

MYSTERIES OF THE MESSIAH

Mini-Vol. 10: Units 12 & 13

William H. Heinrich

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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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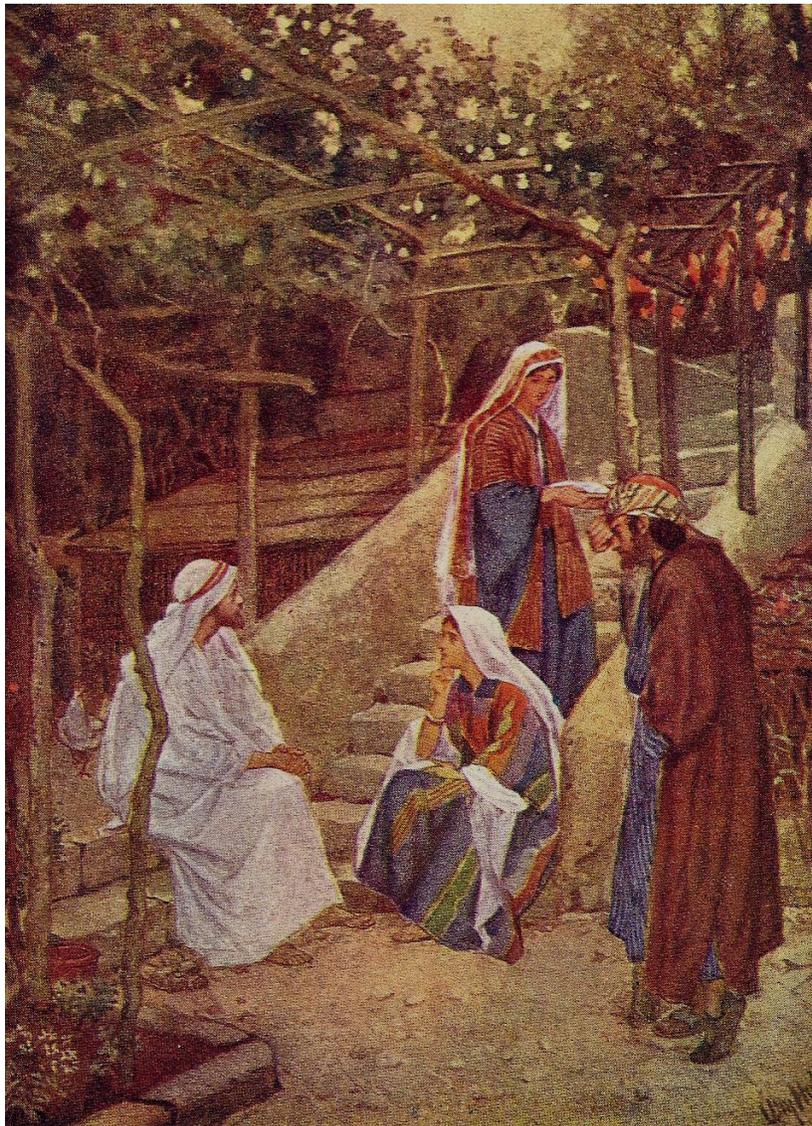
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Unit 12

The Galilean Ministry Ends

Chapter 01

The Disciples Function As Apostles



12.01.00.A. JESUS VISITS HIS FRIENDS IN BETHANY. Artwork by William Hole of the Royal Scottish Academy of Art, 1876. Jesus speaks with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. His three friends lived in

Bethany, a village on the southern slope of the Mount of Olives, a short walk from the old city of Jerusalem. (See Luke 10:38-42.)

12.01.01 Mt. 19:1-2; Lk. 9:51-56 (See also Mk. 10:1) Galilee to Samaria to Judea

GALILEAN MINISTRY ENDS

Mt. ¹ When Jesus had finished this instruction, He departed from Galilee and went to the region of Judea across the Jordan. ² Large crowds followed Him, and He healed them there.

Lk. ⁵¹ When the days were coming to a close for Him to be taken up, He determined to journey to Jerusalem. ⁵² He sent messengers ahead of Him, and on the way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make preparations for Him. ⁵³ But they did not welcome Him, because He determined to journey to Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ When the disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?"

⁵⁵ But He turned and rebuked them, ⁵⁶ and they went to another village.

At this point the Galilean ministry ends, as Jesus predicted in Matthew 16:21. His time on earth was coming to a close and He began His final journey to Jerusalem.

“Region of Judea across the Jordan.” The gospels give interesting insights into geography and political areas. Today, Judea is not normally considered to be on the eastern side of the Jordan River, but Matthew and Mark clearly state this because the region of Perea was sometimes also known as the “region of Judea across the Jordan.”¹

“Lord, do You want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?” James and John certainly knew their Jewish history. The comment of calling fire down from heaven was reflective of Elijah who once called down fire from heaven and consumed 100 men and their two captains (2 Kgs. 1:9-16). So their thinking was quite logical: if someone like Elijah had the divine power and authority to call fire down from heaven, how much more could Jesus do? However, they had not realized that the Kingdom of Heaven was one of faith and obedience and cannot be spread by wrath and destruction. It must arise

1. Some ancient writers use the term “Judea” in the broadest sense. Examples are found in Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 5.15.70; Strabo, *Geographia*, 16.4.21; and Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, 37.15.2.

out of one's heart with love and humility. It must rest upon a free and honest conviction, and it grows continuously in the love of Jesus.

The negative attitude of the disciples demonstrates that Luke's gospel is authentic. Some critics have suggested that the gospels were created to embellish the life events of Jesus and His disciples. If that were the case, the gospel writers would not have included such negative comments as this one.

The reaction of the disciples was quite negative and typical of the sentiments most Jews had toward their Samaritan neighbors. Clearly the disciples wanted divine judgment – fire – to fall upon those who rejected them.² Most Samaritans, like so many Jews, had difficulty determining the identity of Jesus and, therefore, rejected Him as the messiah. But Jesus did not reject them; His compassion prevailed as He understood their difficulties. Later He healed ten lepers, one of whom was a Samaritan who returned to thank Him for the healing (Lk. 17:11-19). The disciples were willing to call fire from heaven to destroy them because of their hostile attitude, but the grace of God prevailed and, three years later, when the evangelist Philip began preaching, they were receptive (Acts 8:4-8).

12.01.02 Lk. 10:1-16 (See also Mt. 11:20-24)

SEVENTY DISCIPLES SENT OUT

¹ After this, the Lord appointed 70 others, and He sent them ahead of Him in pairs to every town and place where He Himself was about to go.

² He told them: "The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest. ³ Now go; I'm sending you out like lambs among wolves. ⁴ Don't carry a money-bag, traveling bag, or sandals; don't greet anyone along the road. ⁵ Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this household.' ⁶ If a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. ⁷ Remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they offer, for the worker is worthy of his wages. Don't be moving from house to house. ⁸ When you enter any town, and they welcome you, eat the things set before you. ⁹

2. 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.

Heal the sick who are there, and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near you.’¹⁰ When you enter any town, and they don’t welcome you, go out into its streets and say,¹¹ ‘We are wiping off as a witness against you even the dust of your town that clings to our feet. Know this for certain: The kingdom of God has come near.’¹² I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town.

¹³ “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes!¹⁴ But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you.¹⁵ And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will go down to Hades!¹⁶ Whoever listens to you listens to Me. Whoever rejects you rejects Me. And whoever rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me.”

“In pairs.” The concept of sending out disciples in pairs is a reflection upon “being yoked together” and “discipleship.” This creates a greater degree of self-confidence for those who work together. There are several interesting aspects to sending missionary teams in groups of two.

1. These instructions underscore how Jesus fulfilled the Hebrew prophecies in every detail, because He repeated the legal requirement of double witness found in the Mosaic Law.³ Those who heard the gospel from His discipleship teams obviously had two witnesses to verify a rejection or acceptance of the message.
2. In groups of two there are generally a leader and follower, a discipler and a disciple; a trainer and a trainee.⁴
3. In terms of spiritual combat, according to Moses (Deut. 32:30), one person could put a thousand to flight, but two people could put ten thousand to flight. When two people work together the spiritual dynamics of ministry increases exponentially.

“The harvest is abundant.” The same words were spoken by Jesus to the disciples after the encounter with the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4). The compassion of Jesus for the lost never failed, regardless of the social and ethnic hostilities.

3. Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Gilbrant, “Luke” 317.

4. See also comment on Mt. 18:19-20.

“Do not take a money-bag, traveling bag, or sandals.” It has been suggested that the reason Jesus gave these instructions was because He wanted to impress the urgency of the mission and saturate the land with His message. While that may have been true, there was a more important reason – one pertaining to identification. At this time itinerant stoic philosophers were going from village to village teaching their philosophies. They wore only blankets and left their hair grow which supposedly reflected divine philosophy and the achievement of the higher life of self-discipline and sanctity.⁵ They not only attempted to gain converts, but also tried to live off the good graces of their hosts for as long as possible. Since they frequently begged for money or food, their money bags became known as “beggar bags,”⁶ which happened to be identical to shepherd’s bags.⁷ One Jewish scholar was a bit more polite in his description and called it an “alms-bag.”⁸ Little wonder then, that Jesus did not want His disciples to have the appearance of the Stoics.

A point of interest might be that a wallet or *scrips* was a leather pouch that shepherds hung around their necks. Jewish men often wore them when traveling. The Roman satirist, Juvenal, (c. late 1st century A.D.) said that a wallet or basket was a characteristic of the Jews.

[To the] Jews who possess a basket and a truss of hay for all their furnishings.

Juvenal, *Satire* 3:14⁹

The difficulty of this passage lies in the fact that other passages indicate a worker is worthy of his hire (salary; v. 7) or that one should take a purse or bag. The explanation is that at this point in time, Jesus was not giving His disciples commandments for life, but instruction for particular situation.

As stated previously, 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

5. Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages*. 166.

6. Angel, “Bag, Box.” 1:142-43.

7. See Josephus, *Antiquities* 8.7.3 (185).

8. Vine, “Wallet.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:665.

9.

http://ancienthistory.about.com/gi/o.htm?zi=1/XJ&zTi=1&sdn=ancienthistory&cdn=education&tm=131&f=00&su=p284.13.342.ip_&tt=2&bt=0&bts=0&zU=http%3A//www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/juv-sat3lat.html Retrieved June 5, 2012. Geikie, *The Life and Words*. 2:631. See also Juvenal, *Satire* 6:542.

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 said “let the dead bury the dead” (Lk. 9:59-62).

“If a son of peace is there.” This Hebraism refers to the head of the household – the father or husband, as well as his attitude. If he did not have a hospitable spirit, he was not a son of peace.

“The worker is worthy of his wages.” This phrase (Lk. 10:7) is significant for reasons of the historical development of theology, rather than history or culture. During the years A.D. 63-65, after the events of Acts 28, the Apostle Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy. In that letter, he combined this phrase with Deuteronomy 25:4 that reads “do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out grain.” The early church fathers followed the same principle for entertaining strangers. Itinerant preachers and prophets were not to ask for food or salary from their hosts, yet Jesus told His disciples they should willingly accept whatever is given to them. This passage from the *Didache* is therefore, insightful.

Let every apostle who comes to you be received as of the Lord. He shall stay 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.

Do not treat any prophet who speaks in the Spirit, and do not judge him, for all sins will be forgiven, but this sin will not be forgiven. Not everyone who speaks in the Spirit is a prophet but only the one whose behavior is the Lord’s. So the false prophet and the prophet will be recognized by their behavior.

Didache 11:4-8¹⁰

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.

10. 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 11:12

“Heal the sick.” Healing the sick and preaching the message of the Kingdom of God were constantly linked together. This was the mission of both Jesus and the disciples (Lk. 9:1-2, 11).

“On that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom.” The fiery destruction (Greek: *phthora*)¹¹ of that ancient city, as well as Gomorrah (Gen. 19:24-29), stood as a monumental warning for those who purposefully ignored God’s warning for repentance. Sodom and Gomorrah were two of five ancient cities that were well known for their sexual sins, especially the sin of homosexuality. They did not see Jesus perform miracles or hear His teachings, but could they have had this opportunity, they would have repented. Even though they did not hear specific laws of God, they should have obeyed *common law* concerning the matters of right and wrong. But they didn’t. So they will be punished, but their punishment will not be as great as for those who heard God’s laws and rejected them. This account shows that there are various degrees of punishment in the eternal hell.

However, the three villages along the northern edge of the Sea of Galilee did see and hear Jesus, and still rejected Him. When they did, Jesus pronounced judgment upon them by saying, **“Woe to you, Chorizim . . . Bethsaida . . . Capernaum.”** The phrase *woe* which in Greek is *ouai* and refers to both *anger* and *sorrow* is an expression of *sorrowful pity*.¹² The term is a dirge; a lament for the dead.¹³ Furthermore, the word has a sympathetic tone, not an angry or furious tone.¹⁴ His statement, **“It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you”**, clearly illustrates that there are degrees of punishment in hell.

Mystery Unveiled These words of Jesus clearly indicate that there are various degrees of punishment in the eternal hell.

11. Barclay, “Destruction.” *Jesus*. 264.

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

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

14. Barclay, “Matthew.” 2:12-13.

Clearly, Jesus was *extremely* upset with these three communities. As is typical throughout the Bible, God's judgment is greatest against those who know right but choose to do wrong. These villages had witnessed multiple miracles and frequently heard His sermons, yet rejected His message. The wicked cities of Sidon and Tyre, on the other hand, did not hear the message of our Lord and would be judged in accordance with the little they knew – but judgment eventually came.¹⁵ Those who sin horribly will suffer horribly. Apparently the good news of Jesus had reached those two cities, because people traveled from there to Galilee to hear Jesus preach (Lk. 6:17).

It is noteworthy to briefly examine “**Tyre and Sidon**” because these two Canaanite cities were significant in Israel's history; history that was rather vivid to the audience of Jesus. They had three historical points to consider:

1. In Joshua's time, the Canaanites were the occupants of the Promised Land, who were eventually defeated by the incoming Israelite occupiers.
2. However, in the days of King David, Hiram, the king of Tyre was on good terms with David and Solomon.
3. But one of the great arch-enemies of the Jewish people was Queen Jezebel, who married King Ahab of Israel (ten northern tribes). She promoted the gods of Tyre and Sidon known as Baal and Ashtoreth (1 Kgs. 17-22). Both cities and the communities around them were known for their immorality, wealth, and corruption.

Therefore, when Jesus compared Chorizim, Bethsaida, and Capernaum as being *worse* than Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon, He most certainly burned everyone's ear. Since He spoke firmly and with authority, His words made a powerful impact – one that stunned the religious leaders because they believed they were secure with God since they were “His chosen people.” But Jesus thought otherwise.

The changes in the social-political environment eventually led to the fulfillment of the prophetic curse. When the Zealots began the Second Revolt in A.D. 65, the Fifth Legion was brought in by the Emperor Titus to strengthen the Tenth Legion that was stationed in Damascus and had dominated the region for decades. Together they began a systematic devastation of the country, one village; one community after another. Chorizim and Bethsaida were both destroyed but Chorizim was rebuilt. It continued to grow to approximately 80 acres in size, but died with the Muslim conquest in 636. However, at

15. Isa. 23; Jer. 25:22; 47:4; Ezek. 26:3-7; 28:12-22.

the end of the fourth century, the church father Eusebius said that it was a destroyed village. This would appear to be in conflict with other historical sources, except that over the centuries many villages and cities that were destroyed were rebuilt only to be destroyed again. Nonetheless, the Muslim conquest ended village life in this community.

Capernaum was also destroyed by the Tenth Legion, but it too was rebuilt and continued to be a thriving community for both Christians and Jews. It was severely damaged in the earthquake of 363 (estimated 7.0 magnitude on the Richter scale) and was immediately rebuilt. Later, as a result of the Islamic invasion of 636 – six centuries after Jesus – a number of Arabs became residents of the prosperous village. By then many must have questioned the prophetic prediction by Jesus. However, His words were finally fulfilled on January 18, 749, when a destructive earthquake (estimated 6.6 magnitude on the Richter scale),¹⁶ leveled the village and it was never occupied again. The words of Jesus for each village were fulfilled to the last detail in due time – His time. Bethsaida was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 65, and Chorizim was destroyed centuries later in the 636 during the Islamic conquest.

Anyone in deep mourning wore a sackcloth garment, placed ashes or dirt¹⁷ on the forehead, sat in the shade and wailed bitterly.¹⁸ Ashes were sometimes from animal sacrifices, but regardless from the source, ashes, sackcloth, and sometimes torn clothing were signs of deep grief.¹⁹ It was and still is common practice to let the emotions be expressed openly and loudly. Sackcloth was a rough and uncomfortable garment made from the hair of goats or camels, and at times worn next to the skin. Some scholars believe this coarse material was also used to make fishnets²⁰ as well as tents and grain sacks (Gen. 42:25; Josh 9:4). The Greek poet Homer wrote in his famous *Iliad* that when Achilles heard of the death of Patroclus, he grasped in both hands...

The ashes of the hearth, he showered them over his head and soiled with them his noble face.

Homer, *The Iliad* 18.23

16. <http://israel-tourguide.info/2011/01/10/earthquakes-history-archaeology/>. See also <http://geology.geoscienceworld.org/content/31/8/665.abstract> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/749_Galilee_earthquake Retrieved on August 25, 2014.

17. See 1 Sam. 4:12; 2 Sam 1:2; 13:19; Job 2:12; Ezek. 17:30; Rev. 18:19 and *Judith* 4:114-15.

18. Esth. 4:1; 1 Kgs. 21:27; See also 2 Kgs. 6:30; Job 16:15.

19. Vine, "Ashes." *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:39.

20. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:351.

Later in Homer's story, another character by the name of Priam, mourned for the death of Hector and,

Sat with a cloak wrapped around him and dust strewn on his head and neck, which, when he rolled upon the earth, he had gathered with his hands.

Homer, *The Iliad* 24:162-65

Clearly, the custom of mourning in sackcloth and ashes was not unique to the Jews. On the other hand, stifling with ashes was a Persian mode of punishment as recorded in *Maccabees* 13:5-7. The Christian tradition of ashes applied to the believer's forehead is rooted in the mourning tradition. Ash Wednesday is the name given to the first day of the Lent season – prior to Easter. The earliest Christian writings date to the 9th or 10th century Europe when Christians wore sackcloth and placed ashes on themselves as a sign of mourning and repentance of sins during the Lenten season.²¹

12.01.02.Q1 Did Jesus send out 70 or 72 disciples (Lk. 1:1-16 vs. Mt. 11:20-24; see also 12.01.02.Q3)?

There is an apparent discrepancy among biblical manuscripts concerning the number of disciples who were sent out on the short-term missionary journey. Among the translations, the King James Version reads 70, while others such as the New International Version of 1984, read 72. Why the numerical difference?

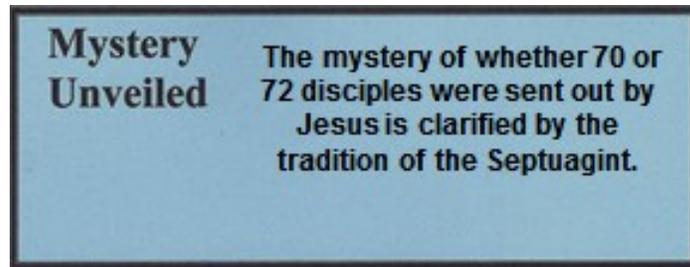
The answer is hidden in the third century (B.C.) Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible;²² although not of any particular verse. At that time the Jewish people in Egypt were confronted with the challenges of a youthful generation that was speaking Greek and losing the Hebrew language. So, according to tradition or legend, the elders had 72 scholars translate the Hebrew Bible into Greek. In the course of time, the translation became known as the "Septuagint," meaning 70 and later represented by the Roman numeral symbol "LXX." The number 72 had simply changed to 70 for conversational use; a type of verbal shorthand. Furthermore, in good Jewish tradition, the names of the translators were preserved as well.²³ The phrase did not have a literal meaning, but

21. <http://www.orlutheran.com/html/ash.html> Retrieved December 7, 2013.

22. See Septuagint in 02.02.25.

23. B. S. J. Isserlin of the University of Leeds has an article titled *The Names of the 72 Translators of the Septuagint* based upon the Pseudepigraphic Letter by Aristeas (47-50) to his brother Philocrates written in the 2nd century B.C. It was later repeated by Philo of Alexandria as well as Josephus in *Antiquities* 12.2.7 (57). The article by

became a figure of speech. The same change may have occurred in regard to the number of missionaries who were sent out by Jesus. It is noteworthy that while the Sanhedrin has 70 members, the Council at Jamnia had 72 members, also known as *elders*.²⁴



12.01.02.A. THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE OF BETHSAIDA. A trail goes through the active archaeological site of what a growing number of archaeologists believe is Bethsaida (this writer disagrees). The sand bags around the excavation site reduce rain damage during the winter months when there is no archaeological activity. While the date of the founding of the village is unknown, archaeologists have uncovered the foundations of a city wall dated to the Assyrian conquest. The words of

Isserlin is available at <https://www.jtsa.edu/Documents/pagedocs/JANES/1973%205/Isserlin5.pdf>
Retrieved June 29, 2015.

24. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:94; For more information on the Septuagint, see 02.02.25.

Jesus concerning its demise were fulfilled when the Romans destroyed it in during the First Revolt (A.D. 66-70). It was never rebuilt. Photographed in 2005 by the author.

12.01.02.Q2 What are the differences among the terms “Hell, Hades,” and “Gehenna?”²⁵

Jesus spoke more of hell than He did of heaven which is why the words “hell, Hades,” and “Gehenna” are found numerous times within the gospels.²⁶ The New Testament provides a clear definition of hell as an eternal lake of fire (literally, the *hell of fire*),²⁷ but the terms “Hades” and “Gehenna” are somewhat ambiguous. Jesus said that the village of Capernaum would be sent down to Hades (Mt. 11:23; Lk. 10:15), an imagery that is synonymous with the Old Testament rendering of “Sheol” (e.g., Amos 9:2; Ps. 139:8).²⁸ The judgment that comes after time spent in Hades apparently will not be in Hades, but in another place called hell. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man is in torment in Hades, which implies that Hades is hell (Lk. 16:19-31). However, the section of Hades that is a place of torment in the earth²⁹ is certainly miserable and may seem like hell, but the lake of fire of hell is far worse.³⁰

Hades has two distinct areas:

1. One area is a place of torment, where the wicked are temporarily held until their final judgment and ultimate damnation in the more painful eternity of hell.
2. The other area was a holding area for the saints who died before Jesus ascended to heaven. The souls of the Old Testament saints, held captive in Hades, were freed by Jesus and taken to heaven during the time that His body was dead in the

25. See also 08.01.05.

26. For “Gehenna,” see 02.03.09; 08.01.05 and 10.01.06. For “Hades,” see 08.01.05; 09.01.05; 10.01.29; 12.01.02; 12.03.09 and 18.01.01. For “Hell,” see 08.01.05; 09.02.04; 10.01.29; 12.01.02; 12.03.09; 13.05.02; 15.03.12; 16.01.18; 17.02.02; 18.01.01 and 18.02.01.

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

28. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies*. 46.

29. Mt. 11:23; Lk. 10:15; Bietenhard, “Hell, Abyss, Hades, Gehenna, Lower Regions.” 2:07.

30. The topics of Gehenna, Hades, and Hell have been the subject of discussions for many theologians, and there are no shortages of interpretations. However, all agree that it is not a place where one wants to be for a moment, much less forever.

tomb. Previously, their sins were merely *covered* by Old Testament sacrifices and so, they could not enter heaven until Jesus *removed* their sins on the cross. Only by the atoning blood of Jesus could Old Testament saints enter eternal glory. This area was also referred to by Jesus as “Paradise” when the thief on the cross believed in Him.

With two distinct areas in Hades, separated by a great divide, the rich man could communicate with Lazarus. This conversation would have been impossible if he were in hell and Lazarus in heaven. When Jesus died He went to Hades, as indicated by Peter in Acts (2:25-31), in which he quoted Psalm 16:8-11. The word “grave” means “Hades” and this narrative proves that Jesus not only was there, but also did not remain there.

**⁸ I keep the LORD in mind always.
Because He is at my right hand,
I will not be shaken.**

**⁹ Therefore my heart is glad
and my spirit rejoices;
my body also rests securely.**

**¹⁰ For You will not abandon me to Sheol;
You will not allow Your Faithful One see decay.**

**¹¹ You reveal the path of life to me;
in Your presence is abundant joy;
in Your right hand are eternal pleasures.**

Psalm 16:8-11

The eternal punishment, whether in the area reserved for the wicked in Hades or in hell, is often called “death” and, as such, is referred to four times in Revelation (1:18; 6:8; 20:13,14). In Revelation 20:14 John said that one day in the future, death and Hades would be thrown into the lake of fire (hell).

Also, the word “Gehenna” is used to describe a place of torment and eternal suffering. The name comes from the Valley of Hinnom, where supposedly, there was the city dump located in the modern Hinnom Valley along the southern or western side of the Old City of Jerusalem. The name “Gehenna” has three legendary sources, all from the Valley of Hinnom that is located along the southern and western sides of Jerusalem. The reasons

for the name are as follows:

1. It is where child sacrifice was once practiced (see below).
2. It is where pottery kilns were located.
3. It is where a trash heap burned continuously.

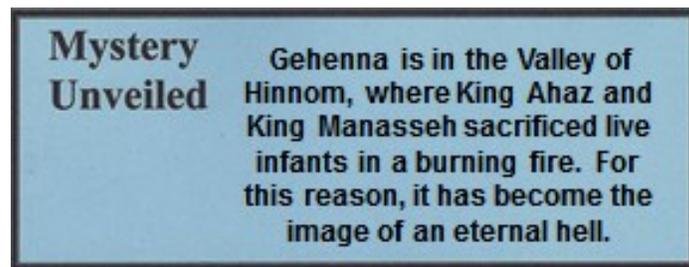
Obviously not all of these so-called sources of the name can be correct. The most popular seems to be the third one, and there are at least four reasons to argue against this interpretation.

1. The residents of the city would never have placed a smoldering dump on the western side of the city, since the prevailing westerly winds would have blown the stench over them. Herod the Great had his palace along the western wall of the old city, right by the Jaffa Gate, and would have been the first to be smoked-out of his home. Furthermore, it is because of the prevailing westerly winds that a vast majority of cemeteries were located on the eastern side of cities and villages, to blow the stench of decaying bodies away from the communities. Visitors today are amazed at the thousands of graves located on the side of the Mount of Olives – just east of Jerusalem.
2. The most significant argument against this theory is that ancient cities did not produce sufficient waste to have a burning dump. Almost everything was recycled, with the exception of pottery shards. Even manure was dried and used for cooking fuel or fertilizer.
3. The burning rubbish dump theory is believed to have originated with Rabbi David Kimhi's commentary on Psalm 27:13 around the year A.D. 1200. No Jewish or Christian literary works prior to Kimhi mentions it.
4. While a rubbish dump has been found, there is no archaeological evidence to support the *burning* rubbish dump theory.

The second suggestion is that pottery kilns were in the Hinnom Valley west and south of the city. This is also highly unlikely for the same reason. Along the southern side is where the priests and other aristocrats had their palace homes. They most certainly would not have wanted to be near burning trash heaps or pottery kilns. King David had his palace along the southern side. Furthermore, no archaeological evidence has been uncovered in the Hinnom Valley to support this theory, nor is it mentioned in any Jewish

writings.

Finally, the primary reason the Hebrew name *Ge-Hinnom* is derived from the Valley of Hinnom,³¹ that is where King Ahaz (2 Ch. 28:3; cf 2 Kg. 16:3) and King Manasseh (2 Ch. 33:6; cf 2 Kg. 21:6) sacrificed living babies to the pagan god, Molech (Jer. 32:35). This was the ultimate imagery – a picture of hell – of pain, agony, and death by ancient writers. Neither the Jewish nor the gospel writers could have conceived of anything worse than this era of incredible shame in Jewish history. Little wonder it is associated with those damned to hell by apocalyptic and New Testament writers.



Hell is a real place that is given several descriptions such as being a fiery furnace (Mt. 13:42), a lake of fire (Rev. 19:20), a place of everlasting torment (2 Pet. 2:4), and a place of eternal fire (Jude 7). Jesus and the New Testament writers were dynamic on this issue and added that it is reserved for Satan and his angels as well as for those who reject Christ. It is that vast lake of fire where death will consume the wicked forever. These appear to be contradictory terms. The modern mind thinks of death as a distinctive ending point where life ceases to function. But in Hebraic thinking the continuous agony is so immense that it is called “death,” while the final breath never comes.³²

The rejection imagery³³ and its association with eternal punishment with clearly expressed on both the Old³⁴ and New Testament, as well as in Jewish literature.³⁵ Eternal punishment is evident in Matthew 5:22 and 18:9 and Mark 9:43-44 say hell as a place of unquenchable fire, as does Matthew 25:41. The phrase “weeping and gnashing of teeth”

31. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 41; Mieth, *The Compact Dictionary of Doctrinal Words*. 97.

32. Bass, “Hell.” 6:809-10; Scharen, “Gehenna in the Synopsics.” 324-337.

33. For further study, see Pagenkemper, “Rejection Imagery in the Synoptic Parables.” 179-198.

34. Old Testament prophets who spoke of a final judgment were Isaiah (17:11) and Joel (3:13). Two other prophets who made similar statements concerning Babylon and Ephraim were Jeremiah (51:33) and Hosea (6:11).

35. For example, see *1 Enoch* 1:18, 23-24, 38, 71-72, 81, 84, 88; *2 Enoch* 1:118-19, 188; *Sibylline Oracles* 1:323-24, 333, 385, 409, 469, 471.

occurs seven times in the gospels.³⁶ The phrase “outer darkness” occurs three times (Mt. 8:12; 22:13, and 25:30) and is also referred to in *1 Enoch* 102:8. Inter-Testament literature frequently mentions hell and fire together. The “casting out” judgment imagery of Matthew 22:13 is also found in *1 Enoch* 10:4. Likewise the term “furnace of fire” is found in the Parables of the Wheat and Tares (Mt. 13:42) and the Parable of the Dragnet (Mt. 13:50). This imagery is not only for those who reject Christ, but is also reserved for those who claim to be followers of Jesus, but have never truly committed themselves to His lordship.

The Greek word *abyssos* has been translated to mean “bottomless” and is found in the LXX translation of Genesis 1:2. It also occurs six times in John’s *Revelation* (9:1-2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3) where it is described as the place of endless torment and punishment. But this term was also used to refer to the bottom of the Sea of Galilee where the Gentiles believed the demons lived. That was a cultural interpretation³⁷ and not a theological one.³⁸

The term *sheol* has on occasion been incorrectly translated as *hell*. The Old Testament concept of *sheol* is not a place of torment, but a land of shades, a shadowy and joyless, ghostly place. The New Testament understanding of heaven and hell is not related to *sheol*, and there is hardly any concept of eternal life in the Hebrew Bible.³⁹

12.01.02.Q3 Did the 70 or 72 disciples go to Jewish or Gentile homes (Lk. 1:1-16. Mt. 11:20-24; see 12.01.02.Q1)?

Some scholars have said that the 72 (or 70) went to Jewish communities, while others believe they went to the hated Samaritans and Greeks in the Decapolis cities. If they went to non-Jewish homes, they would have eaten non-kosher meals with their hosts. That alone would have been a major theological adjustment at this time. The rules concerning kosher foods do not appear to relax until the book of Acts. So therefore, it is the opinion of this writer that they probably went to Jewish homes, especially since their journey

36. Mt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30, and Lk. 13:28.

37. In the Inter-Testamental book of *Enoch*, the writer said that the abyss was the prison for fallen spirits/angels (10:4ff; 18:11ff). The writer of *Jubilees* said likewise in 5:6ff.

38. Bietenhard, “Hell, Abyss, Hades, Gehenna, Lower Regions.” 2:205.

39. Barclay, “John.” 2:91-92.

appears to have been several days in length. And if they went to Gentile communities, they probably stayed in Jewish homes there.

12.01.03 Lk. 10:17-24

SEVENTY DISCIPLES RETURN

17 The Seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in Your name.”

18 He said to them, “I watched Satan fall from heaven like a lightning flash. 19 Look, I have given you the authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy; nothing will ever harm you. 20 However, don’t rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

21 In that same hour He rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and the learned and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, because this was Your good pleasure. 22 All things have been entrusted to Me by My Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son desires to reveal Him.”

23 Then turning to His disciples He said privately, “The eyes that see the things you see are blessed! 24 For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see the things you see yet didn’t see them; to hear the things you hear yet didn’t hear them.”

The disciples returned to Jesus with great joy. Evidently they were surprised at the power of Jesus flowing through them, because He had not told them to cast out demons.⁴⁰ But He cautioned them to focus their excitement on their own eternal life, not on their power to perform exorcisms. The phrase **“Lord, even the demons submit to us in Your**

40. 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.

name,” is clear evidence that the powers of darkness and Satan were already crippled at this time, which was *before* His victory at the cross. This clearly suggests that the use of “binding and loosening” had gone from a legal matter to a spiritual matter of binding demonic spirits and loosening people afflicted by those spirits.

This is an interesting contrast where these 72 disciples performed incredible miracles, but the twelve closest disciples could not bring healing to an epileptic boy (Lk. 9:37-43).

The doctrine of “binding and loosing” has the traditional meaning of “forbidding and permitting.”⁴¹ The word *binding* (Gk. *deo*) is used in 1 Corinthians 7:29 in reference to marriage, while loosing (Gk. *lyo*) is used when laws are relaxed (Mt. 5:19) and sins are forgiven (Rev. 1:5).⁴² Nonetheless, the terms appear not to have been used in the performance of miracles of casting out demons. Jesus may have expanded the traditional parameters of the definition. His divine power convinced many to believe His message of the Kingdom of God. Now that power was transferred to His disciples, more people would hear the message and believe in His name. Evidently, the early church continued the practice, as recorded by Origen in his reply to Celsus:

By their prayers Christians are of more service to the realm than if they had fought for it in the legions, for by their petitions they vanquished all demons who stir up war and disturb the peace.

Origen, *Against Celsus* 1:24⁴³

“I watched Satan fall.” Jesus again attests to His eternal existence. However, now He also declares His superior power and authority over Satan. Jesus was in heaven when the evil one was thrown out by His authority. There are three possibilities to understanding this statement, and all three are correct:

1. This statement of observing Satan fall from heaven is clearly reflective of the words of Isaiah:

41. A wide range of meanings to the term “binding and loosing” is 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. See also Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 1:795. See also Richard Hiers, “Binding’ and ‘Loosing’: The Matthean Authorizations.” *Journal of Biblical Literature*. 104:2 (June, 1985). 236-37.

42. Tongue, “Binding and Losing.” 1:199.

43. Thomas, *The Golden Treasury of Patristic Quotations: From 50 – 750 A.D.* 202.

**¹² Shining morning star, how you have fallen from the heavens!
You destroyer of nations, you have been cut down to the ground.**

Isaiah 14:12

2. This passage clearly reflects the eternal nature of Jesus – the fact that He was witness to Satan fall from heaven as stated in Revelation 12:

So the great dragon was thrown out — the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the one who deceives the whole world, He was thrown to earth, and his angels with him.

Revelation 12:9

Jesus, speaking in past-tense language, was looking toward the future, after His thousand year reign to the ultimate defeat of Satan as recorded by John.

⁷ When the 1,000 years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle. Their number is like the sand of the sea. ⁹ They came up over the surface of the earth and surrounded the encampment of the saints, the beloved city. Then fire came down from heaven and consumed them. ¹⁰ The Devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet are, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Revelation 20:7-10

3. And finally, when the disciples said, “**Lord, even the demons submit to us in Your name,**” Satan must have trembled at the thought of so many going out and experiencing victory over his kingdom of darkness.

“Snakes and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy.” There is a debate concerning the phrase “snakes and scorpions.”

1. Some scholars believe it was a rabbinic phrase referring to demonic spirits. However, of those who believe this, many believe the phrase did not exist in the first century, but came in use later, possibly the 4th or 5th century.

2. A second opinion is that snakes and scorpions were not symbolic of evil in the

first century, as they are today. In fact, in the biblical era, snakes were symbolic of renewed life because they shed their skins annually and a scorpion was one of the creatures in the zodiac.

3. However, Jesus referred to the two creatures because they have a reputation for inflicting serious bodily harm, along with the power of Satan who desires to destroy both body and soul.

“Rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” In ancient times, the genealogical records of the Jewish people were kept in the temple. Roman cities had the names of citizens recorded. Likewise, the epistles note that the names of true believers are written in heaven⁴⁴ and Revelation 20 refers to the heavenly “Book of Life” that has the names of all true believers. Jesus said that it is far more important that one’s name be written in the right book than to have the ability to perform signs and wonders and lose his life.

Finally, some scholars believe that Luke 10:21-22 (cf. Mt. 11:25) was incorporated into an early church hymn. It is believed that a number of sayings by the apostles were remembered because they were put to music.⁴⁵

12.01.04 Mt. 11:28-30

REST FOR THE WEARY

- ²⁸ **Come to me,
all of you who are weary and burdened,
and I will give you rest.**
- ²⁹ **All of you,
take up My yoke and learn from Me,
because I am gentle and humble in heart,

and you will find rest for yourselves.**
- ³⁰ **For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.**

44. Philip. 4:3; Heb. 12:23.

45. A number of early Christian hymns are embedded in the New Testament. The best known are 1) the *Magnificat* (Lk. 1:46-55); 2) the *Nunc Dimittis* (Lk. 2:29-32); 3) Eph. 5:14 is considered to be either a baptismal hymn or a hymn to the unconverted; 4) 1 Tim. 3:16 is an early church creed that was sung, and 5) 2 Tim. 2:11 ff. is thought to be a fragment of an Eucharistic hymn. Philippians 2:6-11 was known as the *Christ Hymn*. Other verses that were incorporated into songs are. Acts 4:24-28, Col. 1:15 ff., Lk. 10:21-22 = Mt. 11:25 ff., and Jn. 1:1-5, 9-13. See Mould, *Essentials of Bible History*. 527.

This imagery of a yoke was not new to His listeners. The Oral Law referred to one who would pick up the yoke of the Mosaic Law and He would be delivered from the oppressive yoke of worldly cares. The phrase “**worldly care**” (below) referred to the encroaching Greek culture. The rabbinic literature reads as follows:

Rabbi Nehunya ben Ha-Kanah said:

**“He that takes upon himself the yoke of the Law,
from him shall be taken away the yoke of the kingdom
(meaning the troubles suffered at the hands of those in political
power)
and the yoke of worldly care.**

**But he that throws off the yoke of the Law,
upon him shall be laid the yoke of the kingdom
and the yoke of worldly care.”**

Mishnah, *Aboth* 3.5

There is an astounding parallel to the words of Jesus that predate Him by more than a century from the book of *Ben Sirach*. The Inter-Testament writer said this:

Draw near to me, you unlearned, and lodge in the house of study. Why are you slow, and what do you say about these things, your souls being very thirsty? I opened my mouth and said, “Buy her [wisdom] for yourselves without money. Put your neck under [her] yoke, and let your soul receive instruction. She is to be found nearby. See with your eyes how, with only a little labor, I have gotten much rest.

***Ben Sirach* 51:23-27⁴⁶**

These two quotations demonstrate again how the message of righteousness that had been preached by so many righteous rabbis, was foundational to the kingdom of God message presented by Jesus.

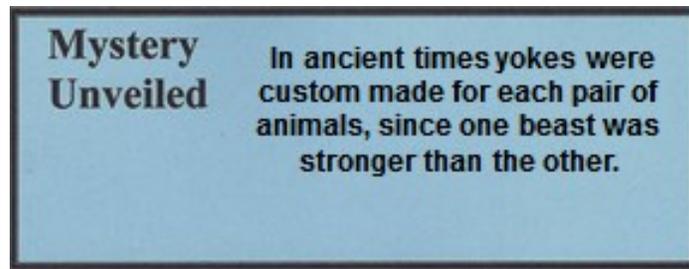
“Take up My yoke and learn from Me.” The traditional yoke was a device placed on the necks of two draft animals to cause them to work as a team and allow them to pull a farm implement such as a plow. Using this imagery, Jesus said His yoke is easy,

46. Cited by Bivin, bracketed inserts by Bivin, *New Light on the Difficult Words of Jesus*, 23-24.

meaning that whoever would pick up the “yoke,” would be yoked to Him. In ancient times, yokes were custom made for each pair of animals, since one beast was the stronger than the other. To be yoked with Jesus means to work with Him for a specific ministry. He is the stronger member of the team, and hence, the burden is light.

It also had a reference to the rabbi’s teaching, philosophy and interpretation of Scripture.⁴⁷ Jesus is referred to as a teacher forty-one times, indicating that as a teacher He would help those who would follow Him. Learning His lessons would not be difficult, but living them could be more challenging.

So why did Jesus say that His yoke was easy or light? The Greek word for *easy* is *chrestos*, which means *well fitting*.⁴⁸ It was certainly a term with which Jesus was well acquainted, since as a carpenter, he had made so many of them (yokes). In comparison to the rigorous requirements demanded by leading Pharisees and their Oral Law, the requirements of Jesus were relatively easy to obey.



“My yoke is easy.” For nearly three centuries after Jesus, Christians were tortured and martyred which, amazingly, was a purification element and helped the church to grow and expand into many nations. Many Christians today, especially those living in persecuting countries, understand that all too well. To follow Christ; to live a life that honors God and upholds biblical principles, is not always easy in the modern sense of the word. The issue of persecution was never hidden in the discussions of Jesus, although it is seldom the subject of sermons today. Concerning the biblical phrase, the word *easy* would be better translated *wholesome, serviceable, and kindly*.⁴⁹ The hidden message of being “yoked with Jesus” is that He is the stronger one and the believer is the weaker one. In that sense, being yoked with Jesus is *serviceable* and *kind*.

47. <http://www.jewishrootsofchristianity.org/jewishroots/discipleship-in-jesus-day.pdf> Retrieved January 12, 2012.

48. Barclay, “Matthew.” 2:17.

49. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:70.

12.01.05 Lk. 10:25-37

PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

²⁵ Just then an expert in the law stood up to test Him, saying, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

²⁶ “What is written in the law?” He asked him. “How do you read it?”

²⁷ He answered: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind (Deut. 6:5); and your neighbor as yourself (Lev. 19:18).

²⁸ “You’ve answered correctly,” He told him. “Do this and you will live.”

²⁹ But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

³⁰ Jesus took up the question and said:

A “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers.

They stripped him, beat him up,
and fled, leaving him half dead.

B ³¹ A priest happened to be going down that road.

When he saw him,
he passed by on the other side.

C ³² In the same way, a Levite, when he arrived at the place
and saw him,

passed by on the other side.

D ³³ But a Samaritan on his journey came up to him, and
when he saw the man,
he had compassion.

C’ ³⁴ He went over to him
and bandaged his wounds,
pouring on oil and wine.

B’ Then he put the him on his own animal,

**brought him to an inn
and took care of him.**

A' ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, and said. 'Take care of him.

When I come back I'll reimburse you for whatever extra you spend.'

³⁶ "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"

³⁷ "The one who showed mercy to him," he said.

Then Jesus told him, "Go and do the same."

Literary Style.⁵⁰ The poem is written in the style of step parallelism in which each stanza has three lines. From stanzas A to C', the first line is one that describes an action by someone. This action is a "come" action. The middle line of every stanza of the parable is a "do" action. The last lines of the first five stanzas are a "go" action of some sort. The Samaritan who demonstrated compassion did care for the injured traveler, as expressed by the last line of stanzas C' to A' which are also "do" actions in that he took care of the injured.

Cast of Characters

The Traveler	= The injured victim of robbery who was lying on the side of the road.
The Priest	= A servant of man and God, who lived and functioned with numerous restrictions and responsibilities.
The Levite	= An assistant to the priest in the temple who had fewer life restrictions and responsibilities.
The Samaritan	= A member of an ethnic group hated by the Jewish people, but who truly demonstrated the love of God.

The story takes on realism because many priests and Levites lived in Jericho where a large synagogue was constructed by the Hasmoneans in the previous century. In fact, it has been estimated that about half the courses that served in Jerusalem (see 04.03.01) lived in Jericho,⁵¹ meaning they would have traveled the road of the Good Samaritan

50. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*. Part I, 72 and Part II, 40; Fleming, *The Parables of Jesus*. 62.

51. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:9.

parable. The Jericho to Jerusalem road is a winding, narrow road that was at times cut into the side of a mountain with an upward cliff on the south side and a sheer precipice on the north side with a drop of hundreds of feet down into a wadi below. Along this road, Zealots robbed traveling pilgrims and Romans who had limited opportunities to escape.

Jesus put the setting of the parable along a five mile section of the 16 mile road that for centuries had a reputation as being extremely dangerous⁵² – known as “the Bloody Way.”⁵³ For reasons of safety, men frequently carried short concealed swords and families traveled in groups or camel caravans, such as Mary and Joseph did on their journey to and from Egypt, and later when they and Jesus (aged twelve) went to the temple.⁵⁴ Those who traveled to and from Jerusalem for religious observances traveled in *festival caravans*.⁵⁵ At the time when Herod the Great was given rulership of the land, the whole region was filled with highway robberies, some of which continued throughout Roman occupation.⁵⁶

<p>Mystery Unveiled</p>	<p>The Samaritan lived under the same restrictions as did the priest and Levite, yet took the chance to become defiled, and helped a wounded man and paid for his medical attention.</p>
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Traveling for the Galileans was always a challenge. If they went through Samaria they were in danger of attack by the Samaritans; if they went via Jericho they were in danger of robbers. Josephus said that the Samaritans killed a “great many” Galileans who were in route to Jerusalem, which clearly reflected the danger.⁵⁷ Galileans, therefore, frequently traveled south by taking a road located on the eastern side of the Jordan River in Perea. When they arrived near Jericho, they turned westward, crossed the river, went

52. Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.6.1 (118); *Wars* 2.15.6 (232).

53. Gilbrant, “Luke.” 335; Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 336.

54. Josephus says that the Essenes, when traveling, carried nothing but swords because they feared the thieves. *Wars* 2.8.4; *Wars* 2.15.6 (232); *Antiquities* 20.6.1(118).

55. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 59; Geikie, *The Life and Works of Christ*. 2:278; Farrar, *The Life of Christ*. 364.

56. Mishnah, *Berakboth* 1.3; Mishnah, *Shabbath* 2.5

57. Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.6.1. The Samaritans, however, did not threaten the Jews when they left Jerusalem and traveled towards Galilee. It was a symbolic gesture stating that leaving Jerusalem, symbolic of Judaism, was good.

to the rebuilt city of Jericho and rested.⁵⁸ From there they walked up the Jericho-Jerusalem Road through the narrow Wadi Kelt canyon walls and on to the Holy City.

To insure maximum safety, people traveled in groups with the following formation:

1. Several men would lead the procession.
2. Then came the women, children, and possibly a few animals
3. Several men were at the end of the group who served as a rear guard.

Country roads were always dangerous, which is why the Essenes never carried anything but a small sword. One would ever walk alone on this country road unless it was absolutely necessary. In fact, Josephus recorded that Judea was full of robberies;⁵⁹ therefore, this parable of Jesus had a dynamic reality to the listeners. While the road was open for tourists during the 1990s, as of this writing it is closed due to Palestinian bandits and terrorists.



12.01.05.A. THE DANGEROUS CLIFFS OF THE WADI KELT

58. The ancient city of Jericho was destroyed, never to be rebuilt. A new city by the same name was built a short distance from the ancient ruins of the first.

59. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.11.8.

ALONG THE JERICHO-JERUSALEM ROAD. Shown is a side road to the 16 mile road, known as *the Way of Blood*,⁶⁰ is the setting for the Parable of the Good Samaritan, was a treacherous road cut into steep hillsides and mountains. People traveled in groups for protection from would-be robbers even though Roman soldiers patrolled the area to insure safety. Photograph by the author.

In this parable, an expert in the law – presumably a scribe – stood up to challenge Jesus. Even though his intention was a verbal confrontation, it was with respect. Teachers sat when teaching and students stood in respect to their teacher, especially when speaking. In true Jewish style, the gentleman stood to address Rabbi Jesus about the requirements needed to inherit eternal life. The answer is not a check list of things to do, such as the Ten Commandments, or a philosophical concept, as might be expected by the lawyer (“Scribe”) or by modern Westerners.

In response, Jesus who was seated tells a story of a traveler who was robbed, beaten, and left for dead along the only road from Jericho to Jerusalem. Technically, the physician Luke said he was half dead (Gk. *hemithanes* 2253), and obviously in grave condition. Jesus then identifies three men who walked by and what they did. The Samaritans were highly despised for reasons previously discussed. The priest and Levite were men of a high religious order; men who were to reflect the character and compassion of God, but chose not to offer assistance. The priests were descendants of Aaron, while the Levites were descendants of Levi. Each group had a different, but important function in the temple. The Priests could take part in the sacrifices and enter the inner sanctuary, while the Levites insured protection of the temple grounds and sang in the choirs.⁶¹ Both the Levite and priest were concerned about becoming defiled if they touched a man who was dead. They did not even care enough to see if he was still alive and possibly help him, only that they might become defiled. The Samaritan, on the other hand, had the same restrictions according to the Samaritan Torah, but he was not only willing to take the chance and become defiled, but then he helped the wounded man and paid for his medical attention.

The lifestyles of the priests were highly restricted by the Mosaic Law. For example, if a priest touched a corpse he would be defiled, but the law did not apply to Levites (even though they were concerned about defilement). This was one of 613 commands in the Law of Moses (248 positive, 365 negative).⁶² However, the Law also stated that priests

60. Gilbrant, “Luke.” 335; Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 336.

61. Guignebert, *The Jewish World in the Time of Jesus*. 59-60.

62. Carter, *13 Crucial Questions*. 57.

and Levites were required to offer assistance to save a life. But in the story, they chose not to. Then the Samaritan came who offered assistance to the stranger. He obviously was the good neighbor who demonstrated obedience to the Mosaic Law where the priests and Levites failed.⁶³



12.01.05.B. THE UPPER SECTION OF THE JERICHO-JERUSALEM ROAD. The famous road is shown as it was in the 1920s. Throughout history it was a passageway notorious for high risk travelers who traveled alone or in small groups. Photograph by Mary Morton / Public Domain.

“Strength.” The Greek word is *Dunamis* (1411), and is often ascribed to the power of God (Rev. 5:12, 7:12). Clearly the love to be expressed by believers is to the full human potential, and then more.⁶⁴

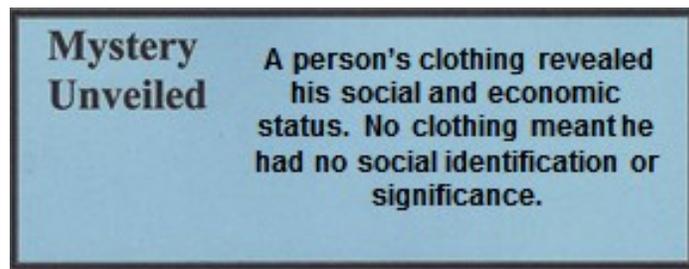
“Neighbor.” The Greek term *plesion* (4139) refers to a specific person, whereas the plural form (*geiton*, 1069) in the New Testament refers to anyone living in the same land.⁶⁵ Jesus obviously rejected the popular opinion that a neighbor was only a fellow

63. The Samaritans believed in a slightly modified version of the Mosaic Law. See 02.01.17 for the basics of their theological beliefs.

64. Vine, “Ability, Able.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:2.

65. Vine, “Neighbor.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:429-30.

Jew. In the first century, people maintained strong ethnic ties and were identifiable by the style of clothing they wore. Clothes were a type of identity badge that displayed the economic status, tribal affiliation, social, and religious affiliation of a person. Back then as now, clothes, language, or accent were markers that distinguished “them from us.”⁶⁶ Over the years the religious leaders had redefined the word “neighbor” in the Mosaic command (Lev. 19:18) to mean those who wore the same clothes. The parable specifically stated the man who was robbed and injured was also without his clothes, meaning, he had no social identification and, evidently, could not communicate (Lk. 10:30).⁶⁷ So he was no one’s neighbor.



12.01.05.C. THE RUINS OF A TURKISH MILITARY OUTPOST ALONG THE JERICHO-JERUSALEM ROAD. This abandoned

66. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 292.

67. Bowman, *Jesus' Teaching in its Environment*. 31-32; Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 292-93.

outpost, dated to the Ottoman Empire (1517-1917), was reflective of the centuries-old problem travelers had with robbers along the feared Jerusalem-Jericho Road. Soldiers stationed here protected travelers from robbers. It was constructed in front of a natural cave so the soldiers would be protected from the desert heat. Photograph by the author.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan (nowhere in the Bible is he called “good”) was given by Jesus to answer the question posed by an expert of the law: **“And who is my neighbor?”** The answer by Jesus was “Anyone who has a need.” To illustrate the question, “who is my neighbor?” Jesus used the parable because His listeners were aware of the traveling dangers associated with the road and, as such, it was the subject of other stories.

The Levite and priest were probably concerned about their own purity should the injured man die while in their care. They preferred the man to suffer death rather than take the chance of becoming “unclean.” The irony is that the Levites not only served in the temple, but they also acted as clergy throughout the land and were responsible for social welfare. If anyone should have taken care of the poor traveler, it should have been the Levite.

From the Mishnah is the following narrative that was probably their concern:

A high priest or a Nazarite may not contract uncleanness because of their (dead) kindred, but they may contract uncleanness because of a neglected corpse. If they were on a journey and found a neglected corpse, Rabbi Eliezer says: “The high priest may contract uncleanness but the Nazarite may not contract uncleanness.” But the sages say: “The Nazarite may contract uncleanness but the high priest may not contract uncleanness.” Rabbi Eliezer said to them: “Rather let the priest contract uncleanness for he needs not to bring an offering because of his uncleanness, and let not the Nazarite contract uncleanness for he must bring an offering because of his uncleanness.” They answered: “Rather let the Nazarite contract uncleanness, for his sanctity is not a lifelong sanctity, and let not the priest contract uncleanness, for his sanctity is a lifelong sanctity.”

Mishnah, *Nazir* 7.1

<p>Mystery Unveiled</p>	<p>The Levites not only served in the temple, but they also served as clergy and were responsible for social welfare throughout the land. The Levite was ordained to care for the traveler.</p>
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In a unique manner, Jesus answered the question, “**And who is my neighbor?**” from the point of cleanliness, since that was a major issue in first century Judaism. The parable intensified the popular rabbinic story and Jesus used it to demonstrate that to show love, compassion, and mercy to someone in need was far more important than the traditional “cleanliness.”



12.01.05.D. THE GOOD SAMARITAN INN. Legend said there once was an inn midway between Jericho and Jerusalem. That legend was based on a khan, or way station, that was built by the Sultan Ibrahim Pasha (1494-1536) of the Ottoman Empire for traveling camel caravans. Since such facilities were generally built upon the ruins of previous ones, the khan added credibility to the legend. However, the legend was not taken seriously until in the late 1990s when evidence was found of a Byzantine church that commemorated an ancient inn. Visitors today can see the evidence of the Byzantine church that commemorated the inn that once stood at this site, and was probably referred to by Jesus. Photographed by the author in 2003 when the archaeological site was under restoration.

The religious elite had two serious obligations or yokes under which they lived.

1. The Vow of Neeman that pertained to tithing⁶⁸ and
2. The Vow of Chabber that pertained to living ritually pure lives.⁶⁹

It is the second vow that was taken to an extreme and is demonstrated here. The exaggerated attitude of purity held by the priest can be seen in the Apocryphal book of *Ben Sirach* 1:1-7. Here lies the sentiment that undoubtedly saddened Jesus. The priests were instructed not to help those who were sinners, because supposedly, God hates sinners. The narrative is as follows:

**If you do a kindness, know to whom you do it,
and you will be thanked for your good deeds.
Do good to a godly man, and you will be repaid -
if not by him, certainly by the Most High.
No good will come to the man who persists in evil
or to him who does not give alms.**

**Give to the godly man,
but do not help the sinner
Do good to the humble,
but do not give to the ungodly;
hold back his bread,
and do not give it to him
(lest by means of it he subdue you);
for you will receive twice as much evil
for all the good you do to him.**

**For the Most High also hates sinners
and will inflict punishment on the ungodly.
Give to the good man
but do not help the sinner**

***Ben Sirach* 12:1-7⁷⁰**

68. Lee, *The Galilean Jewishness of Jesus*, 112.

69. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 216; Lee, *The Galilean Jewishness of Jesus*, 112.

70. Metzger, *The Apocrypha of the Old Testament*. 143.

“Pouring on oil and wine.” Olive oil had numerous uses in the ancient world. In this parable, it was used as a medical remedy for injuries. It was also used in religious services in the temple and for lamps in the home (Mt. 25:1-13). It was used as a condiment (Judges 9:9; Hosea 2:8), for baking (Num. 11:8), and even used after a bath (Ruth 3:3; 2 Sam. 12:20). In an anointing context, it was used to anoint the king upon his coronation (1 Sam. 10:1; 16:1, 13), priests (Lev. 8:30), prophets (Isa. 61:1), and for certain sacrifices (Lev.2:4). In the New Testament it was used by the elders of the church to anoint the sick. Wine has antiseptic qualities and they understood that it had beneficial effects on open wounds.

It should be noticed that the Good Samaritan performed his good deed without any pious phrases or self-congratulation on his own virtuous action. In Luke 10 there is no response given by the lawyer, because the reader is to place himself in that position and answer the question. Yet what the Good Samaritan did will not qualify for eternal life. In the Parable of the Sheep and Goats (Mt. 25:31-46) there are two groups of people standing before God on the day of the last judgment. One group repeatedly demonstrated mercy and kindness to those in need and the other group didn't. What Jesus said is that true faith takes action in helping others.

Finally, it is unfortunate that for some seventeen or eighteen centuries this parable and many others were not been properly understood. The well-known and highly respected early church father, St. Augustine, was convinced this parable was an allegory with hidden meanings. Three examples of his allegorical interpretations are as follows:

1. A “certain man” who was going down to Jericho was the first Adam.
2. “Jerusalem” was thought of as the heavenly city, where God lives and from which the first Adam was thrown out.
3. “Jericho,” was affiliated with man’s mortality.

Each character in the parable was given a name and function that had some type of spiritual application. But his interpretations are clearly *not* what Jesus had in mind.⁷¹

A Lesson in First Century Hermeneutics:
12.01.05.X Use Of Known Stories And Events

71. Mowry, “Allegory.” 1:82-84.

As Christian believers who are removed from the historical event by two thousand years, it is difficult to comprehend the cultural setting of various gospel narratives. Hence, the belief that since the words of Jesus are divinely inspired, every story and parable is an *original idea* with Him. In reality, Jesus used stories and concepts with which the people were already familiar. He spoke of fishing, bread, losing a coin, and many other events that His listeners had already experienced.

These are stories to which His listeners could relate. What is difficult, however, is for the modern student to comprehend what stories, fables and legends were common in the first century. His words were obviously inspired and original and were presented in a manner that His listeners, who had no books, television, radio, or recording devices, could remember. He not only used parables and poetic genre as a memory tool but also existing stories of history, common sayings, current events, and He adapted all of them to His message. Therefore, His parables were not quickly forgotten.



12.01.06 Lk. 10:38-42

JESUS WITH MARTHA AND MARY

³⁸ While they were traveling, He entered a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. ³⁹ She had a sister named Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet and was listening to what He said. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by her many tasks, and she came up and asked, "Lord, don't You care that my sister has left me to serve alone? So tell her to give me a hand."

⁴¹ The Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, ⁴² but one thing is necessary. Mary has made the right choice, and it will not be taken away from her."

Disciples and students always sat on the ground in respect for their teacher. In this case, it was Mary who "**sat at the Lord's feet**" like a faithful disciple.⁷² It was the cultural norm that rabbis stood when they read the Torah and sat when teaching. To sit at the teacher's feet was ancient body language that said that the listener desired to be taught

⁷². Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 49.

and would apply the instruction to his or her life. In this case, Martha was working hard to accommodate Jesus, while Mary, in Martha's opinion, was just sitting there doing nothing. Jesus responds kindly by saying that the issues at hand were more important.

12.01.07 Lk. 11:1-4

TEACHING HOW TO PRAY

¹ He was praying in a certain place, and when He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples."

² He said to them, "Whenever you pray, say:

Father,

Your name be honored as holy.

Your kingdom come.

³ **Give us each day our daily bread.**

⁴ **And forgive us our sins,**

**for we ourselves also forgive everyone
in debt to us.**

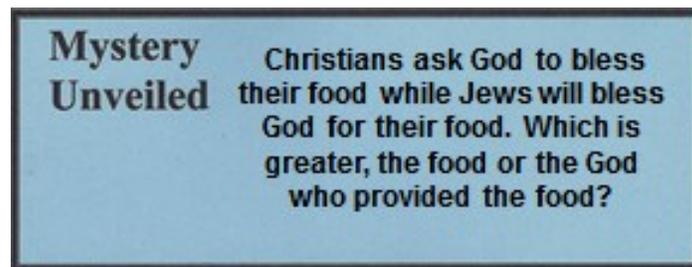
And do not bring us into temptation."

Judaism had developed a sophisticated series of prayer books, similar to many churches of later centuries. Modern critics often reflect upon the "deadness" of liturgical prayers, but fail to recognize that the Jews also prayed extemporaneously.⁷³ Messianic scholars insist that in biblical times the free and open flow of prayer was common and that included prayers in the temple. Jesus, being an orthodox Jew, would have prayed a number of liturgical prayers at their appropriate times as well as spontaneous prayers whenever needed.

For the disciples, ministry with Jesus was a profound adventure. They knew He communicated with God and since they observed the results of His prayers, the only request they ever made was, "**Lord, teach us [how] to pray.**" This prayer model is similar to the example given on the Mount of Beatitudes (Mt. 6:9-13), where the prayer is incorporated into the famous Sermon on the Mount. Matthew included six petitions whereas Luke mentioned only five. The point was to learn *how* to pray from the heart, not *what* to pray from a predetermined script.

73. Schneider, "How Should We Pray?" 18.

The disciples obviously noticed that after He prayed, there were incredible results. They realized that the prayers of Jesus were answered – profoundly! In their simple understanding, they believed that if they learned *how* to pray like Jesus did, they would achieve similar results. A relationship with God is something they would learn later. Another point to consider is this: A unique difference between how Jews and Christians pray is the subject of their prayers. Christians will ask God to bless their food while Jewish people will bless God for their food that He has provided. Which is greater, the food or the God who provided the food? Maybe it is time for Christians to pray the Jewish way.



Finally, according to the book of *Jubilees*, the synagogue service was a long dry lecture of the smallest details of rabbinic rules and regulations.⁷⁴ In fact, the book of *Jubilees* is considered one of the most important authorities on Jewish customs and opinions at the time of Jesus, second only to the *Mishnah*.⁷⁵ It included everything about proper washing before and after eating, to the kind and quality of wood needed for the temple altar. By this time the disciples not only realized there was a refreshing and unique difference between the sermons of Jesus and those of the local rabbis, but there was a difference between their prayers. And the disciples wanted to know how to pray with results like Jesus had.

12.01.08 Lk. 11:5-13

PARABLE OF A MIDNIGHT FRIEND

⁵ He also said to them: “Suppose one of you has a friend and goes to him at midnight

A and says to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread,

B ⁶ because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me,

74. See Philo, *The Works of Philo*. 689-90 quoted in 06.02.02.Q1. Also Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*. 24. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:67; Geikie, *The Life and Works of Christ*. 2:3-4.

75. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 1:560.

C and I don't have anything to offer him.”

C’⁷ Then he will answer from inside and say, ‘Don’t bother me!

**B’ The door is already locked, and my children and I have gone to bed.
A’ I can’t get up and give you anything.’**

**⁸ I tell you,
“even though he won’t get up
and give him anything
because he is his friend,
yet because of the man’s boldness
he will get up
and give him as much as he needs.”**

⁹ “So I say to you:

**Keep asking, and it will be given to you.
Keep searching, and you will find.
Keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you.
¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives; he who searches finds,
and to him who knocks,
the door will be opened.”**

**¹¹ What father among you, if his son asks for a fish,
will give him a snake instead of a fish?**

**¹² Or if he asks for an egg,
will give him a scorpion?**

**¹³ If you then,
who are evil,
know how to give good gifts
to your children,
how much more
will your heavenly Father
give the Holy Spirit
to those who ask him!”**

The literary style of verses 5-7 is rather technical, as the patterns are not recognized with repeating words.⁷⁶ The reader needs to observe the motives behind each stanza, clearly reflecting the skill the first century listeners had in understanding and memorizing complicated parables. In line A, a request to give a loaf of bread is made, whereas in A' the negative answer is given for the loaf of bread. In lines B and B,' the reason is given with a final comment in C and C'.

The literary style changes in verses 8-13 and is relatively easy to follow with repeating words in the matching lines.⁷⁷ Undoubtedly, some may find this to be somewhat difficult at first, which is why this writer has added several letters followed by an explanation. However, the listeners of the first century were trained to listen in this manner and immediately recognized the patterns.

“Goes to him at midnight and says.” At midnight people were sound asleep and a knock on the door was very unusual. With hearing only a knock, the residents would not know who was outside – and that would be a frightening event. But when the unexpected visitor speaks, those inside will recognize his voice. Interestingly, in this culture strangers knocked, but neighbors and friends called. The fact that someone both knocked and called reveals an urgent situation.

The moral of the story is that if an unwilling friend is willing to serve at midnight, how much more is our Father in heaven ready to supply our needs? The lesson Jesus gave is that God the Father desires to give His children good gifts, just as any earthly father would do for his children. Likewise, just as a fish and eggs are good food, snakes and scorpions are hazardous.⁷⁸

12.01.09 Jn. 10:22-30 Dec. 17, A.D. 29 Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah)

JESUS AFFIRMS HIS OWN DEITY

²² Then the Festival of Dedication took place in Jerusalem, and it was winter.

²³ Jesus was walking in the temple complex in Solomon's Colonnade. ²⁴ Then

76. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*. Part I, 120.

77. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*. Part I 48, 120, 135; Fleming, *The Parables of Jesus*. 71.

78. For a similar theme and literary style, see 08.04.05; Mt. 7:7-12.

the Jews surrounded Him and asked, “How long are You going to keep us in suspense? If You are the Messiah, tell us plainly.”

²⁵ **“I did tell you and you don’t believe,”** Jesus answered them. **“The works that I do in My Father’s name testify about Me. ²⁶ But you don’t believe because you are not My sheep. ²⁷ My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish — ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. ³⁰ The Father and I are one.”**

In this passage Jesus identified Himself as the ultimate good Shepherd – an attribute the Jewish people recognized in God, known as *Jehovah Rohi*.⁷⁹ The connection could not be missed. Yet they continued to have difficulties understanding Jesus as being God in human form. Their opinions were based upon the following reasons:

1. They simply could not imagine that God would be a man since Daniel said the Messiah would be *like* a man (10:18).
2. They also had a long-standing tradition of not worshiping any man or idol.
3. They had to contend with the claims of divinity made by the Roman emperor and,
4. They recalled all too well similar claims and persecution from Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the second century B.C.⁸⁰

The ministry of Jesus included the challenge of changing their preconceived mind sets and allowing them to discover who He was.

“Feast of Dedication.” Two centuries earlier the Syrian-Greeks had desecrated the temple. After the Maccabean Revolt ended, the temple was quickly cleansed and on the 25th day of Kislev (December 25), 165, B.C. the first Feast of Dedication was celebrated.⁸¹ It was a celebration enjoyed by Jesus. Obviously this eight-day feast does

79. See “Jesus, the Fulfiller of Selected Names of God” in Appendix 32 for additional attributes.

80. See 03.04.23; Chronological History, 180 to 160 B.C.

81. Tenney, *The Gospel of John*. 111; Franz, “Jesus celebrates Hanukkah.” 116-19; Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 2:195.

not have an Old Testament origin, but it was to remember two significant events:

1. The incredible victory God gave them over the Greek Antiochus IV Epiphanes.
2. The miracle of oil for the menorah. At the time of the temple cleansing, there was only a one-day supply of olive oil, which was used for fuel in the giant temple menorahs. The miracle was that the menorahs remained lit for eight days, until new oil could be pressed according to the strict rabbinic guidelines.

This was a clear sign that God was still with them after three years of incredible persecution and more than two centuries since their last prophet.⁸² This celebration today is known as the Festival of Lights or Hanukkah.

“Solomon’s colonnade.” This large temple porch, with its 162 white marble columns, was a favorite teaching area for the rabbis. It was reconstructed, in part, with building materials from the destroyed first temple and, hence, the name, Solomon’s Colonnade. Whenever the rabbis taught, they alluded to a physical object, an event in history, or other meaningful connection.⁸³ They placed their students in the atmosphere that literally reflected the wisdom of Solomon. Under these colonnades, the rabbis encouraged them to become as wise as their king who had built the first temple. Today the colonnaded porch is gone. Yet archaeologists have identified a section of the Temple Mount wall that was constructed by Solomon,⁸⁴ but are unsure if any columns are of Solomon’s era.

“The Father and I are one.” After performing the messianic miracles, and fulfilling messianic prophecies, His challengers still demanded that He state whether He was the long expected messiah. However, it was the custom of the time not to speak of one’s self in a direct manner, since that was seen as being prideful. Suspecting the answer Jesus would give, they wanted to have a plain straight forward answer so that they could kill him. The time had finally come and Jesus now revealed Himself to be the one true God who is the eternal self-existent, self-revealing “I AM.” He further revealed Himself in the Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.⁸⁵ This doctrine of the one true God is essential to the Christian faith. Jesus clearly proclaimed His deity – a comment that horrified them. The New Testament repeatedly affirms the divinity of Jesus.⁸⁶

82. Farrar, *Life of Christ*. 302-03; Jones, “Dedication, Feast of.” 1:380; Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.7.7.

83. Franz, “Hanukkah: The Festival of Light.” 91-92.

84. Laperrousaz, “King Solomon’s Wall Still Supports the Temple Mount.” 37.

85. For other references on this doctrine see Deut. 6:4; Mk. 12:29; Isa. 43:10-31; 1 Tim. 6:15-16; 1 Jn. 5:7; Mt. 28:19.

86. The divinity of Jesus is also mentioned in Jn. 1:1; 17:5; Phil. 2:6; Col. 1:15; 2:9.

12.01.10 Jn. 10:31-39

JEWS ATTEMPT TO STONE JESUS

³¹ Again the Jews picked up rocks to stone Him.

³² Jesus replied, “I have shown you many good works from the Father. Which of these works are you stoning Me for?”

³³ “We aren’t stoning You for a good work,” the Jews answered, “but for blasphemy, because You — being a man — make Yourself God.”

³⁴ Jesus answered them, “Isn’t it written in your scripture, I said, you are gods? (Ps. 82:6) ³⁵ If He called those whom the word of God came to ‘gods’— and the Scripture cannot be broken — ³⁶ do you say, ‘You are blaspheming’ to the One the Father set apart and sent into the world, because I said: I am the Son of God? ³⁷ If I am not doing My Father’s works, don’t believe Me. ³⁸ But if I am doing them and you don’t believe Me, believe the works. This way you will know and understand that the Father is in Me and I in the Father.” ³⁹ Then they were trying again to seize Him, yet He eluded their grasp.

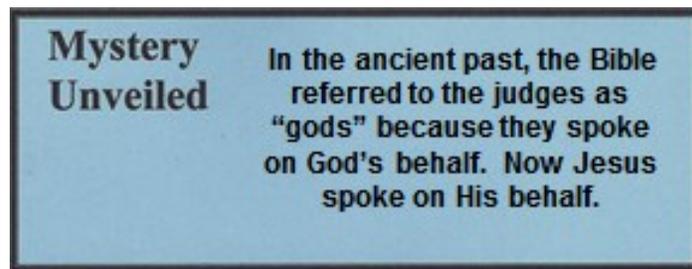
“**Because You — being a man — make Yourself God.**” The difficulty the religious leaders had was not just that Jesus performed the three messianic miracles, but they reflected upon the horrible dictatorial Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and the Roman emperors, these and all others who ever claimed to be a god. Their fears of the past clouded their perspective of the present reality. Furthermore, their preconceived ideas of a political-messiah blinded their understanding of Jesus. The fact that Jesus could be so radically different evidently did not occur to them. Yet the time had come again when He needed to clearly state His divine authority.⁸⁷

“**If he called them ... ‘gods.’**” The critics of Jesus had no difficulty with Psalm 82:6, which referred to men as gods to whom the Word of God would come. During the time of the judges (ca. 1375-1075 B.C.), judges ruled the Israelite people by divine authority. While they were ambassadors for God, they were called by the divine name “Elohim.”

87. See 11.02.20.Q1 “What are the three examples of where Jesus claimed divine authority that brought Him into conflict with the religious establishment?”

The English word *judges* is *Elohim* and means *gods*.⁸⁸ The judges were mere humans with authority of divine delegation and their title of *Elohim* was one of honor and respect. At no time did the Israelites ever believe that their judges were deified. Likewise, Moses was called a “god” to Aaron (Ex. 4:16) and called a “god” to the pharaoh (Ex. 7:1).⁸⁹ This was not because they were deified, but because they were ambassadors, who carried the divine message to the Egyptian monarch.

Therefore, if the Jews could accept ancient men being called “gods,” how could they possibly be critical of Jesus for referring to Himself as the same? In light of this context, Jesus had authority of divine delegation and in that sense, was a small g “god.”⁹⁰



88. Barclay, “John.” 2:76-77; Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 17, pages 9-10.

89. The term *Elohim* is also found in Psalm 82:6; Exodus 21:1-6 and Exodus 22:9 and 28.

90. For years scholars have debated verses 34-36 as to whether Jesus is or is not claiming deity. For further study, see W. Gary Phillips. “An Apologetic Study of John 10:34-36.” 405-19.

Unit 12

The Galilean Ministry Ends

Chapter 02

The Perea Ministry



12.02.00.A. JESUS TEACHES THE CROWDS by James Tissot. 1880.

Wherever Jesus went, crowds were sure to go. His popularity increased exponentially as people increasingly believed He would be the One who would deliver them from Roman oppression.

12.02.01 Introduction

Hostility toward Jesus by the religious leaders developed first in Jerusalem and Judea and then it spread to Galilee. Consequently, He traveled east, crossed the Jordan River, and entered the province of Perea (modern Jordan), where John the Baptist had preached only

a few years earlier. There He was beyond the reach of the Sanhedrin and He could teach His disciples and other followers in peace.

East of the Jordan River and several miles south of the Sea of Galilee, the Yarmuk Valley branched off toward the east. In ancient times the Jews passed through the Yarmuk on their way to and from Babylon and Persia. It is also where Elijah hid from King Ahab (1 Kg. 17:2-6). Since it was a popular travel route, Herod the Great had a small palace-fortress there, and some scholars believe the magi may have returned to their homes by way of the road along the Yarmuk Valley (see also 04.04.07). Since Jews lived in the surrounding communities, it was an ideal place for Jesus to minister.⁹¹ The areas where He traveled cover a large distance and are today in modern Jordan and the Golan of Israel. They are as follows:

1. John 1:28 Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, possibly the same location as Bethabara (05.03.01).
2. John 1:28 Bethabara. The name means “house of the ford; place of crossing.” Some believe it is east of the Dead Sea, perhaps where the Wadi Shuayb reaches the Jordan Valley, but the most popular opinion is the area north of the Dead Sea and east of Jericho along the Jordan River where Jesus was baptized (05.03.01).
3. Mk 5:20 The region of the Gerasenes. The area north and south of the Yarmuk River, includes the city of Gadara (08.06.03).
4. Jn 10:42 The region of Perea, an area south of the Jabbok River, known to the Jews as Gilead (10.01.10).
5. Mark 7:31 Region of the Decapolis (10.01.24).
6. Mk 8:1-10 Dalmanutha feeding of 4,000 (10.01.26).
7. Mt. 16:13-20 Caesarea Philippi, where Peter acknowledged Jesus as being the Anointed One (10.01.29).

12.02.02 Jn. 10:40-42 Perea (December 29-April 30)

TO PEREA

91. Pixner, *With Jesus in Jerusalem*. 37.

⁴⁰ So He departed again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing earlier, and He remained there. ⁴¹ Many came to Him and said, “John never did a sign, but everything John said about this man was true.” ⁴² And many believed in Him there.

The history of the Jews who lived in Perea is rather interesting. Shortly after Herod the Great came to power, he invited a number of Babylonian Jews to live in the Yarmuk Valley and region of Batanea in Perea. The shrewd monarch did this for a specific reason: protection. These Jews were excellent archers and could shoot arrows as they rode on horseback, a rare and outstanding military skill of this time.⁹² Their position east of the Jordan River meant they were Herod’s first line of defense in the event of a Parthian invasion. Scholars believe Batanea was one of the communities of Babylonian Jews where Jesus ministered.⁹³

92. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.2.1.

93. Pixner, *With Jesus in Jerusalem*. 57.



12.02.02.Z Map of Three Jewish Provinces of Judea, Galilee, and Perea. By crossing the Jordan River, Jesus was able to minister to the Jewish people who lived in Perea, as well as to the Gentiles in the area. In the days of Jesus, Perea was often referred to as the “region of Judea across the Jordan.” Map courtesy of International Mapping and Dan Prsywara.

12.02.03 Lk. 13:22-35 Perea

HOW MANY WILL BE SAVED?

²² He went through one town and village after another, teaching and making His way to Jerusalem. ²³ “Lord,” someone asked Him, “are there few being saved?”

He said to them,

²⁴ “Make every effort to enter
through the narrow door, because I tell you,
many will try to enter and won’t be able.
²⁵ once the owner of the house gets up and shuts the door.

Then you will stand outside and knock on the door, saying,
‘Lord, open up for us.’

He will answer you, ‘I don’t know you or where you’re from.’

²⁶ Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets!’

²⁷ But He will say,

I tell you, I don’t know you or where you’re from.

Get away from Me, all you workers of unrighteousness!’ ²⁸ There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth in that place, when you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves thrown out. ²⁹ They will come from east and west, from north and south, and recline at the table in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ Note this: Some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.”

³¹ At that time some Pharisees came and told Him, “Go, get out of here! Herod wants to kill You!”

³² He said to them, “Go tell that fox, ‘Look!

I’m driving out demons and performing healings today and
tomorrow, and

on the third day I will complete My work.’

³³ **Yet I must travel today,**

tomorrow, and

the next day, because it is not possible for a prophet to perish outside of Jerusalem!

³⁴ **“Jerusalem, Jerusalem,**

She who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her.

How often I wanted to

gather your children together,

as a hen

gathers her chicks under her wings,

but you were not willing! ³⁵ See, your house is abandoned to you. And I tell you, you will not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘He who comes in the name of the Lord is the blessed One!’” (Ps. 118:26)!

In this discourse someone asked Jesus how many, or how few, would be saved. An insightful teacher can estimate how much a person knows, not by the answers given, but by the questions asked. In this case, Jesus understood that this person was beginning to wonder if the assumption was true that all Jews would be saved. This was a hot issue among the rabbis, as the legalistic Pharisees believed that only those who conformed to their legalism would be saved, while other Pharisees were far more compassionate and caring for the common Jewish people. Possibly the only issue they agreed on was that all Gentiles were lost, except for those who kept the Noahide Commandments⁹⁴ or converted to Judaism.⁹⁵

Jesus made it clear that *only* those who placed their faith in Him would be saved. Others, who refuse to do so, will recognize Him with pain and grief on the Day of Judgment. Jesus said there will be Jews in eternal torment who will be able to briefly see Abraham,

94. The Noahide Commandments are based upon the Book of Genesis and are found in Appendix 17.

95. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 2:254.

Isaac, and Jacob before being thrown out. This was in sharp contrast to the prevailing belief that said that because they were descendants of Abraham, they were given eternal security.⁹⁶ In essence, the Pharisees said that for Jewish people, the door was wide open and the road was broad that leads to heaven and for everyone else it was closed – but Jesus clearly disagreed.

Furthermore, all Jews expected to enjoy the heavenly messianic banquet with their patriarchal forefathers. Much to the surprise of His listeners, Jesus told them that Gentiles will be there as well. He also said that people would come to Him, **“from east and west, from north and south,”** which obviously refers to Gentiles. The Assyrians and Babylonians had taken their forefathers captive and relocated them far to the east. But the Gentiles completely encircled them and, therefore, these four compass directions could have only one meaning: Jesus was telling them that Gentiles would be coming from every direction in the world. The thought of a Gentile being at this banquet was totally unimaginable to them.

It is important at this point to clarify a significant point. Throughout Church history, there has been a misconception that *all* the Jews were always against Jesus, especially at His crucifixion. However, the gospels clearly indicate otherwise. Some informed Him that “Herod [Antipas] wants to kill you.” In fact, the believing Pharisees on several occasions warned Him of impending danger.

1. The Pharisees come to warn Jesus that Herod wants to kill him. “Herod Antipas is looking to get his hands on you.”⁹⁷
2. They warned Him when they were coming down from the Mount of Olives.
3. They warned Him when the crowds were saying, “Hosanna, Hosanna.” This could have been said with a reasonable degree of safety in Galilee, but to say this in Jerusalem would be cause for a potentially explosive situation.
4. There was a sincere interest on the part of Jesus’ contemporaries concerning His safety. This demonstrates that within the community of Pharisees there were those who were concerned for the safety of Jesus, while others desired to kill Him. Yet nowhere in the gospels is there any evidence that Jesus broke a single written Law of Moses. His enemies desired to kill Him because He broke their

96. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 17, page 12.

97. However, one scholar suggests that this may have been a trap because Jesus was in Perea and outside of the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin. However, this writer believes that if it were a trap, Jesus would have responded differently. See Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 17, page 13.

Oral laws.

“I must travel today, tomorrow, and the next day.” This phrase is not to be taken literally, but is a Hebraic way of saying that when His work was finished, then He would go. A similar term is “in three days and one” or “in seven days and one.” These phrases refer to a time when one’s work is completed.⁹⁸

“Because it is not possible for a prophet to perish outside of Jerusalem!” Again, Jesus makes use of irony in His discussion. He has a three-day walk from the Galilee area to Jerusalem, where He must go to die. Jerusalem, known as the “city of God” and “the city of the prophets,” was the natural place for the Son of God to die, as many prophets had done in the past.⁹⁹

“Your house is abandoned to you.” This was a specific reference to the coming destruction of the temple and Jerusalem four decades later in A.D. 70. How interesting that the Jews had established extremely rigid regulations in order to secure their place in the land of Judaea/Israel, so they would never be exiled again. Yet, it was because of these regulations that they rejected Jesus and, within a century, the majority of them were either killed or forcibly removed from Jerusalem.¹⁰⁰

12.02.04 Lk. 14:1-6

MAN HEALED ON THE SABBATH

¹ One Sabbath, when He went to eat at the house of one of the leading Pharisees, they were watching Him closely. ² There in front of Him was a man whose body was swollen with fluid. ³ In response, Jesus asked the law experts and the Pharisees, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?” ⁴ But they kept silent. He took the man, healed him, and sent him away. ⁵ And to them, He said, “Which of you whose son or ox falls into a well, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?” ⁶ To this they could find no answer.

“Body was swollen with fluid.” The physical description of the ill man suggests that he

98. Bookman, *When God Wore Sandals*. CD Trac 10.

99. More than seven centuries after Jesus the Muslims referred to Jerusalem as the city of the prophets.

100. General Titus destroyed Jerusalem and burned the temple in A.D. 70, and Hadrian destroyed the temple again in A.D. 135, at which time he evicted every Jew from the city.

may have had a condition known as dropsy¹⁰¹ or hydropsy, which today is more commonly known as edema.¹⁰² The biblical phrase is from the Greek word *hudropikos* (5203), meaning *dropsical* or *suffering from dropsy*.¹⁰³ Whether it was this or a similar disease, in ancient times the condition was far more serious than it would be considered today.

It was the custom that a visiting speaker or rabbi was invited to the home of one of the synagogue leaders. In this case, Jesus went to the home of a leading Pharisee.¹⁰⁴ While there, Jesus asked His critics if it was permissible to heal on the holy day. They refused to answer and, therefore, Jesus healed the man. Jesus then spoke of their distorted values. Their tradition permitted a son (a beloved member of the family) or an ox (a great asset) to be rescued if trapped or injured. Yet, they objected to the healing of a man who was suffering from an illness.

Jesus was again accused of being a Sabbath breaker, whereas in reality, the opposite was true. He demonstrated the love of God and the importance of every person, in light of a holy day in a sin-infested world. Luke recorded four healings by Jesus on the Sabbath but, no doubt, there were many others as well. These healings gave critics ample argument, while He continued to demonstrate the love of God and His kingdom.

Two major schools of theology within the Pharisee sect had numerous heated debates, one of which pertained to Sabbath restrictions.¹⁰⁵ The School of Shammai said it was unlawful to comfort the sick or visit the mourner on the Sabbath, but the School of Hillel permitted it. In the case of a Sabbath violation, the School of Shammai demanded physical punishment whereas the School of Hillel and most other Pharisees, as strict and legalistic as they were, offered a milder punishment that was often in the form of a monetary fine.¹⁰⁶ Those who confronted Jesus on healing on the Sabbath were most likely to be followers of Shammai, rather than Hillel or any other sect.

101. Blomberg, "The Authenticity and Significance of Jesus' Table Fellowship with Sinners." 241.

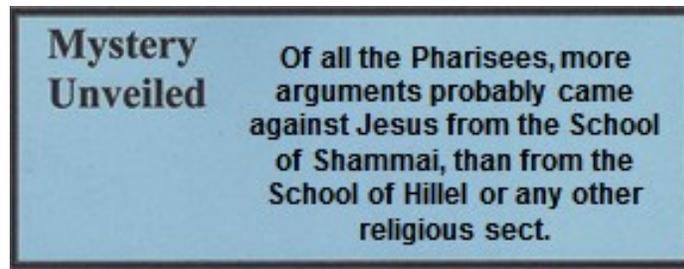
102. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edema> Retrieved October 15, 2013.

103. Vine, "Dropsy." *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:185.

104. Just as the gospel writer used the phrase "leading Pharisees," Josephus expressed the same idea using the term "principal men" in describing those who were responsible for accusing Jesus before Pilate. See Josephus *Antiquities* 18.3.3.

105. See 02.01.14 "Pharisees," 02.01.18 "School of Hillel," and 02.01.19 "School of Shammai."

106. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 2:106.



12.02.05 Lk. 14:7-14

BANQUET PLACE OF HONOR¹⁰⁷

⁷ He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noticed how they would choose the best places for themselves: ⁸ “When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, don’t recline at the best place, because a more distinguished person than you may have been invited by your host. ⁹ The one who invited both of you may come and say to you, ‘Give your place to this man,’ and then in humiliation, you will proceed to take the lowest place.

¹⁰ “But when you are invited, go and recline in the lowest place, so that when the one who invited you comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher.’ You will then be honored in the presence of all the other guests.

¹¹ For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

¹² He also said to the one who had invited Him,

“When you give a lunch or a dinner,
Don’t invite your friends,

107. The significance of the messianic banquet was very important to Jesus (Heb. *Yeshua*). The wedding imagery between Himself and His church as it was reflected in a first century Jewish wedding is discussed by Dr. John Fischer, a messianic scholar and rabbi at 09.03.04.V1. See the following as well: Wedding garments needed at the wedding in Mt. 22:1-14 (13.03.07); 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). See also 14.02.05.V2 where Professor John Metzger discusses the purity of the (L)amb during the Passion Week and the related imagery of the bride and groom to the Messianic Wedding Banquet.

**your brothers, your relatives,
or your rich neighbors,**

**Because,
they might invite you back,
and you would be repaid.**

**¹³ On the contrary,
when you host a banquet,
invite those who are poor,
maimed,
or blind,**

**¹⁴ And you will be blessed.
because they cannot repay you;
you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”**

Jesus instructed the disciples to invite the poor, the crippled, and the blind, so they would be blessed. These were the people with whom the leading Pharisees and Sadducees would not associate, because the religious leaders believed God cursed them by giving them an infirmity and poverty. Furthermore, these leading Jews believed they would become defiled by even associating with such people. Therefore, the status seekers were generally quick to place themselves in the most favored positions.

It was the cultural norm that, when at a banquet, guests would be seated in the order of the greatest honor to the least. The one seated to the left of the host held the “**the best place**” which was also known as the “place of honor.” This passage, as with the one following, provides social rules for receiving and giving of hospitality. In the ancient Middle East, social outcasts were invited to wedding banquets – it was a way of demonstrating charity to the poor. They were asked to sit quietly on the floor, lean against the wall, and were fed at the end of the banquet.¹⁰⁸ These invitations were recognized by the community as a noble gesture by the host. Caring for the poor and outcast has always been a significant element in Judaism. It is highly probable that Jesus used this rule of social etiquette in the structure of His parable. One such rule of social engagement is found in the Hebrew Bible:

**⁶ Don’t brag about yourself before the king,
And don’t stand in the place of the great;
⁷ for it is better for him to say to you, “Come up here!”**

108. Babylonian Talmud, *Derek Eres Zuta* 59a; Bailey, *Jesus through Eastern Eyes*. 246 n15.

Than to demote you in plain view of a noble.

**⁸ Don't take a matter to court hastily.
Otherwise, what will you do afterward
if your opponent humiliates you?**

**⁹ Make your case with your opponent
without revealing another's secret;**

**¹⁰ otherwise, the one who hears will disgrace you,
and you'll never live it down.**

Proverbs 25:6-10

At banquets and feasts, guests were seated according to either their social position in the community or their relation to the host (1 Sam. 9:22; Lk. 14:8). This was commonplace among all the ancient Middle Eastern peoples. **“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”** This basic principle was taught in years past¹⁰⁹ and is another example of how Jesus came to fulfill the Old Testament and not to replace it.¹¹⁰ This paradoxical phrase also emphasized the contrast by being present in Hebraic poetry. In rabbinic literature is found a similar story that the people knew quite well. In it, a certain Rabbi Yochanan, the son of Zakkai,¹¹¹ told a parable:

It is like a king who invited his servants to a feast and did not set a time for them to arrive. The wise adorned themselves and waited by the door of the palace, for they said, “Is there anything lacking in a palace?” The foolish continued working, for they said, “Is a feast ever given without preparation?” Suddenly the king summoned his servants. The wise entered the palace adorned as they were, but the foolish entered in their working clothes. The king rejoiced when he saw the wise, but was angry when he saw the foolish, and said, “Those who adorned themselves for the feast shall sit down and eat and drink; but those who did not adorn themselves for the feast shall stand and look on!”

Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbath* 153b

109. 2 Ch. 7:14-15; Pr. 3:34; 25:6-7.

110. See also Mt. 18:4; 23:12; Lk. 11:43; 18:14; 20:46; Jas. 4:10; 1 Pet. 5:6.

111. Rabbi Zakkai was the last disciple of the famous Rabbi Hillel. See Parry, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Talmud*. 38-39.

Jesus never said it was wrong to honor someone, as that is related to respect. He did condemn, however, the arrogant pride that was flaunted by the religious leaders. This narrative underscores an important point: Jesus told stories in various forms to explain His theology and, therefore, understanding the language and culture of the Storyteller is critical. In this case, there can be little question that the wedding banquet narrative gives a hint of the coming messianic banquet in which Jesus will be the central figure and His saints will be the guests.

12.02.06 Lk. 14:15-24

PARABLE OF THE GREAT MESSIANIC BANQUET¹¹²

Lk. ¹⁵ When one of those who reclined at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, “The one who will eat bread in the kingdom of God is blessed!”

¹⁶ Then He told him: “A man was giving a large banquet and invited many. ¹⁷ At the time of the banquet, he sent his slave to tell those who were invited,

‘Come, because everything is now ready.’

¹⁸ “But without exception to make excuses.

**The first one said to him, ‘I have bought a field,
and I must go out and see it.**

I ask you to excuse me.’

**¹⁹ “Another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen,
and I’m going to try them out.**

I ask you to excuse me.’

²⁰ “And another said,

112. The significance of the messianic banquet was very important to Jesus (Heb. *Yeshua*). The wedding imagery between Himself and His church as it was reflected in a first century Jewish wedding is discussed by Dr. John Fischer, a messianic scholar and rabbi at 09.03.04.V1. 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 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). See also 14.02.05.V2 where Professor John Metzger discusses the purity of the (L)amb during the Passion Week and the related imagery of the bride and groom to the Messianic Wedding Banquet.

**‘I just got married,
And therefore I’m unable to come.’**

²¹ “So the slave came back and reported these things to his master. Then in anger, the master of the house told his slave, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the city, and bring in here the poor, maimed, blind, and lame!’”

²² “‘Master,’ the slave said, ‘what you ordered has been done, and there’s still room.’”

²³ “Then the master told the slave, ‘Go out into the highways and lanes and make them come in, so that my house may be filled. ²⁴ For I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will enjoy my banquet!’”

Literary Style¹¹³ Again Jesus taught a lesson in the form of a parable reflecting upon a story that the people already knew. This one in Luke has seven stanzas. The first four have similar ideas, whereas the last three are different, but are related. In each of the first four stanzas, there is an action, which is used as an excuse not to come to the banquet. Finally, after a disappointing response an invitation was given to the worldwide community to come and dine with the master.

In the biblical period, a wedding was one of the most joyous and festive celebrations. It came with two invitations, although the community already knew that a certain young man and lady were betrothed to be married. The first invitation came weeks prior to the wedding, and a second invitation came as a reminder, and that one was just a day or two prior to the special event.

In this parable, the two invitations to the Messianic banquet reflect the following:

1. The first invitation was sent out by the Old Testament prophets.
2. The second invitation was sent out personally by Jesus.

In the parable, no one had an excuse for not coming at the first invitation, but when the second invitation was presented some of the worst excuses imaginable were given. First a review of the characters is given before the question is asked as to why Jesus told this

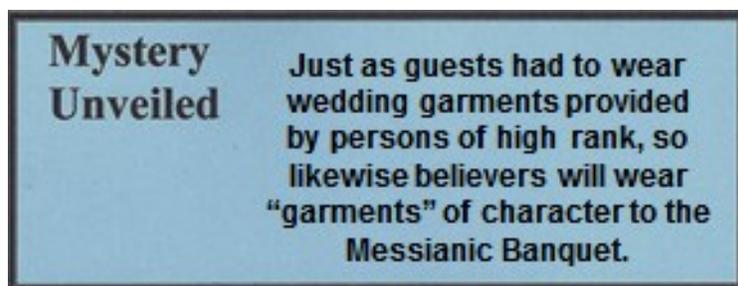
113. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*. Part II. 93.

parable.

Cast of Characters

The Master	=	God
The original invited guests	=	The Jews
The poor people	=	The tax collectors and social outcasts
Those in streets and lanes	=	The Gentiles

It was the cultural norm that there were always two wedding invitations, but in this parable there are three. Scholars have often cited the third invitation to be the invitation of the Gentiles to come to the messianic banquet.¹¹⁴ Today's readers have difficulty understanding the meaning of the wedding garments that are to be worn by the guests.¹¹⁵ In ancient times, persons of wealth or high rank showed their magnificence and generosity by providing the guests with wedding garments.¹¹⁶ In the parable, the garments represent God's righteous character, and must be worn to attend the great Messianic banquet our Lord will one day have with His saints.



The messianic banquet will occur at the end of the Church Age when all the saints will dine with their Messiah and a new era will begin. When Isaiah first wrote of this event (25:6-9) six centuries before Christ, he said that among those present would include Gentiles from many nations. But during the Inter-Testamental Period the leading Jews were convinced that only God's Chosen People would be present.¹¹⁷ Yet Jesus clearly invited those whom the religious leaders rejected.

114. Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, eds., "Banquet." *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. 71-72.

115. See video 09.03.04.V1 by Messianic Rabbi John Fischer who discusses first century wedding imagery, and video 14.02.05.V2 by Professor John Metzger who discusses the Passover, the Last Supper and its implications to the Messianic Banquet.

116. Vine, "Garment." *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:261, and "Marriage, Marry." 2:394-95.

117. This opinion is seen in the *Dead Sea Scroll* known as *The Messianic Rule*, which states that no Gentiles will be present. In addition, the second century (B.C.) *Book of Enoch*, states that Gentiles will be present, but then the angel of death will kill them.

The thought that Jesus said God had other plans was another point of consternation for them. His words were difficult for them to accept, as they believed they were God’s “Chosen People” and, therefore, His “only people,” regardless of what kind of garments they wore. The cultural meaning of *righteousness* has always been to hold the biblical code of ethics, such as giving to the poor or expressing kindness, especially in situations when it would not be expected. But Jesus introduced a new definition of *righteousness* – that is to have an *ongoing relationship* with God. Therefore, one “wears the garment” of righteousness.

The first messenger to announce the banquet was John the Baptist and the second was Jesus. Jesus, speaking in the form of a parable, said that a king made two invitation announcements for his son’s wedding. The first was several weeks in advance and the second, a few hours prior to the wedding. According to the rabbinical commentary *Midrash*, the double invitation was common practice in Jerusalem, because to miss anyone would have been a greater offense in a culture where politeness is held in high regard – with an unknown parallel in Western culture.¹¹⁸ The significance of cultural politeness and courtesies among the ancients has been lost in Western culture, thereby creating difficulties in understanding the passage.

The irony in the parable given by Jesus is that many refused to come to the wedding for ridiculous reasons, thereby conveying supreme insult upon the host. Note the following excuses in this parable:

1. Jesus said that one invited guest refused to come because he had purchased a field and needed to see it. Who would buy a property without first looking at it? It was a poor excuse for not coming.
2. A second man purchased five teams of oxen and needed to test them. Obviously, he was very wealthy and could have had his servants test them.
3. A third man indicated that he just gotten married and, apparently, there was no need to give an excuse for not coming. Many preachers have said, with a sense of humor, that this excuse did not need an explanation. However it does. In fact, according to Deuteronomy 24:5, if anyone had a good reason to attend the celebration with his wife, this man was that person.

What is unique about the parable of Jesus is that there were those who made excuses not

118. Midrash. *Lamentations*, 4:2.

to attend – which was considered to be a gross insult to the host. The patter of excuses is repeated as follows:

1. I just did this (“X”).
2. As a result I must follow through to do this (“Y”).
3. Kindly excuse me, but I cannot come.

But there is no excuse: $X + Y = \text{Condemnation!}$ Jesus clearly stated that each person desired to pursue his own selfish goal with total disrespect for the host. Materialism was as much of a problem in the first century as it is today. All too often the personal goals and pursuits overshadow the important eternal matters. At this point, the host sent out his servants a third time to invite anybody and everybody. The point of the story is that the Jews had been the invited guests of the Old Testament era and they pursued their own goals in life. Hence, the Gentiles received the blessings that were promised for the Jews. The imagery as to whom Jesus was speaking could not have been missed. The banquet was the messianic banquet prophesied by Isaiah (25:6-9). The first guests were the leaders of Israel who rejected Jesus. The poor and lame are the social outcasts within Israel, and those on the roads and country lanes are the Gentiles.

“Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the city, and bring in here the poor, maimed, blind, and lame!”¹¹⁹ In the ancient Middle East, everyone was invited to a wedding banquet because kindness and hospitality to the unfortunate was seen as righteousness.¹²⁰ As stated previously, this narrative underscores an important point: Jesus told stories in various forms to explain His theology and, therefore, understanding the language and culture of the Storyteller is critical.

“Not one of those men who were invited will enjoy my banquet!” Jesus did not say that no Jew would be saved. In fact, the earliest church was comprised totally of Jews, who told other Jews the good news of Jesus, followed by the gospel going to the Gentiles (cf. Cornelius, Acts 10). The men in this context are the anti-Jesus leaders, who were constantly opposing Jesus.

Finally, one of the amazing discoveries of doing this study was to learn how many concepts and teachings of Jesus preceded Him during the Inter-Testamental Period. This writer feels these are part of the meaning of Galatians 4:4 where the Apostle Paul said

119. Some older translations, such as the King James Version, read “**compel them to come in.**” That phrase, unfortunately, has been used to justify persecution of Jewish people, unbelievers, and heretics over the centuries.

120. Jeremiah, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 127.

that in the “fullness of time” Jesus came.

In the two short passages below are responses to invitations given by a monarch or other influential person. In the first, Jesus, the son of Sirach (*Ben Sirach*), described how the invited person should respond. In the second, the unknown author said that to decline an invitation offered by a king was seen as a supreme insult. On a side note, Josephus recorded two longer accounts where denying an invitation (not wedding related) by a king resulted in harsh punishment.¹²¹

When an influential person invites you, be reserved, and he will invite you more insistently. Do not be forward, or you may be rebuffed, do not stand aloof, or you will be forgotten.

Ben Sirach 13:9-10

A parable: A king sent a proclamation to his country. What did the inhabitants of the country do with it? They took it, tore it up, and burned it. Then they said, “Woe unto us when the king hears this!”

*Ruth Rabbah Proem 7*¹²²

Three variations of the parable of the Great Messianic Banquet were well known to the listeners of Jesus. One of them is in the second century (B.C.) book of *1 Enoch*. It says that Gentiles will be present at the Great Messianic Banquet. On the other hand, the Essenes said that only Jews would be there. The banquet narrative of *1 Enoch* is as follows:

¹ Thus the Lord commanded the kings, the governors, the high officials, and the landlords and said, “Open your eyes and lift up your eyebrows – if you are able to recognize the Elect One!” ² The Lord of the Spirits has sat down on the throne of his glory, and the spirit of righteousness has been poured out upon him. The word of his mouth will do the sinners in; and all the oppressors shall be eliminated from before his face. ³ On the day of judgement, all the kings, the governors, the high officials, and the landlords shall see and recognize him – how he sits on the throne of his glory and righteousness is judged before him, and that no nonsensical talk shall be uttered in his presence. ⁴ The pain shall come upon them as on a woman in travail with birth pangs – when she is

121. Josephus, *Antiquities* 9.13.2 (263-267) and *Wars* 2.17.10 (449-456).

122. Both quotations cited by Bock and Herrick, *Jesus in Context*. 156.

giving birth (the child) enters the mouth of the womb and she suffers from childbearing. ⁵ One half portion of them shall glance at the other half; they shall be terrified and dejected; and pain shall seize them when they see that Son of Man sitting on the throne of his glory. ⁶ (These) kings, governors, and all the landlords shall (try to) bless, glorify, extol him who rules over everything, him who has been concealed. ⁷ For the Son of Man was concealed from the beginning and the Most High One preserved him in the presence of his power; then he revealed him to the holy and the elect ones. ⁸ The congregation of the holy ones shall be planted, and all the elect ones shall stand before him. ⁹ On that day, all the kings, the governors, the high officials, and those who rule the earth shall fall down before him on their faces, and worship and raise their hopes in that Son of Man; they shall beg and plead for mercy at his feet. ¹⁰ But the Lord of the Spirits himself will cause them to be frantic, so that they shall rush and depart from his presence. Their faces shall be filled with shame, and their countenances shall be crowned with darkness. ¹¹ So he will deliver them to the angels for punishments in order that vengeance shall be executed on them – oppressors of his children and his elect ones.

*1 Enoch 62:1-11*¹²³

Prior to the time as Jesus told His parable the Essenes in Qumran were writing about their Banquet in a scroll known as *The Messianic Rule*. Of course, some of their ideas were hardly in agreement with Him but they did write an interesting opinion concerning that future event. One of their Dead Sea Scrolls reveals that they anticipated a messianic banquet and, therefore, must have understood His message.

When God will have engendered (the Priest-) Messiah, he shall come [at] the head of the whole congregation of Israel with all [his brethren, the sons] of Aaron the Priests, [those called] to the assembly, the men of renown; and they shall sit [before him, each man] in the order of his dignity. And then [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. And before them shall sit all the heads of [family of the congreg]ation, and the wise men of [the holy congregation,] each in the order of his dignity.

And [when] they shall gather for the common [tab]le, to eat and [to drink] new wine, when the common table shall be set for eating and the new wine [poured] for drinking, let no man extend his hand over the first-fruits of

123. Parenthesis by Charlesworth in Charlesworth, "1 Enoch" in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 1:43.

bread and wine before the Priest; for [it is he] who shall bless the first-fruits of bread and wine, and shall be the first [to extend] his hand over the bread. Thereafter, the Messiah of Israel shall extend his hand over the bread, [and] all the congregation of the Community [shall utter a] blessing, [each man in the order] of his dignity.

Dead Sea Scroll 1Q28a, Column 2¹²⁴

Obviously there are two very different opinions of a Wedding/Messianic Banquet.

1. Some believed it will include Jews and Gentiles
2. Others believed only certain Jewish people will attend while all Gentiles will be condemned

In the Middle Eastern culture, not to attend a banquet is highly insulting no matter how well the words of an excuse are crafted. It would have been a different matter if one was seriously ill or injured. But in the parable Jesus presented, it was clearly evident that those who were invited, *did not want to come*. The parable is also a reflection of the words of Isaiah and the three kinds of people the prophet described.¹²⁵

1. Isaiah 56:1 The pious Jews of Israel who claim to be faithful to the Mosaic law.
2. Isaiah 56:2 The outcasts of Israel; those who were despised by society and the religious leaders.
3. Isaiah 56:8 “Others” in addition to those already attending.

So when Jesus presented His version of the Banquet, He definitely had everyone’s attention. After all, anyone who could heal people, perform miracles of bread and fish, cast out demons, walk on water, and raise the dead, must know what He’s talking about. Whatever He said about the future Banquet carried considerable weight.

Finally, when Jesus and the disciples were finishing their last Passover together, Jesus

124. Translation by Stephen D. Ricks of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Provo, Utah. Because the Dead Sea Scrolls are 2,000 years old or older, portions of papyrus are at times missing and the translators attempt to insert the lost letters and words which are in brackets. <http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/books/?bookid=120&chapid=1438> Retrieved October 10, 2013. See also Dead Sea Scroll 1QSa 2:5-10 as referenced by Kenneth Bailey in *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 321, citing Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*. (1975 ed.) 121.

125. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 319.

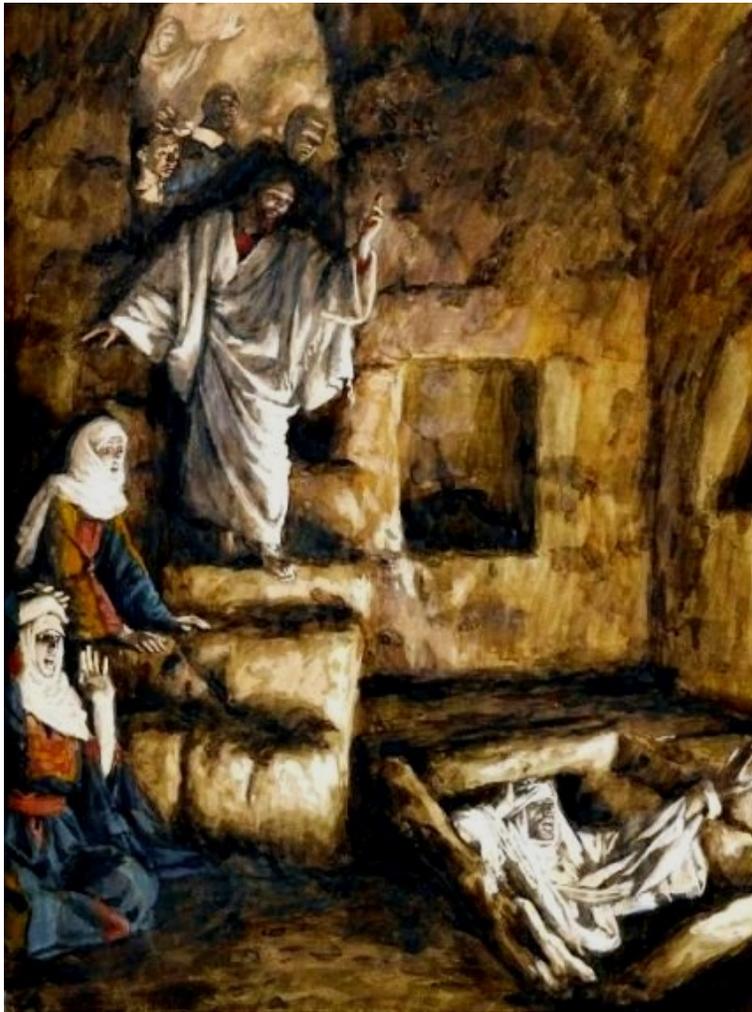
picked up a cup of wine and said that He would not drink of this again until the Great Messianic Banquet. Clearly the imagery of this parable points toward that future event that will include everyone, from all levels of society, who placed their faith and hope in Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

Unit 12

The Galilean Ministry Ends

Chapter 03

Jesus Goes Towards Jerusalem



12.03.00.A JESUS SUMMONS LAZARUS FROM THE TOMB by **James Tissot**. The raising of Lazarus was, without question, the most significant miracle that proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah, but it also motivated the religious leaders to kill Him.

12.03.01 Introduction

As Jesus draws near to His time of crucifixion, His identity becomes increasingly clear – not by spoken words such as “I am the Messiah” – but by miracles the prophets and rabbis said only the Messiah would be able to perform. At this same time, opposition from the religious establishment increases as they do not want to lose their positions of power and authority and Jesus did not fit into their preconceived ideas of what the messiah would be like.

12.03.01.Q1 What “Messianic problems” did the Jewish leaders have with Jesus?¹²⁶

The Jews had some serious difficulties with Jesus, primarily because He broke nearly every one of their sacred preconceived ideas of who the Messiah would be. But even among themselves, rabbis had different and conflicting opinions about Him, because, in their minds, there were obvious conflicts in Scripture concerning the coming of the messiah. Most of their paradoxical problems centered on the words of the highly esteemed prophet Isaiah. Had Isaiah’s life not been so profound and so many of his prophecies fulfilled, his words would easily have been dismissed.¹²⁷ However, both Jesus and Isaiah provided the fuel for endless debates. Note the following difficulties, and some would say “oxymorons,” with which they were grappling.

Video Insert >

12.03.01.V *Primary Messianic Expectations of First Century Jews in Israel.* Dr. Darrell Bock discusses the different expectations the first century Jews had of the coming Messiah. Introduction by Dr. Bill Heinrich. [Click here if Internet connection is available.](#)

Students today who are challenged by biblical difficulties are not alone. For centuries Jews scholars and rabbis could not reconcile various messianic prophecies that clearly opposed each other. These prophetic controversies became known as “Messianic Problems.” It was not until the death and resurrection of Jesus, that these issues were

126. 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”; 15.03.11.Q1 “What did Jesus say that caused the Sanhedrin to condemn Him?”

127. See Appendix 7 for major Old Testament prophecies that were fulfilled by Jesus.

clarified. Below are some of the major issues that were discussed, even during the ministry days of Jesus.

Messianic Problems

1. The Messiah will be humble and of honor

Humble: Isaiah 11:1-2

**¹ Then a shoot will grow from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots will bear fruit.¹²⁸**

**² The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him —
a Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
a Spirit of counsel and strength,
a Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.**

Honored: Isaiah 53:12

**¹² Therefore I will give Him the many as a portion,
and He will receive the mighty as spoil,
because He submitted Himself to death,**

**and was counted among the rebels;
yet He bore the sin of many
and interceded for the rebels.¹²⁹**

2. The Messiah is both man and God.

Man: Genesis 3:15

¹⁵ I will put hostility between you and the woman,

128. The Hebrew root word for “branch” is also the root word for the name of the village “Nazareth.” The debate hinges on whether the Greek word for “Nazareth” was derived from Hebrew *netzzer*, meaning *branch*, or *nazar*, meaning *to consecrate*. See 04.05.04.Q1. The genealogy of Jesus can be traced to Jesse, the father of King David.

129. See 1 Cor. 15:20-22.

**and between your seed and her seed.
He will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel.**

God: Isaiah 9:6

**⁶ For a child will be born for us,
a son will be given to us,**

**and the government will be on His shoulders.
He will be named
Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God,
Eternal Father,
Prince of Peace.**

(Note: Wonderful Counselor = Holy Spirit; Mighty God = God the Father; Prince of Peace = Jesus)¹³⁰

3. The Messiah is both king and priest.¹³¹

King: 2 Sam. 7:12,16

¹² When your time comes and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up after you your descendant, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom ... ¹⁶ Your house and kingdom will endure before Me forever, and your throne will be established forever.”¹³²

Priest: Ps. 110:4¹³³

⁴ The Lord has sworn an oath and will not take it back: “Forever, You are a

130. Parenthesis mine; See Ps. 45:6-7 where God the Father addresses the Messiah as God; cf. Heb. 1:7-9.

131. The Mosaic Code clearly stated that no person could function in both offices of priest and king, so the question was: How could the messiah hold both offices?

132. Four points of the kingship of Jesus: (1) The Davidic Covenant secures His throne and kingdom forever (Ps. 89:33-37); (2) He will be seated on this throne (Lk. 1:32-33), (3) He will rule the earth (Ps. 2:8-10), and (4) Everyone will bow to Him (Phil. 2:10-11).

133. Scholars believe that Psalm 110 was a royal psalm, originally written for the enthronement of one of the kings of Judah. But in the course of time it was accepted as a prophetic psalm of the Messiah.

priest like Melchizedek.”¹³⁴

4. The Messiah is both the Sacrificer and the Sacrifice

Sacrificer: Isa. 50:6

**⁶ I gave My back to those who beat Me,
and My cheeks to those who tore out My beard.
I did not hide My face from scorn and spitting.¹³⁵**

Sacrifice: Isa. 53:7

**⁷ He was oppressed and afflicted,
yet He did not open His mouth.
Like a lamb led to the slaughter
and like a sheep silent before her shearers,
He did not open His mouth.**

5. The Messiah is both the stumbling stone and cornerstone.¹³⁶

Stumbling stone: Isaiah 8:14

**¹⁴ He will be a sanctuary; but for the two houses of Israel, He will be a stone
to stumble over and a rock to trip over, and a trap and a snare to the
inhabitants of Jerusalem.¹³⁷**

Cornerstone: Isaiah 28:16

**¹⁶ Therefore the Lord God said: “Look, I have laid a stone in Zion, a tested
stone,
a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; the one who believes will be**

134. Jesus could not have been in an earthly position of priesthood since he was of the tribe of Judah, and not Levi. However, He became a priest after the order of Melchizedek, who predated Aaron and Levi. See Heb. 7:14; Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 285-86.

135. See Heb. 7:27b.

136. See “Cornerstone” in Appendix 26.

137. To those who examine the words and work of Jesus but refuse to believe in Him, to those individuals He is a stumbling stone, a rock of offense. See also Lk. 20:17; Rom. 9:33.

unshakable.¹³⁸

12.03.01.A. CHART OF KEY CONFLICTS KNOWN AS MESSIANIC PROBLEMS. Key points of the Messianic Problem are shown above. The Jews pondered the words and actions of Jesus in light of “conflicting passages,” as they understood them, as well as their preconceived ideas of the messiah.

12.03.02 Lk. 14:25-33

THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

²⁵ Now great crowds were traveling with Him. So He turned and said to them: ²⁶ “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters — yes, and even his own life — he cannot be My disciple. ²⁷ Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

²⁸ “For which of you, wanting to build a tower, doesn’t first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?

²⁹ Otherwise, after he has laid the foundation and cannot finish it, all the onlookers will begin to make fun of him, ³⁰ saying, ‘This man started to build and wasn’t able to finish.’ ³¹ “Or what king, going to war against another king, will not first sit down and decide if he is able with 10,000 to oppose the one who comes against him with 20,000? ³² If not, while the other is still far off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. ³³ In the same way, therefore, every one of you who does not say good-bye to all his possessions cannot be My disciple.

There are three issues with this phrase, “**and does not hate his own father and mother,**” that challenge modern readers:

1. This passage sounds offensive, especially within a culture where respect was a high virtue. In English the words *hate* and *love* are generally considered to be polarized opposites, but in Hebrew these terms do not have the same degree of absoluteness. When *love* is placed in contrast to *hate* (Gk. *miseo* 3404), the former means *to prefer*;¹³⁹ a relative preference for one thing over another.¹⁴⁰

138. Jesus is the sure foundation wherein one can place their faith. See 1 Peter 2:6-8.

139. Bivin, “Jesus’ Attitude Toward Poverty.” *Yavo Digest*. 1:5, 3.

2. It is in bold contrast to the character and nature of Jesus
3. It is in bold contrast to the Hebrew commandments specifically concerning respecting and honoring one's parents.

The words “love” and “hate” are not emotional words, but refer to the will of a person. The phrase is a hyperbole and, as such, does not have a literal meaning, but it is an exaggeration to emphasize a point. “Love,” means to *choose* or to *prefer*¹⁴¹ to submit to authority and “hate,” means to *refuse* to submit to authority.¹⁴² The concept is repeated in Mark 10:29-30. God referred to Jacob and Esau with these words in Malachi 1:2-3 and Romans 9:13. When God said He “loved” Jacob, He meant that Jacob had been *chosen* by Him. A second interpretation is that “love” is an emotion of concern for someone's best interest and “hate” means to love less.¹⁴³ These words are often considered polarized opposites in English, but in Hebrew, these do not have the same degree of absoluteness.

This statement was not shocking to the original listeners because they understood the context in which Jesus spoke. This context is the cost of being His disciple. Clearly, Jesus desires one to be fully dedicated to Him, even if it should break family ties. That is precisely the point! His disciples are expected to love Him so intently that, in comparison, love for parents or anyone else would appear to be as hate. This certainly does not mean a believer should hate their parents – far from it. However, love for family, no matter how great it is, is actually diminished in light of the believer's love for Jesus.

Mystery Unveiled Whenever the word *love* is placed in contrast to the word *hate*, the definition of the former means “to prefer.”

140. Vine, “Hate, Hateful, Hater, Hatred.” *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:292.

141. Bivin, “Jesus' Attitude Toward Poverty” 1:5, 3.

142. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 331-32.

143. Herbert, “Hate, Hated.” 102-03.

Here is a personal example of love / hate within the family. While teaching at a seminary in Jordan, this writer met an Arab Christian who had two wives. He married his first wife, but after ten years, she did not give him any sons. At the time he was a Muslim and had the right to marry a second wife who then gave him a son. A short time later, he accepted Christ. I asked him how he got along with his two wives. He said that they got along well, but he truly loved his first wife so much that, in comparison, he hated his second wife. But he said he loves them both and desires to see them become believers. His situation is the classic example to which the Apostle Paul wrote about to Timothy in 1 Timothy 3:2.

“After he has laid the foundation and cannot finish it.” The comment concerning someone who started a construction project but could not complete it seems almost ridiculous. Of course no one would consider doing something as stupid as this. Yet, it was not an unknown event, but one well-known to everyone due to the political figures involved.

When Herod the Great died, his little kingdom was nearly bankrupt due to his expensive lifestyle and extravagant building projects. Construction projects begun became construction projects unfinished. One of them was an aqueduct he started to supply water to the temple that remained unfinished for decades. A number of other building projects were started by his sons but also remained unfinished. The reason was that the people became so impoverished under Herod, that the required tax revenue could not be collected to complete them. The Herodian dynasty laid a number of “foundations” but could not finish them.

12.03.03 Lk. 14:34-35

PARABLE OF THE SALT

³⁴ “Now, salt is good, but if salt should lose its taste, how will it be made salty? ³⁵ It isn’t fit for the soil or for the manure pile; they throw it out. Anyone who has ears to hear should listen!”

“Anyone who has ears to hear should listen.” Literally, “anyone who has ears should hear.” Obviously, everyone has ears. Jesus was saying that all who heard His words will be responsible for what they have heard. A major problem the leading Pharisees had with Jesus was that they refused to understand how a holy, pure, and righteous God could have anything to do with defiled sinners. They believed that God rejoiced when a tax collector or sinner died. Jesus addressed this issue in three parables (Lk. 15), in which He illustrated how the Father persistently searches for those who are lost. These parables

were a single teaching lesson and build up to a climax as follows:

1. Luke 15:1-7, is the search for a lost sheep (one out of a hundred) by the searching shepherd. In the first parable, of a wayward sheep wandering into the wild unknown realm of sin and deadly pleasure, the focus is on the one “lost.”
2. Luke 15:8-10, in the second account, the lost coin (one out of ten) was not astray, but hidden somewhere in the house, and the focus was on the “search” for the coin.
3. Finally, in Luke 15:11-32, the search was for the lost son (one out of two). In this parable, the most precious lost son was found and restored; the focus was on the “restoration” of the son.

Notice the literary escalation from the first to the third parable – a dramatic increase in value from 1 in 100 to 1 in 2. The words spoken and recorded as a literary device underscore God’s passion to restore lost sinners unto Himself. Jesus, the Master Teacher, taught by bridging the gap from the known to the unknown, using stories and parables the people knew.¹⁴⁴ At one time or another, everyone had experienced a lost sheep, a misplaced coin, or had difficulties with an unmarried teenager. Furthermore, parables were often borrowed from rabbinic writings or were stories of common knowledge.

His attitude stood in stark contrast to that of the leading Pharisees and Sadducees. They had no compassion whatsoever for wayward souls, the souls of the Gentiles or the physical needs of the poor. Jesus, however, repeatedly showed compassion to everyone.

12.03.04 Lk. 15:1-7

PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP

¹ All the tax collectors and sinners were approaching to listen to Him. ² And the Pharisees and scribes were complaining, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them!”

³ So He told them this parable:

1 ⁴“What man among you, who has 100 sheep

144. 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.

**2 and loses one of them,
3 does not leave the 99 in the open field**

A and go after the lost one

B until he finds it? ⁵ When he has found it,

C he joyfully puts it on his shoulders,

**D ⁶ and coming home, he calls his friends and neighbors
together**

C' saying, 'Rejoice with me,

B' because I have found

A' my lost sheep!'

1' ⁷ I tell you, in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven

2' over one sinner who repents

3' than over 99 righteous people who don't need repentance.

Many parables are based on Old Testament stories and themes. For example, Luke 15:4-7 Parable of the Good shepherd is based on Psalm 23.¹⁴⁵ As Jesus did so often, He took daily activities of life and applied the message of the Kingdom of God to it. In this case, it was applied to a flock of sheep – a modest flock consisted of about 200 sheep (Gen. 32:14) while a flock of 300 sheep was considered to be rather large.¹⁴⁶

Literary Style¹⁴⁷ This poetic style is more complicated than most. Note the sections identified with numbers. The lines 1 and 1' are an address to the audience. Lines 2 and 2' refer to a single sheep/sinner while lines 3 and 3' refer to the ninety-nine sheep/righteous persons. This frames out the body of the parable.

The center section is a typical chiastic structure.¹⁴⁸ Lines A and A' mention the one that was lost, followed by a successful search to find him in B and B'. The theme of the three parables begins on the lost, but changes to the restoration to the fold (D) and the rejoicing that is a part of it.

145. Three other examples of Jesus' parables that are based upon Old Testament are as follows: 1) the prodigal son has many similarities to Jacob's life in Gen. 27:1 – 36:8, 2) the two builders of Luke 6:46-4 is related to Isaiah 28:14-18, and 3) the Pharisee and tax collector of Luke 18:9-14 is related to the judgment and joyous restoration of Isaiah 66:1-6.

146. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 281.

147. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*. Part I, 144; Fleming, *The Parables of Jesus*. 67.

148. See "Chiastic Literary Structure" in Appendix 26.

“Sinners.” While most people today think of only one definition to the word *sinner*, the Jewish people of the first century considered two possibilities.

1. A person who broke the moral laws of the written Scriptures. Quite often the word *sinner* is a euphemism for prostitutes or *possibly* for women who had their hair uncovered in public.¹⁴⁹ In fact, prostitution was the only kind of “occupation” a woman could have had that would have given her that social stigma. No other kind of activity would have produced the title of “sinner.”¹⁵⁰

2. It should be noted, however, that the leading Pharisees defined a sinner as anyone who did not conform their legalistic rituals – the Oral Laws – which included numerous prayers and washings throughout the day. The ultra-strict Pharisees even considered anyone who touched a Roman or Greek coin as filthy because he violated the command against graven images.¹⁵¹

To the leading Pharisees, one who committed adultery was just as much of a sinner as the person who failed to wash his hands in a particular fashion and for the required number of times prior to eating.

12.03.05 Lk. 15:8-10

PARABLE OF THE LOST COIN

**⁸“Or what woman who has 10 silver coins,
A if she loses one,**

B does not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?

C ⁹When she finds it, she calls her women friends and neighbors together saying, ‘Rejoice with me;

B’ because I have found

A’ the silver coin I lost.”

149. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 249-51; Compare with Josephus, *Antiquities* 4.8.23, and the complete section of Mishnah, *Ketubbat* 6.6.

150. Blomberg, “The Authenticity and Significance of Jesus’ Table Fellowship with Sinners.” 232-33.

151. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 248; See also 02.01.14 “Pharisees” and the discussion on “sinners” in 08.05.07.

¹⁰ I tell you, in the same way, there is joy in the presence of God’s angels over one sinner who repents.”

Literary style¹⁵² This poetic parable has an introduction and a conclusion. The next instep is a reference to the lost coin in A and A’, followed by the search to find it in B and B’. The theme is the rejoicing with her neighbors and friends when it was found in C. This is a typical Hebraic chiasmic literary structure.¹⁵³

The ten coins may have been the woman’s dowry, that is, money she brought into the marriage and would remain hers should the marriage end, regardless of the reason. The small quantity suggests that she was poor; making its discovery significant. Since most people were economic slaves¹⁵⁴ due to the Roman taxation, this parable was one to which all could relate.¹⁵⁵ It has also been suggested that the dowry coin was sown to a linen or silk shawl, known as a “generation shawl.” Attaching coins, usually Roman *denarii* (plural for *denarius*), to a shawl was a popular trend during the Roman era, especially during the reigns of Augustus and Tiberias.¹⁵⁶ If she was wealthy she would have dozens of coins attached; if she was poor, then possibly only a dozen coins would be sewn to the garment. In the parable, the coin probably became lost because the thread broke that held it to her head scarf.

The floors in the homes of common peasants consisted of paving stones. Houses were dark because windows were merely small openings in the walls. Those of somewhat more financial means had their floors and walls plastered, while the very wealthy had mosaic tiles. But the poor woman who lost a coin conceivably lost a significant portion of her meager treasure. Stone floors frequently had small cracks in the joints and a coin could easily have fallen into a crack and, therefore, was not readily seen. She had to sweep the floor to find it.

152. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*. Part I, 156; Fleming, *The Parables of Jesus*. 69.

153. See “Chiasmic Literary Structure” in Appendix 26.

154. The subject of high taxation that resulted in economic slavery is presented by Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.11.2 (307-308). See also 02.03.03 “Economy” and 03.06.04 “4 B.C. The Death of Herod the Great.”

155. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*. 232.

156. See Appendices 1 and 20.

<p>Mystery Unveiled</p>	<p>The woman's lost coin was probably a dowry coin sown to her linen or silk "generational shawl" that became lost when the thread that attached it to the shawl, broke.</p>
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A typical home in Capernaum was built with rough and uneven basalt (dark volcanic) rock. It was cold in the winter and hot and humid in the summer. Homes were usually built in such a manner that four houses created a square with a private courtyard in the center. Interior walls often had window openings near the floor to provide for ventilation. Exterior walls had small openings for fresh air and a minimal amount of light. Large openings would invite intruders to enter and, hence, were not used. Privacy in a typical home was unknown, especially with four families in very close proximity. Losing a coin in the joints between floor stones created a crisis. A small hand-held oil lamp gave a dull glow, which was hardly worth the effort. At best, such a lamp would reveal the general outline of large objects in the room. Wax candles, as we know them today, were unknown in the first century. The story Jesus told was all too familiar and everyone identified with it.



12.03.05.B ROUGH STONE FLOOR IN A 4TH CENTURY (A.D.) RABBI'S HOUSE IN KATZRIM. The floors of common homes were amazingly rough, presenting the opportunity for something small, such as a coin, to be out of sight and therefore, lost. Photograph by the author.

12.03.06 Lk. 15:11-32

**PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS (or the PARABLE OF THE LOVING FATHER)
(The first son: 15:11-24)**

¹¹ He also said:

“A man had two sons.

**A ¹² The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the estate I have coming to me.’
So he divided the assets to them.**

B ¹³ Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, where he squandered his wealth in foolish living.

C ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, severe famine struck that country, and he had nothing.

D ¹⁵ Then he went to work for one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs.

E ¹⁶ He longed to eat his fill from the carob pods the pigs were eating, but no one would give him any.

**F ¹⁷ When he came to his senses, he said,
“How many of my father’s hired hands have more than enough food, and here I am dying of hunger!**

**F’ ¹⁸ I’ll get up, go back to my father, and say to him:
‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight.
¹⁹ I’m no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired hands.’**

**E’ ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.
But while the son was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. He ran, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him.**

D’²¹ The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I’m no longer worthy to be called your son.’

**C’²² “But the father told his slaves, ‘Quick!’
Bring out the best robe and put it on him;
 put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet,**

**B’²³ Then bring the fattened calf and slaughter it.
 and let’s celebrate
 with a feast.**

**A’²⁴ because this son of mine was dead and is alive again;
 he was lost and is found.’
 So they began to celebrate.**

(This parable is continued below)

Literary Style¹⁵⁷ The parallel stanzas in this poem have opposite themes. In line A the son is lost and in line A’ he is found. In line B and in line B’ the inheritance is lost and then found. In C and in C,’ everything is lost and then gained. In D and in D’ there is sin and repentance. In E and in E’ there is rejection and acceptance, and finally the theme of the parable is where F equals F’. At this point the young man has a change of mind, which is the same as repentance. Again, Jesus presented His story in the form of a chiasmic poetic structure, although a rather big one compared to some of the others.¹⁵⁸

This parable is similar to a king and a wedding story or a rich man and poor man story; it was created to teach a lesson. Everyone could relate to these realistic life experiences because they were so easy to remember. His parables were

1. First in poetic form, and
2. Similar to real life situations, common to people since the dawn of civilization.

The meaning of this parable given by Jesus is given first, followed by two short secular accounts.

157. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*. Part I, 158, 191; Fleming, *The Parables of Jesus*. 83, 87.

158. See “Chiasmic Literary Structure” in Appendix 26.

Cast of Characters

Father	= God
Youngest son	= Jews and Gentiles in faith with Jesus
Oldest son	= Opposing Jews

Jesus was the Master Teacher whose lessons went from the “known” (human qualities) to the “unknown” (divine qualities). This and His other 37 parables teach that man is to respond to a loving God and to train each other with God-like compassion.

The few assets any family acquired were incredibly important in day to day survival. However, the family described in this parable was not an ordinary family, but one of wealth and financial security. In a case such as this, the ancients had two ways for an inheritance to be passed on to a son.

1. The most common was the traditional way; when, after the death of the father, the eldest son received twice as much as any other son.
2. The other option was that while the father was still alive, he could divide his estate as he wished. This option was usually an equal share to all his male children (see 12.03.06.Q1).

In the biblical story, it was the second choice but only because of the son’s request. In this culture, for a young man to ask his father for his inheritance was an incredible insult. It was paramount to saying, “I wish you were dead.”¹⁵⁹ Politeness and courtesies are, to this day, supreme. His request is unthinkable and consequently, a request of this nature was extremely rare.¹⁶⁰ Since the oldest son always received a double inheritance (Deut. 21:17), the younger son received a third of his father’s wealth, sold it, and soon disappeared.

In the parable there is no mention of the son’s insult to his father, but the audience would have recognized that immediately. Likewise, there is no mention that the father became angry or was grieved over the request, but that too, was understood by the audience. He simply permitted the son to go on his way, but was always ready to receive him on his return. The father knew that his son’s immaturity and foolishness would soon lead to poverty, yet he allowed him to do as he wished.

This parable is reflective of many situations families have experienced throughout

159. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*. Part I, 161-62; Spangler and Tverberg, *Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus*. 140.

160. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*. Part I, 161-66.

history, and is similar to other stories and parables. In these stories the younger son usually represents the youngest of the family, a class of people, or a degenerate; all of whom have an undesirable moral condition and who desire the wealth of their family more than the family. The father is a figure of compassionate authority who gives his son the freedom of choice. The young man then makes some wrong decisions. While there are a wide variety of endings, in this account, Jesus presented the heart of God. The story as a whole reflects the small peasant economy of the time.¹⁶¹

Unique to this story is that the son took immediate possession of his wealth. According to the Oral Law, if a son desired to sell his share, the buyer could not take possession until the father passed away.¹⁶² The purpose of this regulation was because the family's income was often generated by the estate. However, for the purpose of making His point, Jesus structured the parable as to captivate everyone's attention.

“Father.” The term *father* (Gk. *pater* 3962) is from a root word that signifies a *nourisher, protector, and upholder*.¹⁶³ It is considerably more protective of family and loved ones than is commonly understood today in Western culture. One who does not have a loving influence of a *father* was known as an orphan (Gk. *orphanos* 3737; Jas. 1:27) or as is sometimes translated as *desolate* as in John 14:18. If one who had no genealogical record (Gk. *agenealogetos* 35) as in Hebrews 7:3, he was also considered to be an orphan.¹⁶⁴ The role of the father was so important, that a child whose father was dead was considered an orphan even if his mother was still alive (Job 24:9).¹⁶⁵ Clearly the role of a loving father was profoundly important in biblical times.

“He longed to eat his fill from the carob pods.” The young man not only had to feed pigs, but his food rations were so low that he had to eat the food given to the pigs. His life was so low, that in Jewish terms, he had to work for a Gentile pagan, feed unclean animals – the worst of all unclean animals, and do so on the Sabbath¹⁶⁶ — essentially abandoning his religious customs. In essence, he was humiliated beyond measure.

161. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*. 140-41.

162. Mishnah, *Baba Bathra* 8:7. (See below).

163. Vine, “Father.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:227.

164. Vine, “Genealogy.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:262.

165. Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, eds., “Orphan.” *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. 615.

166. Lev. 11:7; Deut. 14:8; *1 Macc.* 1:47.

Carob pods are the husks of the seedpods of the carob tree (*ceratonia siqua*).¹⁶⁷ It is also known as the locust tree. These pods are generally used for animal feed, but were also consumed by people who lived in deep poverty. This same pod was referred to as “locusts” in the life of John the Baptist.¹⁶⁸ There is a rabbinical proverb that says, “When the Israelites are reduced to eating carob pods, then they repent.”¹⁶⁹ That is precisely what this young man did.

“Threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him.” This phrase literally means that he kissed his son on the neck. Two forms of greetings need to be discussed here:

1. When two equals met, they exchanged three kisses on the cheek: first on the right cheek, then on the left cheek, then again on the right side.
2. When a servant met a master, the servant never kissed the master on the cheek, but on the neck.

But in this parable, it was the father who accepted and kissed the wayward son. By this action, the father elevated him above himself. Furthermore, in doing so, the father reconciled the son to himself.

“Bring out the best robe ... ring ... sandals ... fattened calf ... feast.” Jesus did not end there. Notice the elements of ownership, family, and of sonship that the father bestowed upon the son:

1. His once-lost son was given a robe – the symbol of sonship (1 Sam. 18:4). Even though the son had squandered much of the father’s wealth, his robe was restored. Clothing was also symbolic of wealth and identity.¹⁷⁰
2. He placed a ring upon his son’s finger, the symbol of authority (the father’s authority).¹⁷¹
3. He placed sandals on his son’s feet; the symbol of social-class that underscored

167. Geikie, *The Life and Works of Christ*. 2:351.

168. See 05.01.03.A.

169. Major, Manson, and Wright, *The Mission and Message of Jesus*. 580.

170. Another example is found in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, where the victim was found naked along the side of the road. He had no ethnic identification.

171. Gen. 41:42; Hag. 2:23; Esther 8:2.

sonship (Deut. 25:9), for his son was not to be barefoot as a child or considered to be a servant. The curse of cultural defilement of walking barefoot was removed.

4. Then they were to enjoy the dinner of a fatted calf, symbolic of the ultimate festival and celebration.¹⁷² The “fatted calf” was not only the prized meat but was also a figure of speech that indicated only the best foods would be served. It was the pinnacle of hospitality. A young goat or calf, for example, was a feast of most valuable food – reserved for only the most important occasion.

When the father and wayward son met, the father reconciled the son to himself. In roasting the fatted calf and having a village celebration, the father demonstrated the reconciliation to the community. Since everyone was aware of the son’s wayward actions, this festival was to announce forgiveness and restoration.

This is the attitude God has for the lost.¹⁷³ As mentioned previously, these gifts were all signs of high position and acceptance. Nothing was withheld from the father’s expression of his love for the wayward, but now repentant son. Likewise, our Father in heaven and the angels rejoice when a lost soul is found. But the story did not end there, as the faithful older son became jealous and angry concerning the attention given to the return of his younger brother.¹⁷⁴ Hence, this parable is an illustration of the two people groups: Gentiles and Jews, and it is a parable that continues to live today.

“This son of mine was dead.” The word “dead” can have one of two meanings as follows:

1. Dead as in physically dead.
2. Dead as in no longer as part of the household. That is the applied definition in this passage.

(The second son: 15:25-32)

²⁵ “Now his older son was in the field; as he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he summoned one of the servants and asked what these things meant.

172. 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.

173. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 333-37.

174. While the cultural norm is to favor the oldest son, in this case the younger son is favored. This was also the case with Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, Joseph and his brothers.

A ²⁷ ‘Your brother is here,’ he told him,
 ‘and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf
 because he has him back safe and sound.’”

B ²⁸ “Then he became angry and didn’t want to go in. So his father came
 out
 and pleaded with him.

C ²⁹ But he replied to his father, “Look! I have been slaving many
 years for you, and I never disobeyed your orders, yet you never gave
 me a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.

B’ ³⁰ But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your assests
 with
 prostitutes, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

A’ ³¹ “‘Son,’ he said to him, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is
 yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours
 was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

The theme of the parable continues as follows: The younger son entered the house, joined in the celebration and dancing, and was reconciled with his father. The father rejoiced with his two sons. However, the elder son was quite upset with the attitude his father had for the younger sibling, so much so, that he charged his father with injustice. Everything the father gave to the younger son (ring, robe, etc.), was at one time available to the elder son. Notice the contrasting themes written in poetic form:

The first son went astray,
 But he eventually returned to the father.

The second son stayed
 In his appointed position within the family, he had an arrogant attitude.

The first son represents the Gentiles,
 Who went astray but returned to their heavenly Father, while

The second son represented the scribes, Sadducees and leading Pharisees
 In appointed religious positions, but had an arrogant attitude.

Since the younger son refused to enter the festivities of the celebration, Jesus is said that the Jews chose not to have a part in the celebration of life and the Messianic Wedding Banquet that someday awaits all believers.

Jesus, a Jewish theologian, described the attributes of God in human terms. His words are easy to understand, while difficult for His critics to comprehend. Directly, parables teach that man is to respond to a loving God, as well as respond to one another with God-like compassion. Indirectly, parables indicate that God is aware of the human condition but desires that man follow His ways for salvation and a fulfilled life.

This parable may be better called the Parable of a Loving Father,¹⁷⁵ because the focus is on the father, not his sons. The illustrative theme is that the caring love of this father toward his prodigal son is God's attitude toward lost men and women. As to the conclusion, Jesus left it open-ended. No one knows if the older son repented and came to the feast. Those who heard this story could identify with one of these characters. Today, as in the past, many families have a "younger or older son."

Finally, all three parables – the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the lost son – are in sharp contrast of how Jesus looked upon sinners, in comparison to how the leading Pharisees looked upon them. A similar contrast was portrayed by Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount message. God permits His people to go their own way, but He calls them back. When they return they should be welcomed, not shunned, since their return represents a recovery from death that deserves celebration.¹⁷⁶

12.03.06.Q1 How could an inheritance be given prior to a death?

The laws of inheritance in the ancient world pre-existed Abraham and Moses. Biblical laws were established by Moses but later enhanced in the Oral Law and recorded in the Mishnah. Some of these laws permitted for an inheritance to be received prior to the death of the parent as is the case in this parable. For example:

If a man assigned his goods to his sons he must write, "From today and after my death." So R. Judah and R. Jose say: He need not do so. If a man assigned his goods to his son to be his after his death, the father cannot sell them since

175. This title was suggested by Brad Young.

176. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 283.

they are assigned to his son, and the son cannot sell them since they are in the father's possession. If the father sold them, they are sold [only] until he dies; if the son sold them, the buyer had no claim on them until the father dies.

Mishnah, *Baba Bathra* 8.7

The Mishnah continues to say that the father can harvest the crops on his estate. However, this custom was the cause of considerable difficulties, which is why *Ben Sirach* advised against giving and inheritance prior to death.

**To son or wife, to brother or friend
give not power over yourself while you live;
And do not give your goods to another
So as you have to ask for them again...
For it is better that your children ask you
Than you should look to the hand of your sons
When your days of this life are ended,
In the day of death, then distribute your inheritance.**

***Ben Sirach* 33:19-23**

The common laws of the time dictated that if a son left his home with his inheritance, he was in effect rejecting his home and forever leaving his family. The Sumerian Code from Mesopotamia was two thousand years old at the time of Christ and reflects the cultural norm that was still honored in the first century. It reads,

If a son say to his father and his mother, you are not my father, not my mother, (he shall leave) from the house, field, plantations, servants, property, animals he shall go leave, and his portion to its full amount he (the father) shall give him. His father and his mother shall say to him "not our son." From the neighborhood of the house he shall go.

Sumerian Code¹⁷⁷

In effect, the son who ran away was rejecting his parents, as if to curse them. In the parable, Jesus said that God continues to love the son who despised Him and desires to see him return to his home. The following story was also popular in the first century,

177. Cited by Clay, "The Prodigal Son." 10-12.

Tell me, what sort of a father would give an inheritance to his son, and having received the money (the son) goes away leaving his father, and becomes an alien and in the service of aliens. The father then, seeing that the son has forsaken him (and gone away), darkens his heart and going away, he retrieves his wealth and banishes his son from his glory because he forsook his father. How is it that I, the wondrous and jealous God, have given everything to him, but he, having received them became an adulterer and sinner?

Apocalypse of Sedrach 6:4-6

While there were many stories similar to those that Jesus told, His accounts always present an image of God with great love and compassion. The leading Pharisees scoffed at His ideas of wealth and poverty because they believed that God promised to bless His obedient people (Deut. 28:1-14) and that the more obedient they were, the more they would be blessed. They and the Sadducees alike had perverted the interpretation of this passage to mean that whom God loves He would make wealthy, an early form of prosperity theology.¹⁷⁸ Conversely, those whom He did not love or who were guilty of some sin were condemned to live in poverty.

12.03.07 Lk. 16:1-13

PARABLE OF THE DISHONEST MANAGER

¹ He also said to the disciples:

A “There was a rich man who received an accusation that his manager was squandering his possessions.

B ² So he called the manager in and asked him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you can no longer be my manager.’

C ³ “Then the manager said to himself, ‘What should I do, since my master is taking the management away from me?’

178. Prosperity theology is a 20th century American doctrine that is sometimes referred to as the prosperity gospel or the health and wealth gospel. It essentially states that wealth and health is the will of God for all believers but they must have faith, a positive attitude and speech, and of course, cheerfully make all the necessary financial donations.

I'm not strong enough to dig; I'm ashamed to beg,

D⁴ I know what I'll do so that
when I'm removed from management,
people will welcome me into their homes.'

C'⁵ "So he summoned each one of his master's debtors.
'How much do you owe my master?' he asked the first one.
⁶ "A hundred measures of olive oil,' he replied.

B' "Take your invoice,' he told him,
'sit down quickly, and write 50.'

A'⁷ "Next he asked another, 'How much do you owe?'
'A hundred measures of wheat,' he said.

"Take your invoice,' he told him, 'and write 80.'

⁸ "The master praised the unrighteous manager because he had acted astutely. For the sons of this age are more astute than the sons of light in dealing with their own people. ⁹ And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of the unrighteous money so that when it fails, they may welcome you into eternal dwellings.

¹⁰ Whoever is faithful in very little
is also faithful in much, and
whoever is unrighteous in very little
is also unrighteous with much.

¹¹ So if you have not been faithful with the unrighteous money,
who will trust you with what is genuine?

¹² And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to someone else,
who will give you what is your own?

¹³ No household slave can be the slave of two masters,
Since he will hate one and love the other,
Or he will be devoted to one and despise the other.
You can't be slaves to both God and money."

Luke 15 has a set of three parables that obviously were intended to be together: the parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son. But one scholar believes that this parable (Lk. 16:1-13) should be the fourth, because it has a number of similarities with the parable of the prodigal son. They are as follows:

1. Each parable has a noble person who extends extraordinary grace to a subservient.
2. Each story has a son/servant who is wasteful with his resources
3. In each story the foolish person realizes his error.
4. In each story, the son/servant relies upon the mercy of his superior.
5. In each story, trust has been broken, and dealing with that situation is challenging.

Literary style:¹⁷⁹ The stanzas of Luke 16:1-13 have the following structure: In A, there is first the rich man and his dishonest manager, whereas in A' Jesus concluded that those of the evil world are wiser than those of spiritual insight.

When Jesus told this parable to the disciples, the leading Pharisees were evidently close enough to overhear the conversation. He told a story of a business entrepreneur, or master, and his manager, both of whom were focused solely on attaining wealth. The Greek word for *steward* or *manager* is *oikonomos*, which can be translated as either a banker's agent or the manager of a farm.¹⁸⁰ The dishonest manager obviously made a personal profit at the expense of his master, which suggests that his employer (master) suffered a financial loss of some extent. Regardless, the manager recognizes a limited future at his current employment and carefully plans for an escape.

A quick first time reading would leave the impression that Jesus complimented the manager for being a liar and thief, but that is obviously not the case. In this story Jesus commended him for his wisdom to look out for himself, not for his dishonesty. He was dishonest with the wealth of his master (employer) but then realized he was about to be fired from his position. He had enjoyed a very comfortable lifestyle, but this was about to change drastically with the loss of his job. Future employment opportunities were

179. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*. Part I, 95, 112.

180. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 335.

nonexistent in light of the reason for his dismissal. Therefore, he decided to be kind to all those who owed his employer money. He reduced their debts and, thereby, won favor with them so that when hard times would come upon him, he could go to them for help.

There is no mention that the rich man did anything dishonest. In fact, twice he was victimized as follows:

1. First, when he realized the manager was dishonest and he was dismissed.
2. Secondly, the manager quickly reduced the debts of others when he no longer had the authority to do so. Therefore, the rich man was again victimized. The debtors may have discovered that they too were defrauded, but in a culture where honor is highly esteemed, in all probability, the rich man would have honored the final actions of his crooked ex-manager. Note that the manager was fired and told to turn in his accounting books. In that brief period of time from being fired to returning the books, possibly less than a day, the manager hurriedly made these alternative business agreements.

In this culture, people of wealth were expected to be generous to those of lesser financial status, especially the poor. For the rich man to demand that the original debts be honored would have made him look greedy in the eyes of his neighbors; but to honor the reduced debts would have been honorable for him. The very shrewd and dishonest manager, knowing this, got away with a crime that, hopefully, would benefit him in the near future. This cheating scandal probably never became public.

When this writer taught in the seminary in Amman, Jordan, students told him of the importance of family honor – there appears to be no equal of it in Western culture today. Clearly, the same was true in biblical times. Publicly, personal honor was sacred even though privately, the rich man probably wanted to kill his former manager, or at least toss him into prison, or sell him and his family on the slave market to recover his losses. But he didn't, which suggests that he was quite generous as well as wealthy. Furthermore, notice that when the manager was informed that his scheme was discovered, he made no defense – silence before an accuser is assumed guilt.¹⁸¹

The power of a debt can be overwhelming, especially when circumstances change and the debtor is unable to meet the repayment requirements. When the First Jewish Revolt broke out in A.D. 66, one of the primary targets the rebels burned was the archive building in

181. Apparently Kenneth Bailey learned the same lessons (in *Jesus through Jewish Eyes*, 339-41) that this writer did when in the Middle East.

the temple that housed mortgage documents and other debt records.¹⁸²

“Sons of light.” The Jewish people have long been said to be the light unto the Gentiles, meaning that they were to bring knowledge of God to them. The phrase “sons of light,” or, as some translations read, the “people of light,” is a phrase describing the Jewish people, not Christians. Jesus redefined the phrase to mean not only the knowledge of God, but to live accordingly to that knowledge (see 02.01.06). This was a common phrase *before* the time of Jesus, as evidenced by the Dead Sea Scroll commonly known as *The Manual of Discipline*.

12.03.07.Q1 In Luke 16:1-13, what is the point Jesus made concerning the dishonest manager?

A possible answer is that the manager learned how wealth could be wisely given away to do some good. The giving of alms was always considered an act of righteousness in the Old Testament and rabbinic writings. Furthermore, depending on how the bill was written, the transactions could very well have been legal.¹⁸³ This would have been especially true, if the invoice were written in terms of commodity, rather than cash and interest. The difference in the value of the products could easily benefit the debtor, while not affecting the master.

In this narrative, both the master and the dishonest manager were working hard to attain as much wealth as they could – a reflection upon the religious leaders. The dishonest manager, like some Pharisees and Sadducees, was cunning, shrewd, and wise in a business sense and financially successful. The point Jesus was making is that the dishonest managers and religious thieves understand that money is a tool and not an end or goal in itself.

Notice that some commentaries say that the manager was a slave. He may have been a servant, but in this case, the manager was not a servant/slave. Dishonest slaves did not get fired, but were either killed or sold.

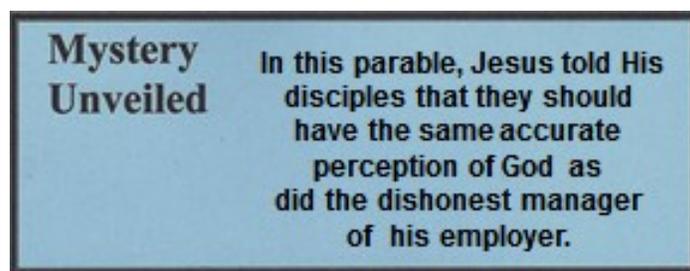
The key point in this story is that Jesus did not applaud the dishonest manager for being a thief, but for his ability to correctly evaluate his options with potential consequences

182. Millard, “Literacy in the Time of Jesus.” 39.

183. Liefeld, “Luke.” 8:986-88.

including his employer's generosity. The ungodly are more shrewd than are God's children who should be more intentional and dedicated about how they pursue life.¹⁸⁴

Most likely the manager was employed for several years and understood the rich man's nature and character – then took advantage of him. In the heart of Jesus, He desires His followers to have the same perception of God as did the manager of his employer. We, like the dishonest manager, risk everything in the confidence of the Master's mercy and generosity.



12.03.08 Lk. 16:19-31

PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

¹⁹ “There was a rich man who would dress in purple and fine linen, feasting lavishly every day. ²⁰ But a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, was left at his gate.

²¹ He longed to be filled with what fell from the rich man's table, but instead the dogs would come and lick his sores. ²² One day the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ And being in torment in Hades, he looked up and saw Abraham a long way off, with Lazarus at his side. ²⁴ ‘Father Abraham!’ he called out, ‘Have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this flame!’

²⁵ “ ‘Son,’ Abraham said, ‘remember that during your life you received your good things, just as Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here, while you are in agony. ²⁶ Besides all this, a great chasm has been fixed

184. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 283-84.

between us and you, so that those who want to pass over from here to you cannot; neither can those from there cross over to us.’

²⁷ “ ‘Father,’ he said, ‘then I beg you to send him to my father’s house — ²⁸ because I have five brothers — to warn them, so they won’t also come to this place of torment.’

²⁹ “**But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.’**

³⁰ “ ‘No, Father Abraham,’ he said. ‘**But if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.**’

³¹ “**But he told him, ‘If they don’t listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.’”**

This parable was created specifically for the leading Pharisees and Sadducees. As previously stated, they believed in a “first century-style prosperity theology,” meaning that God gave wealth only to those whom He loved. Therefore, in their opinion, God loved them and hated the poor. In fact, they thought it was wrong to give to the poor, because the gift would go to one whom God had cursed. At the root of this thinking was an incorrect interpretation of Deuteronomy 28. From this passage, they determined those in poverty had done some evil deed, or their parents did and, hence, they were suffering the consequences. At the conclusion of His speech, Jesus said, “**If they don’t listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.**” This is precisely what the Scribes, Levites, leading Pharisees and Sadducees did after Jesus arose from the grave.

Cast of Characters

Rich man	=	Annas and Caiaphas
Purple and fine linen	=	Garments of the high priest
Feasting lavishly	=	Indolent self-indulgence
Lazarus	=	The Jewish people
Five brothers	=	Five sons of Annas

In this parable, the rich man who was wealthy because of divine favor he had had ample opportunity to fulfill the second most important commandment: to help his neighbor.

Then he died and his soul was impoverished in Hades,¹⁸⁵ while Lazarus was wealthy in Abraham's bosom – a common phrase in Jewish writings. While the rich man was a son of Abraham, his sonship did not keep him out of the lake of fire, as the Pharisees believed it would.

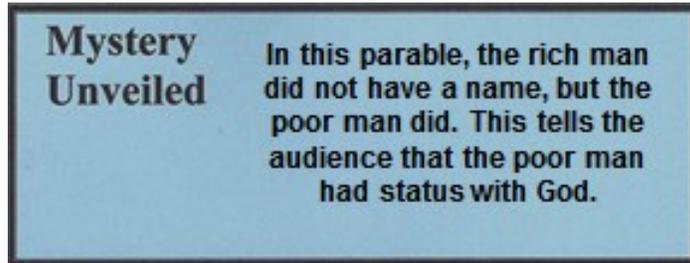
He failed to share his good fortune with a poor man named Lazarus. This type of giving was called "almsgiving," whereas the "tithing" was ten percent and given to the local synagogue.¹⁸⁶ There is no mention of tithing, but the story is focused on giving to the poor or the failure to do so. Lazarus barely survived from the scraps given to him by the rich man. Even the dog had more compassion on Lazarus, as shown by the licking of his wounds. Eventually, both men died. Lazarus went to be with Father Abraham, while the rich man went to Hades, the place of the dead who were separated from God and waiting final judgment. According to the story, when the two men could speak, the rich man called upon Lazarus for some relief as he was suffering from the fire. However, there was nothing Lazarus could do. The wealthy man was very shrewd for his immediate gratification, whereas he should have been shrewd about his eternal destiny.

There has always been a debate among scholars as to whether this story was an actual event or if it was told to illustrate biblical truth. The difficulty all too often lies in the debate, rather than on the focus of the message. However, the Master Teacher Jesus at times took real life situations and stories and used them within His parables. In this case, Jesus could have created a story wherein rich man had three brothers, or six brothers, but instead, He mentioned five. Why? Could the story have been intended to reflect upon someone with five sons or brothers?

Many scholars believe that the story of Lazarus and the rich man is more than a moral invention; it was directed toward Annas, the retired high priest who had five sons. The rich man and his five brothers did not listen to Moses or to the prophets, nor did they care about an eternity after death. Annas, his son-in-law Caiaphas, and the five sons of Annas were Sadducees and from time to time, held the office of high priest. While Sadducees claimed to believe in the books of Moses, their lifestyle did not in any way reflect that belief. If they truly believed Moses they would have been obedient to the Mosaic Laws. Since actions come out of what the heart believes, obviously they did not believe him.

185. As will be explained in further detail, Hades had two sides: 1) Abraham's Bosom where Old Testament saints went prior to Jesus taking them to heaven, and 2) the other side where sinners went prior to their descent into hell. This is the only place in the Bible where the phrase "Abraham's Bosom" is found.

186. Josephus spoke of corrupt priests who stole the tithes from other priests in *Antiquities*, 20.9.2, found herein in, "A den of robbers," 13.02.02. He also mentioned it in *Antiquities* 20.8.8 as found herein in "The chief priests" in 15.02.09. See additional rules on tithing in the Mishnah, *Ma'aserot* 1.1 and *Moed Shabbath* 4.7. The point is that tithing was a well-established practice.



In this manner of teaching, Jesus did not make a direct assault on Annas, but everyone knew of whom Jesus was speaking. This style of indirect confrontation was common in ancient Judaism. For more information on this style of communication, see “Education” in 02.03.04.

“There was a rich man.” Some theologians believe this illustration was an actual event and recorded in Scripture as a narrative and not as a parable. Their primary reasons for this interpretation are,

1. The introductory phrase, “*there was* a rich man,” obviously indicating the existence of an actual person, and
2. The name of a second person: Lazarus.
3. Furthermore, since the account refers to a resurrection it has also been suggested that there is a correlation to the story of Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead (Jn. 11). But this is purely coincidental because the name Lazarus, like Jesus, was a common name.

However, this writer disagrees with that assessment. At this point, a quick review of the essential elements of a parable is necessary. Parables have a single point or theme and are created stories that are true to life. Therefore, to have a phrase, “There was a rich man,” does not disqualify it from being a parable. Furthermore, in Jewish literature, parables are known to have names of individuals and places, although no others are found like it in the New Testament.

Rich men were often assumed to have attained their wealth either by the blessings of God or by dishonest means. Since most people assumed the latter, the proverbial “rich man” became the subject of stories and parables in which he was condemned and the poor peasant would live happily ever after. The story gave hope to those in a life of poverty.

Mystery Unveiled The story of poor Lazarus and the rich man with five sons was a “type and shadow” parable that pointed toward the impoverished Jewish people and the rich Annas with his five sons.

The rich man’s wealth was described in the clothing he wore. The phrase, “**who would dress in purple and fine linen,**” is indicative of extreme wealth. For centuries purple dye was made from the secretions of four seashell creatures¹⁸⁷ that lived along the eastern Mediterranean coast.¹⁸⁸ The dye masters of Tyre created variations of purple or scarlet that could be obtained by mixing the secretions. Since a large number of creatures¹⁸⁹ was needed for the production of a small quantity of dye, the process was labor intensive and very expensive.¹⁹⁰

The term *fine linen* was a fabric known in Greek as *bussos* or *byssus*.¹⁹¹ It was second in value to silk, which was worth its weight in gold.¹⁹² It was made from Egyptian cotton and used for the finest garments, including underwear.¹⁹³ The Greek writer Herodotus said it was used for wrapping Egyptian mummies.¹⁹⁴ While byssus was made in Samaria and Judea, the finest quality, such as the white garments the high priest wore on the Day of Atonement, is believed to have been imported from India and Egypt.¹⁹⁵ The man in

187. Technically speaking, the four types of molluscs were known as *belix ianthina*, *murex brandaris*, *murex trunculus*, and *purpura lapillus*.

188. Oldest known cloth murex-dyed known today dates to the fifth to fourth century BC. However, the older Papyrus Anastasy (now in the Victoria Museum in Upsala, Sweden) was written about 1400 B.C. in Egypt, and includes about 70 formulae for dying wool, most of which deal with the color purple. It has been estimated that nearly 10,000 snails needed to be crushed to produce enough liquid to dye a single garment. For more information, see Philippa Scott “Millennia of Murex.” *Saudi Aramco World*. July-August, 2006. 30-37.

189. It has been estimated that 8,000 of these molluscs were needed to produce 1 gram of dye. See Irvin, “Purple.” 1057.

190. Irvin, “Purple.” 1057. According to Josephus, large quantities of purple (or scarlet) fabric were required for the temple curtains which were replaced every few years (*Wars* 6.8.3 (390)). Some scholars believe that the purple (or scarlet) robe placed on Jesus (Mt. 27:28) was a soldier’s cloak.

191. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 382.

192. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:397.

193. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 382.

194. *The History of Herodotus* 2.86. Translated by George Rawlinson
<http://classics.mit.edu/Herodotus/history.3.iii.html> Retrieved November 30, 2013.

195. Mishnah, *Yoma* 3.6-7.

this parable was not simply wealthy, but in modern terms, he was “filthy rich,” and dressed arrogantly to show it off.

“Dogs would come and lick his sores.” This statement describes the desperate level of poverty that Lazarus endured. It would have been bad enough if it was the rich man’s pet dog that came to Lazarus, like the dog referred to by the woman in Matthew 15:26. In Greek, a *dog* is called a *kunaria*, an affectionate household pet.¹⁹⁶ But here Jesus described ordinary street dogs, the kind that roamed from rubbish heap to rubbish heap – the kind that was descriptive of Gentiles. There is a huge difference between the two.¹⁹⁷ In this case, even those stray and shaggy dogs seemed to have pity on Lazarus as they licked his sores out of affection.¹⁹⁸

“Abraham’s side.” This is a Hebrew euphemism meaning “to be with God.”¹⁹⁹ The Jews believed that the Patriarchs, who had passed on from this earth, were with God in a temporary place until the final judgment at the end of the age.²⁰⁰ This place, consisting of two divisions is Hades (not Hell).

In this story, Jesus gives us eternal insight into the knowledge all will have during eternity. The wealthy individual in hell will be able to remember the opportunities he had in life to do what was right, but he chose not to change. He will be able to remember his lucrative lifestyle and the lack of mercy for the poor beggar. Now he is in eternal torment without any hope whatsoever.

There are numerous stories from antiquity that feature a certain rich man and a poor man and how their fortunes changed in the next world. Similar stories abound of a king and his subject. This was probably due to the fact a vast majority of the people were poor peasants, who could barely eke out a living, and the rich and powerful lived a life of ease as merchants, priests, and government officials. At least eight variations of the biblical narrative have been found, not only in the Jewish culture, but also neighboring cultures as well. Many Middle Eastern cultures had similar laws, legends, and customs. A study of

196. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:89; Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 71; Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 221-22.

197. Barclay, “Matthew.” 2:122-23.

198. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 384-85.

199. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 339-40.

200. Saunders, “Abraham’s Bosom.” 1:21-22.

the Egyptian, Babylonian, and Jewish cultures reveals such similarities.²⁰¹ All societies have rich man / poor man stories, just as they have had prince and pauper and husband and wife stories. In the *Midras Coheleth* is a parable of a rich man and a beggar named Diglus Patragus or Petargus. Another account is found in the *Hieros Peah*.²⁰² These stories have a land called *Elysium* for the blessed and a land called *Tartarus* for the damned with a river *Cocytus* or *Acheron* between the two; or there may be a great gulf or wall between them.²⁰³ The following narrative is a short section of a longer story found on the backside of two Greek business manuscripts, written on papyrus, and now in the British Museum:

At a still more tender young age the boy took his father on a tour of Amnte. This he had to do because of a remark he made one day about two funerals:

A rich man (died and) was borne out to the mountain, shrouded in fine linen, loudly lamented, abundantly honored; then a poor man (died) wrapped in a mean straw mat, unaccompanied, unmourned, was taken out to the necropolis of Memphis. The father exclaimed he would rather have the lot of the rich man than that of the pauper.

But (the) little (boy) Si-Osiris impertinently contradicted his father's wish with the opposite one: And may it be done to you in Amnte as it is done in Amnte to this pauper, and not as it is done to this rich man in Amnte.

He who has been good on earth will be blessed in the kingdom of the dead, and he who has been evil on earth will suffer in the kingdom of the dead.

*Midras Cohelet*²⁰⁴

In the Jerusalem Talmud is a story that has the typical rich man / poor man motif. As in the parable of Jesus, this story features the eternity of the wealthy man who obeyed the law, but had no good deeds at the end of his life. But another man, who was a kind tax-collector and was admired by his neighbors, died and went to Paradise. This writer

201. An examples of similar stories of a dialog between heaven and the underworld in Jewish writings can be found in *4 Ezra* [=2 *Esdra*] 7:85, 93; 2 *Baruch* 51:5-6. A later tradition, written in the Christian era, is found in the Babylonian Talmud *Basab* 32b.

202. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:166-67.

203. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:175.

204. Beasley-Murray, *Preaching the Gospel*. 214-15 quoting K. Grobel, "Whose Name was Nerves." 376-78.

uncovered seven Jewish versions of this story during the research for this eBook, which indicates that it was a popular first century story.²⁰⁵ The following narrative was recorded twice in the Jerusalem Talmud.

Two godly men lived in Ashkelon.²⁰⁶ They ate together, drank together and studied law together. One of them died and kindness was not shown to him (because nobody attended his funeral). The son of Mayan, a tax collector, (also) died, and the whole city stopped work to show him kindness. The (surviving) pious man began to complain; he said: “Alas that no evil comes upon the haters of Israel!” In a dream he saw a vision; and one said to him: “Do not despise the children of the Lord.” The (pious) one had committed one sin and departed (this life) in it (i.e. his mean funeral canceled it); and the other wealthy publican had performed one good deed and departed (this life) in it (i.e. his splendid funeral canceled it).

After some days the godly man saw the godly one his (former) companion walking in gardens and parks besides springs of water (in Paradise). And he saw the son of Mayan, the publican, stretching out his tongue on the edge of a river; he was seeking to reach the water and he could not.

Jerusalem Talmud, *Hagigah* 2.77d²⁰⁷

What is to be learned from these examples is that the Master Teacher spoke the language of the people. He transformed stories they knew to present His message of love, salvation, and the Kingdom of God. But in doing so, at times He also gave interesting allusions that would make them wonder what He meant – such as a possible allusion to Annas and his five sons. Such “brain teasers” helped people remember what He said. And the most important lesson is that there is a real heaven and a real hell with a great separation between the two – and Jesus is the only way to obtain eternal life.

“Lazarus at his side.” Some translations read that Lazarus was reclining in Abraham’s bosom. This is a significant point because means that he was enjoying a meal with someone – probably Abraham.²⁰⁸ Furthermore, reclining at mealtime was a sign of

205. Gressmann, *Der Messias*. 59.

206. Ashkelon is an ancient Philistine city along the coast that was eventually inhabited by the Israelites.

207. This comment is also found in the Jerusalem Talmud. *Sanhedrin* 6.23c; Beasley-Murray, *Preaching the Gospel*. 215; Manson, 297; Major, Manson, and Wright, *The Mission and Message of Jesus*. 588-89. Parenthesis by Jerusalem Talmud editors.

208. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 374.

wealth, comfort, and leisure – all the things that the rich man enjoyed for a short season called “life.” Just as Jesus reclined with His disciples at Passover, so likewise did Lazarus enjoy the company of Abraham.

A Lesson in First Century Hermeneutics:

12.03.08.X A Parable That Reflects History

Parables can be newly created or reflect a person or event in history. The advantage of a reflective parable is that the hearers would remember it better. There are a number of examples of this, including the following passage.

The Jews believed that, unless there was some horrific sin in one’s life, eternity in Paradise was an assured certainty because they were the chosen people of God. The fact that the Master Teacher took a common story from daily life which people were already familiar with, and used it to teach His message, appears to be absent from modern hermeneutics. Nonetheless, the point of this story is the equalizing justice of God.

<p>Mystery Unveiled</p>	<p>The Master Teacher often used stories and events the people already knew. The issue is not whether Lazarus and the rich man actually existed, but the lesson Jesus was teaching.</p>
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Jesus illustrated the danger the Pharisees were in because they despised and rejected those who were ignorant and poor, rather than helping them. To the Sadducees the parable meant that the temple aristocrats were totally consumed in their own pleasures and were indifferent to the needs of others, even to the leading Pharisees.²⁰⁹

In the story there is **“a poor man named Lazarus,”** or, as some translations read, “a beggar named Lazarus.” His name in Hebrew is *Eleazar*, meaning *he whom God helps*, which is a key point to the parable.²¹⁰ This is certainly an interesting name, as he received no help from his wealthy neighbor. In fact, it appeared that God did not help him either, but he received abundant help from God in the next world. The misery and wretchedness of Lazarus is illustrated in the rabbinical saying: “There are three men

209. Major, Manson, and Wright, *The Mission and Message of Jesus*. 590.

210. Barclay, “John.” 2:80-81; Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 382.

whose life is no life (it is simply miserable):

1. He who depends on the table of another (for food);
2. He who is ruled by his wife; and
3. He whose body is burdened with sufferings.”²¹¹

Lazarus was the first of these three miserable men. Furthermore, Jesus placed a double emphasis upon Lazarus and the rich man. Not only was the poor man named *he whom God helps*, but the fact that it was Jesus who gave him a name adds significant status. In the same manner, the man who was rich and had status on earth now has neither name nor riches in hell.

<p>Mystery Unveiled</p>	<p>The Jesus used a double emphasis – a name and the meaning of that name, to describe God's perception of Lazarus, and the opposite emphasis of the rich man.</p>
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The rich man recognized Lazarus as being in Paradise. Between the two men was a great divide, an impassable gulf between Hades and Paradise. Interestingly, the rich man desired that someone return to his home community to warn others of the pending reality of the eternal place of punishment. Ironically, Jesus was that person.

“Covered with sores.” Literally, a medical term meaning *to be ulcerated*.²¹² Obviously he had oozing open wounds that must have been painful. This description intensifies the lack of care and respect on the part of the rich man. In fact, not only did the rich man not care about the health of Lazarus, he didn't even toss any food to him either. Most people, even the most hard-hearted, would have shown some compassion and pity for this impoverished beggar, but he didn't.

“Was left at his gate.” The fact that Lazarus was left at the rich man's gate (described with a passive in the Greek text)²¹³ indicates that he was too ill to get there by himself

211. Jerusalem Talmud, *Besa* 32b; Major, Manson, and Wright, *The Mission and Message of Jesus*. 591.

212. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:398.

213. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 219.

and family and friends had to carry him to that location. This description adds to the pitiful sight and the fact that the rich man obviously knew he was there.

12.03.08.Q1 How could secular cultural stories become part of the inspired text (Lk. 16:19-31)?

It could be said that the answer is a “God thing.” As previously stated, Jesus, as the Master Teacher, often took a well-known story and changed it to suit His teaching. This helped the listeners remember what He taught. The Apostle Paul did a similar feat. In Acts 17:28 Paul made a quotation from two Greek poets whose writings were well known to the people to whom he preached. He quoted Cleanthes (*Hymn to Zeus*) and Aratus of Soli (*Phaenomena*, a poem on astronomy) in his Areopagus address. Of the two ancient Greek writers, scholars are divided as to who was the original author of the words that were copied twice. However, it is also possible that both of them quoted the Cretan philosopher-poet Epimenides, who lived about 7th or 6th century B.C.²¹⁴

This is an interesting parable since it has always been sinful to speak to the dead (i.e. King Saul with the witch at Endor), but the Jews believed that the dead could speak to each other. The Talmud recorded several such instances²¹⁵ and this parable, which is somewhat mystical was, in fact, on par with prevailing beliefs of the Jewish culture.²¹⁶ The problem most evangelicals have with this biblical account and obvious multiple versions in Jewish and pagan writings, is that we have assumed the biblical narrative was either an actual event or a parable or story completely original by Jesus. It should not be difficult for modern students to accept the fact that Jesus used stories that were in common use so that His listeners could easily remember His lessons. This parable simply underscores the great lengths God is willing to go to bring an understanding of the Kingdom of God to a lost generation.²¹⁷

The issue is not whether the account of the rich man and Lazarus was an actual historical event or if it was a story with a life-like setting. The Apostle Paul even said that believers should not argue about words (2 Tim. 2:14), especially since it is easy to get caught up in this discussion and miss the main issues. Those issues reflect the status of the lost as...

214. Blaiklock, “Poets, Pagan, Quotations from.” 13:1646-47.

215. Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot* 18b.

216. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 669.

217. Blaiklock, “Poets, Pagan, Quotations from.” 13:1646-47.

1. Eternally separated from God,
2. Their state of lostness and hopelessness,
3. The suffering of continuous torment,
4. The condition is unchangeable and eternal, and
5. The lost will forever remember missed all opportunities that were available to find salvation.

Mystery Unveiled The rich man did not go to hell because he was rich or for what he did; he went to the eternal lake of fire because of what he did **NOT** do.

Finally, there are a few observations to be considered.

1. It was the common belief that those in heaven could see and mock those in hell. But by silence, Jesus refutes that concept. Lazarus did not torment the rich man.
2. The rich man never addressed Lazarus, but called upon Father Abraham to help him. Even in his place of torment, he was too proud to call upon his former impoverished neighbor.
3. The rich man was not a Gentile, but a Jew who had all the imagery of a successful life. There is no mention as to whether he was observant of all the Jewish laws, so it can be assumed that his sin was that he was indifferent to the needs of others.
4. The situation of the rich man is the same as what occurred in the church of Laodicea. It was a church that was extremely wealthy and in need of nothing, but Jesus called those believers poor, wretched, blind and naked and said they needed to repent (Rev. 3:14-19).
5. In this parable, the food from the rich man's table was thrown away, but not toward poor Lazarus. Rather, the food was thrown to the dogs. The same theme appears in the narrative of the Syro-Phoenician woman who pleads for the bread

thrown to dogs. It was common practice for unwanted food to be thrown to dogs that guarded the home.²¹⁸

6. While alive on earth, Lazarus was in pain but was ignored by the rich man. Now the situation was reversed: the rich man was in pain and desperately wanted help – the kind of relief he refused to give to Lazarus. Once Lazarus was a beggar but is now rich while the rich man becomes the beggar, and remains condemned as such for all eternity.

The parable of Lazarus and the rich man points to the principle of Luke 12:48 that says that to whom much is given, much will be required. Likewise with the rich young ruler who obeyed all the laws of Scripture, but his wealth owned him.

12.03.09 Mt. 20:1-16

VINEYARD WORKERS

¹ “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. ² After agreeing with the workers on one denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard.

³ When he went out about nine in the morning, he saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. ⁴ To those men he said, ‘You also go to my vineyard, and I’ll give you whatever is right.’ So off they went.

⁵ About noon and at three, he went out again and did the same thing. ⁶ Then about five he went and found others standing around, and said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day doing nothing?’

⁷ “‘Because no one hired us,’ they said to him.

“‘You also go to my vineyard,’ he told them.

⁸ When evening came, the owner of the vineyard told his foreman, ‘Call the workers and give them their pay, starting with the last and ending with the first.’

⁹ “When those who were hired about five came, they each received one denarius.

218. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 384.

¹⁰ So when the first ones came, they assumed they would get more, but they also received a denarius each. ¹¹ When they received it, they began to complain to the landowner: ¹² ‘These last men put in one hour, and you made them equal to us who bore the burden of the day and the burning heat!’

¹³ “He replied to one of them,

‘Friend, I’m doing you no wrong.

Didn’t you agree with me on a denarius?

¹⁴ Take what’s yours and go.

I want to give this last man the same as I gave you.

⁵ Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my business? Are you jealous because I’m generous?’

¹⁶ **“So the last will be first, and the first last.”**

Historically, Israel has been referred to as a vineyard, and in this parable, the Landowner calls workers to be employed in His vineyard. Notice the poetic matching themes of verses 13 – 15:

The master replies

The master is fair

The workman agreed on the wage

The master chooses to accept those unwanted by others.

The master desires to be generous to workmen

The master has a right to perform his business as he pleases (he is fair)

The master replies

The cast is rather minimal in this parable:

Cast of Characters

Vineyard = Israel

Landowner = God

Workers = Those whom God called

“Hire workers.” When someone needed a helper (employee), he went to the city marketplace and looked for day laborers. At the end of an ordinary 12-hour day, the employee was paid.²¹⁹ The next morning, if there was additional work that needed to be

219. Carson, “Matthew.” 8:428; Wessel, “Mark.” 8:676; Barclay, “Matthew.” 2:105.

done, the process was repeated. Laborers never knew if they would have a day of work or, if they did, how much they would be paid. This custom continues to this day. Even though this parable appears to address labor and economic issues, in reality, it is a parable of grace because it makes no business sense whatever. But it does make incredible sense in understanding the grace of God. Saint Augustine stated in his commentary that the denarius symbolized an eternal reward in the parable of Jesus, as follows:

The denarius, which the householder orders to be given to all of those who worked in his vineyard, with no distinction between those who labored less and those who labored more, is equally given to all. By that denarius it is certainly eternal life that is signified, in which no one lives longer than anyone else, since in eternity life has no diversity in its measure.

*Augustine, Homilies on John*²²⁰

The essence of the story is that every “employee,” or believer, receives eternal life. It makes no difference whether one comes to Jesus as a child and lives a long faithful life serving Him, or comes to Jesus moments prior to death.

“About nine in the morning.” Literally, “the third hour.” The Roman Empire functioned on a time measurement of twelve hours during daylight and four watches during the night.²²¹ Yet it is the eleventh hour that is a focal point of argument – those who were employed at the end of the day received a full days’ wages.

“I’ll give you whatever is right.” The hired men do not agree on a set wage, but trust that the employer will be fair (Gk. *dikaios*, meaning *just* or *fair*).²²²

“When evening came.” At the end of the day the laborers were gathered and each received the payment for his work. The lesson is obviously not relative to economics, as every worker received the same salary. The ancient custom of day laborers for hire is still practiced today throughout the Middle East,²²³ including in an area outside Jerusalem’s Damascus Gate as illustrated in 12.03.10.A below.

220. Thomas, *The Golden Treasury of Patristic Quotations: From 50 – 750 A.D.* 234.

221. See Appendix 16 for further details on divisions of the day.

222. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes.* 358.

223. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes.* 357-59.

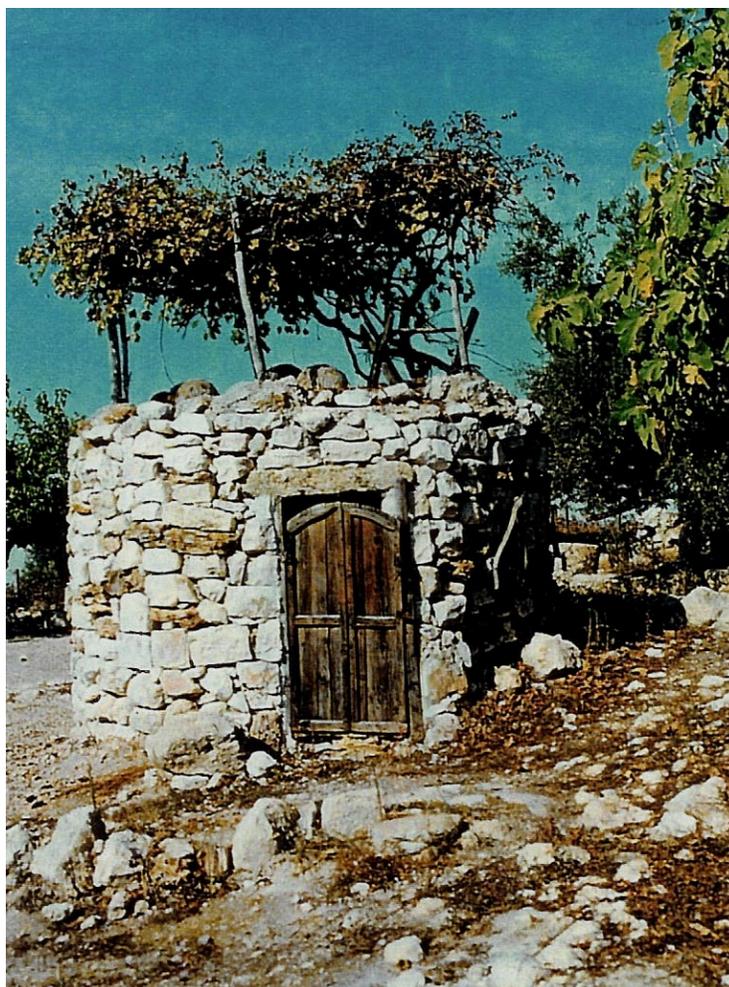


12.03.09.A. MODERN DAY LABORERS IN JERUSALEM. Arab construction day laborers and craftsmen with their trucks and tools wait to be hired for the day near the Damascus Gate, just as laborers did in the days of Jesus. Photograph by the author.

“Their pay.” Literally the term means *the wage*, which culturally speaking is a *full days’ wage*. There is no implication for an hourly adjustment. The initial interpretation is an economic one – a person who does more work should get paid more. However, God’s interpretation is one of grace – one who comes to salvation in the last minute of life receives eternity in heaven just as does the one who lives a faithful life. The classic example of a “death bed conversion” is the thief on the cross who asked Jesus to remember him. Jesus did.

“So the last will be first.” There is a degree of sadness in this phrase. Just as God’s ways are not man’s ways, Jesus states that there will be those who will not learn God’s ways and, therefore, they will be last. This does not mean a loss of salvation. But, because they did not surrender full control of their lives to God, they suffer loss of opportunity to be fruitful and productive for the Kingdom of God (cf. Mt. 16:21; 17:22-23).²²⁴

224. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 764-65.



12.03.09.B. AN ORIGINAL VINEYARD WATCHTOWER. This original Old Testament era agricultural watchtower has been well maintained over the centuries and is still used. Vineyard owners were constantly occupied in watching for thieves who would steal livestock, grapes, or crops. The owner and his servants would take turns on the observation deck, which was shaded with a grape arbor. The lower section served as a bedroom chamber. It was not uncommon for a family to live in this tower up to six months of every year. A similar tower was known as the “Tower of the Flock” near Bethlehem. Photograph by the author.

The landowner was of noble generosity while the workers looked upon the unfairness through eyes of greed. A denarius was the typical wage paid for a day laborer or foot soldier.²²⁵ Yet those who worked all day desired more, because of their greed, even though they had previously agreed to the denarius as their wage. Was this fair? Yes,

225. *Tobit* 5:14; Tacitus, *Annales* 1.17; Pliny, *Natural History* 33.3.

because they had received according to what was previously agreed. The men who worked only part of a day had the same financial responsibilities at home as those who worked all day. Did any express thankfulness to the generous nobleman? Hardly! The action hardly seems to be fair. The workers who worked all day received pay equal to those who were hired near the end of the day. However, from God's perspective, He is the one who offers eternal life by His grace. If one accepts the gift of salvation early in life, he will someday be with our Lord. If one accepts the same gift of salvation near the end of his life, he too will someday be with our Lord. Most readers might conclude this is somewhat unfair. But, if God would be fair, then no one would receive such a gracious gift.

When teaching in Israel and Jordan, students have told this writer that these vineyard workers had an "evil eye." Throughout the Middle East, the proverbial expression "evil eye" is associated with an individual who is self-centered, envious, greedy, and constantly on the prowl to take advantage of someone (Cf. Prov. 23:6; 28:22).²²⁶ Herod the Great and his good friend Caiaphas were two men who would have been deemed to have had the evil eye; they were constantly looking for another innocent victim. The vineyard workers who labored all day at an agreed-upon wage quickly developed an "evil eye" when others received the same wage for less work.²²⁷ The basis of justice in matters like this has always been "equal pay for equal work." However, the focus of this parable is a reference to the grace of God and it was never intended to be an economic principle.²²⁸

Finally, the ministry of Jesus in the Galilee area captured the attention of many Gentiles who were traveling along the *Via Maris* as well as those who lived in Israel and nearby Decapolis. Consequently, there were Gentiles coming to faith and who believed that they too would have an inheritance in the Kingdom of God.²²⁹ There can be no question that this parable was directed, in part, toward those Jews who resented them. This parable underscores the grace of God. No matter how long one has worked in the proverbial vineyard, salvation is by grace of which no one can boast (Eph. 2:8-9). The irony is that other Jews were very evangelistic and brought Gentiles into the Jewish faith. These situations underscore the various Jewish sects and theological chaos that existed.

226. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 47.

227. Gilbert, "Matthew" 425.

228. See 08.04.01 and 09.02.01.

229. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 47.

12.03.10 Jn. 11:1-37 Bethany**THE MIRACLE OF LAZARUS**

¹ Now a man was sick, Lazarus, from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, and it was her brother Lazarus who was sick. ³ So the sisters sent a message to Him: “Lord, the one You love is sick.”

⁴ When Jesus heard it, He said, “This sickness will not end in death but is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” ⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha, her sister, and Lazarus. ⁶ So when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was. ⁷ Then after that, He said to the disciples, “Let’s go to Judea again.”

⁸ “Rabbi,” the disciples told Him, “just now the Jews tried to stone You, and You’re going there again?”

⁹ “Aren’t there 12 hours in a day?” Jesus answered. “If anyone walks during the day, he doesn’t stumble, because he sees the light of this world. ¹⁰ If anyone walks during the night, he does stumble, because the light is not in him.” ¹¹ He said this, and then He told them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I’m on My way to wake him up.”

¹² Then the disciples said to Him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will get well.”

¹³ Jesus, however, was speaking about his death, but they thought He was speaking about natural sleep. ¹⁴ So Jesus then told them plainly, “Lazarus has died. ¹⁵ I’m glad for you that I wasn’t there so that you may believe. But let’s go to him.”

¹⁶ Then Thomas (called “Twin”) said to his fellow disciples, “Let’s go so that we may die with Him.”

¹⁷ When Jesus arrived, He found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸ Bethany was near Jerusalem (about two miles away). ¹⁹ Many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother. ²⁰ As soon as Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet Him. But Mary remained seated in the house.

²¹ Then Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother wouldn’t have died. ²² Yet even now I know that whatever You ask from God, God will give You.”

²³ “Your brother will rise again,” Jesus told her.

²⁴ Martha said, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me, even if he dies, will live. ²⁶ Everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die — ever. Do you believe this?”

²⁷ “Yes, Lord,” she told Him, “I believe You are the Messiah, the Son of God, who comes into the world.”

²⁸ Having said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, saying in private, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.”

²⁹ As soon as she heard this, she got up quickly and went to Him. ³⁰ Jesus had not yet come into the village but was still in the place where Martha had met Him. ³¹ The Jews who were with her in the house consoling her saw that Mary got up quickly and went out. So they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to cry there.

³² When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw Him, she fell at His feet and told Him, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died!”

³³ When Jesus saw her crying, and the Jews who had come with her crying, He was angry in His spirit and deeply moved. ³⁴ “Where have you put him?” He asked.

“Lord,” they told Him, “come and see.”

³⁵ Jesus wept.

³⁶ So the Jews said, “See how He loved him!” ³⁷ But some of them said, “Couldn’t He who opened the blind man’s eyes also have kept this man from dying?”

Scholars believe the miracles of raising Lazarus back to life was about six weeks prior to Jesus making His triumphal entry into Jerusalem.²³⁰ Jesus was incredibly popular among the people and this miracle only heightened the expectation that He was the long awaited political-messiah. This miracle also intensified the threat the religious leaders felt, that, if Jesus really would declare Himself to be the messiah, their wealthy aristocratic lifestyles would be ruined.

“Bethany” This small village was located east of Jerusalem on the eastern side of the Mount of Olives. It was well known for its dates and figs, in fact, its name means *the place for dates*.²³¹ The village was just beyond a Sabbath’s Day walk from the city walls and was adjacent to another village, Bethpage, whose name means *the place for the green or winter fig*.²³² Church father Origen (A.D. 184/85 – 253/54) said that Bethpage was a village of priests.²³³ That would be logical since the village was close to the temple, and being outside the city village residents could have their own gardens.

It has been suggested that the reason Jesus may have chosen to stay with friends in Bethany is because, for many months there were constant threats upon His life.²³⁴ When He was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, He asked the disciples to keep watch – probably for the same reason – and they failed to perform as requested. But in this village He was safe with friends and yet close to Jerusalem.

“Thomas (called Didymus).” The Hebrew name *Thomas* and its Greek counterpart *Didymus*, both mean *twin*. Obviously, there is the possibility that the apostle had a twin brother, who either died previously or for an unknown reason remained outside of recorded Scripture.

The resurrection was also the sign of Jonah that had been prophesied. Previously when Jesus resurrected someone, the event was somewhat private and those who witnessed it were told not to tell anyone. But of course, such a profound event never remains silent. The gospel writers also dedicated only a few lines to those miracles. But the miracle of Lazarus is in sharp contrast, because as multitudes watched, it forced everyone to make a decision on the identity of Jesus. The significance of this miracle cannot be understated,

230. Bookman, *When God Wore Sandals*. CD Trac 11, 12.

231. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 2:401.

232. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 2:401.

233. Origen, *Commentary on Matthew*. 16, 17 on Matthew 21:1.

234. Farrar, *The Life of Christ*. 383.

because it was the final motivation of the Jewish leadership to have Jesus put to death.²³⁵

Jesus was about to be crucified. His ministry to the public was almost over and He was spending most of His time and effort building up the faith of His disciples. This miracle had to do more with His authenticating His person to the disciples than to the community of believers who happened to witness this event. The faith of these men was going to be shattered when Jesus would be crucified. They would have unending questions. Yet when He would rise to life, so likewise their faith would rise to life. This miracle would eventually help them place Jesus, His teachings and miracles, into perspective.

By the time Jesus arrived at the tomb of Lazarus, the body was wrapped in grave clothes and spices had been placed over it to reduce the offensive odor of the decaying body. The tomb was whitewashed to mark the site (to prevent anyone becoming defiled) and a stone was rolled over the entrance to prevent wild animals from devouring the body. The foul odor of death from the tomb left no question in the mind of witnesses that their friend was dead and his body was in the process of decaying.

Then one of the women said to Jesus, **“If you had been here,”** Lazarus would still be alive. As with the centurion whose son was ill in Capernaum (Jn. 4:46-54), these women believed Jesus had to be present to manifest a healing on someone who was still alive. They believed the healing power of Jesus was limited to only the living. With sternness, yet lovingly, the woman chided Him for not coming sooner. Jesus, then demonstrated His divine authority over Jewish superstitions and death.

<p>Mystery Unveiled</p>	<p>The raising of Lazarus was the only miracle in our Lord's ministry that was deliberately made more spectacular than it might have been, but it prepared the Jews for the Triumphal Entry.</p>
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12.03.10.Q1 Why did Jesus wait for four days to raise Lazarus up from the dead (Jn. 11:1-37)?

In this historical account, the immediate question pertains to the reason why Jesus delayed his return to the home of His very good friends in light of the emergency they faced. Had He no compassion upon them? The issue here is not one of compassion or friendship. Jesus delayed His return to provide Himself the opportunity to show that He

235. Nelesen, *Yeshua; the Promise, the Land, the Messiah*. (Video Tape 2).

was the Creator of life and the Son of God. There are four reasons.

1. It was the custom of all Middle Eastern cultures, as it is today, to bury a body on the same day as death occurred.²³⁶ The semi-arid climate conditions will cause decomposition to occur immediately.

2. The Pharisees believed the soul hovered over the body for three days after death, because, in the event of a “resurrection,” the person would have a soul when life returned. This tradition may have originated when someone became unconscious due to an injury and awoke two or three days later (a “resurrection”). Nonetheless, in that sense it was believed there was no hope of a resurrection after three days. Jesus proved, beyond any shadow of doubt, that Lazarus was dead before bringing a dead smelly Lazarus back to life. As a result, even the Pharisees and Sadducees could not challenge this issue.²³⁷

After three days of decomposition, the eyes of the deceased had decayed, the face was hardly recognizable, maggots have infested the corpse and, therefore, it was believed that there was no hope of a resurrection.²³⁸ The Mishnah reflects the common opinion held from the days of Jesus

For it has been taught, “They adduce evidence as to a corpse’s identity only from the features of the face, including the nose, and they give testimony only within three days [of the deceased’s death].”

Mishnah, *Yebamoth* 16:3

Later, from an eighth century post-Talmudic tractate, additional clarification on this subject is insightful, even though it well outside the acceptable time period for this study. It reads,

“We go out to the cemetery and examine the dead [to see if they are still alive and have been buried by mistake] for a period of three days and do not fear being suspected of engaging in the ways of the

236. Babylonian Talmud, *Mo’ed Katan* 28a (Mid-Festival Days); Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 46b.

237. Gilbrant, “John.” 315; Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 123; Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 2:206.

238. Pickup, “‘On the Third Day’: The Time Frame of Jesus’ Death and Resurrection.” 522-23; Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 330.

Amorites [i.e., superstitious practices]. Once a man who had been buried was examined and found to be alive; he lived for twenty-five years more and then died. Another such person lived and had five children before he died.”

S’machot 8:1²³⁹

4. It was the custom that after the passing of someone, there were thirty days of mourning.

a. The first three days were for weeping.²⁴⁰ Some scholars believe that during these three days, phylacteries were not worn, fasting was common (not a complete fast, as eating an egg or lentils was permitted the first seven days),²⁴¹ and the mourners did not greet other people. However, it is unknown if this was a first century practice in the Holy Land or if this was a later cultural practice.²⁴²

b. The following seven days were for lamentation. But this time frame included the fourth day which was known as the high day of mourning. It was believed that on that day his soul departed and went to sheol (Hades) never to return.²⁴³ In essence, to rephrase his condition in a modern term, “he was good and dead.”²⁴⁴ Therefore, a fourth day event was truly a resurrection from death to life – that, in the Jewish mind, only God could perform. It was also a silent attack against those who claimed Jesus performed miracles with demonic powers, for it was believed that demons could kill, but not restore or create life.

239. Quoted by Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*. 190-91.

240. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:363-64.

241. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 2:330.

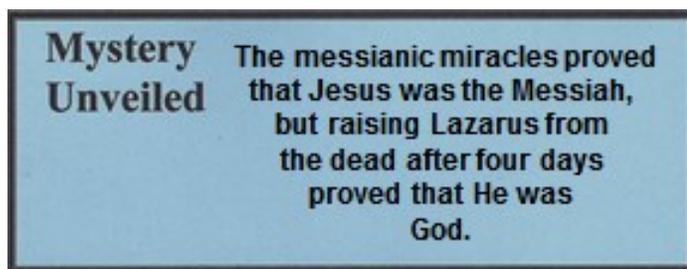
242. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:366. It is a constant challenge to isolate the first century Jewish cultural norms from later practices.

243. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 18, page 15; Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:367.

244. The belief that the soul remained in the corpse for three days was known in other cultures as well. See Pickup. “‘On the Third Day’: The Time Frame of Jesus’ Death and resurrection.” 522 n51.

c. The balance of the thirty days for intermission from washing their clothes and shaving.²⁴⁵

5. Jesus always brings understanding of Himself to the level of comprehension of those who He desires to show His love and compassion. It was believed that only God could raise a person back to life immediately after death, but it was also believed that not even God could raise anyone once the body began to decay. Therefore, Jesus demonstrated that His power of life was far beyond their concept of God. The primary reason Jesus delayed His arrival by four days was because He was about to perform a miracle *greater* than His messianic miracles – miracles the Jews believed that only the true messiah could perform.²⁴⁶ This miracle was more than just raising a dead person back to life — an astounding feat by itself— but Jesus also proclaimed His deity without a single spoken word! Because only God can give life!



Mystery Unveiled The messianic miracles proved that Jesus was the Messiah, but raising Lazarus from the dead after four days proved that He was God.

6. In the gospels, especially in the book of John, it appears that Jesus moved on His own initiative. He was never pressured to do anything and never in a hurry – but always functioned in His timing. When Mary came to Jesus, He essentially told her that He would come in His time and in His way.

“To cry there...crying...crying.” The Greek word *klaio* means, to *wail loudly*, as in *loud lamentation* or *loud weeping*.²⁴⁷ It was the custom, and still continues to be, that to comfort the grieving family professional mourners were employed to weep loudly – an exercise of comfort that is generally not understood by modern Westerners.

245. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:363-64.

246. For a description of the three messianic miracles, see 06.03.08.Q1, 06.03.08.Q2, 06.01.03, John 4:25 as well as the related video link 08.03.08.V. See also the comparison of Dead Sea Scroll fragments 4Q278 and 4Q521 with Luke 4:16-30 at 06.02.02; Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context*. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 10, Session 2.

247. See also Mt. 2:18; Mk. 5:38; Lk. 6:21; 7:32; Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 2:204; Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor's Manual*. Class 18, pages 14-15.

“Jesus wept.” The Greek word *dakryo* means *to weep silently*.²⁴⁸ This short sentence reflects the great compassion Jesus had for his dearest friends. All too often, those who declare this to be the shortest verse of Scripture fail to see that it is in fact, the deepest verse. The compassion of Jesus for the human condition is immense. Believers all too often fail to recognize this. This condition is more than an illness that ends physical life, but is the effect of the original sin. In this case, the death of Lazarus meant his two unmarried sisters would be without financial support and, therefore, would be condemned to a life of poverty. From the moment Jesus heard of the illness of Lazarus, He knew that He was about to raise him from death. So why did Jesus weep?

Jesus wept because He recognized all too well the effects of sin on the lives of those He so dearly loved. It brought forth physical, as well as spiritual death. Jesus mourned for their affliction and the effect of sin upon humanity, yet He knew the glorious future that lies ahead of those who follow Him. Some scholars have suggested that the reason Jesus wept was that he looked into the future and saw the incredible destruction that would come upon the people of Jerusalem in the years 70 and 135, along with the eviction from the Holy City. The Roman historian Cassius Dio Cocceianus in A.D. 222 said that as the result of the Simon bar Kokhba in the year 135, about 580,000 Jewish men were killed in various raids and battles and 985 villages were razed to the ground. The number who died from disease and famine could not be counted.²⁴⁹ There is little question that when Jesus envisioned this horrific future event, He wept, but His primary sorrow was the effects of sin upon humanity.

In raising Lazarus and others from death, Jesus demonstrated that He was God. Words did not have to be spoken. Two previous prophets, Elijah and Elisha, as well as two apostles, Paul and Peter, also raised the dead back to life. However, each declared the miracle to be the work of our Lord and not of their strength or action. But here Jesus performed a miracle in His own authority.

A point of interest should be noted in this narrative. Lazarus had a typical Jewish burial that included wrapping the body in the customary manner. That meant his head, arms, and legs were tightly wrapped with linens. The mystery remains of how he was able to get up and walk out of the tomb and see where he was going. Nonetheless, while Jesus raised him from the grave, He asked the people around him to remove the burial clothes. This was another demonstration where the God of Life desires His followers to

248. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 2:204-05; Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor's Manual*. Class 18, pages 14-15.

249. Dio Caccius, *Roman History* 69.14; <http://orion.it.luc.edu/~avande1/jerusalem/sources/cassiusDio-69.htm>. Retrieved November 25, 2012.

participate in miracles.

“Couldn’t He who opened the blind man’s eyes also have kept this man from dying?” This was not just a passing statement, but a reflection on the messianic miracles that Jesus performed. The idea that Jesus could be God incarnate was still to be discovered.

12.03.11 Jn. 11:38-44 Bethany

LAZARUS RAISED TO LIFE

³⁸ Then Jesus, angry in Himself again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹ “Remove the stone,” Jesus said.

Martha, the dead man’s sister, told Him, “Lord, he’s already decaying. It’s been four days.”

⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, “Didn’t I tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?”

⁴¹ So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes and said, “Father, I thank You that You heard Me. ⁴² I know that You always hear Me, but because of the crowd standing here I said this, so they may believe You sent Me.” ⁴³ After He said this, He shouted with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” ⁴⁴ The dead man came out bound hand and foot with linen strips and with his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Loose him and let him go.”

The deceased was wrapped in a traditional “mummy wrap” style, similar to the Egyptians but without embalming or ornamental burial chambers. This is the same type of wrap that was later placed around Jesus.



12.03.11.B. THE TOMB OF LAZARUS. The tomb site has been authenticated; however, the tomb itself has changed over the years. The tomb shelf upon which the body was laid no longer exists and the steps inside the cave were carved in the rock by the Franciscans in 1610.²⁵⁰ Today, the tomb is attached to a mosque. Photograph by the author.

“Angry in Himself.” This phrase would be better translated as *groaned in Himself* or *deeply moved within*.²⁵¹ The phrase is also found previously in verse 33. The question of course is, “what caused Jesus to groan within?” There are three possible reasons.

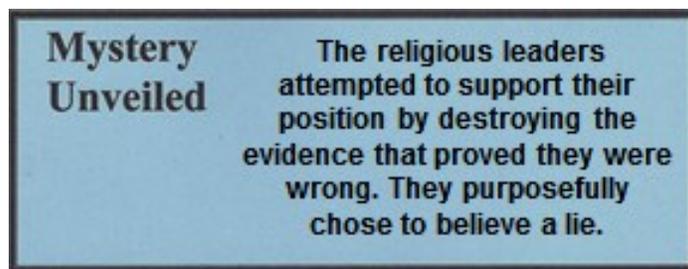
1. He could have been angry at the effects of sin and death upon the human race. After all, it was Jesus who formed mankind in His own image in the Garden of Eden. Now He was experiencing the pain and emotional stress of His friends that were the result of sin and death entering the earth.
2. Or He may have been upset at the professional mourners. Or He may have been upset for both of these reasons.
3. He may have been upset that after spending more than three years in ministry,

250. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades*. 112.

251. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor's Manual*. Class 18, page 15.

the people still did not understand who He was or the purpose of His coming.

By performing this miracle, Jesus again demonstrated that He had power over death and life and, therefore, He was the true Messiah. One of the great ironies is that because of His raising of Lazarus from the dead, the leading Pharisees and Sadducees determined to kill Him. Those who had desired Jesus to perform one mighty miracle to prove that He was the messiah, refused to believe what was overwhelmingly obvious. They chose not to believe; they chose not to see the truth.



The leading Pharisees and Sadducees of the Sanhedrin gathered to discuss the incredible miracle. They faced two serious dilemmas.

1. If Jesus were to be accepted as the messiah, then Rome would most certainly crush not only Jesus, but also Israel and the aristocrats would lose their wealthy, social-economic lifestyle. They could not imagine Jesus being a military victor over the Romans, but they could not deny His impressive miracles.
2. If Jesus took control only of the temple and the religious part of the Jewish life, they too, would lose their social position.

Either way, they would lose. So therefore, Jesus would have to be eliminated. A formal presentation to the Sanhedrin to kill Him was about to be made. Reports of the miracle spread like wildfire. No doubt, there were those who believed that if any man could perform such mighty acts, he could also overthrow the Roman oppressors and replace the corrupt temple establishment. Little wonder then that some members of the Sanhedrin seriously worried about their future.

12.03.12 Jn. 11:45-53 Jerusalem

SANHEDRIN PLOTS TO KILL JESUS

⁴⁵ Therefore, many of the Jews who came to Mary and saw what He did believed in Him. ⁴⁶ But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

⁴⁷ So the chief priests and the Pharisees convened the Sanhedrin and said, “What are we going to do since this man does many signs?” ⁴⁸ If we let Him continue in this way, everyone will believe in Him! Then the Romans will come and remove both our place and our nation.”

⁴⁹ One of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all! ⁵⁰ You’re not considering that it is to your advantage that one man should die for the people rather than the whole nation perish.”

⁵¹ He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, ⁵² and not for the nation only, but also to unite the scattered children of God. ⁵³ So from that day on they plotted to kill Him.

“What are we going to do since this man does many signs?” What an incredible confession – a confession that they recognized that Jesus had performed many signs proving beyond any shadow of doubt that He was the expected messiah. He had not only performed the three messianic miracles, but by raising the dead to life, He went beyond those three incredible miracles.²⁵² But rather than accepting Him for who He was, they were more concerned about losing **“both our place and our nation.”** Interestingly, in the year A.D. 70, they lost everything they feared they would lose, and they didn’t have Jesus either. It wasn’t just that Jesus performed miracles, but these miracles were “signs.” The term connected the miraculous events with specific prophecies of messianic identity. There was absolutely no possibility of ignorance – but a full knowledge rejection of Jesus the Messiah.

Mystery Unveiled	The miracles were “signs” that connected the miracles with specific prophecies, so there was no possible misunderstanding that Jesus was their Messiah.
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252. The three messianic miracles are 1). Healing a Jewish leper. 2). The casting out of demons from someone who could not speak. 3). Healing a person who was born blind. See 06.03.08.Q2 “What were the three “messianic miracles” that first century Jews believed the messiah would perform?” See also Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context*. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 10, Session 2.

The “signs” of miracles were so many, that the modern reader forgets that there were many other signs as well – prophetic signs that He fulfilled.

“Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.” Caiaphas was the chief instigator, using whatever dictatorial methods possible, to have Jesus executed. As high priest, he was to represent the people to their God. Instead, he was an impatient, insulting, overbearing and Hellenistic tyrant similar to Herod the Great. Both Caiaphas and Herod the Great were the ultimate in greed personified. No one dared to speak against either one without first considering the consequences.

Critics have argued that this phrase reflects an error in John’s account, because according to the Law of Moses, the high priest held his position for life. They are correct concerning the Law of Moses, however, the first century high priest was a position filled by the local Roman governor. Furthermore, neither the Sadducees nor the Romans had any regard for the Laws of Moses. Yet it is an interesting irony of history that in *that year*, Caiaphas would be the instrument in the sacrifice of Him who would take away the sin of the world.

12.03.12.Q1 Did the high priest have a rope tied around his ankle when he entered the Holy of Holies?

A traditional myth says that whenever the high priest went into the Holy of Holies, he had a rope tied around his ankle. This was because if there was any sin found in him, God would strike him dead. The end of the rope was available for others to pull his body out without entering the sacred area. According to scholars at the Temple Institute this writer has interviewed, this teaching is false.²⁵³ Furthermore, there is no evidence of this practice in any rabbinic writings that carefully describe the activities in the temple. Were that myth to have been true, then one must question why God did not kill several high priests, especially Caiaphas who one of the most evil of all high priests?

“You know nothing at all!” This is hardly the kind of speech one would expect from a priest, and especially a high priest. However, Caiaphas was hardly a person with any God-like characteristics, but he was typical of all the Sadducees. Josephus made this comment about them.

The behavior of the Sadducees to one another is rather crude, and their

253. Interviews in October, 1998. See <https://www.templeinstitute.org/> for more information on the Institute that has re-created the vessels and garments for the new temple.

intercourse (conversation) with their equals is rough, as it is with strangers.

Josephus, *Wars* 2.8.14 (166b)²⁵⁴

Amazingly, Mark refers to the Sadducees once by name and 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 stepped aside and let the Sadducees do their dirty work.

“You’re not considering that it is to your advantage that one man should die for the people rather than the whole nation perish.” Is it not amazing that Caiaphas spoke these words, since they became profoundly prophetic? This was the formal declaration to have Jesus killed. Just as the pagan prophet Balaam gave a true prophecy (Num. 24:17), so did the Hellenistic Caiaphas. National Israel would now be guilty of His death. To Caiaphas the death of Jesus would solve a political-religious problem while to God the death would solve the sin problem of all humanity. The irony is that while the Romans repeatedly crucified messianic pretenders,²⁵⁵ when the real messiah was before them, they repeatedly found Him innocent. Only the religious leaders wanted Him crucified. The most common people and many in the Sanhedrin knew the life and reputation of Jesus was above reproach. As will be shown, it was the Sadducees and not the leading Pharisees, who eventually condemned Jesus to death and turned Him over to the Romans for execution.

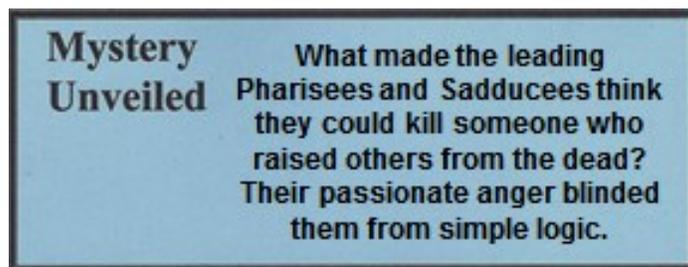
<p>Mystery Unveiled</p>	<p>The religious leaders represented “national Israel,” and as such, all Israel suffered.</p>
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To be a member of the distinguished Sanhedrin, a man had to be a minimum age of thirty, although most members were much older in this life-long career. Since Jesus was only in His mid-thirties by now, His words were all the more painful. He cut through their rhetoric and exposed their impure motives in public. It was extremely embarrassing for older men when a young man like Him repeatedly won arguments in a culture where

254. Clarification in parenthesis mine.

255. A partial listing of an estimated 60 messianic pretenders is found in Appendix 25 “False Prophets, Rebels, Significant Events, And Rebellions That Impacted The First Century Jewish World.”

the words of a Sanhedrin member were considered almost sacred. Obviously, there was an overemphasis on the value of their opinions. But in Jewish thinking, since Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, could He also successfully overthrow the Romans and annihilate the existing temple? They concluded it would be much better to kill Jesus and remain under Roman rule.



“To unite the scattered children of God.” John prophesied that the Jews would one day be restored. This pertained not only to the Jews who lived in the Promised Land, but also to those who were scattered abroad in many nations. Since he did not place any limitations on the restoration of unity, it must be understood to mean both physical (return to Israel) and spiritual (acceptance of Jesus [Yeshua]) as Lord and Savior.²⁵⁶ This interpretation, however, is a matter of debate. The early church made use of these prophetic words in a book titled *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, also known as *the Didache*. When the bread is broken,

Even as this bread is scattered across the mountains, and was brought into one, so let the Church be brought together from the ends of the earth into the kingdom.

Didache 9:4²⁵⁷

12.03.13 Jn. 11:54 Ephraim

JESUS GOES TO EPHRAIM²⁵⁸

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

257. 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.

258. Scholars have long questioned where was the location of Ephraim. The Christian West Bank village of Taybet (pronounced Tie-bay) claims to be the ancient village. It is located 18 miles northeast of Jerusalem and 7 miles west of modern Ramallah. But the village has no archaeological evidence to its claim. However, nearby is Khirbet el-Maqatir (the biblical Ai), an archaeological site since 1995 examined by the Associates for Biblical Research. While attempting to uncover possible evidence that it is the ancient city of Ai, a first century village

⁵⁴ Therefore Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews but departed from there to the countryside near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim. And He stayed there with the disciples.

12.03.14 Lk. 17:11-19 Between Samaria and Galilee

TEN LEPERS HEALED

¹¹ While traveling to Jerusalem, He passed between Samaria and Galilee.

¹² As He entered a village, 10 men with serious skin diseases met Him. They stood at a distance ¹³ and raised their voices, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”

¹⁴ When He saw them, He told them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And while they were going, they were healed.

¹⁵ But one of them, seeing that he was healed, returned and, with a loud voice, gave glory to God. ¹⁶ He fell face down at His feet, thanking Him. And he was a Samaritan.

¹⁷ Then Jesus said, “Were not 10 cleansed? Where are the nine? ¹⁸ Didn’t any return to give glory to God except this foreigner?” ¹⁹ And He told him, “Get up and go on your way. Your faith has made you well.”

Jesus would soon go to Jerusalem for His final journey. He was avoiding Herod Antipas who desired to kill Him as he killed John the Baptist. He was also avoiding the Sanhedrin, until the appointed day and hour when He would give up His life. It was during this time when He encountered the ten lepers. The context assumes that nine men were Jewish, since Jesus told all of them to see the priests to be declared “cleansed” (Gk. *katharizo*)²⁵⁹ A dreaded disease such as this would make men of like affliction live

was discovered with evidence that suggests it might be the first century village of Ephraim. See Gordon Govier “The Mysteries of Khirbet el-Maqatir” *Artifax* 29:3 (Summer 2014) 3; and Clyde Billington “Christian Village Holds Tradition of Jesus’ Visit” *Artifax*. 29:3 (Summer, 2014) 3, 6. See also Scott Stripling, “Have We Walked in the Footsteps of Jesus?” *Bible and Spade*. 27:4 (Fall, 2014) 88-94, and Bryant G. Wood, “Remarkable New Discoveries at Ai.” *Bible and Spade*. 27:4 (Fall, 2014) 95-98 for further details. On a side note, Joshua 10:1-4 suggests a close relationship between the ancient city of Ai and Jerusalem, possibly because it was a border fortress for the city-state of Jerusalem.

259. A leper who has been healed was often not called “healed,” but “cleansed” because the disease was symbolic of sin. See also Vine, “Leprosy.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:364.

together for their common good, even though they would have despised and hated each other, if they were healthy.

Lepers were social outcasts. Everyone feared they might contract the disease.²⁶⁰ In fact, they were required by law to ring a bell or shout “unclean, unclean” whenever anyone approached them. If any Jew came within two meters of them or within thirty meters downwind of a leper, the Jew was considered defiled and had to go through ritual purification in a mikvah. These lepers had heard of the reputation of Jesus and, together, they came to Him to be healed. Once they received their healing, everyone left except the despised Samaritan who returned to Jesus to thank Him.²⁶¹ The Jewish lepers could go to the temple in Jerusalem to be declared “clean,” while the Samaritan had to see the Samaritan priest in Shekem to be declared “clean.”²⁶² However, some scholars believe the Samaritan leper could have entered the Gentile Court of the temple and be declared “clean” by a Jewish priest.²⁶³ Regardless, all ten experienced a messianic miracle.

<p>Mystery Unveiled</p>	<p>The Samaritan went to the Samaritan priest in Shekem while the nine Jews went to their priest in Jerusalem. All ten men experienced a “messianic miracle.”</p>
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“Between Samaria and Galilee.” Some scholars believe Jesus traveled through the valley of Beth Shean on this journey where He had the opportunity to minister to Greeks, Samaritans, as well as Jews. It was the only Greek Decapolis city located west of the Jordan River.²⁶⁴

260. There were four kinds of people that were considered as good as dead, and it was believed that in all four situations their illness was a divine judgment. They were the blind, the leper, the poor, and the childless.

261. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 347-48.

262. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 2:285.

263. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:334-36.

264. Farrar, *Life of Christ*. 282.



12.03.14.A. THE RUINS OF BETH SHEAN. The ruins of the Decapolis city of Beth Shean, also known as Scythopolis or Nyssa-Scythopolis, stand as a monument of a bygone civilization. It was originally settled by the tribe of Manasseh (Jos. 17:11-12; Judg. 1:27) and expanded under Greek domination. In the second century B.C., it was resettled by Jews, who renamed it during the Hasmonean rule. This Jewish population was massacred during the revolt of A.D. 66-70.²⁶⁵ Photograph by the author.

12.03.15 Lk. 17:20-35, 37

COMING OF KINGDOM

²⁰ Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God will come, He answered them, “The kingdom of God is not coming with something observable; ²¹ no one will say, ‘Look here!’ or ‘There!’ For you see, the kingdom of God is among you.”

²² Then He told the disciples: “The days are coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you won’t see it. ²³ They will say to

265. Vamosh, *Beit She’an: Capital of the Decapolis*. 2-3.

you, 'Look there!' or 'Look here!' Don't follow or run after them. ²⁴ For as the lightning flashes from horizon to horizon and lights up the sky, so the Son of Man will be in His day. ²⁵ But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

²⁶ "Just as it was in the days of Noah,
so it will be in the days of the Son of Man:

²⁷ People went on eating, drinking,
Marrying, and given in marriage
until the day Noah boarded the ark,
and the flood came and destroyed them all.

²⁸ It will be the same as it was in the days of Lot.

People went on eating, drinking,
Buying, selling,
Planting, building.

²⁹ But on the day Lot left Sodom,
fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all.

³⁰ It will be like that on the day the Son of Man is revealed. ³¹ On that day, a man on the housetop, whose belongings are in the house,

must not come down to get them.

Likewise the man who is in the field

must not turn back. ³² Remember Lot's wife!

³³ Whoever tries to make his life secure

will lose it,

and whoever loses his life

will preserve it.

³⁴ I tell you,

on that night two will be in one bed:

One will be taken and the other will be left.

³⁵ **Two women will be grinding grain together:**

One will be taken and the other left.

[³⁶ **Two will be in a field:**

One will be taken, and the other will be left.]”

³⁷ **“Where, Lord?” they asked Him. He said to them, “Where the corpse is, there also the vultures will be gathered.”**

“The kingdom of God is among you.” Some translations read “the kingdom of God is within you.” The English words “among” and “within” are translated from the Greek adverb *entos*, which usually means *within*. The Greek phrase *entos humon* can be translated to read *within you*, *in your midst*, or *within your grasp*.²⁶⁶ It appears that Jesus referred to all three definitions. In this case, the word *among* is rather weak and does not fully compliment the meaning of the passage. For the Kingdom to be *within you* means that Jesus is in complete control of one’s life.

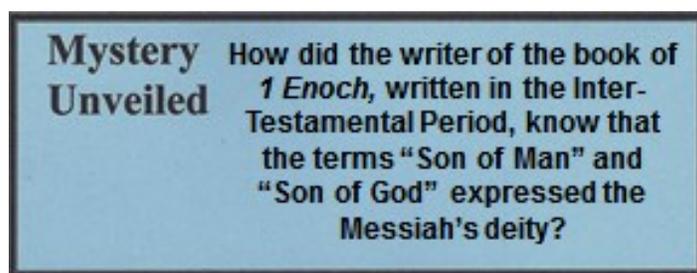
According to some theologians, the kingdom of God is “among you” now, but during the Millennial Reign of Jesus the Kingdom of God will be a political-religious kingdom. This new Kingdom will be the life of God living within the believer. It could also be translated as meaning “in your midst,” or “among you.”²⁶⁷ In essence, Jesus said that His character was “within you.” The gospels declare the main theme of Jesus is the Kingdom of God/Heaven, whereas in the rest of the New Testament the theme is Jesus. Of course, His character is the Kingdom of God within His believer. If one desires to have the kingdom within, the life of Jesus must be within his heart.

“The Son of Man will be in His day.” Here Luke equated the Hebrew phrase *Day of the Lord* with Jesus’ return in judgment at the end of time. There will be the climactic battle known as the “great day of God Almighty” (Rev. 16:14). Then the forces of evil are destroyed by the Lord God Himself. Most certainly, this is what John the Baptist had in mind when he spoke of the one who would follow him and bring judgment upon the earth.

266. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 239-40.

267. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 349.

As stated previously, and this point is critical, the phrase *Son of Man*, or *Bar Enosh* in Aramaic,²⁶⁸ 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. 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,” when used of Christ, do so to express His deity.²⁶⁹ The mystery that remains veiled is this: How did the writer of *Enoch* know this?



“Just as it was in the days of Noah.” Noah was the spokesman for God to a depraved world that was determined to seek its own pleasures, while Lot (v. 28) was a preacher of righteousness in a sexually depraved culture.²⁷⁰ Each man gave warning to the people of their cities. The few who placed their faith in the Most High God were saved, while the others died in the predicted destruction. This phrase has a reference to the judgment that followed Noah and Lot. Jesus essentially said that people would be busy pursuing the daily events of life with no thought of God, Judgment Day, or eternity.

12.03.15.Q1 Why did Jesus tell His followers to remember Lot’s wife (Lk. 17:32)?

“Remember Lot’s wife!” To protect them from death, Lot and his family were personally led out of Sodom by two angels (Gen. 19). As they fled, Lot’s wife looked back and instantly became a pillar of salt. Her name is not recorded in Scripture, but according to the ancient *Book of Jasher* (19:52), it was Abo (Edith).²⁷¹

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

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

270. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 340.

271. Jordan. *Who’s Who in the Bible*. 237. That narrative has generally been perceived with less respect than is deserved – almost with a point of humor.

When God told them to flee, it was to remove them from the wickedness of Sodom, its pending destruction, and to look forward to a better future. However, a moment of disobedient hesitation cost her, her life. The lesson is that one cannot have a passion for both the world and for God. The comment “remember Lot’s wife” was a serious warning to *not* be part of a degenerating world, but to keep one’s focus on Christ Jesus. Similar warnings are found in the parable of the ten virgins, two women at the grinding stone, etc. The warning to be prepared to meet God and give an account of one’s life has not changed.²⁷² Clearly, it was never intended to be a point of humor.

“Where the corpse is, there also the vultures will be gathered.” This is an excellent example where the context of a statement presents the definition of a word. In the Greek language, the same term is used for *eagle* and for *vulture*. However, since eagles would not eat a corpse, the meaning is clearly *vulture*.²⁷³

In this narrative, the dead body represents the nation of Israel and the vultures represent the Gentile nations that one day will come against the Jewish state. Some scholars believe that prior to the final battle of the ages, many Jews will flee to the ancient city of Petra (Jer. 49:13-14). It is also where many believe Jesus will return with His heavenly army to save them from destruction.²⁷⁴

272. There are numerous Old Testament warnings as well, such as Ezekiel 3:17-21.

273. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 293.

274. See also Micah 2:12-13; Isa. 34:1-7; 63:1-6.



12.03.15.A. ROOFTOP LIVING AS IN ANCIENT TIMES. This modern home in Israel has an area on the roof designated for resting, relaxation, and family time, as was done in Bible times. This is typical of many homes throughout the Middle East today. Photograph by the author.



12.03.15.B. A PAIR OF GRINDING STONES. This crude kitchen tool, a pair of basalt grinding stones, was typical of household implements of the first century that Jesus probably referred to when He said that two women would be grinding grain, and one would be taken. Grain was placed in the center hole. As the top stone was turned, the grain crushed against the bottom stone. The crushed grain, called flour, fell out of the edges of the stones. Photograph by the author.

12.03.16 Lk. 18:1-8

THE PERSISTENT WIDOW AND UNRIGHTEOUS JUDGE

¹ He then told them a parable on the need for them to pray always and not become discouraged:

A ² “There was a judge in a certain town
who didn’t fear God
or respect man.

B ³ And a widow in that town
kept coming to him saying,
‘Give me justice against my adversary.’

A’ ⁴ For a while he was unwilling,
but later he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God
or respect man,

B’ ⁵ yet because this widow keeps pestering me,
I will give her justice,
so she doesn’t wear me out by her persistent
coming.’”

⁶ Then the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷ Will not God grant justice to His elect who cry out to Him day and night? Will He delay

to help them? ⁸ I tell you that He will swiftly grant them justice. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find that faith on earth?”

Literary Style.²⁷⁵ In this poetic parable, stanzas A and A’ each focus on a judge, God, and man, while the other stanzas focus on the widow and her vindication.

In this narrative Jesus taught the importance of persistence prayer. The lesson is that if an unrighteous judge will make a favorable decision, how much more will God provide for those whom He loves? Historically, according to the Talmud, in the larger villages there were two stipendiary magistrates, known as *Dayyaney Gezeloth*.²⁷⁶ They were constantly on duty and had become known for their arbitrariness and covetousness.²⁷⁷ They were not beyond bribery, and so “for a dish of meat, they would pervert justice.”²⁷⁸ They were employed by the Herodian family and, as such, they were not permitted to have any other occupation. They had to be available to the public at a moment’s notice. When anyone had a problem that needed a scholarly decision, he would highly prefer to ask a rabbi, and if none could be found, then ask a carpenter.²⁷⁹ However, if in a desperate situation, he could also go to a magistrate, appointed by Herod, who was, most likely, a despised Roman sympathizer. This points to two interesting features concerning the Babylonian Talmud:

1. It presents interesting insights into Jewish social life (in this case the legal system) in the Holy Land, not Babylon, prior to the destruction of the temple, and
2. It discredits the argument that since it was written at a late date, it should be not be considered as a source for biblical study on Jewish life and culture.

“There was a judge ... who didn’t fear God.” The literal phrase reads “He felt no shame before the people.”²⁸⁰ The phrase does not mean that the judge was not afraid of God, but he had no respect for God’s authority. A similar statement is found in Exodus 1:8 where Moses wrote that a new king did not know about Joseph. The fact is that

275. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*. Part II, 131; Fleming, *The Parables of Jesus*. 72.

276. See *Dayyaney Gezeloth* in Appendix 26.

277. Babylonian Talmud, *Kethub* 104b.

278. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 674.

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

280. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 263.

Joseph, who was the second highest ruler of Egypt for eighty years, helped the Egyptians survive a terrible drought and became a national hero. Of course the new king certainly had heard of him, but he had no respect or regard for him. The same is true of the judge in this parable. It was to a *Dayyaney Gezeloth* judge who didn't fear God that the persistent woman came for justice.²⁸¹ Some scholars believe that this judge was not a Jew, but a Roman and this was a Roman court, not a Jewish one.²⁸² That is possible, or he could have been a Hellenistic Jew. Nonetheless, the persistence of the widow eventually resulted in her receiving due justice. This parable clearly reflected the passage in Psalm,

The LORD protects foreigners and helps the fatherless and the widow, but He frustrates the ways of the wicked.

Psalm 146:9

“His elect.” (Gk. *eklekton*) The chosen ones are those who will be in the victorious army of Jesus at the end of history.²⁸³ The parable Jesus told was reflective of a well-known parable that was written some two centuries earlier in a book known as *The Wisdom of Ben Sirach*.²⁸⁴ Again, Jesus taught from the known to the unknown; teaching from what the people were already familiar with to what He wanted them to learn. Since they did not have notepads, iPads, or books, all instruction was memorized – a skill that was well developed in the Jewish culture. Note the words of this Inter-Testamental wisdom book,

**Do not the tears run down her cheek
as she cries out against him who has caused them to fall?**

**He whose service is pleasing to the Lord will be accepted,
and his prayer will reach to the clouds.**

**The prayer of the humble pierces the clouds,
and he will not be consoled until it reaches the Lord;
he will not desist until the Most High visits him,
and does justice for the righteous and exercises judgment.**

281. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 351; Barclay, “Luke.” 221-22.

282. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 93-94.

283. Mt. 24:31; Mk. 13:27; Rev. 17:14; See also Liefeld, “Luke.” 8:1000.

284. A/k/a *Ben Sirach*, *the Wisdom of Ben Sirach*, or *Ecclesiasticus*.

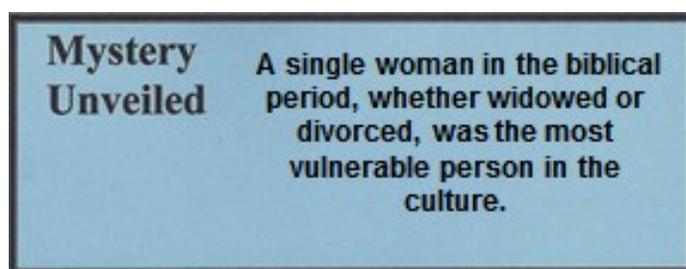
**And the Lord will not delay, neither will he be patient with them,
till he crushes the loins of the unmerciful and repays vengeance on the
nations;**

**till he takes away the multitude of the insolent,
and breaks the scepters of the unrighteous;**

**till he repays man according to his deeds,
and the works of men according to their devices;
till he judges the case of his people
and makes them rejoice in his mercy.**

*Ben Sirach 35:15-19*²⁸⁵

In the poetic writings of *Ben Sirach* was a popular and similar motif that reflects the prayers of the humble and the rewards that will fall upon the righteous. In this narrative, the judgment of God is portrayed as being brutal on the Gentiles, but in response by Jesus, no judgment was mentioned. Yet there is an unmistakable awareness that all will one day give an account before the Judge of the Universe. At this point in His ministry, and at this time in church history, mercy and forgiveness is extended to those who repent, place their faith in Christ Jesus, and live according to biblical principles. This narrative underscores an important point: Jesus told stories in various forms to explain His theology. Therefore, understanding the language and culture of the Storyteller is critical.



“Will He find that faith on earth?” The essential question of Jesus can easily be overlooked. When He returns, will He find people of faith – people who live their daily lives being focused on obediently doing His will knowing that He will care and provide for them?

285. Metzger, *The Apocrypha of the Old Testament*. 174.

12.03.17 Lk. 18:9-14

THE PRAYERS OF THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS PHARISEE AND TAX COLLECTOR

⁹ He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and looked down on everyone else:

A ¹⁰ “Two men went up to the temple complex to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

B ¹¹ The Pharisee took his stand and was praying like this:
‘God, I thank you that I’m not like other people

C greedy, unrighteous, adulterers,
or even like this tax collector.

D ¹² I fast twice a week;
I give a tenth of everything I get.’

C’ ¹³ “But the tax collector, standing far off,
would not even raise his eyes to heaven,

B’ but kept striking his chest and saying,

‘God, turn Your wrath from me — a sinner!’

A’ ¹⁴ I tell you, this one,

went down to his house justified rather than the other;

because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled,

but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Literary style.²⁸⁶ Following the introduction is stanza A, in which there are two men, a Pharisee and a tax collector, both sinners. In line A’, there are two men; the tax collector is made righteous and the Pharisee is not. This is followed by the conclusion, which is a

286. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*. Part II, 142; Fleming, *The Parables of Jesus*. 39.

mini-poem. In stanzas, B and B' are two different manners of prayer: one is arrogant and the other repentant. In stanzas C and C' is the image of the tax collector who first compared himself to other sinners and then compared himself to an almighty God. In line D is the self-righteous attitude of the Pharisee who kept all the Mosaic laws, which did not make him holy before God.

Many parables are based on Old Testament stories and themes. For example, the Pharisee and tax collector of Luke 18:9-14 is related to the judgment and joyous restoration of Isaiah 66:1-6.²⁸⁷ In this case, the Pharisee is *not* thanking God for anything, but rather, is telling God what he personally has accomplished. In the meantime, the repentant tax collector beats his chest in crying to God for mercy. But that is more than a comparison of two men, it also warns the disciples of the danger of pride in their ministry.

Jesus again teaches that true righteousness is available for everyone and those who are in religious authority also need salvation. Salvation was/is a matter of the honest heart coming before God and pleading mercy, forgiveness, and a desire to live a repentant life. People remembered this teaching, because it was so radical from what they were accustomed to, and the words of Jesus were carefully spoken in poetic form for ease of remembrance by the listeners. Most certainly everyone remembered the rebuke God gave the Israelites during the ministry of Isaiah, because they had fasted without a changed life (Isa. 38:1-7; cf. Mt. 6:16-18).

“I fast twice a week.” The Pharisees were known for fasting twice a week.²⁸⁸ The Talmud recorded the Jews fasted Mondays and Thursdays and this narrative has an interesting insight into the making and breaking of vows:

If a man undertook to fast on Mondays and Thursdays throughout the year and any of the festive days enumerated in the Scroll of Fasts happens to fall on those days, then if his vow was made previous to our decree his vow overrides our decree, but if our decree was made before his vow then our decree overrides his vow.

Babylonian Talmud, *Ta'anith* 12b

287. Three other examples of Jesus' parables that are based upon Old Testament are as follows: 1) Luke 15:4-7 the parable of the Good shepherd is based on Psalm 23, 2), the prodigal son of Luke 15:11-32 is related to Jacob's life in Gen. 27:1 – 36:8, and 3) the two builders of Luke 6:46-49 is related to Isaiah 28:14-18.

288. Mt. 6:6; 9:14; Lk. 5:33; Jn. 7:18; Acts 27:9.

Mondays and Thursdays were also the local market days in Jerusalem, when many people traveled to the city to buy fresh food and other commodities. Hence, the Pharisees were able to make the greatest impact on the community by advertising their self-righteous piety. It is interesting to see how the primitive church carried on the tradition of fasting. The *Didache*, which was written as early as the mid-90s, states that Jewish believers fasted on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Let your fasts not take place with those of the wicked. They fast on Monday and Thursday; you, though, should fast on Wednesday and Friday.

Didache 8:1

Clearly, they continued the tradition but refused to be identified with the leading Pharisees, whom they saw as being responsible for the judgment of Jerusalem. The early church exploded with this kind of dedication and obedience toward God. It always played an important function in Jewish piety – and this was carried over into early Christianity.

“Kept striking his chest and saying, ‘God, turn Your wrath from me — a sinner!’ The tax collector approached God with a dire sense of need and humility. The original Greek for *a sinner* is as if the tax collector recognized himself to be the worst of all sinful humanity.²⁸⁹ He realized that only God could give him mercy. This simple phrase epitomizes the Sermon on the Mount phrase, “poor in spirit.” The collector’s spirit was impoverished and only God could help him. In essence, he is profoundly humble.²⁹⁰

In this parable, Jesus again elevates the meaning of *righteousness*. The cultural meaning is for one to observe the biblical code of ethics, such as giving to the poor or expressing kindness, especially in situations when it would not be expected. However, Jesus introduced a new definition of *righteousness* – that is to have an *ongoing relationship* with God. The *self-righteous* attitude is one whereby one assumes he or she has a relationship with God, often by some form of legalism, when in fact that relationship does not exist. Righteousness (Gk. *dikaiosyne*) is defined by a number of terms such as *uprightness, upright, just acquitted*²⁹¹ or as one might say in a simplified manner, “as if I never sinned.” In the parable, the self-righteous Pharisee, encumbered with legalistic laws, believed he was in right relationship with God while the tax collector passionately desired the right relationship.

289. Barclay, “Luke.” 224.

290. Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context*. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 4, Session 1.

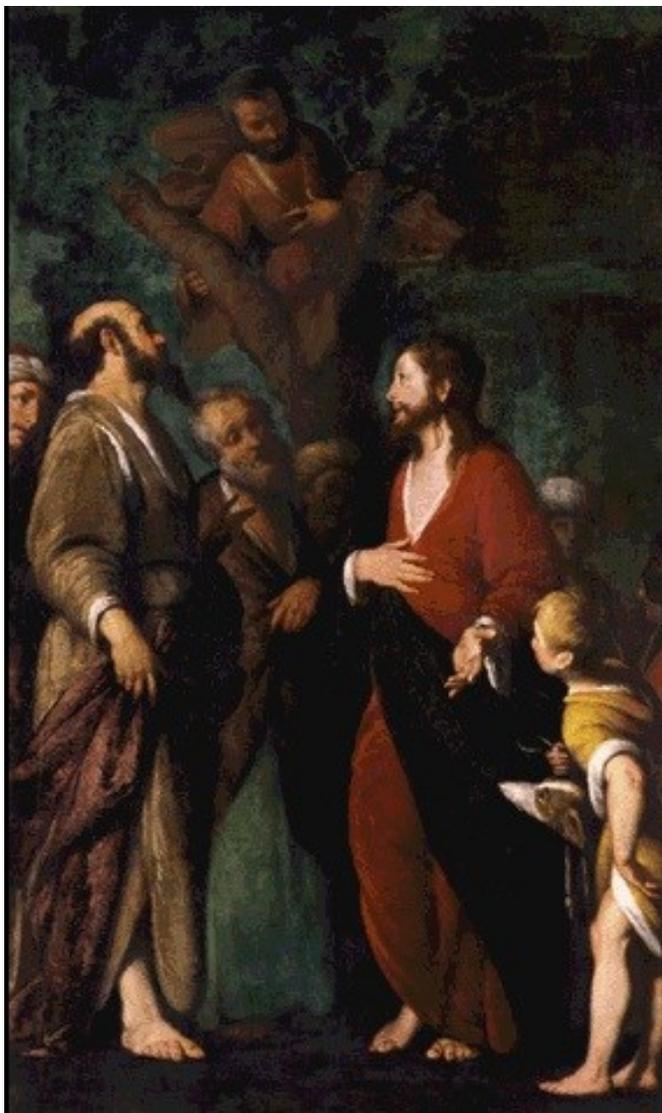
291. Brown, “Righteousness, Justification.” 3:352-54.

Unit 12

The Galilean Ministry Ends

Chapter 04

Miracles And Teachings Intensify



12.04.00.A. THE CONVERSATION OF ZACCHAEUS by **Bero Strozzi. 1625-1650.** People were stunned when Jesus asked Zacchaeus, a tax collector, to come down from the tree. Tax collectors were considered to be the worst of all sinners.

Jesus now ends His work in Galilee and begins His last journey in life – the long road to Jerusalem and Calvary where He will die.

12.04.01 Mk. 10:13-16 (See also Mt. 19:13-15; Lk. 18:15-17)

JESUS BLESSES THE CHILDREN

¹³ Some people were bringing little children to Him so He might touch them, but His disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ When Jesus saw it, He was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to Me. Don’t stop them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁵ I assure you: Whoever does not welcome the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” ¹⁶ After taking them in His arms, He laid His hands on them and blessed them.

In the midst of His challenges, Jesus took the time to bless the children. In doing so, He did nothing unusual. It was what every caring rabbi or loving father did. There was a wonderful custom of parents bringing their children, at an early age, to the synagogue that they might receive the prayers and blessings of the elders. It is the origin of today’s “child dedication service” in many churches. However, since Jesus had become such a prominent figure, the disciples considered these little ones to be an interruption. Consequently, He became upset. This account is the first recorded event where He became displeased with other believers. His anger was a response to injured love. He loved the children and desired to bless them and be responsive to the love of their parents who brought them.²⁹²

The similarities between children and His followers, who are to be like children, are that children are pure, truthful, simplistic, sincere, and have a loving dependence upon their parents. Followers of Jesus are to have the same attributes with a loving dependence upon Jesus.

“Indignant.” This was the strong word that described Jesus when His disciples refused to let the children come to Him. It reflects the high degree of importance He placed on them and is used only here. Jesus blessed them, as a visual demonstration of the Kingdom of God.²⁹³

292. Becker, “Blessed, Blessing, Happy.” 1:213.

293. Earle, *Word Meanings in the New Testament*. 93.

12.04.02 Lk. 18:18-27; Mk. 10:18c (See also Mt. 19:16-30; Mk. 10:17-18b, 19-27)

THE RICH RULER; THE CAMEL AND THE EYE OF A NEEDLE

A Lk. ¹⁸ A ruler asked Him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

B ¹⁹ “Why do you call Me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good – except God alone. ²⁰ You know the commandments:

‘Do not commit adultery,

do not murder,

do not steal,

do not bear false witness;

Mk. ^{18c} do not defraud

Lk. honor your father and mother’ (Ex. 20:12-16; Deut. 5:16-20).”

²¹ “I have kept all these from my youth,” he said.

C ²² When Jesus heard this, He told him,

“You still lack one thing:

Sell all that you have and

distribute it to the poor

and you will have treasure in heaven.

Then come, follow Me.”

**D ²³ After he heard this,
he became extremely sad,
because he was very rich.**

**E ²⁴ Seeing that he became sad, Jesus said,
“How hard it is for those who have wealth
to enter the kingdom of God!**

**E’ ²⁵ For it is easier for a camel
to go through the eye of a needle
than for a rich person
to enter the kingdom of God.”**

**D’ ²⁶ Those who heard this asked,
“Then who can be saved?”**

²⁷ He replied, “What is impossible with men

is possible with God.”

**C’ Peter said to him,
“We have left all
 to follow you!”**

**B’ “I tell you the truth,”
 Jesus said to them,
 “no one, who has left
 home
 or wife
 or brothers
 or parents
 or children
 for the sake of the Kingdom of God,**

A’ will fail to receive many times as much in this age and in the age to come, eternal life.”

Literary style.²⁹⁴ Luke demonstrated, in typical Hebraic question and answer style, the matter of eternal life in lines A and A’. To acquire this eternal life one must enter the Kingdom of God in lines E and E’. In lines B and B’ are the old requirements versus the new requirements and in lines C and C’ are recorded the required obedience of the ruler versus the fulfilled requirements of Peter and the disciples. Finally, in line C is the obedience required of the ruler, but he feels it is too hard for him. In line C’ it is apparent that with God all things are possible, including obedience to His Word. In the poetic parable, Jesus compared the largest animal, a camel, which was in domestic use, with the smallest of holes to make the illustration that it is impossible to have eternal life without God.

In this encounter Jesus met a young man who, in today’s standards, might be considered to be the ideal disciple. He was religious, seriously observed all the biblical regulations of life, he was wealthy and evidently had a good mind for business and government administration, and his question suggests that he had heard Jesus several times previously. But Jesus identified his motives and knew that even though he loved God, his primary interest was wealth and not God. Therefore, when Jesus asked him to surrender his fortune to the poor (charity is one of the ideals of Judaism) he went away

294. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*. Part II, 158; Fleming, *The Parables of Jesus*. 25.

saddened. In fact, he is the only one in the gospels narratives who met Jesus and left discouraged.

“A ruler.” The identity of this ruler is not given, but when considering the common hatred everyone had for the Herodian dynasty, it is interesting that not a single negative word is mentioned about this ruler. Furthermore, he is one who observed all the Jewish laws, and in fact, he probably was Jewish. Mark said that he ran up to Jesus and knelt down (10:17). For a man of wealth, especially one in government, that was a very undignified way of addressing a common rabbi. Clearly he was at a point of desperation. Furthermore, since all Jews believed that they would all be saved, clearly he had heard several sermons by John the Baptist or Jesus previously that made him ask the question of eternal life.

One of the unique features of Inter-Testamental and first century Judaism was the love of discussion men had on theological issues. One of their favorite topics must have been, **“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”** This subject, on one form or another, appears in a number of Jewish writings as it was among the favorite subjects of debating rabbis.²⁹⁵ Therefore, it is not surprising that this question was presented to Jesus – and probably many times. However, it is a flawed question – one cannot do anything to inherit eternal life. We have free will because God wants us to freely accept His invitation of love and to love Him in return. Furthermore, that love is demonstrated not so much by our lip service, but by our actions to Him and to others. So while the rich young ruler thought he observed all the commandments, he was weak on the first four (of the Ten Commandments). Evidently something in his spirit bothered him, because the subject had become personal to him.

“You know the commandments.” Every Jewish man knew the Ten Commandments. However, when Jesus referred to those commandments, he mentioned only a few of them. He did not need to mention all ten because that was understood. To mention a few of them was a Hebraic shorthand of referring to all of them – as was also done in James 2:10, Romans 13:9, and with the Noahide Commandments.²⁹⁶ Furthermore, Jesus knew that this man knew the answer to his own question.

“Sell all that you have.” The wealthy man had faithfully kept all the laws in relationship to other people, but his security and trust were in his wealth, not in God. He was focused on materialism first and religion second – just enough to logically rationalize that God

295. Ps. 37:9, 11, 18 refer to inheriting the land but also of an abiding heritage; Dan. 12:2; 1 QS 4.7; CD 3.20; 4Q181 1.4; 2 Macc. 7:9; 1 Enoch 37:4; 40:9; 58.3; *Psalms of Solomon* 3:12.

296. See Appendix 17.

was pleased with him. Yet his heart was empty. The reason Jesus told him to give all that he owned to the poor was to separate him from his earthly security; to make him dependent upon Jesus and become a follower of Him.

This passage is often problematic in Western nations today where success is identified with materialism. The question is whether Jesus really intended to reduce this wealthy man, who was already obeying the Mosaic Law, down to poverty with this command. When Jesus spoke with Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector of Jericho, the social outcast said he would give half his wealth to the poor (Lk. 19:8). But Jesus did not require all his wealth to be given to the poor. Evidently Jesus was pleased with his response. Neither did Jesus tell him to seek another occupation. Jesus perceived the hearts of both men: With the ruler it was evident that the wealth owned him even though he obeyed all the laws, whereas Zacchaeus demonstrated that he owned wealth and was more than willing to share it with others. The first man had his faith (trust) in materialism and was not willing to give it up, whereas Zacchaeus had his total faith in Jesus. There is a significant difference.

“Distribute it to the poor.” This was the cultural symbol of righteousness.²⁹⁷ It was believed one could not inherit eternal life unless there was a contribution to the less fortunate. This was always money above the tithing or support of the temple. It is amazing how close this came to being theologically correct. Jesus told the rich man to give to the poor because it was the godly thing to do and because he would then have to transfer his faith and security to Christ. But he refused.

Giving to the poor and other acts of charity is considered acts towards perfection and becoming “fully righteous.” However, by the time of Jesus the term “fully righteous” also included observing the entire Torah.²⁹⁸ 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

“Extremely sad.” This rich young ruler is the only person in the gospels who had a direct encounter with Jesus and left sad – he rejected the counsel of the One whom he will meet one day. In comparison to Zacchaeus, the tax collector at Jericho (Lk. 19:1-10; 12.04.06) the rich young man had good doctrine as reflected in his religious training and

297. For more information on the economy and social structure of the time, see. 02.03.03 “Economy.”

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

having been observant of all the biblical commands, yet he lacked love for those in need. Zacchaeus, on the other hand, had no doctrinal foundation in his life, but fell in love with Jesus and for those in need.

12.04.02.Q1 In Matthew 19:16-26 and parallels, could the gospel writers have meant “rope,” instead of “camel”?

Some critics have said that the phrase, “**a camel,**” is a misinterpretation. They claim the Greek word actually means *rope*, because the two Greek words for *rope* and *camel* are similar. They argue that a scribal error was made when copying Scriptures since the Greek word for camel *kamelos*,²⁹⁹ is close to the word for a heavy rope *kamilos* that was used to pull ships.³⁰⁰ This interpretation was so popular among some scholars, that in 1938 English Bible translation titled the *Book of Books* used the word *rope* instead of *camel*.³⁰¹ The purpose was obviously to soften the harshness of the saying. However, what these translators failed to recognize is that the same figure of speech is found in rabbinic writings, which indicates that the Scripture was transmitted accurately, without a scribal error.³⁰²

12.04.02.Q2 In reference to Luke 18:25, is “the eye of a needle” a small gate in the city wall?

This figure of speech, “**the eye of a needle,**” has often been problematic. Matthew used the Greek word *rhaphis* to mean an ordinary needle, but Luke, a physician, used the word *belone*, a medical term for a surgical needle and is found nowhere else in the New Testament.³⁰³ The phrase obviously cannot be taken literally, but could this figure of speech be a reference to a very small gate in the city wall that was impassible for a large camel?

The Babylonian Talmud has a reference to the phrase, and from its context, it is clearly a figure of speech, similar to a hyperbole – an intentional exaggeration to underscore a

299. Barclay, “Matthew.” 2:217.

300. <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/hawsers>. Retrieved August 3, 2013.

301. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*. 55.

302. Grant, R. *Early Christianity and Society*. 97.

303. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:212, 1:407.

point. It was also a point of humor. In the Talmud a certain Rabbi Naaman wrote that a man's fanciful dreams are a reflection of his thoughts. He said that:

This is a proven by the fact that a man is never shown in a dream, a date palm of gold, or an elephant going through the eye of a needle.

Babylonian Talmud, *Berakoth* 55b

This saying was reflective of life in Babylon where elephants were more common than in Israel. Obviously the reality of having a date palm tree made of gold is as likely as an elephant going through the eye of the needle. Jesus used the same humor. Centuries later Muhammad made a similar comment which is found in the Qu'ran. It reads,

To those who reject our signs and treat them with arrogance, no opening will be there for the gates of heaven, nor will they enter the garden, until a camel can pass through the eye of a needle. Such is our reward for those in sin.

Qu'ran, *Sura A'raf* 7:40³⁰⁴

Another Jewish proverb reads as follows,

A needle's eye is not too narrow for two friends, nor is the world wide enough for two enemies.

A Jewish Proverb³⁰⁵

Jesus essentially used a proverb that was centuries old and common in many cultures. The classical Periclesian Greek proverb says,

A camel can pass through an eye end of a needle for sewing easier than can a man of wealth who loves his wealth enter into the dwelling of the Gods.

Pericles in 485 B.C.

As to the meaning of the "eye of a needle," there are two incorrect traditions and both

304. Muhammad founded Islam in the early 7th century A.D. and the Qu'ran (Koran) was compiled a century or two later. The more distant a literary work is from the time of its subject, the less reliable it is. Therefore, Islamic writings are not considered reliable "primary witnesses." Nonetheless, this quotation is included for the benefit of Muslim readers.

305. Quoted by Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:109.

refer to a small door through which someone could enter the city at night when the main gate was sealed. The two traditions are as follows:

1. Beside main city gate there was a smaller gate in the wall.
2. In the main city gate there was a much smaller door; a door within a door. (However, centuries later such combination of doors was developed.)³⁰⁶

The so-called lesson of the proverbial “eye of the needle” was that anyone with a large animal, such as a camel, would have to unload his beast of burden and the camel could barely squeeze through the gate to enter the city.³⁰⁷ Any such claim is grossly false;³⁰⁸ there is no archaeological or literary evidence of it.³⁰⁹ Some have even said that the camel had to enter walking on its knees. There are four strong arguments against this fanciful interpretation.

1. In all rabbinic writings, some of which are extremely detailed in the physical descriptions of Jerusalem and the temple, there is not the slightest hint of such a gate. Jerusalem and the temple were deemed so incredibly beautiful and influential that there are no less than nine ancient sources which have preserved a description and none of them mentions the mythical gate as a night entrance.³¹⁰
2. No archaeological evidence of the biblical period has been found to support either the gate in the wall theory or the gate within the city gate theory,
3. A camel cannot walk on its knees – no more than a horse or cow can walk on its knees.

306. An example of such a double door can be seen in the Nazareth Village in Israel. This door is of the early Ottoman Empire Period and is typical of medieval European fortress doors.

307. Thompson, “Camel.” 1:491-92.

308. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor's Manual*. Class 19, page 6.

309. Vine, “Needle.” *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:429; Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman, eds., “Eye of the Needle.” *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. 256.

310. Descriptions of Jerusalem and the Temple are found in a number of ancient sources, including Josephus, *Wars*. 5.5.1-8; *Antiquities*. 15.11.1-7; Jewish writings in the Mishnah, *Middath* 1-4; Strabo, *Geography* 7.281; 16.28-40 (cf. 16.2.34); Tacitus, *History*. 4.4; Dio Casius *History of Rome*. 37.5-17; 49.22; 66.4-12; Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*. 5.14; Polybius, *The Histories of Polybius*. 16.4; and the Temple Scroll which is a part of the collection known as the Dead Sea Scrolls.

4. The myth may have had its origin in 1835 when a correspondent traveled to the Middle East and wrote to F. W. Farrar indicating that he had discovered such a gate. Farrar then proceeded to write of it in biblical journals.³¹¹ Because he was a highly respected scholar and theologian, whose works are considered classics even today, his opinion on the eye of the needle was considered gospel truth. Hence, the myth was born. But if the unknown correspondent found it in the early 19th century, why cannot archaeologists do the same today? The answer is obviously a mythical mystery.

However, shortly after Farrar's "research" became public, a longtime Middle East resident, G. N. Scherer, read the story and boldly stated that there was no such evidence whatsoever. Scherer stated the following: "There is not the slightest shred of evidence for this identification. This door has not been called the needle's eye in any language and is not called so today."³¹² Scherer obviously was not familiar with the term in other writings, but he was quite knowledgeable of Jerusalem.

5. Concerning a gate within the city gate, the city gate was the weakest point of any ancient city defense system. To have a door within a door would only have weakened it more. However, by the time the Ottoman Empire ruled Jerusalem (1517-1917), technology had advanced and small doors were placed within the city gates in a manner that the gates were not significantly weakened. The legend of the small gate of the first century is probably rooted in this development.

The conclusion of these two gate accounts is that the gate in the city wall is outright false and the night gate within the city gate is a legend rooted in a tradition that is barely a few centuries old. In light of that, the only explanation is one that has a trail of written history, and that is the phrase an "eye of the needle" is a figure of speech. Unfortunately, Farrar never realized that the camel and eye of a needle narrative is an exaggerated proverb denoting extreme difficulty; but note – it is a proverb; a figure of speech.

"A rich person." The point of this poetic parable is not that the wealthy are automatically condemned to eternal punishment, but their sin is placing faith and security in material possessions. To the ancients, this phrase carried the cultural definition that wealth was obtained because of divine blessing. That belief posed a problem: "How could God punish someone to Hell, if He had blessed him financially?" Therefore, those who were wealthy were convinced they had free entrance into Heaven. The problem was

311. Farrar, "Brief Notes on Passages." 375-76.

312. Scherer, *The Eastern Colour of the Bible*. 37; Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*. Part II, 166.

not only that finances “owned” wealthy people, but those individuals believed in a theological constructed that made repentance challenging.

Mystery Unveiled Convincing the wealthy to repent was difficult because it was the common opinion that since God blessed them financially, they would receive an automatic entrance into heaven.

However, Jesus said that it is a sin for the wealth to own the believer. On the contrary, the believer is to own, enjoy, and share his material blessings to others. Giving to the poor has always been considered an act of righteousness not only in Judaism, but also in the primitive church. When Jesus told the ruler he needed to sell everything, that did not necessarily mean that the giver would become destitute and equally poor himself or even poorer than those he helped. Rather, it meant that he was to be free with his wealth and give to those in need. An example is found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, where members sold everything they owned to join the community. Archaeological discoveries indicate that the Essenes did not live in poverty, but rather enjoyed comfort in first century living standards even though they considered themselves individually poor. They had become known for their righteousness in helping the poor outside of their community, precisely what Jesus was teaching. A scroll reads as follows:

But we in the Community of Your Truth shall rejoice because of your mighty hand... Truly, your mighty hand is with the poor.

Dead Sea Scroll, *War Scroll* 1QM 13:12-14³¹³

The account of the condemned wealthy man is not because he owned wealth, but because it owned him. Eternal life is only when faith is placed in Christ Jesus and not in any other form of security. What Jesus meant was that just as the camel cannot pass through the physical eye of a physical needle without the miraculous intervention by God, so a wealthy man cannot enter the Kingdom of God without the miraculous intervention by God. Wealth is a blessing to those who use it properly (see 1 Tim. 6:17-19).

“We have left all to follow you.” Really? Did Peter really leave *everything* behind to follow Jesus? The gospels are clear that he still possessed a house (Mk. 1:29) that was occupied by his mother-in-law and presumably by his four daughters, as well as a boat

313. Cited by Hansen, “The Rich Young Ruler and the Wandering Rabbi.” 13-14.

(Mk. 3:9; 4:1). Clearly his statement was not an absolute literal interpretation and Jesus never remarked about it. His statement was understood however, in the context that he renounced the comforts of a home and family along the Sea of Galilee as well as the security and financial rewards of a prosperous fishing business.

12.04.03 Mk. 10:32-34; Lk. 18:34 (See also Mt. 10:17-19) Road to Jerusalem

DEATH FORETOLD THIRD TIME

Mk. ³² They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. They were astonished, but those who followed Him were afraid. Taking the Twelve aside again, He began to tell them the things that would happen to Him.

³³ “Listen! We are going up to Jerusalem. The Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn Him to death. Then they will hand Him over to the Gentiles, ³⁴ and they will mock Him, spit on Him, flog Him, and kill Him, and He will rise after three days.”

Lk. ³⁴ They understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.

Jesus again warned His disciples of His coming death, but they still did not comprehend what He was talking about. He knew that the imminent crucifixion would shake them to the core. To prepare them, He told them for the third time that He was about to be betrayed, He would die, and after three days would rise from the grave. This was an unusual statement because it was *not* the cultural norm to say something of this nature directly. He did not declare, “Within a month I will fulfill such-and-such prophecies of the Old Testament.” That would have been totally inappropriate, even though modern students would prefer to see such a pointed statement. Yet, He did make the point, which the disciples failed to comprehend. He had performed so many profound miracles they simply could not understand how He could be killed. Their lack of understanding of the preceding discussion is demonstrated by the following conversation in Matthew and Mark:

12.04.04 Mt. 20:20-21; Mk. 10:35-45

MEN OF SELFISH HONOR - JAMES AND JOHN

Mt. ²⁰ Then the mother of Zebedee's sons approached Him with her sons. She knelt down to ask Him for something. ²¹ "What do you want?" He asked her.

"Promise," she said to Him, "that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right and the other on Your left, in Your kingdom."

Mk. ³⁵ Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, approached Him and said, "Teacher, we want You to do something for us if we ask You."

³⁶ "What do you want Me to do for you?" He asked them.

³⁷ They answered Him, "Allow us to sit at Your right and at Your left in Your glory."

³⁸ But Jesus said to them, "You don't know what you're asking. Are you able to drink the cup I drink or to be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"

³⁹ "We are able," they told Him.

Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink, and you will be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with. ⁴⁰ But to sit at My right or left is not Mine to give; instead, it is for those it has been prepared for." ⁴¹ When the other 10 disciples heard this, they began to be indignant with James and John.

⁴² Jesus called them over and said to them, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles dominate them, and their men of high positions exercise power over them. ⁴³ But it must not be like that among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first among you must be a slave to all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life — a ransom for many."

Mark 10:35-45 and 9:33-37 are parallel passages of discussions that occurred at different times. Both predict the death of Jesus, discuss the meaning of true greatness in God's kingdom, and emphasize how undiscerning the disciples were. The latter part is quite interesting as it authenticates the gospel as genuine. If the book of Mark was a created work by later editorial Christians to enhance their religion, as some critics claim, they would never have written the critical comments about the disciples that are so evident in this gospel.

As previously stated, honor and respect were high values in this culture. This is evident in

the wedding banquet parables. In this case, the seating arrangement is often thought to be of a selfish attitude. However, Jesus never said there would *not* be a seating order at His table. Rather, those who desire to be the greatest will need to be servant to all and will need to be humble in attitude. The culture, however, demanded a precise seating arrangement and Jesus did not refute it. What He said without words, was there will be a seating order based on an arrangement different than what the disciples thought, namely, that of humble service to the King of kings. Note that there was a seating order at the Last Supper.

“The mother of Zebedee’s sons.” The mother of Zebedee’s sons has been criticized for making this request. She was the sister of the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus. Or in other words, she was the aunt of Jesus. In this culture where honor and age were highly valued, a woman, especially a woman of age, could often ask sensitive questions that others could not.³¹⁴

“That these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right and the other on Your left.”

Sitting on either side of a king would strongly suggest the honored person would also share the king’s power and prestige, especially if her sons were His cousins. Such a request in ancient times was quite normal, especially in families of royalty.³¹⁵ But Jesus never spoke of a future government; never spoke of any military organization, and did not propose any laws of His new society. So He recognized that the statement was made out of ignorance, because no one at this point could comprehend His concept of the Kingdom of God or the difficulties He would have to endure. Anyone sitting beside a king was also obligated to share in the difficulties and hardships of being a monarch. It was believed that ranking was initially a matter of respect and wisdom given to those who were honored for their age and wisdom.

When the patriarch enters, everyone rises and does not sit down until he says to them, “Sit down.” And when the head of the court enters, they set up for him two rows, one on one side and one on the other side, through which he goes, and he sits down in his place.

Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 7.8

314. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 308.

315. See Lk. 14:7-14 Banquet Place of Honor 12.02.05.

And on what account does one sit in rank and age at his right hand? Because of the honor owing to age.

Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 8.1

The Essenes believed that there was a clearly defined seating order, which clearly reflected a person's relationship in God's order. This opinion may have been prevalent throughout the Jewish culture and therefore, reflected in this biblical passage. Precisely whatever was in the minds of those in the biblical passage is unknown to the modern reader. Yet it is safe to presume that people in general believed that there was a proverbial "pecking order," as described in the following Dead Sea Scrolls.

They shall act in this way year after year, all the days of Belial's dominion. The priests shall enter the Rule foremost, one behind the other, according to their spirits. And the Levites shall enter after them. In third place all the people shall enter the Rule, one after another, in thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, so that all the children of Israel may know their standing in God's Community in conformity with the eternal plan. And no one shall move down from his rank nor move up from the place of his lot.

Dead Sea Scroll Fragment, 1QS 2.19-23

When God will have engendered (the Priest-) Messiah, he shall come [at] the head of the whole congregation of Israel with all [his brethren, the sons] of Aaron the Priests, [those called] to the assembly, the men of renown; and they shall sit [before him, each man] in the order of his dignity. And then [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. And before them shall sit all the heads of [family of the congregation], and the wise men of [the holy congregation,] each in the order of his dignity.

Dead Sea Scroll Fragment, 1Q28a, Column 2³¹⁶

316. Translation by Stephen D. Ricks of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Provo, Utah. Because the Dead Sea Scrolls are 2,000 years old or older, portions of papyrus are at times missing and the translators attempt to insert the lost letters and words which are in brackets.

<http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/books/?bookid=120&chapid=1438> Retrieved October 10, 2013. See also Dead Sea Scroll 1QSa 2:5-10 as referenced by Kenneth Bailey in *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 321, citing Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*. (1975 ed.) 121.

The response by Jesus is two fold:

1. He notes that they do not realize that suffering will be part of their future, if they will have a part of His ministry.
2. In addition, the kingdom of God will be one that is opposite of the world's system. Therefore, they have no clue as to what will be in store in their future.

“Are you able to drink the cup.” The term *cup* (*poterion* 4221)³¹⁷ in an expression or figure of speech indicating that “I” will share in someone’s misfortune and sorrowful fate (i.e. sin). There have been two major misunderstandings concerning “the cup.”

1. Some have said Jesus referred to His physical death. Not so, see John 10:17; Luke 19:10; Philippians 2:8; Hebrews 10:5-9.
2. Others have said Jesus referred to his premature death. Not so, see Luke 22:46; John 10:18.

As is explained, Jesus referred to the wrath of God and spiritual death that was about to fall upon Him. The phrase **“the cup”** has more than a single meaning.

1. It is a metaphor for the life experiences that one will have as the result of being a committed follower of Jesus. Those experiences may be good or bad,³¹⁸ but in this case, it reflects upon the coming suffering.³¹⁹
2. In Mark 14:32-36 it is symbolic of God’s wrath for the sin of humanity that Jesus bore; the baptism of persecution they will face is another metaphor.³²⁰

In Old Testament days, the cup of wine was a metaphor of God’s pending judgment for rebellion and sin.³²¹ Later Jesus referred to the cup He would drink in reference to carrying the sins of humanity to the cross (Mk. 10:45; 14:36).³²² In this passage (vv. 38-39), the cup refers to the persecution that His disciples would face. A few decades later

317. Vine, “Cup.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:141.

318. Barclay, “Mark.” 255.

319. See Ps. 75:8; Isa 57:17.

320. Gen. 6-8; Isa. 30:27-28; Jon. 2:2-6; Ps. 18:4-5; 2 Sam. 22:5-6.

321. Isa. 51:17-23; Ps. 75:8; Jer. 25:15-28; 49:12; 51:7.

322. *New International Version* Study Bible footnote on Mk. 10:38.

His half-brother, James, would be the first to be martyred (Acts 12:2). However, some messianic scholars say this phrase refers to wedding imagery, meaning that being joined with Jesus will mean similar trials and tribulations in life as He was about to experience.

“Give His life – a ransom for many.” The Greek preposition *for* means *instead of*, or a *substitute for*, or *in place of*. The word *ransom* refers to the monies paid to purchase freedom for a slave.³²³ This phrase makes the verse one of the outstanding theological passages in Mark’s book and was another prophecy (Isa. 52:13 and 53:12) fulfilled by Jesus.

12.04.04.Q1 How can Matthew 20:20 be reconciled with Mark 10:35?

In Matthew's account, the mother of James and John approached Jesus to ask him for a position for her sons in the new kingdom. Mark, on the other hand, does not mention the mother; he only records that it was the two disciples who came to Jesus to make the same request. In this culture, there was no difference between a requester and his agent – the same issue with the centurion and his servant. All too often attention is paid to the origin of the question rather than the response given by Jesus.

12.04.05 Mk. 10:46-51; Lk. 18:42-43 (See also Mt. 20:29-34) Jericho

BLIND BARTIMAEUS HEALED

Mk. ⁴⁶ They came to Jericho. And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a large crowd, Bartimaeus (the son of Timaeus), a blind beggar, was sitting by the road. ⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out, “Son of David, Jesus, have mercy on me!” ⁴⁸ Many people told him to keep quiet, but he was crying out all the more, “Have mercy on me, Son of David!”

⁴⁹ Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.”

So they called the blind man and said to him, “Have courage! Get up; He’s calling for you.” ⁵⁰ He threw off his coat, jumped up, and came to Jesus.

⁵¹ Then Jesus answered him, “What do you want Me to do for you?”

323. Earle, *Word Meanings in the New Testament*. 95-96.

“Rabbouni,” the blind man told Him, “I want to see!”

Lk. ⁴² “Receive your sight!” Jesus told him. “Your faith has healed you.” ⁴³ Instantly he could see, and he began to follow Him, glorifying God. All the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

The ministry of Jesus was filled with ironies. The rich young man did not perceive the identity of Jesus, but the blind man did. In this case, Jesus again fulfilled the prophetic words of Isaiah (35:5) when He said that the eyes would be opened. In fact, this miracle has been called a doublet because of the similar account in Matthew 9:27-31. In that narrative beggars were permitted in limited areas of the temple. Usually they were near the entrance of a “holy place” such as the temple gate, on along the road leading to the temple or a synagogue.³²⁴ But in this case, it appears that Bartimaeus may have been waiting for Jesus to walk by on His way to Jerusalem.

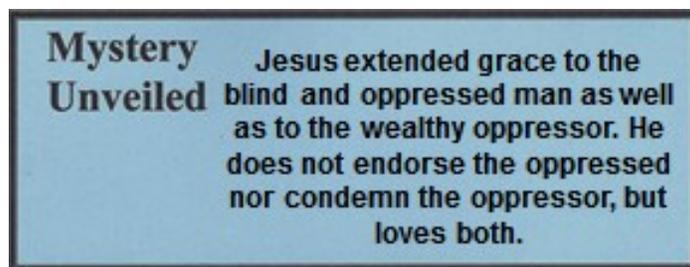
While the Bartimaeus passage is generally treated as a “stand-alone” narrative, in reality it should be in conjunction with the famed tax collector of Jericho – Zacchaeus. The reason is that both men were clearly alluded to in Ecclesiastes 4:1, an Old Testament book that is seldom referred to as having any prophetic significance relative to Jesus. Notice that the author, who most likely was King Solomon, made a reference to the tears of the *oppressed* and the power of the *oppressor* – and there was no one to comfort either one. Fast-forward a thousand years and Jesus meets Bartimaeus, who is *oppressed* by his blindness, and Zacchaeus, who is the *oppressor* agent of Rome. Now for the words of Solomon:

Again, I observed all the acts of oppression being done under the sun. Look at the tears of those who are oppressed; they have no one to comfort them. Power is with those who oppress them; they have no one to comfort them.

Ecclesiastes 4:1

Bartimaeus had spiritual sight, Zacchaeus was spiritually blind; Bartimaeus was physically blind, Zacchaeus had physical sight. Jesus healed them both.

324. 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) Jesus also met a blind man at the Pool of Siloam, another place considered to be “holy.”



Into this paradox steps Jesus. He did what only He could do – touch the point of need for both men who were at opposite ends of life. Blindness vs. health; poverty vs wealth; weakness vs. power; but both needed Jesus. Zacchaeus was hated for being a tax collector and Bartimaeus was among the downtrodden of society – both were despised by their fellow Jews; but both received the gift of Jesus. Both had their lives radically changed.

“Son of David, Jesus.” This was a profound statement because Bartimaeus recognized Jesus as the true messiah. There were many descendants of the famous king, even the great Hillel was a Davidic descendant.³²⁵ But he spoke specifically of the expected Son of David who would bring freedom to Israel. He also knew the prophecies of Isaiah that the messiah would bring sight to the blind.³²⁶ So when he called Jesus by the biblical title, “Son of David,” he sent fear into the leading Pharisees and Sadducees. The irony is that those who were ordained to represent the people before an eternal God chose to remain blind. Bartimaeus chose sight and vision.³²⁷

Jesus and His disciples arrived at Jericho either in the evening of Thursday, Nisan 7, or Friday morning, Nisan 8. This beautiful city was located at an oasis about two miles from the ruins of a smaller city of the same name that was destroyed by Joshua. The new Jericho was known for its fragrant roses and palm trees. The springs that gushed forth a constant stream of water were in stark contrast to the surrounding hot Judean Desert and the near-by Dead Sea. Jericho was an import-export city situated inland from the Jordan River. For centuries water from the Jericho springs had been distributed by irrigation

325. Babylonian Talmud, *Juchas*. 19.2; Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:35.

326. There were four kinds of people that were considered as good as dead, and it was believed that in all four situations their illness was a divine judgment. They were the blind, the leper, the poor, and the childless.

327. 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. 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.

ditches to nearby palm groves, vineyards and farmlands that included the best balsam trees used for medical purposes. Traveling caravans stopped at Jericho, paid the required toll tax, and continued on to their destinations. Since it was much warmer than Jerusalem, the Hasmoneans built a winter palace there in the second century B.C. that was later remodeled by Herod the Great. The temple Sadducees, who were descendants of the Hasmoneans, also enjoyed luxurious winter homes near the desert springs.³²⁸ Many beggars congregated along the main street to beg for money as pilgrims in festival caravans went to Jerusalem.³²⁹ And it was in this opulent community where Jesus met a tax collector by the name of Zacchaeus, who welcomed Jesus to his home (Lk. 19:9).

12.04.05.Q1 How does one explain the two discrepancies (two cities of Jericho and two blind men) in Matthew 20:29-34, Mark 10:46-51, and Luke 18:42-43?

There are two issues to consider in these passages:

1. Matthew and Mark record that Jesus was leaving Jericho while Luke said He was entering it. Clearly, someone has to be wrong? Right?
2. How many beggars were there? Luke recorded that Jesus met the blind man as He approached Jericho, while Matthew said He met two blind men as they left the city. Mark, on the other hand, simply stated that the name of the blind man was Bartimaeus. Some critics have said there is an obvious conflict.

Concerning the number of cities: This issue is resolved by understanding that there were two cities by the name of Jericho.³³⁰ The first one was destroyed centuries before Jesus. The second one is located about two miles from the first. It was built in the second century B.C. by the Hasmoneans and later expanded and enhanced by Herod the Great.³³¹ He made it into a city with surprising beauty, creating the ideal vacation destination and

328. Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.4.2; *Wars* 4.8.2-3.

329. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 59; Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 2:278; Farrar, *The Life of Christ*. 364.

330. In this desert oasis in centuries past the Chaldeans captured King Zedekiah (2 Kg. 25:5) and during the Maccabean Revolt the Syrians attempted to establish a military outpost there (*1 Macc.* 9:50). The military stronghold came under Hasmonean control at the end of the Revolt, but was destroyed by the Roman General Pompey in 63 B.C.

331. Byers, "On the Jericho Road." 43-44. See also Zondervan's *New International Version Archaeological Study Bible*. (2005 ed.). 1646.

travel rest area.³³² The answer to the question, in what some have called a biblical error, was explained by the Jewish historian Josephus. He made reference to “the old city” that was destroyed by Joshua, but was near the new town of the same name.

“... Notwithstanding which, there is a fountain by Jericho; that runs plentifully and is very fit for watering the ground. It rises near the old city which Joshua, the son of Nun, the general of the Hebrews, took the first of all the cities of the land of Canaan by right of war.”

Josephus, *Wars* 4.8.3 (459)

The gospel writers presented their accounts from two different perspectives, so there is no conflict.

Concerning the number of beggars: Matthew, being the former accountant and tax collector, would have been more detail-oriented in this matter, whereas Mark and Luke would have presented the story of an individual named Bartimaeus. In essence, Matthew gave the legal accounting of two blind men Jesus encountered, while Luke and Mark simply referenced the encounter of the most prominent person.

In the modern legal system, such differences are not acceptable. However, in the biblical era, reporting an account in this manner was deemed normal and accurate. The ancients focused on the theme or purpose of the encounter, not as much on the details as is common today. An alternative view is that the blind man met Jesus as He approached the ancient city (as per Luke), the two walked together through the town, and as they left the city Jesus healed him (as per Matthew). Consequently, there is no need to believe that there is a contradiction.³³³

Finally, on a cultural side point, blind persons were given special clothing to wear, which identified them as being blind. This permitted people passing by to offer aid when needed, and chariot drivers took extra precaution when approaching them. When Jesus healed him, “**he threw off his coat,**” a signal to the public of his healing, and he rejoiced in Jesus.

332. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 715; The new Jericho was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. For more information, see Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.3.3 and *Wars* 1.22.2.

333. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 364.

12.04.06 Lk. 19:1-10 The New Testament Era Jericho

ZACCHAEUS RECEIVES JESUS

¹ He entered Jericho and was passing through. ² There was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. ³ He was trying to see who Jesus was, but he was not able because of the crowd, since he was a short man. ⁴ So running ahead, he climbed up a sycamore tree to see Jesus, since He was about to pass that way. ⁵ When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down because today I must stay at your house.”

⁶ So he quickly came down and welcomed Him joyfully. ⁷ All who saw it began to complain, “He’s gone to lodge with a sinful man!”

⁸ But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “Look, I’ll give half of my possessions to the poor, Lord! And if I have extorted anything from anyone, I’ll pay back four times as much!”

⁹ “Today salvation has come to this house,” Jesus told him, “because he too is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost.”

“**Crowd.**” Luke did not describe these people as an ordinary crowd. Evidently the expectation and tension was high because he used the Greek word *ochlos* (3793), meaning *a confused throng*.³³⁴ The fact many present were pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem who expected Jesus to announce His Messiahship at the temple simply added to the dynamics of the moment.

The “**sycamore tree,**” a/k/a the “sycamore-fig tree,” (Gk. *sukomorea* 4809) is, in fact, an Egyptian fig tree (*Ficus sycomorus L*).³³⁵ It has leaves like a mulberry tree but fruit like a fig tree.³³⁶ It is not related to the American sycamore or English maple, although both are at times identified to be this biblical tree. A point of interest is that the gospel writer indicated that Zacchaeus was of short stature and, therefore, had to climb a tree to see

334. Vine, “Crowd.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:139.

335. Hareuveni, *Tree and Shrub in Our Biblical Heritage*. 41, 83.

336. Vine, “Sycamore.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:614.

Jesus. The sycamore normally pictured with this verse has high branches, which would have been impossible for any short person to climb. The Egyptian fig tree, however, has low branches, permitting an easy climb.

Few things in Israel are as weird as this tree. While it originated in Egypt, it grows well in Israel but has a little problem – it is handicapped and needs help to pollinate its fruit. This is primarily because the bee needed to pollinate does not live in Israel. Therefore, the fruit does not become edible until a bee makes a hole in the fruit to lay its eggs. The eggs hatch and the young bees fly away. Only then will the fruit ripen. But because the bee does not live in this land, for centuries people like the prophet Amos had to climb Egyptian-fig trees (Amos 7:14) and prick small holes in thousands of little green figs so that other local bees could lay their eggs in the holes of the fruit.³³⁷ That process enabled the figs to ripen. Now that's weird!

“I’ll pay back four times the amount.” This was far more than the twenty percent the Law of Moses required (Lev. 5:16; Num. 5:7). Clearly, he had the “fruit of repentance” John the Baptist preached about (Lk. 3:8). The name “Zacchaeus” means *pure, just, or innocent*³³⁸ and he may not have lived up to his name until he met Jesus. But he said that he would give up to half of his possessions to the poor and pay a four-fold restoration (see 12.04.06.Q1 below) to anyone whom he had cheated. There are two points to consider here.

1. It is well understood from New Testament context that salvation comes only by faith, not by the gifts given to the poor or to any other acceptable cause. Yet anyone who has experienced a sincere transformation of life will immediately be concerned for the welfare of others, as was demonstrated by Zacchaeus.
2. Since the tax collector was willing to restore up to four times any ill-gotten gains, he evidently had made a number of honest and wise financial investments or he would quickly have been bankrupt. Therefore, the negative attitude toward all tax collectors may be one of jealousy as well as the corruption of many (most?) tax collectors.

The four times payment for having done wrong may have been a cultural standard at the time, since Josephus mentioned it.

337. Bees that have been brought into Israel from Egypt and Africa for pollination died, making the insect relocation a failure.

338. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:408.

The thief shall restore fourfold, and that if he had 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)

12.04.06.Q1 On what biblical principle did Zacchaeus offer to pay back four times anything he may have taken unjustly (Lk. 19:8)?

Most Bible readers would consider his offer to be quite generous; going far above and beyond what was required. However, Zacchaeus was doing precisely what the Old Testament law required. There were three levels of restitution for wrongs committed:

1. When a person confessed to having committed fraud, he was to make full restitution plus add twenty percent to his victim (Lev. 6:1-5; Num. 5:5-7).
2. If a thief was apprehended, he had to pay double of what he stole (Ex. 22:4, 7).
3. However, if a man stole *what was essential* and *demonstrated no pity* to his victim, he was required to pay back fourfold (Ex. 22:1; 2 Sam. 12:6). His decision reflects his passion to obey God's Word literally, and he lived up to the meaning of his name.

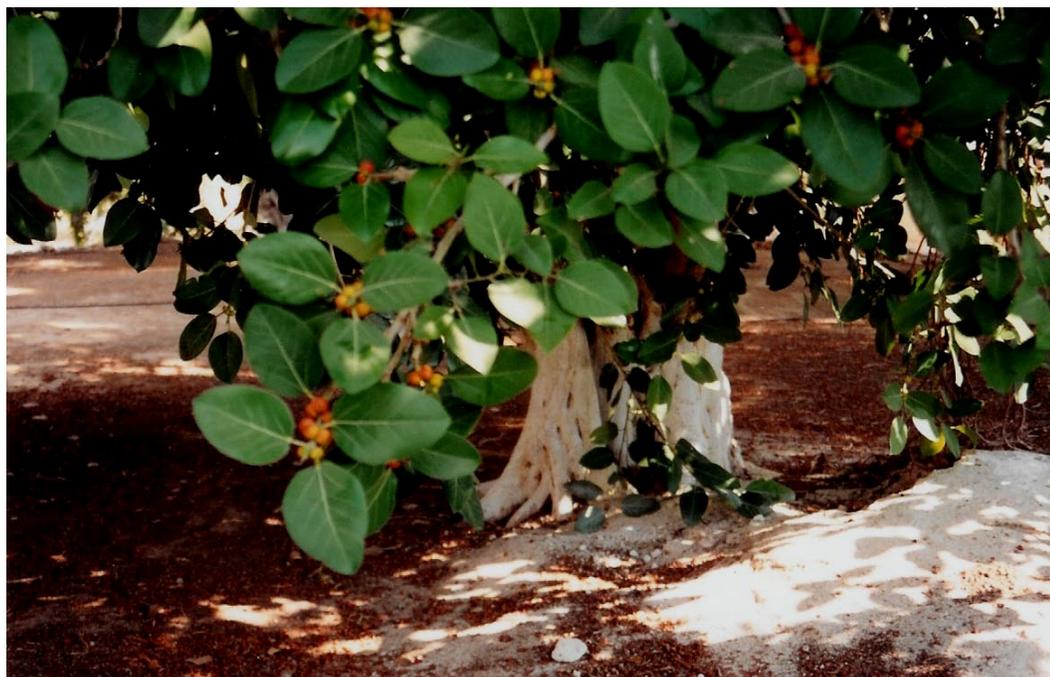
Whether Zacchaeus demonstrated pity to his victims may not be the point here as much as the fact that the general public perceived tax collectors as having no pity and dedicated to greed. He not only desired to be right with God, but also right with his neighbors. Jesus affirmed his decision that was based on an Old Testament law. The greater question might be, what does that mean for us today?

“Today salvation has come to this house.” This phrase is typical of the puns or word plays found in the Bible. Not only did the message of Jesus proclaim salvation, but His name, *Yeshua*, in Hebrew means *salvation*.³³⁹ The irony is that before Zacchaeus had any opportunity to repent or to invite Jesus, Jesus invited Himself to the home of the tax

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

collector – and that was without showing any kind of concern for Zacchaeus’s traitorous lifestyle, his reputation and possible immoral behavior. The gospel narrative leaves the reader wondering what their conversation was about.

“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost.” This is the theme of the life of Jesus. It never changed, but was presented through parables, miracles, teachings, His lifestyle, and finally, His death and resurrection. The theme of Luke’s gospel is that Jesus came to redeem humanity from the ravages of sin. It is noteworthy that the term *seek* is from the Hebrew word *daras*, which means more than to *search*, but to *search with care and diligence*.³⁴⁰



12.04.06.A. AN EGYPTIAN FIG, OR “SYCAMORE” TREE. This fig tree is also known as a sycamore tree, although the two species are not at all related. In fact, the sycamore does not even grow in Israel and the Egyptian fig seeds were planted in Israel by migrating birds. Zacchaeus, who was a man of small stature, could not have climbed the tall American or European sycamore tree because the lowest branches would have been beyond his reach. However, he had no problem climbing the Egyptian fig tree. Photograph by the author.

340. Levy, *The Ruin and Restoration of Israel*. 134.

12.04.07 Lk. 19:11-28**PARABLE OF GOD'S ACCOUNTABILITY**

¹¹ As they were listening to this, He went on to tell a parable because He was near Jerusalem, and they thought the kingdom of God was going to appear right away.

¹² Therefore He said: "A nobleman traveled to a far country to receive for himself authority to be king and then returned." ¹³ He called 10 of his slaves, gave them 10 minas, and told them, 'Engage in business until I come back.'

¹⁴ "But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We don't want this man to rule over us!'

¹⁵ "At his return, having received the authority to be king, he summoned those slaves he had given the money to, so he could find out how much they had made in business. ¹⁶ The first came forward and said, 'Master, your mina has earned 10 more minas.'

¹⁷ "'Well done, good slave!' he told him. 'Because you have been faithful in a very small matter, have authority over 10 towns.'

¹⁸ "The second came and said, 'Master, your mina has made five minas.'

¹⁹ "So he said to him, 'You will be over five towns.'

²⁰ "And another came and said, 'Master, here is your mina. I have kept it hidden away in a cloth ²¹ because I was afraid of you, for you're a tough man: you collect what you didn't deposit and reap what you didn't sow.'

²² "He told him, 'I will judge you by what you have said, you evil slave! If you knew I was a tough man, collecting what I didn't deposit and reaping what I didn't sow,

²³ why didn't you put my money in the bank? And when I returned, I would have collected it with interest!' ²⁴ So he said to those standing there, 'Take the mina away from him and give it to the one who has 10 minas.'

²⁵ "But they said to him, 'Master, he has 10 minas.'

26 “I tell you, that to everyone who has, more will be given; and from the one who does not have, even what he does have will be taken away. 27 But bring here these enemies of mine, who did not want me to rule over them, and slaughter them in my presence.”

28 When He had said these things, He went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

In this parable, the nobleman invested ten minas with each of his ten slaves, or servants. A mina was equal to 100 drachmas or denarii, which in turn represented a hundred days of labor. Therefore, 100 minas was a significant investment and Jesus only responded to the investment results of three servants.³⁴¹ The key figure is, of course, the third servant who failed to earn anything because he not only feared the nobleman, but had no trust or respect for him either.

“They thought the kingdom of God was going to appear right away.” The disciples were convinced that Jesus would be the king of a physical Kingdom of God on earth within a few days and, in some manner, the corruption of the temple aristocrats and Roman tyranny would end. This profound statement is clear evidence that, after spending more than three years with the Him, they still thought He was some kind of a political-messiah. Little wonder then, seeing Him hanging on a cross was a horrific shock. The most unimaginable event was about to become their worst nightmare. Israel had rejected Jesus; therefore, the millennial kingdom would have to be postponed and would not be instituted until after He returns at some future date. For this reason, Jesus told them a parable of a man of noble birth, a story figure with whom they were quite familiar.

It is another story that reflected recent Jewish history,³⁴² and Jesus didn't have to get very far into it until everyone recognized it as such. **“A nobleman traveled to a far country to receive for himself authority to be king, and then returned.”** Many of the 38 parables Jesus told were taken from daily life experiences to illustrate various spiritual lessons. In this parable, the king travels off to another land to receive his crown and kingship. It sounds almost mythological, for who ever heard of a king traveling outside of his kingdom to be crowned as the supreme monarch? Yet this is exactly what occurred with Archelaus while Jesus was still an infant living in Egypt with His parents.³⁴³ This story was of such incredible significance to Israel's social-political environment that

341. See Appendix 20.

342. See also 12.03.08.X.

343. Bible historians have long connected this parable with the life of Archelaus and his trip to Rome to attain the title of “King of the Jews.” It was typical of Jesus to frame His parables to everyday life and events that His audience clearly understood. See Geikie, *The Life and Works of Christ*. 2:388-89.

Josephus wrote a lengthy and detailed account.³⁴⁴ A background summary is found below, followed by the historical narrative by Josephus.

Herod the Great was so cruel, that at his death the Jews and Arabs revolted, believing they could achieve freedom. But in response, the Roman General Varus came south from his district capital in Damascus, because Israel was a province within the region of Damascus, and crushed the revolt.³⁴⁵ It was a time of severe social and political tensions, as the Arabs burned and plundered several villages including Sampho and Arus. By the time Varus restored order, many were killed and 2,000 Jews were crucified.³⁴⁶

In the meantime, Rome had to approve the last will and testament of Herod and that required Herod's son Archelaus, to sail to Rome. When peace was restored, Archelaus sailed for Rome where he requested the title of "king." However, when he arrived, much to his surprise, he found a delegation of his own subjects waiting for the opportunity to address the Senate. These Jews strongly opposed the title and the Senate agreed to grant Archelaus a lesser title. Josephus preserved the account.

...but as for Archelaus, he had new sources of trouble come upon him at Rome, on occasions following: for an embassy (entourage) of the Jews was come to Rome, Varus having permitted the nation to send it, that they might petition for the liberty of living by their own laws. Now the number of [Jewish] ambassadors that were sent by the authority of the nation was fifty, to which they joined above eight thousand of the Jews that were at Rome already. Hereupon Caesar assembled his friends and the chief men among the Romans in the temple of Apollo, which he had built at a vast charge, whither the ambassadors came and a multitude of the Jews that were there already, came with them as did also Archelaus and his friends.

But as for the several kinsmen which Archelaus had, they would not join themselves with him, out of their hatred to him; and yet they thought it too gross a thing for them to assist the ambassadors [against him], as supposing it would be a disgrace to them in Caesar's opinion to think of thus acting in opposition to a man of their own kindred. Philip also was come hither out of

344. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.9.1-3.

345. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.10.9 (290-294).

346. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.10.10 (295).

Syria, by the persuasion of Varus, with this principal intention to assist his brother [Archelaus]: for Varus was his great friend, but still so, that if there should any change happen in the form of government (which Varus suspected there would), and if any distribution should be made on account of the number that desired the liberty of living by their own laws, that he might not be disappointed, but might have his share in it....

Now upon the liberty that was given to the Jewish ambassadors to speak, they who hoped to obtain a dissolution of kingly government betook themselves to accuse Herod of his iniquities That Herod had put such abuses upon them as a wild beast would not have put on them, if he had power given him to rule over us; and that although their nation had passed through many subversions and alterations of government, their history have no account of any calamity they had ever been under that could be compared with this which Herod had brought upon their nation.

That it was for this reason that they thought they might justly and gladly salute Archelaus as king, upon this supposition, that whosoever should be set over their kingdom, he would be more mild to them than Herod had been; and that they had joined with him in the mourning for his father, in order to gratify him, and were ready to oblige him in other points also, if they could meet with any degree of moderation from him: but that he seemed to be afraid lest he should not be deemed Herod's own son; and so, without delay, he immediately let the nation understand his meaning and this before his dominion was well established, since the power of disposing of it belonged to Caesar, who could either give it to him or not as he pleased.

That he had given a specimen of his future virtue to his subjects, and with that kind of moderation and good administration he would govern them, by that his first action which concerned them, his own citizens, and God himself, also, when he made the slaughter of three thousand of his own countrymen at the temple. How, then could they avoid their just hatred of him, who, to the rest of his barbarity, has added this as one of our crimes, that we have opposed and contradicted him in the exercise of his authority?....

When Caesar had heard these pleadings, but a few days afterwards he appointed Archelaus, not indeed to be king of the whole country, but

ethnarch³⁴⁷ of one half that which had been subject to Herod, and promised to give him the royal dignity hereafter, if he governed his part virtuously....

Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.11.1-4 (Excerpts from 299-321)³⁴⁸

It is an irony of history that Herod the Great made the same trip to Rome in 40 B.C. to acquire the same appointment. He received it, but his son Archelaus didn't. Being angered over this humiliating event, Archelaus was determined to punish his subjects, and proved to be an abusive dictator worse than his father. For this reason, Mary and Joseph were told, upon their return from Egypt, not to return to Bethlehem but rather, go to Nazareth. As a result, he was humiliated and spilled out his vengeance upon his subjects. He raised taxes and those who failed to pay were rewarded with utmost cruelty. Ten years later he was removed from his position by the Roman Senate.³⁴⁹

In Luke 19:11-28 Jesus took this historical event and made it into a teaching parable and added His own instruction to it. He wanted the disciples to understand that He would not go to Jerusalem to be crowned as the political-messiah, as some were expecting. Rather, He would be leaving them to return at some future time. Upon that future return, Jesus expects to find His servants fruitful and productive in the work they were entrusted to complete.

This is an example of a historical event that was molded into a parable to teach a spiritual lesson. The audience immediately understood the story of the king and they were able to connect with the teaching of Jesus. Notice the parallels:

(Lk. 19:12) A nobleman traveled to a far country to receive the authority to be king.

Josephus: Archelaus sailed to Rome to receive his kingship

(Lk. 19:14) But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We don't want this man to rule over us!'

Josephus: Jewish ambassadors went to Caesar and said they did not want Archelaus to be their king.

347. The position of ethnarch was a lower ranking than that of a king, and consequently, the change was extremely humiliating to Archelaus.

348. Parenthesis added for clarification by Whiston, ed.

349. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.9.3-7; 17.11.1-4; *Wars* 2.2.1-3; Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 367.

(Lk. 19:15) At his return, having received the authority to be king.

Josephus: Archelaus received the authority to be king without the title of “king.” He functioned as a king but with a less dignified title.

Clearly Jesus once again displayed Himself to be the Master Teacher.

“Well done, good slave.” Some translations read, “Well done, my good and faithful servant.” These are words that every believer desires to hear someday from our Lord. Today, all too often, this parable is restricted to financial matters, but in reality, it covers all aspects of life.

Jesus, His disciples, and many others, left the oasis village of Jericho that is about 1,000 feet below sea level, and began the arduous march up to the Holy City. Since Jerusalem is located centrally within the Central Mountain Range at 2,700 feet above sea level, for centuries Jewish poets and song writers cherished the phrase **“going up to Jerusalem.”** The phrase is often found in Jewish songs of ascent. In route, Jesus said Jerusalem was where many prophets were killed in centuries past, and the past was about to be repeated. Again He warned His enemies of their coming judgment and that His words would fall upon rebellious ears. He also taught that the Kingdom of God would not be a political sovereignty, but a holy lifestyle, where God rules each individual with a blessed reward for those who were faithful. Likewise, those who were hostile to His Word would be punished. As Jesus and the disciples walked to Jerusalem, in true Jewish custom, they would have sung the Psalm of Ascent (Ps. 118).³⁵⁰

<p>Mystery Unveiled</p>	<p>Jesus began and ended His public ministry by cleansing the temple, symbolizing the fact that He desires to dwell in a “temple,” cleansed by His blood.</p>
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At this point it is good to compare two similar parables. In Luke 19:11-28, the servant who kept the master’s money in a cloth (19:20) viewed his master as being less than honorable – so much so, that when an account was required, his master was very angry. It was a matter of self-fulfilling prophecy. Had he invested successfully, he would have received a similar blessing as the others. In Matthew 25:14-30 is a similar parable with the same theme; one where an individual chose to bury his investment money rather than invest it. The Mishnah states that this method of keeping money safe was common at this

350. Gilbrant, “Luke.” 569.

time.³⁵¹ But again the servant is described as being wicked not only because he failed to invest the funds, but he also saw his trusting master in a negative light.

12.04.08 Jn. 11:55-57 Nissan 8; March 31, A.D. 30.

ARREST PLANNED FOR PASSOVER

⁵⁵ The Jewish Passover was near, and many went up to Jerusalem from the country to purify themselves before the Passover. ⁵⁶ They were looking for Jesus and asking one another as they stood in the temple complex: “What do you think? He won’t come to the festival, will He?” ⁵⁷ The chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where He was, he should report it so they could arrest Him.

Caiaphas and his co-conspirators of the Sanhedrin planned to have Jesus executed. They continued to persuade the multitudes that Jesus was a demon-possessed imposter of the messiah. There were many messianic imposters³⁵² during the Roman occupation and they said that Jesus was another one of them.

A Jewish tradition said that when the messiah comes, He would announce His kingship from the temple steps during Passover. They feared what Jesus might say whenever He entered the temple. Consequently, they planned to capture Him secretly and have Him and Lazarus (Jn. 12:10) executed immediately after the festival.

Centuries later the Babylonian Talmud had the following commentary on Jesus. It did not deny that He performed miracles, but claimed He did so with demonic powers. In a negative manner, the Jews here admitted to the miracles He performed but they questioned His source of power.

He (*Yeshu Hannorzr*) shall be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Anyone who has anything to say in his favor, let him come forward and plead on his behalf. Anyone who knows where he is, let him declare it to the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem.³⁵³

The name *Yeshu Hannorzri* is the Hebrew for “Jesus the Nazarene.” The punishment of

351. Mishnah, *Baba Mesi’a* 3.11.

352. See Appendix 25.

353. Quoted by Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism*. 168-69.

stoning would have been the method of execution except that capital punishment was prohibited by the Romans decades earlier. The stoning of Stephen (Acts 7) was not a judicial act, but one of a riotous mob which included the Sanhedrin.

According to the Talmud, when there was to be a trial, the custom was for a court crier to go to the major cities and post an official handbill or make a public announcement in the marketplace of the upcoming trial. Jewish law required that there be forty days between the announcement and the coming trial. This was hardly the case concerning Jesus.³⁵⁴

12.04.08.Q1 What were the 12 reasons the Jewish leadership planned the death of Jesus?

There were many reasons why the Sadducees and leading Pharisees wanted Jesus removed from the national spotlight. And there would be three more after Jesus entered Jerusalem.³⁵⁵

1. He claimed to be the Son of God and have divine authority such as the right to forgive sin.
2. He failed to be the messiah they were expecting. The nationalistic Galilean Jews who did not accept Him were expecting a political-messiah who would overthrow the Romans. The Judean Jews who did not accept Him, including the leading Pharisees and Sadducees of Jerusalem, desired to keep the status quo with Roman occupation. They would not have accepted the political-messiah if they felt that he would be a threat to their lucrative religious businesses and positions.
3. Jesus “was human.” The Messiah, according to Daniel 7:13, would be *like* a man, and to the Jews this meant someone who would *not* be human, but in some mystical way, be superhuman. This individual would be expected to restore Israel to its glory days when it was an international superpower under King David. While Jesus did not fit this picture, thousands of common Jews did accept Him as their Messiah while the religious leaders rejected Him.
4. He held the Written Law in superior position to the Oral Law, which was directly opposite to the position held by the leading Pharisees.

354. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 2:169; Maier, *The First Easter*. 114.

355. See 13.01.04.

5. The Jewish leaders had created laws to circumvent biblical commands, and thereby justify their own selfishness and greed. Jesus challenged their commands as well as their cold hearts when they should have demonstrated mercy and justice for everyone, especially for the poor.
6. When they challenged Jesus in public, He made them look foolish by exposing the weakness of their argument or lack of knowledge.
7. Neither Jesus nor His disciples attended one of the recognized theological schools of Jerusalem. In fact, Jesus came from Nazareth, a disgusting town in the eyes of the aristocrats. The religious elite were far too proud to consider that mere fishermen disciples of Jesus could possibly be ordained of God to do anything worthwhile, much less be participants in miracles of healing and teach them anything about God.
8. Jesus was born of a virgin. Religious leaders said that was an impossibility and that He was born out of wedlock and, therefore, a sinner.
9. He ignored some of their purity laws when He associated with sinners, including some of the most despised people in the community.
10. Jesus healed on the Sabbath. There were numerous prohibitions for the Sabbath and healing violated one or more of these oral laws. The term *Sabbath* means *rest*³⁵⁶ but healing was redefined to mean *work*.
11. Jesus was said to cast out demons with the power of Beelzebub, the prince of demons, meaning Satan.³⁵⁷
12. Jesus was accused of blasphemy for no less than seven reasons.³⁵⁸

As stated previously, the upper echelon of the scribes, aristocratic Pharisees, and all of the Sadducees now functioned well together to protect their wealth and religious status. All were involved in an event of political-religious corruption during the days of Herod the Great according to Josephus, especially the Pharisees. For example, the daughter of Herod Antipas, Salome,³⁵⁹ made accusations against another woman in the royal court

356. Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.1.1.

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

358. For a listing, see 15.03.08.Q1 “What were the reasons the Jewish leaders accused Jesus of blasphemy?”

359. This is the Salome who requested the head of John the Baptist.

and accused her of “subsidizing the Pharisees” to oppose the king.³⁶⁰ The most corrupt of political figures in Rome would hardly be a match for various members of the Herodian dynasty, as John the Baptist had previously experienced. Now these religious leaders were cooperating with the Romans to rid themselves of Jesus.

The Jews carefully used the political environment to their advantage. They had rebelled against the Romans numerous times since 63 B.C. Yet they were good friends with their Roman overlords and they did not want to risk the loss of their status or comfortable lifestyles. They knew the political relationship between Pilate and Rome was strained to a breaking point. They knew Pilate attempted to please Caesar in every possible manner and believed that another Jewish revolt could possibly result in his loss of office. So they took advantage of Pilate’s predicament and used it to remove their “problem.” Therefore, Pilate was forced to appease them even though he strongly felt that Jesus was innocent of all charges. While this political issue was more of a Roman issue than a Jewish one, obviously the Sadducees used it to manipulate Pilate.

12.04.09 Jn. 12:1-2; Mt. 26:7b; Jn. 12:4-6; Mt.26:10-13; (Mk. 14:9) Bethany

MARY ANOINTS JESUS

Jn. ¹ Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus was, the one Jesus had raised from the dead. ² So they gave a dinner for Him there; Martha was serving them, and Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him.

Mt.^{7b} A woman approached Him with an alabaster jar of very expensive fragrant oil. She poured it on His head as He was reclining at the table.

Jn. ⁴ Then one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot^(F) (who was about to betray Him), said, ⁵“Why wasn’t this fragrant oil sold for 300 denarii and given to the poor?” ⁶ He didn’t say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief. He was in charge of the money-bag and would steal part of what was put in it.

Mt. ¹⁰ But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a noble thing for Me. ¹¹ You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me. ¹² By pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she has prepared Me for burial. ¹³ I assure you: Wherever this gospel

360. Josephus, *Wars* 1.29.2; Neusner, “Josephus and Pharisees.” 279.

is proclaimed in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told in memory of her.”

A cultural commentary is important to review at this point: In the history of the Jewish people, kings and priests were anointed in the coronation or dedication ceremony. These were individuals who were set apart and chosen by God for a special service. They were heavily anointed with olive oil that was perfumed with expensive spices that was placed not only on the head, but also on the clothing. This created an aroma that was noticed by everyone near the king, the priest, and later Jesus. The English word “Christ” comes from the Greek word *Christos*. The Hebrew equivalent is *Mashiach* from where the English word *Messiah* originated, and it means *the Anointed One*.³⁶¹ This adds significance to the anointing that Mary gave to Jesus.

Spikenard, a/k/a *nard*, was the expensive perfume used in this encounter. It was used for anointing in both religious and civic feasts and celebrations.³⁶² In this culture a woman would never do this, but she willingly broke cultural traditions because she was determined to honor Jesus.

12.04.09.Q1 How could Mary have afforded expensive perfume such as Indian Spikenard (Mt. 26:7)?

Women of wealth were rare in ancient times. Those privileged with high incomes generally were the wives of government officials, merchants or high priestly families, unless of course, they were expensive “call girls” for the rich and famous clients. Unfortunately, many scholars have implicated Mary to have been a prostitute, who may have been personally known to the religious leaders. However, she could have simply have been a wealthy woman who realized her need for salvation.

Mary brought “**an alabaster jar of very expensive fragrant oil**” for Jesus that was known by the full plant name of Indian Spikenard.³⁶³ Some translations read this phrase as, “pure, an expensive perfume.” Pliny the Elder said, “Perfumes are best kept in alabaster flasks” (13.4).³⁶⁴ While Jesus ministered to the poor and destitute, He was also

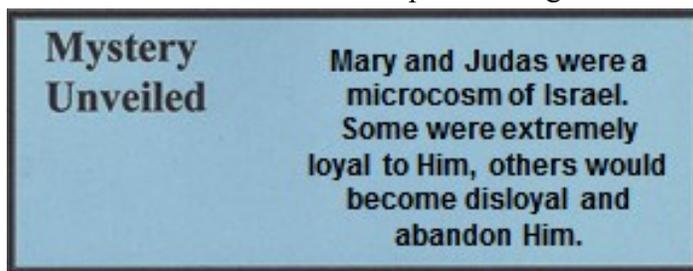
361. Spangler and Tverberg, *Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus*. 16.

362. Ex. 30:25-30; Josephus, *Antiquities* 3.8.6 (205) and 19.9.1 (358).

363. Farrarm, 326; Alexander, 14.

364. Ben-Dor, “Alabaster.” 1:75-76.

clearly interested in the rich and famous and, at times, without comment about their wealth. This was to be her last feast of fellowship with her good Friend and Savior.



“Because he was a thief.” No doubt all the disciples considered Judas to be the most trustworthy, since Jesus permitted him to be in charge of the financial affairs of the group. However, Jesus was evidently aware of his dishonesty and intentions, as evidenced by His foreknowledge of the coming betrayal. Yet He did not confront Judas on this issue. Jesus still loved him, wishing to win him into the kingdom. It is interesting that Judas, who knew that Jesus recognized the attitudes and thoughts of His critics, for some reason must have assumed that Jesus would not realize that he was going to betray Him.

“A noble thing.” This phrase is a Jewish idiom meaning she performed a great work; a great deed.³⁶⁵ Some scholars point to four narratives of Mary anointing Jesus, and concluding that these were the same event but written incorrectly in the Bible. The similar accounts found in Luke 7, Mark 14, and Matthew 26, bear some resemblance to the story of the anointing by Mary (there were several Mary’s) of Bethany found in John 12. Even though there are some similarities of all four accounts, the apparent differences between Luke 7 and Mark 14 are indicative of two separate events.³⁶⁶

Finally, on an interesting side note, critics in the past three or four centuries have often argued that the gospels were written two or three centuries after the events they describe. Then three small papyrus fragments were discovered that include sections of Matthew 26:7 and 10 and became known as the Magdalene Papyrus fragments. The discovery shocked many New Testament scholars because these are now dated to the first century.

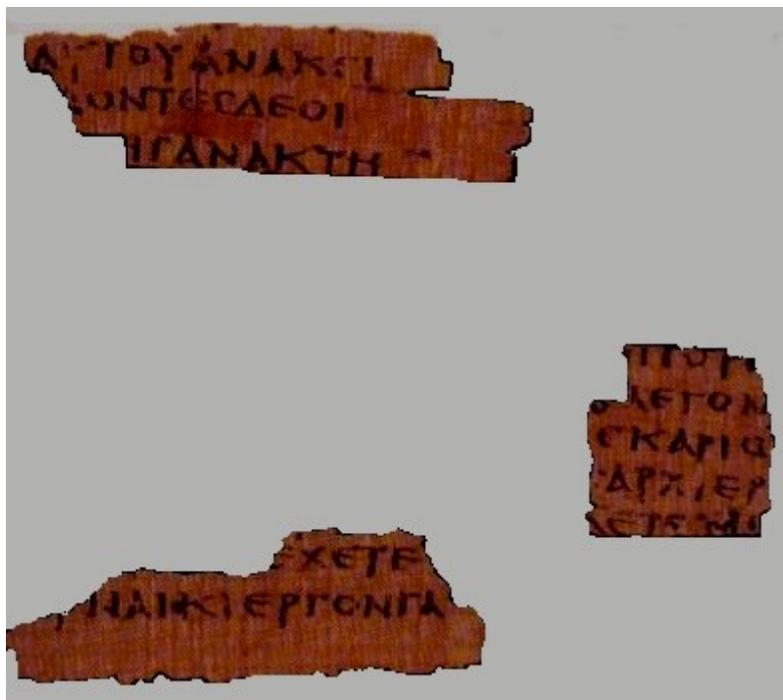
Researchers today have scientific resources and measuring instruments that were considered science fiction merely twenty years ago. For example, a scanning laser microscope can measure the height and depth of the ink upon layers of papyrus.³⁶⁷ In

365. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 356.

366. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 355-56.

367. Traditionally, scholars have had a wide range of opinions concerning the date of the Magdalen Papyrus. However, recent scholarship that applied laser technology has revealed identical writing styles with a copy of

fact, the composition of the ink can also be determined. The Magdalen papyrus was dated on the basis of physical evidence and letter style rather than literary analysis or historical suppositions.³⁶⁸ And that silences the critics!



12.04.09.A. THE “MAGDALENE PAPYRUS” FRAGMENTS.

Papyrus fragments, a/k/a the “Jesus Papyrus,” are believed to have been written in the second half of the first century or earlier. The three small pieces, written on both sides, reveal portions of Matthew 26:7-8, 10, 14-15, 22-23, and 31-33. Photograph courtesy of Wikipedia Commons.

12.04.09.Q2 Is there a conflict between John 12:1-3 and Mark 14:1-3?

According to the gospel of John, Mary anointed Jesus in Bethany six days before Passover, but in Mark she anointed Him two days before the national festival. Why is there an obvious difference? This again is reflective of the significant differences in the thinking processes between Greeks and Jews.

the book of Leviticus from the Dead Sea Scrolls, and other writings from within twenty years of the life of Jesus. For more information, see *Eyewitness to Jesus*. (DVD) Discovery Communications, 2011.

368. The “Jesus Papyrus,” a/k/a the “Magdalene Papyrus,” are fragments which have been the subject of considerable scholarly debate and scientific testing. For more information, see Thiede and D’Ancona, *The Jesus Papyrus*.

Today, scholars examine all the details before coming to a conclusion. But the ancient Jews considered events and concepts of far superior importance to chronological order of an account. In fact, the latter point was considered relatively insignificant. The fact that Mark placed this event in the 14th chapter indicates that he was aware of the anointing, but he felt it was important not to write particular features modern scholars think are necessary. Note that modern scholarship is based upon Greek patterns of thinking, not Hebraic patterns of thinking.³⁶⁹

Information omitted by Mark does not imply an event did not occur. Furthermore, the gospels were written several decades after these events. One would certainly become suspect, if every detail was in perfect agreement. This derails the argument of modern critics, who have proposed that this account was added later by church fathers to create a theological story. Such apparent difficulties occur in historical chronology, not in theological matters.

Both Jews and Christians think of Passover as a ritualistic meal on a specific day. However, Passover is essentially a week-long celebration with culmination at the Passover (Seder) meal. They chose the Passover lamb on the 10th day of Nisan and killed it on the 14th day. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was seven days (but fell under the “Passover” name).³⁷⁰ Where the text has the term “Passover,” the term was applied to all three feasts that were celebrated at that time. Therefore, the phrase, “After two days was the feast of the Passover,” it could mean that it may have been the 8th day of the month, two days before the lamb was chosen, not two days before the lamb was killed.

The reason Mark may have placed this event in this portion of his text is that it is adjacent to the following episode in which Jesus washed the feet of His disciples during the Last Supper. He did not record the feet-washing event of Jesus, yet everyone in the early church was aware of it. This would provide a literary contrast for his readers between Mary, the humble servant, and Jesus, the humble servant to His disciples.³⁷¹

The act of anointing must have highly irritated the religious leaders who, no doubt, looked upon the episode in 2 Kings 9:6 and discounted the scene before them. In this Old Testament passage, one of Israel’s greatest prophets, Elisha, told the son of another

369. For more information on the differences of Greek and Hebraic ways of thinking, see Unit 02, Chapter 04 “Differences between First Century Roman-Greek and Jewish Worldviews.”

370. See “Levitical Feasts as Prophetic Reflections of Jesus” in Appendix 5.

371. Major, Manson, and Wright, *The Mission and Message of Jesus*. 855.

prophet (2 Kgs. 9:1) to take a flask of oil and anointed Jehu as King of Israel (2 Kgs. 9:6).³⁷² Now the religious leaders experienced a truth they could not escape: in the room with Jesus were the greatest leaders of Israel, who had almost unanimously rejected Him, when suddenly, in walked a woman who broke her flask of oil and anointed Jesus as her Lord. She did what the ordained men of God refused to do. Furthermore, she broke the Jewish custom and let her hair down to anoint the feet of Jesus.

This encounter not only demonstrated the heart of the Gentiles and Jewish leaders, but also the status of women in the culture. Normally, religious leaders would not have accepted anointing by women and, if they did, the authors would not have mentioned it. But the disciples were functioning within the framework of the Kingdom of God.

12.04.10 Jn. 12:9-11

PLOT TO KILL LAZARUS

⁹ Then a large crowd of the Jews learned He was there. They came not only because of Jesus, but also to see Lazarus the one He had raised from the dead. ¹⁰ Therefore the chief priests decided to kill Lazarus also ¹¹ because he was the reason many of the Jews were deserting them and believing in Jesus.

The Sadducees were exasperated with Jesus. In fact, they could not even think clearly. At this point, in the heat of anger, **“the chief priests decided to kill Lazarus.”** Had they considered the possibility that if they did kill him, Jesus would simply restore his life again? In their frustration they blindly plotted their evil plan, only to discover that He would not stay in the tomb.

<p>Mystery Unveiled</p>	<p>What made the leading Pharisees and Sadducees think they could kill someone who raised others from the dead? Their passionate anger blinded them from simple logic.</p>
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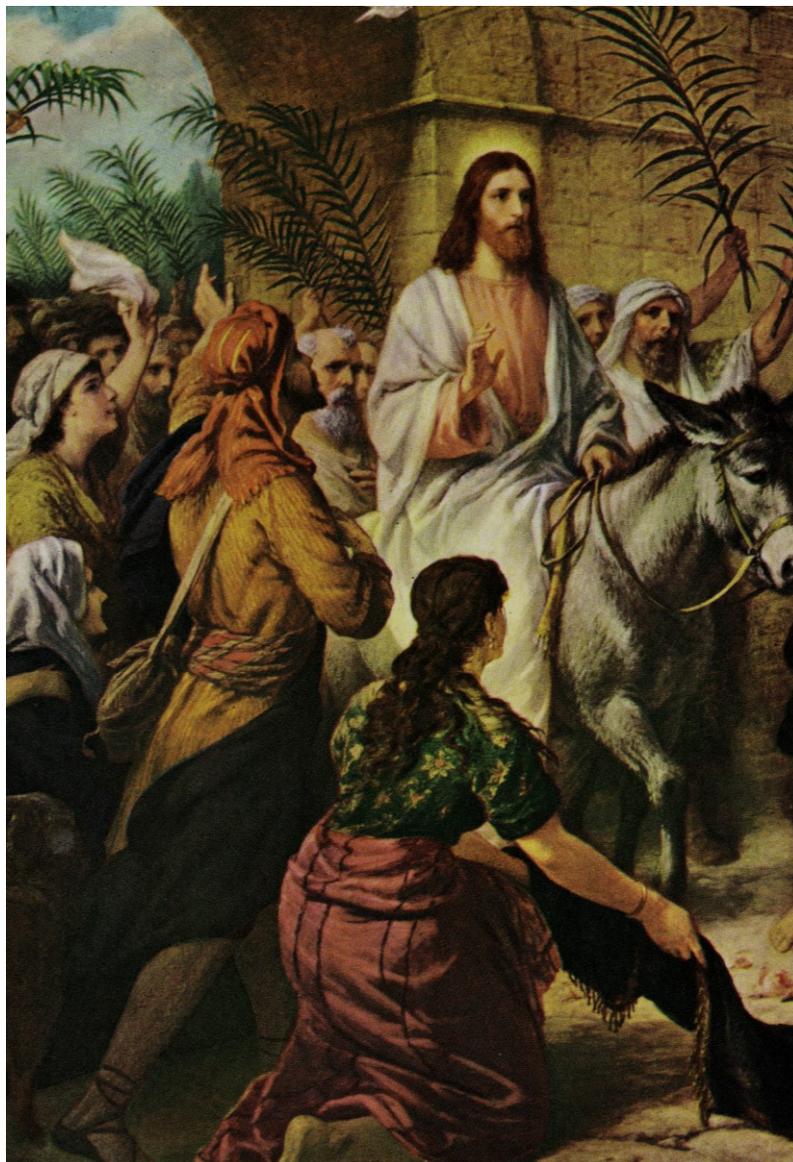
372. Jehu is among fifty biblical names whose existence has been verified by archaeological studies in a published article by Lawrence Mykytiuk titled, “Archaeology Confirms 50 Real People in the Bible.” *Biblical Archaeology Review*. March/April, 2014 (40:2), pages 42-50, 68. This archaeological evidence confirms the historical accuracy of the biblical timeline. For further study, see the website for Associates for Biblical Research, as well as Grisanti, “Recent Archaeological Discoveries that Lend Credence to the Historicity of the Scriptures.” 475-98.

Unit 13

The Passion Week Begins

Chapter 01

Preview Of Events And The Triumphal Entry



13.01.00.A. THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY. Artwork by **Heinrich Hoffmann**. Jesus enters Jerusalem as the crowds wave palm branches. The waving of branches before a monarch was an ancient “body

language” whereby people expressed their acceptance and allegiance to their king. The entry was the most significant public proclamation by Jesus that He was the Messiah, a direct fulfillment of “the day” of Psalm 118. To this announcement the religious establishment responded by planning His death.

13.01.01 Introduction and Summary of the Passion Week³⁷³ Events

The most important week in the history of humanity has become known as the Passion Week beginning when Jesus entered Jerusalem. The immense popularity He had in the city can be clearly seen in sharp contrast to the immense hatred of His enemies when they stood before Pilate.

Tensions always ran high at Passover because it was believed that was the most likely time for the messiah to rise and begin another revolt for national freedom. Therefore, extra soldiers were present to crush any self-proclaimed messiahs, as well as the expected rebellion that would follow. At Qumran, the Essenes wrote of an expected messiah and various false prophets also wrote of one in Pseudepigrapha literature.³⁷⁴ These all reflect the various expected dreams and opinions of the time.

Since the Roman occupation began, several individuals claimed to be the messiah but were consequently killed or crucified.³⁷⁵ For this reason, Herod the Great upgraded the Hasmonean Baris and renamed it as the Antonio Fortress. It was adjacent to the temple, and he stationed extra military units inside the temple at every Passover. He wanted to be sure that if a messianic pretender did announce himself, his soldiers would put a quick end to his life as was done to the little boys in Bethlehem.

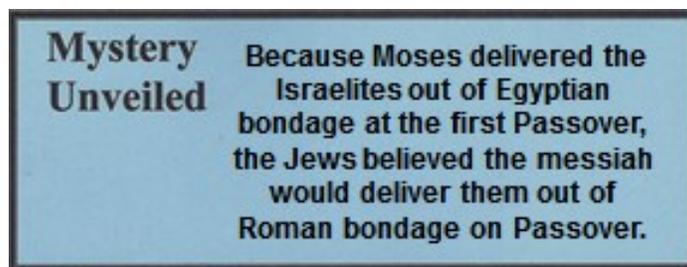
However, the Old Testament prophets described a messiah who was to be very different from the many first century expectations. It is interesting that there seems to be little or no evidence that the rabbis of this era were reviewing “Daniel’s 70 weeks,” and if they pondered the possibilities that the predicted 490 year period might end soon and the

373. The phrase *Passion Week* is an old English term that means *Suffering Week*.

374. See “Barabbas” in Appendix 26.

375. Simon bar Kokhba was one of those who claimed to be the Messiah who would deliver the Jews from the Romans. He led an uprising in A.D. 132 which resulted in the utter destruction of Jerusalem three years later. Both Jews and Christians were expelled from the city and the victorious Roman general Hadrian renamed Israel, “Palestina,” in honor of the ancient Philistine enemies. From this name that the modern name “Palestine” is derived. See also Appendix 25.

Messiah would appear. If they did, in fact, suspect Jesus to be the Messiah, then they should have suspected that rejection of Him would bring destruction to the city and nation – the judgments that are described in Deuteronomy 28.



Into this political caldron entered Jesus, riding on a donkey, a humble resemblance to a king on parade entering one of his cities. The people loved Him. His reputation for healing and excellent teaching went far beyond Israel! He never spoke a harsh word to anyone, except of course, to those hypocritical religious leaders who did not practice what they preached. As long as He was moving in the villages and among the synagogues, He was in *Pharasaic* territory and the Sadducees were enjoying the frustrations of their enemies – the Pharisees. However, when Jesus cleansed the temple, He deliberately entered *Sadducean* territory. Consequently, He galvanized all of His enemies against Him.

As Jesus exposed the corruption of the religious elite, they began to plot their strategy. Their dirty work would have to be done at night when those who loved Him would be sleeping. Furthermore, if they could not get Him executed for religious reasons, then they would attempt a political accusation, such as accusing Him of being a messiah with anti-Roman political ambitions.

At this point, it is important to provide an overview of the many events that transpired in the last week. There have been various attempts to calculate which year the Passion Week occurred. Suggested years range from A.D. 26 to A.D. 36. The latter has been often chosen because Jesus started His ministry when He was about 30 years of age (Lk. 3:23).³⁷⁶ In the sixth century it was assumed that Jesus was born in year 1 and had a three and a half year ministry period. This obviously adds up to the year 33. However, as previously explained, He was born between the years 7 and 5 B.C.³⁷⁷ Furthermore, the term “about 30” years of age permits Him to have begun His ministry when He was a little older. Assuming a three and a half or possibly a four and a half year ministry period, the years add up to the year A.D. 30 with no difficulty. This is confirmed by

376. Maier, *In the Fullness of Time*. 345.

377. See 04.03.10.Q3 “When was Jesus born?”

Jewish writings that state a number of strange events occurred about four decades before the temple was destroyed, meaning, these occurred in the year A.D. 30. In calculating years, it must be remembered that there is no year zero, the time from December 31, 1 BC to January 1 AD 1, is one day, not one year.

The Triumphal Entry was the fulfillment of three significant prophecies.

1. Jesus fulfilled the 483 year prophecy of Daniel 9:25, and thereby fulfilled the moment or timing of His coming. The prophet Daniel said that beginning of the time of restoration and the rebuilding of Jerusalem until the *anointed* comes would be sixty-nine sevens of years [Sabbatical years], or when adjusted to the modern calendar, 483 years. Scholars have debated what time this prophetic clock began and there are three possibilities. Most, however, agree that it was in 444 B.C. when the king of Persia decreed that Jerusalem should be rebuilt (Neh. 1 & 2). Daniel 9:26 states that the *Anointed One* would be *cut off* at the end of the seven sevens and sixty-two sevens of weeks, meaning at the end of the 483 years. It is significant to know that the word *cut off* also means *executed*. If that is correct, then the Triumphal Entry and death of Jesus occurred in A.D. 30.³⁷⁸ The challenging difficulty for scholars is that there were four decrees given around the 444 B.C. period.³⁷⁹

The second half of Daniel 9:26 states that after the *Anointed One* is cut off, the ruler of the people will come and destroy the city and sanctuary.³⁸⁰ That ruler was the Roman General Titus and his Tenth Legion, as they not only destroyed the city, but also destroyed and dismantled the temple and thousands were slaughtered in the process. This clearly points to Jesus as being the *Anointed One*.³⁸¹ Furthermore, just prior to the Roman entry of the temple, the Zealots entered and destroyed all financial records that pertained to debts, and when the

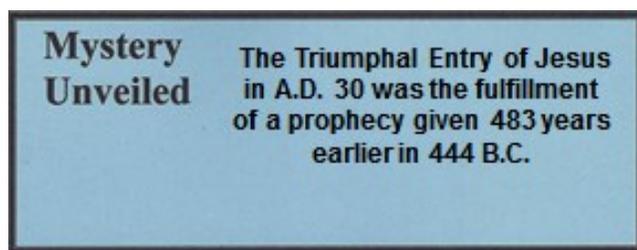
378. While this writer agrees with F.F. Bruce (*New Testament History*, 192 n2) and Arnold Fruchtenbaum, (*The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor's Manual*, Class 20, page 19.) that the year A.D. 30 is the crucifixion date, a majority view appears to lean toward the A.D. 33 date. One of the earliest studies of the crucifixion date was by Sir Robert Anderson (1841-1918) and is titled *The Coming Prince*. It was first published in Great Britain in 1894 and quickly became a classic, but it has some problems. In 1978 Dr. Harold Hoehner, in his book *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, resolved four difficulties of Anderson's work. Hoehner presents strong arguments defending an A.D.33 crucifixion date. See Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, 572. See also Appendix 19.

379. See 16.01.18.Q5. "What was the year of His death?" for more details.

380. See Appendix 15 concerning Daniel's prophecy.

381. Metzger, *God in Eclipse*. 151-52.

Romans came, they destroyed the genealogical books. So no one after A.D. 70 could prove that he was a descendant of King David.



Jesus was the fulfillment of the sacrificial Lamb of God. Moses said in Exodus 12:3 that on the 10th day of the first month of Nissan acquire a lamb and bring it into their homes. There they would observe it for any imperfections as it was not to have a proverbial “spot or blemish.” Of course during that time everyone, especially children, became affectionately close to the cute little thing. But then, four days later, the lamb was sacrificed.

2. Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Psalm 118, and thereby fulfilled the meaning of His coming. Note that Psalm 118:24 reads,

**This is the day the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

The obvious question is, “what day?” It was the anticipated day that the messiah would ride into Jerusalem. It finally arrived. The next verse (25a) reads, “**Lord, save us!**” which is precisely why the people shouted “**Hosanna**” (Lk. 19:42). The term “hosanna” (Gk. *hosanna* 5614) is generally understood as a prayer of praise meaning *Lord, save us* or *save us now*,³⁸² but in the first century it also meant *please deliver us*.³⁸³ The crowds knew that they were shouting a reference to the psalm when they addressed this phrase to Jesus – for they wanted Him to be their king; their messiah. Unfortunately, national Israel would reject Him, which is why He later said in Luke 19:42 that if they “knew this day” it would bring them peace – the phrase is a reference to Psalm 118:24.

3. Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of riding into Jerusalem on a donkey (see 13.01.02 below) as predicted by Zechariah (9:9), and thereby, fulfilled the manner of His

382. Bookman, *When God Wore Sandals*. CD Trac 12; Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 334-35; Vine, “Hosanna.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:312.

383. Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context*. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 7, Session 1.

coming. On the 10th of Nisan, He rode into the Holy City and in the following four days the Sadducees, Pharisees, Scribes, and even the Herodians examined him theologically. In the meantime, the people loved Him more than ever; His popularity escalated. All who tried to find fault with Him became embarrassed or humiliated. Little wonder then, that they planned to kill Him.

Mystery Unveiled Just as the sacrificial lamb was carefully inspected for purity for four days in every Jewish home, so was Jesus carefully examined by the Jews for four days in Jerusalem.

As Jesus approached the city gates, the public praises became increasingly intense. It was only a few days since Lazarus was raised from the tomb and the news of this incredible event spread like wildfire. Everyone remembered His many miracles and now they wanted to make Him their king. People probably thought that since Jesus performed such great wonders, He could conquer the Romans, clear the temple of its corrupt priesthood, re-establish the long awaited Davidic Kingdom and the Davidic Covenant.³⁸⁴ In the meantime, as the crowds praised the Miracle Worker, Caiaphas and his Roman friends were nervously waiting for what would happen next. At this point Jesus probably remembered Satan's temptation of kingship after His baptism.

The life of Jesus was filled with numerous prophetic fulfillments. Yet there is one that would not be recognized for another four decades. It is a prophetic word given by the prophet Daniel while in Babylon.³⁸⁵

After those 62 weeks the Messiah will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the coming prince will destroy the city and the sanctuary.

Daniel 9:26a

Only after the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, did Jewish and Gentile believers realize the significance of Daniel's prophecy. The destruction confirmed that Jesus was the expected messiah, because according to Daniel, He would come *before* the temple's destruction.

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

385. See Appendix 15 concerning Daniel's prophecy.

Mystery Unveiled	Daniel 9:26 says that the Messiah would come <i>before</i> the destruction of the temple. This challenges Jews today to reconsider Him as their Messiah.
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Jesus had spent His ministry years teaching about the Kingdom of God; that to know God was to know Him – Jesus. His Triumphal Entry (Mt. 21:4-5) was the fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9-10, but more than that, it was also the public presentation of Himself to national Israel as their Messiah. He had spent several years in ministry and while He had a great following of common peasants, this was the last opportunity for the Jewish leadership, commonly referred to as “national Israel,” to accept or reject Him. Since the Jewish leadership officially rejected Him and His message, He announced the official end of Israel’s stewardship of the Kingdom of God (Mt. 21:33-43). Instead, His gospel would now be preached to all nations (Mt. 26:13) by Gentiles and one day the entire world will be judged (Mt. 25:31-46). This new kingdom is the new covenant, symbolically sealed with His blood for all Jews and Gentiles who would accept Him as their Messiah (Mt. 26:26-28).

Mystery Unveiled	Passover lambs were sacrificed only on Nisan 14. That date fell on Friday April 7, A.D. 30 and April 3, A.D. 33. All events considered, the crucifixion had to have been in the year A.D. 30.
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In summary, the Triumphal Entry of Jesus announced, without question, the fact that the Jewish people accepted Jesus as their messiah – although they were thinking of Him as a political-messiah.

1. Jesus rode into the city on a donkey, in essence saying, “I am your messiah.” This was not only in the fulfillment of prophecy, but the people responded by waving of the palm branches – a non-verbal greeting to Jesus as their king. During the festival of Sukkot, they waved palm branches in six directions to acknowledge God as their king. Now they waved palm branches to acknowledge Jesus as their king – an act that must have placed the religious leaders and the Romans on high alert.

2. The first word the people shouted was “hosanna!” It was a messianic greeting that meant “Please deliver us.”³⁸⁶
3. Then they referred to Him as the “Son of David.” This was the most popular name of the messiah.
4. Then they said, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” The rabbis for centuries taught their people that when the rabbi comes, they should address him with this phrase.

There can be no question that the popularity of Jesus had reached its climax. In John 6:14-15 the people tried to make Him king and now they greeted Him as king.

13.01.02 Lk. 19:29-31; Mt. 21:4-7; Mk. 11:4-7 (See also Jn. 12:14-16) Bethpage and Bethany

JESUS SENDS FOR COLT

Lk. ²⁹ As He approached Bethpage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, He sent two of the disciples ³⁰ and said, “Go into the village ahead of you. As you enter it, you will find a young donkey tied there, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ say this: ‘The Lord needs it.’”

Mt. ⁴ This took place so that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled:

**⁵ Tell Daughter Zion,
“Look, your King is coming to you,
gentle, and mounted on a donkey,
even on a colt,
the foal of a beast of burden” (Zech. 9:9).**

⁶ The disciples went and did just as Jesus directed them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt; then they laid their robes on them, and He sat on them.

Mk. ⁴ So they went and found a young donkey outside in the street, tied by a door. They untied it, ⁵ and some of those standing there said to them, “What are you doing, untying the donkey?” ⁶ They answered them just as Jesus had

386. Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context*. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 7, Session 1.

said, so they let them go. ⁷ Then they brought the donkey to Jesus and threw their robes on it, and He sat on it.

It is amazing that Jesus and so many other people traveled through the three villages that were located east of the Jerusalem, because the Temple Scrolls identify these as leper colonies.³⁸⁷ Evidently these lepers had the type of leprosy that was a skin condition and not the “full blown” disease which caused limbs to decay and fall off. It was believed that the disease was a wind borne illness and since the prevailing wind came from the west, the Mount of Olives was a safe place for the lepers to live. It has been suggested that lepers were assigned to the crest of this hill because in 63 B.C. General Pompey defiled the hill by establishing his camp upon it. Since then it had a second name – the Hill of Offense.³⁸⁸

While anyone with a physical infirmity was not permitted to enter into the inner temple, from the top of the mount, those with a disease or handicap were high enough that they could barely see over the city walls and observe the events within the temple courts. It was the Hebraic way of saying that one day they would be in the heavenly temple courts.

By choosing to ride a colt into Jerusalem, Jesus identified Himself with a messianic symbol that everyone recognized. His ride was a clear and profound announcement that He proclaimed Himself to be Israel’s Messiah. Throughout history there had been kingly entrances gloriously described by ancient writers, but the triumphal entry is the only one that is a prophetic fulfillment. No wonder the religious leaders were shocked and furious.

It was only a few weeks earlier when Jesus and His disciples were in northern Israel at the cultic shrine of Pan, where He asked them, “Who do people say that I am?” To this Peter’s response was, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!” Similar imagery now played out at the Triumphal Entry as the people believed Jesus was some type of Figure sent by God to deliver them from oppression. Jesus entered Jerusalem as if to silently ask, “Who do you people say that I am?” Their response was correspondingly correct when they, in effect, said, “You are the king who comes in the name of the Lord!” The common people were sufficiently educated in their Scriptures to understand the symbolic language of the donkey and Who was on it.

387. Among the Dead Sea Scrolls were found some scrolls known as the *Temple Scrolls*. The reference to the three villages as leper colonies is found on column 46, lines 16-18.

388. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 2:310.



13.01.02.A. THE EASTERN (GOLDEN) GATE OF JERUSALEM.

The Eastern Gate seen today was rebuilt by Suleiman the Magnificent in 1538 and stands upon the original gate where Jesus made His triumphal entry. Suleiman, however, eventually learned that Christians believed that their Messiah would one day ride through it. In response, he closed it and placed a cemetery in front of it believing that the Messiah would not defile Himself by going over it.³⁸⁹ Photograph by the author.

**Mystery
Unveiled**

**The message was
unmistakable. By riding into
Jerusalem on a colt, Jesus
made a public announcement
that He was the Messiah,
King of the Jews.**

“You will find a young donkey.” Some translations read, “You will find a colt,” with a reference to the young donkey. In this description Mark agrees with Luke; however, Matthew is somewhat more descriptive when he said, “You will find a donkey . . . with her colt by her.” John simply stated that Jesus “found a young donkey and sat upon it.” The fact that three gospel writers did not mention the young offspring is not an error; not all writers elected to include that detail. What is important is that this was a young

389. Packer, Tenney, and White, eds., *Nelson's Illustrated Encyclopedia*. 40.

donkey, and most certainly, she had her first colt. The young donkey also would have been called a colt.

The statement, “You will find a young donkey,” is a classic example of an *angaria* – the custom of a temporary procurement of resources for the benefit of a leader, ruler, or rabbi.³⁹⁰ That is why Jesus said, “**The Lord needs it.**” That statement let the owner know his donkey was not being stolen, but it was the custom of *angaria*. This custom is unknown in Western culture today. But Jesus needed a donkey for symbolic reasons as this imagery connected Him with Hebrew prophecies. While during the Inter-Testamental period and at the time of Jesus, kings rode horses, centuries earlier in Jewish history, they rode donkeys.³⁹¹ The horse was symbolic of war, whereas the donkey was symbolic of peace – two images that were well established in biblical times. Note the following examples:

1. Jair was a judge who had thirty sons, all of whom rode donkeys (Jg. 10:4; 12:14).
2. Ahithopel rode a donkey (2 Sam. 17:23).
3. Mephibosheth, a royal prince of King Saul rode a donkey to see King David (2 Sam. 19:26)

Prophetic Scriptures such as Genesis 49:10, Isaiah 62:11, and Zechariah 9:9 portrayed a vivid image of a messianic king riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, not a horse. Therefore, Jesus fulfilled the image the rabbis told people concerning the messianic miracles and other prophecies in their Hebrew Bible. He could not have ridden a horse, as that would have been symbolic of a military victor.³⁹² Jesus never endorsed, nor opposed, the nationalistic fever by word or by deed. The donkey was a symbol of peace and servanthood.³⁹³ Men do not fear those whose mission is peace, but they fear men of war. At issue here was the conflict between belief and unbelief, light and darkness, death and resurrection into new life. If there was ever a symbol to show that Jesus was not going to overthrow the Romans, the donkey was that symbol. Yet the thousands of people cheering and welcoming Him into the city were worrisome for Jewish leaders.

390. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 313.

391. Judg. 10:4; 12:14, 25a; 16:2.

392. Johnston, Gordon “Introduction to Hebrew Language Study.” Lecture series at the Lancaster Bible College, Lancaster, PA. Fall, 1997.

393. Farrar, *Life of Christ*. 330-31; Stein, R. *Jesus the Messiah*. 179.

Ironically, there is no record that the Romans were concerned although they were always on full alert.

13.01.02.Q1 Why did Jesus need to ride a donkey that was *not* trained to accept a rider (Mt. 21:4-7; Mk. 11:4-7; Lk. 19:29-31; Jn. 12:14-16)?

To have ridden a trained beast of burden would have meant that Jesus was on a “used” or “second hand” animal. It is a fundamental rule of worship that all that is ever given or used to honor God is to be pure and holy, *never* having been used for anything else previously. Animals used for religious service, likewise, had to be pure, holy, and never used previously.³⁹⁴ Therefore, Jesus *had* to ride a colt that was never ridden. Another example of this purity law is the brand new tomb in which Jesus was laid – it had not even become anyone’s family tomb.

The phrase, “**on which no one has ever sat**” is significant for another reason: To sit on a donkey is to ride it, and this was another miracle as Jesus demonstrated He had power and dominion over nature. Anyone who mounts a donkey, horse, or any other animal for the first time will be thrown off because all domesticated animals need to be trained to accept a rider. For an untrained donkey to accept a rider, especially when she had her young foal, was definitely miraculous. What Jesus did was clearly against all laws of nature.

<p>Mystery Unveiled</p>	<p>No domesticated animal will accept a rider unless it has been trained to do so. It was a miracle that Jesus could ride an untrained donkey into Jerusalem.</p>
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13.01.02.Q2 How is the apparent conflict of the number of donkeys explained (Mt. 21:4-7; Mk. 11:4-7; Lk. 19:29-31; Jn. 12:14-16)?

Matthew, who wrote to a Jewish audience, made it a point to report that when Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem He was fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9. He also said that Jesus told His disciples to bring *them* (Mt. 21:2) and restated the plurality in the following verse when He said our Lord needs *them*, obviously meaning both the donkey

394. Num. 19:2; Deut. 21:3; Isa. 6:7.

and her colt.³⁹⁵ Matthew perhaps recorded the presence of the colt, as it was too young to be taken from the mother. This would emphasize the uniqueness of Jesus riding upon it. Mark and Luke reported only one donkey, which was the focus of each writer.

In this scene, the issue of “Was it one or two?” reappears. In another passage is the issue of whether there were one or two blind men by Jericho, one or two Jerichos (12.04.05.Q1), or one or two demoniacs on the eastern shore by Gadara (08.06.03.Q4). If there were two, then obviously there had to be one. But if the focus of discussion is on one, then the second person, place, or thing is out of the discussion – mentioned only that it existed.

The imagery of a donkey continued to be a challenge for the Jewish people. A passage in the Talmud recorded similar imagery with an interesting prophetic twist of the messiah riding a white horse. Note the phrase “**if they are meritorious**” (below) reflects the common thinking of the day that the messiah will come only after the Jews cleanse themselves and live pure and holy lives. Jesus came because it is impossible for humanity to present itself pure and holy before God; hence, He paid the price of sin with His life.

It is written, “Behold your king comes to you, lowly and riding on a donkey” (Zech. 9:9). If they are meritorious, he will come with the clouds of heaven; if not, lowly and riding upon a donkey. King Shapur³⁹⁶ said to Samuel, “You maintain that the Messiah will come upon a donkey: I will rather send him a white horse of mine.”

Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 98a

The Talmud reflects the common thinking that the Jewish people wanted a Messiah who would give them political freedom as reflected by the comment of the white horse – a victorious military animal. This opinion continued centuries later when the Talmud was written. In contrast, notice the powerful symbolism of His entry:

1. Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey,
2. Huge crowds greeted Him.
3. They placed hundreds, if not thousands, of palm and tree branches (Jn. 12:13;

395. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*. 62.

396. A Jewish king outside of Judea who struggled against the Romans.

Mk. 11:8) as well as their garments (Mt. 21:6; Mk. 11:7; Lk. 19:36) on the road before Him.

4. They shouted praises of Him (Mt. 21:9; Mk. 11:9-10; Lk. 19:38).

It is understandable that the religious leaders were nearly paranoid. No wonder they came to Jesus and asked Him to calm the crowd (Lk. 19:39-40; Jn. 12:19). It was a most unusual request in light of the many times they criticized Him.

While Matthew's focus was to report the fulfillment of biblical prophecy to a Jewish audience who knew the Old Testament prophecies, Mark and Luke wrote to Gentile audiences who had little or no knowledge of Hebrew prophecies. Therefore, the second and third evangelists would not have reported this information. They did, however, report that the donkey had never been ridden and the animal was completely submissive to Jesus. Everyone understood this was against all laws of nature; clearly a miracle!

“Daughter Zion ... your king comes to you.” The phrase “Daughter Zion” or “Daughter of Zion” is a personification of Mount Zion, which was that part of Jerusalem. It represents Jerusalem and all of its inhabitants. However, at times the phrase “daughter” can refer to the villages that surround the Jerusalem such as Bethlehem. In this case, Jesus combined these two phrases from two verses from the Hebrew Bible: Isaiah 62:11 and Zechariah 9:9. Note the following,

**¹¹ Look, the LORD has proclaimed
to the ends of the earth,
“Say to Daughter Zion:
Look, your salvation is coming,
His reward is with him,
and His gifts accompany Him.”**

Isaiah 62:11

A unique feature of this passage is Isaiah's word for *salvation*. It is *Yesha*, and is identical to the Hebrew name of Jesus, that is *Yeshua*, except that the latter has the optional letter *vav*.³⁹⁷ Furthermore, the word *Yesha* does more than imply a person, it implies Deity. Jesus connected portions of Isaiah's passage with portions of Zechariah 9:9,

**⁹ Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!
Shout in triumph, Daughter Jerusalem!**

397. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*. 61.

**Look, your King is coming to you;
 He is righteous and victorious,
 humble and riding on a donkey,
 on a colt,
 the foal of a donkey.**

Zechariah 9:9

The implication is that God, the salvation of Israel, and the expected Messiah, are all one embodied in Jesus of Nazareth. By reflecting upon Isaiah and Zechariah, Jesus implies that there is still work ahead of Him, and that is His return.

13.01.03 Lk. 19:36-40; Mk. 11:8 (See also Mt. 21:8-9) **Jerusalem, Sunday**

JESUS ENTERS JERUSALEM

Lk. ³⁶ As He was going along, they were spreading their robes on the road. ³⁷ Now He came near the path down the Mount of Olives, and the whole crowd of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles they had seen:

**³⁸ The King who comes
 in the name of the Lord
 is the blessed One (Ps. 118:26).**
**Peace in heaven
 and glory in the highest heaven!**

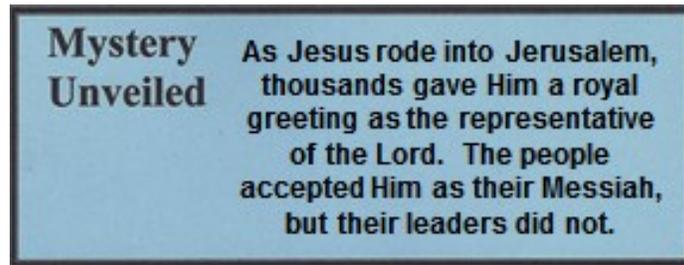
³⁹ Some of the Pharisees from the crowd told Him, “Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.”

⁴⁰ He answered, “I tell you, if they were to keep silent, the stones would cry out!”

Mk. ⁸ Many people spread their robes on the road, and others spread leafy branches cut from the fields.

“The King who comes in the name of the Lord is the blessed One.” This is an amazing statement with a profound message that is sadly, so often missed in commentaries. The crowds clearly stated that they were accepting Jesus to be their king!

It was a royal greeting that is recorded five times in the gospels.³⁹⁸ It is similar to a typical generic royal greeting that states, “May King [so-and-so] live forever.” What the crowds shouted when Jesus rode into town was more than a royal greeting; they said He came as a *representative of the Lord!* But that does not mean that they recognized Him as Deity. That would happen later after His resurrection.



“The stones would cry out.” In this context, if the people would not recognize Jesus as their Messiah, then the rocks would have done so. For centuries the phrase has been considered a figure of speech due to the nature and work of Jesus. The statement echoed the words of the prophet Habakkuk.

**For the stones will cry out from the wall,
and the rafters will answer them from the woodwork.**

Habakkuk 2:11

However, in the past two centuries there have been two unique phenomena:

1. The rise of textual criticism by some theologians who state that the Bible cannot be trusted; that it is not historically accurate.
2. The rise of archaeology that has shown that the biblical history is accurate and, therefore, can be trusted.³⁹⁹ Jesus will receive praise that is due Him, if not from man, then from nature; and if man will not proclaim that the Bible is trustworthy, then the rocks will.

“Leafy branches.” In their description of this event, Matthew, Mark, and John each use

398. 1 Kgs. 1:39; 2 Kgs. 11:12; 2 Chron. 23:11; 1 Sam. 10:24; 2 Sam. 16:16.

399. Archaeology does not “prove” the truthfulness of the Bible. It is a scientific method of research that stresses experimentation and induction from data rather than philosophical deduction in the tradition of Aristotle. When evidence uncovered by archaeologists is interpreted honestly without bias, the conclusions often agree with the chronology of biblical history. Where agreement fails, additional research is required.

a different word for *branches*. Matthew described young shoots, Mark said the people used straw, rushes or leaves that were beaten together, and John mentioned palm branches.⁴⁰⁰ There is no disagreement because the people quickly gathered whatever they could to honor Jesus.

13.01.04 Jn. 12:12-13a; Mk. 11:9-10; Jn. 12:13b Jerusalem: The Triumphal Entry

A LARGE CROWD CALLS JESUS “THE KING OF ISRAEL”

Jn. ¹² The next day, when the large crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, ^{13a} they took palm branches and went out to meet Him.

Mk. ⁹ Then those who went ahead and those who followed kept shouting:

Hosanna!

**He who comes in the name
of the Lord is the blessed One!**

**¹⁰ The coming kingdom
of our father David is blessed!**

Hosanna in the highest heaven! (Ps. 118:25-26)

Jn. ^{13b} He who comes in the name of the Lord is the blessed One —the King of Israel!

Thousands came for the Passover celebration. Josephus recorded that the population of the Holy City increased to between two and three million people.⁴⁰¹ Although recent scholarship has documented that his population estimates are somewhat exaggerated, it is well known that a very “**large crowd**” packed into Jerusalem each year at this time.⁴⁰²

400. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:214.

401. Josephus, *Wars* 6.9.3; 2.14.3.

402. Gilbrant, “Mark.” 377.

“Palm branches ... Hosanna” For centuries palm branches⁴⁰³ were used in the Feast of Tabernacles, a festival that occurs six months later in the fall of the year. However, the presentation of palm branches was common practice in *all* ancient Middle Eastern cultures that symbolized,

1. Victory after a conflict, or
2. Dedication and loyalty to a king.

As Jesus entered the city, the crowd shouted, **“Hosanna,”** (Gk. hosanna 5614)⁴⁰⁴ a Greek praise word derived from the Hebrew *Hoshana*.⁴⁰⁵ It originally loosely meant, *Hallelujah*, and *Sabbath*.⁴⁰⁶ However, since the Maccabean Rebellion, it had been redefined with a nationalistic meaning: *deliver us, save us, and give us our freedom* – a distinctive messianic message of political freedom. The religious leaders feared such shouting would bring the Roman guards, so they told Jesus to keep His followers quiet.⁴⁰⁷ The people *must have anticipated* that Jesus would become their king – one who would overthrow the Romans – because they had no other reason to obtain palm branches. The request would not have been made if the people were merely praising God, but their palm branches signified political independence.⁴⁰⁸

In the days preceding a festival, as pilgrims entered the city they sang psalms. One such Psalm, 118, has the word, “hosanna” (118:25-26) that was sung while waving palm branches praising God for victories over their enemies.⁴⁰⁹ Ironically, later when Jesus and His disciples closed their Passover service, they would sing this same hosanna psalm. According to Jewish writers, this was sung in the temple at Passover,⁴¹⁰ but sung on the way going to the temple at the feast of Tabernacles.⁴¹¹

403. Mishnah, *Bikkurim* 1:3; 1 Macc. 13:51; Jn. 1:13; Palm trees grew in Jerusalem as ornamental trees, since they do not bear edible fruit at that altitude (about 2600 ft. above sea level) and in that climate See also Kloner and Zissu. *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period*. 35.

404. Vine, “Hosanna.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:312.

405. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 19, page 13.

406. Major, Manson, and Wright, *The Mission and Message of Jesus*. 856.

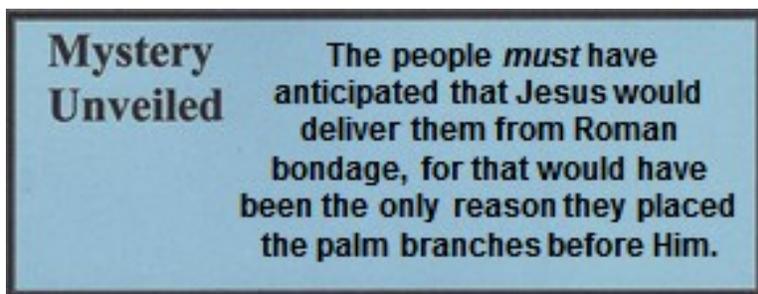
407. See comments on Mt. 8:1-4 and the *Psalms of Solomon*.

408. Stein, R. *Jesus the Messiah*. 181.

409. Stein, R. *Jesus the Messiah*. 180-82.

410. Mishnah, *Pesachim* 5:7.

411. Mishnah, *Sukkah* 4:5.



The use of palm branches to welcome a king was a long tradition that reflected nationalistic pride and aspirations.⁴¹² For example, in the Old Testament era, much as today, when a king traveled throughout his kingdom, a herald would first go out and announce the coming of the monarch. The people responded by lining the streets to catch a glimpse of their royalty, whom they perceived to be a god. At the time of his arrival, the king would ride into town on horseback with a procession of military units before and after him. The crowds placed palm branches on the road before him to signify his position as their king. The procession eventually became known as a “parade.”⁴¹³ The greeting that Jesus received was identical to what many other men of royalty and high honor received in the ancient Middle East. Note the following examples:

1. When the prophet Elisha anointed Jehu to be the next king of Israel (2 Kgs. 9:3) and took command of the army, the people placed their (outer) garments before him instead of palm branches. The account is in the Second book of Kings.

Each man quickly took his garment and put it under Jehu on the bare steps. They blew the ram’s horn and proclaimed, “Jehu is king!”

2 Kings 9:13

This same account was paraphrased by Josephus, who said,

...And when they were eager about the matter, and desired he (Elisha) would tell them, he answered that God had said he had chosen him (Jehu) to be king over the multitude. When he had said

412. Kinman. “Jesus’ Royal Entry into Jerusalem.” 405.

413. Lecture by Marc Turnage. “Jesus and His Times.” Teacher Assistant to R. Steven Notley. Jerusalem University College, Israel: June-July, 1999.

this, every one of them put off his garment and strewed it under him, and blew with trumpets, and gave notice that Jehu was king.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 9.6.2 (111)

2. In the days of Queen Esther, Mordecai was honored when the Jewish people laid myrtle twigs and robes on the ground before him as he came out of the palace of Ahasuerus.⁴¹⁴

3. The Persian army honored Xerxes when they were about to cross the Hellespont, a narrow strait in northwestern Turkey.⁴¹⁵

4. Another account is that of the Persian King Cyrus II (reigned 550-530)⁴¹⁶ who united the Persians and Medes and defeated the Babylonians in 539. At his processional march on a horse into Babylon the people spread branches on the road before him to announce their loyalty to him. This momentous event was recorded on several clay tablets, which were eventually discovered by archaeologists. One of those tablets reads as follows,

In the month of Arahshamnu, the third day, Cyrus entered Babylon, green twigs were spread before him (and) the state of Peace (sulmu) was imposed upon the city. Cyrus sent greetings to all Babylon.

Cyrus II Tablet⁴¹⁷

5. After Judas Maccabees recaptured the temple from the Syrian-Greeks and purified it, the Jerusalemites celebrated with palm branches that were laid before him as he rode into the Holy City. The account, as written by Jason of Cyrene⁴¹⁸ is recorded in *2 Maccabees*:

They celebrated it for eight days with rejoicing . . . Therefore, carrying ivy-wreathed wands and beautiful branches and also fronds

414. Targam, *Esther* 10.15. Cited by Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 2:396.

415. Herodotus, *Histories* 7.54. Cited by Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 2:396.

416. The grandson of Cyrus I.

417. Prichard, *The Ancient Near East*. 1:204.

418. Hellerman, "Purity and Nationalism in Second Temple Literature: 1-2 Maccabees and Jubilees." 407.

of palm, they offered hymns of thanksgiving to him who had given success to the purifying of his own holy place.

2 Maccabees 10:6a, 7⁴¹⁹

6. During the course of history the tradition of honoring a king changed from the placement of garments to the placement of palm branches as described by the writer of *2 Maccabees*. That event occurred near the end of the Maccabean Revolt and the people chose Simon as their leader. When he confirmed that he was united with their cause, the people greeted him as he entered Jerusalem,

With thanksgiving, and branches of palm trees, and with harps, and cymbals, and with viols,⁴²⁰ and hymns, and songs, because a great enemy was destroyed out of Israel.

2 Maccabees 13:51

After the successful Maccabean Revolt, Israel enjoyed a century of political independence but it was full of political corruption and strife. During this time, Alexander Jannaeus (d. 78 B.C.) minted coins that featured the palm branch and the words, “Yehonatan the king.” The palm branch was associated with kingship.⁴²¹

419. First and 2nd Maccabees belong to a classification of extra-biblical books known as the Apocrypha. These two literary works are deemed highly reliable historically. See 02.02.03 “Apocrypha” for more information.

420. The identity of the musical instruments referred to as “viols” is uncertain, since the viol was developed in Italy around 1510 and the violin about twenty years later. Source: <http://www.diabolus.org/guide/viols.htm>. Retrieved August 3, 2013. However, another website, <http://www.atelierdes7cordes.com/profile%20gb.html.shows> bas-relief images showing musicians playing stringed instruments have been dated to 2500 B.C. Retrieved August 3, 2013.

421. Hendin, *Guide to Biblical Coins*. 43, no. 8; For additional study, see Frederick W. Madden. *Coins of the Jews*. Boston: James Osgood, 1881.



13.01.04.A. COIN BY FESTUS WITH PALM BRANCH. A Jewish coin with palm branch struck by Porcius Festus in A.D. 60 under the reign of Nero. LEFT: The obverse (front) depicts a palm branch. RIGHT: The reverse scene has the legend and a wreath.

Finally, eschatologically, the palm branch has a future function when a great multitude, one that will be too massive to count, will wave palm branches before Jesus in heaven. They will shout, “Salvation belongs to our God” (Rev. 7:9-10). To the first century Jews, the palm branch was not a mystery; it was the symbol of victory. Therefore, the obvious question is, why didn’t the Romans and Herodian Dynasty see Jesus as a threat? The answer is that they observed Him for more than three years, during which time He never spoke of violence nor did He speak against the dominating Roman occupation. Would they have seen Jesus as potential threat, He would never have had the opportunity to ride into Jerusalem.

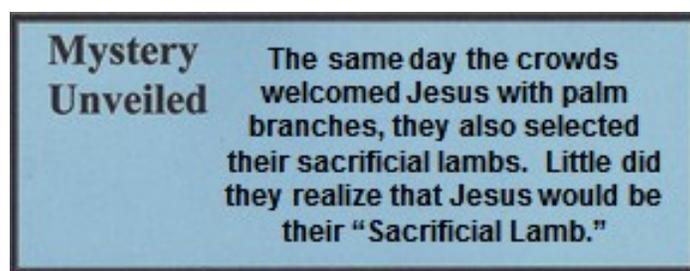
Mystery Unveiled	When considering the cruelty and injustice of Pilate and that palm branches were placed before Jesus, it is amazing that Pilate’s response was so incredibly compassionate.
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“He who comes in the name of the Lord is the blessed One!” The rabbis taught that this phrase was the Messianic greeting; part of the official greeting all people would give the Messiah when He comes. It is based on Psalm 118:22-27.⁴²² Now they were

422. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 19, page 14.

witnessing the people greeting Jesus with it. Undoubtedly, this struck terror in the hearts of the religious leaders, especially when they called Jesus **“the king of Israel.”**⁴²³ This title again demonstrates that the people firmly believed that Jesus would deliver them from Roman oppression. Incidentally, some scholars believe that the phrase, “blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” will be repeated at the return of the Messiah. 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.⁴²⁴ More specifically, it refers to a quality of spirituality that is already present.⁴²⁵

Ironically, the day the crowds waived palm branches before Jesus was the same day – the Sunday before Passover – they selected their sacrificial lambs. The head of every family entered the city and purchased the lamb that was to be sacrificed on the following Friday at Passover. This was the same day that Jesus entered the city because He was the Lamb chosen of God. The popularity that was in His favor would never be lost by the common people. Yet while the religious leaders were preparing to sacrifice thousands of lambs for the people, they were also planning to kill the Lamb of God.



When examining the life and ministry of Jesus and how the religious leaders responded, the development of their negative attitude can be traced as follows:

1. Beginning with skepticism as they carefully observed His teachings and His ministry (Mk.2:1-12).
2. To jealousy and the leading Pharisees assert their authority as the only “keepers of the Law.” They had particular difficulties with how Jesus “violated” their rules pertaining to the Sabbath (Lk. 6:1-11).

423. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 373.

424. Weasel, “Blessed.” 1:201; Becker, “Blessing, Blessed, Happy.” 1:206-08.

425. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 66-68.

3. To fear when they heard Jesus preach His famous Sermon on the Mount. While He connected His principles with those of the Hebrew Bible, He also pointed out the differences between the “righteousness” of the Pharisees and that of written Scripture (Mt. 5-7, esp. 5:20).

4. To hatred and plans to kill Him. Even when Jesus performed miracles specifically prophesied by prophets like Isaiah, the leading Pharisees refused to acknowledge Him, but rather, appealed to demons as the source of His power (Mt. 12:22-37).

Previously, the Jewish leadership had many reasons to kill Jesus.⁴²⁶ Now they had three more.

1. He raised Lazarus from the grave.
2. The Triumphal Entry was a profoundly loud but unspoken declaration that Jesus “said” He was the messiah.
3. He again cleansed the temple. Without doubt this caused a financial loss for Annas and Caiaphas, and they were indeed quite unhappy about this matter. It was bad enough that Jesus had done this once previously, but now He repeated this action along with stating He was the Messiah when He entered the city.

13.01.05 Lk. 19:41-44

JESUS SEES THE COMING DESTRUCTION

⁴¹ As He approached and saw the city, He wept over it, ⁴² saying, “If you knew this day what would bring peace — but now it is hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ For the days will come on you when your enemies will build an embankment against you, surround you, and hem you in on every side. ⁴⁴ They will crush you and your children within you to the ground, and they will not leave one stone on another in you, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.”

“If you knew this day what would bring peace.” There are few verses more stunning than this one. This was the official presentation of Jesus to the nation of Israel as their Messiah, as the Prince of Peace, and as the Lamb of God. His statement and His entry

⁴²⁶. See 12.04.08.

are a fulfillment of the prophetic words of the Prophet Daniel.⁴²⁷ The phrase **“this day”** is a reference to the day Jesus enter Jerusalem and fulfilled the prophecy of Psalm 118,⁴²⁸

**This is the day the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

Psalm 118:24

The day that the messiah would ride into Jerusalem finally arrived. The next verse (25a) reads, **“Lord, save us!”** which is precisely why the people shouted **“Hosanna”** (Lk. 19:42), which means *Lord, save us*. The crowds knew that they were shouting a reference to Psalms when they addressed this phrase to Jesus – for they wanted Him to be their king; their messiah. Unfortunately, national Israel would reject Jesus, which is why Jesus later said in Luke 19:42 that if they “knew this day” would bring them peace – the phrase is a reference to Psalm 118:24.

Again, the humanity of Jesus is heavy as He wept. In this phrase the word for *wept* means to *cry loudly*. He looked into the future and could see the coming destruction of the temple, the dispersion of His people, and the rejection of His love. He wept because His people were still looking for a political leader to bring peace that only He could provide; the leadership preferred their socially popular aristocratic and prosperous life rather than a holy life committed to God.

“For the days will come on you.” Some translations read “the days are coming,” which is judgment terminology – a prediction based upon similar statements in the Old Testament that divine judgment is at hand.⁴²⁹ The destruction that Jesus foresaw was one of horrific carnage. As His followers saw the prophecies come into fulfillment, they followed His advice and escaped. History recorded the 9 steps to Jerusalem’s destruction:

1. In A.D. 66, Florus, who was the Roman appointee over Jerusalem, stole money from the temple treasury. In response, the Zealots rioted first in Caesarea, then along the coast and Galilee, and soon it was widespread – an attempt to gain independence. Florus fought and eventually crucified an estimated 2,000 Zealots,⁴³⁰ but had to get reinforcements from Gallus.

427. For additional information related to Daniel’s prophecy, see Appendix 15 and 16.01.18.Q5.

428. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 315.

429. 1 Sam. 2:31; 2 Kg. 20:17; Jer. 7:32-34; 31:38; Isa. 39:6; Zech. 14:1.

430. Josephus, *Wars* 2.14.8 (306-08); 5.11.1 (449-51).

2. In response, General Sestus Gallus, who was the legate of Syria, marched his army from Caesarea to Jerusalem in an attempt to restore order. He began to set up embankments, but was unable to capture the Temple Mount because the Zealots cut off his supply line.

3. Gallus was forced to retreat to Caesarea during which time he was killed and his army suffered heavy casualties and lost significant military equipment. This Zealot victory encouraged many Jews, including some priests and Levites, to join their ranks.

4. At this time Messianic Jews remembered the prophecy of Jesus when He said, “**when your enemies will build an embankment against you.**” (Lk. 19:43).⁴³¹ This was a confirmation to the Messianic Jews that Jesus really was the expected prophet and Messiah. Consequently, there was a mass exodus of Messianic believers, twenty to twenty-five thousand from Jerusalem and approximately eighty thousand from the Galilee, who went to Pella and other Decapolis cities. There they waited until the siege was over. Cleopas, who was a leading church figure after the martyrdom of James, the half-brother of Jesus, organized the mass evacuation.⁴³² Two church fathers, Eusebius and Epiphanius, said many of these believers lived in the area of Pella.⁴³³

5. It was bad enough that Gaius was killed, but the Romans passionately hated defeat. In response, Emperor Nero authorized Vespasian to crush the revolt using whatever means necessary.

6. General Vespasian established the siege against Jerusalem, but was called back to Rome to be crowned emperor upon the suicide of Emperor Nero.

7. The siege was continued by his son, General Titus, who attempted to make peace with the Jews, but they refused. According to Josephus, by this time the highly feared *Legio X Fretensis*, better known as the Tenth Roman Legion from Damascus, had surrounded the city.⁴³⁴ Due to the stronghold nature of Jerusalem, Titus ordered his men to build a siegeworks, enlarged the embankments begun by Gaius, and attacked the Holy City. The following paragraphs capsulize the graphic words of Josephus:

431. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 341.

432. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor's Manual*. Class 26, page 14.

433. Eusebius, *Church History* 3.5.3; Epiphanius, *Panarion* 29.7.7.

434. Josephus, *Wars* 5.7.2.

So now Titus's banks were advanced a great way, notwithstanding his soldiers had been very much distressed from the wall. He then sent a part of horsemen and ordered they should lay ambushes for those that went out into the valleys to gather food.

Josephus, *Wars* 5.11.1 (446)

Now the length of this wall was forty furlongs, one only abated. Now this wall without were erected thirteen places to keep garrisons in, the circumference of which, put together, amounted to ten furlongs, the whole was completed in three days; so that what would naturally have required some months, was done in so short an interval as is incredible. When Titus had therefore encompassed the city with this wall and put garrisons into proper places, he went around the wall, at the first watch of the night, and observed how the guard was kept; the second watch he allotted to Alexander, the commanders of legions took the third watch.

Josephus, *Wars* 5.12.2 (508-510)

Now, so soon the army had no more people to slay or to plunder, because there remained none to be the subjects of their fury (for they would not have spared any, had there remained any other such work to be done) Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and temple, but should leave as many of the towers standing as were of the greatest eminency; that is [the towers of] Phasaelus, and Hippicus, and Mariamne, and so much of the wall as enclosed the city on the west side. This wall was spared in order to afford a camp for such as were to lie in garrison; as were the towers also spared, in order to demonstrate to posterity what kind of city it was and how well fortified, which the Roman valor had subdued; but for the rest of the wall, it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited. This was the end which Jerusalem came to by the madness of those that were for innovations; a city otherwise of great magnificence, and of mighty fame among all mankind.

Josephus, *Wars* 7.1.1 (1-4)

Luke said this coming destruction (21:22) would be the “time of punishment,” prophesied because of the unfaithfulness of God’s people.⁴³⁵ That may be why the temple doors mysteriously opened for the Romans to enter, as reported by the historian:

The security of their holy house was dissolved of its own accord, and that the gate opened for the advantage of their enemies.

Josephus, *Wars* 6.5.3 (296)

8. The four-year encampment resulted in starvation for the city’s occupants. The famine was so severe that Josephus wrote that those within the city fought each other for small morsels of food. When Jesus looked into the future and saw not only the destruction of the temple, but also the suffering that occurred for their refusal to accept Him.

Concerning Jerusalem, Josephus further wrote that the pain and suffering they endured was the worst they ever experienced in their history. Those who attempted an escape were caught and crucified a short distance outside the city walls for all inside to see. With the decline of moral and religious values, God’s chosen people acted worse than animals. One account is of a woman who cooked and ate her own son in an attempt to survive the starvation. The news of the event horrified everybody, and the survivors deemed those who had already died as “happy.”⁴³⁶

Nor would men believe that those who were dying had no food; but the robbers would search. Now of those who perished by famine in the city, the number was prodigious, and the miseries they underwent were unspeakable; for if so much as a shadow of any food did appear, a war was commenced presently; and the dearest friends fell a fighting one with another about it, snatching from each other the most miserable supports of life. Nor would men believe that those who were dying had no food, but robbers would search them when they were expiring, lest any should have any concealed food in their bosoms, and counterfeited dying.

435. Isa. 63:4; Jer. 5:29; Hos. 9:7.

436. Josephus, *Wars* 6.4.4-5.

Josephus, *Wars* 6.3.3 (193-195)

Josephus, who was an eyewitness to the destruction, was so moved by what he saw, that he recorded his personal opinions, something which he seldom did.

But why do I describe the shameless impudence that the famine brought on men in eating their inanimate things, while I am going to relate a matter of fact, the things to which no history relates, either among the Greeks or Barbarians! It is horrible to speak of, and incredible when heard.

Josephus, *Wars* 6.3.3 (199)

The madness of the seditious did also increase together with their famine, and both miseries were every day inflamed more and more; for there was no corn (grain) which appeared anywhere publicly, but the robbers came running into, and searching men's private houses; and then, if they found any, they tormented them because they had denied they had any. And if they found none, they tormented them worse because they supposed they had more carefully concealed it. The indication they made use of whether they had any or not, was taken from the bodies of these miserable wretches; which, if they were in good case, they supposed they were in no want at all of food. But if they wasted away they walked off without searching any farther; nor did they think it proper to kill such as these because they would very soon die for want of food.

Josephus, *Wars* 5.10.2 (424b-426a)

It was now a miserable case and a sight that would bring tears to our eyes, how men stood as to their food, while the more powerful had more than enough and the weaker were lamenting (for the want of it). But the famine was too hard for other passions, and it is destructive to nothing so much as to modesty; for what was otherwise worthy of reverence was in this case despised insomuch that children pulled out the very morsels that their fathers were eating out of their very mouths, and, what was still more to be pitied, so did the mothers do as to their infants; and when those that were most dear were perishing under their hands, they were not ashamed to take from them the very

last drops that might preserve their lives.

Josephus, *Wars* 5.10.3 (429-430)

The events that occurred in Jerusalem were so horrific that the Jews were forced, by the severity of the famine, to eat their own children. This kind of cannibalistic action was completely unknown even by the pagan Greeks and Barbarians. Yet the historian's account records the fulfillment of the prophetic words of Moses.

**You will eat the flesh of your sons;
You will eat the flesh of your daughters.**

Leviticus 26:29

The historian continues his lengthy account of the destruction of Jerusalem and the famine that accompanied it. He presented the account of a certain wealthy woman named Mary, who had moved into the city with her son. She, too, was among the famine victims who became unusually desperate. Of her Josephus wrote:

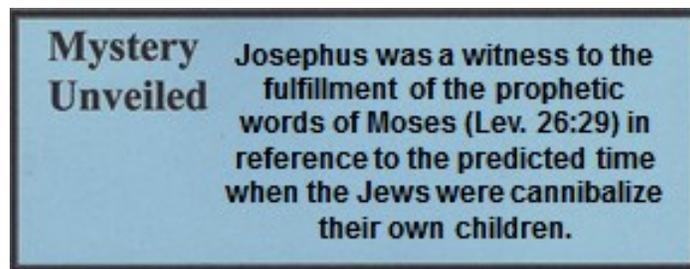
She then attempted a most unnatural thing; and snatching up her son, who was a child sucking at her breast, she said, "O you miserable infant! For whom shall I preserve you in this war with the Romans, if they preserve our lives we will be slaves! This famine also will destroy us, even before that slavery comes upon us: - yet are these seditious rogues more terrible than both the other. Come on; be my food, and be a fury to these seditious varlets and a byword to the world, which is all that is now wanting to complete the calamities of us Jews."

As soon as she said this she slew her son; and then roasted him, and ate half of him, and kept the other half by her concealed. Upon the seditious came in presently and smelling the horrid scent of this food, they threatened her that they would cut her throat immediately if she did not show them what food she had gotten ready. She replied that she had saved a very fine portion of it for them; and withal uncovered what was left of her son. Thereupon they were seized with a horror and amazement of mind, and stood astonished at the sight; when she said to them, "This is my own son and what was done was my own doing! Come, eat of this food; for I have eaten of it myself! Do not you pretend to be either more tender than a woman or more

compassionate than a mother; but if you be so scrupulous and do abominate this my sacrifice, as I have eaten the one half let the rest be reserved for me also.”

After which those men went out trembling being never so much affrighted at anything as they were at this, and with some difficulty they left the rest of that meat to the mother. Upon which the whole city was full of this horrid action immediately; and while everybody laid his miserable case before their own eyes, they trembled as if this unheard of action had been by themselves. So those that were thus distressed by the famine were very desirous to die and those already dead were esteemed happy, because they had not lived long enough either to hear or see such miseries.

Josephus, *Wars* 6.3.4 (208-213)



Various attempts to escape were made by the desperate defenders. One such individual was a freedom fighter, Simon, who thought he could escape capture by merely acting like the messiah. The prolific Josephus recorded an interesting account of Simon, who after the destruction of the temple, but still during the siege against Jerusalem, realized he and his men were going to be destroyed. Simon, therefore, took several men, and entered the tunnels below the temple in an attempt to escape. They dug for a while before they realized their plight was hopeless and their provisions were nearly exhausted. Simon then decided he would escape by dressing like the messiah and magically appearing before the people. The story:

And now Simon, thinking that he might be able to astonish and delude the Romans, put on a white frock, and buttoned upon him a purple cloak, appeared out of the ground in the place the temple had formerly been. At the first, indeed, those that saw him were greatly astonished, and stood still where they were; but afterward came near

to him, and asked him who he was, but bade them call their captain; and when they ran to tell him, Terentius Rufus, who was left to command the army there, came to Simon, and learned the whole truth, and put him in bonds, and let Caesar know that he was taken. Thus did God bring this man to be punished for what bitter and savage tyranny he had exercised against his countrymen.

Josephus, *Wars* 7.2.1 (29-31)

9. By the end of A.D. 70, the temple was a heap of rubble. The pride of the Jewish establishment was utterly destroyed and, in fact, the Sadducees and Herodians were likewise destroyed. Throughout the world, the Jewish people mourned the day of *'Tisha B'By*, the day both temples were destroyed.⁴³⁷ Josephus, who rarely shared his personal thoughts, recorded this commentary:

And where is not that great city, the metropolis of the Jewish nation, which was fortified by so many walls around it, which could hardly contain the instruments prepared for the war, and which had so many ten thousands of men to fight for it? Where is the city that was believed to have God himself inhabiting therein? It is now demolished to the very foundations; and has nothing but that monument of it preserved, I mean the camp of those that has destroyed it, which still dwells upon its ruins, some unfortunate old men also lie upon the ashes of the temple, and a few women are there preserved alive by the enemy, for our bitter shame and reproach.

Josephus, *Wars* 7.8.7 (377)

437. A growing number of scholars believe this date was the date of destruction for Solomon's temple, and it became the date to observe other horrific events in Jewish history such as the destruction of the second temple and when the spies returned from Canaan and rejected the land promised by God. Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context*. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 10, Session 2.



13.01.05.A JUDAEA CAPTA COIN. This coin was minted by the Romans in honor of the conquest over the Jewish people in A.D. 70. No other victory was commemorated by such a large number of coins as the crushing of this revolt. The front honors Emperor Vespasian and the reverse side (right) shows the woman (symbolic of Judea) in a captive position and a man with his hands tied behind his back. SOURCE: Wikipedia Commons.

When the events of the destruction of Jerusalem are compared to the actions of Pilate, it is obvious that his response to Jesus was incredibly compassionate. Jerusalem was in ruins and the Roman army went to the Dead Sea to destroy Qumran and Masada. Soon the Jewish believers, who had previously fled to Pella, returned, and the Holy City was rebuilt.⁴³⁸

Unfortunately, within six decades after the temple was destroyed, another messianic pretender, Simon bar Kokhba, arose. He was determined to give the Jews the national freedom they longed for. In the early days of the Bar Kokhba Revolt (A.D. 132-135), many believed that he was their messiah. He minted coins that declared freedom from Roman domination.

Prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, there is no significant extra-biblical literature concerning tension between Jewish believers and the Synagogue. However, tensions increased dramatically after the destruction because Jewish believers had escaped the Roman slaughter and were considered to be cowards by those Jews who remained and suffered. But by the beginning of the Bar Kokhba War in the 130s,⁴³⁹ there was a

438. Tongue, "Decapolis." 1:379.

439. For further study, see Yigael Yigael, *Bar-Kokhba*. New York: Random House. 1971.

complete separation between Jewish believers and traditional Jews.⁴⁴⁰ In fact, Eusebius wrote that Bar Kokhba punished believers because they refused to fight against the Romans.⁴⁴¹



13.01.05.B BAR KOKHBA COIN (A.D. 132) Bar Kokhba Revolt Coin. LEFT: The palm tree represents sovereignty, as it has throughout centuries past. RIGHT: Palm branches and the words “For the Freedom of Jerusalem.” Wikipedia Commons.

But the Romans responded with might, power, and fury. The revolt was crushed by Emperor Hadrian (A.D. 135) who evicted all Jews from Jerusalem, destroyed all trees and gardens within ten Roman miles (stadia) of the city – probably both for military use and to devastate the Jews. He also renamed the land *Philistinia*, in honor of the ancient Philistines. This is the origin of the modern term *Palestine*.

Finally, Jesus clearly told them that they failed to “**recognize the time of your visitation.**” Had they carefully observed Daniel’s prophecies, they would have known the time of the Messiah’s coming was near. Even the magi, those wise men from the east, knew the time was near. Even if the leading Jews missed the prophecies, the visit of the magi should have given them the proverbial wake-up call. Yet they refused to recognize the obvious signs and related consequences. No wonder Jesus was in such deep sorrow for them.

440. Cited by Flusser, “The Jewish-Christian Schism (Part II).” 32.

441. Flusser, “The Jewish-Christian Schism (Part II).” 30-31.

13.01.06 Mt. 21:10-11; Jn. 12:17-19**THE PHARISEES RECOGNIZE THE POPULARITY OF JESUS**

Mt. ¹⁰ When He entered Jerusalem, the whole city was shaken, saying, “Who is this?”

¹¹ And the crowds kept saying, “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee!”

Jn. ¹⁷ Meanwhile, the crowd, which had been with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify. ¹⁸ This is also why the crowd met Him, because they heard He had done this sign.

¹⁹ Then the Pharisees said to one another, “You see? You’ve accomplished nothing. Look — the world has gone after Him!”

The people were in a fever pitch, awaiting the son of David, the Messiah. The Pharisees looked at each other and said, “**Look — the world has gone after Him!**” They realized they were in a losing battle with Jesus and needed to take matters into their own hands, even if it meant breaking conventional laws of justice.

13.01.07 Mk. 11:11 (See also Mt. 21:17)**JESUS RETURNED TO BETHANY**

¹¹ And He went into Jerusalem and into the temple complex. After looking around at everything, since it was already late, He went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

Unit 13

The Passion Week Begins

Chapter 02

Prediction Of Israel And Plots Of Jesus' Death



13.02.00.A. MERCHANTS CHASED FROM THE TEMPLE. Illustration by James Tissot. 1884. Jesus began and ended His ministry by cleansing the temple thereby not only emphasizing His displeasure with the religious establishment, but also the importance of holiness before God.

13.02.01 Mk. 11:12-14 (See also Mt. 21:18-19) April 3, A.D. 30, **Bethany**

UNFRUITFUL FIG TREE CURSED

¹² The next day when they came out from Bethany, He was hungry. ¹³ After seeing in the distance a fig tree with leaves, He went to find out if there was anything on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴ He said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again!” And His disciples heard it.

The fig tree was one of the historic symbols of Israel throughout the centuries (Hos. 9:10; Na. 3:12);⁴⁴² Israel – a nation that God brought forth for one purpose – to bring forth the Anointed One who was Jesus. For generations, rabbis would sit under the fig tree and teach their students the Torah. As the students would “eat the word of Scripture,” so they would find some fruit to eat on the tree most of the year. In a similar manner, Israel was called to instruct the nations of the world about the covenants of God. This imagery was used by Amos (Ch. 8) when God referred to His people as the “summer fruit” that would be destroyed.⁴⁴³ The tree cursed by Jesus had an abundance of leaves and gave the appearance of being fruitful, whereas in reality, it was a barren tree. Israel was the same. The religious nation gave the appearance of being full of life but was, in fact, a barren people.

“A fig tree with leaves.” The story of the fig tree (*figus carica*) is a story of hope.⁴⁴⁴ Modern readers who are not acquainted with the land of Israel often question why an innocent tree was cursed, but the tree may not have been quite as innocent as they may have thought. It normally takes three years for a fig tree to mature and produce fruit, after which it has three seasons of fig production as follows.

1. The early fig, known as the *bekurah*, ripens at the end of June, sometimes earlier in the Jerusalem area.
2. The summer fig which is the main crop. It ripens in August and September and the Israelis preserve the fruit in the form of cakes.
3. The *pag* is the winter fig or unripe fig. It ripens only after the leaves have fallen off the tree.⁴⁴⁵

The difficulty with this passage is that Jesus cursed the fruit tree for *not* having fruit, when Mark said that it was *not* supposed to have fruit (Mk. 11:13b). So why was the tree cursed for being a normal fig tree? There are two interpretations.

1. The writers of the synoptic gospels focused the life and ministry of Jesus in the Galilee area while John focused primarily in the Jerusalem and Judea area. Galilee lies in a different climate zone than does Jerusalem, which is atop of the

442. See discussions on the fig tree in 02.03.04 “Education” and 09.03.09.

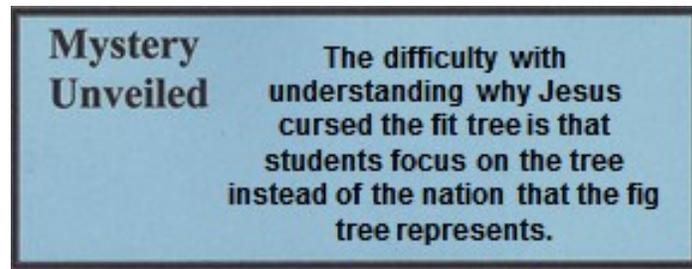
443. Jer. 5:17; Hos. 2:12; Joel 1:7-12; Hab. 3:17; Farrar, *Life of Christ*. 338-39.

444. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 1:232.

445. Geikie, *The Life and Words*. 2:640. See also Josephus, *Wars* 3.10.8.

central mountain range. Josephus said that in Galilee figs are ripe every month of the year with the exception of January and February. In Jerusalem, however, the period of dormancy for fruit trees is longer due to the higher elevation. So anyone from Galilee visiting Jerusalem might expect to find figs on a tree as they would in Galilee, but there would not be any. Jesus might have expected to find a few early figs on this tree, but the *ordinary* fig-season had not arrived yet.⁴⁴⁶ But that interpretation obviously limits the knowledge of Jesus.

2. Another interpretation is that just as an innocent lamb was sacrificed every Passover for the sins of the family, so the fig tree was “sacrificed” because it represented the sins of national Israel. The sins of the Jewish family were covered by the sacrifice; but the sins of the unrepentant nation brought forth a curse.



In the Old Testament, the tree was associated with God’s promises of prosperity as well as His prophetic warnings.⁴⁴⁷ While both the early fruit and later fruit are figs, the taste of each is clearly different. The early fruit appears only for a brief period and clusters of the later fruit ripen throughout most of the year. It is the only tree in the Middle East where, in early spring, the early fruit appears *before* the leaves. Mark referred to the latter fruit, since this is the fruit that would have been the preferred fruit enjoyed by travelers. Fig trees were planted along roads for the benefit of the traveling public and its fruit was considered to be common property.⁴⁴⁸

The accounts of the fig tree are placed on either side of the second cleansing of the temple for symbolic reasons. Not only did the temple leadership fail to represent God to the Jewish and Gentile people, but they were also about to condemn the Messiah. The fig tree as a prophetic event had full significance in A.D. 70 when the temple was destroyed and judgment fell upon the Jewish nation. When Jesus spoke these words, He announced that judgment was coming upon the spiritually dead religious leaders. The

446. Farrar, *The Life of Christ*. 384-85.

447. Jer. 5:17; Hos. 2:12; Joel 1:7-12; Hab. 3:17; See also Mic. 7:1 and Nah. 3:12.

448. Farrar, *The Life of Christ*. 384.

following three parables repeat the theme:

1. The Parable of the Two Sons (see 13.03.03; Mt. 21:28-32; also known as “The Son Who did not Work”)
2. The Tenant Farmers (see 13.03.04; Mt. 21:33-46; also known as “The Parable of the Tenants.”)
3. The Wedding Invitation (see 13.03.07; Mt. 22:1-14; also known as “The Parable of the Wedding Banquet”).

One of God’s divine principles is that men always be as honest as possible. His hatred for hypocrisy⁴⁴⁹ was demonstrated in the cursing of the fig tree. The call for honesty was later quite emphatic when two people, Ananias and Sapphira, made false claims concerning the funds received from the sale of land and met sudden death (Acts 5:1-11).

Yet another law forbade the cutting down of fruit trees except for special circumstances (Deut. 20:19-20), namely, for the lack of producing fruit. In this case, both the fig tree and the nation it represented were condemned according to the Old Testament law. The message was clearly understood because the imagery of a plant to depict God’s people is common in Judaism.⁴⁵⁰ The following discussion (cf. Mt. 24) took place as Jesus was on the Mount of Olives with all of His disciples and there He gave His famous Olivet Discourse. According to the *Apocalypse of Peter*, the disciple, Peter, recorded the following:

And I, Peter, answered and said to him, “Explain to me concerning the fig tree, and how shall we perceive it, for throughout all its days does the fig tree sprout and every year it brings forth its fruit (and)⁴⁵¹ for its master. What does the parable of the fig tree mean? We do not understand.”

And the Master answered and said unto me, “Do you not understand that the fig tree is the house of Israel? Even as a man had planted a fig tree in his garden and it brought forth no fruit, and he looked for its fruit for many years. When he did not find it he said to the keeper of his garden ‘Uproot the tree that our land may not be unfruitful for us.’”

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

450. 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.

451. Parenthesis by Schneemelcher, editor.

*Apocalypse of Peter Ch. 2*⁴⁵²

While the *Apocalypse* has some Hellenistic overtones, both Clement of Alexandria⁴⁵³ and Eusebius, a church father and historian of a later period,⁴⁵⁴ shared the unknown author's opinion. Clearly, the phrase "fig tree" refers to the nation or house of Israel and is, therefore, preserved by more than one credible witness within two generations of Jesus.

"The fig tree is the house of Israel." The children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are referred to symbolically in the form of three trees – each one for a specific purpose.⁴⁵⁵

1. The grape vine is the symbol of Israel spiritual privileges (Jer. 2:21; Isa. 5:1-7).
2. The fig tree is a symbol of Israel's national privileges⁴⁵⁶
3. The olive tree is a symbol of Israel's religious privileges (Jer. 11:16-17)

Finally, while national Israel was cursed, obviously God's love for Jewish individuals continues. In Acts 1:8 the disciples were told to go and preach the Kingdom of God first to the Jewish people, then to the Samaritans, and then to the far corners of the world. If every segment of the Jewish people was cursed, the obviously the passage in Acts would have been written differently. Notice that in Romans 11:17-27 is the "Parable of the Two Olive Trees" that is additional evidence that Israel was not *completely* cursed. The two olive trees represent the Gentiles and Jews who come to faith in Christ Jesus.

452. Schneemelcher, "Apocalypse of Peter." *New Testament Apocrypha* Vol. 2. This passage was written in King James English and has been slightly modified by this writer for an easier reading by a modern audience. Nearly all scholars believe that the author was someone other than Peter; someone who recorded some events, embellished a few others, and then assigned Peter's name to the document. It certainly should **not** be considered equal to the inspired text. See video by Dr. Doug Finkbinder 02.02.01.V.

453. 2 *Clement* 5; Schneemelcher, ed., in *New Testament Apocrypha*. 2:625.

454. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.14.1.

455 Larkin, "The Three Trees to which Israel is compared in the Scriptures." *Dispensational Truth or God's Plan and Purpose in the Ages*. 4th 29:153-57.

456. 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.



13.02.01.A. THE EARLY FRUIT OF THE FIG TREE. The fig tree (*ficus carica*) was symbolic of both the king and people of Israel since the early days of the judges.⁴⁵⁷ Jesus cursed the fig tree, symbolic of the curse that would come and the land would be destroyed and Jews from their homeland. Photograph by the author.

13.02.02 Mk. 11:15-17 (See also Mt. 21:12-13; Lk. 19:45-46) **In the Temple**

SECOND TEMPLE CLEANSING, MERCHANTS DRIVEN OUT

¹⁵ They came to Jerusalem, and He went into the temple complex and began to throw out those buying and selling in the temple. He overturned the money changers' tables and the chairs of those selling doves,¹⁶ and would not permit anyone to carry goods through the temple complex.

¹⁷ Then He began to teach them:

“Is it not written,

457. Judges 9:7-15; Lk. 8:6-9; Hareuveni, *Tree and Shrub in Our Biblical Heritage*. 60-61.

My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations (Isa. 56:7)?

But you have made it a den of thieves” (Jer. 7:11).

This was the second of two recorded temple cleansings; symbolically, Jesus opened and closed His ministry with a call to purity of the people of God.⁴⁵⁸ The Sadducees had absolutely no respect for the Court of the Gentiles because they had no respect for Gentiles. That court was built specifically for worship by foreigners. The Sadducees believed that since that area was defiled anyway by visiting Gentiles; why not permit shopkeepers and money changers there as well? Its sacredness was destroyed. Therefore, Jesus confronted them on four points:

1. Defilement of the court reserved for Gentile worship and
2. Robbery by excessive pricing of sacrificial lambs for the faithful Jews who had traveled long distances to honor God.
3. Dishonest currency exchange, as the moneychangers charged between four and eight percent above fair value to exchange currency that would be given to the priests.⁴⁵⁹
4. The temple tax *had* to be paid with the Tyrian silver half-shekel tax.⁴⁶⁰ The Sadducees were considerably more interested in the pure silver than the pagan image stamped on the coin itself.⁴⁶¹

Three years earlier Jesus cleansed the outer court of the temple from its degrading materialistic and commercial nature. Since then the money changers and livestock

458. The synoptic gospels record the temple cleansing at the end of Jesus’ ministry while John recorded a cleansing at the beginning. Throughout history the church has maintained that these were two separate events. However, with the rise of textual criticism and various liberal theologies, this viewpoint has become the minority view. For an excellent article that supports the view of two cleansings, see Allan Chapple “Jesus’ Intervention in the Temple: Once or Twice?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. 58:3 (Sept. 2015) 545-570.

459. Matthews, *Manners and Customs*. 248.

460. Crosson and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*. 156; For more information on the Tyrian shekel and related issues, see 05.05.04 and the discussion of the first cleansing.

461. Crosson and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*. 156.

swindlers were back in full force.⁴⁶² Even though it was now cleansed again, the change would be short-lived and the days of this structure and the religious system were numbered.

Nothing could have offended the Sadducees more than the Triumphal Entry and the two cleansings. The first cleansing (see 05.05.04) most certainly angered them, as they carried on their sacrilegious sacrificial lamb trade under the pretense of accommodating strangers. There is also an important point to consider, and that is that His appearance was a fulfillment of a prophecy by Malachi, and as such, was a bold messianic claim.

“See, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. Then the Lord you seek will suddenly come to His temple, the Messenger of the covenant you desire — see, He is coming,” says the Lord of Hosts.

Malachi 3:1

The beginning of this verse clearly refers to John the Baptist, but the second sentence refers to Jesus who suddenly came to the temple. Jesus began and ended His ministry with the cleansing of the temple and, in doing so He made a profound messianic claim without a spoken word:⁴⁶³ God’s judgment will always fall upon His house first. By the cleansings, He also fulfilled a prophecy in Psalm 69 that reads,

For your house has consumed me,

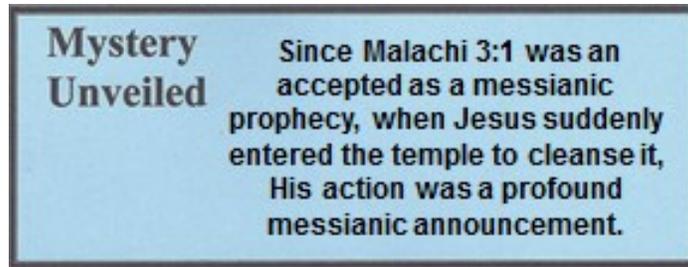
Psalm 69:9a

The psalm literally means, *the temple will be His destruction.*⁴⁶⁴ That is precisely what happened. The Sadducees were delighted to see Jesus challenge and humiliate the leading Pharisees, but when He cleansed the temple, He was threatening their turf – their social, economic, and political security. Jesus had done this once previously; they would not permit Him to get away with this a second time without a severe punishment.

462. The issue of commercialization in the commercialization within the Court of the Gentiles is found in the Mishnah *Seqalim* 1.3; 3.1 and *Berakot* 9.5; Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.3.4 (145) and 15.11.5 (417).

463. Bookman, *When God Wore Sandals*. CD Trac 6.

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



“Would not permit anyone to carry goods through the temple complex.” The temple was to be a sacred place of worship for both Jews and Gentiles. Unfortunately, the Court of the Gentiles had degraded to the point that merchants carried their merchandise through the temple courts as a short cut from one part of the city to another.

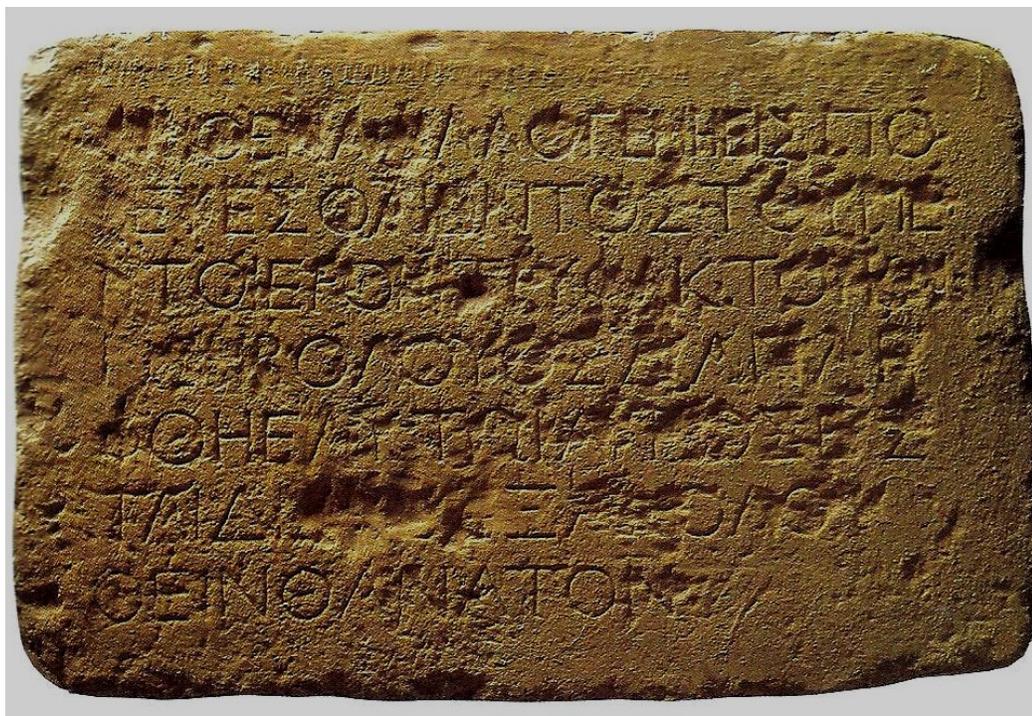
Yet not all priests were as corrupt as the leading Pharisees and Sadducees. The Mishnah preserved the comments of those who desired to a return of respect and reverence that would truly honor God.

A man should not behave himself unseeingly while opposite the Eastern Gate (of the temple) since it faces the Holy of Holies. He may not enter into the Temple Mount with his staff or his sandal or his wallet, or with dust upon his feet, nor may he make of it a short by-path; still less may he spit there.

Mishnah, *Berakoth* 9:5⁴⁶⁵

Yet while the Court of the Gentiles was treated with the utmost disrespect, the inner sanctuary was held in the highest ritualistic respect. Any Gentile who entered was subject to be killed on the spot, even if he was a Roman soldier. An inscribed stone found in the temple rubble threatened Gentile trespassers with death if they entered beyond this particular temple area.

465. Clarification in parenthesis by Danby, ed., *Mishnah*.



13.02.02.A. TEMPLE WARNING INSCRIPTION. This warning stone was discovered in the 1930s. It was originally imbedded in a stone wall that surrounded the inner temple court. The Greek inscription states that no foreigners, including Romans, were to enter the sacred area of the temple.⁴⁶⁶ Photograph courtesy of the Rockefeller Museum.

In addition to the temple warning inscription discovered in the 1930s, another warning stone with a Greek inscription⁴⁶⁷ was discovered earlier and published in 1871 by archaeologist Charles Clermont-Ganneau.⁴⁶⁸ That artifact is today in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum in Turkey. That stone was situated near the main entrance and reads:

No stranger is to enter within the balustrade (partition barrier) surrounding the temple and whoever is caught will be answerable for his death, which will ensue.

466. This stone was discovered in the 1930s outside St. Stephen's Gate, a/k/a the Lion Gate. See Wilson, *Jesus, the Evidence*. 113; No photographic credit given. It is one of two temple warning inscriptions found.

467. A second warning sign has been uncovered with a Latin inscription. Obviously that was installed after the Romans controlled the region, and most likely by the builders employed by Herod the Great.

468. Clarmont-Ganneau, "Discovery of a Tablet from Herod's Temple."132-133.

Josephus, *Antiquities*. 12.3.4 (145b)⁴⁶⁹

Twice the Mishnah makes a reference of the temple warning,⁴⁷⁰ and twice Josephus did the same,⁴⁷¹ and he indicated that not even Romans were permitted to enter the sacred area.⁴⁷² No Gentile could enter the inner sanctuary and expect to live to tell about it.

“A House of prayer for all nations.” In the cleansing of the temple Jesus profoundly decried the degenerated state of religious affairs. By this cleansing and the reflection upon the words of Isaiah, Jesus declared Himself as the rightful Lord of God’s sanctuary.⁴⁷³

**⁷ I will bring them to My holy mountain
and let them rejoice in My house of prayer.
Their burnt offerings and sacrifices
will be acceptable on My altar,
for My house will be called a house of prayer
for all nations.”**

Isaiah 56:7

Jesus valued the temple because it was where people came with their sacrifices and to commune with God. Yet it would be only a few days until the New Covenant would be established and He would become the focus of worship. Then, with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the body of every believer would become the new temple. In light of the two temple cleansings, it behooves the believer to be a pure and holy temple in mind (personal thoughts) and body (physical) and spirit (worship). The Apostle Paul said that the bodies of believers were the temple of God.⁴⁷⁴ The holiness that Jesus demanded in the temple ought to be the believer’s gift given to Him in love and a willing desire to serve Him. The devotion to purity and holiness is both a commitment and sacrifice, even if it leads to persecution and martyrdom.

469. See also Josephus, *Wars* 5.5.2.

470. Mishnah, *Middoth* 2:3 and *Kelim* 1:8.

471. Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.11.5; Josephus, *Wars* 3.7.15.

472. Josephus, *Wars* 6.2.4.

473. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*. 21.

474. 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16.

After the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the disciples continued to go to the temple to pray (Acts 3:1). They realized that Jesus had been revealed in the seven Jewish feasts and festivals.⁴⁷⁵ There is no mention of a sacrifice of any kind since Jesus was the ultimate and final sacrifice for all humanity. Jesus, by His sacrifice of death and resurrection, was both priest and victim and, therefore, in Him believers live (Rom. 6:9; Heb. 9:23-28). Today sacrifices to God are good works (Heb. 13:16), faith (Phil. 2:17), evangelism (Rom. 15:16), almsgiving (Phil 4:18), and sometimes martyrdom (2 Tim 4:6), but not animal sacrifice.

“A den of robbers.” Not only did the Sadducees rob the people in their religious trade, but, more importantly, they robbed the temple of its holiness and sanctity. Jesus recalled the words of Jeremiah.

⁹ “Do you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and follow other gods that you have not known? ¹⁰ Then do you come and stand before Me in this house called by My name and say, ‘We are delivered, so we can continue doing all these detestable acts’? ¹¹ Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your view? Yes, I too have seen it.”

Jeremiah 7:9-11

However, the most descriptive narrative concerning the evils of the High Priest Annas and his family is from the pen of Josephus who said that

He increased in glory every day, and to this great degree, and had obtained favor and esteem of the citizens in a signal manner; for he was a great hoarder of money; he therefore cultivated the friendship of Albinus and of the high priest Jesus (obviously not the Christ), by making them presents, he also had servants who were very wicked, who joined themselves to the boldest sort of people, and went to thrashing floors, and took away the tithes that belonged to the priests by violence, and did not refrain from beating such as would not give these tithes to them. So other high priests acted in like manner, as did those servants without anyone being able to prohibit them, so that some of the priests, that of old were wont to be supported with those tithes, died for want of food.

475. Acts 20:16; 21:17ff; 1 Cor. 16:8; cf. with Col. 2:16-17; Gal. 4:10.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.9.2 (295-296)⁴⁷⁶

It is difficult to comprehend the evilness of Annas; he had no compassion whatsoever, not even for his fellow priests who served with him. He was a religious dictator who literally caused some to starve to death. His so-called friends, who were “purchased,” gave him favor and esteem out of fear only when he was in their presence (by signal). He was greed personified. At no time was there ever a greater contrast of personalities than that between Jesus and Annas. Just as Jesus had cursed the fig tree, which was representative of national Israel, likewise the temple system would be cursed because Annas and his fellow Sadducees. Just as the fig tree was found to be dead the following morning, likewise the temple and all the Sadducees were destroyed in the following generation by the Romans.

A question that has been raised is how was it possible for Jesus to cleanse the temple without causing the temple police and Roman guards to respond? They were well known to respond quickly to any sign of trouble,⁴⁷⁷ especially at Passover when there was a tension in the crowds who believe that someone would come forward at the temple and announce himself to be the messiah. In addition to the temple guards and security forces, there were priests and Levites stationed at specific places to maintain order.

The priest kept watch at three places in the Temple: at the Chamber of Abtinah, at the Chamber of the Flame, and at the Chamber of the Hearth; and the Levites at twenty-one places: five at the five gates of the Temple Mount, four at its corners inside, five at the five gates of the Temple Court, four at its corners outside, and one at the Chamber of Offerings, and one at the Chamber of the Curtain, and one behind the place of the Mercy Seat.⁴⁷⁸

Mishnah, *Middoth* 1:1

The priests were the temple gatekeepers who prevented unqualified persons from entering the sacred domain. Since there was a large amount of gold and silver, in both coinage and sacred objects, the gatekeepers were responsible that theft did not occur.⁴⁷⁹ Security was obviously tight, so how did Jesus manage to cleanse the temple without being arrested?

476. Added comment in parenthesis mine.

477. Acts 21:30-33; Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.6.3 and *Wars* 1.33.3.

478. This “Mercy Seat” was outside the western wall of the Holy of Holies.

479. Walton, Matthews, and Chavalas. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*. 417-18.

The answer may lie in the fact that the temple area was huge – thirty-five acres and filled with thousands of people. The only area that Jesus cleansed was the Court of the Gentiles, as this had been converted to a market place sometimes referred to as Annas’ Bazaar. It was filled with thousands of people bringing the products needed by the temple staff – firewood, wine, olive oil, and many other products. The merchants within this temple compound were, in effect, agents for the House of Annas and his son-in-law, Caiaphas. They were in business competition with the shop keepers out in the street.

But there is another thought to consider: while there has been a great deal of negativity placed on the temple leadership, it is easy to forget that many individuals in the temple service were righteous and holy servants who functioned in their positions as best as they could. When they saw the cleansing, they probably praised God for the opportunity to see Malachi 3:1 being fulfilled.

13.02.03 Mk. 11:18 (See also Lk. 19:47-48) The Temple Courts in Jerusalem

PLOT TO KILL JESUS DELAYED

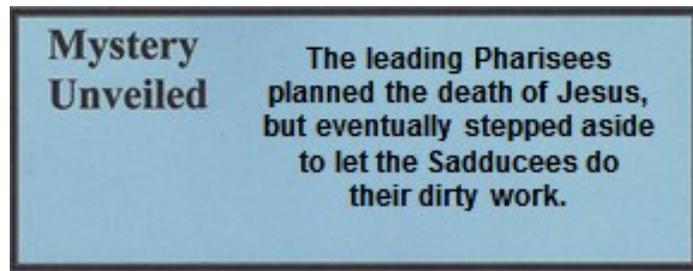
Mk. ¹⁸ Then the chief priests and the scribes heard it and started looking for a way to destroy Him. For they were afraid of Him, because the whole crowd was astonished by His teaching.

“**The chief priests and the scribes.**” This phrase clearly points to the Sadducees and scribes as the instigators, who were eventually successful in the execution of Jesus. The leading Pharisees are not mentioned as they took only an accusatory role, not an active role, as they were apparently absent in the Roman trials that led to the final execution of Jesus. The population at large and some religious leaders (see Jn. 12:42)⁴⁸⁰ remained faithful to Jesus, listening carefully to His teaching and expecting Him to announce His Messiahship at any moment. Therefore, a heavy tension hung between them and the common people that would burst into the crucifixion.

As stated previously, amazingly, Mark refers to the Sadducees once by name and 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. Along with them,

480. This is an excellent example of a misunderstanding of a passage that appears to be rather simple to comprehend. Throughout the gospels the writers often wrote that the religious leaders were against Jesus. Readers understand that to mean every leader of the Jews wanted to see Jesus crucified, when in fact, only those leaders, who were present with Jesus at that specific conversation, wanted to see His demise. John 12:42 gives clear evidence that some leaders became faithful followers of Jesus.

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.



13.02.03.Q1 If the Pharisees planned His death, why did they not pursue their plan?

The missing Pharisees were not there! Significant to the biblical narrative is a point that is frequently overlooked. It is important to underscore the point that *not all Pharisees* were the extreme legalists who attempted to kill Jesus. If so, why would some have warned Jesus that Herod Antipas wanted to kill Him (Lk. 13:31)? Why would Rabbi Gamaliel have taken a personal risk to save the lives of Peter and the apostles (Acts 5:34ff.)? In fact, many writings outside of Scripture, quoted in this text, were written by devoted Pharisees who pursued God within the framework of their knowledge. It has wrongly been assumed that since the leading Pharisee plotted to kill Him, *all Pharisees* were active in His execution.

But from this time forward, the leading Pharisees are no longer mentioned as having any role in the prosecution and execution of Jesus. They did not consider the motivation to kill someone a sin, but only if the act was committed. Josephus clearly indicates the Pharisees avoided severe punishments and executions (see below). A case in point was recorded by Josephus concerning a man by the name of Eleazar, who was “of ill temper and delighting in seditious practices.” In the discussion of Eleazar’s punishment for his transgressions, which were considered extremely serious, the Pharisees leaned on the side of mercy.

So the Pharisees made answer that he deserved stripes and bonds; but that it did not seem right to punish reproaches with death; and indeed the Pharisees, even upon other occasions are not apt to be severe in punishments.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.10.6 (294b)

The Pharisees, for the most part, were strongly opposed to being *personally* involved in any death sentence. Therefore, in light of the words of Josephus, it must be concluded

that the Pharisee elite must have been extremely corrupt and out of their Pharisaic norm that they would repeatedly plot the murder of Jesus. As previously stated, once the Sadducees seized Jesus, the Pharisees are no longer mentioned in Scripture. They still hated Him and wanted to see Him dead, but in their religious legalism they felt that if they did not have an active part in the crucifixion, they remained innocent. So they handed their dirty work over to the Sadducees, who were more than willing to present a mock trial and hand Him over to the Romans.

Conflicts within the Pharisaic judicial system: While the term “Pharisees” covers a multitude of religious sects, the two leading schools of theology were the House of Hillel and the House of Shammai. Those of Hillel focused on compassion, kindness, and forgiveness while those of Shammai focused on harshness and legalism. This is highlighted in the following passage of the Babylonian Talmud.

If someone stole a beam and built it into a house—

The School of Shammai say, “Let him tear down the whole house and return the beam to its owner.”

And the School of Hillel say, “The owner has a claim only for the value of the beam alone, on account of the good order of those who repent.”

Babylonian Talmud, *Gittin* 18b⁴⁸¹

The entire conflict between the two schools became so intense that it caused division and conflict in the Jewish judicial system. Notice the following warning.

Abbaye said, “The caution against splintering into deviant groups applies only in the case of two courts of law, such as one deciding according to the views of Beit (meaning *House of*) Shammai and one according to the views of Beit Hillel, but two courts of law in separate cities would not be subject to this limitation.” Rava challenged this, “But were not the Shammaites and the Hillelites like two courts of law [and they differed freely from each other in the same locale]?” Said Rava, “The caution applies in the case of one court in the same city, with half the judges deciding according to the Beit Shammai and the other half according to the Beit Hillel.”

Babylonian Talmud, *Yebamoth* 14a⁴⁸²

481 Cited by Neusner. *The Talmud of Babylonia: An American Translation*. Vol XVIIIIB: Gittin. 93.

482. Cited by Boker. *The Talmud: Selected Writings*. 134-35; Bracketed insert by Boker; Definition in parenthesis mine.

Furthermore, the Mishnah has numerous situations where the application of the Mosaic Law or Oral Law by these opposing schools led to intense arguments. There can be no question that some, if not all, of the legalistic questions presented to Jesus were from the Shammaite branch of the Pharisees. If there were any Pharisees before Pilate demanding the crucifixion of Jesus, it would have been those of this school.

13.02.04 Mt. 21:14-16 In the Temple Courts

THE CHILDREN PRAISE JESUS

¹⁴ The blind and the lame came to Him in the temple complex, and He healed them. ¹⁵ When the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonders that He did and the children shouting in the temple complex, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant ¹⁶ and said to Him, “Do You hear what these children are saying?”

“Yes,” Jesus told them. “Have you never read:

You have prepared praise from the mouths of children and nursing infants?”

Beggars were not permitted in every part of the temple. Usually they were near the entrance of a “holy place” such as the temple gate, on along the road leading to a temple or synagogue.⁴⁸³ It is significant that the blind and lame came to Jesus, since they were forbidden to enter the temple according to the Oral Law.⁴⁸⁴ Once they were healed, they had to present themselves to the priests to be declared healed and they could then enter the temple sanctuary to worship God. The healing forced the priests to again deal with Jesus.

A Lesson in First Century Hermeneutics:

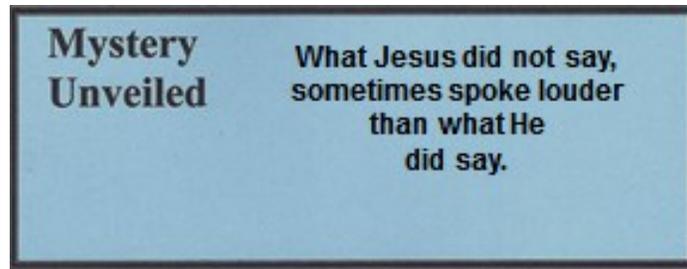
13.02.04.X Conveying A Verse Without Words

In a culture where the common people were probably more biblically literate than are

483. 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 men 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.”

484. Mishnah, *Hagigah* 1:1.

many modern Christians, Jesus could recite half a verse and the audience know how to finish it. With that understanding, Jesus recited half a passage and left the condemning part silent – yet everyone knew what Jesus ment.



“You have prepared praise from the mouths of children and nursing infants?” One of the unique features of how the rabbis taught, is, that at times, what was *not* said spoke the loudest. Jesus used this technique when addressing His critics, who were plotting His death. He quoted one half of Psalm 8:2 and left the other half unspoken. Since everyone in attendance knew the entire passage, His silent message was profound.

**² Because of Your adversaries,
You have established a stronghold
from the mouths of children and nursing infants
to silence the enemy and the avenger.**

Psalm 8:2



**13.02.05 Mk. 11:20-21; Mt. 21:20-22; Mk. 11:25-26 From Bethany to Jerusalem,
Tuesday Nissan 12**

LESSON FROM THE FIG TREE

Mk. ²⁰ Early in the morning, as they were passing by, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up. ²¹ Then Peter remembered and said to Him, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree that You cursed is withered.”

Mt. ²⁰ When the disciples saw it, they were amazed and said, “How did the fig tree wither so quickly?”

²¹ Jesus answered them, “I assure you: If you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you tell this

mountain, ‘Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,’ it will be done. ²² And if you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”

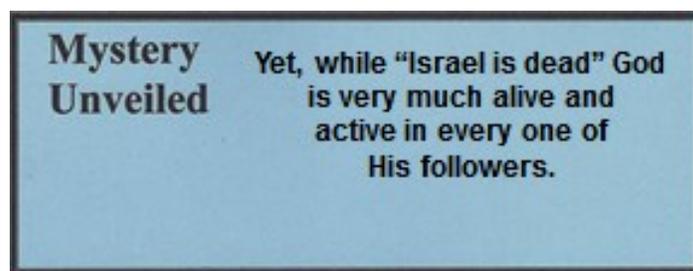
Mk. ²⁵ And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven will also forgive you your wrongdoing. [²⁶ But if you don’t forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your wrong-doing.]”

When Jesus and His disciples returned to the Holy City, they noticed the fig tree that had been cursed was dead.⁴⁸⁵ This sudden death was symbolic of the impending judgment that would fall upon the Jewish nation for their rejection of Jesus. It was a profound prophetic object lesson; a lesson that found its fulfillment in A.D. 70 and again in A.D. 135.

“If you have faith and do not doubt.” Faith is a gift from God that is to be applied to all life situations. It cannot be produced by human efforts or positive thinking. Faith is an applied decision for a divine result based on biblical principles when human intelligence would indicate other consequences. For this reason, an early church father known as the Shepherd of Hermas said,

You see then, said he, that faith is from above, from the Lord, and has great power; but double mindedness is an earthly spirit from the devil and has no power. Therefore, serve that faith that has power.

The Shepherd of Hermas⁴⁸⁶



A Lesson in First Century Hermeneutics:

13.02.05.X Explaining The Unknown With Use Of The Known

485. For further study, see Moulton, “Jesus’ Goal for Temple and Tree: A Thematic Revisit of Matt 21:12-22.” 561-72.

486. Lightfoot, citing “The Shepherd of Hermas” in *The Apostolic Fathers*. 2:191-92 without reference.

There are certain stories and historical events of culture that everyone knows. Jesus simply took some of those stories and events and used them in His lesson. In essence, He took His listeners from the known to the unknown; from the life of this earth to the spiritual life of the Kingdom of God.

“You tell this mountain, be ... thrown into the sea.” Jesus used an example of the physical world to explain a principle of the spiritual world. He used this imagery to say that feats greater than Herod’s could be accomplished by faith. One profound accomplishment of the king was the construction of the summer fortress-palace known as the Herodian. He literally relocated the top of one mountain and placed it on the top of another, making the fortress impenetrable and creating the appearance of a volcano. The lesson Jesus taught is that to have prayers answered one must have faith in God and forgive others. The imagery was impressive to His listeners.



13.02.05.A. THE CREATION OF THE HERODIAN PALACE-FORTRESS. Herod the Great relocated the top of one mountain (left) and placed it on top of the other mountain to build this fortress-palace. At its base he constructed an indoor Olympic-size swimming pool. The Herodian is located three miles south of Bethlehem along the edge of the Judean Desert, within sight of where Jesus was born. Photograph by the author.



13.02.06 Jn. 12:20-26

JESUS EXPLAINS THE PURPOSE OF HIS DEATH

²⁰ Now some Greeks were among those who went up to worship at the festival. ²¹ So they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and requested of him, “Sir, we want to see Jesus.”

²² Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

²³ Jesus replied to them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ “I assure you:

Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground
and dies,

it remains by itself.

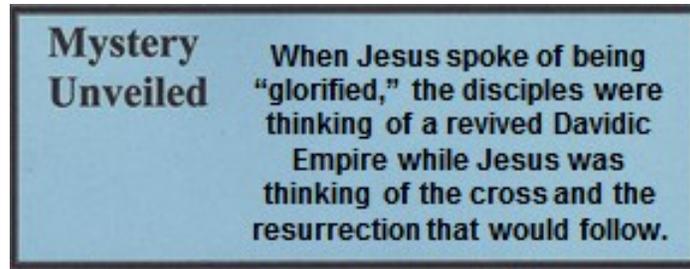
But if it dies,

it produces a large crop.

²⁵ The one who loves his life
will lose it,
and the one who hates his life in this world
will keep it for eternal life,

²⁶ If anyone serves Me
He must follow Me.
Where I am,
There My servant also will be.
If anyone serves Me
the Father will honor him.

While Jesus told His disciples that He would face death, they could not comprehend His words. They could not imagine that someone who performed such incredible miracles and raised the dead would permit Roman tyranny to kill him. Rather, their anticipation was like that of everyone else; they continued to think that He would establish a revived Davidic Empire.



“Now some Greeks ... went up to worship.” Some Greeks worshiped the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. To qualify to worship in the temple, Gentiles were required to affirm one of the following:

1. Convert to Judaism, and be circumcised, or
2. Worship God as Gentiles and affirm that they observe the Noahide Commandments.⁴⁸⁷

Those who went through the rite of circumcision could worship anywhere within the temple where other Jewish men worshiped, but those who observed the Noahide Commandments could worship only in the Court of the Gentiles. They became known as “God-fearers.” They were not Hellenized Jews or Jews from the Diaspora, but Gentiles, who *observed* the Jewish faith.⁴⁸⁸ Like the magi some three decades earlier, they represented the multitudes of Gentiles that would come to Him in the future from every nation of the world. Some of them later became Christians and consorted with Paul and Silas at Thessalonica (Acts 17:4). The Jewish people placed Gentiles in three categories.⁴⁸⁹

1. The *Ben Noah*, meaning *Sons of Noah*, who observed the Noahide Commandments. They were also known as “Righteous Gentiles,” “God-fearers,” and “Proselytes of the Gate.” When the early church was getting established, the Jerusalem Council met (Acts 15) to determine if Gentile converts had any further obligation beyond the Noahide Laws, other than repentance and baptism.⁴⁹⁰
2. The *Akkum*, who did not observe the Noahide Laws (sometimes referred to as

487. The Noahide Commandments were and continue to be, in the opinion of orthodox Jews, divine laws that Gentiles need to obey to obtain favor with God if they did not want to convert to Judaism. See Appendix 17 for more information.

488. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 2:254.

489. Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 57.

490. See Acts 2:10; 6:5; 13:43.

dogs).

3. The *Ger Toshav*, who were those persons who, under oath, stood before a Jewish judge, stated they had two intentions:

- a. To reside in Israel and, if permitted,
- b. Their intention to faithfully observe the seven Noahide Laws.

A Gentile man could be honored and respected as a *Ben Noah* without circumcision, but if he wanted to become a full-pledged Jew, then the painful circumcision was required. For that reason, it is generally accepted that many women and few men converted to Judaism.

Finally, this passage challenges the common opinion that the Jews did not attempt to evangelize the world. While most of the national leadership of Israel had no interest in this matter, and some even hated the Gentiles, God always has His remnant few to do His work. While the Jews as a whole failed to bring the Word of God to the Gentiles, it must not be stated exclusively that all Jews failed in this calling.

“Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies.” Everyone understood that wheat, the most prized grain, dies at the end of the harvest season. Yet seeds that die bring forth life when planted. Likewise, here, Jesus told His disciples that life in Him could come to them only through complete death to self and dedication to Him.

“The one who hates his life in this world.” This is a phrase of comparison and a reflection of the seed that dies. The believer’s love and dedication for Christ must be so intense that, in comparison, the concerns for his own well-being are so minute as to appear to be hatred. The word *world*, as John used it, means a *human society organizing itself without God*.⁴⁹¹

13.02.07 Jn. 12:27-33

FORETELLING HIS CRUCIFIXION

²⁷ “Now My soul is troubled. What should I say—Father, save Me from this hour? But that is why I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify Your name!”

491. Barclay, “John.” 2:185.

Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again!”

²⁹ The crowd standing there heard it and said it was thunder. Others said that an angel had spoken to Him.

³⁰ Jesus responded, “This voice came, not for Me, but for you. ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. ³² As for Me, if I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all people to Myself.” ³³ He said this to signify what kind of death He was about to die.

Throughout the Old Testament Period the Jewish people believed that God spoke to selected men, generally known as prophets. For example,

1. God spoke to Samuel when he was a child (1 Sam. 3:1-14).
2. God spoke to Elijah when he had to flee from Jezebel (1 Kgs. 19:1-18)
3. God spoke to Eliphaz the Temanite in Job 4:16.

However, after four centuries of prophetic silence and the invasion of Hellenism, most of the Jewish people ceased to believe that God spoke personally to anyone. So when they heard the voice from heaven, it was absolutely stunning!

13.02.08 Jn. 12:34-36; Mk. 11:19 Bethany

CALL FOR WALKING IN LIGHT

³⁴ Then the crowd replied to Him, “We have heard from the scripture that the Messiah will remain forever. So how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?”

³⁵ Jesus answered, “The light will be with you only a little longer. Walk while you have the light so that darkness doesn’t overtake you. The one who walks in darkness doesn’t know where he’s going. ³⁶ While you have the light, believe in the light so that you may become sons of light.” Jesus said this, then went away and hid from them.

Mk. ¹⁹ And whenever evening came, they would go out of the city.

“Believe in the light so that you may become sons of light.” The phrase *sons of light* was used by the Essenes, as evidenced in their numerous Dead Sea Scrolls, especially in one scroll known as *The Manuel of Discipline*. The phrase means *to have the knowledge of God*. Darkness, on the other hand, means ignorance of God’s Word, because it is ignorance that leads to disobedience of His laws that in turn results in death. The phrase, as used by Jesus, was a common term throughout Judaism. The Essenes felt they were the exclusive sons of light, because they obeyed the strictest Mosaic Laws, and everyone else was a son of Darkness. The Apostle Paul used the term in his epistle to the Ephesians (5:8a) when he said, “Live as children of light,” meaning to live as children with the knowledge of God. Paul and Jesus did not endorse Essene theology, but used the same phrase that was well known and everyone understood it.

In the evening Jesus returned to Bethany, a short distance east of Jerusalem. He desired to spend the night there with close friends, before returning to the city in the morning. He probably stayed with Lazarus whom He had raised from the dead. There He could enjoy quietness, seclusion, and prepare Himself for the trials and anguish of the coming week. It is here His humanness is revealed. This peaceful village of believers was His home until His arrest.

Unit 13

The Passion Week Begins

Chapter 03

The First Examination Of Jesus



13.03.00.A. JESUS ADDRESSED THE CROWD by James Tissot.

Tensions increased as Jesus continued to preach and demonstrate, by performing miracles, that He was bringing forth the Kingdom of God. For this the religious establishment confronted Him.

13.03.01 Introduction

The similarities between the sacrificial lamb and the Passion Week of Jesus are astounding. Just as each family's sacrificial lamb was examined for any possible imperfections, so likewise, Jesus was examined by the Pharisees for any possible "imperfections" (violations of the Written and Oral Laws). Both examiners looked for reasons to *reject* the "offering." Just as every small sacrificial lamb lived in a Jewish home and was loved by a Jewish family between the tenth and fourteenth of Nissan, so

likewise, Jesus was in Jerusalem where He was loved by thousands between the tenth and fourteenth of Nissan.

From Bethany Jesus returned to the temple where Jewish leaders approached to examine Him. In their minds, the only authorized teachers were those who had graduated from a recognized theological school; they had “rabbinic authority.” Jesus obviously had not graduated from one of their schools and, therefore, another examination of the Miracle Worker was required. Ironically, while they examined Him, in reality, it was they who were being examined. There were four examinations of Jesus that were parallel to the examinations of the lambs that occurred in Jewish homes at this same time. The religious leaders were looking for any possible imperfection in His theology, lifestyle, or intentions.⁴⁹² They had two goals in mind:

1. To find any issue by which they could bring Jesus before the Romans for execution. This was by far their primary objective.
2. To find any substantial evidence they could present to the crowds, since His popularity was growing exponentially. But that goal was hindered by the ongoing problem, that due to corruption in the ranks of the Sadducees and leading Pharisees, the people were greatly displeased with their religious leadership. Therefore, their ability to persuade anyone was limited.

A summary of the four examinations is as follows:

1. The first examination was by the priests (Sadducees) and elders (Pharisees) on Tuesday, April 4, the 12th day of Nisan. They desired to uncover cause for which to accuse Jesus before the Romans and discredit Him before the people. However, in that conversation Jesus responded by presenting three parables: The Parable of the Two Sons (Mt. 21:28-31; 13.03.03), The Parable of the Householder (Mt. 21:33-41; 13.03.04), and the Parable of the Wedding (Mt. 21:1-14; 13.03.07).
2. The second examination was by the Herodians who desired to present Jesus before the Roman on the grounds of treason. Any charge of rebellion or failure to pay taxes qualified. So they presented the fundamental question on whether it was proper to pay taxes to Caesar (Mt. 22:20).

492. For an exhaustive study on this subject, see Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor's Manual*. Class 25ff.

3. Then the Sadducees returned for a third examination. They asked Jesus a question pertaining to eternal life (Lk. 20:28-33), something that they themselves did not believe in. Jesus responded with Exodus 3:6-7.

4. After the Sadducees, the leading Pharisees returned for the fourth and final examination of the day. They were legalists who knew that Jesus highly prized the Written Law over their Oral Law. So they asked which was the most important law (Mk. 12:28-34). They agreed with His response and evidently, from this point on they abandoned their attempts to trap Him.

13.03.02 Mk. 11:27-33 (See also Mt. 21:23-27; Lk. 20:1-8) In the Temple

THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS QUESTIONED

²⁷ **They came again to Jerusalem. As He was walking in the temple complex, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came²⁸ and asked Him, “By what authority are You doing these things? Who gave You this authority to do these things?”**

²⁹ **Jesus said to them, “I will ask you one question; then answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. ³⁰ Was John’s baptism from heaven or from men? Answer Me.”**

³¹ **They began to argue among themselves: “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ ³² But if we say, ‘From men’”— they were afraid of the crowd, because everyone thought that John was a genuine prophet. ³³ So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.”**

And Jesus said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

Jesus returned to the temple where He was confronted by His adversaries. They again attempted to embarrass Him before the massive populace to find accusations to use against Him. This time they questioned the source of His authority.

“The chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came.” The instigators of the death of Jesus were known as the proverbial “unholy trinity” – the Sadducees, scribes, and the elders – all three groups that comprised the Sanhedrin. Notice that the Pharisees are not mentioned because they are absent from the biblical text from this point on and are presumed by scholars not to be involved.

Mystery Unveiled	From this point on, the Pharisees are no longer mentioned in the gospels as having any involvement with the trials and crucifixion of Jesus.
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“By what authority.” It is interesting that the leaders questioned His authority, especially in light of the fact that they failed to find anything He did wrong according to the Written Scripture. They had asked the same question of John the Baptist (Jn. 1:19-25) and of Jesus earlier in His ministry (Jn. 2:18-22). The “authority” they were speaking of could come only from the temple priesthood. In essence, their question was: Who had given Jesus the right to teach on the Kingdom of God? Was He an impostor or a temple teacher? The questions by the religious leaders had no reflection upon proper credentials as a rabbi, since that office would not be in existence for at least another century. At this time Jesus was called “rabbi” out of honor and respect, not as a teaching title.

Mystery Unveiled	Since Jesus did not graduate from a recognized theological school in Jerusalem, the religious leaders questioned who gave Him the right to preach about the Kingdom of God?
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In the Hebraic idioms there were two possible phrases that would give the religious leaders what they wanted. If Jesus claimed authority of either:

1. Being the Messiah + the son of David = that was treason and rebellion
2. Being the Messiah + the Son of God = that was blasphemy⁴⁹³

“Was John’s baptism from heaven or from men?” In typical rabbinic style, He answered the question with another question. They carefully contemplated the answers and the consequence of each answer, because they were masters of theological debate. However, they could not make any comment because, whatever they said, would have reflected negatively upon them. Therefore, they responded, “We don’t know.” However,

493. At this point, the term “Messiah” and “Son” with a capital letter did not mean deity to the Jewish audience. Understanding Jesus as Deity did not fully occur until after the resurrection and ascension.

they did know. They were fearful to say that the baptism was human and equally afraid to say it divine.

The phrase “was it from heaven...?” means “was it from God?” The Jews, throughout history, have substituted words and phrases in place of the Divine Name, as not to abuse it (Ex. 20:7). For this reason, Jesus did not directly say His authority was from God, but He certainly implied it. John the Baptist did likewise. As to the question, the leading Pharisees chose not to answer it.

The counter response by Jesus, “**neither will I tell you,**” was hardly a failure to answer the question. This was typical rabbinic dialog – to respond in like manner. In essence Jesus said, “Since you won’t answer my question, I will not answer yours.” By their silence they said, “You win,” a non-verbal confession that angered them all the more.

The message was clearly communicated. Everyone understood that John the Baptist was a prophet and that his authority was divine. Likewise, Jesus was a prophet, whose authority was also of divine origin. The fact that neither John nor Jesus were educated in a school of a leading rabbi totally frustrated them. To add insult to injury, both had become more popular among the masses than had any of their leaders. Jesus then continued the conversation to teach those truths concerning the kingdom with the use of four parables recorded in Matthew 21:28 – 22:14.⁴⁹⁴

1. The Parable of the Two Sons (Mt. 21:28-32),
2. The Parable of the Only Son (also known as the Parable of the Wicked Tenants) Mt. 21:33-41; Mk. 12:1-9; Lk. 20:9-16), and
3. The Stone that the Builders Rejected.
4. Parable of the Wedding Banquet (Mt. 22:1-14).

Unfortunately, throughout history some theologians have said that these parables suggest that God has replaced Judaism with the church in His eschatological plan. This misinterpretation has given foundation to what has become known as “Christian anti-Semitism.” (A better phrase would be “church-sponsored anti-Semitism” since true Christianity cannot be connected with the hatred of any kind, especially anti-Semitism.) Those who espouse this replacement theology often indicate that these three parables build up to a crescendo in declaring God’s decision to permanently turn away from the Jews.

494. See commentary on Mt. 21:18-19; Mk. 11:12-14.

Notice that the key theme of every parable is in some way focused on Jesus and clarifies a point He is teaching.⁴⁹⁵ The objective is to have mankind be transformed into the image of Christ with practical true to life lessons and examples. Unfortunately, some early Gentile church fathers considered these parables allegorical. This was a grave mistake, because parables in rabbinic writings are almost never allegorical. The resulting interpretations are both misrepresented and inaccurate.⁴⁹⁶

After the first test questioning Jesus' authority, He told four parables:

13.03.03 Mt. 21:28-32

PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS

²⁸ “But what do you think? A man had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘My son, go, work in the vineyard today.’

²⁹ “He answered, ‘I don’t want to!’ Yet later he changed his mind and went.

³⁰ Then the man went to the other and said the same thing.

“‘I will, sir,’ he answered. But he didn’t go.

³¹ “Which of the two did his father’s will?”

“The first,” they said.

Jesus said to them, “I assure you:

Tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God

before you!

³² For John came to you in the way of righteousness,

and you didn’t believe him.

Tax collectors and prostitutes did believe him,

but you,

495. Young, *Jesus and His Jewish Parables*. 5-7.

496. Young, *Jesus and His Jewish Parables*. 103.

when you saw it,

didn't even change your minds then and believe him.

This passage is somewhat unusual, as it has two parts commonly referred to as a pericope.⁴⁹⁷ The first part is the parable (vv. 28-31) followed by its explanation (v. 32). Here Jesus told the story of a certain man who had two sons to whom he had given instructions to work in the vineyard. The first son refused to obey, but later repented and complied with his father's instruction. The second son said he would comply, but later changed his mind and was disobedient.

The explanation is that the second son, an illustration of the Jewish leaders, was appointed by God to perform various religious functions, but in fact, they were disobedient, hypocritical, and rebellious toward God. The first son represents those wicked religious leaders who repented, either in the ministry of John the Baptist or of Jesus, and he became fully dedicated and obedient to God. To assume that this parable implies the kingdom would be taken from the Jews and given to the Gentiles is eisegesis (meaning to replace the original meaning with one's own interpretation).⁴⁹⁸ The theme of the discussion was not on a future position of the church, but rather, on the sinfulness of the Pharisees.⁴⁹⁹

Jesus specifically indicated that prostitutes and tax collectors would get into heaven before these religious leaders. This greatly offended them because they were convinced there was no need to repent because they were the sons of Abraham and, therefore, were guaranteed eternal life. By their confession, they were true descendants (sons) of Abraham, but by their actions they were outside of God's providence and not Abraham's children. Repentant sinners, such as the prostitutes and tax collectors, were accepted by Jesus, while the leaders could not imagine that they too were sinners because they were God's chosen people. They failed to receive the warning and that was the only point of the parable.⁵⁰⁰

497. Hagner, "Matthew 14-28." 612; See Appendix 26.

498. For further study, see Scott Jr., J. Julius. "On the Value of Intertestamental Jewish Literature for New Testament Theology." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. 23:4 (Dec. 1980). 315-24.

499. A rule of hermeneutics is that parables are not to be used for the establishment of doctrines.

500. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 765-66.

13.03.04 Mk. 12:1-9; Lk. 20:9-16 (See also Mt. 21:33-41)

PARABLE OF THE HOUSEHOLDER AND THE ONLY SON

Mk. ¹ Then He began to speak to them in parables: “A man planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug out a pit for a winepress, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenant farmers and went away.

² At harvest time

he sent a slave to the farmers

to collect some of the fruit of the vineyard from the farmers.

³ But they took him, beat him, and

sent him away empty-handed.

⁴ Again he sent another slave to them, and

they hit him on the head and treated him shamefully.

⁵ Then he sent another,

and they killed that one.

He also sent many others;

they beat some and they killed some.

⁶ “He still had one to send, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’

⁷ “But those tenant farmers said among themselves,

‘This is the heir.

Come, let’s kill him,

and the inheritance will be ours!’

⁸ So they seized him,

killed him, and

threw him out of the vineyard.

⁹ “Therefore, what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the farmers and give the vineyard to others.”

Lk. ^{16b} But when they heard this they said, “No — never!”

This parable has been a favorite instrument to prove the doctrine of replacement theology.⁵⁰¹ But with that there is a serious hermeneutical problem. Parables were never to be used for establishing doctrine, not in biblical times and not today. This parable is one of special interest because Bible translators and commentators have given this parable a number of different titles, based on their interpretation of its meaning.

Titles give an understanding of what a parable is about, but sometimes titles also shade the meaning of a parable. Using the title *Kingdom of God* with this parable may be a leading directive as to how it is interpreted. However, if the title is *The Parable of the Murdered Son*, then the focus of the parable points toward the murdered son. On the other hand, if the title is about the wicked tenants, it will focus the attention of the reader on the tenants. For example, the Thompson Chain Reference Bible, NAS edition, titles it the *Parable of the Landowner*, but has marginal notes with references to the rejection of Jesus, Israel being cut off, the Gentiles, and it clearly gives the implication of the Gentiles replacing the Jews. On the other hand, if it would have the words *Wicked Tenants* then the tenant farmers become the focus of the story. However, in its cultural context, the vineyard owner is the true hero and focus of the story.⁵⁰² Furthermore, it has been often been stated herein that Jesus often used persons and events of history as the backdrop of some parables and stories. In this case, the parable is a retelling of Isaiah 5:1-6. It is this author’s opinion that the title should be *The Parable of the Only Son*,⁵⁰³ as the focus of all parables point to Jesus and His Kingdom of God.

In this case, Mark was rather detailed in the description of the man who established the vineyard. In essence, the man made a huge investment. Not only did he plant the grape seedlings, but he also placed a fence around it to keep out wild pigs (boars) and thieves, he built a wine press that clearly indicates that he expected to receive the rewards of his investment. And finally, he built a watchtower to enable his servants to do their job well

501. See definition in Glossary in Appendix 26; A rule of hermeneutics is that parables are not to be used for the establishment of doctrines.

502. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 410-14.

503. This title was originally suggested by Brad H. Young.

and they would also have a comfortable housing. For many centuries towers⁵⁰⁴ served two purposes.

1. Some shepherds were stationed in the tower to look for thieves and wild predatory animals just as vineyard owners looked for thieves and wild boars.
2. The tower served as a second home for those who tended to the flocks and crops.

The listeners were very much acquainted with the agricultural process and Jesus made the connection of that process to those who desired to kill him – and as such this parable has a single theme focused on the Sadducees and leading Pharisees. The story itself is somewhat complicated with vineyards, an absentee property owner, and rebellious tenant farmers. Furthermore, the phrase “**A man planted a vineyard**” is reflective of Isaiah 5:1-2 where the song of the vineyard is the image of Israel. Jesus, therefore, wove the message of Isaiah into His parable, making it more complex than usual. To clarify the parable, note the following list of characters:

Cast of Characters

The Owner of the Vineyard	=	God
Watchtower	=	Temple of God
The vineyard	=	The people of Israel
The tenant farmers	=	Jewish leaders
Slaves who were sent	=	The prophets
Son	=	Jesus

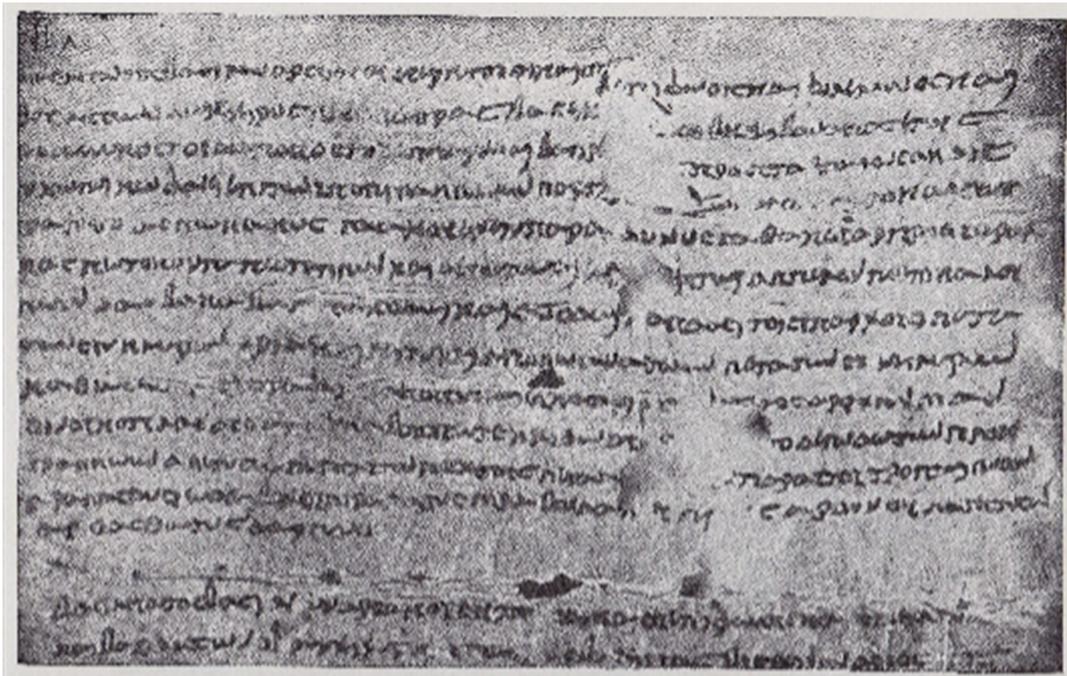
It is evident that a landowner had accomplished the sizeable task of establishing a functional vineyard that had all of the necessary equipment for the production of wine. After he placed several farmers in charge, he went on a journey. The rent was generally collected by a business manager. But once the farmers were in charge they decided to take ownership of the vineyard. When the owner sent his servants to the vineyard, the farmers killed them. The imagery could not be missed by the Pharisees. They knew that in previous years their forefathers killed numerous prophets sent by God.

The passage clearly says, “**This is the heir.**” It does not say, “He claims to be the heir.” The leading Pharisees and Sadducees enjoyed the “kingdom” they had which was of their own making and Jesus was clearly a threat. Furthermore, in the parable, Jesus said “this is

504. Sometimes the word for an agricultural “tower” or “watchtower” is translated as “booth,” “shack,” or “shelter,” as in Isaiah 1:8.

the heir,” because He knew that they had correctly recognized Him – the Pharisees and Sadducees knew He was the Messiah.

When the tenant farmers said that **“the inheritance will be ours”** if they killed the owner’s son, they were legally right in terms of inheritance laws of the time. An ancient law stated that if an heir did not claim his land, it could be declared “ownerless” and therefore, anyone could claim it.⁵⁰⁵ This was typical business law throughout the ancient world, as evidence by a hereditary lease of a vineyard discovered by archaeologists in the early twentieth century in ancient Parthia.⁵⁰⁶



13.03.04.A. HEREDITARY LEASE OF A VINEYARD. The legal document dated to 22-21 B.C., was written on Parchment and reflects the conditions of Mark 12:1-9 and Luke 20:9-16. It is from Kopanis, in the Kingdom of Parthia, and is evidence that some of the legal contracts and proceedings Jesus used in His parables were common to all nearby cultures.

In the parable the landowner sent one servant after another. Each one was either ill-treated or killed. Finally, in order to insure the rent would be paid, the landowner sent the

505. *New International Version* Study Bible footnote on Mk. 12:7.

506. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*. 33. Artifact in the British Museum.

son whom he loved. In both the Greek and Hebrew, the son is described as the “beloved son,” which is equal to “the only son.” This is a significant point and shows the emphasis. Jesus was speaking of Himself and this is the theme of the parable. Immediately following this dialog, Jesus speaks of Himself as a stone (see below). The business managers who were sent are equal to the Old Testament prophets who were sent to the children of Israel. Some tenants were beaten, while others were killed in real life; some prophets were beaten while others were killed. Only a few ever enjoyed the honor they deserved. Just as the only son was killed by the tenants, herein Jesus predicted His own death.

“Destroy the farmers and give the vineyard to others.” This phrase has generally been interpreted to mean that the covenant promises that were given to national Israel would now be transferred permanently to the church, and the Jews would be destroyed.⁵⁰⁷ That is hardly the case. Rather, the divine authority given to the Jews to have the Word of God produce fruit would be transferred to the Gentiles. The irony is that Jesus told them He knew they were going to kill Him. However, their hatred was so great they failed to recognize the prophetic insight of their intentions. One must wonder how blind these men were, having been witnesses to multiple miracles, yet refusing to believe in Jesus. The phrase was an announcement of a two-fold judgment.

1. The Kingdom of God would be removed from them, and
2. It would be given to a people who would produce the fruit desired by God.

Clearly, this had a reference to the Gentiles as the heirs of the Kingdom of God. The parable angered the Pharisees and Jesus responded before beginning the parable of the most important wedding banquet. There are two possible interpretations to this parable:

1. Was the purpose of this parable to forecast the coming rejection of the Jewish people so they would be replaced by the Gentile church as the “New Israel?”
2. Or was the purpose to focus on the death of the “only son?”

While the first question has historically been affirmed, there are a growing number of scholars who affirm the second with the theme being on the “only son.”⁵⁰⁸ Since parables

507. This is a core element of replacement theology. See “Replacement Theology” in Appendix 26 for more details.

508. For a comprehensive study on this parable and others, see Brad H. Young. *Jesus and His Jewish Parables*. Tulsa, OK: Gospel Research Foundation, 1989. See also Brad H. Young. *Jesus the Jewish Theologian*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995.

point toward Jesus and His Kingdom of God, the only viable interpretation is the “only son.”

Finally, this parable is an example of what theologians call “practical atheism.” The tenants, just as the Jewish leaders of Israel, said they believed in God and may have even prayed and discussed life in religious terms. However, their conduct demonstrated that they had no “heart-belief” in God; no desire to live life according to His divine plan – hence – they were “practical atheists.”⁵⁰⁹

13.03.05 Mt. 21:42-44 (See also Mk. 12:10-11; Lk. 20:17-18) In the Temple

THE STONE THE BUILDERS REJECTED

⁴² **Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:**

The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.
This came from the Lord
and is wonderful in our eyes? (Ps. 118:22-23)

⁴³ **Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing its fruit. [⁴⁴ **Whoever falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whoever it falls, it will grind him to powder!]**”**

This passage is part of the preceding parable of the wicked tenants. And Jesus included an Old Testament quotation and the Jews knew precisely what He was talking about. Early in His ministry Jesus gave hints of who He was and the consequences to those who opposed Him, but now He was more direct. Three times Jesus had just announced His Messiahship in a firm and unmistakable manner.

1. Jesus had ridden a donkey into Jerusalem, thereby reflecting the image of a king.
2. He then cleansed the temple again, as if He owned it.

⁵⁰⁹ Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 341. Another term for “practical atheists” is “secular Christians.” Obviously both terms are oxymorons.

3. Now He said He was **“the stone that the builders rejected.”**⁵¹⁰ The cornerstone was critical to the integrity of the building, as Jesus was critical to the integrity of life.⁵¹¹ The “stone” that was rejected was the cornerstone – meaning Jesus. Furthermore, the name of the chief builder (*tekton*) was often inscribed upon it.⁵¹²

In this tense social-political environment, were Jesus to have made a public announcement of His divine office, a riot would have ensued and the Romans would have killed many innocent people, along with the disciples. But Jesus showed Himself to be a master diplomat in how He announced His Messiahship.

This was the final point of conflict with the Sadducees and the upper Pharisee echelon. They understood that Jesus was telling them they would be destroyed and their position of religious authority would be given to others. Jesus saw Himself as the smiting stone of Daniel 2, which would bring destruction upon them. He used the imagery of Isaiah (5:1-7) to describe the Sadducees as the vineyard which produced bad fruit. They realized He was predicting judgment upon them. This explosive accusation caused them to determine to put Jesus to death. The prophetic words of Jesus came true. When the Romans destroyed the temple, they also destroyed the entire priestly caste of the Sadducees and the upper Pharisee echelon, both of whom were the policy makers of first century Judaism.

Ironically, the prophetic messengers of God were killed by those who were to be the beneficiaries of the message. The words of the Hallel (Ps. 114-18) included a phrase that pertained to the Messiah at this time.⁵¹³

“The kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing its fruit.” This phrase means that the Kingdom of God would be taken from the Jewish people and given to the Gentile church, although not all messianic scholars would agree

510. Examples of other titles for Jesus are *the chief cornerstone* (Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:6); *the head of the corner* (Ps. 118:22; Lk. 20:17; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:7); *The head of the body* (Col. 1:18; 2:19); *the head of the church* (Eph. 1:22; 5:23); *the firstfruits* (1 Cor. 15:20); *The firstborn from the dead* (Col. 1:18); *the captain of our salvation* (Heb. 2:10); *the first and the last* (Rev. 1:17); *the firstbegotten* (Heb. 1:6); and *the firstborn* (Rom. 8:29; Heb. 12:23).

511. See “Cornerstone” in Appendix 26.

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

513. For the identifying connections of Jesus with the Hallel (Ps. 114-118), see 04.06.01.

with that interpretation. They state that the Kingdom of God was taken from the Jewish leaders and given to different leaders (who, by the way, comprised the first century church).

Finally, this parable has not been without its share of controversies. It is considered to be one of the most complicated and debated parables and some critics have even said that all or parts of it were probably additions by the early church fathers.⁵¹⁴ However, their opinions have no foundation, and furthermore, there are two significant details that attest to its authenticity, especially the Psalm quotation.

1. An important feature of the parable is the *son/stone* wordplay. Jesus often used wordplays, as did many others⁵¹⁵ – at times it is a normal part of conversation. The wordplay is obvious only in Hebrew or Aramaic language, but is lost when translated into another language.
2. Mark and Luke used the word “beloved” to describe “son,” as part of the broader “son” theme. As one scholar said, it is clear that the gospel writers associated the parable’s “beloved son” who is the key figure of the parable with the “stone,” the “Son” figure, and Jesus Himself.⁵¹⁶

13.03.06 Mt. 21:45-46; Lk. 20:19 (See also Mk. 12:12)

RELIGIOUS LEADERS ANGERED

Mt. ⁴⁵ When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they knew He was speaking about them. ⁴⁶ Although they were looking for a way to arrest Him, they feared the crowds, because they regarded Him as a prophet.

Lk. ¹⁹ Then the scribes and the chief priests looked for a way to get their hands on Him that very hour, because they knew He had told this parable against them, but they feared the people.

514. For an exegetical study on this passage, see Lanier, “The Rejected Stone in the Parable of the Wicked Tenants: Defending the Authenticity of Jesus’ Quotation of Ps. 118:22.” 733-58.

515. Another example of a wordplay is a statement by Caesar Augustus when he spoke of the cruelty of Herod the Great. The Roman historian Macrobius wrote in his *Saturnalia* (2.4) that Augustus said, **“I’d rather be Herod’s pig than his son.”** The words “pig” and “son” sound similar in Latin. (See 03.06.04)

516. Lanier, “The Rejected Stone in the Parable of the Wicked Tenants: Defending the Authenticity of Jesus’ Quotation of Ps. 118:22.” 738.

Nonetheless, Jesus gave them another parable.

13.03.07 Mt. 22:1-14

PARABLE OF THE WEDDING BANQUET / WEDDING GARMENT⁵¹⁷

¹ Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables: ² “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. ³ He sent out his slaves to summon those invited to the banquet, but they didn’t want to come. ⁴ Again, he sent out other slaves, and said, ‘Tell those who are invited: Look, I’ve prepared my dinner; my oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’

⁵ “But they paid no attention and went away, one to his own farm, another to his business. ⁶ And the others seized his slaves, treated them outrageously and killed them. ⁷ The king was enraged, so he sent out his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned down their city.

⁸ “Then he told his slaves, ‘The banquet is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. ⁹ Therefore go to where the roads exit the city and invite everyone you find to the banquet.’ ¹⁰ So those slaves went out on the roads and gathered everyone they found, both evil and good. The wedding banquet was filled with guests. ¹¹ But when the king came in to view the guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed for a wedding.

¹² So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without wedding clothes?’ The man was speechless.

¹³ “Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him up hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

¹⁴ “For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

517. The significance of the messianic banquet was very important to Jesus (Heb. *Yeshua*). The wedding imagery between Himself and His church as it was reflected in a first century Jewish wedding is discussed by Dr. John Fischer, a messianic scholar and rabbi in video 09.03.04.V1 and Professor John Metzger in video 14.02.05.V2. See the following as well: 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).

This is a unique parable in that it is one of dual separation as follows:

1. Separation from national Israel
2. Separation from those believers who are improperly dressed for the messianic banquet

To bring clarity to this passage, examine briefly the cast of characters.

Cast of Characters

King	= God
First group	= The Jews who did not come
Second group	= Gentiles who were not invited previously
Slaves	= The prophets sent to the Jews over the centuries
Outsiders	= Gentiles (non-Jews) who were invited to come

Terms

Appropriate Attire	= Character of a godly person
Inappropriate Attire	= Character of an unrepentant person

Separation from national Israel

The king (Jesus) gave three invitations, of which the first two went to the Jewish people.

1. The first invitation was sent by the various prophets who preached the Word of God throughout the centuries, and many of them were rejected and some were even martyred.
2. The second invitation to the Jewish people was by Jesus Himself, and He too was martyred.

There is an unusual element in the parable because the custom was to send out two invitations for a wedding banquet. But in this case, three invitations were sent. The third invitation was by Jesus and His apostles who went to the Gentiles. At verse 11 the second phase of this parable begins – the parable of separation. Now that the Gentiles have been invited, it is apparent that *of those who responded*, meaning those who became saved or said they did, not all will be permitted to the banquet. Why?

Separation from those believers who are improperly dressed for the messianic banquet

Jesus clearly stated that everyone is invited to His messianic banquet – Gentile, Jew – everyone. But He also makes a unique point that not everyone who is invited will enter into the banquet hall. An important cultural element is this: it was the custom for the wealthy and persons of high rank to provide wedding garments for those whom he invited. If anyone refused to come, or if they came but would not wear their wedding garments, they insulted the host of the banquet.⁵¹⁸ An important feature of this comment is that the deciding factor of who comes is not Jesus, but those people who decided *not* to wear their wedding garments (Gk. *enduma*). Those who wear appropriate attire have the character of Christ and those who do not wear the required garments are those who say they are believers, but their lives do not match their words. Just as the persons of rank showed their kindness by providing wedding garments to all the guests, the same shall be provided by the Host – the King, but those “garments” are His character.⁵¹⁹

On a side note, this parable has often been used to support the doctrine of predestination, but there are two problems with this interpretation.⁵²⁰

1. In predestination, it is Jesus who determines who decided before the foundation of the earth who goes to heaven or who goes to hell. In this parable, as in others, the decision is left to the individual.
2. A standard rule of Jewish hermeneutics is that parables are never to be used for the establishment of doctrine.

A wedding was always a time for great celebration, as it was seen as the beginning of a new family. The “dinner” of verse 4 was not the evening meal, but the noon-breakfast or luncheon meal⁵²¹ which enabled the attendees to enjoy fellowship for the rest of the day. The custom of the time required that literally everyone be invited, including those living in remote areas and byways (verses 9-10).⁵²²

518. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 243-44.

519. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 2:414-15; Vine, “Marriage, Marry.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:394.

520. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 244.

521. Scholars debate as to when the wedding feast was served. Some say it was an evening meal. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:119.

522. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:120.

Again, it is evident Jesus used a parable that was of common knowledge to the people. The one He presented was similar to a story of the rabbis and recorded in the Babylonian Talmud. In the Jewish culture it was customary for any good rabbi, when teaching a lesson in the form of a parable to give an explanation. Jesus was a Master Teacher who followed the cultural norm in this regard. From rabbinic literature is an example of a “king” parable:

The matter may be compared to a king who arranged a banquet and invited guests to it. The king issued a decree which stated: “Each guest must bring something on which to recline.” Some brought carpets, others brought mattresses or pads or cushions or stools, while still others brought logs or stones. The king observed what they had done, and said, “Let each man sit on what he brought.” Those who had to sit on wood or stone murmured against the king. They said, “Is it respectful for the king, that we, his guests, should be seated on wood and stone?” When the king heard this, he said to them, “It is not enough that you have disgraced with your wood and stone the palace which was erected for me at great cost, but you dare to invent a complaint against me! The lack of respect paid to you is the result of your own action.”

Similarity, in the Hereafter, the wicked will be sentenced to Gehenna and will murmur against the Holy One, blessed be He, saying, “We sought His salvation. How could such a fate befall us?” He will answer them, “When you were on the earth, did you not quarrel and slander and do evil? Were you not responsible for strife and violence? That is why it is written, ‘All you that kindle a fire, that encircle yourselves with firebrands, walk in the flame of your fire and among the brands that you have kindled’ (Isaiah 50:11). If you say, ‘This we have from your hand,’ it is not so; you have brought it on yourselves and, therefore, ‘you will lie down in torment.’”

Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbath* 153b

The matter may be compared to a king who arranged a banquet and invited guests to it. The king issued a decree, but the people complained and did not show the respect that was due to a king. Similarity, in the hereafter, the wicked will be sentenced to Gehenna and will murmur against the Holy One Blessed Be He, saying,

“We sought His salvation. How could such a fate befall us?” He will answer them, “When you were on the earth, did you not quarrel and slander and do evil? Were you not responsible for strife and violence? That is why it is

written, ‘All you that kindle a fire, that encircle yourselves with firebrands, walk in the flame of your fire and among the brands that you have kindled’ (Isa. 50:11). If you say, ‘This we have from your hand,’ it is not so; you have brought it on yourselves and, therefore, ‘you will lie down in torment.’”

Ecclesiastes *Rabbah* 3:9

In the parable of Jesus, the Jews were the guests of honor at the banquet. They received their invitation by the Hebrew prophets. But by the time Jesus came onto the scene, they had convinced themselves that they would be the only persons at the heavenly wedding banquet, so they did not come to the hallowed event. Therefore, the host of the banquet sent other servants again to invite guests, and after another poor response, the host finally invited anybody and everybody. However, when the host saw that some of the attendees were not wearing wedding clothes, he threw them out.

Finally, some commentators have observed the parallel of this narrative with the historical event when a Jewish delegation went to Rome and objected to Augustus the succession of Archelaus after the death of Herod the Great.⁵²³ Clearly, when Jesus told a parable, He structured it so the people would understand and remember what He taught.

“He sent out his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned down their city.” While the Jews believed they would be the only chosen people at this event, Jesus completely upset their theology. Four decades later the Romans besieged the Holy City, murdered thousands, and burned the temple.

“Wedding clothes.” As previously stated, persons of wealth or high rank showed their magnificence by providing wedding garments to their guests.⁵²⁴ In this context, the wedding garments are symbolic of righteousness provided by God’s gracious character. However, concerning the one who rejected the garments, Jesus reflected upon the words of the prophet Hosea, who said,

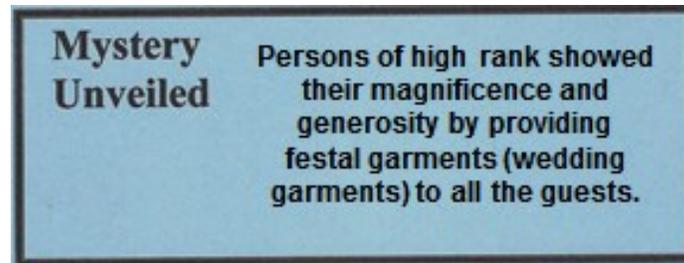
**What will you do on a festival day,
on the day of the LORD’s feast?**

Hosea 9:5

523. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.11.1.

524. Vine, “Garment.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:261, and “Marriage, Marry.” 2:394-95. See video 09.03.04.V1 by Messianic Rabbi John Fischer who discusses first century wedding imagery, and video 14.02.05.V2 by Professor John Metzger who discusses the Passover, the Last Supper and its implications to the Messianic Banquet.

Jesus said that one must be ready at all times for the messianic banquet. But while many are aware of the coming wedding, few will do what is necessary to be prepared for the event.



“For many are invited, but few are chosen.” Those who are “invited” or “called” as some translations read, are simply those who heard and accepted the invitation of salvation. Those who are “chosen” did the same but continued their Christian lifestyle and obeyed His Word. This passage has often been incorrectly been interpreted to either support or deny the doctrine of predestination. As previously stated, the standard rule of hermeneutics is that parables are not used to support or deny doctrines.

13.03.07.Q1 Was Jesus familiar with non-biblical literary sources?

To the modern reader, the answer might be an affirmative – yes. However, Jesus lived in an oral tradition culture where stories were handed down from generation to generation. Within such a culture, great care is taken to insure that the historical accounts are transmitted accurately – a skill and tradition that has been lost in today’s modern Western culture. Therefore, when Jesus referred to an account that may have been written in the book of *Tobit*, He probably was familiar with it by way of oral tradition. At this time, writing materials were extremely expensive and difficult to acquire. So rabbis had to memorize great volumes of Scriptures and extra-biblical books.⁵²⁵

Jesus was typical of orthodox rabbis of His period. They all taught the same basic truth and only in a few instances did Jesus introduce new elements into His sermons. Of course, the most dramatic of these elements was the eventual proclamation of Messiahship. Modern students at times conclude, since Jesus did not lie, that every story or parable Jesus told was an actual historical event. But as a Master Teacher, He would use four sources to illustrate a point:

1. Historical events

525. This dedication to study and memorize might explain why today, the Jewish people who comprise only one-half of one percent, have attained an outstanding twenty-two percent of the Nobel Peace Prizes.

2. Word plays on a legend known to everyone
3. Stories to teach a lesson
4. Reflections on an Old Testament story

All orthodox rabbis used these elements in their instructional lessons. An example is found in 2 Samuel 12:1-4 where Nathan told King David the famous parable of a rich man who had many sheep but took the lamb of the poor man. The account was so real to life that David was ready to kill the rich man, only to learn that the prophet spoke of David himself. Likewise, rabbis as well as Jesus also used story parables to touch the hearts of men. To create a story that presented a truth never meant that the story was a historical event.

Mystery Unveiled	Parables were often built upon stories and events that were common knowledge. However, the wedding feast parable is a prophetic parable that was fulfilled in A.D. 70.
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Unit 13 The Passion Week Begins

Chapter 04 The Second Examination Of Jesus



13.04.00.A. THE HEALING OF THE LAME MAN by Raphael. 1516.

13.04.01 Introduction

There is a modern saying that politics can make for strange bedfellows. Such is the case here: The Pharisees and the Herodians were constantly at odds with each other. Now, however, they worked together to confront the challenge of Jesus. While they were looking for ways to accuse Him before Pilate, little did they realize that this second test

would demonstrate the purity of Jesus under biblical law. What Satan planned for evil, God turned into a revelation of the righteousness of Jesus.

13.04.02 Mt. 22:15a; Lk. 20:20-26 (See also Mk. 12:13-17)

HERODIANS AND PHARISEES ASK JESUS ABOUT TAXES

Mt. ^{15a} Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to trap Him by what He said,

Lk. ²⁰ [and] sent spies who pretended to be righteous, so they could catch Him in what He said, to hand Him over to the governor's rule and authority. ²¹ They questioned Him, "Teacher, we know that You speak and teach correctly, and You don't show partiality, but teach truthfully the way of God. ²² Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

²³ But detecting their craftiness, He said to them, ²⁴ "Show Me a denarius. Whose image and inscription does it have?"

"Caesar's," they said.

²⁵ "Well then," He told them, "give back to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's."

²⁶ They were not able to catch Him in what He said in public, and being amazed at His answer, they became silent.

The subject of this discussion originated in the year A.D. 6, when a new poll tax (Mt. 9:9; 10:3) was instituted for the benefit of the Roman treasury.⁵²⁶ The Jews were already reduced to economic slaves by Herod the Great,⁵²⁷ and the new tax made life even worse. The payment of taxes was seen by patriotic Jews as a confirmation that people gave authority to the Romans to rule over them.

In response, a Zealot by the name of Judas the Galilean declared that it was sacrilege for God's chosen people to pay taxes to a pagan ruler. So he quickly gathered some followers and started a revolt. Josephus said the following of this matter:

526. Gilbrant, "Mark." 333; Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 2:418.

527. The subject of high taxation that resulted in economic slavery is presented by Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.11.2 (307-308). See also 02.03.03 "Economy" and 03.06.04 "4 B.C. The Death of Herod the Great."

There was one Judas, a Gaulonite⁵²⁸ of a city whose name is Gamala, who, taking with him a Saddock, a Pharisee, because zealous to draw them to a revolt, who both said that this taxation was no better than an introduction to slavery, and exhorted the nation to assert their liberty.

So men received what they said with pleasure, and this bold attempt proceeded to a great height. All sorts of misfortunes also sprang from these men, and the nation was infected with this doctrine to an incredible degree. One violent war came upon us after another, and we lost our friends who used to alleviate our pains; there were also very great robberies and murders of our principal men.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.1.1 (4, 6-7a)

This area was under the rule of Caponius, whose seat of authority was in Damascus. But Caponius was a poor ruler, motivated by greed and corruption and consequently, he was called back to Rome to give an account of his administration. To resolve the problems, Rome asked Quirinius to serve a governor-general and take a population census for these reasons:

1. To determine how strong a military force was needed to control the population and
2. To determine the potential tax revenue.

The rebellion that Judas and the Zealots started was quickly crushed. However, the theological issue that Judas popularized continued (see 03.06.14). Jesus was about ten years old when the rebellion was crushed, so by the time His ministry began, the matter had become explosive. He defused it gently.⁵²⁹

To add insult to injury, it was the common opinion that to own a coin with the image of Caesar, was to affirm loyalty to him and, therefore, disown loyalty to God.⁵³⁰

528. According to Whiston, ed., Gaulonite was the term Josephus used for a resident of Gamala, although Judas was probably originally from Gaulonitis on the eastern side of the Jordan River, and moved to Gamala to join or lead a nationalistic movement.

529. Bruce, *Jesus Past*, 33-34; Carson, "Matthew," 8:458-59; Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.8.4; 18.1.1 and *Wars* 2.1.3.

530. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 739.

Furthermore, some Roman coins had the inscription *Roma Perpetua* meaning *Rome Perpetual*, or *Roma Aeterna*, meaning *Rome Eternal*.⁵³¹

The coin that was shown to Jesus could have been minted at a number of places, but not in the Jewish provinces of Judea, Perea, or Galilee. The tetrarch Herod Philip was the first local monarch to introduce an image of Caesar on Jewish coins.⁵³² But he was so far north of Jerusalem, near Mount Hermon, that there was little effective opposition.

Concerning the direct issue of taxes and the coin, if Jesus would have responded with an affirmative answer that taxes had be paid, He would have lost his public following and appeared to have abandoned Israel. If He had said that taxes should not be paid, He would have been brought before the imperial courts for subversive activities and treason. The religious leaders knew the Romans would subject them to harsh penalties for unpaid taxes. Jesus separated legal and spiritual obligations, but did not avoid or negate them. In this discussion He clearly indicated that Jews were to honor both civil government and God, insofar as the secular authority does not clash with the believer's loyalty to God. Throughout His entire ministry, He never attacked the policies of the Romans. The irony is that if Jews had faithfully given their dues and allegiance to God, they would never have been subjects of Roman nor any other form of dictatorship.⁵³³

“Spies who pretended to be righteous.” These spies were the classic hypocrites,⁵³⁴ as Luke used the Greek word *hypokrinomenoi* related to the root word of *hypokrites*, meaning *actor* and translated as *hypocrite*.⁵³⁵ Here the focus is not so much on the spiritual condition of these individuals, as their attempt to induce a false impression as they plotted against Jesus.

“Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?” While the Romans had reduced the Jews to economic slaves, they did, in fact, benefit from Roman military protection and were permitted to practice their religion as they wished. To answer the question, Jesus said that they ought to pay the civil taxes, while at the same time obeying God.

The question is also significant in light of the fact that Josephus says that more than six

531. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 343.

532. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:96.

533. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 387.

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

535. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/feign>. Retrieved August 13, 2013; Herbert, “Hypocrite.” 109-10.

thousand Pharisees refused to take the oath of allegiance to Herod and Caesar.⁵³⁶ The motives of those who challenged Jesus must have been questioned by the bystanders who witnessed the discussion.

The Romans contracted taxes with two kinds of tax collectors and many kinds of taxes.⁵³⁷

1. A tax collector known as a *Gabbai* collected on real estate, income (as from crops), and poll taxes, as follows.
 - a. The ground tax consisted one-tenth of a farmer's grain and one-fifth of his fruit. Tax was payable in cash or kind (grain or fruit).
 - b. The income tax which was one percent of one's income.
 - c. The poll tax which every male had to pay between the ages of 14 to 65 and every female had to pay who was between the ages of 12 and 65.
2. Another type of tax collector, known as the *Mockhes* collected duty on imports, as well as export tolls on roads, bridges, and ships that anchored in the harbors. There was also a tax on wagon and cart wheels, and on pack animals. The import / export duty ranged from 2 ½ to 12 ½ percent on all goods.

The question in this discussion (Mt. 22:15, etc.) has nothing to do with the kind of tax, but the image on the coin with which the tax was paid. That was problematic for these reasons:

1. The coin had a graven image in direct violation of the second commandment (Ex. 20:4). The images and text of ancient coinage always reflected the ideology of the pagan ruling class.
2. To add insult to injury the image was of the emperor whom many considered to be deified, or soon would be deified.⁵³⁸
3. The image on the coin represented the military and economic authority of the Romans, but the Jews believed that they – God's people – should control the

536. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.2.4.

537. Barclay, "Matthew." 1:329-30.

538. Appendix 20.

military and economy. (It must be noted that in the century (c. 165 – 63 B.C.) when they did control both, the Jewish leaders were as bad as any pagan monarch.)

The image of Caesar with an inscription that deified him as a god was so offensive that many refused to carry it, for they believed holding ownership would be equal to agreeing with the inscription. It was deemed by some Pharisees to be a violation of the second commandment to own one – and as such, anyone who had a denarius was said to be “unrighteous.” Therefore, in an attempt to appease the Jews, the Romans minted some coins without the image of Caesar.⁵³⁹



13.04.02A. ROMAN DENARIUS. The Roman silver coin that offended the Jews has a portrait of Tiberius Caesar with the inscription “TI CAESAR DIVI AUG F AUGUSTUS,” meaning “Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus.”⁵⁴⁰ A denarius was the minimum daily income needed to sustain a small family.

There are two ironies with this account.

1. The Pharisees who challenged Jesus obviously had a coin with the portrait of Tiberius Caesar, a violation of their own strict standard of righteousness.
2. The Roman silver denarius with the portrait of Tiberius Caesar was not acceptable in the temple. However, the Tyrian silver shekel that had the image of

539. Farrar, *Life of Christ*. 348.

540. Gilbrant, “Matthew.” 477.

the god Murduk was accepted because it was minted of the finest grade of silver.

Jesus once again spoke clearly concerning the Kingdom of God and affirmed that He was neither a supporter of Rome nor a Zealot against Rome. Neither those who desired to accuse Him of being a traitor nor those who were looking for a military viceroy would find their answer in Him, but only those who were seeking God would find Him. This statement, while in response to a monetary issue, had implications for all aspects of life; they spoke of coins and taxes but Jesus wanted His listeners to apply all aspects of life to the Kingdom of God.

Coinage had significant influences upon people for the following reasons:

1. It identified the king and his authority over a certain region and people. Whenever a king conquered an area, one of his first priorities was to mint new coins with his image. When the Zealots seized Jerusalem (A.D. 132-135) they immediately minted their own coins, which was the ancient method of declaring their independence and rulership.
2. The power of the king was valid wherever the coins were used.
3. A times the coins were considered the personal property of the king since these had his name and image stamped on them.

“Give back to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s.” Jesus said that to give God what belongs to God could be nothing less than His supreme creation, human life. Jesus spoke little of currency in this discourse, but rather, He spoke of the dedication of life to either Caesar or to God. Money, of course, would follow either dedication. Tertullian reflected this idea when he said:

Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s - his image on the coin; give to God what is God’s - His image in man, yourself.

Tertullian on Money⁵⁴¹

The biblical observance continues today, as Israeli coins do not have images on them. An “image” was defined as a *likeness of a human or animal* and was associated with the

541. Cited by Thomas, *The Golden Treasury of Patristic Quotations: From 50 – 750 A.D.* 263.

word “graven” (cf. Ex. 20:4). Hence, other images such as a lily on the capital of an ancient column are acceptable. Paper currency and postage stamps, however, do not have a three-dimensional surface and, therefore, have pictures of Israeli heroes and great leaders. Ironically, secular Israelis today demonstrate a greater respect for the biblical commandment than did the Sadducees.

13.04.03 Mt. 22:23-33 (See also Mk. 12:18-27; Lk. 20:27-38)

THE THEOLOGICAL ISSUE OF THE RESURRECTION QUESTIONED

²³ The same day some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came up to Him and questioned Him: ²⁴ “Teacher, Moses said, if a man dies, having no children, his brother is to marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. ²⁵ Now there were seven brothers among us. The first got married and died. Having no offspring, he left his wife to his brother. ²⁶ The same happened to the second also, and the third, and so to all seven. ²⁷ Then last of all the woman died. ²⁸ In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will she be of the seven? For they all had married her.”

²⁹ Jesus answered them, “You are deceived, because you don’t know the Scriptures or the power of God. ³⁰ For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like angels in heaven. ³¹ Now concerning the resurrection of the dead, haven’t you read what was spoken to you by God: ³² I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”

³³ And when the crowds heard this, they were astonished at His teaching.

This time the Sadducees took their turn at Jesus. Just as Jesus used well-known historical events and stories to help people remember His teachings, so did other rabbis and Jewish leaders. But this discussion on the resurrection was purely academic for the following two reasons:⁵⁴²

1. The marriage issue refers to a levirate marriage, one in which a husband died and his brother marries the widow so the deceased husband will have descendants. The sons born of levirate marriage had their names recorded in the

542. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 328.

public register⁵⁴³ as being the sons of the deceased “father.”⁵⁴⁴ However, the Levitical custom was almost out of use by the first century.

2. Some scholars believe that the Jews had a custom that a woman could not marry more than three times.

The Sadducees told a story of a man who died leaving a widow and no offspring. In the biblical culture, life was bound up partly in social identity, meaning that the end of a family line was the functional equivalent of death (Gen. 15:1-3; 30:1).⁵⁴⁵ So to insure the deceased husband would have a legacy and perpetuate his name, the widow married his brother but he also died, then another brother who died, until she married each of the seven brothers and finally she passed away. The account seems quite unusual except for the fact that stories like this were fuel for theological discussions that never seemed to end. In this case, the Sadducees gave a modified version of a similar story found in the book of *Tobit*, chapters 7 and 8. In that story, Tobias desires to marry a certain Sarah, but her father tells Tobias that she had been married seven times previously and each of the men died on the couple’s wedding night. Note the following:

And he explained the matter (of Tobias’ desire to marry Sarah) to Raguel, and Raguel said to Tobias, “Eat and drink, and be merry tonight. For it is fitting that you should marry my child. I must, however, explain to you the true situation. I have given her to seven men, and they died during the night when they went in to her. But for now, be merry.”

But Tobias said, “I will not taste anything here until you settle matters with me.”

Tobit 7:10-12⁵⁴⁶

As the story goes, Sarah’s father Raguel wanted Tobias to eat, drink, and be merry before their wedding. However, Tobias chose to resolve the issue first. Once settled, he married

543. The Book of Pedigrees or Genealogies that was stored in the temple.

544. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 2:421.

545. The hope and promise of a resurrection is rooted in the book of Genesis. For further study on this interesting subject, see Mitchell L. Chase “The Genesis of resurrection Hope: Exploring its Early Presence and Deep Roots.” 467-80.

546. *Ben Sirach* and *Tobit* belong to a classification of extra-biblical books known as the Apocrypha. These two literary works reflect the opinions of many Jewish people. See 02.02.03 “Apocrypha” for more information. 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.

her. But before he approached her on their wedding night, he burned a fish's heart and liver to cast a demon out of her. Had the Sadducees not been humiliated on the resurrection issue, they would probably have challenged Jesus on an exorcism question.

Returning to the Sadducean discussion on the doctrine of resurrection, they held a strong position against life after death which made their question most absurd. Some scholars believe the fiercest of all conflicts between the Pharisees and Sadducees was on this doctrine.⁵⁴⁷ They no doubt asked the question in an attempt to entrap Jesus and defeat their theological rivals as well. Jesus first exposed their misunderstanding and then their ignorance. He responded by simply telling them, "you are in error . . .," and went on to prove it. With extreme simplicity Jesus said, "I am the God of Abraham . . . He is not the God of the dead but of the living."

But what did the Jewish people believe concerning marriage and the resurrected life? They had a number of concepts concerning this issue. Most, it seems, believed that at the resurrection men would be restored to their former natural bodies and have human appetites and passions. They would have activities of eating, wearing the clothes in which they were buried, drinking, etc., and be married to one wife. And therein was their problem. If one had more than one wife on earth, how could he only have one wife in the new heaven? So while the Sadducees posed a hypothetical question to Jesus, the Pharisees also would have had an interest in the answer. The gospels do not give a description of the resurrected bodies, but later the Apostle Paul did briefly describe the "glorified bodies" in Philippians 3:21.

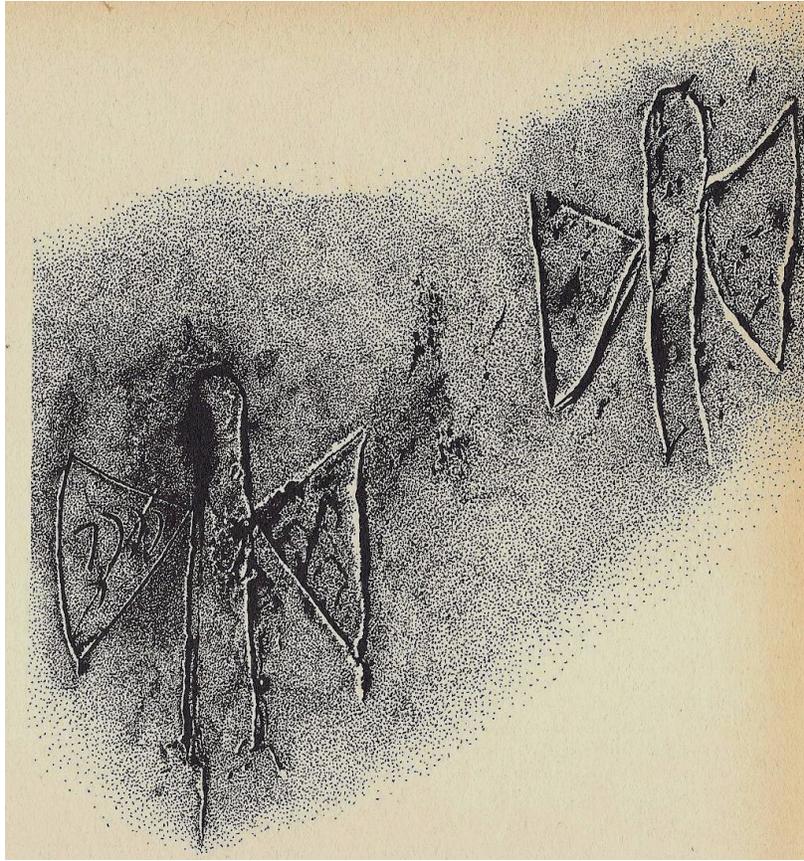
"I am the God of Abraham . . . He is not the God of the dead but of the living."

Clearly, this statement indicated that those who died were very much alive elsewhere. If there were no resurrection, then God would have said, "I *was* the God of Abraham." But, God *is* a God of the living, not the dead. So if there is no resurrection, then there is no God.⁵⁴⁸ Again, the crowds were astonished and His enemies humiliated.

Jesus gave to them fresh insight into the meaning of Scriptures and some teachers of the law agreed with Him (Lk. 20:39-40), which again underscores the basic fact that not every religious leader was critical of Jesus or wanted to see Him crucified.

547. Finkelstein, *The Pharisees*. 145.

548. For further study on the significance of the physical resurrection of Jesus, see Geisler, Norman L. "The Significance of Christ's Physical Resurrection." *Bibliotheca Sacra*. 146:582 (Apr-June, 1989). 148-70.



13.04.03.B. GRAFFITI OF ASCENDING SOULS. The Pharisees believed that at some time after the death of the body, when the resurrection occurs, the independent soul is reunited with the body. These unusual drawings from the catacombs at Beth Shearim are believed to represent ascending souls.

In sharp contrast to the graffiti of the Pharisees, is an inscription found on an ossuary of a Hellenized Jew or Sadducee. It reads,

No man can go up (from the grave), nor (can) ‘El’azar or Sappirah

Inscription on the lid of Ossuary No. 2⁵⁵⁰

The significance of the inscription is that it clearly denies the resurrection, just as did

550. The Aramaic inscription was translated by Professor Frank Moore. Parenthesis also by Moore. Cross, “A Note on a Burial Inscription from Mount Scopus.” 245-46. See also Franz, <http://www.lifeandland.org/2010/01/the-resurrection-of-the-jerusalem-saints-at-the-feast-of-firstfruits-matthew-2751-54/> Retrieved October 10, 2014.

those who challenged Jesus. The ossuary was discovered in 1973 in a Jewish tomb on Mount Scopus in Jerusalem. It contained five skeletons and nine ossuaries. Archaeologists believe the tomb belonged either to a family of the Sadducees or Hellenized Jews.

In essence, the Sadducees or Hellenized Jews, tried to trap Jesus with the previous dilemma of choice: to believe in the laws of Moses or to believe in an afterlife. Jesus clearly revealed that the answer was both. Now they questioned Jesus about the most important commandment.

13.04.04 Mk. 12:28-34 (See also Mt. 22:34-40; Lk. 20:39-40)

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT: THE “SHEMA.”

²⁸ **One of the scribes approached. When he heard them debating and saw that Jesus answered them well, he asked Him, “Which command is the most important of all?”**

²⁹ **“This is the most important,” Jesus answered:**

Listen, Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is One (Deut. 6:4).⁵⁵¹ ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength (Deut. 6:5).

³¹ **“The second is: Love your neighbor as yourself (Lev. 19:18). There is no other command greater than these.”**

³² **Then the scribe said to Him, “You are right, Teacher! You have correctly said that He is One, and there is no one else except Him. ³³ And to love Him with all your heart, with all your understanding, and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself, is far more important than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices.”**

³⁴ **When Jesus saw that he answered intelligently, He said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And no one dared to question Him any longer.**

551. See video comments messianic scholar Timothy Hegg on the “the Lord is One” as symbolized on the tzi-tzi in video 08.06.05.V. The words *LORD* and *God* can be somewhat confusing for modern readers. When Hebrew names are applied to the passage, it reads as follows: **Hear, O Israel; YHVH our Elohim is one YHVH** (Deut. 6:4, KJV).

“One of the scribes approached.” Some scholars believe, and this writer agrees, that this scribe could very well have been Saul, later known as the Apostle Paul. This opinion is based on the fact that Saul was living with his sister in Jerusalem while a student of Gamaliel during the ministry time of Jesus (Acts 23:16).⁵⁵² While this is obviously somewhat speculative, it must be remembered that he was an aggressive character and fierce defender of the law. It is almost impossible to think that he did not personally see and hear Jesus during his studies in Jerusalem. Therefore, when Jesus said, “You are not far from the kingdom of God,” that could very well have been a pun, in addition to the literal meaning.

“Which command is the most important [commandment] of all?” The commandments were listed in priority so the rabbis would have a uniform base of knowledge in the event that there would be a conflict between two commandments. For example, what should be done if the 8th day of circumcision falls on the Sabbath or on the Feast of Passover? Which law would they observe and which rite would be postponed? Some believed that the failure to wash hands before and after meals was as grievous as murder; others believed the wearing of fringes (or strings) by men was the most important.⁵⁵³ In fact, some priests and high priests were so passionate about purity that they wore silk gloves when among people or presiding over sacrifices, so they would not become defiled by “those repulsive and degrading common people.”⁵⁵⁴ In a religious culture where there were multiple religious rituals, the priorities were important.⁵⁵⁵

In response, Jesus placed all the Old Testament laws under two headings:

1. Those laws that focus responsibility toward God and
2. Those laws that focus responsibility toward men.

Therefore, Jesus said that one should first “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with your entire mind” (Mt. 22:37). Notice the priority – loving an unlovely neighbor is not possible without first obtaining the love of God. This was followed by the second commandment: that is to love one’s neighbor as one’s self (Mt. 22:39). The Apostle Paul affirmed the summary of these laws in Romans 13:10,

552. See also Bookman, *When God Wore Sandals*. CD Trac 12.

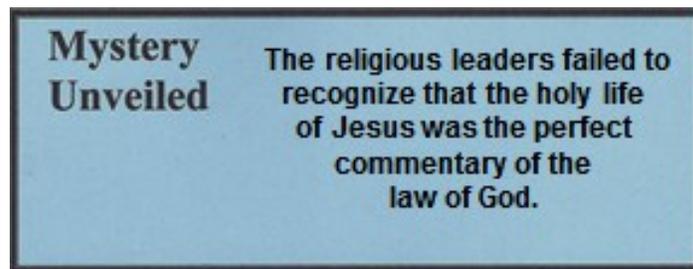
553. Mishnah, *Shabbath* 62.1

554. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 1:89.

555. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:121-23.

when he said that love fulfilled the purpose of the law.⁵⁵⁶

1. Some first century scholars understood the phrase, “all your heart,” to mean control of every lustful inclination for food, drink, and sensual pleasures.
2. The term “all your soul,” was said to mean a commitment for righteous living that would include martyrdom if needed; and
3. The term “all your strength” was said to mean all of one’s desires for earthly possessions and riches, which must not reduce or replace the love for God.⁵⁵⁷



The early Church took the words of Jesus and connected it to a lesson on behavior. The Church fathers taught that:

The way to life is this: “First you shall love God, who has created you; second you neighbor as yourself. Whatever you do not want to happen to you, do not do to another. This is the teaching [that comes] from these words.

Didache 2:2-3a

When Jews and Christians think of the *Shema* today, they refer to a short confession that is based upon Deuteronomy 6:4-9. It reads as follows:

Hear, O Israel, the LORD is our God; the Lord is one.

The Shema⁵⁵⁸

556. See also Rom. 7:5-6, 10:4; Heb. 7:11-19, 8:13; Col. 2:14; Eph. 2:11-3:6; Gal. 3:17-19.

557. Henaut, *Oral Tradition and the Gospels*. 197.

558. http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Scripture/Torah/The_Shema/the_shema.html. Accessed September 28, 2013. The words *LORD* and *God* can be somewhat confusing for modern readers. When Hebrew names are applied to the passage, it reads as follows: **Hear, O Israel; YHVH our Elohim is one YHVH** (Deut. 6:4, KJV).

This rendition of the most important commandment Jesus referred to is, in reality, a rendition created around the year 500.⁵⁵⁹ While the concept and message did not change from the days of Moses, the wording did. The Babylonian Talmud recorded Rabbi Hillel who said that, “The Shema is the whole law and the rest is commentary.”⁵⁶⁰ This was very close to what Jesus taught.

On an important side note, when the Apostle Paul directed his followers to pray “without ceasing,” “continually,” or “always,” he did not mean uninterrupted prayer, but to observe the regular hours of prayer as they were. The early church recited the *Shema* morning and evening⁵⁶¹ along with their morning and evening prayer – that was our Lord’s Prayer along with anything else that concerned them. At noon they prayed again but did not necessarily recite the *Shema*. This was not a legalistic issue, but one that righteous Jewish believers wanted to do. In addition to our Lord’s Prayer, they prayed for whatever else concerned them.⁵⁶²

“This is the most important.” The central doctrine of faith in Judaism is known as “the Shema.” Reciting the Shema was how a Jewish person acknowledged that he was under the rule of God and, in fact, had taken upon himself the “Kingdom of God.”⁵⁶³ It never was “just a prayer” as is often thought of today, but rather, a concept of identity based on series of three biblical passages the rabbis centuries ago felt were significant to Jewish life and identity.⁵⁶⁴ Ever since the Exodus it was recited twice a day.⁵⁶⁵ The first sentence of the text (below) is the theme (translations may vary the wording) which was cited by Jesus. A common way of referring to a passage in the Second Temple Period was to recite a key phrase of it, and the listeners understood that the speaker referred to entire passage. Therefore, when Jesus cited only the first portion (Deut. 6:4), He was in effect, conveying the significance of the entire “Shema.” Modern students may conclude that what was *not* said might not be important, or if anything may only have been a hint or suggestion. However, at times what is *not said* may be just as important or more so than what was said. Jesus carefully selected His words and His silence.⁵⁶⁶

559. Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*. 67 n5.

560. Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbath* 31a.

561. See discussion on “evening” in Appendix 16.

562. Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*. 72-73.

563. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 228.

564. <http://www.jewfaq.org/prayer/shema.htm> Accessed February 10, 2012.

565. Josephus, *Antiquities* 4.8.13; Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*. 68-69.

566. Spangler and Tverberg, *Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus*. 80-82, 211-212.

⁴ “Listen, Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is One. ⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. ⁶ These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. ⁷ Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸ Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them be a symbol on your forehead. ⁹ Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

¹³ “If you carefully obey my commands I am giving you today, to love the LORD your God and worship Him with all your heart and all your soul, ¹⁴ I will provide rain for your land in the proper time, the autumn and spring rains, and you will harvest your grain, new wine, and oil. ¹⁵ I will provide grass in your fields for your livestock. You will eat and be satisfied. ¹⁶ Be careful that you are not enticed to turn aside, worship, and bow down to other gods. ¹⁷ Then the LORD’s anger will burn against you. He will close the sky, and there will be no rain; the land will not yield its produce, and you will perish quickly from the good land the LORD is giving you.

¹⁸ “Imprint these words of mine on your hearts and minds, bind them as a sign on your hands, and let them be a symbol on your foreheads. ¹⁹ Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ²⁰ Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, ²¹ so that as long as the heavens are above the earth, your days and those of your children may be many in the land the LORD swore to give your fathers.

Deuteronomy 11:13-21

³⁷ The LORD said to Moses, ³⁸ “Speak to the Israelites and tell them that throughout their generations they are to make tassels for the corners of their garments, and put a blue cord on the tassel at each corner. ³⁹ These will serve as tassels for you to look at, so that you may remember all the LORD’s commands and obey them and not become unfaithful by following your own heart and your own eyes. ⁴⁰ This way you will remember and obey all My

commands and be holy to your God. ⁴¹ I am Yahweh your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God; I am Yahweh your God.”

Numbers 15:37-41

The highest endeavor of any Jewish man was the study of the Torah. Centuries earlier, upon return from Babylonian exile, Jewish scholars studied and analyzed the Mosaic Law and wrote many commentaries. They weighed, measured, and classified every word and letter, creating subtleties⁵⁶⁷ and associations that were never intended by the author. They concluded that there were 248 divinely inspired affirmative precepts, just as there were 248 parts of the human body created by God. They also concluded that there were 365 negative precepts, the same number of veins and arteries in the body.⁵⁶⁸ (Clearly the Jewish scientific mind was somewhat undeveloped at this time.) The total number is 613, the same number of Hebrew letters in the Decalogue.⁵⁶⁹ The Talmud preserved these insightful gems:

There is nothing else that is good but the Law.

Babylonian Talmud, *Abodah Zarah* 19b

If one studies the Torah, painful sufferings are kept away from him.

Babylonian Talmud, *Berakoth* 5a

<p>Mystery Unveiled</p>	<p>When Jesus cited the first portion of Deuteronomy 6:4, He, in effect, conveyed the significance of the entire <i>Shema</i>. It was a type of verbal shorthand.</p>
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Jewish scholars noted that Moses commanded Jewish men to wear tassels, a/k/a fringes (Heb. *tsitsith*, *tzi-tzi*, or *tzitzit*) with blue threads on their garments (Num. 15:38). At no

567. Subtleties are fine points or nuances.

568. Several sources indicate the number of veins and arteries of the body, but those sources are of a later period and there is no evidence that this was the opinion of first century Jewish people. Certainly it is not reflective of modern medical knowledge.

569. Farrar, *Life of Christ*. 352-53.

time did Moses ever indicate how many threads to a fringe or how many knots had to be tied in every fringe, yet by the time of Jesus, the Pharisees said that not tying the strings properly was equal to breaking the laws of Moses.⁵⁷⁰ Furthermore, there is no evidence that tassels were worn during the First Temple Period. Nonetheless, the scholars managed to add all the threads and knots, plus the number of Hebrew letters for the word *tsitsith* and have a total number of 613. How inspiring! To them this was a confirmation of God's favor upon His people.⁵⁷¹ Yet the Pharisees added additional laws, their own contribution of religious legislation, for a total of 1,521 commandments.⁵⁷² And to make life more complex, various Jewish sects emphasized their own petty regulations while being heavily engaged in theological discussions with leaders of other sects.⁵⁷³ Little wonder then, that Jesus got upset at their legalism.

13.04.05 Mt. 22:41-45; Mk. 12:37b; Mt. 22:46 (See also Lk. 20:41-44)

JESUS ASKS THE PHARISEES ABOUT HIS OWN ANCESTRY

Mt. ⁴¹ While the Pharisees were together, Jesus questioned them, ⁴² “What do you think about the Messiah? Whose Son is He?”

“David’s,” they told Him.

⁴³ He asked them, “How is it then that David, inspired by the Spirit, calls Him ‘Lord’:

**⁴⁴ Adonai said to my Lord (YHWH),⁵⁷⁴
‘Sit here at my right hand
until I put your enemies under your feet’ (JNT; Ps. 110:1)?⁵⁷⁵**

570. The knots had alpha-numeric values which represented the receipts of the Law. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 1:189-92.

571. Farrar, *Life of Christ*. 352-53.

572. Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew*. 132.

573. Wilson, *Related Strangers*. 18.

574. The Hebrew term for *Lord* is *Yahweh*, or YHWH. See Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 332.

575. Psalm 110:1 (verse 44) translation by Stern, *Jewish New Testament*; This verse is quoted more often in the NT than any other in the Hebrew Scriptures. See. Mt. 26:64; Acts. 2:34; 1 Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:20 Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 13.

⁴⁵“If David calls Him ‘Lord,’ how then can the Messiah be his Son?”

Mk. ^{37b} And the large crowd was listening to Him with delight.

Mt. ⁴⁶ No one was able to answer Him at all, and from that day no one dared to question Him anymore.

In His early ministry, Jesus did not bluntly say that He was the Messiah, or anything of His deity. However, in the course of time, as people realized this man from Nazareth was uniquely different, they began to question His identity. This was especially true when He performed miracles that they believed only God could do. So therefore, was Jesus God, or the Son of God? Why was the Messiah known as David’s son when David himself called him Lord?

“Whose Son is He?” There is no shortage to references to the Son of David in Jewish literature.⁵⁷⁶ They had good cause to ask the question. While the leading Pharisees responded correctly to the question posed by Jesus, they failed to recognize who Jesus was. Matthew emphasized throughout his gospel that Jesus met every requirement set forth by the ancient prophets. Yet these Pharisees refused to accept the identity of Jesus, even after He performed several messianic miracles.

As previously stated, Jesus followed the rabbinic technique of debating and teaching that was commonly used – one of answering questions with counter-questions. He asked His critics about Psalm 110:1 as this the passage was regarded to be Messianic. It has the phrase “Son of David” that was considered to be Messianic by two prophets (2 Sam. 7:14; Isa. 11:1). Explicitly, Jesus said, “The Lord (*Jehovah*) said to my Lord (*Adonai*).”⁵⁷⁷ The obvious question then is, if David called him “Lord,” how could he be his son? Could the most honored patriarch Abraham have called any one of his descendants “Lord?” Furthermore, Psalms 110:1 describes the messianic king as a priest according to the order of Melchizedek. This had the profound implication that Jesus was that long-awaited fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, as well as a Melchizedekian priest himself.⁵⁷⁸

Jesus had given them a riddle, the answer to which they knew but did not want to answer

576. For example, see 2 Sam. 7:12-14; Ps. 89:29-37; Isa. 9:2-7; 11:1-9; Jer. 23:5-6; Ezek. 34:23-24; 37:24; *Psalm of Solomon* 17:21-25; 4QFlor 1.11-13. The early church also reflected upon this in Rom. 1:3 and 2 Tim. 2:8.

577. Farrar, *Life of Christ*. 354-55.

578. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*. 186-87; Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 285-86.

because then they would have to acknowledge He was a descendant of David. That, in turn, would open the door for the next confession – that He was the Messiah, a thought they refused to consider. They loved their blindness, ignored rules of basic simple reasoning, and permitted repeated embarrassments to build into anger and rage.

Consequently, they were humiliated beyond description. For centuries, they prided themselves on scholarship and exegetical purity; it was their recognized domain. Now, every time they encountered Jesus, their ignorance was exposed. Ancestry was one of the key points concerning the prophecies and identification of the Messiah. For once Jesus asked them a question. If they wanted to examine His genealogy, all they needed to do was to read the records in the Library of Pedigrees⁵⁷⁹ located in the temple. The answer to the question was clear: Jesus was both human and divine (Rom. 1:3-4).

Finally, Matthew told his Jewish readers that the birth, life, and death of Jesus fulfilled all the requirements of the Davidic Covenant as prophesied by the prophets.⁵⁸⁰ Therefore, the royal line is re-established. Although the Davidic Heir was crucified, He will reign in Jerusalem during the Millennium Period. There were many views concerning the Messiah in first-century Judaism, yet a vast majority of them agreed that He would be a descendant “son” of David.⁵⁸¹ The point that Jesus made is not to deny that Christ is David’s son, but to argue that the key name for Him is “Lord.”⁵⁸²

13.04.06 Mt. 23:1-12 (See also Mk. 12:38-40; Lk. 20:45-47)

SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS CONDEMNED

¹ Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples: ² “The scribes and the Pharisees are seated in the chair of Moses. ³ Therefore do whatever they tell you, and observe it. But don’t do what they do, because they don’t practice what they teach. ⁴ They tie up heavy loads that are hard to carry and put

579. Dalman, *Jesus Christ in the Talmud*. 31; Jerusalem Talmud, *J’bamoth* 49b.

580. Mt. 1:21-23; 2:1-6; 3:1-12; 17:10-13; 21:1-5; 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. 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.

581. There are a number of extra-biblical sources that agree that the m/Messiah would be a son, or descendant of King David. Examples that support this are *Psalms of Solomon*, 17:21-25 and Dead Sea Scroll Fragment 4QFlor 1.11-13.

582. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 332.

them on people's shoulders, but they themselves aren't willing to lift a finger to move them.

⁵ They do everything to be observed by others: They enlarge their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels. ⁶ They love the place of honor at banquets, the front seats in the synagogues, ⁷ greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called 'Rabbi' by people.

⁸ "But as for you, do not be called 'Rabbi,' because you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. ⁹ Do not call anyone on earth your father, because you have one Father, who is in heaven. ¹⁰ And do not be called masters either, because you have one Master, the Messiah. ¹¹ The greatest among you will be your servant. ¹² Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

In this discussion Jesus addressed the religious leaders who flaunted their overtly large phylacteries and extra-long tassels. Both Mark (12:38) and Luke (20:46) said that the expensive garments worn to show off wealth and status.⁵⁸³ To the wearing of such items, later rabbinic writers agreed with Jesus. For example, the Babylonian Talmud preserved the account wherein a Rabbi Nahman ben Isaac denounces the sin of those who wrap themselves with cloaks in order to show off. Another rabbi, ben Azzai said,

It is easier to rule the world than to teach in the presence of two men wrapped in cloaks.

Babylonian Talmud, *Sotah* 22b

A century later another writer wrote,

Rabbi Benjamin interpreted the verse as referring to hypocrites in regard to Torah. People suppose that they can read the Scriptures and the Mishnah, but they cannot. They wrap themselves in cloaks and put phylacteries on their heads. Of them it is written, "Behold, the tears of the oppressed, with none to comfort them." "It is mine to punish" says God, as it is said: "Cursed be they who do the work of the Lord deceitfully." (Jer. 48:10)

***Ecclesiastes Rabbath* 4:1⁵⁸⁴**

583. Weinfeld, "The Charge of Hypocrisy in Matthew and in Jewish Source." 56.

584. Cited by Weinfeld, "The Charge of Hypocrisy in Matthew 23 and in Jewish Sources." 57.

Evidently the issue of pride, status, and wealth was not limited to first century leaders. It can be assumed that, just as it existed for centuries after the destruction of the temple, so likewise the tradition existed previously throughout the Inter-Testamental Period and was a well-established in the days of Jesus.

The location of this discussion was probably at the southern steps of the temple mount – where many of the original stone steps are still visible today. This was the main entrance to the temple and was always full of people coming or leaving the Holy Shrine. Scholars believe it was here that Jesus addressed the crowds as well as His disciples. Note the following video comments by Dr. Paul Wright:

Video Insert >

13.04.06.V1 *The Southern Steps of the Temple*. Dr. Paul Wright discusses the importance of the southern steps of the temple and its popularity as a teaching site for rabbis in Matthew 23. Click here if Internet connection is available.

In this discussion, Jesus spoke *about* the Saturday morning synagogue service.⁵⁸⁵ After the reading of the Mosaic Law, the reader would sit down in the “**chair of Moses,**” literally, “the seat of Moses;”⁵⁸⁶ which was a carved stone throne-type seat in the front of the synagogue that faced the audience to preach his sermon. Sitting was the physical posture of teachers. The seat received its name because the person sitting in it represented Moses and, whoever sat in that seat wielded the same power and authority.⁵⁸⁷ The first century scribes held to the same opinion, as evidenced in *Aboth* 1:1 of the Mishnah.⁵⁸⁸ They made the Word of God a rigid list of hundreds of restrictions. Jesus said Scripture must lead men into a true heart relationship with God. Anything else is an abuse of Scripture.

585. For synagogue service procedures, see Philo, *The Works of Philo*. 689-90 quoted in 06.02.02.Q1. Also Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*. 24. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:67-69; Farrar, *The Life of Christ*. 118-20. See the book of *Jubilees* for the tiresome instruction on the minutest rabbinical details presented in synagogue services.

586. See 06.02.02.A and 06.02.02.B.

587. See Ex. 11:5; 12:29; 1 Kg. 1:35, 46; 2:12; 16:11; 2 Kg.15:12; Ps. 132:12; Josephus, *Antiquities* 7.14.5; 18.1.1.

588. Mishnah, *Sanbedrin* 11.3; Mishnah, *Aboth* 1.1 ff; Mishnah, *Yabamoth* 2.4; 9.3.

In Aboth 1:1 there is an interesting statement that clearly defines the Oral Law. It reads:

Moses received the Torah at Sinai and handed it on to Joshua, Joshua to elders, and elders to prophets. And the prophets handed it on to the men of the Great Synagogue. They said three things: Be prudent in judgment. Raise up many disciples. Make a fence around the Torah.

Mishnah, *Aboth* 1:1⁵⁸⁹



13.04.06.A. THE SEAT OF MOSES. This stone seat was the honored place for any teacher in the synagogue, as he was recognized as speaking for Moses. Photograph by the author.

The phrase, “**chair of Moses,**” was once thought to be a figure of speech representing the authority of the one who spoke as Moses when explaining the reading of the law. However, then archaeologists discovered such a seat while digging at Chorazin, and it is now understood that every synagogue had one. After the seat was discovered, scholars

589. See video 02.02.16.V by Messianic Rabbi John Fischer who discusses the term “fence around the Torah” from a first century Jewish perspective. See also Neusner, *Rabbinic Judaism*. 207.

debated whether Jesus recognized the authority of the Pharisees.⁵⁹⁰ It was generally situated by the main entrance, which faced Jerusalem. There was also a flat stone in front of the Seat of Moses which was known as the *Bema*, and it was upon this stone that the Torah was read and the explanation followed afterward when the reader was seated in the Seat of Moses.

“Therefore do whatever they tell you, and observe it. But don’t do what they do.”

Most of the Jewish people obeyed codes of conduct and religion according to the Pharisees, even though they did not formally belong to the Pharisees.⁵⁹¹ The Pharisaic elite and scribes taught the Mosaic laws, but did not live by them. Jesus singled them out because most of the Pharisees were conscious and honest leaders of their local synagogues. They lived godly lives according to the laws of the Torah. Whenever Jesus confronted the Pharisees, as in this case, He confronted the aristocratic leadership.⁵⁹² Here Jesus underscored, for His fellow Jews, the importance of living according to the biblical laws. Note that Jesus frequently condemned the Jewish leadership, but not the common people.

Mystery Unveiled When Jesus said, “Do whatever they tell you, and observe it. But don’t do what they do,” shows that He was theologically aligned more with the Pharisees than with any other Jewish sect.

It is amazing that Christian commentaries *never* mention that some Pharisees were in support of the disciples when they were attacked by the religious leaders. Seldom do these commentaries mention quotations from the Mishnah or Talmud that also criticized the Sadducees and those aristocratic Pharisees. Nor do they mention that Jesus told His people to obey the teachings of the Pharisees (Mt. 23:3). Could it be that, the except for the corrupt lifestyles of a few powerful Pharisaic leaders, the Pharisees as a whole were relatively close theologically to Jesus? Could some commentaries have an anti-Jewish bias?

590. Rabbinowitz, “Matthew 23:2-4: Does Jesus Recognize the Authority of the Pharisees and does He Endorse their *Halakhab*?” 423-47.

591. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 258.

592. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 259, n42.

13.04.06.Q1 How close was Jesus to being a Pharisee, or, how close were the Pharisees to being followers of Jesus (Mt. 23:2-3)?

In light of the context of this chapter, this seems to be an inappropriate question. Throughout church history the Pharisees have all been painted with the wide brush of corruption and hypocrisy. As was mentioned previously, there were many good and righteous Pharisees who loved their people as much as they loved God. The leading Pharisees who held the reins of power and wealth in Jerusalem were the ones who constantly confronted Jesus and plotted His death (although were hidden at the time of His crucifixion).

Most people identified themselves with the Pharisees. If they were not a member of the sect, they attempted to follow their instructions of life. There were four levels of Pharisees:⁵⁹³ On the lowest entry level, slaves and women were permitted to enter.⁵⁹⁴ The highest and fourth level was the elite aristocratic Pharisaic leaders, whom Jesus humiliated before the lower class Pharisees as well as the common people. The Pharisees influenced the common people more than any other since they controlled the instruction in the local synagogue. Most were truly interested in the spiritual welfare of their people. Jesus was not a member, but theologically He identified far more with the caring element of this sect than with any other.

<p>Mystery Unveiled</p>	<p>Jesus most certainly was not a Pharisee, but theologically, He identified more with the caring element of that sect than with any other Jewish group.</p>
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Finally, for those readers who believe that Jesus and the Pharisees were always polar opposites, notice the following examples of “togetherness” of Jesus, early Christians, and the common Pharisees:

1. In Luke 13:31 the Pharisees warned Jesus that Herod Antipas wanted to kill Him
2. In Matthew 23:2-3 Jesus said that whatever the Pharisees teach, they should do.

593. See 02.01.14.Q1.

594. Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 112.

3. Gamiel argued in defense of Peter and the apostles in the book of Acts.
4. Furthermore, it was the Pharisees who protested to the high priest when James was martyred
5. In Acts 21, many who were devout to the Torah (meaning Pharisees) became His followers.

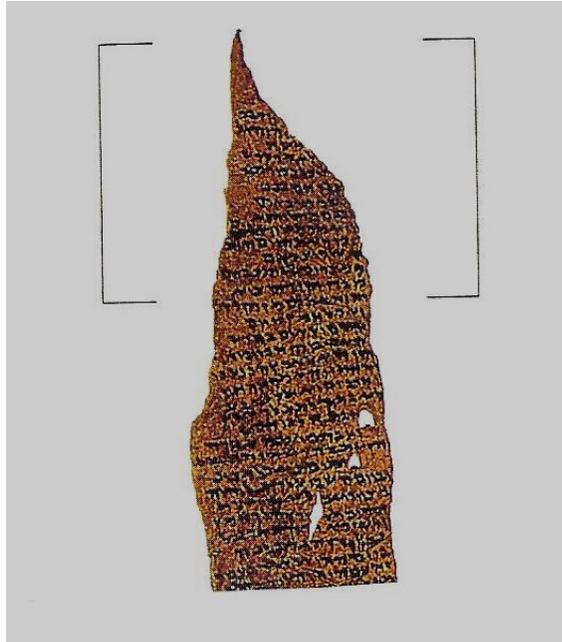
“They enlarge their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels.” The scribes and Pharisees literally interpreted the passages of Exodus 13:9, 16 and Deuteronomy 6:8; 11:18 and applied the four sections of the Mosaic instruction to their garments. Nearly all Jewish men practiced this tradition, especially at times of prayer, as many orthodox Jewish men do today, but the religious leaders enlarged their phylacteries and tassels to show off their religious statue. Unfortunately, many Christians today cannot imagine Him wearing these religious ornaments. As an orthodox Jew, Jesus would have worn ordinary phylacteries and tassels in the temple and synagogue.

A *Phylactery* (Gk. *phulakterion* 5440), known in Hebrew as a *tephillin*,⁵⁹⁵ was a leather box worn on the forehead and right arm. The phylactery worn on the forehead had four sections with a section of the law in each compartment.⁵⁹⁶ The phylactery worn on the arm had only one compartment with a verse written on a single slip of leather or papyrus, written in four columns with seven lines each. These traditions became so sacred, that some believed that God also wore the same *tephillin*.⁵⁹⁷ These objects of religious ritual were worn in the Second Temple Period, and orthodox Jewish men continue to wear them today. The custom of wearing phylacteries may have originated in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, but by the first century it was an accepted practice. It is unknown if these were worn during the First Temple Period.

595. Bivin, *New Light on the Difficult Words of Jesus*. 51-52; Vine, “Phylactery.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:470-71.

596. Ex. 13:1-10; 13:11-16; Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 178-79.

597. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:123.



13.04.06.B. A PHYLACTERY. A *phylactery*, also known as a *tefillin*, that was found among the Dead Sea Scrolls contained a small piece of leather with the following biblical passage written on it. The bracketed portion is shown below.

And spoke
 the Lord to
 Moses
 saying, “Consecrate
 to me every first-born
 the first issue of every womb of the
 Israelites, man
 and beast is Mine.”
 and Moses said to the people,
 “Remember this day
 on which you went (free)
 from Egypt, house of bondage,
 how with a mighty hand
 the Lord freed you from it...”
 (Exodus 13:1ff)⁵⁹⁸

13.04.06.C. TRANSLATION OF THE PHYLACTERY / TEFILLIN.

598. Maddex, ed. *Scrolls from the Dead Sea*. 44-47.

Not all phylactery tefillins have the same passage, but most appear to have Deuteronomy 6:4, a passage that is known as the “Shema.”

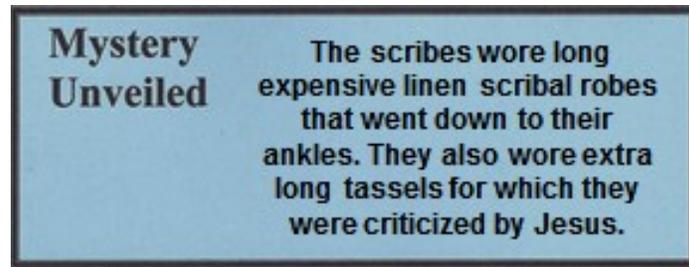
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13.04.06.V2 *The Purpose of the Jewish Phylactery.* Messianic scholar Timothy Hegg discusses the phylacteries worn by first century orthodox Jewish men. Introduction by Dr. Bill Heinrich. [Click here if Internet connection is available.](#)



13.04.06.D. MAN WEARING A PHYLACTERY. This man, meditating at the Western Wall, is wearing a *phylactery* on his forehead and another on his left arm. The skull cap did not exist in the first century and is the result of anti-Semitism in Europe after the Reformation. Photograph by the author.

Jesus also criticized His opponents for their prideful long tassels. Orthodox men wore them at all religious gatherings and festivals. However, the Talmud indicates that neither the officiating priests nor those representing the people in the temple wore them.⁵⁹⁹ Therefore, it appears that these may have been worn only by the scribes and Pharisees. But the scribes also had their own clothing style that identified their occupation. Their garments included the extra-long tassels and the scribal robe that touched the ankle.⁶⁰⁰



It is interesting that Jesus did not criticize them for wearing the tassels; He criticized them because these were exaggerated as to produce public awareness to them. The same message was taught by honest rabbis. Whenever Jesus criticized the scribes and aristocratic Pharisees,⁶⁰¹ He did so because,

1. They imposed restrictive laws on people which they avoided themselves.
2. They build beautiful monument tombs for the prophets who were sent by God, but whom they killed.
3. They kept knowledge of God's Word essentially for themselves, and they made themselves judge and jury of biblical interpretation.
4. They were incredibly prideful in dress, in greetings, and in public places such as the market and synagogue.

Besides wearing tassels on their outer garments, Jewish men also had them on their prayer shawls (Heb. *tallith*)⁶⁰² as prescribed in Numbers 15:37-41. One rabbinic author

599. Babylonian Talmud, *Zebahim* 19a-b.

600. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 244.

601. Other Jewish writers also criticized the leading Pharisees as found in *1 Enoch* 102:9-10; *Testament of Moses* 7:3; Tosefta, *Menahot* 13:22; See also Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 259 n42.

602. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 179.

indicated that excessiveness constituted a width of threads (a/k/a tassels) if more than three “fingerbreadths” wide.⁶⁰³ Tassels are known in Hebrew as *tsitsith*, *tzi-tzi*, or *tzitzit*⁶⁰⁴ that Jesus wore (some translations read *hem of His garment*), as evidence by the woman who had a bleeding problem and was healed by touching them.

Extravagance among the rich and famous of Jerusalem was so excessive that the Sanhedrin, which served both as a court and legislation body, had passed a law to prevent the very wealthy from covering their phylacteries with gold.⁶⁰⁵ Yet wealth was exhibited in other ways, such as when the wealthy brought their First Fruits to the temple, they used baskets covered with silver and gold.⁶⁰⁶ This reflects the vast chasm between the two social groups: the common peasants and the super-rich. A middle class was all but unknown at this time. It should be noted, however, that Jesus, who was an orthodox Jew, wore tassels as was common to all Jewish men.

“They love the place of honor ... the front seats in the synagogues.” In biblical times, honor and respect were highly esteemed virtues, much more so than today, to the point that Western civilization hardly has anything parallel to it. The closest person to the host or speaker had the highest honor and the one most distant had the least. The first row of seats in the synagogue faced the audience, rather than the speaker. These seats were reserved for visiting guests and dignitaries and were prized by the Pharisaic elite.⁶⁰⁷ What is known as “open seating” today – where anyone could sit anywhere – was unknown in biblical times.

13.04.06.Q2 In Matthew 23:9-10, why did Jesus say, “Do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ or be called ‘teacher?’”

In various discussions the comment was made that Jesus was either a prophet or like one. To be called a prophet was the highest honor one could give to any Jew. But Jesus was also referred to as “rabbi” meaning “teacher” or “my master,” and did not rebuke those who called him by this unofficial title. Obviously, He did not have a problem with

603. Babylonian Talmud, *Zebahim* 19a.

604. See video comments messianic scholar Timothy Hegg on the “the Lord is One” as symbolized on the tzi-tzi in video 08.06.05.V.

605. Mishnah, *Megillah* 4:8.

606. Mishnah, *Bikkurim* 3:8.

607. Metzger, *New Testament*. 57.

anyone using titles in reference to Him. In fact, failure to give respect or proper courtesies was a supreme insult more than it is today. A cultural element that must be considered is that honor and respect were considered as virtues synonymous with servanthood. But the comment about fathers and teachers was made because these religious leaders loved to be addressed by impressive titles that stroked their egos. Would Jesus have broken all cultural and biblical rules concerning respect of others? Hardly!

“As for you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’... do not call anyone on earth your father” In this narrative Jesus criticized the religious leaders who enjoyed hearing the titles people called them.⁶⁰⁸ Jesus immediately told His disciples that they were not to be called “teacher” or call anyone else “father,” because Jesus did not want the common people to equate the disciples with the Pharisees or scribes.⁶⁰⁹ Scribes loved to be called *rabbi* or *father*, yet many of these men were arrogant and selfish.⁶¹⁰ If Jesus meant a literal probation of the use of these titles, then the Apostle Paul erred when he spoke of the five-fold ministry (Eph. 4:11). One messianic scholar suggests that Jesus warned His followers not to accept unearned titles and honors.⁶¹¹

In Matthew 23 (below), Jesus condemned the religious leaders who used the religious system for their own use rather than serving God. His righteous anger demonstrated that He was not a “meek and mild,” spineless pacifist, but One who initiated “tough love.” God intended the Law to be impressed upon the heart (Prov. 6:20-21), but the religious leaders had reinterpreted the Scriptures. In response to their wickedness, Jesus pronounced a series of “woes,” but did not indicate what the punishment would be. He did, however, indicate the reasons for the woes, which were:

1. They shut the Kingdom of heaven in men’s faces (Mt. 23:13),
2. They were evangelistic to win converts, but then trained the converts in their own evil practices (Mt. 23:15; see comments on evangelism in 09.03.03),
3. The Pharisees circumvented biblical teaching (Mt. 23:16-22),

608. Other Jewish writers also criticized the leading Pharisees as found in *1 Enoch* 102:9-10; *Testament of Moses* 7:3; *Tosefta, Menahot* 13:22. See also Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 259, n42.

609. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 244.

610. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 208-10.

611. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*. 68; Spangler and Tverberg, *Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus*. 61-62.

4. They were condemned because they gave tithes without mercy, justice, and faithfulness (Mt. 23:23-24),⁶¹²
5. They externalized their religious practices without giving any attention to the condition of the heart (Mt. 23:25-26),
6. They had become devout hypocrites (Mt. 23:27-28), and
7. The Pharisees were like their forefathers who killed previous prophets of God.

Jesus was kind and compassionate to those who were hurting and open to receive Him. To those who seriously questioned Him, He first taught them and gave them repeated invitations. But to those who were close-minded and hardhearted, or determined to confront or entrap Him, Jesus was on the offensive. This He also demonstrated twice when He cleared out the temple. They should have known that He was God, His patience with them proved that!

Finally, it is noteworthy to consider the sincere reverence Jesus gave to the holy name, *Father*. When considering all the conversations He had with His disciples and the people, He used the term surprisingly few times – and then only with the disciples who could comprehend the sacredness of the name. That may be why in the book of Mark the name *Father* appears only six times. The lesson to be learned is that it is never to be used lightly, cheaply or sentimentally, but only with love, reverence, and endearment. An example is found in our Lord's Prayer / Disciple's Prayer, that states, "Let Your name be held holy" (Mt. 6:9).

"Your servant."The Greek word for *servant* is *diakonos* (1249)⁶¹³ and it occurs in the New Testament relative to domestic servants, civil rulers, and followers of Jesus in relation to one another. The *diakonos* is a person who volunteered to be a servant or is a servant because of family status. It is sometimes translated as *deacon*, an office of servanthood throughout church history. This term is different from *doulos* (1401),⁶¹⁴ a

612. Josephus spoke of corrupt priests who stole the tithes from other priests in *Antiquities*, 20.9.2, found herein in, "A den of robbers," 13.02.02. He also mentioned it in *Antiquities* 20.8.8 as found herein in "The chief priests" in 15.02.09; See additional rules on tithing in the Mishnah, *Ma'aserot* 1.1 and *Moed Shabbath* 4.7. The point is that tithing was a well-established practice.

613. Vine, "Deacon." *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:147; Green, ed. *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*.

614. Vine, "Deacon." *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:147; Green, ed. *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*.

bondservant or slave (i.e., Mt. 22:2-4). For example there are *douloi* (plural) who serve guests and *diakonoi* (plural) who carry out a king's sentence or decree. There is a clear distinction between those who chose to be servants and those who were slaves for whatever.

Finally, it should be noted that while not all scribes were Pharisees, although a majority probably were. Neither were all Pharisees scribes. But the Pharisees who were members of the Sanhedrin were all scribes.⁶¹⁵ Being a scribe opened job opportunities in government, education, and at the temple.

615. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 236.

Unit 13

The Passion Week Begins

Chapter 05

The Fourth Level Of Pharisees Condemned



13.05.00.A. JESUS CONFRONTS THE LEADING PHARISEES by **James Tossit**. Of the four levels of Pharisees, the elitists were the leaders who confronted Jesus numerous times whereas the common people, including many Pharisees, loved Jesus.

13.05.01 Introduction

As previously stated, most Jewish people were theologically aligned with the Pharisees. They carefully observed and practiced the biblical regulations of life; they were the

lowest level of Pharisees.⁶¹⁶ The next highest level was the local synagogue leaders who had the same passion to think, pray, and live a Torah-focused life. However, they were frequently under the scrutiny of religious authorities above them; the aristocrats of Jerusalem. The fourth or highest level of Pharisees included the schools of Hillel and Shammai as well as other leading Pharisees were the subject of criticism and condemnation by Jesus. Centuries later, writers of the Babylonian Talmud also criticized them, and essentially, agreed with Jesus concerning the hypocrisy of the Pharisaic leadership.

13.05.02 Mt. 23:13-15

FALSE RELIGIOUS PIETY CONDEMNED

¹³ “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You lock up the kingdom of heaven from people. For you don’t go in, and you don’t allow those entering to go in.

[¹⁴ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You devour widows’ houses and make long prayers just for show. This is why you will receive a harsher punishment.]

¹⁵ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to make one proselyte, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as fit for hell as you are!

The passage of Matthew 23:13-32 should ideally be treated as a single literary unit, but it is divided into four units for the purpose of explaining each section. Note the poetic structure of this passage (outlined below), and that it points to the failure of leadership as the emphasis of this narrative.

1. v. 13 Failure to recognize Jesus

2. v. 15 Superficially zealous and doing more harm than good

3. vv. 16-22 Incorrect use of Scripture

4. vv. 23-24 Failure of religious leaders to recognize thrust of

616. See 02.01.14.Q1.

Scripture

3'. vv.25-26 Incorrect use of Scripture

2'. vv. 27-28 Superficially zealous and doing more harm than good

1'. vv. 29-32 Heirs of those who failed to recognize God's prophets.

The chiasmic pattern has repeated ideas (i.e. 2 and 2') that focus on the main point, which, on line 4, is the failure of the religious leaders to recognize the thrust of Scripture that is to bring man to a close relationship with God (line 4). Jesus was not the only one who condemned the leading Pharisees and Sadducees, the condemnation of scribes and teachers who do not follow their own instruction is well known in rabbinic literature.⁶¹⁷ The irony is that all forms of post second-temple Judaism originated from the surviving Pharisees.

Following this heated discussion with the religious leaders Jesus proceeded to pronounce upon them seven condemnations, commonly known as the "seven woes." There is reason to believe that Matthew (Ch. 23) recorded them in the precise order as spoken by Jesus. Matthew's account reveals a very precise chiasmic literary structure⁶¹⁸ that has the focus upon the fourth woe, where the basic failure of the Pharisaic teachers is laid out.⁶¹⁹

While Luke and Matthew both recorded the condemning words of Jesus against the leading Pharisees, Matthew apparently made a point of it. Yet there were essentially two kinds of Pharisees:

1. Those who had a burning passion to serve and love God and
2. Those who were arrogant legalists determined to observe the Oral Law rather than the Written Law and do whatever was necessary to protect their own interests. This group filled so many verses of the gospels that those who loved and served God passionately are almost forgotten. It is this group of leading Pharisees to whom the "woes" were given by Jesus, and later by the editors of the Talmud.

The three woes pronounced upon the leading Pharisees were for specific reasons:

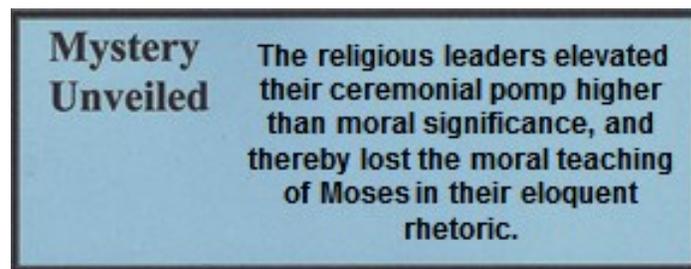
617. For further study, see Weinfeld, "The Charge of Hypocrisy in Matthew 23 and in Jewish Sources." 52-58.

618. See "Chiasmic Literary Structure" in Appendix 26.

619. Carson, "Matthew." 8:480; Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 343-37.

1. The first woe was for preventing people from receiving and participating in the Kingdom of God that Jesus was promoting. These leading Pharisees were supposed to lead the people to God, but instead, they prevented them from hearing the message of salvation and the Kingdom of God.
2. The second woe was because of their covetousness and hypocrisy. They had attained wealth and power and desired more of the same, with no regard to following priests, and certainly not for the common Jewish peasants.
3. The third woe was focused on their evangelistic efforts. While they won many Gentiles to Judaism, they also converted them to a perverted form of Judaism – making them twice the children of hell as they were.

It is a well-known principle in history that, whenever the ceremonial is elevated above the rank of the moral, the moral teaching is lost in the eloquent rhetoric of the ceremonial. The scribes and Pharisees had learned how, by arbitrary exegesis, to explain away the weightiest moral obligations and make up for the neglect of them by multiplying ritual ceremonial observances. As a result, these men of pride and arrogance were able to indulge in selfishness and greed while justifying their self-defined world of “holiness.” Jesus probably recognized this when He first encountered them in the temple at the age of 12.



“Woe to you.” Seven times Jesus hammered the Pharisees with this ominous warning – a warning underscored by the number seven that is representative of “completeness” and “wholeness.” The phrase *woe*, which in Greek is *ouai*, refers to both *anger* and *sorrow*.⁶²⁰ The term *woe* is a dirge, a lament for the dead.⁶²¹ This time Jesus was not only *extremely* upset with them but He underscored *woe* seven times.⁶²² Utter destruction was in the

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

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

622. See also 08.01.02, 09.02.02, 11.02.05, and 13.05.02-05.

forecast that became reality in A.D. 70. Ironically, in the Mishnah and Talmud seven kinds of Pharisees were described by other Jewish writers.⁶²³ Centuries later rabbis recorded their own condemnation of these seven types of leading Pharisees whom Jesus condemned. The Talmud gives a brief description of each:⁶²⁴ A portion is as follows:

Our rabbis have taught: There are seven types of Pharisees: the *Shikmi* Pharisee, the *Nikpi* Pharisee, the *Kizai* Pharisee, the ‘Pestle,’ Pharisees, the Pharisee [who constantly exclaims] ‘What is my duty that I may perform it?’ the Pharisee from love [of God] and the Pharisee from fear.

1. The Shikmi Pharisee - he is one who performs the action of Shechem because of his self-interest.

2. The Nikpi Pharisee - he is one who knocks his feet together since he is so humble that he is constantly falling.

3. The Kizai Pharisee - Rabbi Nahman ben Isaac said: He is one who makes his blood flow against walls. His humility causes his head to bow so low that he is constantly walking into various objects.

4. The Pestle Pharisee - Rabbah ben Shila said: [His head] is bowed like a [pestle in] a mortar to insure that he would not see a woman.

5. The Pharisee [who constantly exclaims] “What is my duty that I may perform it? - but that is virtue! - Nay, what he says is, ‘What further duty is for me that I may perform it?’ He desires to work hard because he is filled with the fear of judgment.

6. The Pharisee from fear - Abaya and Raba said to the tanna [who was reciting this passage], Do not mention ‘the Pharisee from love and the Pharisee from fear’; for Rabbi Judah has said in the name of Rabbi Eleazer: A man should always engage himself in the Torah and the commandments even though it be not for their own sake⁶²⁵ because from [engaging in them] not for their own sake, he will come [to engage in them] for their own sake.

623. See also Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot* 14b as cited by Boker. *The Talmud: Selected Writings*. 81; Stemberger. *Jewish Contemporaries of Jesus: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes*. 43-45.

624. Farrar, *Life of Christ*. 356-57; Barclay, “Matthew.” 2:281-85; Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 2:73-75.

625. From pure and disinterested motives.

Rabbi Nahman ben Isaac said: What is hidden is hidden, and what is revealed is revealed. The Great Tribunal will exact punishment from those who rub themselves against the walls.⁶²⁶

7. The “Pharisee from love” who believes he obeys God faithfully.

Babylonian Talmud, *Sotah* 22b⁶²⁷

The Jerusalem Talmud provides additional insight on these seven classifications – five bad and two good. Five bad Pharisees are:

1. The Shikmi Pharisee who performs the action of Shechem was circumcised from an unworthy motive (Gen. 34) and carries his religious duties upon his shoulders (Heb. *Shekem*)⁶²⁸ ostentatiously.⁶²⁹ This is why Jesus responded with the word “shoulder” in Matthew 23:4.
2. The Nikpi Pharisee walks with exaggerated humility with the attitude of, *Spare me a moment that I may perform a commandment.*⁶³⁰ He prefers to wait awhile so someone else can watch him do a good deed.⁶³¹
3. The Kizai Pharisee, in his vain attempt to be righteous and holy, avoids looking at women and thereby injures himself by walking into walls.⁶³² He has chosen to be blind.
4. The Pestle Pharisee walked around so everyone noticed that he was avoiding temptation by hanging his head down.
5. The Pharisee who desires additional duties is attempting to please God by his

626. In simulated humility. Others render: who wrap themselves in their cloaks. The meaning is that hypocrisy is of no avail against the Divine Judge who reads the heart.

627. Weinfeld, “The Charge of Hypocrisy in Matthew and in Jewish Source.” 53.

628. Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 106.

629. Jerusalem Talmud, *Berakhot* 14b.

630. Babylonian Talmud, *Seder Nashim Sotah* 22b, 3:112.

631. Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 105-06.

632. Babylonian Talmud, *Seder Nashim Sotah* 22b, 3:112.

own efforts.⁶³³

Two good Pharisees are

1. There are those God-fearing Pharisees who faithfully observed the commandments, they are truly righteous and steadfast, like Job.
2. The God-loving Pharisee is one who had a heart affection for God as did Abraham and Moses.

As to the Pharisees from love and fear, these words are used in a manner steeped in laws and tradition. There is a sense of love of the promised heavenly rewards and fear of the punishment for transgressing the laws of the commandments.⁶³⁴ However, the “love” is for the rewards and is not focused on God. The “fear” is defined as a fear of punishment and not a respectful attitude toward God. The missing element is the affectionate love and desire to know God in a personal manner. As previously stated, the Jews had concluded that, as the chosen people, they were a special privileged class before God. In reality, however, they were the chosen people for being chosen to serve Him, a calling the leadership had failed miserably to endorse.⁶³⁵

Babylonian Talmud also emphasized the cruelty of temple priests by the leading Sadducees. The Sadducean House, or Clan, of Hanan included the family of Annas (or Ananias) with his son-in-law, Caiaphas.⁶³⁶ The evilness of these high priests at the time of Christ was so horrific that they were known to physically beat other priests and people with staves. This point is underscored by the fact it is mentioned in the first and last stanzas, thereby framing the poem. Unfortunately, their evilness did not end there, as the House of Kathros was a priestly family of scribes who used contracts and agreements to swindle and cheat common Jews of their hard-earned income. Ishmael was specifically identified in relationship to his father because there evidently was more than one high priest by that name and the authors of the Talmud were careful not to implicate an innocent Ishmael. This is a mid-sixth century document of first-century events that obviously occurred within the temple.

Woe is me because of the House of Beothus

633. Babylonian Talmud, *Seder Nashim Sotah* 22b, 3:113.

634. Babylonian Talmud, *Seder Nashim Sotah* 22b, 3:113.

635. Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 105-07.

636. Crossan and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*. 212.

woe is me because of the staves.
Woe is me because of the House of Hanan,
 woe is me because of their whisperings.
Woe is me because of the House of Kathros,
 woe is me because of their pens.
Woe is me because of the House of Ishmael, son of Phiabi,
 woe is me because of their fists.
For they are high priests,
and their sons are treasurers,
and their sons-in-law are trustees,
and their servants beat the people with staves.

Babylonian Talmud, *Pesahim* 57a

Little wonder then, that Jesus reflected upon the words of a prophet. All the prophets were not only concerned about social justice, but also about the spiritual welfare of the nation that shaped and directed the culture. In this case, He quoted from the prophet Amos.

Woe to those who are at ease in Zion and to those who feel secure on the hill of Samaria — the notable people in this first of the nations, those the house of Israel comes to.

Amos 6:1

The leading Pharisees and Sadducees were greatly offended that Jesus made that frontal attack on them. In this culture, this was highly offensive, of which there is no parallel in Western culture. Furthermore, the common people who heard Jesus realized that the words of Amos not only applied to his day, but were also prophetic for their time. They remembered similar words from Jeremiah who was concerned about scribes and teachers who did not follow their own teaching.

How can you claim, ‘We are wise; the law of the Lord is with us’? In fact, the lying pen of scribes has produced falsehood.

Jeremiah 8:8



13.05.02.A. A Roman Sword in the ruins of the House of Kathros.

When archaeologists uncovered this first century priestly home, they found a sword, human bones, and ashes of an intense fire. The evidence supports what Josephus said in his book *Wars*, that on the 8th day of Elul, in A.D. 70, the Romans stormed the Upper City, set it ablaze and put its inhabitants to the sword. Wikipedia Commons.

**Mystery
Unveiled**

During the time of Jesus and in the centuries that followed, Jewish leaders and scholars condemned the family of Annas as much as Jesus did.

The corrupt priesthood was not missed by Josephus either. He commented on Ananus who was the high priest only for the year 63, (the son of the Ananus who was instrumental in the crucifixion of Jesus). The historian mentioned Porcius Festus, who was the procurator of Judea and Jerusalem from A.D. 59 to 61, but had died prior to the topic below:

Now the report goes, that this elder Ananus proved a most fortunate man, for he had five sons who all performed the office of a high priest to God, and he had himself enjoyed that dignity a long time formerly, which never

happened to any other of our high priests: but this younger Ananus, who, as we have told you already, took the high priesthood, was a bold man in his temper and very insolent, he was also of the sect of the Sadducees who are very rigid in judging offenders above all the rest of the Jews, as we have already observed, when, therefore, Ananus was of this disposition, he thought he had now a proper opportunity [to exercise his authority].

Festus was now dead and Albinus was but upon the road; so he (the younger Ananus) assembled the Sanhedrin of judges and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James and some others; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the Law, he delivered them to be stoned.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.9.1 (198-200)⁶³⁷

The corruption of the Sanhedrin and the Sadducees continued even though the leadership changed repeatedly. In this case, it was James, the brother of Jesus who was brought before the local governor who sentenced him to death by stoning. The culture of corruption continued until the Romans slaughtered the entire Sadducean clan during the temple's destruction.

On a side note, it is wrong to say that all the Hebrew prophets condemned the proverbial "rich and famous." For one to have had a servant or secretary was reflective of some degree of wealth. Jeremiah had a scribe by the name of Baruch and Elijah and Elisha had their servants. Daniel, one of the most studied prophets, lived in the king's court. However, all Hebrew prophets were highly critical of the rich who had no concern for God, the poor, and lived only for the purpose of attaining more wealth.

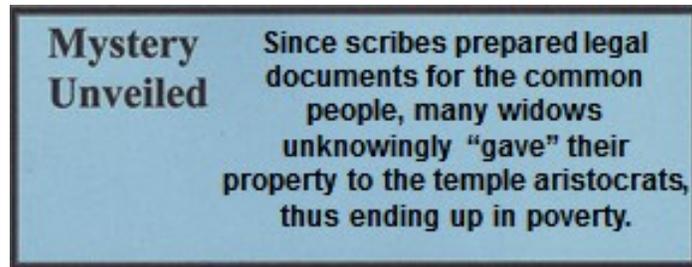
"You devour widows' houses." Since scribes wrote wills and conveyances of property, they abused the elderly and widows by conveying their properties to the temple rather than for the benefit of the families. The Greek word for *devour* is *katesthio* (2719), and it means *to forcibly acquire or by appropriation*.⁶³⁸ Consequently, many widows lived their last years homeless and in destitute poverty. This was in direct disobedience to Exodus 22:22 which prohibited anyone from taking advantage of widows and the poor. According to Josephus, some scribes were also Pharisees who accepted bribes.⁶³⁹ They, as well as the leading Pharisees, Sadducees and elders, justified their actions by their own

637. Brackets by Danby, ed. *Mishnah*.

638. Vine, "Devour." *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:166.

639. Josephus, *Wars* 1.29.2 (571-72).

rules. In fact, the Sadducees even had their own penal code that was considerably harsher than the penal code of the Pharisees.⁶⁴⁰ Note the following comparison, which is one of seven (see 02.01.14.Q1):⁶⁴¹ The Sadducees demanded that false witnesses be put to death while the Pharisees permitted punishment by eighty scourgings.⁶⁴² This is interesting, because the Sadducees acquired false witnesses in their case against Jesus. This form of injustice was prophesied in Amos 4:5, Isaiah 29:13, and Jeremiah 12:2. Claiming to be teachers of God's Word, these wicked men will be judged more strictly (Jas. 3:1).



“You lock up the Kingdom of Heaven.” The religious shut themselves and others out of the Kingdom of Heaven even though they paid their tithes. They paid tithes on herbs of small value (Mt. 23:23) while ignoring the more important issues of life such as caring for orphans and widows. This passage reveals the significance of obedience, love, and holiness in the sanctification process of becoming transformed into the image of God.

13.05.02.Q1 Did the Jews believe in winning the Gentiles to God?

Yes. There is evidence that they did and some scholars believe Jewish evangelism to the Gentiles began after the Maccabean Revolt. Jewish leaders were criticized by Jesus for making their new converts agents of Satan (Mt. 23:15). Had evangelism disappeared from Judaism, then Jesus would not have criticized them on this issue. On the other hand, while some sought to win Gentiles to the faith, John sought to bring Jews to righteousness (see commentary on Mt. 23:15).

The statement, **“You travel over land and sea to make one proselyte,”** illustrates the

640. Megillah, *Taanith* 10; Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 127. This may explain why the Sadducees were before Pilate demanding a crucifixion and the Pharisees are not mentioned.

641. For additional examples, see 02.01.14 “Pharisees,” in particular 02.01.14.Q1 “What were the four levels of Pharisees?” as well as 02.01.16 “Sadducees.”

642. Mishnah, *Makkoth* 1.3 and 1.5; See 15.03.07.

point that not only did the Pharisees attempt to win Gentiles to their faith, but also *God-fearers*,⁶⁴³ Gentiles who worshiped the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. A *proselyte* (Greek: *proselutos*) was someone who made the conversion to Judaism and accepted all of the ceremonial laws, rules and regulations of the faith.⁶⁴⁴ By definition, a *proselyte* is *someone who has approached* or is *drawn near*.⁶⁴⁵ It is a term applied to anyone who makes a religious conversion to any faith.

As has been previously stated, within Judaism there were many religious sects. Some went to great efforts to win Gentiles to Judaism, while others believed that was a wasted effort. Yet the evangelistic efforts did produce some interesting results. But clearly, Jesus was born in a day of Jewish evangelism.⁶⁴⁶ Note the following:

1. Some scholars believe the Jews in Rome had such an evangelistic fever that the authorities expelled them from the city in 139 B.C.
2. Josephus indicated that the men of Damascus in the first century B.C. became gravely concerned because their wives became “addicted to the Jewish religion.”⁶⁴⁷
3. A Roman nobleman by the name of Aquilla not only converted to Judaism, but became a student in the rabbinical academies of Shemaiah and Abtalion.⁶⁴⁸
4. Jewish writings attest to the fact that Pharisaic leaders prior to Herod the Great were descendants of proselytes.⁶⁴⁹ This was a problem for some as they believed only those with “proper” a genealogical history could become teachers.
5. The Babylonian Talmud mentions many converts in the city of Mahoza in

643. Another reference to *God-fearers* is found in Acts 17:4 that refers to the devout Greeks of Thessalonica.

644. The Noahide Commandments were and continue to be, in the opinion of orthodox Jews, divine laws that Gentiles need to obey to obtain favor with God if they did not want to convert to Judaism. See Appendix 17 for more information.

645. Barclay, “Matthew.” 2:290.

646. See also Dugas, “The Reaction of the Hellenistic World to Judaism.” 67-73.

647. Josephus, *Wars* 2.20.2.

648. Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 127.

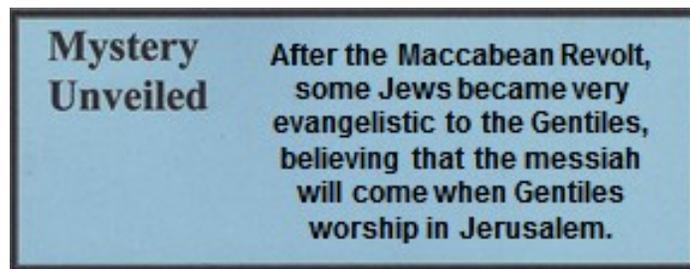
649. Babylonian Talmud, *Gittin* 57b and *Yoma* 71b(Soncino, ed.).

Babylon.⁶⁵⁰

6. Another example of this evangelistic effort recorded by Josephus is of two Jewish men who lived outside Israel and convinced some rather important individuals to accept the Jewish faith. The account occurs several years after Jesus, when Jerusalem suffered greatly from a severe famine, possibly the same famine mentioned in Acts 11:28-30. At that time, Queen Helena of Abiabene responded to the need by providing grain to the city to feed the poor, all because two Jewish evangelists reached into the royal courts, where “Helena, queen of Abiabene, and her son Izates, changed their course of life and embraced the Jewish custom.”⁶⁵¹ Josephus wrote the following account on this matter:

Now, during the time Izates abode at Charax-Spasini, a certain Jewish merchant, whose name was Ananias, got among women that belonged to the king, and taught them to worship God according to the Jewish religion. He, moreover, by their means, became known to Izates: and persuaded him, in like manner, to embrace that religion.....it also happened that Helena, about that same time, was instructed by a certain other Jew.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.2.3 (34, 35b)



The descendants of some proselytes became very influential in the Jewish world. For example, Shemaiah and Abtalion, two highly respected teachers of the mid-first century B.C. were sons of proselytes.⁶⁵² Another teacher was Rabbi Johanan who lived in

650. Babylonian Talmud, *Kiddushin* 73a (Soncino, ed.).

651. Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.2.1, see also 20.2.1-4 for other conversions. Abiabene is in the area of modern Iraq and Iran where, according to tradition, the Assyrians relocated a number of the so-called ten lost tribes centuries earlier. Evidently some of the Jews of Kurdistan converted to the Christian faith, including the King, Monobaz, whose mother was Queen Helena. http://www.jcjr.org/kyn_article_view.php?aid=20 Retrieved December 13, 2012.

652. Babylonian Talmud, *Yoma* 71b; *Gittin* 57b.

Jerusalem at the time of Jesus, was the son of the Hauranite.⁶⁵³ Clearly the evangelistic efforts were effective, but Jesus said that the Pharisees made them just as bad as they themselves were.

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 and Jeremiah 16:18 and peaked in the Hasmonean period (c 165 BC – 37 BC).⁶⁵⁴ Therefore, by the time Jesus spoke on the issue, the Pharisees had a long history of evangelism that in this case, was considered to be “bad fruit.”

At the end of the Maccabean Revolt the Jews realized they had a new era of freedom and many became evangelistic because they believed this would hasten the coming of the messiah. They read prophecies such as Jeremiah 16:19 and concluded that the nations would soon come to Jerusalem to worship God. These early evangelists evidently were highly effective, as the Babylonian Talmud states that because of the growing number of converts to Judaism, many of the leaders in Jerusalem prior to Herod the Great were proselytes.⁶⁵⁵ There were many conversions in Babylon as well.⁶⁵⁶

“Twice as fit for hell as you are.” The phrase literally means, “A son of hell.” This indicates that the religious leaders trained new converts to break their own biblical commands while propagating their own agendas. The phrase “son of hell” is also a Hebraism in reference to an incredibly evil and sinful person,⁶⁵⁷ denunciation spoken centuries earlier by the prophets Isaiah (5:8ff; 10:1-5), Habakkuk (2:6ff), and others. The Pharisees made the connection. Yet not all Jews were in the category portrayed by Jesus and espoused by evangelical preachers. Jesus was speaking to a small minority of aristocratic leaders, as did the author of the *Pesahim* in the Babylonian Talmud. Another author of the *Yebamoth* section of the same Talmud wrote that those who come to the faith should first seriously consider the cost of such a decision. Note the following:

Our rabbis taught: If at the present time a man desires to become a proselyte, he is to be addressed as follows: “What reason have you for

653. Mishnah, *Sukkah* 2.7.

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

655. Babylonian Talmud, *Gittin* 57b; Babylonian Talmud, *Yoma* 71b.

656. Babylonian Talmud, *Kidduboth* 73a.

657. Bilbrant, “Matthew” 497.

desiring to become a proselyte; do you not know that Israel at the present time is persecuted and oppressed, despised, harassed and overcome with afflictions?" If he replies, "I know and yet am unworthy," he is accepted forthwith, and is given instruction in some of the minor and some of the major commandments. He is informed of the sin (of the neglect of the commandments) Gleanings, the Forgotten Sheaf, the Corner, and the Poor Man's Tithe. He is also told the punishment for the transgression of the commandments. Furthermore, he is addressed thus: "Be it known to you that before you came to this condition, if you had eaten suet you would not have been punishable with *kareth*, if you had profaned the Sabbath you would not have been punishable with stoning; but now were you to eat suet you would be punished with *kareth*; were you to profane the Sabbath you would be punished with stoning." And as he is informed of the punishment for the transgression of the commandments, so he is informed of the reward granted for their fulfillment. He is told, "Be it known to you that the world to come was made only for the righteous and that Israel at the present time is unable to bear either too much prosperity or too much suffering." He is not, however, to be persuaded or dissuaded too much. If he accepted, he is circumcised....he is deemed to be an Israelite in all respects.

Babylonian Talmud, *Yebmoth* 47a, b

This hardly appears to be a passage that would lead new converts into the depths of hell. In fact, Jews throughout history have always been careful to inform new converts of the cost of becoming Jewish. Their concern for the lost was portrayed in one of their regular synagogue prayers (see the Thirteenth Benediction).⁶⁵⁸

The Jewish people had a blessing or benediction for nearly every aspect of life. For example, there is a benediction of thankfulness for the holiness of God (no. 3), a blessing of thankfulness for the healing of the sick (no. 8), and thankfulness for the mercy of God. However, concerning those who became followers of Jesus, first century Jews added a so-called blessing that, in reality, was a condemnation. (Compare with Lk. 11:1-4 and Mt. 6:9-15).

For apostates, let there be no hope, and the dominion of arrogance do Thou speedily root out in our days; and let the Nazoreans and the heretics perish as in a moment, let them be blotted out of the Book of the Living and let them not be written with the righteous. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who humblest

658. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 94; See Appendix 18.

the arrogant.

Twelfth Blessing of *The Eighteen Benedictions*⁶⁵⁹

After the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, the Romans permitted the Jews to open a school for biblical studies west of Jerusalem in the village of Jabneh. It was there that, according to Jewish tradition, the Eighteen Benedictions were arranged, or re-arranged by Shim'on, a cotton merchant under the direction of Rabbi Gamaliel II, although the Benedictions existed since the first century B.C. The rabbi held the position of the Patriarch after the year A.D. 80 and the Benedictions were promoted throughout the Jewish world.⁶⁶⁰

Finally, other rabbinic evidence that Jews were interested in the welfare of converts is also found in the Babylonian Talmud:

It was taught: “Rabbi Hanania son of Rabbi Simeon ben Gamaliel said: ‘Why are proselytes at the present time oppressed and visited with afflictions? Because they had not observed the seven Noahide Commandments?’”⁶⁶¹

Rabbi Jose said: One who has become a proselyte is like a child newly born. Why then are proselytes oppressed? Because they are not so well acquainted with the details of the commandments as the Israelites.

Abba Hanan said in the name of Rabbi Eleazer: “Because they do not do it out of love, but fear.” Others said: “Because they delayed their love under the wings of the Shechinah.”

Babylonian Talmud, *Yebamoth* 48b-49a⁶⁶²

659. Boring, Berger, and Colpe, eds. *Hellenistic Commentary to the New Testament*. 211; Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 94, 106. See also “*The Eighteen Benedictions*” in Appendix 18.

660. Herford, 127.

661. The Noahide Commandments are listed in Appendix 17.

662. Notice that Abba Hanan’s title of *Abba*, means *father*, and is the same title Jesus used in reference to addressing His Father in in the Lord’s Prayer.

13.05.03 Mt. 23:16-24

LEGALISTIC RELIGIOUS ATTITUDE CONDEMNED

¹⁶ “Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever takes an oath by the sanctuary, it means nothing. But whoever takes an oath by the gold of the sanctuary is bound by his oath.’ ¹⁷ Blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the sanctuary that sanctified the gold? ¹⁸ Also, ‘Whoever takes an oath by the altar, it means nothing. But whoever takes an oath by the gift that is on it is bound by his oath.’ ¹⁹ Blind people! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? ²⁰ Therefore, the one who takes an oath by the altar takes an oath by it and by everything on it. ²¹ The one who takes an oath by the sanctuary takes an oath by it and by Him who dwells in it. ²² And the one who takes an oath by heaven takes an oath by God’s throne and by Him who sits on it.

²³ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You pay a tenth of mint, dill, and cumin, yet you have neglected the more important matters of the law — justice, mercy, and faith. These things should have been done without neglecting the others. ²⁴ Blind guides! You strain out a gnat, yet gulp down a camel!

“You pay a tenth of mint, dill, and cumin.” The religious leaders tithed on everything according to the Mosaic Law. If a man desired to reach the pinnacle of the Pharisee hierarchy, he had to take two vows:

1. To tithe immediately and faithfully,⁶⁶³ called the vow of the *Neeman*.⁶⁶⁴ This was on *all* earnings.
2. Maintain and promote strict ritual purification,⁶⁶⁵ called the vow of *Chabher* (a/k/a *Chabber*; observing the Levitical Law).⁶⁶⁶ It was said that if any

663. Josephus spoke of corrupt priests who stole the tithes from other priests in *Antiquities*, 20.9.2, found herein in, “A den of robbers,” 13.02.02. He also mentioned it in *Antiquities* 20.8.8 as found herein in “The chief priests” in 15.02.09. See additional rules on tithing in the Mishnah, *Ma’aserot* 1.1 and *Moed Shabbath* 4.7. The point is that tithing was a well-established practice.

664. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 216.

665. For additional details, see 02.01.14.Q1.

666. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 215-17.

agricultural products were not tithed, the food was not fit to eat.⁶⁶⁷

Yet if there was any way they could have avoided paying tithes, they did so immediately. The concept of giving a minimum of ten percent to the temple was a religious and cultural standard. It was not even questioned and, therefore, is not addressed in the New Testament. There was no need to address a nonexistent issue.

The early church continued the practice of tithing and it became a key doctrine. Critics, who claim that tithing ceased with the Old Testament era, fail to understand the cultural and religious setting of the day. Furthermore, were tithing to have been a doctrine *only* of the past, then Jesus would have condemned the *continued* practice of it just as He did other issues of the scribes and Pharisees. Clearly, this was not anything He desired to change.⁶⁶⁸

The first century church continued the practice of paying tithes. But instead of tithing at the temple, these gifts were to be given in the local synagogue or to the poor. Note the following, where the pastor was known as the “prophet.”

So when you take any first fruits of what is produced by the winepress and the threshing floor, by cows and by sheep, you shall give the first fruits to the prophets, for they are your high priests.

If, however, you have no prophet (pastor), give them to the poor. If you prepare dough, take the first fruits and give them according to the commandment.

Likewise, when you open a jar of wine or oil, take the first fruits and give them to the prophets. Take the first fruits of money and clothing and whatever (else) you own as you think best and give them according to the commandment.

Didache 13:3-7⁶⁶⁹

Jesus confronted the Pharisees, not because they paid tithes, but because they had hearts

667. Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds*. 62.

668. For additional references on the doctrine of tithing, see Gen. 14:20, 28:22; Lev. 27:30; 2 Ch. 31:5; Mal. 3:8-10; Mt. 23:23; Lk. 11:42; Heb. 7:6-8.

669. Clarification in parenthesis mine. 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.

of stone (see 02.01.14). He never rescinded the law of tithing and the practice was continued according to the Old Testament directives.

Mystery Unveiled	Tithing was so well established in the first century, that it did not need to be addressed in the New Testament nor was it cancelled.
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“You have neglected the more important matters of the law.” 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, and therefore, there are different degrees of punishment in the eternal lake of fire.⁶⁷⁰

Mystery Unveiled	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.
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In the phrase, **“You strain out a gnat,”** Jesus made an allusion to the process of making wine. Insects were always attracted to the sweet aroma of fruit juice and wine. Eventually these unwanted bugs got into the beverage and needed to be removed. The Mishnah recorded that when straining the pulp from the wine with the use of a cloth or fine wicker basket, insects were attracted to the sweet wine. Great care was taken to keep the beverage pure by straining the gnats out as recorded in Shabbath 20:2 of the Mishnah. This phrase **“you strain out a gnat,”** was not just a figure of speech, but an allusion to properly preparing a beverage that would be ceremonially clean since a gnat was an unclean insect. Jesus used this imagery to describe the judgmental attitudes of the Pharisees. According to Him, they were concerned about keeping the impure gnats out, but were swallowing impure camels. Jesus used a common phrase as expressed in the Jerusalem Talmud:

“He that kills a flea on the Sabbath is as guilty as if he killed a camel.”

670. See also Mt. 10:15 in 10.01.05.

Jerusalem Talmud, *Sabbath 107*⁶⁷¹

13.05.04 Mt. 23:25-28

HYPOCRISY CONDEMNED

²⁵ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence! ²⁶ Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup, so the outside of it may also become clean.

²⁷ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which appear beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and every impurity. ²⁸ In the same way, on the outside you seem righteous to people, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

“Like whitewashed tombs.” It was the custom to have a tomb whitewashed (a mixture of water and limestone powder)⁶⁷² for one of three reasons:

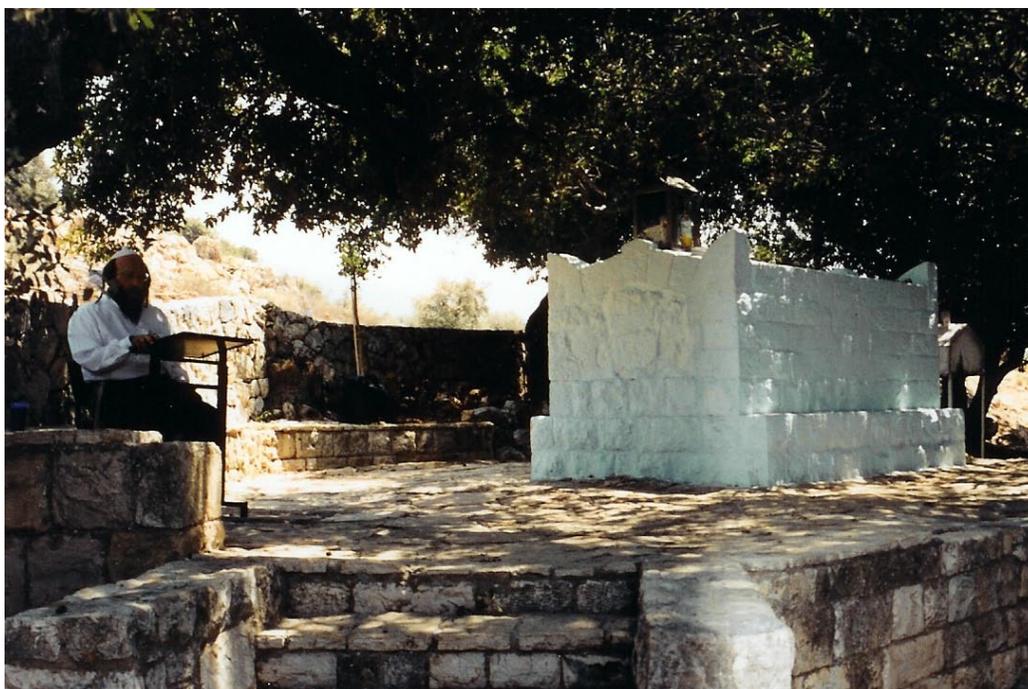
1. To improve the tomb’s appearance at the time of a burial
2. To decrease the odor of decomposing bodies.
3. But the main reason tombs were whitewashed was to identify them so other pilgrims would not walk over them and become defiled. If that occurred, they could not participate in the feast. When pilgrims came to Jerusalem, the city was not large enough to house all of them. Therefore, many slept in nearby olive groves and woodlands. Obviously it was extremely easy for someone to walk over a grave and become defiled. Whitewashing tombs was therefore, considered highly important.

671. For additional Sabbath regulations, see *Jubilees* 50:6-13 at 02.04.06. In fact, during the early days of the Maccabean Revolt, since the Jews refused to fight on the Sabbath, the Greeks slaughtered more than a thousand men, women, and children. Thereafter they decided to defend themselves so as not to be removed from the face of the earth (*1 Macc.* 2:31-38).

672. To make plaster, the ancients burned limestone for 72 hours until it became a heavy dust. Then they added water and placed it on the walls with a trowel. Because limestone is about thirty percent water, the burning process required considerable fuel. The result was that during the Roman period many areas were deforested. SOURCE: Interview with Arie bar David, tour guide and lecturer. August 2000.

Rabbinic writings specifically stated that all graves had been identified with whitewash to prevent accidental defilement. Furthermore, all graves were whitewashed in the month of Adar.⁶⁷³ Uncleanness or defilement always resulted in prevention of festival observances.⁶⁷⁴

The backdrop to this passage is very impressive, as the western side of the Mount of Olives, which faces the temple mount, has been a cemetery for thousands of years. When Jesus used the phrase, “**like whitewashed tombs,**” He used it as a play on words because some leading Pharisees wore white garments so they would be perceived to be righteous and pure.⁶⁷⁵ That is, purity (Greek *katharos*) is defined within the realm of physical, religious, and ethical purity; a term that has both figurative and literal requirements of behavior.⁶⁷⁶ They gave the impression of purity but were far from it. Therefore, Jesus said they were like whitewashed tombs: white on the outside, but like decaying bodies in their motives.



673. Mishnah, *Shekalim* 1:1; Mishnah, *Kelim* 1:4; Mishnah, *Moed Katan* 1:2; Mishnah, *Masser Shevi* 5:1; *Living Bible Encyclopedia* 10:1255.

674. Mishnah, *Kelim* 1:4; See also Jn. 11:55; 18:28.

675. Josephus describes the garments of the Essenes in *Wars* 2.8.3. See also Babylonian Talmud, *Kiddushin* 72a; Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbath* 25b; Babylonian Talmud, *Nedarim* 20b.

676. Link and Schattenmann. “Pure, Clean.” 3:102-03.

13.05.04.A. MODERN “WHITE-WASHED” TOMB. The whitewash (lime and water) of ancient times has been replaced with white paint. The tombs of significant individuals, both Arabs and Orthodox Jews, are painted white to honor them. Shown is the tomb of Rabbi Ushiva of Tiria. Photograph by the author.

Evidently the scribes and Pharisees were familiar with the expression, as it was common in their day.⁶⁷⁷ From the Dead Sea Scrolls are similar statements written by the Essenes in their *Damascus Document*.

The serpents are the kings of the peoples and the wine their paths and the asps’ head is the head of the kings of Greece, which comes to carry out vengeance against them. But all these things the builders of the wall or those who daub themselves whitewash, have not understood, for one who raises wind and preaches lies, has preached to them, the one against whose congregation God’s wrath has been kindled.

Dead Sea Scroll, *Damascus Document* CD 8:9b-13⁶⁷⁸

God says: “Their wine is serpent’s venom and the head of cruel harsh asps.” The serpents are the kings of the peoples and the wine, their paths and the asps’ head is the head of the kings of Greece, which comes to carry out vengeance against them. But the builders of the wall have not understood all of those things, nor those who daub with whitewash, because one who raises up storms, and preaches lies, to the man, the one against whose congregation God’s wrath has been kindled.

Dead Sea Scroll, *Damascus Document* CD 19:22-27 (with reference to Deut. 32:33)⁶⁷⁹

These examples demonstrate the use of the term “whitewashed tombs” as one of condemnation and subject to the judgment of God. Clearly, not all Pharisees were religious hypocrites. The Apostle Paul belonged to the religious sect, even after becoming the primary evangelist of the New Testament (Phil. 3:5; Acts 23:6; 26:5), as did the now famous Jewish historian Flavius Josephus⁶⁸⁰ and the Hasmonean King,

677. Herr, “Whitewash.” 4:1058.

678. Martinez, ed., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*. 38.

679. Martinez, ed., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*. 45-46.

680. Josephus, *The Life of Flavius Josephus* 2.12.

Alexander Jannaeus. The dying words of the king (reigned 102-76 B.C.) to his wife were,

“Fear not the true Pharisees, but greatly fear the painted Pharisees.”⁶⁸¹

Jannaeus also said that she should not be like:

“Painted ones, whose deeds are the deeds of Zimri, but who expect to receive the rewards of Phineas.”

Babylonian Talmud, *Sotah* 22b⁶⁸²

The Essenes likewise condemned the Pharisaic aristocracy for misleading the people. One of them wrote:

They lead thy people astray, for they utter smooth speeches to them. False teachers, they lead astray, and blindly they are heading for the fall, for their works are done in deceit.

Dead Sea Scroll, *Thanksgiving Hymn* 1QH 4:6-8⁶⁸³

Clearly the condemnation by Jesus was not unique as His words were shared by many other righteous Jews.

13.05.05 Mt. 23:29-36

JESUS CONDEMNED PERSECUTION OF GOD’S PROPHETS

²⁹ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, ³⁰ and you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we wouldn’t have taken part with them in shedding the prophets’ blood.’ ³¹ You, therefore, testify against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. ³² Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers’ sins!”

681. Farrar, *Life of Christ*. 356.

682. Babylonian Talmud, *Seder Nashim Sotah* 22b, 3:113.

683. Martinez, ed., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*. 317.

³³ **“Snakes! Brood of vipers! How can you escape being condemned to hell?”** ³⁴ **This is why I am sending you prophets, sages, and scribes. Some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will flog in your synagogues and hound from town to town.** ³⁵ **So all the righteous blood shed on the earth will be charged to you, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.** ³⁶ **I assure you: All these things will come on this generation!**

“You build tombs for the prophets.” The construction of ornate tombs for murdered prophets was a vain attempt by leaders to gain atonement for their wicked sin.⁶⁸⁴ In the Kidron Valley, at the base of the Mount of Olives, the Pharisees constructed the tombs for two prophets, Zechariah and Jehoshaphat, when Jesus spoke with them.⁶⁸⁵ Eventually they also constructed the tomb of Absalom, a memorial for the wayward son of King David.⁶⁸⁶

“Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers’ sins.” Jesus was quite sarcastic at time, but here He was profoundly sarcastic! He essentially urged those who opposed Him to go ahead and do their worst acts against Him. To “fill up the measure of your fathers,’ as some translations say, was to bring to a head the pattern of resistance to the messengers of God.

“Snakes! Brood of vipers!” The imagery Jesus applied to them was none other than the deceptive and unclean animal – that famous serpent – in the Garden of Eden. Jesus, in a very profound manner, said that they were no different than Satan who deceived Adam and Eve, and they were likewise, deceiving the Jewish people.

It is noteworthy that, at this time, a snake was not symbolic of Satan but was symbolic of his deceptive character. (For centuries the snake had been symbol of renewed life because it sheds its skin annually.) The obvious implication is that they were deceptive, unclean, deadly leaders. It was the ultimate insult. Most certainly, their anger and bitterness were near the point of uncontrollable outrage.

Finally, at this point there has been a great deal of conversation between Jesus and His opponents, but little has been said of those who supported Him. Yet there is evidence that

684. Gilbrant, “Matthew.” 507.

685. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:126.

686. Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs, Practices and Rites in the Second Temple Period*. 30, 32-34, 36.

His popularity was increasing, such as the illegal trials at night to avoid a public response that would have been supportive of Jesus. Therefore, it is easy for readers to acquire a warped view that *every* Jewish person was becoming “anti-Jesus.”

13.05.05.Q1 In Matthew 23:35, did Jesus refer to Zechariah or Jehoiada?

The text clearly reads “**Zechariah, son of Berechiah,**” but the identity of this Zechariah (or Zecharias) has often been debated. There are twenty-seven individuals named Zechariah in the Old Testament, two of whom were martyred and Jesus obviously referred to one of them. The arrangement of Old Testament books could point to a possible conclusion that Jesus did not mean Zechariah who was the last to be martyred, but rather, Jehoiada. To explain this apparent difficulty, note that the Old Testament books are *not* in chronological order in either the Jewish or the Christian Bibles. The Jewish Bible begins with Genesis and ends with 2 Chronicles. According to this chronology, the righteous blood that was shed spans from Abel (Gen. 4:8) to Zachariah, the son of Barachiah, who was also known as Jehoiada (2 Ch. 24:20-22).

²⁰ The Spirit of God took control of Zechariah son of Jehoiada the priest. He stood above the people and said to them, “This is what God says, ‘Why are you transgressing the LORD’s commands and you do not prosper? Because you have abandoned the LORD, He has abandoned you.’” ²¹ But they conspired against him and stoned him at the king’s command in the courtyard of the LORD’s temple. ²² King Joash didn’t remember the kindness that Zechariah’s father Jehoiada had extended to him, but killed his son. While he was dying, he said, “May the LORD see and demand an account.”

2 Chronicles 24:20-22⁶⁸⁷

The Zechariah (a/k/a Zacharias) referred to by Jesus was the prophet and son of Jehoiada/Berechiah (Zech. 1:1) whose ministry ended in 480 B.C. He preached the message of Ezra and Nehemiah, that the people should follow the ways of God. However, opposition against him was great. Later, the Jews were so ashamed that their prophet was martyred in the temple that the Heshir family of priests erected a memorial-tomb for him in the late second or early first century B.C.⁶⁸⁸

Ironically, while Zechariah preached a return to the Jewish laws and rejection of

687. A parallel account is found in Josephus, *Antiquities* 9.2.3 (168-69).

688. Pixner, *Judah*. 98.

paganism, the tomb that bears his name reflects Greek architecture and has an Egyptian-styled pyramid roof and motifs he so strongly opposed. However, there is a growing opinion among scholars that the tomb was misnamed and the rightful owner is uncertain.



13.05.05.A. THE SO-CALLED TOMB OF ZECHARIAH. The tomb design reflects both Greek and Egyptian pyramidal architecture. It is located in the Kidron Valley, between the Mount of Olives and Temple Mount. Photograph by the author.

His public ministry ended with the lament, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ...” He will not return until the Jewish leaders ask him to come by reciting the messianic greeting of Psalm 118:26. It must be noted that at that time some men had two names and Jehoiada is cited in the catalog of priests in 1 Chronicles 6. Therefore, two biblical authors could have referred to the same person who had two different names, although the connection between the names has been lost in history.⁶⁸⁹ Therefore, it is easy for a critic to claim a possible error, when in fact, not all the connecting information is currently available.

689. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:127-29.



**Please note that all references to footnotes are in the “Works Cited”
section located in the last mini-volume.**