation is that this Hebraic idiom was used to express the rabbinical authority to either forbid or permit various activities in the synagogue. The rabbis functioned as if they were entrusted with a limited degree of divine authority concerning the affairs of the people under their ministry. This concept was continued in the early church and demonstrated in Acts 15:1-11 where Peter gave a stinging rebuke to Ananias and Sapphira for their deceitfulness. Paul functioned with this authority in I Corinthians 5:3 when he stated, “And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this.” Finally, when the Jerusalem Counsel met to consider issues related to Gentile believers (Acts 15:1-29), they invoked this rabbinic tradition that was endorsed and extended by Jesus when they decided that their decision was based on what, “seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us ...”

Finally, during the Inter-Testamental Period, some Jews believed that the phrase “binding and loosening” has spiritual implications concerning the control of Satan and his demons. In one of the most significant Inter-Testamental books is a reference to a “New Priest” or the “Righteous One,”

note the following from the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*.

**And he shall open the gates of paradise,
And he shall overcome the threatening sword against Adam.
And he shall give to the saints to eat from the tree of life,
And the Holy Spirit shall be on him
And Beliar shall be bound by him
And he shall give power to his children to tread upon the evil spirits.**

*Testament of Levi 18:10-12*⁵⁹⁹

Writing in the second century B.C., the author of the *Testament of Levi* made obvious references to Genesis 2:9 and what would later become Revelation 22:2, 4, and 19. And from another book within the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* is the following quotation:

Then Shem shall be glorified; because God the Lord, the Great One in Israel, will be manifest upon the earth [as a man].⁶⁰⁰ By himself will he save Adam. Then all the spirits of error shall be given over to being trampled underfoot. And men will have mastery over the evil spirits.

599. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 1:795. Hiers, “‘Binding’ and ‘Loosing’: The Matthean Authorizations.” 236-37.

600. Bracketed insert by Charlesworth.

Testament of Simeon 6:5-6⁶⁰¹

The final example from a third book of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* is the following quotation which has a reflection upon Malachi 4:2.

And thereafter the Lord himself will arise upon you, the light of righteousness with healing and compassion in his wings. He will liberate every captive from the sons of men from Beliar, and every spirit of error will be trampled down. He will turn all nations to being zealous of him. And you shall see [God in a human form],⁶⁰² he whom the Lord will choose: Jerusalem is his name.

Testament of Zebulon 9:8⁶⁰³

Some rabbis, as early as the second century B.C., had various opinions of what the messiah would be like. The exorcisms performed by Jesus did not surprise them. However, Jesus went a step further – He authorized His disciples to perform the same acts of healing and setting people free from demonic oppression as He did.

The subject of binding and loosening was not restricted to Jewish and early Christian communities. Such curses, blessings, and charms have been found by archaeologists in the ruins of many pagan communities. An interesting one was written on an ostrakon from the Egyptian city of Ashmunen in the second century A.D. Notice that the individual who places a “binding” restriction does so by the power of God and pagan deities.

Cronos, thou who restrainest the wrath of all men, restrain the wrath of Hor, whom Mary bore, and suffer him not to speak with Hatros(?), whom Taisis bore. I adjure ... by the finger of God⁶⁰⁴ that he open not his mouth to him, because he is subject to Crinupelis(?) and Cronos. Suffer him not to speak with him, neither for a night nor a day, nor for one hour.

An Egyptian Charm for Binding⁶⁰⁵

601. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 1:787.

602. Bracketed insert by Charlesworth.

603. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 1:807.

604. The “finger of God” expression suggests a Jewish writer or a pagan author who calls upon the God of the Jews to work in this situation.

605. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*. 306. The (?) suggests that the translators are not certain of the word.

This Egyptian ostraca is one of many that clearly suggest that the term *binding and loosening* was used in spiritual sense.⁶⁰⁶ Since this artifact was first published in 1927, many others have been found that reveal spiritual warfare. Therefore, on that evidence alone it is highly unlikely that Jesus meant it only in a legalistic or legislative sense. Two examples are:

1. In the gospels, those who could not speak were said to have been “bound” by a non-human force. Zechariah, when in doubt, had his tongue bound by an angel. It was not a physical illness that caused the loss of speech, but a spiritual binding.
2. Another example is found in Luke 13:16 where Jesus said that Satan had “bound” a daughter for eighteen years. He meant that the crooked woman who was “bound” by a “spirit of infirmity” was later “loosened” on the Sabbath.

Therefore, Jesus clearly meant that the phrase **“bound in heaven . . . loosed in heaven”** refers to limited binding and loosening of demonic spirits by people with the use of His power.⁶⁰⁷

“If two of you on earth agree.” What Jesus repeated to His disciples was not a new revelation but a fulfillment of what they had learned in their youth. This discussion had a major emphasis on how someone was to be removed from the fellowship of the early Church. Clearly, if the Church followed divine principles, God would honor their final decision. It reads as follows:

Rabbi Halafta ben Dosa of Kefar Hanania said: “If ten men sit together and occupy themselves with the Law, the Divine Presence rests among them, for it is written, ‘God standeth in the congregation of God’ (Ps. 82:1). And whence do we learn this even of five? Because it is written, ‘And hath founded his group upon the earth’ (Am. 9:6). And whence even of three? Because it is written, ‘He judgeth among the judges’ (Ps. 82:1). And whence even of two? Because it is written, ‘Then they that feared the Lord spoke one with another: and the Lord hearkened and heard’ (Mal. 3:16). And whence even of one? Because it is written, ‘In every place where I record my name I will come unto thee and I will bless thee’” (Ex. 20:24).

Mishnah, *Aboth* 3.6

This passage suggests that ten men were needed to establish a new synagogue. Why were ten men required? It has been suggested that if ten men tithed, they could afford to employ a scribe who would teach the Torah. However, the rabbinic rules that *only* men could form a synagogue

606. For other examples, see Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*. 135-40; 301-09.

607. While this subject is clearly of a theological nature, Adolf Deissmann has clearly presented this position of spiritual dynamics to the phrase ‘Bound in heaven . . . loosed in heaven’ in *Light from the Ancient East*, 302-11, esp. 307.

apparently is in Jewish writings *after* the 500s. Prior to that time, in some areas both men and women could establish a synagogue.⁶⁰⁸ Women were included in the quorum that made up ten persons in the Galilee area,⁶⁰⁹ but this was not the case in Jerusalem. Nonetheless, since most scribes were men who belonged to the Pharisees, they were the ones who had the greatest influence in the local synagogues.⁶¹⁰

11.02.09 Mt. 18:21-22; Lk. 17:3-4

PETER ASKS ABOUT FORGIVENESS (“70 times 7”)

Mt. ²¹ Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how many times could my brother sin against me and I forgive him? As many as seven times?”

²² “I tell you, not as many as seven,” Jesus said to him, “but 70 times seven.”

Lk. ³ Be on your guard. If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. ⁴ And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and comes back to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.”

Concerning forgiveness, one Jewish tradition stated that it had to be given only three times;⁶¹¹ but another stated forgiveness should be granted seven times.⁶¹² The conflict of opinions led Peter to ask Jesus the obvious question. Yet the counting of the number of times one has been forgiven is indicative that forgiveness may never have been granted originally.

“70 times seven.” The subject of forgiveness was an essential element in the ministry of Jesus, and was represented by an interesting figure of speech. The number seven represents wholeness, completeness, and perfection, not only in the Jewish culture but in surrounding cultural groups as well. Some scholars believe the number 70 represents the number of nations based on Genesis 10. However, that would not have had any relationship to the issues of the Jewish people.

608. Cited by Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context*. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 7, Session 1. Furthermore, the September – October, 2000 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review* reports that no archaeological evidence has been found in numerous synagogue ruins to suggest a separate section for women, as has been a common opinion.

609. This is a minority view among scholars, but it is well known that Galilee promoted education for girls and the rabbis were not as restrictive there as those in Jerusalem.

610. Bookman, *When God Wore Sandals*. CD Trac 6 & 7.

611. Amos 1:3; Job 33:29; Babylonian Talmud *Aboth de Rabbi Nathan* 40a and *Yoma* 86b-87a.

612. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:105-06; Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 146.

Therefore, the greater probability is that the number 70 represented the highest human judicial court, the Sanhedrin, since it has seventy members. It was based upon the Law of Moses in the book of Numbers,

¹⁶The LORD answered Moses, “Bring Me 70 men from Israel known to you as elders and officers of the people. Take them to the tent of meeting and have them stand there with you. ^{17a} Then I will come down and speak with you there.

Numbers 11:16-17a

Therefore, not only was the number considered to be ordained by God, but it was believed that a Sanhedrin was a decision that was also affirmed by God as noted in verse 17a. To the Jewish mind, this not only meant times without number but also without the highest legal judgment.

From the perspective of Jesus, the term “seventy times seven”⁶¹³ is an emphasis on perfect forgiveness. The implication is obvious: perfect forgiveness decreed by every justice seated in the highest court in the land. This figure of speech has little to do with the number 490. Rather, it is focused on the *spirit of quality*, not *legalistic quantity*.

Some scholars have reflected upon Genesis 4:24 concerning the account of Lamech, a descendant of Cain. He was the Old Testament icon for revengeful killings. Concerning him, Moses wrote, “If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech seventy-seven times.” (But 77 is not 70x7.) Jesus may have thought of him in this discourse. If so, then forgiveness by mere human strength is impossible; such forgiving strength can come only from divine intervention.

Peter and the disciples were challenged with an incomprehensible thought that full forgiveness was being offered to tax collectors, prostitutes, and other sinners who were struggling to get out of a sinful lifestyle. Note that previously the discussion was on an *unrepentant* brother, whereas the instruction here is given to one who is repentant and is struggling to live a pure and holy lifestyle.

There is an interesting reflection of this figure of speech in Genesis 4:24 and in a collection of writings known as the Pseudepigrapha in which is the *Testament of Benjamin* 7:4.⁶¹⁴ As is typical of Pseudepigrapha writers, authors at times referred to Moses or Abraham to give their

613. It should be noted that some scholars claim there is a variation in some texts concerning this phrase. However, the difference in wording does not change the meaning nor the *spirit* of what Jesus taught.

614. The *Testament of Benjamin* is part of a larger work titled *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*. See Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 1:827.

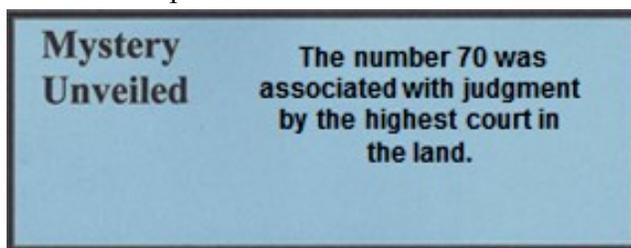
work authoritative clout. Moses wrote that, “If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech (is to be avenged) seventy-seven times.” However, the author of the *Testament* emphasized the ultimate condemnation of Lamech by stating that Lamech “was condemned seventy times seven.” This phrase was a powerful phrase in the second century B.C. when the *Testament* was written. Therefore, it was used in this imagery, but Jesus used it for forgiveness instead of condemnation. This is an example of how an extra-biblical book can give insight to the cultural emphasis the author felt were significant.

Another interesting reference was provided by Josephus who recorded a slaughter of seventy judges during the First Revolt. By the year A.D. 69, the Revolt was into its third year and the Zealot freedom fighters were not only fighting the Romans, but also reigned with terror against the religious upper classes (i.e. Sadducees, leading Pharisees, and scribes) in Jerusalem. Since the corruption of the priesthood was well established and known for more than a century, the Zealots took it upon themselves cleanse the temple. At this same time, there was Zacharias, the son of Baruch, whom the Zealots accused of being in conspiracy with the Romans. In an attempt to imitate the Sanhedrin, the Zealots then gathered seventy citizens and established a mock trial. Josephus again provided the riveting details:

And so they intended to have Zacharias, the son of Baruch, one of the most eminent of the citizens, slain ... he was also a rich man, so that by taking him off, they did not only hope to seize his effects but also to get rid of a man that had great power to destroy them. So they called together, by public proclamation, seventy of the principal men of the populace, for a show as if they were real judges, while they had no proper authority.

Josephus, *Wars* 4.5.4 (335-336)

In this narrative Josephus provided additional evidence that the number **seventy** was associated with judgment. The Zealots, in an attempt to appear legitimate, replicated an artificial Sanhedrin to condemn an innocent man. As to the story, the seventy citizens found Zacharias innocent. The Zealots were so indignant that they immediately killed Zacharias and in great turmoil, the seventy barely escaped from the temple with their lives.⁶¹⁵



615. Josephus, *Wars* 4.5.4.

11.02.10 Mt. 18:23-35

PARABLE OF SERVANTS IN DEBT

²³ For this reason, the kingdom of heaven can be compared to a king who wanted to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴ When he began to settle accounts, one who owed 10,000 talents was brought before him. ²⁵ Since he had no way to pay it back, his master commanded that he, his wife, his children, and everything he had to be sold to pay the debt.

²⁶ “At this, the slave fell facedown before him and said, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you everything!’ ²⁷ Then the master of that slave had compassion, released him, and forgave him the loan.

²⁸ “But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him 100 denarii. He grabbed him, started choking him, and said, ‘Pay what you owe!’

²⁹ “At this, his fellow slave fell down and began begging him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.’ ³⁰ But he wasn’t willing. On the contrary, he went and threw him into prison until he could pay what was owed. ³¹ When the other slaves saw what had taken place, they were deeply distressed and went and reported to their master everything that had happened.

³² “Then, after he had summoned him, his master said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. ³³ Shouldn’t you also have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴ And his master got angry and handed him over to the jailers to be tortured until he could pay everything that was owed. ³⁵ So My heavenly Father will also do to you if each of you does not forgive his brother from his heart.”

In this society, slaves could own property and become a debtor (Gk. *opheiletes* 3781) ⁶¹⁶ to his owner/master. If the agreed payments were not made, the property could be seized. This was a real-life issue concerning business affairs for the Jewish people.

They also had to pay a huge amount of taxes to corrupt tax collectors. They frequently had to mortgage their land to pay taxes and hoped they would not be tossed in prison or sold as slaves. ⁶¹⁷ Most likely it was for this reason, Jesus alluded to the debtor, creditor and the prison in

616. *Opheiletes* – “One who owes anything to another.” Vine, “Debtor.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:150.

617. Sanders. “Jesus in Historical Context.” 430.

his teachings.⁶¹⁸ The classic example was the steward who owed the king and the servant who owed the steward.

The key point is that the forgiveness received from the heavenly Father should be the basis to forgive others. Ancient laws could, at times, become rather complicated concerning loans, mortgages, and the consequences for the failure of payment.⁶¹⁹ This was true not only in Israel with its Oral Law,⁶²⁰ but in all countries. The one overriding principle that Jesus taught more than anything else was the principle to forgive.

“10,000 talents.” The talent (Gk. *talanton* 5007) was the largest unit of currency in the ancient Near East, and was the equivalent to 114 pounds of silver⁶²¹ or about fifteen years of labor of a single man.⁶²² Obviously ten thousand talents was a debt that he could never repay – obviously far beyond human comprehension, and that is foundational to this parable.⁶²³ Clearly it was an exaggerated figure, a hyperbole, but it was to emphasize the principle and importance of forgiveness.⁶²⁴ While it is easy to forgive a small debt or offense, Jesus was focused on major events of life that needed serious forgiveness. To put that into perspective, Josephus said that the entire province of Judea had to pay an annual tax of 600 talents to the Romans,⁶²⁵ meaning, that debt of 10,000 talents was the equivalent of more than 16 years of taxes.

On the other hand, some individuals in ancient times had huge personal debts. During to the days of the Roman Empire, a small silver coin was minted, known as the sesterius (or *sesterce*; plural: *sestertii*). It was equal to one-fourth of a denarius. Mark Anthony, at age 24, owed 6,000,000 sestertii and fourteen years later, he owed 40,000,000 sestertii. Milo owed 70,000,000 sestertii and Curio owed 60,000,000 sestertii.⁶²⁶ So the illustration by Jesus was hyperbole for the Jews but realistic concerning the rich and famous of Rome.

618. See 02.03.03 “Economy” for a brief description of the condition of the economy during the ministry years of Jesus.

619. For further study of loans, debts, and how first century Jewish courts ruled, see the Mishnah and the chapter titled *Baba Bathra*.

620. See 02.02.18 Mishnah, 02.02.16, and Oral Tradition 02.02.20.

621. The weight of 114 pounds is based upon Exodus 30:13, which may have changed by the first century. Vine, “Talent.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:617.

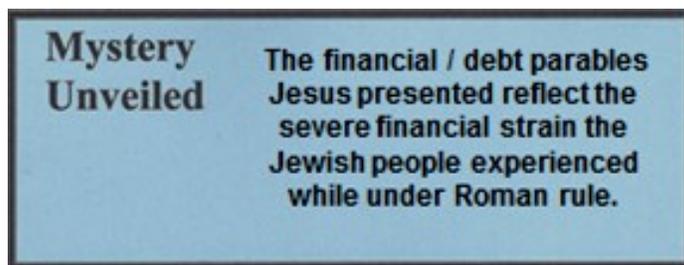
622. Appendix 20.

623. Gilbrant, “Matthew.” 389.

624. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*. 423.

625. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.11.4 (320)

626. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 1:353-54; 2:629-38.



“He, his wife, his children, and everything he had to be sold to pay the debt.” When a man could not pay his financial obligations, all of his property was sold to pay his creditors. This could potentially include the sale of his family into slavery although Hebrew law had restrictions on families that went into slavery.⁶²⁷ All cultures in the ancient Middle East had provisions in civil law for the sale of family for the payment of debt (cf. 2 Kg. 4:1). However, only the Mosaic Law limited such slavery to seven years. In fact, since Jewish laws forbade the sale of one’s wife because it would destroy a family and create a divorce, this suggests the individuals in the parable may have been Gentiles.⁶²⁸ The point of the parable, however, is that one must be ready to forgive.

Modern readers tend to read this narrative without the clear reality that slavery was practiced, and becoming a slave was a real possibility. Both heathen and Jewish slaves were sold in Jerusalem.⁶²⁹ Various sources indicate that there were few, if any, slaves in the rural countryside, but most were domestic urban slaves or government slaves. Since the Holy City had a significant Gentile population, much to the chagrin of Jewish leaders, heathen slaves were bought and sold at the slave market. Ancient writings indicate the existence of a stone upon which slaves of both sexes stood while bidders examined them and bid on them. The historian Josephus made frequent references to slaves, especially during the days of Herod the Great.

Jerusalem was, in fact, a very cosmopolitan community with people from many different countries and with different belief systems living there. Male and female slaves were bought and sold on the market block. Several accounts of slavery in the day of Jesus are as follows:

627. Ex. 22:3; Lev. 25:39, 47; 2 Kg. 4:1; Neh. 5:5; Isa. 50:1.

628. Gilbrant, “Matthew.” 389.

629. God hates slavery, but it was part of the human predicament, which is why He permitted slavery for a limited duration of seven years (Ex. 21:2 ff.; Deut. 15:12). In Amos 2:6 He brought judgment upon Israel for the enslavement of its own people. The way the Apostle Paul dealt with Philemon, demonstrates how God changed the slavery-based economy by changing the hearts of men.

1. At one time, Tobiah, a physician in Jerusalem, had a freed slave who was to testify in a court of law, but the priests and Sanhedrin disagreed on whether the freed slave could testify.⁶³⁰
2. During the reign of Herod the Great, Karkemith, a freed slave woman, was suspected of adultery and given the “water of bitterness” or “bitter waters”⁶³¹ to drink.⁶³²
3. In another case, an ossuary was discovered about two miles north of Jerusalem in the town of Sha’fat. On it was inscribed the name of a slave, Epictetus.⁶³³
4. In the Book of Acts (12:13), Rhoda was a domestic slave in the home of John Mark’s mother.
5. Jewish writings report that once an Athenian purchased a male slave in Jerusalem.⁶³⁴

When Herod the Great became ruler over his domain, he was determined to end particular acts of injustice practiced by corrupt individuals in the cities and countryside. One of the laws he changed pertained to slavery, making the practice more in line with the Roman and Greek practice of perpetual slavery rather than the limits of the Mosaic code. Furthermore, it is believed that a tax collector called a *gabbai* collected the taxes on the slaves sold there.⁶³⁵ Josephus briefly recited the Mosaic code before giving the new decree by Herod.

The thief shall restore fourfold,⁶³⁶ and that if he have not so much, he shall be sold indeed, but not to foreigners, not so that he be under perpetual slavery, for he must have been released after six years. But this [new] law [by Herod], thus enacted in order to introduce a severe and illegal punishment seemed to be a piece of insolence in Herod, when he did not act as a king but as a tyrant.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 16.1.1 (3-4)⁶³⁷

630. Mishnah, *Rosh ha-Shanah* 1.7.

631. See “Bitter Waters” in Appendix 26.

632. Mishnah, *Eduyoth* 5.6.

633. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 346.

634. Lam. R. 1.13 on 1.1, Son. 1.12, 78; Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 313-15.

635. Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 119; Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 249.

636. In Luke 19:1-10, Zacchaeus told Jesus he would repay anyone he cheated four times. See. 12.04.06 as this was the observed biblical standard in the days of Jesus.

637. The punishment was “illegal” from a Jewish perspective since it did not follow the Mosaic code.

The purpose of the decree may have been to eliminate what Herod perceived to be injustice, but in effect, it contributed to the Jewish hatred for him. Therefore, when Jesus spoke of the potential of becoming a slave,⁶³⁸ it was a serious issue. Jews purchased slaves under Jewish law, but if the buyer was non-Jewish, the slave might never become free.

Finally, this parable concerning the forgiveness of debts has an allusion of the forgiveness of sins as well. The English words *sins* and *debts* are both translated from the Aramaic word *hoba*. Therefore, when Jesus speaks of sinners, He is also speaks of debtors.⁶³⁹ The Jews understood that the word *debts* had a spiritual significance, which needed divine intervention in the form of forgiveness.⁶⁴⁰ This account reflects upon the incredible forgiveness and freedom found in Christ Jesus. There were three ways a Jew could become a slave at the time of Jesus.

1. A thief who could not make restitution for what he had stolen could have been sold into slavery and the proceeds went to those who suffered loss as the result of his thievery. This applied only to male thieves (Ex. 22:2; Deut. 13:12).
2. A voluntary sale of one's self. This too was for men only, and was only in the case of extreme poverty (Lev. 25:39-43).
3. The sale of an entire family, either by court action or voluntary decision. Families could not be broken up, but a Jewish father had to right to sell an underage girl to another Jew. If she was under the age of twelve, the custom meant that she would either marry the owner or his son at a later time.

“He grabbed him, started choking him, and said, ‘Pay what you owe!’ ” When a debtor failed to make the required payment on a loan, the law permitted the creditors to drag their debtors by the throat to a judge, who then might sentence the debtor to prison until the debt was paid. An example of this was written 66 B.C. by the Roman philosopher and lawyer Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 B.C.) in his work *Pro Cluentio*,⁶⁴¹ said “Lead him to the judgment seat

638. Because the Jews experienced slavery and thankfulness was one (# 10) of their Eighteen Benedictions, for a Jew to unjustly call another Jew “a slave,” could subject him to excommunication from the synagogue. See Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 2:304.

639. Bailey, *Jesus through Eastern Eyes*. 252.

640. Taylor, “Debt, Debtor.” 61-62.

641. Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Pro Cluentio (In Defense of Aulus Cluentius)*, 21. The writings of Cicero (107-44 B.C.) pertain to the records of the Roman province of Syria, of which Israel was a part.

with twisted neck.”⁶⁴² Since the Romans occupied the Holy Land, they were subject to Roman laws and overlords and, therefore, this narrative was very realistic to His listeners.

Under Roman law, if a debtor could not pay his debt, he was given 60 days to make payment and a public announcement was made three times in the marketplace. If the debt was still not paid, Roman investment creditors were known to have private dungeons or prisons where debtors were placed until someone pitied him enough to pay the debt and free him. Torture and death were common in the Roman prison system.⁶⁴³ Those were the days when knowing *who* one was borrowing from was as important as *how much* one was borrowing.

11.02.11 Jn. 7:2-10 Capernaum September 10-17, A.D. 29: Feast of Tabernacles, About Five Months Before His Crucifixion.

JESUS CHALLENGED BY HIS BROTHERS

² The Jewish Festival of Tabernacles was near, ³ so His brothers said to Him, “Leave here and go to Judea so Your disciples can see Your works that You are doing. ⁴ For no one does anything in secret while he’s seeking public recognition. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world.” ⁵ (For not even His brothers believed in Him.)

⁶ Jesus told them, “My time has not yet arrived, but your time is always at hand. ⁷ The world cannot hate you, but it does hate Me because I testify about it – that its deeds are evil. ⁸ Go up to the festival yourselves. I’m not going up to the festival yet, because My time has not yet fully come.” ⁹ After He had said these things, He stayed in Galilee. ¹⁰ After His brothers had gone up to the festival, then He also went up, not openly but secretly.

When it was time to observe the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, Jesus knew that potential hostilities could be waiting for Him.⁶⁴⁴ It was a time of religious tension even in good times – and those were few and far between. The reason was that the Pharisaic rituals included some

642. The phrase “twisted neck” refers to holding one by the throat in some manner and forcing him to stand before a judge. A similar statement was made by Cicero in his work *In C. Verrem*, 4:10 (*In Defence of Gaius Verres*) written in 70 B.C.

643. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 2:637.

644. It is interesting that the synoptic gospels never mention Jesus in Jerusalem until the Passion week, yet John’s gospel concentrates on His ministry in the Holy City.

activities that were ridiculed by the Sadducees. These included:⁶⁴⁵

1. The pouring of libation of water upon the altar during the Feast and
2. The lighting of the giant menorahs
3. The procession of dancing and singing when water from the Pool of Siloam was carried to the temple altar.

Since none of these activities are mentioned in the Torah the Sadducees were strictly against them. Therefore, there was always tension in the air during these holy days.

“The Jewish Feast of Tabernacles.”⁶⁴⁶ This festival commemorated two important events:

1. The tent-life of the Israelites in the wilderness
2. Thankfulness for the yearly harvest of grain, vineyards, gardens, and orchards.

The feast, also known as the Feast of Ingathering or the Feast of Harvest, was celebrated on the 15th of Tisri (the 7th month; Lev. 23:34) to the 22nd.⁶⁴⁷ The first and last days of this festive week were honored as Sabbaths, or “Second Sabbaths.” When reconciled to the modern calendar, this would have been in the second week of October. It began five days after Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) and lasted seven days (Lev. 23:33-36; Deut. 16:13-17) followed by a day of spiritual insight and reflection (Neh. 8:14-16). This feast was to commemorate the Hebrews’ wandering through the wilderness for forty years and how God provided for their needs during that historic journey. During the Feast, each family constructed a temporary shelter of palm branches in which they lived during this eight-day celebration. By the first century, this feast was considered to be of supreme importance as libation waters taken from the Pool of Siloam followed whole-offerings.⁶⁴⁸ Here they feasted for seven days, followed by an eighth day of spiritual observance.

645. Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 135.

646. See Appendix 5: “The Levitical Feasts As Prophetic Reflections Of Jesus.”

647. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 2:285.

648. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem as Jesus Knew It*. 94; Josephus, *Antiquities* 8.4.1; Chumney, *The Seven Festivals of the Messiah*. 155-66.



11.02.11.A. THE TRADITIONAL SITE OF THE POOL OF SILOAM. The so-called Pool of Siloam that has been visited by thousands of Christian pilgrims, but has now been identified as a Byzantine site of the 4th or 5th century A.D. Since the Byzantines did not know where the actual location of the pool was, they created this one for visiting pilgrims. Internet photograph.

11.02.11.Q1 Concerning the wording of John 7:6, 8 and 10, did Jesus lie?

Critics have used this passage as evidential proof that Jesus either lied or was unsure of Himself and, consequently, had to change His mind – implying that He was susceptible to making errors. In this passage, there was a discussion between Jesus and His disciples about walking to Jerusalem for the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. Critics point out that in v.6 Jesus said, “My time is not yet here” and shortly thereafter in verse 8 the same thought was rephrased as, “you go to the festival. I am not going up to the festival because my time has not yet fully come.” The apparent conflict lies in verse 10 where John recorded that, “after his brothers had left for the festival, he went also, not publicly, but in secret.”

The key to understanding this passage is that the religious leaders were determined to kill Him at any cost, and probably were waiting to capture Him in one of the many festival caravans that was coming to the Holy City. If they could not capture Him along a country road, they would try to

do so at the festival (Jn. 7:11). So the disciples went to the temple as pilgrims, probably joined by others on their way to the temple. No doubt they were aware of some kind of danger that threatened Jesus, although they certainly did not understand the full extent. Jesus, on the other hand, was not about to let Himself be killed until the right time. Therefore, He did not go with them, but waited briefly and left in secret. The Greek phrase *right time* was not a matter of weeks or months, but of hours or, at the very most, days. It has a meaning that is related more to the *right season* or the *right opportunity*, rather than to a clock or calendar measurement.⁶⁴⁹ The word Greek *kairos* does not mean *hour* but at the *appropriate time*.⁶⁵⁰ Jesus may even have taken a different route. The point is Jesus had to enter into the city unnoticed and remained secluded until the right time came for Him to speak publicly. Jesus did not lie, but simply avoided an early capture so Bible prophecy would be fulfilled.



11.02.11.B. THE AUTHENTIC POOL OF SILOAM. The authentic Pool of Siloam was accidentally discovered in the summer of 2004 when construction crews were replacing a damaged sewer line. The pool had three sets of steps of stairs, each with five steps. Four coins found embedded in plaster dated from the rule of Alexander Jannaeus (reigned 103 – 76 B.C.), one of the Hasmonean kings and this discovery secures the date of the site to the time of Jesus. It was

649. Beasley-Murray, "John." 36:107.

650. Pixner, *With Jesus through Galilee*. 63.

somewhere along these steps that Jesus healed the blind man of John 9:1-11.
 Photograph by the author.

“For not even His brothers believed in Him.” It is amazing that after performing so many miracles, and after hearing the testimonies of Mary and Joseph, His half-siblings still had no faith in Him. This is clear evidence that at times winning those in one’s family is a monumental task. In this case, they did not come to faith until after His resurrection.

11.02.12 Jn. 7:11-24 Jerusalem

JESUS TEACHES IN THE TEMPLE

¹¹ The Jews were looking for Him at the festival and saying, “Where is He?” ¹² And there was a lot of discussion about Him among the crowds. Some were saying, “He’s a good man.” Others were saying, “No, on the contrary, He’s deceiving the people.” ¹³ Still, nobody was talking publicly about Him because they feared the Jews.

¹⁴ When the festival was already half over, Jesus went up into the temple complex and began to teach. ¹⁵ Then the Jews were amazed and said, “How does He know the Scriptures, since He hasn’t been trained?”

¹⁶ Jesus answered them, “My teaching isn’t Mine but is from the One who sent Me. ¹⁷ If anyone wants to do His will, he will understand whether the teaching is from God or if I am speaking on My own. ¹⁸ The one who speaks for himself seeks his own glory. But He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him. ¹⁹ Didn’t Moses give you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law! Why do you want to kill Me?”

²⁰ “You have a demon!” the crowd responded. “Who wants to kill You?”

²¹ “I did one work, and you are all amazed,” Jesus answered. ²² “Consider this: Moses has given you circumcision — not that it comes from Moses but from the fathers — and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. ²³ If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses won’t be broken, are you angry at Me because I made a man entirely well on the Sabbath? ²⁴ Stop judging according to outward appearances; rather judge according to righteous judgment.”

When Jesus began to teach (Jn. 7:14), it was probably along the along the eastern side of the temple. It was known as “Solomon’s Porch,” since some of the building materials were said to be from the original temple. The porch provided shelter from the hot summer sun and the cold

winter rain. Here, rabbis and sages brought their students and disciples to teach them “in the shadow” of Solomon’s wisdom. Jesus, in the same tradition, taught His disciples here; but His wisdom was beyond that of Solomon and had caused many confrontations with the religious elite.⁶⁵¹

As stated previously, Jesus was profoundly confrontational with the Pharisees on the issues of Sabbath regulations, divorce and ritual cleanliness. He desired man to have a degree of freedom while at the same time to understand that some covenants (i.e., marriage) are simply not to be broken with certain exceptions.⁶⁵²

“The crowds . . . the Jews.” John carefully made the distinction between the two groups. “The crowds” in the temple area were faithful Jews who had come to worship God. Many of them were honestly debating the identity of Jesus and the new insight they received concerning their Bible. Some became believers; some were skeptical and indecisive, while others did not believe. “The Jews,” however, were the leading Pharisees who had the authority to retaliate upon the synagogue rabbis (also Pharisees) and the common people.

“You have a demon!” To accuse Jesus of being demon possessed was, without question, the greatest insult, and a verbal proclamation of rejection. That would be surpassed only by the physical rejection of crucifixion.

Mystery Unveiled The accusation by Jewish leaders that Jesus was demonically possessed was their greatest and final rejection of Him. From this point on, Jesus changed His ministry focus.

“How does He know the Scriptures, since He hasn’t been trained?” The leading Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes were wise enough to ask the question, but sufficiently ignorant not to answer it. They graduated from the best theological schools in Jerusalem, either from the School of Hillel, the School of Shammai, or one of the other seminaries, and had become academic snobs. They were the brightest and the best scholars, having committed to memory volumes of Scripture and oral laws. Consequently, they could not understand how anyone would have more knowledge than they did. It was deeply humiliating when confronted by someone who had never attended an academy or been a disciple of a leading rabbi. The leading Pharisees realized that

651. Macartney, *Great Interviews of Jesus*. 57.

652. See three reasons for a biblical divorce in 08.02.02.

Jesus knew the Scriptures better than they did, even to the verb tenses. Evidently, they had forgotten the discussion Jesus had with them on the temple steps decades earlier when He was only a twelve-year-old boy.⁶⁵³

“If anyone wants to do His (God’s) will.” The phrase does not refer to an occasional decision, but rather a commitment to a life in which there is a continual desire to do the will of God. It is not a happenstance but a commitment.⁶⁵⁴

Jesus was so popular among the common people that they could not believe that anyone would try to kill Him. So when someone said, **“You have a demon!”** They thought He must have been imagining this or be demon-possessed. The question was certainly not asked in the same manner as had been done previously by His accusers. This was followed by another question, **“Who wants to kill you?”** The fact that a Jew would kill another Jew was repulsive and unthinkable; hence, they thought He was demon-possessed. This remarkable phrase clearly points to the fact that many did not realize their leaders were plotting to kill Jesus.

“If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath.” The word “man,” refers to a male child, but is not limited because at times Gentile men, who converted to Judaism, were also circumcised. The Law of Moses required that a boy child was circumcised on the eighth day of life. However, this was a surgical procedure that violated the Oral Law of cutting on the Sabbath,⁶⁵⁵ so the Jews correctly broke their Oral Law and permitted the circumcision to take place on the Sabbath.⁶⁵⁶ Here Jesus used their life illustration that He broke their Oral Law to heal a man. The issue was not the healing, but the legalistic attitude of breaking the Oral Law the Pharisees created to encumber the people.

On a side note, circumcision is the sign of the Covenant of Abraham and, therefore, is primarily for the Jewish people. Note the following examples that are of particular interest.

1. When the Apostle Paul discussed the subject with Titus, the apostle refused to have him circumcised because he was a Greek, not a Jew (Gal. 2:3).
2. However, Timothy, who was a disciple of Paul, was never circumcised as a child. Therefore, the apostle had him circumcised because his mother was Jewish (Acts 16:3).

653. For more information on first century Jewish education, see 02.03.04.

654. Tenney, *The Gospel of John*. 84.

655. Babylonian Talmud, *Yoma* 85b and parallels.

656. An excellent resource for further Sabbath study is Hagner, “Jesus and the Synoptic Sabbath Controversies.” 270-88.

“Rather judge according to righteous judgment.” The use of “judgment” in this case has the meaning of discernment needed to make correct decisions. It is a totally different context than judgment upon condemnation, which was consistently forbidden because that alone is the prerogative of God.



11.02.12.A. MODEL OF THE TEMPLE. The temple was constructed of white limestone with gold appointments. It was considered one of the most beautiful buildings in the ancient world. Photograph by the author.

11.02.13 Jn. 7:25-36

THE JEWS DISCUSS ARRESTING JESUS

²⁵ Some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, “Isn’t this the man they want to kill?” ²⁶ Yet, look! He’s speaking publicly and they’re saying nothing to Him. Can it be true that the authorities know He is the Messiah? ²⁷ But we know where this man is from. When the Messiah comes, nobody will know where He is from.”

²⁸ As He was teaching in the temple complex, Jesus cried out, “You know Me and you know where I am from. Yet I have not come on My own, but the One who sent Me is true. You don’t know Him; ²⁹ I know Him because I am from Him, and He sent Me.”

³⁰ Then they tried to seize Him. Yet no one laid a hand on Him because His hour had not yet come. ³¹ However, many from the crowd believed in Him and said, “When the Messiah comes, He won’t perform more signs than this man has done, will He?”

³² The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about Him, so the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple police to arrest Him.

³³ Then Jesus said, “I am only with you for a short time. Then I’m going to the One who sent Me. ³⁴ You will look for Me, but you will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come.”

³⁵ Then the Jews said to one another, “Where does He intend to go so we won’t find Him? He doesn’t intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks, does He? ³⁶ What is this remark He made:

‘You will look for Me,
and you will not find Me; and
where I am,
you cannot come’”?

The public was becoming increasingly aware of rumors that a plot existed to kill Jesus and, consequently, tension was developing. They asked, “Isn’t **this the man they want to kill?**” Some probably believed that since Jesus was so immensely popular, His would-be murderers could not possibly succeed. Others no doubt wondered what kind of miracle Jesus would perform to prevent His arrest or assassination. Verse 35 clearly states that some thought He would escape to the Decapolis and teach there. That would make sense since He already had traveled to Tyre, and Sidon. Jesus, of course, fully realized He was on His way to Jerusalem to die – a concept that was beyond the imagination of anyone, especially the disciples.

11.02.14 Jn. 7:37-39

SPIRITUAL DRINK

³⁷ On the last and most important day of the festival, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone is thirsty, he should come to Me and drink!” ³⁸ The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him.” ³⁹ He said this about the Spirit. Those who believed in Jesus were going to receive the Spirit, for the Spirit had not yet been received because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

The Feast of Tabernacles has always been a fall festival celebrated when the long, hot, dry summer season ends and the first rain clouds appear as the winter rainy season begins.⁶⁵⁷ On every day of the festival there was processional march once around the altar, but on the last day the processional march encircled the altar seven times and the priests prayed for rain.⁶⁵⁸ There were no less than 446 priests and just as many or more Levites⁶⁵⁹ active in the sacrificial worship.⁶⁶⁰ That final day was known as *the Day of the Great Hosanna* or *Hosanna Rabba*. It was a day of great celebration and considered a “Second Sabbath” of that week (Lev. 23:36). On each of the previous seven days a bull was sacrificed for the nations of the world, but on the last day, one was sacrificed for Israel. The events of procession on the final and glorious eighth day are as follows:⁶⁶¹

1. After the sacrifice of the bull, the priest led the people down the hill to the Fountain of Siloam.
2. There the priest filled a golden pitcher with water and the procession marched back up the hill and into the temple.
3. The priest carried the golden pitcher and led the crowd to the 15 steps that led from the outer court to the inner court.
4. At the first step they all sang the first Psalm of Ascent – Psalm 120. At the second step everyone sang Psalm 121 and so forth to Psalm 134. Hence, the name “Psalms of Ascent.”⁶⁶²
5. The priest carried the pitcher and led the crowd back to the temple amid shouts of joy and music.

657. The four climate seasons of Israel are unique in that winter is the rainy season with numerous rain showers and summer is a five month dry season with absolutely no rain whatsoever. The exception is of course the southern desert area which receives only a few centimeters of rain annually.

658. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor's Manual*. Class 16, page 10.

659. According to the Torah, all the sons of Levi were to be workers in the temple but only the sons of Aaron were to function as priests, ministering in the Levitical rituals.

660. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 582.

661. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 2:163; Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:311-12; 319-25.

662. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor's Manual*. Class 15, page 8. Some scholars believe that the Psalms of Ascent were also sung by pilgrims as they marched up the long and tedious mountain from Jericho to Jerusalem.

6. When he approached the altar of burnt-offering, the people shouted “Lift up your hand!”

7. He poured out the water toward the west.

8. Then toward the east he poured out a cup of wine while the people shouted “With joy you shall draw water out of the wells of salvation.”

Water from the Spring of Gihon flowed through Hezekiah’s Tunnel (2 Kg. 20:20), into a reservoir known as the Pool of Siloam, and continues into the Kidron Valley. Priests and pilgrims would march to the Pool of Siloam to fill a golden pitcher with fresh living water flowing from the spring to be used for temple libations throughout the festival of the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkoth*).⁶⁶³ When the processional returned to the altar the priest offered the water and the people chanted a passage from Isaiah 12:3, “With joy you shall draw water out of wells of salvation.”⁶⁶⁴ It was when the people shouted “salvation,” that Jesus said, “**If anyone is thirsty, he should come to Me and drink.**” He is the living water and the well of salvation. Historically, libations of water during the Feast of Tabernacles symbolized the water given to their fathers in the wilderness (Ex. 17:6). At this time, they also prayed for abundant water for the next harvest season.

“**Streams of living water.**” Previously Jesus had spoken often of Himself as the source of living water. Now He had the opportunity to speak of it again and use the ceremonial events to illustrate His point.

Early every morning during the festival, many people gathered at the temple. A priest would then lead the entire entourage in ceremonial pomp and circumstance to the Pool of Siloam. There, in great reverence, He drew fresh spring water known as “living water” to fill His vessel. The triumphant procession then carried the water back through the Water Gate of the city wall as trumpets announced the arrival of the precious symbol of life at the temple courtyard. The priest then marched to the western side of the altar where the living water was about to be poured into a silver basin, while another priest went to the eastern side of the same basin and held a vessel of wine. Then the Hallel (Ps. 114-118) was sung; a hymn that, ironically, celebrated Jesus.⁶⁶⁵ When the choir got to the verse that reads, “O give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his mercy endures forever,” the water and wine were poured upon the altar. The choir then sang the great

663. Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.1.1; Elwell and Yarbrough, *Readings from the First-Century World*. 64; Mackowski, *Jerusalem City of Jesus*. 75.

664. Major, Manson, and Wright, *The Mission and Message of Jesus*. 790; Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 15, page 8.

665. For the identifying connections of Jesus with the Hallel, see 04.06.01.

Hallel (Psalm 114-118) antiphonally.⁶⁶⁶ The priests would sing a line to which the people responded with Hallelujah (*praise the Lord*).⁶⁶⁷

An interpretation of the Feast is that the water represented the Holy Spirit upon humanity (Jn. 7:39), and the empty jar represented the emptiness of people without the living water that only Jesus can give. The altar of course was the Lamb of God, Jesus. As Jesus and His disciples saw the priest and procession go by, Jesus said that He was that living water needed and desired by the priest and the people he represented.⁶⁶⁸ Jesus is the water of joy and gladness that gives meaning to life, yet could not be attained by anyone until He poured Himself upon the “altar” and sacrificed His life on the cross that we might live. The pouring out of the water was an acknowledgment that man had sinned and needed cleansing by the Holy Spirit. The phrase, **streams of living water**, is the promise of the Holy Spirit that was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost⁶⁶⁹ that appears several times in the Hebrew Bible⁶⁷⁰ and New Testament.⁶⁷¹ Note the parallelism of ideas in the following example,

**For I will pour water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground;
I will pour out My Spirit on your descendants and My blessing on your
offspring.**

Isaiah 44:3

In the Old Covenant era God sent His Holy Spirit upon certain people at certain times for specific reasons to perform His divine reason. But since the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit functions on behalf of every believer as a *Counselor*, a term translated from the Greek word *parakletos*, meaning *one who comes along beside*.⁶⁷²

666. To sing antiphonally is to have two groups or choirs sing or recite in alternation. In this case, one group sang one part of Scripture and the other group responded by singing another part of Scripture.

667. Farrar, *Life of Christ*. 257-59; Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 278-79; Mishnah, *Sukkot* 4:9.

668. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 279-80.

669. Henry, “John.” 3:172-73.

670. See also Isa. 32:15; Ezek. 39:29; Zech. 12:10 and Joel 2:28-29.

671. Acts 2, 10:34; Jn. 14:26; 15:26; 16:7-15; 20:22, and Rom. 5:5.

672. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 2:243-44; Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 135; see “Counselor” 12.01.01.

“He said this about the Spirit.” Where was this said? And when? This is a reference to a broad concept rather than a specific written quotation as is the previous reference (verse 38) of the Scriptures stating that “streams of living water will flow from within him.”⁶⁷³

11.02.15 Jn. 7:40-53; 8:1 In the Temple

NICODEMUS COUNSELS CAUTION

⁴⁰ When some from the crowd heard these words, they said, **“This really is the Prophet!”** ⁴¹ Others said, “This is the Messiah!” But some said, “Surely the Messiah doesn’t come from Galilee, does He? ⁴² Doesn’t the Scripture say that the Messiah comes from David’s offspring and from the town of Bethlehem, where David once lived?” ⁴³ So a division occurred among the crowd because of Him. ⁴⁴ Some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him.

⁴⁵ Then the **temple police** came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, “Why haven’t you brought Him?”

⁴⁶ The police answered, “No man ever spoke like this!”

⁴⁷ Then the Pharisees responded to them: “Are you fooled too? ⁴⁸ Have any of the rulers or Pharisees believed in Him? ⁴⁹ But this crowd, which doesn’t know the law, is accursed!”

⁵⁰ Nicodemus — the one who came to Him previously, being one of them — said to them, ⁵¹ **“Our law doesn’t judge a man before it hears from him and knows what he’s doing, does it?”**

⁵² “You aren’t from Galilee too, are you?” they replied. **“Investigate and you will see that no prophet arises from Galilee.”**

[⁵³ So each one went to his house...

¹ ...but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.]⁶⁷⁴

673. A partial list of other problematic passages is listed in Appendix 13.

674. John 7:53 – 8:11 is not found in some of the oldest manuscripts. For further information on the authenticity of this debated passage, see Hodges, “The Angel at Bethesda – John 5:4.” 25-39.

The common people continued to be divided on the identity of Jesus. The leading Pharisees did everything they could to discredit Him, including the charge that He healed with the use of demonic powers (Jn. 7:20). Unfortunately, many believed the lie (Jn. 7:31). It is an irony that the Roman soldiers and temple police, though hardened by their training and occupation, were touched by His words and kindness. They acknowledged that they had never heard a man speak as He did. Yet in comparison, the Sadducees and leading Pharisees were unaffected and they soon planned their next attack (Jn. 7:32).

In the meantime, Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin who refused to be under their manipulative control attempted to be a righteous and independent thinker. The difficulty was that his own popularity was so great that the only time he could see Jesus privately was to steal a few moments alone with Him at night. Some have judged Nicodemus for his lack of faith, when in fact, he was simply cautious. He recognized a biased court and by the time Jesus was crucified, his perception had changed. He was not only a representative for justice and fairness, but a follower of Jesus as well.

Others were convinced that Jesus was sent by God and said, **“This really is the Prophet.”** Some translations read, “Surely this man is the Prophet.” The title “prophet” was the highest honor anyone could bestow upon a Jew; an opinion held by many concerning Jesus. Yet from the early days of His ministry, some were still were debating who this He was. Some said he was “*the prophet*” (Jn. 7:40; Deut. 18:15) while others said, “He is the Christ” (Jn. 7:41). And other said He was demonic.

“The temple police.” Literally, the “temple guards.” They functioned as do modern police and were under direct command of the Sadducees. They were a para-military unit separate from the Roman soldiers stationed in the adjacent Antonio Fortress.

“Our law doesn’t judge a man before it hears from him and knows what he’s doing, does it?” Nicodemus had previously met Jesus at night and now came forth in public with a bold legitimate legal objection. He did not defend Jesus, but rather, he raised a principle of law suggesting that he was aware of the illegality of the procedure that was in process. This objection would be normal for a teacher to do. He was faithful to the Scripture to the point that he failed to recognize who Jesus was until after the resurrection. The Mosaic Law required impartial judges (Deut. 1:16) and this issue was required to be thoroughly investigated (Ex. 23:1). A person was considered innocent until the accused was heard, witnesses testified, and judgment was announced concerning his or her guilt (Deut. 17:8-9; 19:15-19). Most certainly, Nicodemus heard the rumors that some Pharisees were planning to kill Jesus. And he probably felt that in a legal court Jesus would be found to be completely innocent. His feelings remain unknown, but the final decision was not what he expected – he was a man of higher integrity and expected the court to be likewise, in spite of its shortcomings. The reason he did not participate

in the trial was probably because Caiaphas handpicked only “judges” who would endorse his plan for the crucifixion.

The Sadducees and leading Pharisees were so highly irritated with Jesus, that they said, “**Investigate and you will see that no prophet arises from Galilee.**” It was ethnic sarcasm because Jerusalem was considered the center of Jewish culture and religion. Galilee, in their minds, was a backwater town where the people were ignorant and socially deprived. However, much of this sarcasm was based upon the fact that the Sanhedrin had its legal authority removed from this district previously by Herod the Great, so they nurtured hostile feelings against all Galileans.

This ethnic sarcasm revealed Jewish anti-Semitism that was common not only between geographical areas but also among the twenty-five to thirty sects that comprised first century Judaism. At times unkind words became physical. For example, the Babylonian Talmud recorded that the wife of a rabbi called an elderly rabbi a “Galilean fool,” which was both insulting and highly disrespectful to an older teacher. She also kicked a student whom she believed was not giving full attention to his or her studies.⁶⁷⁵ With strong ethnic and regional feelings commonplace, the critical words spoken to Jesus were, in fact, relatively mild.

As to the accuracy of the phrase concerning no prophet coming from Galilee, the Pharisees were wrong because the prophets Elisha, Hosea, Jonah, and possibly Nahum were all from the Galilee area.⁶⁷⁶ Barak the deliverer, Elon the judge, and Anna the prophetess, also came from Galilee. During the days of Jesus, a large number of rabbis likewise came from this district. However, their reference probably was not relative to these prophets, but for the fact that there were no rabbinic schools in Galilee.

Since Capernaum was the principal Jewish town of Galilee although Sepphoris, and later Tiberias was the capital. The fishing village had grown to a significant size due to the caravans that traveled along the *Via Maris*. It became the center of commerce, education, and religious activity, which is probably why Jesus spent a considerable amount of time there.

11.02.16 Jn. 8:2-11 At the Temple

WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY⁶⁷⁷

675. Babylonian Talmud, *Erubin* 53b.

676. Tenney, *The Gospel of John*. 88.

677. John 7:53 – 8:11 is not found in some of the oldest manuscripts, but is found in an old edition of Luke. Textual Critics say that this passage does not fit John’s writing style. But, it seems to portray an authentic event in the life of

² **At dawn He went to the temple complex again, and all the people were coming to Him. He sat down and began to teach them.**

³ **Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, making her stand in the center.** ⁴ **“Teacher,” they said to Him, “this woman was caught in the act of committing adultery.** ⁵ **In the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do You say?”** ⁶ **They asked this to trap Him, in order that they might have evidence to accuse Him.**

Jesus stooped down and started writing on the ground with His finger. ⁷ **When they persisted in questioning Him, He stood up and said to them, “The one without sin among you should be the first to throw a stone at her.”**

⁸ **Then He stooped down again and continued writing on the ground.** ⁹ **When they heard this, they left one by one, starting with the older men. Only He was left, with the woman in the center.** ¹⁰ **When Jesus stood up, He said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”**

¹¹ **“No one, Lord,” she answered.**

“Neither do I condemn you,” said Jesus. “Go, and from now on do not sin anymore.”

The Pharisees brought to Jesus a woman they claimed was an adulteress. The narrative implies that she probably spent the night with one of them as part of a premeditated plan of entrapment. While it was the woman who was brought before Jesus, there is no mention of the man she was with – a situation that underscores to an attempt of entrapment. Scholars believe those who brought her before Jesus most certainly were from the School of Hillel as Hillel and his disciples were extremely legalistic and conservative about marriage, adultery, and divorce issues. The School of Shammai, on the other hand, was considerably more liberal in this matter and effectively endorsed an ancient form of “no-fault divorce” (divorce for any reason).⁶⁷⁸

Ironically, the leading Pharisees never attempted to lure Jesus into breaking one of the Ten Commandments. Rather, they focused on their Oral Laws. In that legal context, this seemed to be

Jesus. Early church fathers such as Augustine and Ambrose verified the passage, thereby presenting the obvious answer to the question. According to Burgon, this section was deliberately omitted from some texts because some church leaders feared the passage might promote immorality. See Burgon, *The Causes of Corruption in the Traditional Text*. 251-52, 259; and Trites, “The Woman Taken in Adultery.” 137-46. See also Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context*. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 9, Session 2.

678. For related opinion on divorce issues, see Josephus, *Antiquities* 4.8.23.

the perfect trap. If Jesus held to the Law of Moses, there would be two sets of negative consequences.

1. Jesus would lose His reputation for compassion the public had seen for the past three years.
2. Since the authority to impose capital punishment had been removed from the Sanhedrin, except for unauthorized entry into the inner temple, only Rome could condemn the woman to death. Jesus would therefore, be in collision with the Roman authorities.

Concerning the consequences of whatever Jesus would say, these were the possibilities,

1. If Jesus had said that the Mosaic Law needed to be observed and, therefore, the woman had to be condemned to death by stoning, He would be going against the Emperor as only he or his agent could condemn one to capital punishment.
2. If Jesus did not condemn her to death, He would be breaking the Law of Moses, and thereby, could not possibly be a righteous man.

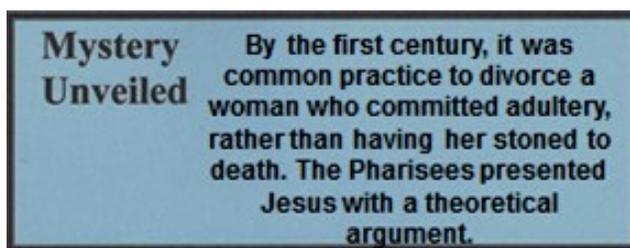
It seemed like the perfect trap. So they came to Jesus **“at dawn.”** This was hardly the time to catch anyone in adultery and enhances the appearance of trickery. They came to Him because they found **“a woman caught in adultery.”** The word *adultery*, Greek *moicheia*, is defined as one having sexual relations with another person who is married, for which the Mosaic Law clearly states that both are partners are to be put to death (Num. 5:11-31). Obviously this is a serious matter in the eyes of God. Yet according to Jewish tradition, adultery was far more serious than prostitution or fornication (Gk. *porneia*).⁶⁷⁹ See Professor Gary Byer’s comments on the video titled *The Nicanor Gate of the Temple*, at 04.04.04.V where he refers to this event.

In the first century Jewish rabbis differentiated between two types of adulterous women – the married woman and engaged virgin. According to the Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 50a, the punishments were as follows:

1. The adulterous married woman was sentenced to death by hanging
2. The adulterous betrothed virgin was sentenced to death by stoning

679. Graystone, “Adultery.” 16-17.

Since the woman who was brought before Jesus was to be stoned, she evidently was a betrothed virgin and not a married woman.⁶⁸⁰ It should be noted that the betrothed virgin was considered to be a “married woman” and, therefore, her act was not technically considered to be fornication. Furthermore, divorce had become the popular solution for an unfaithful spouse rather than death by stoning. The Pharisees had presented Jesus with a theoretical argument which they themselves did not even follow. No wonder they did not stone her! This entire hypothetical situation was therefore, on their part, illegal and a most unconventional practice. Their best schemes challenged Jesus because they were convinced there was no possibility that they could lose this argument.



However, this is another case where history shows that the religious leaders did not always follow their own laws. The Mishnah records that at one time the daughter of a priest was burned for being suspected of adultery and, again, there was no evidence of a trial.

It happened once that a priest's daughter committed adultery and they encompassed her with bundles of branches and burnt her.

Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 7:2

“Jesus stooped down and started writing on the ground with His finger.” One of the mysteries is the question of what He wrote. This is the only instance in Scripture where there is any mention of Him writing, and it is in a situation of accusations. The Greek word meaning “to write” is not found anywhere else in the New Testament. However, in Job 13:26 there is a powerful clue. The Greek word that is frequently used to write the phrase *to write* is *graphein*. However, Jesus was more explicit than that, He used the word *katagraphein* which includes the definition *to write a record against someone*. That is the same word used in the Septuagint translation of Job 13:26.⁶⁸¹

**For You record (*katagraphein*) bitter accusations against me
and make me inherit the iniquities of my youth.**

680. See also Sadan, “Neither do I Condemn You; Go and Sin no More.” 14.

681. Barclay, “John.” 2:3; Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 229.

Job 13:26

Therefore, this writer believes that when the Pharisees came to Jesus to accuse the woman of adultery, Jesus kneeled down in the road dust. He identified the sins of her accusers in a manner similar to that which the Old Testament accusers had done to Job. Then Jesus stood up and said that anyone without sin should throw the first stone. However, the Pharisees saw their sins written on the ground in public view, an embarrassment for all of them.

This interpretation would agree with the fact that the finger of Jesus, in essence the finger of God – that inscribed the Ten Commandments (Deut. 9:10), and cast out demons (Lk. 11:20) left a dynamic impact upon the accusers. While the emphasis is often on the written statement, it should be on the finger of God. It was the divine finger that wrote the Law.⁶⁸² Of the 613 laws Moses wrote and presented to his people, ten of them were written by the finger of God (Jesus) and confirmed by Him.⁶⁸³ However, there is another aspect to this passage. The fact that Jesus referred to the finger of God also is reflective of the hardness of heart the Pharaoh had at the time of the Exodus. In this passage, the Jewish leaders would have understood that Jesus was connecting the Pharaoh's attitude with theirs.⁶⁸⁴ Little wonder then, that they grew increasingly angry at Him.

One scholar suggested a Jewish tradition that, if a woman was suspected of being an adulteress, she had to be brought before a priest. He would take some dust from the floor of the sanctuary and mix it with a little water and she had to drink some of it. He also wrote in a book the curses that were placed upon her (see Num. 5:17, 23). After writing them, he tried to blot out the curses with the "bitter waters." If the curses disappeared, meaning "blotted out," she was free. If not, she was guilty.⁶⁸⁵ However, how often these directives were implemented is unknown.⁶⁸⁶

Finally, writing in the dust of the temple floor was perfectly legal, because it leaves no lasting mark.⁶⁸⁷ The slightest breeze blows the dust away. But in this case, the sins of the legalistic Pharisees remained.

682. Ex. 31:18; 32:15-16; Deut. 4:13; 9:10.

683. Appendix 4.

684. Evans, "Exorcisms and the Kingdom." 171-73.

685. There is no record of a woman being stoned to death by court action for committing adultery in this era. Source: Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context*. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 9, Session 2.

686. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:327-31.

687. Mishnah, *Sabbath*. 12:5; Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbath*, 104b.

“The one without sin among you.” In the eyes of the Pharisees, a “sin” was an infraction of the ritual commands and the Oral Laws which required obedience and immersion in a mikvah. To Jesus and John the Baptist, “sin” was broken faith with God which required repentance followed by obedience.⁶⁸⁸ This phrase is not relative to sin in general, as all have sinned. If Jesus meant this to be a general comment, then it would be impossible for any human to judge when judgment is necessary. Rather, it was obvious that this woman was not alone in her situation of adultery; somewhere in the crowd was the man she was with. The Greek phrase “the one without sin” is in reference to this *same particular* sin. Furthermore, there were two or three witnesses present who were also involved in the set-up, so no legal charges could be brought against her.

These men certainly had the proverbial beam in their own eyes while they judged a woman who had a speck in her eye. Jesus was the only One who had the right to condemn her, and He gave her His compassion and told her to change her lifestyle. The statement of Jesus becomes more interesting and condemning when considering that the Greek word for *without sin*, which is *anamartetos*, could also mean *without sinful desire*.⁶⁸⁹ But when He wrote her sin in the dust, her sin of adultery disappeared because she had no charge held against her.

“Should be the first to throw a stone at her.” Punishment by stoning originated with Moses who said that there had to be two or three witnesses for a capital case (Deut. 17:6). Furthermore, those witnesses were to be the first to throw the stones upon the condemned person (Deut. 13, 17). There were three issues that complicated matters for the accusing Pharisees:

1. Only the Sanhedrin could pass judgment in cases of capital punishment, although its authority to exercise that verdict was removed by the Romans.
2. The Pharisees were barred from capital judgments. So the accusers could not have participated in the judicial system anyway.
3. Moses also said that the witnesses could not be guilty of the same sin. Therefore, the leading Pharisees who intended to entrap Jesus were themselves trapped and found guilty. In cases of adultery, both the man and woman were to be executed (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22-24). They confessed their guilt when they walked away. They were so grossly humiliated that they never attempted to entrap Jesus again. This statement created one of the most amplified and dramatic moments of silence in Scripture.

688. Smith, *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew*. 51.

689. Barclay, “John.” 2:4.

4. However, there is no record of a woman being stoned to death for committing adultery in this era.⁶⁹⁰

All civil and criminal punishments described in the Old Testament were administered by a court. The Torah provides for three modes of capital punishment:

1. Stoning,⁶⁹¹
2. Burning at the stake (Lev. 20:14), and the most merciful,
3. Death by the sword.⁶⁹²

The reference to a hanging in Deuteronomy 21:22 is worded in a manner that suggests that the person was deceased and the corpse was hung as a warning to the community.⁶⁹³ This was a common practice in many ancient cultures and continues today in some Islamic nations. By the Inter-Testament Period, the Jewish leaders also used crucifixion. However, by the time of Jesus, the Romans forbade the Jews to exercise capital punishment except if a Gentile entered the sacred courts of the temple.

Does this response mean that there ought not to be a judicial system in society? Does it mean that every one of the Jews present was guilty of sin? Hardly! There most certainly were reputable men in the audience who were His followers. His focus was not on the abolition of justice but on the sin that is within all humanity, even in the hearts of reputable men. One of the oldest manuscripts of this text has an addendum indicating that Jesus wrote in the dirt all the sins of those who were immediately close to Him. The manuscript reads that Jesus wrote the *sin of each one of them*.⁶⁹⁴ It is unknown if this was in fact the case. However, it is what the early church believed to be true.

A key word in the statement by Jesus is the word “first.” In the first century Jewish court system, when someone was accused of a capital crime punishable by stoning, the first witness threw the first stone to kill the criminal. This made for very few false witnesses since they

690. Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context*. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 9, Session 2.

691. Deut. 17:7; 17:2-7; 13:1-5; 21:18-21; 22:22-23; Lev. 20:2-5; 20:27; 24:15-16; Num. 15:32-36. Capital punishment was always directed by a court and not by individuals. The death of Stephen in Acts 7:57-58 was by a rioting mob and not an act of judicial action.

692. Num. 35:19, 21; Deut. 13:15; Ex. 32:27.

693. Archer, “Crimes and Punishment.” 1:1035.

694. Macartney, *Great Interviews of Jesus*. 60-61.

themselves were subject to capital punishment.⁶⁹⁵ However, this was in theory only, as the practice of stoning by a judicial action had been abandoned. The Mishnah recorded the applicable Oral Law as follows:

When sentence (of stoning) has been passed they take him forth to stone him A herald goes before him (calling), “Such-a-one, the son of such-a-one, is going forth to be stoned for that he committed such or such an offence. Such-a-one and such-a-one are witnesses against him. If any man knowest aught in favor of his acquittal, let him come and plead it.”

When he was about ten cubits (18 feet) from the place of stoning they used to say to him, “Make your confession,” for such is the way of them that have been condemned to death to make confession, for every one that makes his confession has a share in the world to come.

When he was four cubits from the place of stoning they stripped off his clothes. A man is kept covered in the front and a woman both in front and back.

The place of stoning was twice the height of a man. One of the witnesses knocked him down on his loins (by throwing a stone on him); if he turned over on his heart the witness turned him over again on his loins. If he straightway died that sufficed; but if not, the second (witness) took the stone and dropped it on his heart. If he straightway died, that sufficed; but if not, he was stoned by all Israel....

Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 6.1-4⁶⁹⁶

Jesus did not condemn those who desired to stone the woman, but presented the truth to them and the truth judged their sins. Jesus did not condone sin but gave them opportunity to be repentant. The truth rebuked the lies of the Pharisees. Therefore, the Jews could not have legally stoned her under any circumstances. What an incredible hypocrisy on the part of the Pharisees!

“Women, where are they?” These words appear harsh to modern ears, but in ancient times, these were words of endearment.⁶⁹⁷ Jesus called His mother “woman” as He was dying on the cross when He obviously demonstrated a great deal of compassion and forgiveness to those who

695. Mishnah, *Makkoth* 1.5.

696. Parenthesis by Danby, ed., *Mishnah*.

697. Barclay, “John.” 1:98; Vine, “Woman.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:681.

crucified Him. He did not excuse her sin, but he did not condemn her either. He simply told her not to sin in the future.

11.02.16.Q1 Did Jesus forgive the woman caught in adultery (Jn. 8:2-11)?

It has been said that Jesus forgave her. But did He? Scripture reads, **“Neither do I condemn you,” said Jesus. “Go, and from now on do not sin anymore.”** But the text does not say that He forgave her, nor did she come to ask for forgiveness. That is why He just told her to change her lifestyle and not sin any more. The implication obviously is that if she continues in her adulterous lifestyle, she will be held accountable for her past activities. It has been said that in Jesus there is the gospel of the second chance. Throughout the Bible, forgiveness is conditional upon repentance which involves a change of mind and lifestyle. This is proof.

11.02.16.Q2 Why isn't John 8:2-11 in some ancient manuscripts?

That is a good question and, while the exact reason is unknown, there is a good answer. Scholars believe the oldest manuscripts are considered to be the most valuable and date them between the fourth and sixth centuries. They are known as *Uncial Manuscripts* because they were written with Greek capital letters. It is believed that this passage was removed from the biblical text because some church fathers believed it might excuse or even encourage some individuals to commit adultery. Augustine said that it was removed to “avoid scandal” and because some people in his church were of “slight faith.”⁶⁹⁸

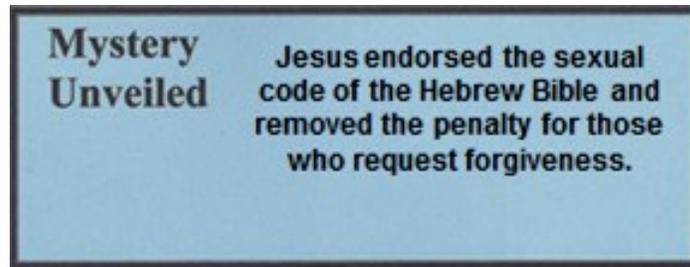
Among the early church fathers, it appears that the Greek fathers did not know of the removed passage, but the Latin fathers did. Among those who did not comment on it are Origen, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Cyril of Alexandria. The John 8:2-11 narrative is not found in the *Syriac* or Egyptian *Coptic Bibles*. However, Jerome did include it in his Latin *Vulgate Bible* in the fourth century. Furthermore, Augustine and Ambrose both wrote of it and possibly the oldest tradition is found in a book known as *The Apostolic Constitution*. In this third century literary work, Eusebius referred to Papias who spoke of a woman who was accused of many sins before our Lord.⁶⁹⁹ Papias lived near the end of the first century. Therefore, many scholars today believe the passage is an authentic segment of the gospel of John.

As with a number of other stories in the gospels, the ending to this event is missing. The reader is not told of her name or the situation of the trickery that entrapped her. A thousand years later,

698. Barclay, “John.” 2:290-91.

699. Barclay, “John.” 2:291.

in one of Europe's monasteries, a so-called historical account appeared in which she is said to have been related to a priestly family. Such fanciful and factious accounts draw the reader away from the basic truth revealed by Jesus who cautioned believers of deceptions in Mathew 24.⁷⁰⁰



11.02.17 Jn. 8:12-20 Jerusalem

LIGHT OF THE WORLD

¹² Then Jesus spoke to them again: “I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows Me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life.”

¹³ So the Pharisees said to Him, “You are testifying about Yourself. Your testimony is not valid.”

¹⁴ “Even if I testify about Myself,” Jesus replied,

“My testimony is valid,

because I know where I came from

and where I'm going.

But you don't know where I come from or

where I'm going.

¹⁵ You judge by human standards.

700. One ancient legend is the story that the man with the withered right hand went on to build a palace for Emperor Nero that had a secret room for Christians. Still, another ancient “Christian myth” claims Pilate and his wife Procula became believers. Little wonder then, that Jesus and the Apostle Paul both cautioned believers to be aware of false teachers. Two modern writers who promote a variety of creative stories are: 1) Ron Charles, who has gathered scores of fanciful legends and myths, mostly written between the sixth and sixteenth centuries, that pertain to the life of Christ in his book titled, *The Search: A Historian's Search for Historical Jesus*. (Self-Published, 2007); and 2) Nicholas Notovich, whose book, *The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ*. Trans. (Virchand R. Gandhi, Dover Pub.) is a so-called historical account of when Jesus went to Asia to study between the ages 13 and 29.

I judge no one.

¹⁶ And if I do judge,

My judgment is true,

because I am not alone,

but I and the Father who sent Me judge together.

¹⁷ Even in your law it is written that the witness of two men is valid. ¹⁸ I am the One who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me.”

¹⁹ Then they asked Him, “Where is Your Father?”

“You know neither Me nor My Father,” Jesus answered. “If you knew Me, you would also know My Father.” ²⁰ He spoke these words by the treasury, while teaching in the temple complex. But no one seized Him, because His hour had not come.

As mentioned previously, in the temple were four huge golden menorahs that shone brightly.⁷⁰¹ The rabbis said that these lamps lit up the city of Jerusalem⁷⁰² and represented the Shekinah Glory of God — God’s visible presence to Israel.⁷⁰³ It was there when Jesus and His disciples were in the temple courts that He said that He was the light of the world – a comment with profound meaning in that He said He was the Shekinah Glory of God.

“I am the light of the world.”⁷⁰⁴ This was a statement Jesus made about Himself, as it represents the following meanings:

1. Jesus claimed that He is the Shekinah Glory – the visible presence to Israel. It was therefore, a claim to His deity. Previously, three disciples experienced the Transfiguration in which they saw the Shekinah Glory, and now Jesus confirmed it again, but within the cultural context.

701. This menorah lamp has seven lamps. However, the menorah honoring the victory of the Maccabean revolt and rededication of the temple has nine lamps.

702. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 15, page 16.

703. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 15, page 16.

704. See related comments by Rabbi John Fischer in 10.01.28.V where he discusses two unique healing methods of blind men.

2. The phrase is a reference to the numerous Old Testament comments about God being “the Light.”⁷⁰⁵ Jesus is that light, meaning that He brings understanding concerning God. The simple formula concerning light and darkness is this:

Light equals understanding,
which results in life
Darkness equals ignorance,
which results in death.⁷⁰⁶

The words of Jesus were specifically suited to the Feast of Tabernacles. Note the recorded history in the Mishnah.

There were four golden menorahs with four golden bowls at the top of each, and four ladders each leading to a bowl. Four strong young *cohanim* (priests) would climb up with pitchers each holding nine liters of oil which they would pour into the bowls. From worn-out drawers and girdles of the *cohanim* they made wicks, and with them lit the menorahs; and there was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that was not lit up by the light of the *Beit-HaSho'evah* [festivals]. Pious men and men of good deeds would dance around [the menorahs] with lit torches in their hands, singing songs and praises, while the Levites played harps, lyres, cymbals, trumpets, and innumerable other musical instruments.

Mishnah, *Sukkah* 5:2-4

Every evening of the festival, as the sun was setting four gigantic menorahs in the Court of the Women were lit.⁷⁰⁷ These gilded candelabra were fifty cubits (75 ft.) high and their soft light shone throughout the temple courtyards and nearby Jerusalem. These were reminiscent of the pillar of fire that led the Israelites through the desert centuries earlier and were symbolic of the Shekinah glory of God. Now around these lighted monuments the people danced and sang for joy for what God had done in their lives. The sounds of flutes and stringed instruments were everywhere. The Levites led everyone in singing Psalms as even the priests and Pharisees joined the joyful procession that danced throughout the courtyards and encircled the menorahs.⁷⁰⁸ But the Sadducees, the faithful antagonists of the Pharisees, mocked the celebrations.

705. Ps. 27:1; Isa. 60:19; Job 29:3; Micah 7:8.

706. Barclay, *Jesus*. 265.

707. Barclay, *Jesus*. 266; There appears to be a difference among scholars as to whether there were two menorahs or four, and the height of them.

708. Farrar, *Life of Christ*. 267.

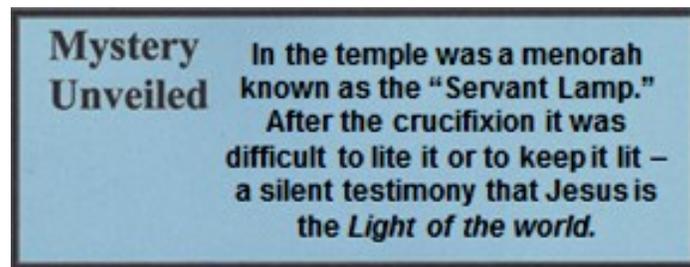
Throughout Jewish and Christian history, darkness has always been associated with the ignorance of God, which leads to sin and death. Light always referred to the knowledge of God and eternal life, and God is the only true source of light and understanding. The light was in the temple, which at that time was considered the presence or dwelling place of God. One of those menorahs was known as the Servant Lamp. Some scholars believe that Jesus referred to Himself as the *light of the world* when He stood by the Servant Lamp, meaning that He would not only bring knowledge of God but also salvation, joy, and happiness.

Ironically, one of the four menorahs known as the Servant Lamp refused to light after the crucifixion. For the next forty years, until the temple was destroyed, priests and Levites must have wondered why this menorah would not light or, if it was lit, why it didn't remain lit. Many years later the Jews wrote in the Jerusalem Talmud an observation that, to them was a mystery.

Forty years before the destruction of the temple, the Servant Lamp refused to light.

Jerusalem Talmud, *Yoma* 43:3

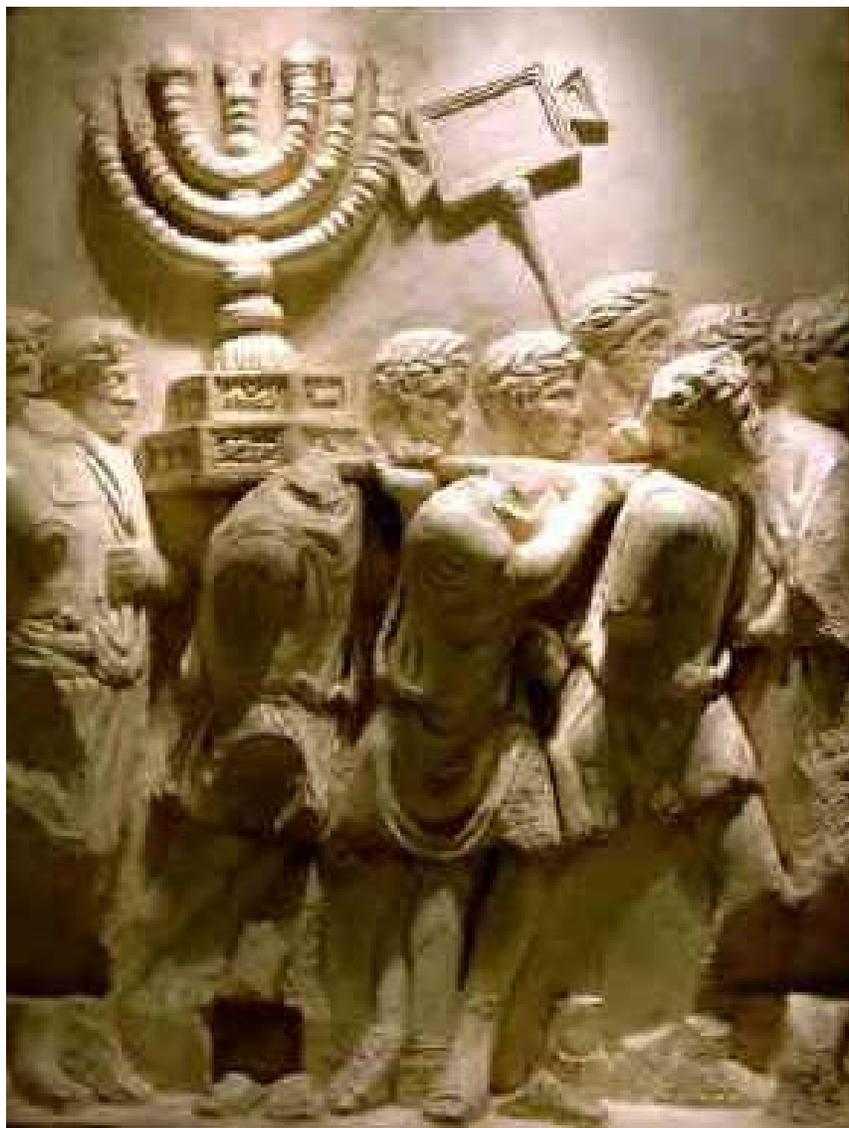
It was a continuing silent message of Jesus that *He* is the light of the world. However, the worst was yet to come. Because the Jewish leaders rejected Jesus, the Romans would bring utter destruction upon their beloved temple. Josephus recorded the account in which a menorah was taken to Rome.⁷⁰⁹ Whether this was the Servant Lamp is unknown, but it clearly was the ancient symbol of God's people being led into captivity once again (see 17.01.01.Q1).



“You are testifying about Yourself.” The Mosaic Law required two or three witnesses to validate truth (Deut. 17:6). This was written for civil matters and the civil court (See Jn. 8:21-30 below). The same principle was applied to biblical interpretation. So by the first century, the leading Pharisees had created their own rules and regulations, which they touted as truth because they created their own witnesses.

⁷⁰⁹. Josephus, *Wars* 7.5.5.

“My testimony is valid.” When the New Testament writers used terms such as “testimony,” “bore witness,” or “I have seen and testify,” these were statements of legal terminology. Such legal statements were also common in both the Roman and Greek cultures whereby the author placed himself under an oath concerning the truthfulness of his conversation.⁷¹⁰



11.02.17.A. THE TEMPLE MENORAH ON THE ARCH OF TITUS. The victorious scene depicted on the Arch of Titus in Rome shows the temple menorah being carried to Rome. Some historians believe these artifacts are now in the Vatican. Obviously the artists who carved the menorah took artistic license, as the menorahs were much larger than could be depicted on the Arch. The Romans

710. Bookman, *When God Wore Sandals*. CD Trac 5.

were so proud of their victory that the arch was built to commemorate it. Also shown on the arch is a titulus.⁷¹¹

“Even if I testify about Myself.” To exceed the compliance of Deuteronomy 17:6, Jesus offered several witnesses beginning with Himself.

1. He knew who He was,
2. His divine origin,
3. His destination, and
4. The purpose of His human life.
5. His miracles were confirmed by His message to be from the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

But His accusers were ignorant on all four points.

11.02.17.Q1 Why did Jesus present two witnesses (Jn. 8:12-20)?

Two witnesses was the legal standard to prove a matter in a court of law. And Jesus provided more than two witnesses, beginning with the prophets and John the Baptist. Hence the statement, **“the witness of two men is valid.”** The judicial system is based upon Deuteronomy 17:15 and 19:15, and was also a principle of law in neighboring cultures as well.⁷¹² Furthermore, the Oral Law stated that a man was not to be believed if he was speaking about himself. Even the Greeks said that a person could not present evidence that would support self-interest.⁷¹³

While this Mosaic Law pertained to civil matters, by the first century, the same principle was also applied to theological studies. John recorded that Jesus was first qualified to bear witness to God’s plan (Jn. 8:14) and second, that the Father was with Him. Furthermore, Jesus knew from where He came and of His eternal future.

711. See 11.02.17 and 16.01.11A for additional information.

712. The Greeks and Romans and several ancient civilizations has similar laws as proven by the Code of Hammurabi and other ancient codes. See http://courses.cvcc.vccs.edu/history_mcgee/courses/his101/Source%20Documents/wc1d01.htm Retrieved January 28, 2015.

713. Barclay, “John.” 1:195.

“By the treasury.” In the temple courtyard were thirteen chests, each with a trumpet-shaped opening called a *Shopheroth*.⁷¹⁴ Into these chests, people placed their offerings and it was where the leading Pharisees were known to announce their giving of gifts.⁷¹⁵ This treasury was in the Court of the Women, not because it was exclusively for them, but that was the limit to which they could go unless they came to offer a sacrifice.⁷¹⁶ The Court of the Women and the Court of the Gentiles were the two most public courts of the temple complex.

11.02.18 Jn. 8:21-30 Jerusalem

WARNING AGAINST UNBELIEF

²¹ Then He said to them again, “I’m going away; you will look for Me, and you will die in your sin. Where I’m going, you cannot come.”

²² So the Jews said again, “He won’t kill Himself, will He, since He says, ‘Where I’m going, you cannot come’ ?”

²³ “You are from below,” He told them, “I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. ²⁴ Therefore I told you that you will die in your sins. For if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”

²⁵ “Who are You?” they questioned.

“Precisely what I’ve been telling you from the very beginning,” Jesus told them. ²⁶ “I have many things to say and to judge about you, but the One who sent Me is true, and what I have heard from Him — these things I tell the world.”

²⁷ They did not know He was speaking to them about the Father. ²⁸ So Jesus said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing on My own. But just as the Father taught Me, I say these things. ²⁹ The One who sent Me is with Me. He has not left Me alone, because I always do what pleases Him.”

³⁰ As He was saying these things, many believed in Him.

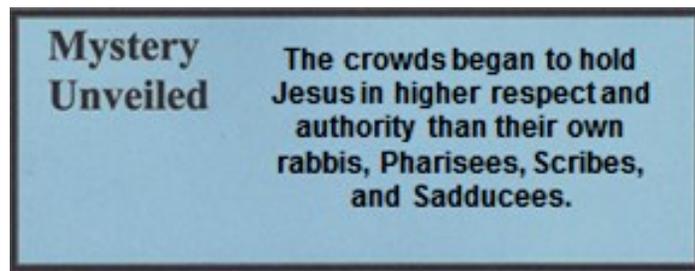
714. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 1:222-24.

715. Farrar, *Life of Christ*. 267.

716. An example of a woman’s sacrifice was when Mary and Joseph offered two doves to be sacrificed after Jesus was born.

“He won’t kill Himself, will He?” Clearly, they did not understand Jesus. They believed that those who committed suicide were destined to the darkest place in Hell. The only exceptions were those who committed suicide to escape the Roman sword in conflicts such as Gamala and Masada.⁷¹⁷

“Who are you?” This question had nothing to do with the personal identity of Jesus or His genealogy; those records were available for study in the temple. Rather, the exasperated critics questioned the authority, status, and claim of Jesus to be the leader in the religious life of Israel. The last thing they wanted to hear were the opinions of the crowds who referred to Jesus as the prophet (Jn. 7:40) or “the Christ” (Jn. 7:16, 18, 26, 29).



11.02.19 Jn. 8:31-47

JESUS CONFRONTS THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS WITH SEVERE SARCASM

³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, you really are My disciples. ³² You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

³³ “We are descendants of Abraham,” they answered Him, “and we have never been enslaved to anyone. How can You say, ‘You will become free?’”

³⁴ Jesus responded, “I assure you: Everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin. ³⁵ A slave does not remain in the household forever, but a son does remain forever. ³⁶ Therefore, if the Son sets you free, you really will be free. ³⁷ I know you are descendants of Abraham, but you are trying to kill Me because My word is not welcome among you. ³⁸ I speak what I have seen in the presence of the Father; therefore, you do what you have heard from your father.”

³⁹ **“Our father is Abraham!”** they replied.

717. Gilbrant, “John.” 233.

“If you were Abraham’s children,” Jesus told them, “you would do what Abraham did. ⁴⁰ But now you are trying to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do this! ⁴¹ You’re doing what your father does.”

“We weren’t born of sexual immorality,” they said. “We have one Father — God.”

⁴² Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, because I came from God and I am here. For I didn’t come on My own, but He sent Me. ⁴³ Why don’t you understand what I say? Because you cannot listen to My word. ⁴⁴ You are of your father the Devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and has not stood in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of liars. ⁴⁵ Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. ⁴⁶ Who among you can convict Me of sin? If I tell the truth, why don’t you believe Me? ⁴⁷ The one who is from God listens to God’s words. This is why you don’t listen, because you are not from God.”

Jesus not only had a heated discussion about their relationship to the patriarch Abraham, but they saw Jesus placing Himself above Abraham (Jn. 8:53-54, 58). To them this was an abomination. They believed that since they were descendants of Abraham, they were “God’s Chosen People” and, therefore, did not need the salvation that Jesus taught. Furthermore, Jesus identified their true characteristics and pointed out the following:

1. Their spiritual father is the devil that has not only has blinded them, but they also chose to remain blind. For example, they believed that exorcism was possible only through the Spirit of God, yet they claimed Jesus performed exorcisms by the power of Satan – an obvious contradiction of their own belief system.⁷¹⁸
2. If they were true sons of God, they would have recognized Him as did John the Baptist (Jn. 8:41-44), but they didn’t recognize John either.
3. He did not break a single law of Moses, so why were they trying to kill Him (Jn. 8:36)? Obviously their motives had nothing to do with the Mosaic Law.
4. In John 8:58 Jesus finally revealed Himself with an “I am” statement, which caused an instant outrage.

718. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 16, page 16.

“You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” If there was anything the Jewish people cherished, it was freedom. They had experienced slavery in the past and now were under political bondage. With the term freedom, came the thoughts of slavery⁷¹⁹ and how to avoid it in the future.

The large number of Hebraisms found in the gospels is clearly indicative that the gospel writers thought like typical Jews. Therefore, it becomes incumbent to examine the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek words. For example, the word “truth” (Heb. *emet*; Gk. *aletheia*) has a broad band of meanings but the Hebrew includes the definition *to have an understanding of the justice of God*. To know and live in truth would render one free from the wrath of God. This is illustrated in many Old Testament references, such as Isaiah 42 and 61, but most prominently in Hosea 4:6 that reads, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”⁷²⁰ There the word “knowledge” means *revelation knowledge* that encompasses an understanding of the justice of God. Truly, there is freedom in divine truth, as it places one in right relationship with God.

“We are descendants of Abraham ... and we have never been enslaved to anyone.” The leading Pharisees were so emotionally caught up in the heat of discussions that they forgot their history of slavery under the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Syrians, the torment of the Greek dictator Antiochus Epiphanes IV, and the economic slavery of the Romans. In fact, their only good leader of recent centuries was Alexandra Salome, queen of Judea (reigned 76-67 B.C.). Their prideful arrogance led them to selective recollections or denials of their past. When Jesus responded, He did not mean any particular act of sin, but the definite article *the* refers to a life of sin.⁷²¹

“We weren’t born of sexual immorality.” Now the leading Pharisees were on the offensive, implying that Jesus was an illegitimate child. This phrase was the severest sarcasm one could make. It meant not only that was Jesus born out of wedlock, but He also had no right to the Abrahamic Covenant. Therefore, in their reasoning, how could any son born of sin live a righteous life and preach of righteousness?

This phrase is also a classic example of a Hebraic play on words. It implied that the Jews were legitimate children of Abraham. Because God had said that the Israelites were “His Chosen People,” they felt they had no need for repentance and they were exempt from any spiritual

719. Because the Jews experienced slavery, thankfulness was one the tenth of their Eighteen Benedictions. Since Jesus lived in a Jewish “honor culture,” for a Jew to unjustly call another Jew “a slave,” could subject him to excommunication from the synagogue. See Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 2:304.

720. Blizzard III, “Be Free” *Yavo Digest* 1:4, 15-17.

721. See 1 Jn. 2:29; 3:4-8; Jn. 3:21.

danger.⁷²² Only absolutely “pure” Israelites were assured of the messianic salvation – no “impure” blood from heathen nations would be accepted – they thought.⁷²³ Obviously this was not the opinion of John the Baptist or Jesus.

“You are of your father the Devil.” Jesus never applied terms such as “children of the devil” to sinners and tax collectors, but He did apply them to the leading Pharisees and Sadducees. They were so evil that Jesus referred to them as sons of Satan (and so did John the Baptist in Matthew 3:7). The reason Jesus said this was that they had become hardened against the will of God. The reason the church skewed the passage may have been for anti-Semitic reasons.⁷²⁴

During the time of Christ, on the other hand, the School of Shammai was influential in the Jerusalem synagogues and the Sanhedrin. The two schools of biblical interpretation (Hillel and Shammai) had become immensely polarized and the Talmud essentially said that the “Torah had become two Torahs.”⁷²⁵ Some sages said that, “Whoever observed the teachings of the School of Shammai deserved death.”⁷²⁶ For example, the first century sage Dosa ben Harkinas highly criticized his brother Jonathan for a decision he made with this school concerning a levirate marriage, and for this called him “the first-born of Satan.”⁷²⁷ Essentially, the followers and disciples of the School of Shammai were accused of being the descendants or “followers of the devil.”⁷²⁸ These powerful words of Jesus appear to be out of character, but in cultural context, they were properly placed and understood in public opinion.

Mystery Unveiled The phrase, “You are of your father, the devil,” was a typical comment used by rabbis who fiercely opposed each other in heated theological arguments.

722. See Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-14, 19; 22:15-18.

723. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 301-02.

724. It is a shameful history, but so-called Christians took this passage, as well as those in Revelation 2:9, 13 and 3:19, where synagogues are referred to as Synagogues of Satan, and church leaders called *all* Jews, “sons of Satan.” These passages were taken grossly out of context and used for a wide variety of anti-Semitic activities for which the corporate body of the church needs to repent.

725. Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 88b; Falk, *Jesus the Pharisee*. 48, 114.

726. Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot* 11a; Falk, *Jesus the Pharisee*. 117.

727. Babylonian Talmud, *Yevamot* 16a.

728. Falk, *Jesus the Pharisee*. 118-19.

Jesus had His greatest opposition with the School of Shammai, although the School of Hillel also came under His scrutiny. In later years, it was from a descendant of Hillel, that his grandson Gamaliel who was the teacher of the Apostle Paul.

“Who among you can convict Me of sin?” This simple question left His critics without an answer. How they wished they could prove Him guilty of anything in the Mosaic Law, but they could not. Had their search for any evidence have been successful, they would most certainly have broadcasted it far and wide. For more than three years the religious scribes, leading Pharisees, and Sadducees had been watching His every move in great dismay.

11.02.20 Jn. 8:48-59

JESUS DECLARES HIS ETERNAL EXISTENCE

⁴⁸ **The Jews responded to Him, “Aren’t we right in saying that You’re a Samaritan and have a demon?”**

⁴⁹ **“I do not have a demon,” Jesus answered. “On the contrary, I honor My Father and you dishonor Me. ⁵⁰ I do not seek My glory; the One who seeks it also judges. ⁵¹ I assure you: If anyone keeps My word, he will never see death — ever!”**

⁵² **Then the Jews said, “Now we know You have a demon. Abraham died and so did the prophets. You say, ‘If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste death — ever!’**

⁵³ **Are You greater than our father Abraham who died? Even the prophets died. Who do You pretend to be?”**

⁵⁴ **“If I glorify Myself,” Jesus answered, “My glory is nothing. My Father — you say about Him, ‘He is our God’—He is the One who glorifies Me. ⁵⁵ You’ve never known Him, but I know Him. If I were to say I don’t know Him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know Him, and I keep His word. ⁵⁶ Your father Abraham was overjoyed that he would see My day; he saw it and rejoiced.”**

⁵⁷ **The Jews replied, “You aren’t 50 years old yet, and You’ve seen Abraham?”**

⁵⁸ **Jesus said to them, “I assure you: Before Abraham was, I am.”**

⁵⁹ **At that, they picked up stones to throw at Him. But Jesus was hidden and went out of the temple complex.**

“The Jews responded to Him ... You’re a Samaritan.” In this passage the phrase “the Jews,”⁷²⁹ was not a reference to the leadership, but it was the common people who accepted the Pharisaic argument that Jesus was demon-possessed, or used demonic powers for His miracles. In this case, they accused Jesus of being demonized by saying He was a Samaritan. The cultural context is that in rabbinic demonology, a leading demon was named *Shomroni*, which was also used to refer to either any demon or to a Samaritan.⁷³⁰ Since the Jews viewed the Samaritans as the lowest of low-life people, they sarcastically called Jesus a “Samaritan.” The statement was highly insulting and reflected their horrible ethnic attitudes toward the Samaritans.

“Are You greater than our father Abraham?” The Jewish leadership often accused Jesus of directly claiming to be deity.⁷³¹ But rather than making a statement that He was the “Anointed One,” meaning the “Christ,” which obviously would have been challenged, He lived, taught, and acted in a lifestyle so that men could observe His divine nature and make an intelligent decision that He was the expected “Anointed One.” His accusers made the same observation and what they concluded threatened them. They had become so arrogant that they believed they could kill the Messiah that God sent to deliver their land from the Romans.

“You’ve never known Him.” The word “know” (Gk. *ginosko*) means “a knowledge of experience,” more than mere facts, a relationship of trust and intimacy,⁷³² as opposed to “I know him” (Gk. *oida*), meaning an instinctive perception of facts.⁷³³

“Your father Abraham was overjoyed that he would see My day.” This astonishing statement indicates that Abraham had some type of future knowledge of the life and ministry of Jesus and he rejoiced at the thought of it. He knew that one day the whole world will be blessed through his descendants (Gen. 18:18). Ironically, the Jews, through their faith gave us the Bible, but through their unbelief, gave us the Messiah.

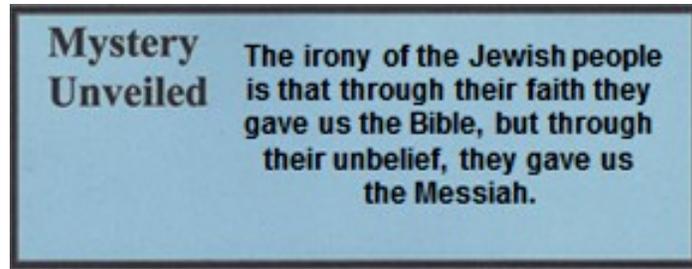
729. The term “the Jews” is used in reference to no less than three Jewish groups in the gospels, and at times it is difficult to discern which group the gospel writer is referring to.

730. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 16, page 2. The name of the demon and its association with the Samaritans was deeply rooted in the centuries-old hatred between Jews and Samaritans. See 02.01.18 for more details.

731. See Jn. 5:18; 10:33; 19:7.

732. Tenney, *New Testament Times*. 109.

733. Tenney, *The Gospel of John*. 98.



“Before Abraham was, I am.” In this passage and in John 10:30, Jesus made His absolute claim to deity. It infuriated the leading Pharisees and Sadducees who said the statement was blasphemy. The punishment for making a statement like this was death by stoning (Lev. 24:16).⁷³⁴ The statement also brought memories of the second century B.C. King Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who claimed to be a god and instigated some of the worst persecutions that ever came upon the Jewish people.⁷³⁵



11.02.20.A. COINS OF ANTIOCHUS IV EPIPHANES. LEFT: A coin of Antiochus IV Epiphanes as a military victor and King of Syria (170 B.C.). RIGHT: A different coin of him shown as “god manifest.”

11.02.20.Q1 What are the three examples of where Jesus claimed divine authority that brought Him into conflict with the religious establishment?

Jesus did not openly declare His divine authority in His early ministry. But in the course of time, it became evident. First, by implication, then by straightforward statements as follows:

1. In John 8:58 Jesus said that, “Before Abraham, I am.”

⁷³⁴. Judicial punishment by stoning had not been practiced for centuries, so this was a hypothetical issue.

⁷³⁵. See 03.04.17 for more information on King Antiochus Epiphanies.

2. In John 10:33 the Jews attempted to stone Jesus. When He asked them why, they responded and said it was because He was a mere man and made himself equal with God.

3. In Luke 5:17-20 Jesus did not heal the paralytic, but said that “Your sins are forgiven you.” This was incredibly offensive to the Pharisees because, as they correctly said, only God could forgive sins.

Finally, it should be noted that the divine authority He claimed in the Great Commission, was told privately to His disciples, and not to the religious establishment.

11.02.21 Jn. 9:1-12 Jesus at the Pool of Siloam

HEALING THE MAN BORN BLIND⁷³⁶

¹ As He was passing by, He saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples questioned Him: **“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”**

³ “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” Jesus answered. “This came about so that God’s works might be displayed in him. ⁴ We must do the works of Him who sent Me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

⁶ After He said these things He spit on the ground, made some mud from the saliva, and spread the mud on his eyes. ⁷ “Go,” He told him, **“wash in the pool of Siloam”** (which means “Sent”). So he left, washed, and came back seeing.

⁸ His neighbors and those who formerly had seen him as a beggar said, “Isn’t this the man who sat begging?” ⁹ Some said, “He’s the one.” “No,” others were saying, “but he looks like him.”

He kept saying, “I’m the one!”

¹⁰ Therefore they asked him, “Then how were your eyes opened?”

¹¹ He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and told me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ So when I went and washed I received my sight.”

¹² “Where is He?” they asked.

“I don’t know,” he said.

736. See comments by Rabbi John Fischer in 10.01.28.V where he discusses two unique methods of healing blind men including the event of John 9:1-12.

After Jesus declared His eternal existence (Jn. 8:48-59 above), He proceeded to perform a profound miracle – a messianic miracle that had a challenging effect on the Jewish leadership. This miracle forced them to decide whether Jesus was the expected messiah. However, it was also an interesting historical reflection upon the Jewish people, which is why some Bible critics said the miracle never happened, but rather, it was simply a metaphor written as if it was an historical event.⁷³⁷ However, with the discovery of the Pool of Siloam, the argument of the critics fell apart.

The Pool of Siloam had a most unique feature: Its water originated at the Virgin's Fountain, a/k/a the Gihon Spring.⁷³⁸ From there the water flowed through the 1,780 foot long Hezekiah's Tunnel into the two sections of the Pool of Siloam, and then into a creek in the Kidron Valley. The ancient pool consists of a lower pool, known as the *Pool of Shelah*, and an upper pool known as the *Pool of Siloah*.⁷³⁹ It is mentioned three times in the Hebrew Bible.⁷⁴⁰ The miracle of this healing was the fulfillment of a prophecy of Isaiah, who said,

**Then the eyes of the blind will be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped.**

Isaiah 35:5

11.02.21.Q1 Why did Jesus use spit and mud to heal the blind man in John 9:1-12?⁷⁴¹

Scholars have pondered this question for centuries.⁷⁴² In ancient times, eyes were sometimes healed with the application of a cream or salve; other times with spit and mud. Could it be

737. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct2005.010.35.26.html>. Retrieved November 26, 2005; In addition, on March 9, 2013, Dr. James H. Charlesworth of Princeton Seminary gave a report in Jerusalem in which he outlined several archaeological discoveries that support the historical reliability of the gospel of John. Essentially, he said that John knew the details of Jerusalem as it was prior to the A.D. 70 destruction, details that were unknown to archaeologists only a decade ago. SOURCE: Charlesworth, James H. "Gospel of John Backed by Archaeology." *Artifax*. 28:3 (Summer, 2013), 11-12.

738. Josephus, *Wars* 5.9.4 (410).

739. Zondervan's *New International Version Archaeological Study Bible*. (2005 ed.) 1739. See also 2 Chron. 32:2-8, 30; Isa. 22:9-11; 2 Kgs. 20:20; Wiseman, "Siloam." 3:1452.

740. It is the *Pool of Shelah* in Neh. 3:15, the *Waters of Shiloah* in Isa. 8:6 and the *Pool of Siloam* in Jn. 9:7; Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:343.

741. See comments by Rabbi John Fischer in 10.01.28.V where he discusses two unique healing methods of blind men including the event of John 9:1-12.

possible that Jesus purposefully mimicked existing methods? Admittedly, nearly all evangelical scholars would demand a negative answer to this question. Furthermore, why would He have done so? He already demonstrated so many healing miracles where other so-called healers failed. To make the possible answers more challenging, the healing of a blind man in Mark 8:22-26 (10.01.28) is the only recorded miracle that was performed in two stages. In that case, Jesus placed spittle on his eyes, but not mud.

After considerable research, a possible answer remains to be a little more than an educated guess. The use of spit and mud was clearly out of the ordinary routine of miracles that Jesus performed, and there may have been more to it than to simply demonstrate His Messianic calling and divine authority. The religious leaders were nearly petrified at this miracle and, as if to add insult to injury upon Pharisaic legalism, this healing was not performed in a private home or environment, but in a public forum where it received maximum attention. As stated previously, Jesus did not come to be a Healer of human bodies, but to be a Healer of souls. Miracles, with Jesus, were only a means to a higher end; credentials to enforce the reception of spiritual truth.

The Greeks, Romans, and other people groups used spit and mud because there was a widespread applied faith in its healing potency. Yet no records have been uncovered that verify a miraculous healing by this common ritual (except by those who claimed to be healers). Some scholars believe that the ancients thought of it as a cure for eye diseases, but not blindness.⁷⁴³ However, the Roman writer Suetonius [below], in a discussion of Vespasian, said that the emperor used spittle to restore the sight to a blind man.

Vespasian as yet lacked prestige and a certain divinity, so to speak, since he was an unexpected and still new-made emperor; but these were also given to him. A man of the people who was blind and another who was lame came to him together as he sat on the tribunal, begging for the help for their disorders, which Serapis had promised in a dream; for the god declared that Vespasian would restore the eyes, if he would spit upon them, and give strength to the leg, if he would condescend to touch it with his heel. Though he had hardly any faith that this could possibly succeed and, therefore, shrank even before making the attempt, he was at last prevailed upon by his friends and tried both things in public before a large crowd; and with success.

Suetonius, *The Deified Vespasian* 7:69-121

742. This writer does not have a firm answer, but has found other ancient writings in which the mud and water were said to have healed blindness. For whatever reason is given, it was Jesus who performed the true healing.

743. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 599.

It is noteworthy that Suetonius stated that the miracle was before a large crowd. Clearly Vespasian was seen as a god; especially since he claimed to be one and those who argued against it put their lives in danger. However, common sense argues against this miraculous claim. If the emperor was so successful in healing others, why didn't thousands come to him for a healing as they did to Jesus?

Mystery Unveiled **Nowhere in the Bible is the reality of pagan healings and exorcisms denied.**

Tacitus also has an account of Vespasian performing a healing, but it could be the same as reported by Suetonius. It was not uncommon that one historian's book was based, in part, on the work of another writer.⁷⁴⁴ Tacitus said that a blind person in Alexandria asked Vespasian for a healing remedy, prayer, and to sprinkle his cheeks and the balls of his eyes with saliva.⁷⁴⁵ He wrote of an event when Vespasian visited Alexandria and two men approached him. One was blind and the other had a diseased hand, but both claimed that their god sent them to the monarch. Vespasian initially refused. But the blind man persisted to ask that his eyes be "moistened with spittle," and the crippled man asked him to step on his diseased hand. Vespasian finally gave in and did as was requested of him, and

"The hand immediately recovered its power; the blind man saw once more. Both facts are attested to this day, when falsehood can bring no reward, by those who were present on the occasion."

Tacitus, *Histories* 4:81

Mystery Unveiled **If what the Roman writers said is true, and if Vespasian did indeed heal people, why didn't thousands flock to him as they did to Jesus?**

744. An example is Josephus who said that some of his information on Herod the Great came from the writings of John of Damascus, who was Herod's historian.

745. Tacitus, *History* 4:81.

Both were supposedly healed immediately. Yet how interesting it is that Tacitus made a comment about possible individuals who might think the report at being false. (Jesus never said anything like that.) His comment clearly suggests that it is really false. Nonetheless, it is it was about this time that Jesus apparently used a method and custom common of His day.⁷⁴⁶

Concerning another account from the first century, Aulus Persius Flaccus (34-62) was a Roman author of satires and poetry. He wrote of a woman and said,

She takes the babe from the cradle, and with her middle finger moistens its forehead and lips with spittle to keep away the evil eye.

Persius, *Satire 2:32-33*

Pliny the Elder (23-79) was a scholar, lawyer, soldier, and authored an encyclopedia of natural history that filled 37 books. His work remained unchallenged for nearly fourteen centuries but is now obviously rejected by modern science. His work gives insight into first century Roman life.⁷⁴⁷ Among his countless comments, he said,

We are to believe that by continually anointing each morning with fasting saliva, inflammations of the eyes are prevented.

Pliny the Elder, *Natural History 18:7*

While these pagan accounts are obviously mythical, whether there was a healing is hardly the point, because many believed it had actually occurred. Nowhere in the Bible is the reality of pagan healings and exorcisms denied. When Jesus came to heal, He did so by His divine power that was in sharp contrast to pagan formulas and rituals. Furthermore, Jesus healed some who were blind from birth, indicating that their illness was not a temporary medical condition from which they could have naturally recovered.

1. An opinion of this writer is that Jesus *might have* healed the man with spit and mud because others claimed to have done the same with a similar method, but Jesus actually healed where others failed.
2. A thought worthy of consideration is this: just as the ten plagues by Moses were against the gods of Egypt, could it be possible that some of the miracles performed by Jesus were against the Greco-Roman gods? Jesus lived in a Jewish community with

746. Barclay, "John." 2:42.

747. http://www.pbs.org/empires/romans/empire/pliny_elder.html. Retrieved December 7, 2013.

pagan Greek influences. He not only needed to prove to orthodox Jews who He was, but also to the Hellenized Jews who accepted many Greek ideologies.

Mystery Unveiled Could it be possible that, just as the ten plagues were against Egyptian gods, some miracles performed by Jesus were against the Greco-Roman gods?

3. Another opinion is that the use of mud reflects upon the creation of Adam in the Garden of Eden, and Jesus symbolically recreated the man's vision so he could see his Creator. But that fails to sufficiently answer "why"?

Mystery Unveiled Regardless of how Jesus healed, He never used magical powers or practices. He used the Divine power of His spoken word.

4. However, a popular book, *Tobit* may give a clue to this method of healing. The apocryphal book may best be described as a novel within the culture of the second century B.C. It reflects folklore, sound moral teaching, and is a romantic story in which, at one point, the angel Raphael tells Tobias to apply the gall of the fish to the blind eyes of his father Tobit. The segment of the story is as follows:

Raphael said, "I know, Tobias, that your father will open his eyes. You therefore must anoint his eyes with gall; and when they smart he will rub them, and will cause the white films to fall away, and he will see you."

Then Anna ran to meet them and embraced her son, and said to him, "I have seen you, my child; now I am ready to die." And they both wept. Tobit started toward the door and stumbled. But his son ran to him and took hold of his father and he sprinkled the gall upon his father's eyes, saying, "Be of good cheer father." And when his eyes began to smart he rubbed them, and the white films scaled off from the corners of his eyes. Then he saw his son and embraced him, and he wept and said, "Blessed art thou, O God, and blessed are all your holy angels ..."

Tobit 11:7-14⁷⁴⁸

All ancient people groups believed in healing by divine intervention.⁷⁴⁹ It is well known that healers applied some type of ointment to the eyes of the blind. While Jesus at times simply touched the eyes of the blind, quite possibly here He mimicked the narrative in *Tobit*, simply to demonstrate that He truly was the Healer as opposed to others who attempted similar feats. But with this divine revelation the disciples, too, had their eyes of understanding opened. The healing power of Jesus was superior to the healing attempts of the best medicine man or magician of the day.

In another case, an inscription was found at the ruins of the temple of Asclepius on the island in the Tiber River in Rome. It is believed to have originated in A.D. 138 and has a reference to the healing of a blind soldier attributed, in part, to “eye salve.”

To the blind soldier Valerius (to whom)⁷⁵⁰ Aprus the god commanded by an oracle to come and take the blood of a white rooster, to mix it with honey and eye salve, and to spread it on his eyes for three days. And he recovered his sight and came and presented an offering of thanksgiving to the god.

MEB / from *SIG* no. 1173⁷⁵¹

Did the ancient eye salve really heal the blind soldier? The fact that he was a soldier, obviously, indicates that at one point he had excellent vision, yet no reason for his temporary blindness is given. If, in fact, there really was a soldier by the name of Valerius, in all probability his sight was restored in spite of the medical brew.

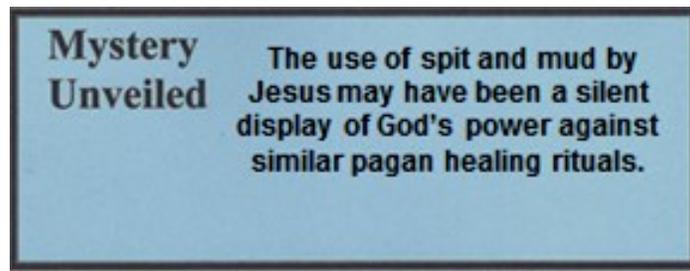
Historians have long said that many emperors and other monarchs claimed to be gods in order to tighten their fearful control on the general population. Stories were created in which they were said to have been born of a virgin or performed various miracles. As previously stated, if Vespasian indeed had the power to perform miracles, it is questionable as to why he did not perform more of them and why thousands of people did not follow and worship him as they did Jesus.

748. The book of Tobit is part of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Bible, but is not in the Protestant Bible. Generally, it is classified as an apocryphal book by Protestant and Messianic Jewish scholars.

749. Atheists were all but unknown, and frequently mocked for their stupidity.

750. Clarification mine.

751. Cited by Boring, Berger, and Colpe, eds. *Hellenistic Commentary to the New Testament*. 284.



There are some distinct differences between ancient rulers, priests, and the ministry of Jesus. They are as follows:

1. Ruling monarchs were proud, arrogant, and usually cared little for the common people. Jesus, on the other hand, loved everyone, was humble and demonstrated genuine care with compassion.
2. While the pagans claimed to have healed only a few people, Jesus literally healed hundreds if not thousands. The pagans had no witnesses, whereas Jesus had multitudes of witnesses.
3. As previously stated, claims of divinity and healings were used by rulers to solidify their power and control, while the demonstrations of healings by Jesus, along with His message, pointed people to the kingdom of God. Rulers demanded everyone recognize them as divine, whereas Jesus, by His actions, permitted observers to conclude whether He was divine.
4. Possibly more important, the use of mud and spittle to make some eye salve was probably a silent attack against the pagans who used a similar method. Jesus quietly confronted the gods of the Greeks, Romans, and Hellenized Jews. He had untold numbers of witnesses who received healings or saw someone who received a healing. The pagans had only myths and a few testimonials of healings, that even they did not believe were true. In essence, He demonstrated His power over the demonic powers in a manner similar to that which God used when He sent the plagues upon Egypt fifteen centuries earlier. At that time, the plagues represented various Egyptian gods; this time Jesus demonstrated who He was.
5. Pagan healers wanted as much public exposure as possible, while Jesus often told people not to tell others and avoided maximum public exposure.

The healing of eyes with saliva was a known remedy, even among the Jews. The Jerusalem Talmud *Sorah* 16,4) records the story of a Rabbi Meir and a woman famous for her ability to

heal sick eyes with her saliva.⁷⁵² Ironically, those who carefully listened and observed Jesus recognized His attributes, while the leading Pharisees and Sadducees remained spiritually blind.⁷⁵³ In agreement with the Pharisees, a Jewish writer a few centuries later gave instructions in the Talmud on how *not* to heal a blind person with spit and mud.⁷⁵⁴ Obviously his directives were a subtle attack against Jesus.

Many theologians have suggested that since God created man from dirt in the Garden of Eden, Jesus used spit and mud to recreate the blind man's eyes.⁷⁵⁵ When the first Adam opened his eyes, he saw his Creator Jesus; when the blind man opened his eyes he saw his Healer Jesus. Regardless of the reason or method of healing Jesus used, it was obvious to the observing audience that His power and authority could have only come from God. Finally, the reason for the two-step healing of a blind man is discussed in 10.01.28.Q1.

“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents?” The common thinking was that any disease or infirmity as this was the result of sin in the family.⁷⁵⁶ This was *not* based on any Scripture, but an opinion that became a Pharisaic doctrine. Certain sins of the parents were thought to have resulted in specific physical ailments of leprosy or blindness in their children. This curse (Jn. 9:1-12) was considered typical evidence that sins were passed on to the proverbial “third and fourth generation.” In other cases, some Jews believed a child might sin in its mother's womb. To support this argument, the rabbis referred to the struggle between Jacob and Esau prior to their births (Gen. 25:22).

In light of the fact that for four centuries there was not a single prophet in the land, there was extensive corruption in both the temple and government, and Hellenism was making great inroads into Jewish theology and lifestyles. It should not be surprising that superstition had increased significantly. One of those beliefs was that the moral state of a pregnant woman could be passed on to her unborn child. For this reason, it was believed that the apostasy of one of the great rabbis was caused by the sinful delight of his mother passing through an idol grove. So therefore, the community blamed her for the rabbi's spiritual failure.⁷⁵⁷ No wonder they asked, “Who sinned?”

752. Cited by Tsvi Sadan, “He Spat on the Ground and made Clay with the Saliva” (Part 3) *Israel Today*. Oct. 2013. No. 171. 14.

753. Major, Manson, and Wright, *The Mission and Message of Jesus*. 813.

754. Jerusalem Talmud, *Shabbat* 108-120.

755. Zondervan's *New International Version Archaeological Study Bible*. (2005 ed.). 1706.

756. There were four kinds of people that were considered as good as dead, and it was believed that in all four situations their situation was a divine judgment. They were the blind, the leper, the poor, and the childless.

757. Cited by Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 2:181.

“Born blind.” The reasons children were born with blindness were obviously unknown to the ancients, but modern scientists have been able to make an educated guess of one possible cause. The venereal diseases of gonorrhea and chlamydia are known to cause a number of ailments, and many babies born to mothers with such diseases are born blind.⁷⁵⁸ It has been estimated that around 1900, about 30 percent of all blindness were the result of sexually transmitted diseases.⁷⁵⁹

A point of consideration is that: If the ancients believed that blindness *could have been* the result of a venereal disease that underscores their question of **“Who sinned?”** However, even more condemning is the increased probability that the blindness resulted from another cause, but the parents were suspected of this “sinfulness.” Regardless of the cause, to have a family member born blind was a horrible stigma. Even though the Jewish culture was socially conservative, their Hellenistic Jewish and Gentile neighbors did not hold the same values.

Most people who were blind became life-long beggars. They were not permitted in the inner sanctuary of the temple, but were usually seated near the entrance of a “holy place” such as the temple gate or along the road leading to the temple or a synagogue.⁷⁶⁰ In this case, Jesus met a blind beggar in the Court of the Gentiles where He healed him, and told him to go and **“wash in the Pool of Siloam.”** He obeyed Jesus and immediately had strength for the long walk to the pool.

Amazingly, Jesus had never told him he would be healed, yet he was made whole. Since the miracle occurred during the Feast of Tabernacles, the pool was one of the most crowded places. As part of the religious rituals, an unusual number of priests were needed to perform the various services, one of which was to carry water from this pool to the altar. Hence, many priests who were not a part of the temple establishment were present and witnessed Jesus performing this messianic miracle.

The Talmud states that during the one week celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, a procession went to the pool to bring water in a golden vessel to the temple.⁷⁶¹ There it was poured out as a libation of thanksgiving to God. John 7 indicates that Jesus attended the Feast and that halfway

758. Today newborn infants receive a few drops of silver nitrate solution or antibiotic as a preventative solution.

759. Hobrunk, *Modern Science in the Bible*. 16-17.

760. A few examples are: 1) The impotent man of Acts 3:2-10 was near the Gate Beautiful, also known as the Nicanor Gate. 2) The blind and lame people in the temple who asked Jesus for a healing were probably in the Court of the Gentiles (i.e., Mt. 21:14). 3) The man who was blind from birth probably met Jesus at one of the two southern temple gates (Jn. 9:1-8). 4) The blind man of Jericho were along the major road that festival caravans took to Jerusalem, and that is where they met Jesus. 5) Jesus also met a blind man at the Pool of Siloam, another place considered to be “holy.”

761. Babylonian Talmud, *Sukkah*. 4.9.

through the festival, He went to the temple courts to teach the crowds that He was the living water (Jn. 7:34). Clearly, everyone's attention was on the miracle and the message.

11.02.22 Jn. 9:13-17 Pool of Siloam

PHARISEES QUESTION MAN

¹³ They brought the man who used to be blind to the Pharisees. ¹⁴ The day that Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes was a Sabbath. ¹⁵ So again the Pharisees asked him how he received his sight.

“He put mud on my eyes,” he told them. “I washed and I can see.”

¹⁶ Therefore some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for He doesn't keep the Sabbath!” But others were saying, “How can a sinful man perform such signs?” And there was a division among them.

¹⁷ Again they asked the blind man, “What do you say about Him, since He opened your eyes?”

“He's a prophet,” he said.

In this passage the two main points of controversy between the leading Pharisees and Jesus are revealed.

1. The interpretation and application of the Mosaic Law to daily life and
2. The claim of Jesus to be the unique and eternal knowledge of God.

Every conversation Jesus had with His hostile critics demonstrated that they did not share the same opinion as He did concerning the Mosaic Law and its relation to life and God.

“How can a sinful man perform such signs?” Finally, someone asked a question of intelligent observation. They recognized that Jesus was born out of wedlock and yet they could find no fault (meaning sin in reference to the Written Law of Moses) in Him. Since the religious leaders saw Him only as an ordinary man, they concluded that He must obviously be a sinner. Furthermore, He did not honor the Sabbath laws that they had created.

After telling His disciples and others that He was the light of the world, He healed a blind man. While many were discussing the reason for this man's blindness, they failed to connect this miracle with His teaching. When the man received his sight, Jesus told him to wash His face in the Pool of Siloam, the same pool where the priests had drawn living water to pour on the altar of God. Ironically, the blind man could not only see, but he could also perceive who Jesus was, while the critics chose to remain spiritually blind.

“And there was a division among them.” The issue of division was that, on one hand, a man born blind was healed and the identity of the Person who healed him was clearly revealed because this was a messianic miracle. On the other hand, Jesus performed the miracle on the Sabbath which violated Sabbath restrictions.⁷⁶² The event was an interesting reflection upon John's theme of light vs. darkness; belief vs. unbelief. When Jesus said He did not come to bring peace but a sword, He meant that there would be divisions among the people concerning His identity — it would be a matter of belief vs. unbelief.

When the religious authorities then confronted the former blind man, he told them, **“He's a prophet.”** That was the greatest compliment any Jew could give to another; that Jesus was no ordinary man.⁷⁶³ And as such, he was among the first to proclaim the New Kingdom of God. This had a repelling effect on the leading Pharisees.⁷⁶⁴ However, at this point he was probably too fearful to call Jesus “the Messiah.”

11.02.23 Jn. 9:18-23

PHARISEES QUESTION THE HEALED MAN'S PARENTS.

¹⁸ The Jews did not believe this about him—that he was blind and received sight — until they summoned the parents of the one who had received his sight.

¹⁹ They asked them, “Is this your son, the one you say was born blind? How then does he now see?”

²⁰ “We know this is our son and that he was born blind,” his parents answered. ²¹ “But we don't know how he now sees, and we don't know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he's of age. He will speak for himself.” ²² His parents said these things because they were afraid of the Jews, since the Jews had already agreed that if anyone

762. See 02.04.06 “Sabbath Day Observances.”

763. Macartney, *Great Interviews of Jesus*. 23-25, 88.

764. See also 10.01.25 and 10.01.29.

confessed Him as Messiah, he would be banned from the synagogue.²³ This is why his parents said, “He’s of age; ask him.”

As stated previously, what both the leading Pharisees and Sadducees missed, what they did not learn from the destruction of Solomon’s Temple and the exile, is that God cares more about obedience, steadfast love, justice, righteousness, and humility than sacrifices, festivals, offerings, and assemblies.⁷⁶⁵

The indignant Pharisees said the healed man and any other followers of Jesus would be **“banned from the synagogue.”** Nothing was more important to a Jewish person than the synagogue. This was a powerful response because it was the local community center, the center of social and religious life outside of the temple. But what religious rule did these people break which would cause the religious leaders to ban them from the synagogue?

Just as the Jews had prioritized the 613 commandments of the Torah,⁷⁶⁶ they had also established 24 violations that would result in excommunication, and prioritized them as well. One of those regulations was decreed, *for the necessity of the time*.⁷⁶⁷ In essence, this was a “catch-all” reason that could be applied to anyone, at any time, for any reason. The parents and their healed son were probably threatened with violating this decree.⁷⁶⁸ To be excommunicated or “put out” was a horrible social stigma. Scholars agree that there were three levels of excommunication, but slightly different in the length of each one (see footnotes). In first century Judaism there were three levels of excommunication as follows:

1. The lightest level was the *neziphah* or *n’zifah* (rebuke) in which a person was removed from seven to thirty days.⁷⁶⁹ An individual such as the synagogue president could impose this penalty.⁷⁷⁰ A New Testament example is found in 1 Timothy 5:1.

765. Jer. 7:21-23; Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:21-24; Mic. 6:6-8.

766. The 613 laws were observed only during the times of the tabernacle or temple. Today, only 271 of those Mosaic commands can be observed. See Parry, *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to the Talmud*. 221.

767. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:345.

768. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:344-46.

769. Fruchtenbaum says this level of discipline had a limit of 7 days. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 16, page 6; Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 320.

770. A ban from one synagogue did not mean likewise from all synagogues. Some scholars believe that Jesus may have been banned from some synagogues, which is why He did not teach in them in the latter part of His ministry. See Farrar, *The Life of Christ*. 310, 326.

2. A moderate level of punishment was the *niddui* or *niddul* (casting out; rejection) of the congregation.⁷⁷¹ This action required the decision of three persons and the excommunication lasted for an additional thirty days. A New Testament example is found in Titus 3:10.

3. The most severe form of excommunication was the *cherem*, which resulted in the excommunicated person being treated as if dead.⁷⁷² A New Testament example is found in Matthew 18:15-20. Such treatment included the following:⁷⁷³

- a. This person was not permitted to be in a group of ten or more men. Obviously that meant he could not attend a synagogue service.
- b. This person was not permitted to engage in any public prayers or services.
- c. The public had to keep at least four cubits of distance from him.
- d. No conversations were to be held with him.
- e. Whenever he died, stones were to be thrown on his coffin and mourning for him was forbidden.⁷⁷⁴

Mystery Unveiled In light of the prevailing belief of "binding and loosening," the parents believed that if they were evicted from the synagogue, they would likewise be cast into eternal hell.

The context of John 9:18-23 appears to be that the excommunication of the man healed by Jesus was a moderate one. Clearly, there were three or more individuals who challenged Jesus and the healed man, and also had the authority to excommunicate. Yet to experience the healing was the most exhilarating one, one that demonstrated that God still loved them.

771. Fruchtenbaum says this level of discipline was between 8 and 30 days. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor's Manual*. Class 16, page 6; Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 320.

772. Farrar, *The Life of Christ*. 309; Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*. 184.

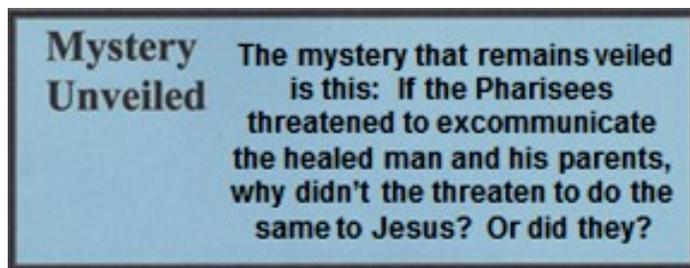
773. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 2:185.

774. Some historians believe that the more severe or restrictive demands (c,d,e) upon the excommunicated person do not reflect first century Jewish practices, but are of a later period.

This miracle polarized the differences between the followers of Jesus and those who opposed Him. Common belief was that when the messiah came, he would perform three kinds of messianic miracles that would unquestionably demonstrate His Messiahship: He would

1. Heal a Jewish leper,
2. Cast a demon or demons out of a mute or deaf person (In various Inter-Testamental Jewish writings, the advent of the Messiah meant that evil would be defeated.⁷⁷⁵), and
3. Heal someone who was born blind.⁷⁷⁶

Jesus had now performed the last of the three and the leading Pharisees were scathing mad. But there is a mystery that remains as such – a mystery! If the Pharisees threatened to excommunicate the man who was healed or his parents, why didn't they threaten to excommunicate Jesus? Or was Jesus excommunicated and the gospel writers believed there were other matters more important to record in their gospels than this?



Finally, in today's Western culture it is nearly impossible to comprehend the social stigma that was associated with first century excommunication. Whenever it occurred, the chief authorities of the local synagogue read the name of the excommunicated person, the length of time the sentence was to be in effect, and the reason for the judgment. The healed man was threatened with excommunication, which was also a threat to his parents. However, there is no record that this form of punishment was never threatened upon Jesus. Is it possible that Jesus was either threatened with excommunication, or was excommunicated from some local synagogues, and the gospel writers never wrote of it?

775. 1 *Enoch* 55:4; *Jubilees* 23:29; *Testament of Simeon* 6:6; *Testament of Judah* 25:3; *Testament of Moses* 10:1, and the *Testament of Solomon* 20:16-17.

776. Research on the "Messianic Miracles" is credited to Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, a Messianic scholar and director of Ariel Ministries in San Antonio, TX, formerly of Tustin, CA. For more information, see <http://ariel.org/>. Retrieved September 26, 2013. See also 06.03.08.V (Video), 06.01.03 and the comparison of Dead Sea Scroll fragments 4Q278 and 4Q521 with Luke 4:16-30 at 06.02.02; See also Fruchtenbaum, *Messianic Miracles*. 4; Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context*. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 10, Session 2.

11.02.24 Jn. 9:24-34

PHARISEES QUESTION MAN AGAIN

²⁴ So a second time they summoned the man who had been blind and told him, “Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner!”

²⁵ He answered, “Whether or not He’s a sinner, I don’t know. One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I can see!”

²⁶ Then they asked him, “What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?”

²⁷ “I already told you,” he said, “and you didn’t listen. Why do you want to hear it again? You don’t want to become His disciples too, do you?”

²⁸ They ridiculed him: “You’re that man’s disciple, but we’re Moses’ disciples. ²⁹ We know that God has spoken to Moses. But this man — we don’t know where He’s from!”

³⁰ “This is an amazing thing,” the man told them. “You don’t know where He is from, yet He opened my eyes! ³¹ We know that God doesn’t listen to sinners, but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He listens to him. ³² Throughout history no one has ever heard of someone opening the eyes of a person born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, He wouldn’t be able to do anything.”

³⁴ “You were born entirely in sin,” they replied, “and are you trying to teach us?” Then they threw him out.

It is interesting to observe how rapidly the man’s faith, insight, and courage grew during this brief examination. Previously he stated that he did not know who Jesus was, but then stated that Jesus must be a prophet. Like the Samaritan woman whom Jesus met at the well, her insight grew exponentially during the brief discussion.

“**Give glory to God.**” The people who witnessed the miracle realized their purpose of life; to give glory to God.⁷⁷⁷ But the religious leaders who were anointed for a ministry to praise and glorify God, not only failed to do so, but also brutally condemned the Healer as well as the one who was healed.

⁷⁷⁷. See Josh. 7:19; 1 Sam. 6:5; Jer. 13:16; Lk. 17:18.

“I was blind, and now I can see!” This man had more vision than he could ever imagine. He not only was able to see the world around him, but he also had his spiritual eyes opened and he “saw” that Jesus was the Son of God. Amazingly, this is the condition of all humanity – people are blind to the desires of God until they respond to Him and the Holy Spirit opens their eyes.

“You don’t want to become His disciples too, do you?” This statement was not by one of the leading Pharisees, but by the blind man who was healed. It was an amazing confrontation to the religious leaders, who were insulted by his bold statement. In essence, if the religious leaders were so close to God, how could Jesus heal him and they not know about it? The question “You don’t want to become His disciples too, do you?” was nothing other than a comment of sarcasm. All this occurred even though he had not met Jesus, and did not even know of Him until verse 35.

“Throughout history no one has ever heard of someone opening the eyes of a person born blind.” This is a key statement to identify this miracle as a “messianic miracle.” The Greeks believed that their gods healed the blind and Roman emperors claimed they had divine healing powers as well. This phrase demonstrated that no one else, including the Greeks and Romans, had performed such an incredible miracle. Nonetheless, the Pharisees threw him out.

Finally, it is noteworthy to review the progression of revelation of how the healed blind man recognized Jesus. The Samaritan woman also had a progressive revelation written of her (see 06.01.03).

1. He called Jesus a man in verse 11.
2. In verse 17 he said Jesus was a prophet.
3. He concluded by saying that Jesus was the Son of Man/God (verse 35). It was a good revelation for him but an undesirable conclusion for the leading Pharisees and other critics.

11.02.25 Jn. 9:35-41

JESUS CONFRONTS THE HEALED MAN

³⁵ **When Jesus heard that they had thrown the man out, He found him and asked, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”**

³⁶ **“Who is He, Sir, that I may believe in Him?” he asked.**

³⁷ Jesus answered, “You have seen Him; in fact, He is the One speaking with you.”

³⁸ “I believe, Lord!” he said, and he worshiped Him.

³⁹ Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgment, in order that those who do not see will see and those who do see will become blind.”

⁴⁰ Some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and asked Him, “We aren’t blind too, are we?”

⁴¹ “If you were blind,” Jesus told them, “you wouldn’t have sin. But now that you say, ‘We see’ — your sin remains.

This discussion took place in the temple where a giant menorah stood. It was so huge that a priest had to climb a ladder to light its seven lamps, which gave a soft glow throughout the temple area. Jesus had just given sight to the blind man and He used the menorah as His object lesson when He said that He was the light of the world. The blind man received both physical and spiritual sight in the temple. Now Jesus would continue the conversation and discuss the true shepherd of the people of God.⁷⁷⁸ Their blindness was that they did not recognize, nor did they want to, Jesus as being sent from heaven as their Messiah. They refused to acknowledge the powerful signs that pointed to this fact. According to the Jewish Bible, a sign is “an outward compelling proof of divine authority.”⁷⁷⁹

11.02.25.Q1 Does John 9:39 conflict with 5:22 and 8:15?

In John 9:39 Jesus said that He came into this world to judge it, but in 5:22 and 8:15 He said that judgment is left to Him because the Father judges no one. The difference lays in the fact that in John 9:39 Jesus said that His “judgment” was a clarification of where people stood in their relationship with God. As previously stated, he came to fulfill the Mosaic Law, not abolish it. He taught the Kingdom of God and helped people discern what God desires. He did not come to condemn the world (5:22; 8:15) but to save it. However, in His future return He will judge all persons and nations. On an important side note, the Church has adopted a Roman view of *law*, that means *restriction* and is therefore considered to be *bad*, while the Hebrew Bible views *law* as *instruction* and *freedom*, and therefore, *good*. Therefore, there is no conflict.

778. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. (Video “D”).

779. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 224-25; Ex. 4:8-9; Deut. 13:1; Isa. 7:10-17, 38:7.

11.02.26 Jn. 10:1-6

SHEEP AND THEIR SHEPHERD

¹ “I assure you: Anyone who doesn’t enter the sheep pen by the door but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a robber. ² The one who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ The doorkeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought all his own outside, he goes ahead of them. The sheep follow him because they recognize his voice. ⁵ They will never follow a stranger; instead they will run away from him, because they don’t recognize the voice of strangers.”

⁶ Jesus gave them this illustration, but they did not understand what He was telling them.

John 10 is known as the “Shepherd Chapter” of the Bible. It is here where Jesus was again criticized by the Pharisees (the shepherds of the people) for healing on the Sabbath. The prophet Jeremiah had little good to say about the Jewish leaders in his day. He warned that those who failed to care for the people of God would be severely punished (Jer. 23:1-2). Ezekiel gave stronger words (Ezek. 34). The response of Jesus was an obvious reflection upon Ezekiel 34 since the shepherds were more concerned with their own welfare than caring for the common people. Careful reading of the text reveals that the issue begins in John 9:40 where the Pharisees are identified as blind thieves who are deceiving the flock. The duplicated phrase of 10:1 emphasized the preceding passage after which Jesus gave His parable of the good shepherd. He often referred to Himself as the Good Shepherd.⁷⁸⁰ The Pharisees still failed to understand Him (Jn. 10:6) and, therefore, He gave another illustration.

Jesus had the right credentials; He had the right genealogy, the right confirmation at the time of His baptism, fulfilled the prophecies of His birth and life, and performed the messianic miracles to enter the sheep pen by the gate. The leading Pharisees and other religious leaders created their own way to enter the sheep pen and harm the sheep with false teachings. The Sadducees, including Caiaphas and his entire family, were committed to a Hellenistic lifestyle and gave only lip service to the Torah.

There is a problem in understanding this passage. But it is not so much with the passage, but rather, the simple fact that people today are so far removed from this ancient agricultural society and Jewish roots, that they have difficulty perceiving the full depth of its meaning. In ancient times, shepherds did not raise sheep for meat, although on rare occasion one was slaughtered for

780. See Hebrews 13:20 that refers to our Lord Jesus as the Great Shepherd of the sheep and 1 Peter 2:25 that refers to stray sheep who returned to the Shepherd, the Overseer of their souls.

a feast. The sheep were raised for wool and, therefore, they became very old. The shepherd often had a name for each one. Furthermore, they listened and obeyed him very carefully.

“I assure you,” This phrase has also been translated, *I tell you the truth, truly, truly, or verily, verily*, which underscored the importance of the preceding six verses.⁷⁸¹ The term *amen* (Gk. *amen*, 281)⁷⁸² is a confirmation of truthfulness. In the Greek, there is a deliberate repetition of a word to underscore its significance. This was a common practice for the use of emphasis. In this case, John placed an unusual emphasis on the fact that he is stating a truth that must be carefully observed.⁷⁸³ Statements such as this have recently given scholars serious consideration that this gospel may have originally been written in Hebrew.

Some scholars believe that the phrase *truly, truly*, or its translated equivalent, places the emphasis on the *preceding* statement, not the following statement as is often translated. As such, it should be translated, *amen, amen*.⁷⁸⁴ Since neither Greek nor Hebrew had punctuation marks, the translators throughout history have assumed this was to emphasize the phrase that followed, not what had preceded it. The original writings did not have chapter or verse divisions. Historians have given various dates as to when these were incorporated into Scriptures. Some say chapter divisions date to the seventh century, but most most scholars believe chapter and verse divisions were added between the years 1228 and 1551 respectively.⁷⁸⁵ Regardless, there appears to be a concensus that the phrase “amen, amen” should be at the beginning of the next verse rather than at the end as it is now. However, its present position does not change the meaning, only the emphasis as it would have been understood in the first century. When numerous Old Testament passages are examined, *Amen* is said by God to mean, *it is and shall be so*, and by men, *so let it be*.⁷⁸⁶

781. Blizzard III. “Jesus: I am the Good Shepherd.” *Yavo Digest* 1:1, 7. See also 05.04.02 and 15.01.05.

782. Vine, “Amen.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:25; and “Verily” 2:659.

783. <https://mail.google.com/mail/?shva=1#inbox/135861d7fedfed9d> Retrieved February 22, 2012. See also Jn. 1:51; 5:19, 24, 25; 6:26, 32, 47, 53; 8:34, 51, 58; 10:1, 7; 12:24; 13:16, 20, 21, 38; 14:12; 16:20, 23.

784. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 279.

785. Most historical sources credit Stephen Langton for placing chapter divisions in the Vulgate Bible in the year 1228. Then, in 1240, Hugh De St. Cher introduced verse divisions in the Hebrew Bible. But it wasn’t for another three centuries, in 1551, when Robert Stephen introduced verse divisions in the Greek New Testament. See Heysham, *The Birth of the Bible*. 10.

786. Vine, “Amen.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:25.

“The doorkeeper opens it for him.” “The doorkeeper” is the hired hand who guarded the sheep at night while the shepherd slept. He opened the sheep-fold door in the morning at the arrival of the shepherd.

11.02.27 Jn. 10:7-10

THE GATE FOR THE SHEEP

⁷ So Jesus said again, “I assure you: I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep didn’t listen to them. ⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. ¹⁰ A thief comes only to steal and to kill and to destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance.

In biblical times there were two kinds of sheepfolds. The discussion by Jesus includes both kinds.

1. In villages there were communal sheepfolds where all the shepherds kept their sheep. This pen had a door and only one person held the key. In the morning when the shepherds came, all the sheep followed the shepherd whose voice they recognized. This is the kind of sheep-fold Jesus referred to in John 10:2-3.

2. Sheepfolds in the countryside were large pens enclosed by a stone wall, but there was no door. Briars were often planted on the outside of the wall to deter attacks by wild animals and thieves. But to protect the sheep at night, the shepherd would sleep across the entrance. No sheep could go out or any other animal or person could enter without going over the shepherd and waking him up. In the most literal sense, he was the door to the sheepfold; Jesus is the sheep-fold door of John 10:7.

In this passage Jesus presented His seventh “I am” statement. Not only did John present the divine characteristics of Jesus with those statements, but he verbally underlined their significance by mentioning seven statements, the number of wholeness and completeness.

During the day, shepherds and shepherdesses guarded the sheep. In the later afternoon, however, the women returned to their homes and the shepherds guarded the sheep that were in the sheepfold. These village sheepfolds or pens were stone wall enclosures with thorny briars along top and outer edges. In the event the sheepfold did not have a gate, or if it were broken, then the good shepherd would sleep across the open entrance and thereby protect his flock with his life. An uncommitted shepherd might attempt to scare away a predator, but would not risk his life for the sheep. A good shepherd would risk his life for his sheep.



11.02.27.A. A RECONSTRUCTED SHEEPFOLD. Sheepfolds or pens were built of stone and were topped with briars to discourage predators and thieves. This reconstructed sheepfold was photographed by the author at the former Pilgrim Center in Jerusalem.

Jesus said that, **“I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance.”** This passage follows the ten verses in which Jesus is speaking of the relationship He desires to have with His followers. It reflects that God’s desire is the highest and best for every person and He warned that the thief would be the one who desires to steal, kill, and destroy the followers of our Lord.

11.02.28 Jn. 10:11-18

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

¹¹ **“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.**
¹² **The hired man, since he is not the shepherd and doesn’t own the sheep, leaves them and runs away when he sees a wolf coming. The wolf then snatches and scatters them.** ¹³ **This happens because he is a hired man and doesn’t care about the sheep.**

¹⁴ “I am the good shepherd. I know My own sheep, and they know Me, ¹⁵ as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father. I lay down My life for the sheep. ¹⁶ But I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will listen to My voice. Then there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷ This is why the Father loves Me, because I am laying down My life so I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down on My own. I have the right to lay it down, and I have the right to take it up again. I have received this command from My Father.”

The imagery of a shepherd in the Hebrew Bible is significant, far more than a lonely individual in the countryside tending a herd of sheep. Parables are short stories that include a key figure, such as a king, farmer, or a shepherd, who is representative of God. However, shepherds are also described as the religious leaders of the Jewish people. Several examples of a shepherd image either as God or as a leader are,

1. The Lord is my shepherd (Ps. 23:1)
2. The leader of Israel is a shepherd (Ps. 80:1)
3. Cyrus, king of Persia is called a shepherd (Isa. 44:28)
4. “Bad shepherds” who failed to be righteous will be slaughtered (Jer. 25:34-36)
5. God is the shepherd who judges between the sheep (Ezek. 34:17)

When Jesus said that He was the Good Shepherd, He was essentially stating that He was far superior to any other shepherd; associating Himself with God. That was a profound statement to make to those who had experienced a number of evil monarchs since the Antiochus V Epiphanes and the Maccabean Revolt of the second century B.C. There are numerous writings in ancient Jewish books that pertain to a good shepherd. Not the following:

When a sheep strays from the pasture, who seeks [for] whom? Does the sheep seek the shepherd, or [does] the shepherd seek the sheep? Obviously, the shepherd seeks the sheep. In the same way, the Holy One, blessed be He, looks for the lost.

Midrash *Psalms* 119:3⁷⁸⁷

787. Cited by Young, *The Parables of Jesus*. 192.

Whether this comment in the Midrash was part of the oral tradition before or after the time of Jesus is not all that important, because there are many such narratives from both eras of history. Again, Jewish writings affirm the fact that orthodox rabbis and Jesus both firmly established their teachings upon the Hebrew Bible.

“I am the good shepherd.” Jesus is the good shepherd, but not an ordinary good shepherd. The Greek term for *good* is *agathos*, which simply describes a good moral quality. However, Jesus did not use that term, He used *kalos*, which is *good moral quality* coupled to *sympathy* and *kindness*.⁷⁸⁸ His passion for being a superior shepherd arises out of His love, knowing that His followers are challenged by two dangers.

1. Dangers from the outside include persecutions and related dangers.
2. Dangers from within the church include false shepherds who have their own agendas.

Again Jesus spoke of the false shepherd as **“the hired man”** who is more concerned about his own safety while attending sheep in the presence of wild animals, as compared to the good shepherd who would be willing to die for his sheep. Since the synagogue leaders were known as shepherds, His accusers immediately recognized that He was speaking of them in the most negative manner. To add insult to injury, this discussion was held in a public forum where the common people could see Jesus express these ideas and sentiments.

Then Jesus startled everyone by saying, **“I have other sheep.”** He had always referred to the Jewish believers as His “sheep,” but, the phrase **“other sheep”** is a clear reference to the Gentiles who would become His disciples in the future as part of a single worldwide body of believers. This is a clear indication that some day He will unite Jews and Gentiles into one flock with one shepherd.

Previously, his critics were shocked when He healed the Roman officer’s servant (Mt. 8:5-13) and the daughter of the Canaanite woman (Mt. 15:22-28) along with other Gentiles. They were among His “other sheep.” He does not see denominations such as conservative Baptists or Pentecostals; or Messianic Jews or Palestinian Christians, or as Paul would later say, neither “Neither Greek nor Jew.” Jesus looked beyond our day and saw a single body of faithful, loyal, and holy people. The Jewish Bible often stated that salvation was to be offered to the Gentiles.⁷⁸⁹ However, by this time many Jewish leaders assumed that God had no future plans for the Gentiles, but would destroy them instead.

788. Barclay, “John.” 2:62.

789. This is a partial listing: Gen. 12:3; 18:14; 22:18; 26:4; Isa. 11:10; 19:6; 54:1-3; 60:1-3; Hosea 1:10.

11.02.29 Jn. 10:19-21**JEWS STILL DIVIDED**

¹⁹ Again a division took place among the Jews because of these words. ²⁰ Many of them were saying, “He has a demon and He’s crazy! Why do you listen to Him?”

²¹ Others were saying, “These aren’t the words of someone demon-possessed. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

Again John recorded that many Jewish people accepted the argument of the scribes and leading Pharisees, that Jesus used demonic powers to perform miracles. How could they have drawn such a conclusion?

1. One problem was that whatever concepts they had of the messiah, and various groups had a variety of ideas,⁷⁹⁰ Jesus did not match any of them.
2. The idea that Jesus could be God was simply an unacceptable idea. It not only violated their understanding of the Torah, but also reminded them of the horrors that Antiochus IV Epiphanies, who claimed to be god, inflicted upon them in the second century B.C.
3. A number of persons had claimed to be the messiah,⁷⁹¹ all were proven to be false prophets, and Jesus, although quite different, was said to be one of them.
4. At this point Jesus was at times teaching in parables, often leaving His critics in bewilderment and confusion
5. The leading Pharisees said there was no explanation for the profound miracles that Jesus performed, other than His use of demonic powers. They refused to believe anything else.

790. See 12.03.01.Q1 “What ‘Messianic problems’ did the Jewish leaders have with Jesus?” and 12.03.01.A “Chart of Key Points of the Messianic Problems.” See also 02.03.09 “Messianic Expectations”; 05.04.02.Q1 “What were the Jewish expectations of the Messiah?” and Appendix 25: “False Prophets, Rebels, Significant Events, and Rebellions that Impacted the First Century Jewish World.”

791. For a partial listing of false prophets and false messiahs, see Appendix 25: “False Prophets, Rebels, Significant Events, And Rebellions That Impacted The First Century Jewish World.”



**Please note that all references to footnotes are in the “Works Cited”
section located in the last volume.**