MYSTERIES OF THE MESSIAH

Mini-Vol. 8: Units 07 & 08

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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08.01.06.V Messianic Rabbi John Fischer discusses the Jewish concept of “light and heavy” elements of the law (instruction) in light of the words of Jesus (Heb. Yeshua). ( )

08.03.04.V The Significance of Ipsissima Verba and Ipsissima Vox. Dr. Joe Wehrer discusses the significance of “Ipsissima Verba” and “Ipsissima Vox” to biblical interpretation. (11:39)

A scholar explains Matthew 11:12, “The kingdom of heaven has been suffering violence, and the violent have been seizing it by force.”

Single or double video
A scholar explains Luke 7:32 (08.05.06.V) and the funeral and marketplace processions, including the phrase, “You played the flute…”
**08.06.03.V1** Professor Gordon Franz discusses the interesting issues of Gadara, including the clarification of names, the first evangelist to the Gentiles of this region, and the mystery of Gadara’s harbor. (6:52)

**08.06.03.V2** Mr. Joel ben Yosef discusses the unique mystery of the harbor of Gadara. Introduction and cultural background comments by Dr. Bill Heinrich.

8.06.05.V Three Jewish teachers, discuss the custom of Jewish men wearing fringes, or strings, on their garments. Moderated by Dr. Bill Heinrich. ()
The Jewish people had pre-conceived ideas of what the Messiah would be like, but Jesus did not match any of their ideas. Rather, He performed miracles
and taught the principles of the Kingdom of God, and consequently created an intense following and intense opposition.

07.01.01 Introduction
The primary reasons the elite Jewish leaders opposed Jesus was because they held their Oral laws in higher authority than the Torah. Furthermore, these men used religion for their own wealth and security. They were extremely legalistic, wealthy, and with little or no compassion for those who had become economic slaves to the Romans. Fortunately, most Pharisees, who controlled the local synagogues, were honorable, hard-working, loving and kind to their congregations — completely different from the aristocratic Pharisees, Hellenists, and Sadducees in Jerusalem.

In sharp contrast to the elite leadership, Jesus always spoke with compassion to those who came to learn or to be healed, especially to those who were rejected by the temple priesthood. He never overloaded his audience with philosophy, theology, or excessive words. In fact, Jesus trusted His followers, such as the Apostle Paul, to put together His ideas, theology, ethics, and guidelines for the church. He spoke of Scripture (Old Testament) as revelation that was self-authenticating, rather than a legal code to be feared or used as a weapon. Therefore, the people loved him.

07.01.02 Lk. 5:29-30; Mt. 9:12-13 (See also Mk. 2:15-17)

EATING WITH SINNERS

Lk. 29 Then Levi hosted a grand banquet for Him at his house. Now there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others who were guests with them. 30 But the Pharisees and their scribes were complaining to His disciples, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?”

Mt. 12 But when He heard this, He said, “Those who are well don’t need a doctor, but the sick do. 13 Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice (Hosea 6:6). For I didn’t come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

The leading Pharisees taught that ritual purity was essential in order to have a close relationship with God. This was taught from birth to the grave. But to remain pure there were a list of daily activities one had to perform and personal associations that had to be avoided whenever possible. For example, to eat a meal with someone was perceived as agreeing with his or her lifestyle. The
Oral Law taught that “If three ate together, they must say Common Grace.” For this reason, His critics could not understand how it was possible for a righteous man to pray to God with unrighteous men, and then eat with them.

“The Pharisees and their scribes.” The reading of the Law in local synagogues was done by scribes who were generally Pharisees, which is why most people were closely aligned to the Pharisees. The people felt comfortable because the scribes had studied the Written and Oral laws more than any other religious sect.

Since the Pharisees and their scribes were often the teachers in local synagogues and schools, they naturally questioned Jesus.

“Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” It is interesting that the religious leaders asked this question of the disciples, because Matthew, who was with Jesus, was a former tax collector – one despised by these same leaders. Nonetheless, it was common practice to eat only with those one shared common values and appreciation. The classic example is the prophet Daniel’s refusal to eat with the king of Babylon for three reasons:

1. Eating involved prayer before and after every meal. The issue was how a righteous man could pray to God with pagans and sinners who broke nearly every imaginable law of God.

2. Eating with someone carried a strong implication of an approval of their lifestyle and what that person believed. Dining was a form of fellowship. Denial of fellowship meant disagreement with someone. This was demonstrated by Daniel when he refused to eat with his king, even though he was a prisoner. Eating with the king meant Daniel was in agreement with him on a wide range of issues, including those of religious merit.

3. Eating the king’s food would have caused Daniel to defile himself (Dan. 1:8) because the food was not kosher.

1. Mishnah, Barakoth 7.1.
Daniel obviously remained strong to his Hebrew faith. While he studied and learned of Babylonian ways, he did not accept or practice them. As to first century religious leaders, they avoided eating with tax collectors and *sinners*. The term *sinners* had several definitions, especially when related to women.

1. It is generally assumed that prostitution was the only kind of “occupation” she could have had that would have given her that social stigma. This has been promoted by some Jewish and Christian writers suggest that no other kind of activity would have produced the title of *sinner* other than a career prostitute. However….

2. A *sinner* could have been a woman who had her hair uncovered in public. Women always had their hair covered from the moment they were betrothed.

3. However, she could simply have been a noble woman from one of the wealthy families who recognized her sinful nature. The Pharisees also defined a sinner as anyone who did not conform to their legalistic rituals, 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.

It was a common belief that the messiah would never associate with *sinners* of any kind because they would defile Him. What they overlooked was that every time Jesus ate with them, He revealed the Kingdom of God. It was not that Jesus accepted their lifestyle, but rather, He was willing to forgive them. This is vividly illustrated in John’s revelation of Jesus,

> 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be committed and repent. 20 Listen! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and have dinner with him, and he with Me.

**Revelation 3:19-20**

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.

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6. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 248; See also 02.01.14 “Pharisees.”

“I didn’t come to call the righteous.” Did Jesus really die for everyone, including these self-righteous Pharisees? Of course He did. This comment was one of sarcasm, because the righteousness of the Pharisees was entirely a human effort.

07.01.03 Lk. 5:33-39 (See also Mt. 9:14-17; Mk. 2:18-22)

DISCIPLES NOT FASTING

33 Then they said to Him, “John’s disciples fast often and say prayers, and those of the Pharisees do the same, but Yours eat and drink.”

34 Jesus said to them, “You can’t make the wedding guests fast while the groom is with them, can you? 35 But the time will come when the groom will be taken away from them — then they will fast in those days.”

36 He also told them a parable: “No one tears a patch from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. Otherwise, not only will he tear the new, but also the piece from the new garment will not match the old. 37 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins, it will spill, and the skins will be ruined. 38 But new wine should be put into fresh wineskins. 39 And no one, after drinking old wine, wants new, because he says, ‘The old is better.’”

Fasting was prescribed in the Torah for only one day in the year, the Day of Atonement. The Pharisees, however, prided themselves on fasting twice a week – on Mondays and Thursdays, the same days the markets were open. Ironically, after being in the public view for a few hours, they went home and bathed themselves to remove the defilement they perceived to have received by being among the common people. The issue of fasting illustrates the difference between the legalism of the Pharisaic leadership and the motivating condition of the heart. Jesus did not preach against weekly fasting; only the evil attitude that the leading Pharisees connected with it. For this reason, the practice of fasting two days a week continued in the early Jewish church. The Didache, an early church book of instruction, states that believers should not fast on Mondays and Tuesdays as do the hypocrites (Pharisees), but rather on Wednesdays and Fridays (Didache 8:1). The Jewish believers did not want to be identified with their Pharisaic counterparts. This reveals that first century Christian worship was molded in the Jewish pattern.


10. See the discussion on hypocrites/hypocrisy in 08.03.04 (Mt. :5-15) and in “Pharisees” in 02.01.14.
“The groom will be taken away from them.” This is clear wedding imagery. It was to capture their attention because this was the first mention Jesus made of His death. While Israel saw the messiah as one who would destroy her enemies, restore her fortunes, and build her into an international superpower, Jesus had a different plan. He saw the deeper and more important need of the forgiveness of sin and the restoration of humanity into the image of God as was initially created. Later, as the Passion Week approached, His words concerning His death became more direct.

Jesus compared His presence to the time a bride and bridegroom were together in their first week of marriage. Weddings lasted between three to seven days, depending on the wealth of the family. There were no honeymoons at that time, and after the ceremony, the couple was inundated with family and visitors who wished them well. This was the most joyful time of their lives, with an abundant celebration and food. Jesus related His time on earth with that week—a type of honeymoon period—and fasting could wait until He would be gone. By the way, the guests of the bridegroom is a reference to the disciples, and if there is one thing the guests at a wedding party don’t do, it is fasting!

“New garment . . . fresh (new) wineskins.” Jesus did not challenge the Mosaic Laws, but challenged the traditions the religious leaders had placed upon the people. By the use of this metaphor of garments and wineskins, He gave a hint that He was about to usher in a new work, a New Covenant. A major issue of Christian scholars is their underestimation of the powerful influence of the Oral Law. They have often stated, and continue to say, that the imagery of old garments and old wine skin is a reference to the Old Covenant. However, Jesus said that one does not patch an old garment nor place new wine in an old wine skin. He was not referring to an Old Covenant but rather, He was stating He was not going to “fix” the Oral Law. Rabbis had an obsession with observing all of the Oral laws. As stated previously, their oral traditions established “a fence” around the Written Law, to insure they would never break them and consequently, be thrown out of the country as happened between the years 605 and 586 B.C., when the Babylonians drove them into exile.

11. 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 and a similar video by Professor John Metzger in 14.02.05.V2. See the following as well: Wedding garments needed at the wedding in Mt. 22:1-14 (13.03.07); discussion of the “best place” in Lk. 14:7-14 (12.02.05); the great messianic banquet in Lk. 14:15-24 (12.02.06); the wise and foolish virgins in Mt. 25:1-13 (14.01.07); only the father knew Mt. 24:36 (14.01.05); the preparation of a new home in Jn. 14:1-4 (14.02.14).

12. For further studies on this important subject, see the literature produced by Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum of Ariel Ministries in San Antonio, Texas. Dr. Fruchtenbaum expands upon the Jewish roots of Christianity and the Jewish background of the gospels.
07.01.03.A. AN OLD WINESKIN. Josiah, the author’s grandson, holds an old wineskin made from a sheep or goat that was typical of biblical times. After skins were used for fermenting grape juice into wine, they served as waterskins. They maintained the shape of the animal from which they were made. The leather stayed pliable as long as it contained a liquid, but once it dried, it developed small cracks and became useless like this one. Photograph by a proud grandpa.
“Old garment …. the old (wine) is better.” The key point in the wineskin narrative is that the old wine is better than the new. New what? Does that mean that the Old Testament is better than the New Testament? Obviously not! Here Jesus made a reference to the old wine that symbolized the Written Law of Moses and “new wine” was symbolic of the Oral Law or “traditions of the elders” (Mt. 15:1-2). Therefore, when Jesus said the old wine was better than the new, He meant that the Old Testament was better than the Oral Law. Hence, God’s Word was to remain intact. The primary reason why Jewish leaders rejected Jesus was not because of His message of the Kingdom of God, but because He rejected the legalistic Oral Law that the leaders held in a position superior to the Hebrew Scriptures. As the cliché says, the Old Testament is the New Testament concealed; the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.

The problem of interpretation for the religious leaders stems from the fact that they believed their Oral Law came from Moses. Their tradition says it came from Moses, but in reality, it originated with Ezra and Nehemiah. So they were steeped in self-deception and chose to remain blind to protect their status, wealth and social influences.

07.01.04 Jn. 5:1-15 Jerusalem. The Second Passover

SABBATH HEALING AT POOL OF BETHESDA

After this, a Jewish festival took place, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. By the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem there is a pool, called Bethesda in Hebrew, which has five colonnades. Within these lay a large number of the sick — blind, lame, and paralyzed [— waiting for the moving of the water, because an angel would go down into the pool from time to time and stir up the water. Then the first one who got in after the water was stirred up recovered from whatever ailment he had].


15. Mishnah, Aboth 1:1.

16. See 02.02.18 and 02.02.20.

17. Lang, Know the Words of Jesus. 198.
5 One man was there who had been sick for 38 years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and knew he had already been there a long time, He said to him, “Do you want to get well?”

7 “Sir,” the sick man answered, “I don’t have a man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I’m coming, someone goes down ahead of me.”

8 “Get up,” Jesus told him, “pick up your mat and walk!” 9 Instantly the man got well, picked up his mat, and started to walk.

Now that day was the Sabbath, 10 so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “This is the Sabbath! It’s illegal for you to pick up your mat.”

11 He replied, “The man who made me well told me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’”

12 “Who is this man who told you, ‘Pick up your mat and walk’?” they asked. 13 But the man who was cured did not know who it was, because Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.

14 After this, Jesus found him in the temple complex and said to him, “See, you are well. Do not sin anymore, so that something worse doesn’t happen to you.” 15 The man went and reported to the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

List of Characters of John 5:1-9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five porches</td>
<td>Five books of the law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thirty-eight years</td>
<td>Time spent wandering in the desert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stirring of the waters</td>
<td>Baptism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some scholars have suggested that this account is an allegory, a story because the event never occurred. Granted, at times it is difficult to determine what has allegorical significance and what doesn’t. Clearly the crippled man and his thirty-eight years at the Pool of Bethesda, meaning the House of Mercy, are reflective of Israel and her journey. But whether the five colonnades (porches) are reflective of the five books of the law is another matter of interpretation. Caution is recommended against reading anything into the text because this narrative has all the factual

18. On March 9, 2013, Dr. James H. Charlesworth of Princeton Seminary gave a report in Jerusalem in which he outlined several archaeological discoveries that support the historical reliability of the gospel of John. Essentially, he said that John knew the details of Jerusalem as it was prior to the A.D. 70 destruction, details that were unknown to archaeologists only a decade ago. For additional details, see “Gospel of John Backed by Archaeology.” Arifax. 28:3 (Summer, 2013), 11-12.
markings of an actual event. But these allegorical connections do not mean the event never happened. The account of the Samaritan woman also has some allegorical connections, and no critic ever questioned the historicity of John 4:1-42.

This miracle is the third of seven signs identified by John. Yet, this account has a unique mystery and, unfortunately, verses 3b-4 are omitted from the New International Version. The reason these few words (verses 3b-4) are difficult to understand is because this narrative is said to essentially describe a contest to obtain a healing, and that is outside of the character of God. Scholars and translators believe that God does not tease the afflicted, nor does He create a contest in which only the winner is healed. This writer agrees! Therefore, the New International Version translators concluded these verses were not part of the original text. However, this writer believes that to correctly understand this passage, two other issues need to be addressed. They are,

1. The geological and climatic issues of the area, and

2. The well-established religious cultic context that existed at this site.

The geological reason the water was “stirred” is that Jerusalem was built upon a dolomite limestone mountain which does not retain water very well. Since Israel has a rainy season (winter) and a dry season (summer), in the winter the limestone is saturated and in the summer it is dehydrated. When winter rains begin, the water that seeps through the dry aquifers pushes the air out and into the pool. Hence, the escaping air creates air bubbles and the illusion of a “stirring of the waters.” This was not the only “gaseous” spring found in the Jordan valley and elsewhere. Similar bubbling pools were also found in Babylon, where cuneiform inscriptions called them “holy wells.” The idea that one could get healed when the waters were stirred originated with pagan religions. Those who laid in vain at the Pool of Bethesda were so desperate for a healing that they placed their faith in anything that might give them relief.

19. The Seven Signs: Water into Wine (Jn. 2:1-2); Healing the Nobleman’s Son (Jn. 4:46-54); Healing the Paralytic (Jn. 5:1-17); Feeding the 5,000 (Jn. 6:1-14); Calming the Storm (Jn. 6:15-21); Healing Man Born Blind (Jn. 9:1-14) and Resurrection of Lazarus (Jn. 11:17-45).


21. Mackowski, Jerusalem City of Jesus. 83.


The well-established religious cultic context reason is this: The Greek religions became epidemic after the conquest by Alexander the Great. In the three centuries that preceded Jesus, no one promoted pagan religions more than did Antiochus IV Epiphanes during the years 167-164 B.C. His reign of paganism and terror led to the Maccabean Revolt (see 03.04.20). Even after the Jews won their freedom, those pagan religions were never completely eradicated except within some villages and in the city of Jerusalem. While all signs of paganism were removed from within the Holy City and the temple, the Jews were rather lax about the removal of pagan shrines outside of the city walls, including the Pool of Bethesda. Hellenistic Jews enjoyed these pagan sites. Note the comments written after the Jews won their independence and religious freedom.

All the Gentiles accepted the command of the king. Many even from Israel gladly adopted his religion; they sacrificed to idols and profaned the Sabbath. And the king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the cities of Judah; he directed them to follow customs strange to the land, to forbid burnt offerings in the sanctuary, to defile the sanctuary and the priests, to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines to idols.

1 Maccabees 1:41-47

From the pen of Josephus is another historical account that affirms the widespread construction of pagan shrines and altars.

He also compelled them to forsake their own God and to adore those whom he took to be gods; and made them (the Jews) build temples and raise idols in every city and village and offer swine upon them every day.

Josephus, Antiquities 12.5.4 (253)

24. 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.

25. See also Josephus, Antiquities 12.5.1-4.
As stated previously, the actions of Antiochus led to the Maccabean Revolt. After defeating the Greek tyrant, the Jews sanctified the temple but failed to purge the nation from its love of idols (Gk. *eidolothutos* 1494, meaning *sacrificed to idols*) or eradicate all pagan sites outside of the Holy City.\(^{26}\) These idols were not only worshiped by Hellenistic Jews, but also by local Gentiles. Later, Herod the Great, who was also a devout pagan, built a temple for emperor worship in Samaria and encouraged pagan worship outside Jerusalem for the sole purpose of strengthening his position with Rome. Therefore, there is an excellent case to be argued that the place where Jesus performed this miracle had a strong pagan history — and desperate people will consider desperate measures to obtain their healing.

There is also a theological explanation for John 5:3b-4.\(^{27}\) He made reference to “an angel would go down,” who would stir the waters. However, in those days, *all* gods were called “Lord” or by their name. This writer suggests that the invalid was waiting for an angel of an unknown god, most likely Asclepius, to heal him, but instead, it was Jesus who healed him. Whether the term “lord” is a reference to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or a reference to a pagan deity is called a “textual problem.”\(^{28}\) In this case as with others in Scripture, it probably was a demonic angel.\(^{29}\) Visitors today at the pool will see archaeological evidence and a sign indicating that this pool was at one time the Sanctuary of Asclepius (also spelled “Aesculapius”).\(^{30}\)

In Greek cities, any place that was said to be a site of healing became a sanctuary to Asclepius, and became a focal point for many invalids and tourists. For example, archaeologists in Corinth have uncovered a building complex dedicated to Asclepius with facilities for bathing, dining, exercise, and sleeping (for dreams).\(^{31}\) Sick persons would come and a dedication of healing was prayed using a reproduced body part (such as an arm or leg), which was made from bronze, marble, or terra cotta.\(^{32}\) Any healing that was received, even if by natural recovery, was

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


28. See the comments by Gordon Franz in 07.01.04.V2.

29. Other biblical examples are found in Mt. 25:41; Jude 6; 2 Cor. 11:13-15; and Rev. 19:20.

30. For additional information on the cult of Aesculapius, see Estee Dvorjetski, “Healing Waters.” 16-27, 60.


accredited to Asclepius.\(^3\) Therefore, when Jesus healed the man, He demonstrated that He was greater than Asclepius - the Greek god of healing.

Pagan worship and traditions instituted by Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the previous century continued, to a limited extent, into the days of Jesus. One of the major social issues between orthodox Jews and Hellenistic Jews was that the latter honored pagan gods and traditions. Epiphanies had directed his men “to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols and to sacrifice swine and unclean animals” (I Macc. 1:47).\(^3\) Ironically, the Pool of Bethesda was built about 200 B.C., just prior to the zenith of Greek paganism in Jerusalem, for the purpose of washing sheep that would be sacrificed in the temple. Yet air bubbles coming out of the limestone aquifers were credited to be the stirring of an angel of a pagan lord or deity.


\(^3\) Metzger, The New Testament. 223.
07.01.04.A. RUINS OF THE POOL OF BETHESDA. The Pool of Bethesda has been identified by the foundations of the pool and its close proximity to the Sheep Gate. Archaeologists uncovered the ruins of a sanctuary to the healing god Asclepius built by Hadrian (A.D. 132-135). They believe Hadrian constructed this sanctuary on the ruins of a previous shrine built by Antiochus IV Epiphanies in the early 2nd century B.C. It is highly possible that the site had a legacy of healing at the time of Jesus. Photograph by the author.

07.01.04.B. THE INTERIOR OF THE RUINS OF THE POOL OF BETHESDA. The Pool of Bethesda today is a dry and dormant archaeological site, and rather deep. Over the centuries, due to the many destructions of Jerusalem, the elevation of the city has been raised creating the appearance that the pool was much deeper than it really was. During the first and second century B.C., hundreds of Hellenized Jews, Greeks, and Romans, came to the pool to receive a healing, caring little for which god or God healed them. Photograph by the author.
07.01.04.C. ASCLEPIUS ARTIFACTS FROM THE POOL OF BETHELDA.
Artifacts from the cult of Asclepius found at the Pool of Bethesda. History and archaeology suggest that the pool was a pagan site for the Greek god of healing, Asclepius. Photograph by the author.

It is also a well-known fact that holy sites usually remained sacred when one people group replaced another. In this case, a holy site established by the Greeks remained a holy site long after the Roman conquest. Archaeological discoveries reveal that the Romans came to this site for healing after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 135.35

Furthermore, emperors and rulers frequently claimed to be gods as a method to strengthen their control on the general population. Stories were created in which they claimed to have been born of a virgin or to have performed miracles. Likewise, priests claimed people were healed to encourage offerings. For example, the following account is from a speech recorded in the second century (A.D.) regarding the healing powers of a water well at the Temple of Asclepius in Corinth.

But the god also uses it in other ways like any other co-worker and the well has often assisted many people in obtaining from the god what they desired. For just as

the sons of doctors and magicians have been trained to serve them and, while they aid them astound spectators and customers, so this well is the discovery and possession of the great magician who does everything for the safety of mankind. It aids him in everything and for many men is like a drug. For many, by bathing in it, have recovered their sight and many by drinking it have been cured of chest trouble and regained the breath of life. It has cured one man’s feet and another part of the body for someone else. Once someone drank it and spoke after being mute, just as those who drink the forbidden waters and have become prophetic. For some merely drawing up the water has been like a means of safety. And, thus, to the sick it is an antidote and a cure and for those in health, who reside nearby, it makes the employment of all other waters subject to blame.

Aelius Aristides, “Regarding the Well in the Temple of Asclepius.” *Speech 39:*14-15

This temple, like other temples associated with Asclepius, served as a hospital and had an enormous encampment of sick people waiting to be healed, while doctors practiced their craft. Another second century (A.D.) writer recorded the account of a false prophet by the name of Alexander, who evidently was rather deceptive.

Alexander had secretly prepared a deception by depositing an egg, in which he had placed a small snake, at the base of the newly constructed temple, which he then “finds” and presents as the god Asclepius. Before doing this, he assembles a crowd and speaks of the imminent good fortune of the city that was about to receive the god in visible presence. The crowd – almost the whole city, including women, old men, and boys, had come running – marveled, prayed, and made obeisance. Uttering a few meaningless words like Hebrew or Phoenician, he dazed the creatures, who did not know what he was saying save only that he everywhere brought in Apollo and Asclepius.

Lucian of Samosata, *Alexander the False Prophet 13*

Still, the writings of another healer, found in an inscription dated AD 484, preserved the belief that Asclepius was the healer of men. However, stories as this are much older than the inscription. The date of when the account originated is not as important as knowing that such


37. For further study on the ancient descriptions of the cult of Asclepius, see Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 2.27.2; 10.32.8; 7.27.5; Aristophanes, *Plutus* 410:653ff; *Wasps*, 122; Strabo, *Geography* 14.1.44; Plautus, *Curculio* 1.1.61; 2.1.

belief systems were widespread in the ancient world (see comment on Mt. 8:28-34). The following account concerns a man with a stomach ulcer:

While he slept, he had a dream (in which)\(^{39}\) the god appeared to him and ordered his assistants to hold him so that the god could cut out the affected part. The man tried to escape, but he was seized and fastened to the door. Asclepius then opened up his stomach, cut out the ulcer, sewed him up again, and finally released him. The man awoke cured but the floor was covered with blood.

**Inscription of Epidaurus\(^{40}\)**

In the past century archaeologists uncovered nearly sixty inscriptions and papyri concerning the healing cult of Asclepius. Records were found which indicate physicians used their personal wealth to establish shrines and altars to the Greek god.\(^ {41}\) However, Luke, a Gentile physician, was incredibly detailed concerning the miracles he recorded, attributing them to the power of Jesus.

**Video Insert**

07.01.04.V1 *The Invalid Man at the Pool of Bethesda.* Dr. Paul Wright and Professor Gordon Franz discuss the invalid man who spent 38 years at the Pool of Bethesda, as a reflection of national Israel. Click here if Internet connection is available.

In the study of John 5:1-15, it is easy to place the focus of attention on the healing or Sabbath violation, but the real focus is on the legalism of the Pharisees. The Jewish leaders were dead in their legalism, which is evident by their complete lack of compassion for anyone who was poor, sick, lame, crippled, or had another affliction. These legalists were overtly self-righteous with a powerful, condemning attitude toward anyone who did not agree with them. They exalted themselves with a demanding set of “do and don’t” regulations (cf. Rom. 6; Gal. 2:4). They could not begin to understand the grace and mercy that Jesus preached and demonstrated. In their thinking, grace and mercy were licenses to sin. Furthermore, the fact that the man was sick for years was proof to them that either he or his family had sinned; hence, there was no need for

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39. Parenthesis for clarification are mine.


mercy for him. The idea that an accident or illness could be the natural result of a fallen world had never occurred to them. But when the poor guy got healed, instead of celebrating, they criticized him for violating their Sabbath regulations. Jesus then told him to carry his mat (a blanket), which was another Sabbath violation according to their Oral Law.

A question that is almost never asked is this: “Why was a Jewish man trying to get a healing by the Pool of Asclepius (Bethesda)...or at any pool for that matter? The answer is that he, like most people of Israel, had left their God as did many of their forefathers. Notice the comments by Professor Gordon Franz.

“A Jewish festival.” The identity of this feast is not given, but scholars believe it was the Festival of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and First Fruits, commonly referred to as “the Jewish Festival,” or just “Passover.” There were no other feasts at this time of year. If this is correct, then John referred to four Passovers (Jn. 2:13; 5:1-16; 5:4 and the Last Supper) making the length of the ministry three and a half years (the majority view), or possible four and a half years (a minority view).

“By the Sheep Gate.” Technically, this entire phrase should read: “Now in Jerusalem, by the Sheep [Gate], there is a pool with a Hebrew name Bethesda.”

“In Jerusalem there is a pool.” The phrase reads *is*, not *was*, thereby clearly indicating the pool existed at the writing of this gospel. The pool was destroyed during the Roman siege in A.D. 66-70. Therefore, this is clear evidence that this gospel was written within four decades after Jesus, that is, before the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem. Amazingly, some critics argue without evidence that John was written after the destruction of Jerusalem.

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42. Since the Feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and First Fruits were celebrated within an eight-day period, these were generally referred to by the most important of the three feasts, Passover.


44. Examples are found in Jerusalem: Center of the World, where various scholars present opinions, some of which are based on Gnostic gospels and other illegitimate writings. Goldberg and Suarez, Producers. Jerusalem: Center of the World. (DVD).
“In Hebrew.” Some translators believe the word in this case was Aramaic. However, the more accurate translation is “Hebrew.” Nonetheless, Aramaic and Hebrew are sister languages, and this issue is of little or no significance because Aramaic was generally the language of the day, commonly used in business and other affairs of daily life among the Jews. Hebrew was spoken in synagogues, at religious events, and used in legal documents. Jewish scholars, however, often spoke only Hebrew as not to be associated with the common people who were called *am-ha-aretz*, meaning unlearned.\(^{45}\)

The use of Hebrew was confirmed in the Dead Sea Scrolls, where various inscriptions and other fragments written by the Jews which are seldom found to be in Aramaic, Greek, or Latin. At Masada, Hebrew writings were found on fourteen scrolls, 4,000 coins, and 700 ostraca.\(^{46}\) Hebrew writings were more common than Aramaic writings by a ratio of nine to one.\(^{47}\) Hence, there is a growing opinion in scholarship that Hebrew was the common language in first century Israel, especially among orthodox Jews. It appears that those who were orthodox in their faith definitely maintained the Hebrew language in worship and in social settings, a lifestyle not necessarily shared by Hellenistic Jews who probably used Aramaic or Greek.

07.01.04.Q1 What is the significance of this invalid man having suffered for thirty-eight years (Jn. 5:1-15)?

Many translators use the word “invalid” rather than “sick,” which suggests that his physical condition existed since birth. His life and the lives of other handicapped people were reduced to begging with no hope or purpose for which to live. Most certainly all of them wanted to be healed and, Jesus, with love and compassion, met their needs. But among them was one who was “sick for 38 years.” The cause of this man’s illness is unknown. Yet God had a purpose for him because, not only would he tell others of the love of Jesus, but his illness was a reflection upon the Israelite people who wandered for 38 years in the wilderness from Kadesh-barnea to the Zered Brook. A summary is as follows: After the Israelites left Egypt, they accepted the false report about Canaan from eight of the ten spies. As a result, God punished them to wander in the desert. It was only after nearly four decades of life in the crippling hot desert that they entered into their Promised Land. The impotent man symbolized the impotent nation. It is Jesus who takes any person from a spiritual wilderness, regardless of why, how long, or what the situation

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46. An ostraca is a pottery fragment that was used as a writing surface or material, since papyri and parchment were extremely expensive. See “ostraca” in Appendix 26 for more details. An example is the King David Fragment at 03.02.01.A.

was, into the full enrichment of life by faith in Him. He came to give life and to give it more abundantly to anyone who desires it (Jn. 10:10). Jesus healed the man and He wanted to heal the nation, but the nation rejected Him.

A point of interest pertains to why the Jewish invalid man was by the pagan pool, in the first place, waiting to be healed. Did he not have faith in God? Why didn’t he go to his rabbi and ask for prayer? No wonder that Jesus asked him, “do you want to get well?” The question seems to be rather unkind. It was asked to determine if the man really desired good health, if he had faith in the Greek god Aesclapius, or if he preferred to remain in his hopeless state and dwell in self-pity. There were many beggars in the land, and many of them identified themselves with their disability. Getting healed also meant that one could no longer beg for money and would have to work for a living. Therefore, the question was asked, Do you want to get well? And that may have implied, or would you prefer to continue begging the rest of your life and have people feel sorry for you?

For a quick historical review, scholars believe that in the Inter-Testamental Period, when the Greeks dominated this area, this was a pool dedicated to the Greek god Asclepius – the Greek god of healing. After the Maccabean Revolt, all signs of paganism were removed from within Jerusalem, but this pool was on the outside of the city wall. Therefore, it is believed that it was still honored by the local Gentiles and Roman soldiers. Archaeologists have clearly demonstrated that in the 3rd and 4th centuries (A.D.) this was an active shrine to Asclepius. As to the crippled man, while he was waiting for a healing from a pagan god, Jesus came along and healed him. Without a word spoken, Jesus demonstrated that He was God!

“Get up,” Jesus told him, “pick up your mat and walk!” Jesus did more than heal the man; He instantly restored his ability to walk. After thirty-eight years of being an invalid, he was in no physical shape to walk, yet he had instant strength and balance when Jesus spoke.

The reaction of the religious leaders demonstrated they were passionately concerned about their laws and had no joy for the man who was just healed. The growing popularity of Jesus was seen as a threat by the Pharisees to their stability and religious power. Not only had Jesus healed on the Sabbath, but He also told the man to carry his mat and, in the process, humiliated the Pharisees. This was a two-point violation of their Oral Law. Some Oral laws permitted caring
for the sick on the Sabbath, but the leading Pharisees chose to ignore them. Therefore, any so-called “violations” were merely those of their own choosing.

The Jordan Valley has several hot springs where sick people came for centuries hoping to receive a healing. The ancients believed that, since the hot water or moving water was so unusual, a divine healing power must be present to cause the unnatural phenomena. There were hot springs in Tiberius, only a couple of miles south of Capernaum. Another popular site was the cold Spring of Gihon in Jerusalem. For centuries foreigners came to these hot springs and to Jerusalem to be healed. Their travels were in vain, until the Healer came.

“This is the Sabbath!” It was the common opinion that failure to observe the Sabbath would cause the Jews to be exiled again, just as failure to keep the Sabbath in the past led to their exile in Babylon. Furthermore, it was believed that, if all Jews would honor the Sabbath only once, the messiah would come. Orthodox and ultra-orthodox Jews believe the same today; if they observe the Sabbath only once and keep it holy, their messiah (whoever he is) will come.50

“It’s illegal for you to pick up your mat.” This law is not the written law of the Bible, but is one of the many oral laws that Jesus condemned and referred to as the “traditions of the elders” (Mt. 15:2). This is another case that reflects upon the previous passages concerning old and new/fresh wineskins. The rabbis had argued that any kind of menial activity was defined as work, which violated the term Sabbath that means rest.51 The irony of this miracle is that it occurred at the Pool of Bethesda, and Bethesda means House of Mercy.52 Yet is was the religious establishment that totally lacked any mercy for the man who was healed, when they should have praised God for his healing.

Finally, by the display of various elements of the Kingdom of God, such as the miracles on the Sabbath, two deadly charges were brought against Jesus by the religious establishment.

1. He was the breaker of their Sabbath rules

48. Mishnah, Eduction 2.5; Mishnah, Sabbath 6.3; Mishnah, Mekila 22.2; 23.13.

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

50. For more information, see “02.02.18 Oral Law,” “02.02.20 Oral Tradition,” and especially Jubilees 50:6-13 at 02.04.06. In fact, during 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 as not be removed from the face of the earth (1 Macc. 2:31-38).


2. He was a blasphemer against God

Throughout the rest of His ministry, Jesus would be repeatedly accused of these two charges.

07.01.04.Q2 Why did the invalid man at the Pool of Bethesda not need faith to be healed (Jn. 5:1-15)?

This question has been challenging for pastors throughout the centuries, especially since the healed man may have believed that his healing was the result of the stirring of the waters. The primary reason is that this was early in the ministry of Jesus, many did not know that He could perform miracles. So He performed miracles which captivated their attention so they would listen to His message about the Kingdom of God. But there are other considerations as well:

1. Jesus performed the miracle to demonstrate that He was, in fact, the One who heals diseases (Isa. 53).

2. Jesus challenged the Pharisees on their Sabbath regulations and

3. Before hundreds of witnesses, Jesus demonstrated His power was superior to the healing cult of Asclepius that was located at this pool (outside of Jerusalem).

4. However, at this early point in His ministry Jesus performed a number of miracles where no faith was required. This was because He validated His ministry as a Healer – not only of the physical body, but of the entire person. These miracles established public awareness and an audience to whom He taught the principles of the kingdom of God – the rule of God in their lives. At the point where the religious authorities rejected Jesus, from that time on both Jews and Gentiles needed faith to receive their healing. The traditional answer is that once Jesus was accepted as a Healer and Teacher, then faith was required to receive a miracle.

5. Prior to his rejection by the religious leaders who represented national Israel, no one needed to have faith to receive a healing because people were just learning who Jesus was. When a person was healed, Jesus told them to tell other of the great miracle God had done for them. This included multitudes, Jews and Gentiles, all without faith.

53. For more details on this important point, see 09.01.03.Q1 “What was the significance of the Beelzebub discussion?”

Did Jesus demonstrate His power over the Greek god Asclepius (Jn. 5:1-15)?

This writer believes that just as God demonstrated His power over the ten plagues of Egypt, Jesus may have done likewise by performing seven miracles or signs as found in the gospel of John. In the account of the plagues of Egypt, the God of Moses demonstrated His power over the gods of the Egyptians. In a similar manner, it appears that when John wrote his gospel, he may have implied that Jesus demonstrated His power over local deities,

1. To demonstrate His divine power and authority.
2. To demonstrate His superior healing power over the gods of the Greeks and Romans,
3. To demonstrate His superior healing power over the mystical healing superstitions of the Jews.

The influence of the Greek invasion during the Inter-Testamental Period was alive and well during the ministry time of Jesus. First century Judaism experienced a culture confrontation that is similar to, if not more intense than, what believers face in the world today. The miracle power of God as performed through Jesus must have revealed the shallowness of Greek mythology and religions.

Students of the Bible today often have difficulties comprehending how much Hellenism influenced Judaism in the first century. Another example is found in coins minted merely a half century before Jesus. A coin of John Hyrcanus II, the high priest (63-40 B.C.) has the name Jehohanan on one side and a double cornucopia (horn of plenty) from Greek mythology on the reverse side. In Greek mythology, the cornucopia was said to involve the birth and nurturance of the infant god Zeus. According to the myth, Zeus was protected by a goat that functioned as a nurturing goddess, but accidently broke off a horn when feeding the infant milk. Hence, the horn has become known as the “horn of plenty.”

55. The Seven Signs: Water into Wine (Jn. 2:1-2); Healing the Nobleman’s Son (Jn. 4:46-54); Healing the Paralytic (Jn. 5:1-17); Feeding the 5,000 (Jn. 6:1-14); Calming the Storm (Jn. 6:15-21); Healing Man Born Blind (Jn. 9:1-14) and Resurrection of Lazarus (Jn. 11:17-45).

56. For more information, see 03.05.12, “Summary Influence of Hellenistic Reform” (331-63 B.C.)

57. Ancient coins are cleaned and restored by a process known as the Deep Proton Activation Analysis.
07.01.04.D. A COIN OF JOHN HYRCANUS II. A coin of John Hyrcanus II, the Jewish high priest (served 63-40 B.C.), has a double cornucopia that was based upon Greek mythology. It is another illustration to show that Jewish leaders chose not to cleanse their land from Greek paganism. Wikipedia Commons.

Statues of idols have been found in Caesarea Maritima, the city built by Herod the Great along the Mediterranean Sea. It was well populated by both Jews and Gentiles, and had a hippodrome, a theater that every tourist sees today, pagan temples, etc. Among the idols are two statues of healing gods shown below.

It was common practice among many cultures, that when a person was sick or injured, he or she went to the temple to discuss the matter with a priest. The priest would either create a body part out of clay or other material, or get a body part from a storage room where such pieces were kept. Clay or wooden reproductions of body parts were known as votive offerings. The person in need of healing and the artificial body part were then anointed with prayer.

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58. In churches that still consider votive offerings today, the parishioner can give gifts such as candles, flowers, or monetary donations.
07.01.04.E. STATUETTES OF HEALING GODS. LEFT: Portion of a marble statuette of the god Asclepius (height 26 cm; Courtesy of the Sedot Yam Museum). RIGHT: Portion of a statuette of his daughter, the goddess Hygieia (height 24 cm. Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority). Both statuettes are of the first century and from Caesarea Maritima.

This practice was not restricted to the Greeks. First Samuel 6 records the account of when the Philistines captured the Ark of the Lord from the Israelites, the Philistines became sick with tumors and rats invaded their land. In response the Philistines asked their priests and diviners what they should do. The answer was to return the Ark with models of rats and tumors made of gold (1 Sam. 6:5). They did and were healed.

Finally, after this point, the religious leaders intensified two charges against the Prophet of Nazareth:

1. He broke their rules that pertained to the Sabbath observances (Jn. 5:16, 18) and,

2. He was a blasphemer of their God because He claimed equality with His Father (Jn. 5:17-18).

The first charge was reason for opposition, persecution, and possibly death. The second charge was serious enough to warrant the death penalty. But the problem was that the Romans had removed the authority for the Jews to inflict capital punishment. Therefore, Jesus was carefully observed for any possible charge that could bring Him before Pilate, which is what eventually happened.
RESURRECTION AND LIFE

16 Therefore, the Jews began persecuting Jesus because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. 17 But Jesus responded to them, “My Father is still working, and I am working also.” 18 This is why the Jews began trying all the more to kill Him: Not only was He breaking the Sabbath, but He was even calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

19 Then Jesus replied, “I assure you: The Son is not able to do anything on His own, but only what He sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, the Son also does these things in the same way. 20 For the Father loves the Son and shows Him everything He is doing, and He will show Him greater works than these so that you will be amazed. 21 And just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son also gives life to anyone He wants to. 22 The Father, in fact, judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son, 23 so that all people will honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Anyone who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

24 “I assure you: Anyone who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not come under judgment but has passed from death to life. 25 “I assure you: An hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

26 For just as the Father has life in Himself, so also He has granted to the Son to have life in Himself. 27 And He has granted Him the right to pass judgment, because He is the Son of Man.

28 Do not be amazed at this, because a time is coming when all who are in the graves will hear His voice 29 and come out — those who have done good things, to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked things, to the resurrection of judgment.

30 “I can do nothing on My own. I judge only as I hear, and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

In this narrative, Jesus stated His equality with God the Father. This was utterly unprecedented in Jewish and pagan history, and demonstrates the unique divine character of Jesus. No one who
desired to be a messiah would ever dream of equating himself with God – especially to the Jewish people. But Antiochus IV Epiphanies did this in the second century B.C., and he was hated by everyone, including his own Greek people.

“Jews began persecuting Jesus.” As the differences between the establishment of Jerusalem and Jesus became more intense, persecution began at the highest levels of Judaism – the upper echelon of Pharisees and the Sadducees. The irony is that while the leaders were rejecting Jesus, His popularity was growing. The religious legalism had become the choking point in everyone’s spiritual life. Their rigid and prideful rules exalted themselves, not God (Lk. 18:9-14).

“My Father is still working.” Since a boy or young man was considered equal to his father, when Jesus referred to God as “My Father,” He claimed equality with God. Furthermore, when He said “I work,” He claimed to be the Son of God in the sense that He had the power and right of working as God works. These statements were thought to be blasphemous. Nonetheless, the question was not whether Jesus possessed power to do these things, but it was whether He exercised His power agreeably to the will of the Father or in opposition to Him. Jesus answered them accordingly.

In Hebrew thinking, the oldest son was always considered to be equal with his father. Hence, when Jesus referred to “My Father,” Jesus was obviously not speaking of His earthly father, who probably had passed away by this time, but His heavenly Father. Therefore, the Jews understood Jesus to say that He was equal to God in heaven. Then He stated that God is always at work to keep the universe running and He, Jesus, is part of that work. Given this context, it is easy to understand why they were so vehemently upset with Him.

“The Son is not able to do anything on His own.” The Fourth Evangelist recorded these interesting words that reflect upon the Sonship and mission of Jesus (vv. 30-47). This statement is not inconsistent with His deity, but rather, there are five main ideas presented here:

59. Wigoder, “Bethesda.”

60. For references to grace and freedom in Christ, see Jn 8:32; Rom 8:1-4; Gal. 5:1; Eph. 2:4-9, as opposed to social conformity manipulated by laws, guilt, and bondage (Gal. 3).
1. The dependence of the Son upon the Father (v. 19),

2. The life-giving mission of the Son (v. 21, 24-26, 28-29), and

3. The judging mission of the Son (v. 22, 27).

4. Jesus sees what the Father is doing.

5. Whatever the Father does Jesus does, because He and the Father are One.

The Sonship of Jesus is the dominant theme (vv. 19-47) with a call to man to come to Him. Note the witnesses:

1. The first witness of the Sonship of Jesus is God Himself. The phrase “there is another” (Jn. 5:32) refers to none other than God Himself.

2. The second witness is John the Baptist (vv. 33-35), who was the witness of the Light, but was not the Light himself.

3. The third witness is found in the works of Jesus, meaning the entire ministry of teaching, miracles, and His life.

4. Finally, the fourth witness (vv. 37-38) is the same as the first – that of God the Father Himself.

Moses had given the Israelites the Law in which they would have found freedom, if they would have accepted the Spirit of the Law. However, since they had become legalistic, the Law was to be their condemnation. They worshiped the letter of the Law of Moses, but killed the spirit of that Law even though the ancient patriarch spoke of Jesus in Deuteronomy 18:15. This was confirmed by Luke in Acts 3:18. Jesus was especially hard on the Jews at this point, because if they could not perceive and accept the words and spirit of Moses, how could they accept the words and Spirit of Jesus? The legalists could not accept Jesus or His words because they were not willing (Jn. 5:40) to do so. They would not receive His words (Jn. 5:43) and they did not seek God’s glory (Jn. 5:44).

“The Father raises the dead.” The Jews fully accepted the fact that God, and God alone, could raise men from the grave. Jesus demonstrated His authority and power to do likewise, and thereby demonstrated that He was God in human form.
“Son of God … Son of Man.” Jesus referred to Himself with both titles. The Son of Man, or Bar enosh in Aramaic, was a title was used extensively by the prophets Daniel and Ezekiel in reference to men of the earth. Jesus was a Son of Man, in that He was born of a human mother, had human emotions and sufferings, as do we. The Son of God came to earth in human form. When Jesus spoke to His fellow Jews, He used the phrase Son of Man in reference to Himself, as this was acceptable to them. They would have objected to the phrase Son of God so strongly, that they would not have heard anything else Jesus said. The phrase Son of Man in the book of Enoch is a figure, who is waiting in heaven until God sends him to earth where he would establish his kingdom and rule over it. This book was common knowledge to the Jewish people, so when Jesus used the phrase about Himself, it was clearly referring to the long-awaited Messiah. The expressions of “Son of Man” and “Son of God,” express the deity of Jesus, but the former title also asserts His humanity.

“He has granted Him the right to pass judgment.” Jesus declared that God the Father gave Jesus the authority to judge every person on the Day of Judgment. This statement struck another fierce chord of anger in the religious leaders, for they heard Him say that He (Jesus), one day would be judge over their eternity. Most certainly, they questioned how He dared to speak such words. Yet He did and they were so true.

The reason why men today do not receive the words of Jesus and treat them as true is because they do not have love for God the Father. If the Jewish leaders loved the Father, they would have recognized Jesus and loved Him as well. In fact, in the course of time some members of the Sanhedrin and other significant Jewish leaders did recognize Jesus and demonstrated their love for Him.

07.01.06 Jn. 5:31-47

DISCUSSION OF FOUR AUTHORITIES / WITNESSES TO JESUS

31 “If I testify about Myself, My testimony is not valid. 32 There is Another who testifies about Me, and I know that the testimony He gives about Me is valid. 33 You have sent messengers to John, and he has testified to the truth. 34 I don’t receive man’s testimony, but I say these things so that you may be saved. 35 John was a burning and shining lamp, and for a time you were willing to enjoy his light.

61. Wijngaards, Handbook to the Gospels. 44.


63. See the Dead Sea Scroll “Son of God” fragment at 05.04.02.A.


"But I have a greater testimony than John’s because of the works that the Father has given Me to accomplish. These very works I am doing testify about Me that the Father has sent Me. The Father who sent Me has Himself testified about Me. You have not heard His voice at any time, and you haven’t seen His form. You don’t have His word living in you, because you don’t believe the One He sent. You pour over the Scriptures because you think you have eternal life in them, yet they testify about Me. And you are not willing to come to Me so that you may have life.

“I do not accept glory from men, but I know you — that you have no love for God within you. I have come in My Father’s name, yet you don’t accept Me. If someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him. How can you believe? While accepting glory from one another, you don’t seek the glory that comes from the only God. Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, because he wrote about Me. But if you don’t believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

In this passage Jesus informed His challengers that:

1. They did not have the love of God in their hearts.

2. They pursued honor from the crowds and from each other.

3. Because they chose to honor each other, they likewise refused to honor God.

What was obvious to everyone was that Jesus spoke the truth and exposed the sins of the religious leaders. When He said that Moses was their accuser, He had reference to the Mosaic passages in Genesis 49:10, Numbers 24:17, and Deuteronomy 18:15-18. If they were truly as faithful to the laws and teachings of Moses as they claimed, then they would have recognized their error. They refused to consider that Moses spoke of Jesus because they had their own agenda.

“My testimony is not valid ... because he wrote about Me.” Why would the testimony of Jesus not be valid? He followed the Old Testament laws in every detail. If He spoke only of Himself, and was the only witness to His words and works, then He would be in violation of Deuteronomy, that reads,

66. Concerning Jesus in the Old Testament and eternity past, see 04.01.01 and the related video link.
The one condemned to die is to be executed on the testimony of two or three witnesses. No one is to be executed on the testimony of a single witness.

Deuteronomy 17:6

A minimum of two witnesses was standard practice in Jewish law. For a capital punishment case, two witnesses were needed to condemn a man to death. To identify the beginning of the Sabbath, two or three medium-sized stars had to be seen in the sky to announce the end of sixth day and the beginning of the seventh. The Deuteronomy passage was the standard of law for making decisions in all aspects of Jewish society and for biblical interpretation. For this reason, Jesus made a point to present witnesses on His behalf. He presented four points, more than was needed. The witnesses to His Messiahship and testimony were:

1. John the Baptist (Jn. 5:33),
2. His works (Jn. 5:36),
3. The Father, Who had spoken audibly at His Baptism (Jn. 5:37), and
4. The Scriptures (Jn. 5:39) because He fulfilled the Hebrew prophecies.

But the Oral Law stated that a man was not to be believed if he was speaking about himself. Even the Greeks said that a person could not present evidence that would support self-interest.

“John was a burning and shining lamp.” The past-tense of the statement is clear evidence that the ministry of John the Baptist to be the revealer of truth was over. It is assumed that by now he was either in prison or martyred.

“If you believed Moses.” The statement obviously implies they did not obey Moses, although they claimed to do so. In Jewish thinking, “belief” exists only when there is obedience to what is believed. Transposed to today, if one says “I believe in Jesus” and does not do what Jesus says, he has made a false statement concerning his belief. To “believe” or to “love” Jesus carries the requirement to be obedient to His principles of life. “Belief” and “love” when related to God are always associated with obedience to Him.

67. The Jewish people observed the biblical tradition that the day begins at sunset, not midnight or sunrise.

The fourth law of the Decalogue is the law of the Sabbath. On this day, all Jews were expected to rest from their weekly activities. Because the Oral Law essentially placed a protective theological “fence” around the Torah, it had many restrictions that would have to be broken before the commandment would be broken. In Aboth 1:1 there is an interesting statement that clearly defines the purpose of the Oral Law.

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 1:1\(^{69}\)

However, the legalistic attitude cannot be totally attributed to the Jewish leadership because even Moses said that anyone who gathered sticks for firewood on the Sabbath deserved stoning (Num. 15:32-36). Therefore, if gathering firewood on the Sabbath deserved stoning, why not for gathering some grain for food or for some other reason?

As previously stated, they held the common opinion that because they had broken the Sabbath laws in the past, God permitted Solomon’s temple to be destroyed and their forefathers taken into captivity in Babylon (605-586 B.C.). They obviously did not want another occurrence of this punishment (2 Ch. 36:20-21). For this reason they were extremely dogmatic about their oral laws, which included highly restrictive Sabbath rules. Their intent was that if anyone broke the Oral Laws, or the “fence,” that surrounded the Written Law, the person could be punished before the Sabbath and other Mosaic Laws were broken. Therefore, the land would be saved from God’s anger. Although the maximum punishment of breaking the Sabbath was death by stoning,\(^{70}\) it was never practiced or Jesus would have been executed on these charges. While the intent was good, its application became extremely oppressive and idolatrous. The major problem

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69. 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.

70. Mishnah, Sanhedrin 7.4.
was that these Oral laws were held in higher authority than the Mosaic Law, and this led to conflicts with Jesus.

Coupled with the extreme intent to maintain the proverbial “fence” around the Torah, the religious leaders had also become arrogant, wealthy, and smug in their lifestyle. They became blind to the needs of the common people whom they served. Yet amazingly, they did realize that the single issue of life was more important than Sabbath rules. In the event there was an urgency to save a life, the Sabbath rules were set aside. They had little disagreement on this matter, but their attitude was completely different concerning a sick or disabled person. In such a case they believed that the healer should wait until sunset, when the Sabbath was over, and then perform the healing.

When God created the world, He rested on the seventh day (Gen. 2:2). This was a rest from His “creative work.” However, He never rested from His “work of providence,” meaning work in the lives of man, or maintaining the creation on the Sabbath or any other day. If God had rested from His work of providence, the universe would dissolve into nothingness as it once was. Therefore, it is generally agreed among theologians that the work of providence continues as an activity of God.  

Finally, this study is focused on the various issues that shaped the ministry environment of Jesus and, therefore, does not dwell on the theological subjects. However, some basic theological issues cannot be avoided. In the passage (John 5) that follows, John sets forth the divine nature and office of Jesus in relation to God the Father. For a clearer understanding of the gospel writer’s message, note the following distinctions:

1. God is His Father and He is the Son of God in such a high and incommunicable sense, that Jesus is equal with the Father in nature (Jn. 5:18);

2. Jesus enjoys the Father’s perfect love and knows all His counsels (Jn. 5:20);

3. Jesus performs all the works that His father performs (Jn. 5:19-21);

4. Jesus has life in Himself as the Father has it, and gives it to whom He will (Jn. 5:21, 26)

5. He claims equal honor with the Father (Jn. 5:23) and

6. He raises the dead and judges them (Jn. 5:21-22; 24-29).

71. Bruce, Jesus Past, 28.
As the Son of God on earth, Jesus always acts in subordination to the will of the Father.

1. He has not come on His own accord, but His Father sent Him (Jn. 5:23, ff);

2. The Father has appointed Him to do certain works and miracles (Jn. 5:20, 22, 26)

3. Jesus can do nothing by His own accord, but must function in accordance to His Father’s will (Jn. 5:19, 39)

4. The Father, who sent Jesus, bears witness to Him by the works that He (the Father) has given Him to do (Jn. 5:36) and by the Scriptures of the Old Testament (Jn. 5:39, 45-47).

It is as the Son of man – the Word made flesh – who not only redeems, but also judges men (Jn. 5:27). Jesus has …

1. Equality with the Father in nature.

2. Submission to the Father in office,

3. Union with human nature in the work of redeeming and judging men,

4. And in all these, perfect union with the Father in counsel and will.

Not only did the Jewish leaders reject the God – Jesus relationship, but the early church had struggles with it, as well. Gentiles, coming from various pagan religions, were equally challenged.
Unit 07
Opposition Against Jesus Grows

Chapter 02
The Sabbath Challenge

07.02.00.A. JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES PLUCKING GRAIN. Artist unknown.
07.02.01 Introduction
Prior to discussing this topic, a brief review of the first century Sabbath restrictions\(^{72}\) is necessary along with a review of two influential schools of theology in Unit 02.\(^ {73}\) The School of Shammai held that 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 violation, the school of Shammai demanded physical punishment whereas the Pharisees, as strict and legalistic as they were, offered a milder punishment that was often in the form of a monetary fine.\(^ {74}\) Those who confronted Jesus for healing on the Sabbath were most likely to be followers of Shammai, rather than Hillel. To add social conflict to the mix, other religious sects held other beliefs – and most of them were under the “Pharisee” umbrella.

Without question, the pious Jews of the Inter-Testamental Period and at the time of Jesus were concerned that they not offend God and again be evicted from their land. They knew the reason their forefathers had been sent to Babylon for seventy years was because they failed to honor the Sabbath. Therefore, by the time Jesus came, observing the Sabbath had become a weekly ritual of unprecedented importance. Unfortunately, in the process of doing so, the elite Pharisee leadership lost sight of their responsibility to care for the congregations.\(^ {75}\)

The leading Pharisees believed they had established a series of righteous acts that, when completed, would establish not only favor with God, but also essentially permit one to earn his salvation. Below are samples of thirty-nine categories of activities from the Oral Law that limited activities for the Sabbath and for any Friday identified as a Preparation Day.\(^ {76}\)

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72. See 02.04.06 “Sabbath Day Observances.”

73. See 02.01.14 “Pharisees,” 02.01.18 “School of Hillel,” and 02.01.19 “School of Shammai.”


75. For more information, see “02.02.18 Oral Law,” “02.02.20 Oral Tradition,” and Sabbath regulations in Jubilees 50:6-13 at 02.04.06. In fact, during 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).

76. The Day of Preparation was the day prior to special holy days such as Passover; a day when work would end and the people prepared themselves for the special event or a special Sabbath (Mt. 27:62; Mk. 15:42; Lk. 23:54; Jn. 19:14, 31, 42). It was rooted in Lev. 23:5-7; Num. 11:18; Jos. 7:13.
Flesh and onions and eggs may not be roasted unless there is time for them to be roasted the same day, nor can bread be put into the oven when darkness is falling, nor may cakes be put upon coals unless there is time for their top surface to form into crust.

Mishnah, *Shabbath* 1.10

If a double stove had been heated with stubble or straw, cooked food may be set on it (on the Sabbath); but if with peat or wood, cooked food may not be set on it until it has been swept out or covered with ashes. The School of Shammai says: “Hot water but not cooked food may be set thereon.” The School of Hillel says; “Both hot water and cooked food.” The School of Shammai says, “They may be removed (on the Sabbath) but not put back.” And the school of Hillel says: “They may also be put back.”

Mishnah, *Shabbath* 3.1

An egg may not be put inside a kettle (on the Sabbath) so it shall get cooked, nor may it be cracked within (hot) wrappings; but Rabbi Jose permits this. Nor may it be buried in (hot) sand or in the dust of the road so that it shall get roasted.

Mishnah, *Shabbath* 3.3

A vessel may not be put under the lamp (on the Sabbath) to collect the (dripping) oil; but if it was put there before nightfall it is permitted.

Mishnah, *Shabbath* 3.6

Rabbi Aha in the name of Rabbi Tanhum ben Rabbi Hiaay said, “If Israel repents for one day, forthwith the son of David will come.” Said Rabbi Levi, “If Israel would keep a single Sabbath in the proper way, forthwith the son of David will come.”

Jerusalem Talmud, *Tannit* 1.1

77. Parenthesis by Danby, ed. *Mishnah*.

78. Parenthesis by Danby, ed. *Mishnah*.

79. Parenthesis by Danby, ed. *Mishnah*. 
If a man removed his finger nails by means of his nails or teeth, and so, too, if [he pulled out] the hair on his head, or his mustache or his beard; and so, too, if a woman dressed her hair or painted her eyelids or reddened [her face], such a one Rabbi Eliezer declares liable to a sin offering.

**Mishnah, Shabbath 10.6**

According to some Pharisees, Sabbath regulations even prevented mourning the loss of a loved one, due to a legalistic regulation based on Proverbs 10:22 that read, “The blessing of the Lord brings wealth and he adds no trouble to it.” They distorted the proverbs of life in an attempt to be pure and holy before God. Another rule forbade women to look in a mirror on the Sabbath. Jesus was passionately upset over these restrictive bondages.

**Video Insert >**

07.02.01.V *Insights into the Sabbath Regulations.* Dr. Malcolm Lowe discusses some unique insights that pertained to the Sabbath controversies. Click here if Internet connection is available.

Finally, it must be emphasized that not all Pharisaic rabbis held the same views concerning Sabbath regulations. There were those who said that a Sabbath rest was defined as ceasing from work activities so one could reconnect with God, family, and friends, and reflect upon the blessings of God in the past week. This agreed with Jesus who clearly said that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. But that statement tends to open more questions than it answers. Some Messianic believers say that for six days God performed His work in the creation, and the seventh day is set aside for His superior creation (mankind) to focus attention on Him. When examining how the modern church honors the Sabbath, it clearly is in frequent violation in both practice and teaching. When one’s attention is totally focused on Christ Jesus, as it should be on that day, then the issue related to many potential activities becomes a moot point.

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80. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah.* 510, 1046.


07.02.02 Mt. 12:1-7; Mk. 2:25-28 (See also Lk. 6:1-5) Galilee

PLUCKING GRAIN ON THE SABBATH

Mt. 1 At that time Jesus passed through the grain fields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick and eat some heads of grain. 2 But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, “Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!”

Mk. 25 He said to them, “Have you never read what David and those who were with him did when he was in need and hungry — 26 how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest and ate the sacred bread — which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests — and also gave some to his companions?”

Mt. 5 Or haven’t you read in the Law that on Sabbath days the priests in the temple violate the Sabbath and are innocent? 6 But I tell you that something greater than the temple is here! 7 If you had known what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the innocent.

Mk. 27 Then He told them, “The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. 28 Therefore, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”

Little did the rabbis consider the activity of David and his men when they were in a precarious situation – fleeing for their lives from King Saul (1 Sam. 21). When they became extremely exhausted and hungry, they entered the holy sanctuary and ate bread, “loaves of presentation,” also called “shewbread,” that were reserved for the priests (1 Sam. 21:1-6; Isa. 58:6-7). A dozen loaves were placed on a Sanctuary table. At the end of the week they were stale and replaced. The stale bread was normally consumed by the priests, but this time it was eaten by David and his men.

There are two reasons for the justification of David’s action:

1. Their escape from Saul led to a life and death situation. The point is that the Sabbath could be broken in times of crisis. 84 They were extremely hungry and thirsty in the desert wilderness. Therefore, according to rabbinic tradition, they could eat to save human life. 85


2. He was permitted to eat because he had been anointed to be the new king (1 Sam. 16:13) and this implies he had the authority to enter the tabernacle.\footnote{Gilbrant, “Luke.” 169.}

There were several issues concerning this matter relative to the response by Jesus.

1. There was no law in the Torah that forbade a Levitical priest from eating the shewbread, but the Oral Law forbade it.

2. If the famous King David could break the Oral Law (which did not exist in his time), then why couldn’t Jesus, who is the Promised One from the line of David? Of course, the leading Jews refused to recognize the authority of Jesus.

3. Even the Oral Law permitted certain acts of mercy and necessity as indicated in the Mishnah and Matthew 12:7.

4. The Jews had reversed the purpose of the Sabbath. It was created for the benefit of mankind, not mankind created for the benefit of the Sabbath (Mk. 2:27).

In addition, Jesus had two good reasons to reflect upon the story of the ancient king.

1. The Hebrew Scriptures clearly state that David “did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite (1 Kg. 15:5).

2. The people had an expectation that the messiah would be a son of David, meaning, He would be like him.

\textbf{07.02.02.Q1 Were there “non-Sabbath” Sabbath Days?}

Absolutely! There were certain weeks in the Jewish religious calendar when two Sabbath days were observed. The Sabbath, of course, was the seventh day of the week when all work activities were set aside and the people celebrated their covenant with the Lord of Israel. However, the term “Sabbath” was also applied to any other holy day that prohibited work activities. Sometimes that was the day before the Sabbath, the sixth day of the week commonly known as
“Friday.” Therefore, when John wrote of the “Preparation Day” for the Sabbath,\textsuperscript{87} neither he nor the other gospel writers had reference to the seventh day, but the holy “Sabbath” day of Passover.\textsuperscript{88}

It should be noted that in Jewish history, the days of the weeks did not have names, but numbers. The seventh day received its non-numerical name after much use of the verb that described it. The name, \textit{Sabbath}, meaning “to rest” was always been descriptive of the day. Over time, it became a proper noun. Therefore, when the primitive church in Acts decided to honor and worship God on the first day of the week, they simply transferred the verb from the seventh day to the first day, and this was not in any violation of biblical exegesis or Scripture. At this time the Sabbath was not simply a day to rest, as it had a much deeper meaning. The phrase “was made” in the Septuagint was translated “to create” and was, therefore, associated with the creation narrative of Genesis. If this was the cultural understanding of the time, then certainly there might be some written evidence to support this interpretation. About a century after Christ a certain sage, Simeon ben Menasya, said, “The Sabbath was given to you and not you to the Sabbath.” The point is not that Menasya paraphrased Jesus, but that both presented a common Jewish thought.\textsuperscript{89} The Sabbath was created for man and focused on the benefit for man, so that his entire focus could be on his Creator. This is far deeper than the modern interpretation of “a day of rest,” which may or may not include an hour or two in church, followed by leisure activities. The modern application is hardly within the biblical framework.

There were two important reasons for keeping the Sabbath.

1. As mentioned previously, observing the Sabbath was to honor God which, ironically, the religious leaders idolized in every way possible.

2. This religious restriction, along with circumcision and kosher foods, provided the means to keep their identity distinctive in an immoral world.

These identity markers are found in various rabbinic writings, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and in the works of historians such as Josephus and Philo. The \textit{Damascus Document} identifies 28 different types of Sabbath prohibitions.\textsuperscript{90} Most leading Pharisees and Sadducees had little or no desire to honor God in true worship; rather, they desired to maintain their financial and social positions

\textsuperscript{87} The Day of Preparation was the day prior to special holy days such as Passover; a day when work would end and the people prepared themselves for the special event or a special Sabbath (Mt. 27:62; Mk. 15:42; Lk. 23:54; Jn. 19:14, 31, 42). It was rooted in Num. 11:18; Jos. 7:13.

\textsuperscript{88} Saldarini, \textit{Jesus and the Passover}. 56.

\textsuperscript{89} Young, “Jesus” \textit{Yaro Digest} 1:3, 3.

\textsuperscript{90} Dead Sea Scroll, \textit{Damascus Document} 6QD 10:15-16.
that could be accomplished only by promoting a religious group separated from neighboring cultures. An example is as follows:

1. By taking the wheat off the stalk they were guilty of reaping (further explanation below).

2. By rubbing the wheat in their hands in order to separate it from the chaff they were guilty of threshing.

3. When they blew the chaff from hands they were guilty of winnowing (separating the outer part of the grain kernel from the edible part).

As stated previously, at this time in Jewish history, not all the rabbis agreed on the Sabbath regulations. Sabbath regulations were hotly debated between the schools of Hillel and Shammasi. To say that all Jewish leaders and theologians were critical of Jesus and His disciples is incorrect. Clearly, there were those who agreed with Jesus, who threatened the ultra-legalists to the very core.

So important was the observation of the Holy Day that Josephus said that the beginning of the Sabbath was announced at the temple pinnacle with the blowing of trumpet. Fire signals were also sent from the pinnacle of the temple, that when seen at distant hilltop stations, were repeated until seen in the most distant locations in Galilee. Therefore, within a short time the entire country received the message from the temple that the Sabbath had begun.

An interesting point of discussion today is whether the church is to meet for corporate worship on Saturday or Sunday. The Mosaic Law requires believers to work six days a week, rest on the Sabbath and keep it holy. By tradition, the Jews also met for corporate worship on the Seventh Day, but that was not a command in God’s law. It has been suggested that, technically, Jews and Christians can gather to worship God any day of the week they choose, just as long as they gather for worship one day and work six days.


92. Scholars believe that the ancient city of Ai, which was probably later known as Ephraim, was one of those cities. It is believed Ai and other similar cities were originally established as warning cities from which a signal was sent to warn Jerusalem of an approaching enemy.
“His disciples were hungry and began to pick and eat some heads of grain.” As Jesus and His disciples were walking along the road, they naturally became hungry and chewed on some kernels of wheat which were growing in a nearby field. This was not stealing because the Mosaic Law (Deut. 23:25) permitted travelers and the poor to eat from the fields. However, they could not harvest someone else’s crop. When disciples were accused of plucking heads of grain (Gk. stachus 4719, meaning *an ear of grain*),\(^93\) Jesus came to their defense and made the statement that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Ironically, this same concept was in rabbinic literature and is debated in modern scholarship.

Some scholars believe the two quotations below are reflective of second or third century (A.D.) rabbinic beliefs. However, there were four levels of Pharisees\(^94\) and the upper echelon were the ones who confronted Jesus. Other scholars believe that many ordinary righteous rabbis in local synagogues believed that the Sabbath was truly for the benefit of mankind, disagreed with their leadership. Within the world of Pharisees, there were numerous sects who held a wide range of theological viewpoints, as illustrated by the differences between the Schools of Hillel and Shammai. At this time, there were disagreements between various Jewish sects as to what constituted “work” on the Sabbath. There were some who would have said that what the disciples did was *not* work, while others clearly disagreed.\(^95\)

“The priests in the temple violate the Sabbath.” Jesus referred to the Mosaic Law in Numbers 28:9-10, 18-19, in which the priests had to break the Sabbath laws as part of their priestly duties. Here, the Pharisees were reminded that they too broke the Sabbath laws as they functioned in the temple. The message was obvious; if they broke the Law in service to the children of Abraham and to God, why were they opposing Jesus, who was doing the same?

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93. Vine, “Corn, Cornfield.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary.* 2:129 and “Ear,” 2:190. The KJV at times translates “grain” as “corn” even though corn was not known to the English people until the pilgrims came to New England where the native Americans told them of it. It was unknown in ancient Israel.

94. See 02.01.14.Q1.

95. Cited by Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context.* (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 10, Session 2. See also the video above by Dr. Malcolm Lowe. *Insights into the Sabbath Regulations* 07.02.01.V.
Did Mark make a mistake in 2:26 when he made a historic reference to “the days of Abiathar the high priest?”

In this passage, Jesus focused on the actions of David and his men when they were extremely hungry. They entered the tabernacle (the temple had not yet been built) and ate the consecrated bread. Since there was no uniform calendar, this action was linked to the time when Abiathar was the high priest. But there is the problem: When examining who was high priest a thousand years previous to Jesus, records show that it was Ahimelech, the father of Abiathar (1 Sam. 21:1-6; 22:20), not Abiathar. Did the gospel writer make a mistake? To discover a possible answer, this study goes back three thousand years to uncover two possible explanations for this difficulty.

1. The most popular explanation is that Jesus referred to those events of David that occurred during the lifetime of Abiathar. As a young child he would have been groomed and prepared for the position in the temple. Everyone knew, before the child realized it himself, that he would be the next high priest. Respect for the high office preceded and followed the actual service. This same degree of respect is given to Annas, who is identified as the high priest during the trial of Jesus, when in fact, he was officially retired and his son-in-law Caiaphas held the position. (The same degree of respect is given to American past presidents, congressmen and others who held high positions of honor. They retain their titles into retirement.) Annas carried the honored title the remainder of his life and, when necessary, functioned in the office. He had received his position by a Roman appointment whereas Abiathar inherited his high calling. Therefore, when Jesus called Abiathar the high priest before he actually was in office, Jesus was speaking in accordance with the custom of the time. When this verse is understood in this cultural context, the assumed biblical error dissipates.

2. Another explanation is that in the time of Jesus, the ancient high priest Abiathar was better known to the audience of Jesus than was his father. This follows the pattern of the gospel writers who sometimes quoted from two Old Testament prophets, but recorded only the name of the senior prophet (see author’s comments on Mk.1:2 and Mt. 27:9-10).

These two solutions answer this challenge and both could be correct. The truth is we may never know the precise answer. But that certainly does not diminish the power or the effect of the Word of God or the life of Jesus. When reaching into history three thousand years, it should not be surprising that a minute detail may on occasion become cloudy. In fact, it is a ceaseless end of miracles that so much historical information is still available. No other religion, philosophy, or historical document can make that claim.
“The Sabbath was made for man.” This statement was quite familiar to the rabbis, who, presumably, were concerned about potential danger to human life. In such cases they said,

The Sabbath is handed over to you;
       Not, you are handed over to the Sabbath.

Mechilt on Exodus 31.13

It is most interesting that the word of Jesus pertaining to the Sabbath (Gk. Sbbaton 4521) being made for man was also the understanding of a Rabbi Simeon ben Menasya. In his commentary on Ex. 31:14, he said the following:

The Sabbath is delivered to you;
       You are not delivered on the Sabbath.

Rabbi Simeon ben Menasya on Exodus 31:14

07.02.03 Lk. 6:6-7; Mt. 12:10b-12; Mk. 3:3-6

THE MAN WITH THE PARALYZED HAND, HEALED ON THE SABBATH

Lk 6 On another Sabbath He entered the synagogue and was teaching. A man was there whose right hand was paralyzed. The scribes and Pharisees were watching Him closely, to see if He would heal on the Sabbath, so that they could find a charge against Him.

Mt 10b And in order to accuse Him they asked Him, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” But He said to them, “What man among you, if he had a sheep that fell into a pit on the Sabbath, wouldn’t take hold of it and lift it out? A man is worth far more than a sheep, so it is lawful to do what is good on the Sabbath.”

Mk 3 He told the man with the paralyzed hand, “Stand before us.” Then He said to them, “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do what is good or to do what is evil, to save life or to kill?” But they were silent. After looking around at them with anger and sorrow at the hardness of their hearts, He told the man, “Stretch out your hand.”

96. Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah. 514.

97. Quoted by Kaiser, Davids, Bruce, and Brauch. Hard Sayings of the Bible. 413.
he stretched it out, and his hand was restored. 6 Immediately the Pharisees went out and started plotting with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him.

Jesus was quite empathetic toward the sick and demonically possessed. For Him it was better to bring healing and freedom than to be unmercifully legalistic and permit one to stay in misery. He demonstrated that the Kingdom of God is superior to the religious Sabbath observances and temple worship.

The irony is that no one appeared to realize that the miracle they witnessed was a near duplication of the miracle that occurred nearly a thousand years earlier to King Jeroboam.98 He built a pagan altar in Bethel to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles and declared himself to be the acting priest. When a “man of God” cried out against the altar, Jeroboam stretched out his right hand to stop him. However, the king’s hand became shriveled up “so that he could not pull it back” (1 Kg. 13:1-7). At the same time the altar split apart and the ashes poured out. As Josephus said, the king understood that the prophet had divine foreknowledge. Evidently Jeroboam repented because he asked the “man of God” to intercede to God for him that his right hand might be healed. It was.99

Another example of a Sabbath “violation” that was conveniently overlooked was the Israelite seven-day march around Jericho. Obviously one of those seven days had to have been a Sabbath day, and the processional march far exceeded Sabbath day walking restrictions of the first century.

“Whose right hand was paralyzed.” The ancient physician made a precise observation, and wrote with a Greek participle that indicates that the paralyzed hand was the result of an accident

98. Jeroboam and Joash (2 Kg. 13:1-2; 2 Chron. 24:20-22) are 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.

or disease, not congenital.100 The result of the miracle reveals the profound social implications it caused. To the ancients the right hand was the hand of blessing and authority and is believed to be the origin of the modern handshake. This belief was derived from the same attributes assigned to the right hand of God. Conversely, the left hand was the hand of cussing and personal hygiene. Because of this, Jews were right-handed and food was eaten from a common bowl with the right hand, whether at home or at social gatherings. The man with the paralyzed right hand was, therefore, not welcomed at social functions since he had to serve himself with his left hand. To make matters worse, it was thought that his disability was a curse of God. The idea that an accident or illness could be the natural result of a fallen world never occurred to them. Hence, he was prevented from worshiping God in the temple. He lived with constant condemnation and was a social outcast. When Jesus healed him, He also gave him freedom from condemnation, freedom to be with others at social functions, freedom to become self-sufficient and no longer a beggar, and freedom to worship God anywhere he wanted.

At this time Jesus was demonstrating His Messiahship through teachings and healings. Hence, He healed selected individuals who had no faith in Him as the Healer. The faith element would become significant later. Those in attendance were forced to consider His Messianic claims in light of their Scriptures. Hence, there was always a debate among observers wherever He traveled.

One of the interesting legends that might be true (legends are highly limited in this study), is the report that claims the injured man was a stone mason.101 The account is as follows:102

I was a stone mason,103 seeking my living with my hands. I pray you, Jesus, to give me back my living with my hands.

Gospel of the Hebrews104


102. 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.

103. One ancient legend is the story of the man with the withered right hand went on to build a palace for Emperor Nero that had a secret room for Christians. Little wonder then, that Jesus and the Apostle Paul both cautioned believers to be aware of false teachers. Two modern writers who promote a variety of creative stories are: 1) Ron Charles, who has gathered scores of fanciful legends and myths, mostly written between the sixth and sixteenth centuries, that pertain to the life of Christ in his book titled, The Search: A Historian's Search for Historical Jesus. (Self-Published, 2007), and 2) Nicholas Notovich, whose book, The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ. Virchand R. Gandhi, Trans. Dover Pub.) is a so-called historical account of when Jesus went to Asia to study between the ages 13 and 29.

But little more than that is unknown. His injury was probably from working on a Herodian construction site, such as the temple.

“The scribes and Pharisees were watching Him … so that they could find a charge against Him.” This phrase obviously suggests that the man with the paralyzed or shriveled hand was placed in the audience so the critics could accuse Jesus of violating the Oral Law (response below). The Pharisees were usually synonymous with the teachers of the Law, which is why it is at times difficult to distinguish them from the scribes. All the Pharisees who were members of the Sanhedrin were scribes (cf. Mt. 23:7-8). Nonetheless, they were desperately searching for a charge against Jesus and, in response, notice what Jesus did not do.

1. He did not ask the man for his name
2. He did not touch the man
3. He did not question him
4. He did not preach at him
5. He did not ask him to exercise the paralyzed arm after it was healed.

Jesus merely told him to stretch out his arm, and that request did not violate any written or oral command. This was frustrating because they realized that He knew the Scriptures better than they did, even to the verb tenses. Note the following:

1. Jesus believed every word of the Old Testament.
2. Jesus believed the Old Testament communities and the accounts of various individuals who lived and functioned as portrayed in Scripture. Examples are:
   a. Noah and the flood (Mt. 24:37-39; Lk. 17:26-27)

105. Mt. 3:7; 15:1; Mk. 2: 16, 24; Lk. 11:38.
107. Jeremias, Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus. 236. Being a scribe was a family occupation, handed down from one generation to another. For a list of families of scribes, see I Chronicles 2:55, and for a “company of scribes,” see 1 Maccabees 7:12.
b. Abraham (Jn. 8:56-58)

c. Isaac and Jacob (Mt. 8:11; Lk. 13:28)

d. Sodom and Gomorrah (Mt. 10:15; 11:23-24; Lk. 10:12)

“To save life.” Acts of necessity, mercy, and worship never violated the Sabbath. Jesus again demonstrated the hypocrisy of the Pharisees by pointing out that the Pharisaic tradition placed a higher value on a sheep in a pit than a man with a shriveled hand. They would help an injured sheep, but not one of their fellow Jews. Here Jesus alluded to the rabbinical expression that the Pharisees themselves ignored, but one that was well known and a part of the Oral Law:

Therefore but a single man was created in the world, to teach that if any man has caused a single soul to perish Scripture imputes it to him as though he had caused the whole world to perish; and that if any man saves a life of a single soul Scripture imputes it to him as though he had saved a whole world.

Mishnah, Sanhedrin 4:5

There was also a rule against placing a dislocated foot or hand in cold water to give comfort to the injured person. But another law within the category of Sabbath restrictions is as if to say, “If you are healed, what can you do about it?”

If a man’s hand or foot is dislocated he may not pour cold water over it, but he may wash it after his usual fashion, and if he be healed, he is healed.

Mishnah, Shabbath 22.6

“Looking around at them with anger.” Seldom was Jesus became angry. Note carefully, however, that He was angry with their selfish, stubborn attitude and because they were failing to meet the needs of the people. He was angry at “the hardness of their hearts.” The hardening of the heart begins with one’s own desires, until the day comes when the Lord gives one what he wants – a life without God. The Greek word is porosis, a hardness of the heart that cared little for human life.  

108. See 02.04.06 “Sabbath Day Observances.”

109. For additional Sabbath regulations, see Jubilees 50:6-13 at 02.04.06. In fact, during 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).

1. They defined religion as a legalistic list of rules and regulations.

2. They had lost all sense of human empathy and compassion for those who were suffering

These cold, cold attitudes even kept the religious leaders from recognizing their own sins, as they had hardened their hearts past the proverbial point of no return.

“How they might destroy Him.” Jesus frequently presented a counter-point argument to the accusations and challenges presented by the religious elite. His counter-point was always stronger, fuller, and a clearer declaration of the truth. These public discussions brought immense humiliation to them, but the common people loved Jesus, because, finally, someone was bold enough to speak out against their corrupt leaders. However, since the religious leaders repeatedly lost their theological arguments, they planned on numerous occasions to kill Him.

Finally, this miracle took place early in the ministry of Jesus when He performed miracles without the need of faith of those who were sick. The primary reason is that at this point in time, the miracles were validating His person and message. Jesus did not come to be a Healer of human bodies, but to be a Healer of souls. Miracles, with Jesus, were only a means to a higher end, credentials to enforce the reception of spiritual truth. Once the general public began to understand Him, He healed only those who had faith in Him as the Healer.
While Jesus was extremely popular among the common people, the religious aristocrats constantly confronted Him, as they perceived Him as a potential threat. Little did they realize He was the prophesied “Cornerstone” whom they rejected.
07.03.01 Introduction
Jesus was always admired for His insightful wisdom and teaching techniques. As was typical of so many rabbis, He responded to a question with another question, but other times He structured a response that perplexed those who questioned Him. That has left some modern scholars to ask the question:

07.03.01.Q1 Did Jesus’ teaching method, the dialectic argument, originate with Socrates?

Jesus used a method of reasoning, analysis, and leading questions, known as the dialectic argument, to bring forth an idea in the minds of His disciples. Rabbis prided themselves on asking profound questions that would create hours of debate. Each opponent (or rabbi), selected, paraphrased, distorted, and re-combined the points which seemed to him to be the weakest of his opponent. Jesus was fully engaged in this type of dialogue and, therefore, is often seen answering a question with another question. The goal was not to respond with a simple answer, but rather to encourage self-examination and self-criticism. This teaching method had become a highly valued skill among the Jews and Greeks. However, did this method come from a foreign source or is there an historical record in Jewish literature?

Modern scholarship has credited Socrates (c. 470-399 B.C.) with developing this method of questions and answers; and sometimes a question is the response to a challenging question. The purpose of Socrates’ questions was to expose error and uncover truth through logic. Centuries before the time of Jesus, the Greeks called this “the Socratic art.” Critics have proposed that Jesus borrowed His teaching techniques from the famed Greek philosopher. The Socratic art did flourish and was well established in Judaism by the first century, but was the famed Greek philosopher the originator of this highly acclaimed teaching technique?

From the pages of the Old Testament, there are several encounters between prophets and those to whom God desired to give a message. Undoubtedly, the most famous is the discussion between Nathan and King David regarding the king’s affair with Bathsheba and the death of her husband. The account in 2 Samuel is as follows:

1 So the Lord sent Nathan to David. When he arrived, he said to him:
   There were two men in a certain city, one rich and the other poor. 2 The rich man had a large number of sheep and cattle, 3 but the poor man had nothing except one

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111. See Appendix 26.
112. Horne, Jesus: The Master Teacher. 47.
114. Reed and Prevost, A History of Christian Education. 29-30; Butts, The Education of the West. 88.
small ewe lamb that he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up, living with him and his children. It shared his meager food and drank from his cup; it slept in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man could not bring himself to take one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the poor man’s lamb and prepared it for his guest.

David was infuriated with the man and said to Nathan: “As the Lord lives, the man who did this deserves to die! Because he has done this thing and shown no pity, he must pay four lambs for that lamb.”

Nathan replied to David, “You are the man!

2 Samuel 12:1-7a

In this narrative, the dialectic argument was used to lead the king into self-discovery of his own sin. This would make one wonder if Socrates had not heard of this technique from a Hebrew source. Without question, the earliest example of dialectic argument is found in the book of Job, as this book is said to be the oldest in the Old Testament. After the many adversities Job faced, God spoke to him with rhetorical questions that resemble dialectic argument.

Where were you when I established the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding.
Who fixed its dimensions? Certainly you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it
What supports its foundations? Or who laid its cornerstone
While the morning stars sang together And all the sons of God shouted for joy?

Job 38:4-7

The nature of the dialogue would have profound effects upon the one who initiated the question. Below are some examples used by Jesus.

Then Jesus said to them, “I ask you: Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do what is good or to do what is evil, to save life or to destroy it?”

Luke 6:9
As is frequently noted in the Bible, the scribes, Sadducees, and Pharisees had spent considerable time observing Jesus and accused Him of performing miracles on the Sabbath. In their minds, the issue was not that it was good to heal on the holy day, but to do anything except to save a life was considered a gross sin. This issue of doing good on the Sabbath surfaced again later and is recorded in Luke 14.

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.

Luke 14:5-6

When the authority of Jesus was questioned, He again responded in dialectic fashion. This placed His accusers in the position of self-entrapment. The narrative is found in Matthew.

23 When He entered the temple complex, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to Him as He was teaching and said, “By what authority are You doing these things? Who gave You this authority?”

24 Jesus answered them, “I will also ask you one question, and if you answer it for Me, then I will tell you by what authority I do these things. 25 Where did John’s baptism come from? From heaven or from men?”

They began to argue among themselves, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ 26 But if we say, ‘From men,’ we’re afraid of the crowd, because everyone thought John was a prophet.” 27 So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.”

And He said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

Matthew 21:23-27

Did the accusers know how to respond? Perhaps they did but were afraid to express their ideas because the error of their thinking would be exposed. They had been led into self-examination and, therefore, became trapped by their illogical legalism. It should be noted that moderate Pharisees were followers of the School of Hillel. The strict Pharisees and most of those who

115. Some versions, such as the King James Version, state “If one of you has an ass (donkey) or an ox that falls into a well…”
most frequently challenged Jesus were followers of the School of Shammai. The students and rabbis of these two influential theological schools not only confronted Jesus, but they also confronted each other in numerous public debates and dialogues. In the example below, Jesus initiated the question to the Pharisees concerning the identity of the ancestry of the Son, the Christ.

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 The Lord declared to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand until I put Your enemies under Your feet’?

45 “If David calls Him ‘Lord,’ how then can the Messiah be his Son?” 46 No one was able to answer Him at all, and from that day no one dared to question Him anymore.

Matthew 22:41-46 (quoting Psalm 110:1; cf. Heb. 1)

If His accusers were truly interested in learning more of Him, the conversation would have continued. They would have been honest enough to recognize their own shortcomings. Since they had only their self-rewarding interests, Jesus did not respond with an answer. He knew His words would not be accepted (Lk. 22:67). Today’s ultra-orthodox Jews in Israel follow the same restrictive legalism, as did the top echelon of first century Pharisees.

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Socrates may have developed the dialectic argument or he may have borrowed it from the Jews. That issue is not as important as the fact that this style of debate has a history in the Jewish culture centuries long before the famed philosopher.

07.03.01.A. A SIGN OF MODERN OBSERVANCE OF ANCIENT PURITY. A modern warning sign posted by the ultra-orthodox Jews in their Jerusalem neighborhood reflects similar legalistic concerns, much as the Pharisees did in the time of Christ. This sign in Jerusalem warns pedestrians to wear modest clothing. Photograph by the author.

07.03.02 Mk. 3:7-12; Mt. 12:15-21 Bay of Parables near Capernaum

JESUS TEACHES FROM PETER’S BOAT

Mk. 7 Jesus departed with His disciples to the sea, and a large crowd followed from Galilee, Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and around Tyre and Sidon. The large crowd came to Him because they heard about everything He was doing.

9 Then He told His disciples to have a small boat ready for Him, so the crowd would not crush Him. 10 Since He had healed many, all who had diseases were pressing toward Him to touch Him. 11 Whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, those possessed
fell down before Him and cried out, “You are the Son of God!” 12 And He would strongly warn them not to make Him known.

Mt. 15 When Jesus became aware of this, He withdrew from there. Huge crowds followed Him, and He healed them all. 16 He warned them not to make Him known, 17 so that what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

18 Here is My Servant whom I have chosen,  
My beloved in whom My soul delights;  
I will put My Spirit on Him,  
and He will proclaim justice to the nations.  
19 He will not argue or shout,  
and no one will hear His voice in the streets.  
20 He will not break a bruised reed,  
and He will not put out a smoldering wick,  
until He has led justice to victory.  
21 The nations will put their hope in His name (Isa. 42:1-4).  

07.03.02.A. THE BAY OF THE PARABLES. The place where Jesus taught from a boat is believed to be immediately west of Capernaum. From a boat anchored in the middle of this bay, which is in the shape of natural semi-circular amphitheater, Jesus could teach to thousands who would have been seated along
the grassy shore. Visitors today are astounded at the natural acoustics of the area and realize thousands could have heard His message. Photograph by the author.

Multitudes came from foreign countries to hear this gentle Preacher and watch Him perform miracles, a fulfillment of Isaiah 42:1-4. He spoke with gentleness, kindness, and compassion. There is little wonder then so many placed their faith in Him.

“**You are the Son of God!**” This is a most interesting statement because the demons recognized the identity of Jesus before the people did. Even within the Hebrew Bible there are a number of descriptions of the term, but with a lower case “s.”

1. The angels are called the sons of God (Gen. 6:2) and in the oldest book of the Bible, the sons of God presented themselves before the Lord (Job 1:6). It appears to have been a common title for angels.

2. The nation of Israel is referred to as a son of God (Hosea 11:1; Ex. 4:22).

3. The king of the Jewish nation is a son of God (2 Sam. 7:14)

4. Any good man is a son of God – a comment written in the Inter-Testamental Period (*Ben Sirach* 4:10)

Anyone who made this statement of Jesus said so because Jesus was seen as a good man. He was not seen as God Incarnate as believers do today.

07.03.03 Lk. 6:12-16 (See also Mk. 3:13-19) **Hills near the Sea**

**JESUS APPOINTS 12 DISCIPLES**

12 During those days He went out to the mountain to pray and spent all night in prayer to God. 13 When daylight came, He summoned His disciples, and He chose 12 of them — He also named them apostles:

14 Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew; 15 Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot; 16 Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Again Jesus went to a quiet place to pray all night, and again Scripture is silent on the details of His prayer. Certainly it included issues related to His disciples and year and a half ministry in
Galilee. Only He could have brought together such a diverse group of men and transformed them into a powerful group of evangelists.

As previously stated, it was common for people to have more than one name: one Greek and another Hebrew, but also first and last names in Hebrew. A brief review of these individuals is in order here, although it can become a bit confusing. Possibly the most extreme examples of personalities, temperaments and motivational passions were Matthew and Simon the Zealot. Matthew was of priestly stock but had degenerated to being a tax agent for the Romans. Simon belonged to a radical fringe group of Pharisees known as the Zealots who would have liked to have seen all Romans dead. The Zealots were known to have caused a number of rebellions and scores of them were eventually crucified. None of the Twelve could have a more vivid contrast between their former position in life and where Jesus placed them than Simon and Matthew. The crucifixion of Jesus must have had special meaning since so many other Zealots Simon had known were also crucified.

Little is known of Bartholomew and Nathanael, yet in later years they became effective apostles and were martyred for their faith and ministry. Bartholomew means son of Tholmai or Ptolemy, but no one’s first name was ever son of … which means that Bartholomew is a second name. It is highly probable that Nathanael was the first name and Bartholomew was his second name.

It is believed that Thaddaeus is the same as Judas, son of James. If so, the four lists are harmonized. Matthew and Nathanael are both Jewish names and both mean the gift of God. Just as there are several Marys in the biblical narrative, several Judes and Jacobs in the Bible, two or more disciples could have had similar names. The Greek name Philip means fond of horses

118. See 02.01.22 and Appendix 25.
which may why a church legend says that he was once a chariot driver. He is not related to the Philip of Acts 6:5 and 8:5-40. Thomas is a Hebrew name meaning twin, but there is no biblical record of his twin brother or sister. He is referred to also by his Greek name of Didymus in John 11:16.

According to Mark (3:17) Jesus called John and James, the two sons of Zebedee, boanerges. The term is often said to mean sons of rage or sons of thunder. However, some scholars believe the name does not mean sons of thunder, but that definition was attached because later when the Samaritan village rejected them. John and James were quick to call for the town’s destruction (Lk. 9:54). In addition, later these two disciples asked Jesus to appoint them to high position in the Kingdom of Heaven (Mk. 10:35-36). Clearly, they were not among the quiet and timid ones, but loud, zealous, with possible need of private instruction, and being associated with Matthew and Simon, the group was certainly a diverse one. Therefore, “sons of thunder” might have been related to a quick temper. It is amazing that Peter isn’t grouped with them.

All of the disciples were from the Galilee area, with the exception of Judas, the son of James, who was probably from Keroich in Judea, a town about twenty miles south of Jerusalem. His name is not according to the customary formula: [first name] son of [his father]. Rather, it is Y’hudah from K’riot, Judas from the town of Kério (or Keriout), shortened to Judas Iscariot. Of course, to add interest to this study of names, there is another Judas – Thaddaeus or Labbaeus (Mt. 10:3) is the Judas of John 14:22, (not Judas Iscariot). His name means beloved child and he has been at times referred to as the “good Judas.” Since Judas Maccabaeus was a national hero of the Maccabean Revolt, the name Judas was extremely popular.


125. Lang, Know the Words of Jesus. 19-20.


**07.03.03.Q1 Do the gospels agree on the names of the disciples?**

Yes and no. Critics have long argued that the gospel writers did not agree on the names of the disciples. But the reason is that the order of the twelve names was not important to the authors, only their listing. In fact, their list is similar to listings found on other Jewish writings.

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**07.03.03.A. CHART OF THE DISCIPLES ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL BOOKS**

It appears that Jesus had His disciples divided into three subsets of four men each. Simon Peter, Philip, and James were the leaders of these three groups. In the book of Matthew, the tax collector is known by his own name: Matthew, but in Mark and Luke he is known by his Hebrew

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129. For more information on this style of education and early discipleship and mentorship, see “Education” in 02.03.04.

name, Levi. Also, the English name James is from the biblical Greek is Iakabos, meaning Jacob. In fact, all persons named “James” in the New Testament are actually “Jacob.”

07.03.03.Q2 Was Judas Iscariot a Jew or an Idumean?

Scholars have often pondered this question. Their reasoning is based upon the fact that the name “Iscariot” is rooted in the village name Kerioth or Kireot, which was located near Arad in the Negev Desert. This village was occupied predominantly by Idumeans – descendants of Esau. However, if in fact, he was from Kireot, that does not mean that he was an Idumean. Many communities had both Jewish and non-Jewish residents. In fact, most of the disciples were from communities occupied by both Jews and Gentiles. But, for Jesus to have selected a non-Jew to be one of His disciples would have gone against all biblical and cultural protocols. Judas was definitely a Jew!

07.03.04 Lk. 6:17-19

**GREAT CROWD GATHERS.**

17 After coming down with them, He stood on a level place with a large crowd of His disciples and a great number of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon. 18 They came to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases; and those tormented by unclean spirits were made well. 19 The whole crowd was trying to touch Him, because power was coming out from Him and healing them all.

Jesus, like everyone else, walked a fast gait wherever He desired to go and, at times, it was over great distances. The switchbacks on steep hillsides and the detours around cliffs and wadis (dry seasonal streambeds) added significant distance to the grueling hike. The direct distance from Jerusalem to Galilee is in excess of eighty miles, mostly through the central mountain region. It is difficult to read the biblical narratives and understand this element of His life. In essence, His ministry required great physical stamina. The Roman roads were an improvement over earlier trails, but, nonetheless, long walks were always a demanding task, especially in the summer heat.

131. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 279.

For example, in John 2:1-12 Jesus performed his first miracle at Cana in Galilee. In the following section (vv. 13-25), he was in Jerusalem where he drove out the moneychangers. Then John and Jesus were baptizing new believers in the Judean countryside. That was followed by a return to Galilee (4:1-3). Shortly thereafter, he met the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:4-26), but later returned to Galilee (vv. 43-45). It is not clear when he left, but it can be seen that, with the exception of Luke, it was not the intent of the gospel writers to give a detailed chronological and biographical account of the life of Jesus, but to write His message. Nonetheless, He traveled many miles on foot.

07.03.05 Mt. 5:1-12 (See also Lk. 6:20-23) Spring A.D. 28 Capernaum

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

1 When He saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain, and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. 2 Then He began to teach them, saying:

3 “The poor in spirit are blessed, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.
4 Those who mourn are blessed, for they will be comforted.
5 The gentle are blessed, for they will inherit the earth.
6 Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are blessed, for they will be filled.
7 The merciful are blessed, for they will be shown mercy.
8 The pure in heart are blessed, for they will see God.
9 The peacemakers are blessed, for they will be called sons of God.
10 Those who are persecuted for righteousness are blessed, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

11 “You are blessed when they insult and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of Me. 12 Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you.
The Sermon on the Mount, a/k/a “The Beatitudes,” is undoubtedly the most famous sermon of Jesus. It provides a highly valued picture of the Kingdom of God while earthly values are greatly diminished; it is a collection of paradox and contradiction.\textsuperscript{133} There are no woes or curses, but clear separation between those who are blessed and those who are not. With this sermon, He affirmed many teachings found not only in the Old Testament, but also those taught by many righteous rabbis of His time.\textsuperscript{134} In fact, the ten blessings are reflective of the Ten Commandments which were confirmed by Him as well.\textsuperscript{135} He accomplished three points.

1. He challenged the Pharisees and Sadducees on their restrictive laws.
2. He supported righteousness of the Mosaic Law perspective, but also
3. Went beyond the goals of the Law of Moses to clarify the principles of God.

Just as the Ten Commandments are first focused on man’s relationship to God, then man’s relationship with other people, so likewise, is the Sermon on the Mount. Notice the following structure:

**In relationship to God, Jesus said:**\textsuperscript{136}

1. “Blessed are…the poor in the spirit…” Jesus said this means to have the correct understanding of oneself before God
2. “Blessed are…they that mourn…” Jesus said it means to develop sensitivity to sin and what God thinks about it.
3. “Blessed are…the meek…” This means to have a peaceful confidence in God and recognize His authority
4. “Blessed are…they that hunger and thirst after righteousness…” Jesus desires that people desire Him passionately.

\textsuperscript{133}Metzger, Goldstein, and Ferguson. *Great Events of Bible Times.* 146.


\textsuperscript{135}See Appendix 4.

In relationship to man, Jesus said:

1. “Blessed are…the merciful….” Jesus desires His followers to be kind to others, especially when they have been wronged, and to respond to their needs.

2. “Blessed are…the pure in heart….” Jesus meant that all should have the highest level of integrity and have only a proper motivation.

3. “Blessed are…the peacemakers….” To be a peacemaker is to convey the peace of God upon men, even if it means conflict, which He later promised it would. To be a peacemaker includes developing unity among the believers.

4. “Blessed are…they that have been persecuted for righteousness sake ….” Jesus promised that those who would hold His standard would be rejected, just as He was, and they would be persecuted. But they will be justly rewarded.

5. “Blessed are you when men shall reproach you, and persecute you…for My sake.” Jesus said that those who accept His Messiahship may be rejected by family and friends.

In essence, the purpose of the Sermon on the Mount is to encourage the people to seek the higher righteousness of the Kingdom of God – the principles of God. Jesus essentially challenged His audience with the question, “What kind of life is worth living?” The Sermon comprises the basic elements of what would become Christianity, or as Jesus said, the Kingdom of God. The summary statement for the Sermon is found in Luke 6:32-36 encouraging men to be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect. However, man cannot possibly be perfect, but he can have a “holy attitude” of becoming perfect and that is what God expects. In essence, one is to love Jesus so much that the thought of sin is repugnant. The Sermon gives characteristics of what Jesus wants His followers to become. Yet near the end, He offers the promise of persecution that would help spread the gospel. Amazingly, the modern student may be surprised to know that some rabbis were teaching this as well, but their teachings are lost in the pool of many other rabbinic opinions of the day.137

137. See video 02.02.16.V by Messianic Rabbi John Fischer who discusses this subject briefly from a first century Jewish perspective.
In Matthew 5:1-12 Jesus described the blessed life that results from faith and a lifestyle built upon His teachings, which actually have Hebraic roots. He gave the elements of a righteous man (Mt. 5:3-16) followed by His condemnation of the Pharisaic interpretation of the Law (Mt. 5:17-48). Then He denounced how the Old Testament was being implemented (Mt. 6:1 – 7:6) and how the aristocrats had violated it themselves in their vain attempts to observe it. Jesus taught the holiness of God to those who desired to enter His kingdom (Mt. 7:7-29) and promised blessings to those who obeyed these divine instructions, which was in sharp contrast to the condemnation of the Pharisaic self-righteousness. In essence, believers should not regard the statements of Jesus in Matthew 5:28, 32, 34, 36, and 44 as setting aside the Law, but as reflecting His authority by giving proper interpretation of the Law.

According to the book of Hebrews, the laws pertaining to the sacrifices and feasts in the book of Leviticus\(^\text{138}\) are a “type and shadow” of what was to be the ministry of Jesus. In other words, the Sermon fulfills the objectives of the Torah. The Law given by Moses pertained only to an act, whereas the Law given by Jesus pertains to the motivation of a person’s heart that is behind the act. Jesus did not come to end the Law, but to fulfill it. Believers are no longer under the Law of Moses but under a new law, the Law of Messiah because Jesus was the fulfillment/goal/purpose of the Law of Moses.\(^\text{139}\) In fact, it might more correctly be said that Jesus did not come to end the law, but to reveal it. But on an important side note, the Church has adopted a Roman view of law, that it means restriction and, is therefore, bad, while the Hebrew Bible views law as instruction and freedom, and is therefore, good.\(^\text{140}\) Jesus must be understood as the messianic interpreter of the intent of God’s Word. This is not only seen here, but throughout His entire life. For that reason, a good understanding of the Hebrew Bible is necessary before attempting to comprehend an in-depth study of the New Testament.

For example, there are six antithetical statements in Matthew 5:21-47. Each one begins with, “You have heard it said...” and this is followed by a Torah text. Every time Jesus gave the requirements of the Mosaic Law, it was followed by the intent of God. This astounded His audience. Matthew teaches that, rather than having mankind be directed by external laws of the Old Covenant, God desires to live within mankind to direct man to live godly according to the New Covenant. That is the definition of the “Kingdom of God.”\(^\text{141}\)

\(^{138}\) See Appendix 4.

\(^{139}\) Rom. 7:5-6, 10:4; Heb. 7:11-19, 8:13; Col. 2:14; Eph. 2:11-3:6; Gal. 3:17-19.

\(^{140}\) See video 08.01.06.V by Messianic Rabbi John Fischer who discusses the term “light and heavy” elements of the Mosaic instruction from a first century Jewish perspective. He also adds a comment about the definition of “Torah” as it means “guidance” or “instruction.”

\(^{141}\) For a study of Jewish covenants from a messianic Jewish perspective, see Arnold Fruchtenbaum, Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology.
Imagine what people must have thought when He told them “blessed were those who mourned … those who are meek … the merciful … and the peacemakers.” He began to reshape their preconceived ideas of how God felt about them and what God wanted for them. There was not a single person unaffected by the economic slavery of the Romans or ethnic tensions. People came expecting to hear how they could have peace and freedom in the land. Instead, they heard how they could have peace and freedom with God. Consequently, there was a great debate of who He was and whether He could be the long-awaited messiah.

Social, political, and religious tensions were also at an explosive point. Those who say the life and times of Jesus cannot be compared to the challenges of modern life today fail to understand the times in which He lived. Often, it was worse. In the midst of this human misery and suffering, Jesus came to give compassion, mercy, salvation, and a bright future of hope. In the Sermon on the Mount, He simply clarified many teachings of the Hebrew Bible that gave them hope and purpose.

“The poor in spirit.” This phrase means one realizes his spiritual condition is impoverished and, therefore, he must depend on the grace and mercy of God. The Greek term ptochoi is defined as the most destitute in poverty. It is the direct opposite of pride. The Essenes understood that the term the poor in Isaiah 29:19 was not a reference to the economically deprived, but to those who were spiritually impoverished. Their ideas were expressed in Hymns of the Poor, found in Dead Sea Scroll fragments 4Q434 and 4Q436. The term poor in grace, with the same meaning is found in fragment 1QH 5.22 in which the Essenes described themselves. Most certainly the Sermon of the Mount captured their attention. Those who are destitute in spirit, who are spiritually broken before Almighty God, will realize and appreciate their need for Him.

143. See “Natural Expressions by Jesus without Quotations” in Appendix 12.
144. Lang, Know the Words of Jesus. 101.
145. Charlesworth, Jesus within Judaism. 68-70.
“Blessed.” The term in Hebrew is baruk and in Greek is makarios. The word means to praise God with a sense of happiness and joy upon man. More specifically, it refers to a quality of spirituality that is already present.

07.03.05.Q1 What are the differences between Old and New Testament blessings?

There are two other terms that need to be clarified since both Testaments use the term “blessed.”

1. The term “beatitudes” is commonly ascribed to this passage and is derived from the Latin word “beatus,” meaning “blessed.” In Hebrew the word is baruk (Gk. makarios 3107), but the Latin and English terms not as specific as the Greek and Hebrew words.

2. Another term to be considered is the Hebrew word beraka (Gk. eulogeo 2127) that also means blessed. This term is used in the Old Testament, but not in the Sermon on the Mount. It is the ideal word to use when asking God to bless the sick or someone who has experienced a misfortune. It is used in prayer when the worshipper blesses God or the object of his prayer. However, the word makarious affirms the quality of spirituality that is already present. The difference is that in the Old Testament the goodness within a person brought forth God’s blessings and in the New Testament the divine blessings are present for the believer.

150. Freeman, The New Manners and Customs of the Bible. 407.
153. Bailey, Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes. 67.
Just as God had given the Law to Moses on a mountain, now Jesus explained the principles of the Kingdom of God, on a mountain. After discussing the concepts of Moses with His new Kingdom, He gave the characteristics of a new life in the kingdom, including its devotion, duties, and dangers.

“Kingdom of heaven.” This was His main theme, which was equal to the Kingdom of God in every detail (cf. Mt. 5:3 with Lk. 6:20). Matthew’s gospel was written to a Jewish audience, who gave such high respect to God’s name that he did not mention it in conversation or write it. This is still true in many orthodox Jewish communities today. Other gospel writers use the phrase “Kingdom of God” to mean the same thing when speaking to a Gentile audience.

The Greek word for “kingdom” more specifically, means *dominion*, as opposed to a large expanse or territory of land. Today dominion and kingdom can be synonyms, but the distinctions were not as close in the first century. The word *dominion* should have alerted everyone that Jesus was not interested in being a military-messiah.

“Those who mourn are blessed.” The phrase signifies grief that is too deep for concealment and is often associated with terms that express audible weeping. It is a reference to the sorrow and mourning of past sins (Isa. 61:1-3). Jesus said they are blessed because they will be comforted. Matthew’s phrase is an abbreviation, meaning “poor and crippled in spirit.” These people are spiritually “down and out,” to use a modern term. It has been said that success and prosperity does not make one wise, but failure and suffering brings forth wisdom as well as an appreciation for life. That may be why King Solomon wrote:

156. His new Kingdom (Mt 5:1-16); the Law of Moses (Mt 5:17-18).

157. To exchange a noun for another or related noun is not uncommon in the Hebrew the Law. It makes little difference whether the writer wrote in Greek or Hebrew, because his thinking process was still Hebraic. See also Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*. 580.


159. Jesus gave a number of “natural expressions,” that is, expressions that convey the larger message of the Old Testament gospel. Examples are found in Appendix 12.

Grief is better than laughter,  
for when a face is sad, a heart may be glad.

Ecclesiastes 7:3

“The merciful are blessed, for they will be shown mercy.” The English term mercy is translated from the Greek phrase ἐλεήμον, meaning sympathetic. However, the unique feature of mercy is that this attitude is not merciful unless accompanied by action when it is within one’s ability to aid someone else who is in need of mercy. God responds to His believers in the same manner they respond to others. A negative example is the Pharaoh of Egypt. After he hardened his heart against God, God did likewise to him (Ex. 8).

“The pure in heart.” This phrase refers to the motives of the heart; not only single-minded toward God, but also passionate to have the desires that God desires. Throughout history people have struggled with their sinful desires and tried to maintain self-control to obey the biblical commands. This does not refer to a sinless life, but rather, to a heart after God; seeking His forgiveness when needed. That is, purity (Gk. καθαρός) defined within the realm of physical, religious, and ethical purity; a term that has both figurative and literal requirements of behavior. Those who have that desire to be obedient are said to be “pure in heart.” This concept was radically different from what the attending Gentiles believed. They thought that being as immoral as their pagan gods was a blessing.

“The peacemakers are blessed.” This was a powerful statement since Galilee was a short distance from the villages of Gischala and Gamla, two strongholds of anti-Roman sentiment and Jewish nationalism. Everyone listening knew Jesus made a reference to the history of social-political struggles that had plagued them for more than a century, as well as to the Zealots – the guerrilla fighters who encouraged Jews not to pay taxes to Rome. From the time the Romans conquered Jerusalem in 63 B.C. to when they destroyed the city and its temple in A.D. 70, there were 13 revolts and many minor skirmishes. Jesus came and ministered in the middle of this chaotic period.

161. See also Jer. 17:9; Ps. 24:3-4; 32:1-5; 119:104; 139:23-24.

162. Link and Schattenmann. “Pure, Clean.” 3:102-03.

163. Jesus often had traveling Gentiles in His audience, especially at the Sermon at the Mount location, since that was given only a short distance off the Via Maris.

164. See “Zealots” 02.01.22.

165. See Appendix 25 for a listing of false prophets who had messianic expectations and for a partial listing of revolts and social disturbances from 63 B.C. to A.D. 70.
However, the words of Jesus went beyond a type of nationalistic peace; He spoke of peace within the heart when the world seems to be falling apart. The Hebrew word *shalom*, means *peace* in English, but is far more than the absence of war. *Shalom* holds a broader concept which includes one’s well-being, wholeness, health, and spiritual life as portrayed numerous times in the Bible.  

No doubt, Jesus reflected upon the oral tradition of Aaron, who not only loved peace, but also pursued peace. Hence, He was truly a peacemaker. The peacemaker is one who is willing to pay a price to attain peace, either for himself or for someone else. This may be why God gave Aaron the benediction blessing of Numbers 6:23-26 and, hence, he was known as one who deeply desired peace as defined above. Aaron was a priest and, as such, functioned as a representative of the people before God to obtain forgiveness of their sins and bring peace and wholeness into their lives, although Jesus is the ultimate peacemaker. Peace was considered to be a gift of God for the study of the Torah.

The entire discussion of **blessed are the merciful...peacemakers** is a reflection upon the sixth commandment as it pertains to murder. Jesus was not talking about capital cases, military action, or the differences between premeditated murder and involuntary murder. Neither did He discuss punishment as a deterrent. Rather, He taught the principles of daily righteous living. He was concerned with removing the motivation of violence, which would otherwise lead to military action, murder, etc. Just as the Pharisees had established a “fence around the Torah” with their Oral Law, so Jesus established a “fence around the Ten Commandments” with His Sermon. This concept of a fence can also be seen in His instruction concerning adultery, to which He essentially said, “Don’t even think about it.” (cf. Mt. 5:8; Ps. 37:18). There is no need for prisons and capital punishment for those who live in forgiveness and are merciful peacemakers.

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166. A few passages are Prov. 17:1; 20:3; 26:17; Gal. 5:20-21, and 2 Cor. 3:3.


169. 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.

Finally, on an interesting side note, could the Sermon of the Mount have influenced the residents of the small Zealot town of Gischala and a young man named Saul who lived there? Twice Jerome, a Latin priest (347-420), mentioned that Paul’s parents once lived in that northern Galilean town. Therefore, Saul as a young child must certainly have had personal experience with military tension and conflict, which, no doubt, shaped his attitude toward the Romans and his fellow Jews. That ancient village is believed to be the town of Jish today.171

Paul, formerly Saul, an apostle outside the Twelve, came from the tribe of Benjamin and the Judean town of Gischala. He was captured by the Romans and came with his parents to Tarsus in Cilicia.

Jerome, De Viris Illustribus (PL 23,646) 76

It is reported that the parents of the Apostle Paul came from the Judean region of Gischala. When the whole province was destroyed by the Romans and the Jews were dispersed over the world, they were taken off to Tarsus, while the young Paul followed his parents in their fate.

Jerome, Commentary on Philemon (PL 23,645-6)

According to Josephus, the village of Gischala was a hotbed of Zealot activity, which is why the Romans destroyed it at the beginning of the Second Revolt in A.D. 66.172 If Jerome’s account is true, then some rather interesting events must have occurred that would enable the father of Saul (later known as Paul) to receive Roman citizenship. Nonetheless, Josephus made no mention of the apostle, only that the Romans destroyed the village. But could the young Saul have heard the sermons of the Kingdom of God before his own calling? Most certainly he did.

07.03.05.Q2 How does one explain the apparent Sermon on the Mount disagreement between Matthew 5:1 and Luke 6:20?

When describing the location of this teaching, Matthew said Jesus, “went up on a mountainside and sat down” (5:1), while Luke said that He simply “stood on a level place” (6:17). To solve this apparent problem one needs only to travel to the site and see the lay of the land with its rolling hills. There are level areas on the side of the large hill that Matthew referred to as a mountainside. Jesus no doubt moved among the people for all to hear as He taught and healed

171. Pixner, With Jesus through Galilee, 77.

172. Josephus, Wars 4.3.8-14.
them. A visit to the Galilee area will reveal that there are occasional level areas on the sides of hills. Furthermore, a visit there will impress the visitor as to how well sound travels. He was easily heard where the curved hillsides create a natural amphitheater.

07.03.05.B. THE POPULAR SITE OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.
On a small mountain top along the Sea of Galilee, one can easily imagine Jesus teaching His disciples and others who desired to listen. Photograph by the author.

While the above site is the most popular site for where Jesus taught the beatitudes, it certainly is not the actual location. This mountain top location was selected as a tourism center in 1937 and funded by the famous Italian dictator, Benito Mussolini. Ironically, the location of the actual site near Capernaum (above) was preserved by a Spanish Pilgrim in the year 384 and, is considered to be the authentic location (see below) by many scholars.

As to the two passages, Matthew’s sermon (Ch. 5-7), has some unique differences from, and similarities to, the sermon recorded by Luke (6:20-49). From Augustine until the Reformation, the church had always considered these to be two separate events and sermons. Since the Reformation, these narratives have been considered by some scholars to be the opinions of two gospel writers who wrote of a single event – a sermon given only once.173 However, now there is a growing interest to return to the Augustinian opinion. The Lucan narrative has sufficient differences that it should be called the Sermon on the Plain. What all agree upon is that these

two narratives are only a small portion of His many teachings. The key point is that throughout His ministry Jesus preached the same theme repeatedly and the difference between the two sermons is simply that it was most likely presented to two different audiences. It would only be natural for a variation of wording, even if the theme remained the same. Jesus was an itinerant preacher, who traveled throughout the three Jewish provinces of Judea, Perea, and Galilee, as well as in Samaria and the Gentile areas. No one knows how many times He preached His simple message of the Kingdom of Heaven/God. Since this subject was a focus of His ministry, He obviously preached it many times. Whether the two sermons are of the same event is hardly the point. It is the message that is significant. All recorded teachings, miracles, and other events of Jesus barely add up to one hundred days of His life, so He probably preached this subject numerous times. This writer follows the Augustinian teaching, treating the two narratives as two separate events.

07.03.05.C. THE ACTUAL SITE OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.
The Spanish Pilgrim Egeria identified the cave and the top of this hill in A.D. 384 as the place where Jesus gave His Sermon on the Mount. The site is adjacent to the international highway, the Via Maris, and can easily accommodate hundreds of people. The slope and atmosphere provide ideal conditions for one’s voice to be heard easily at a great distance. The cave, that can accommodate up to a dozen people, is where tradition says Jesus stayed with His disciples. Photograph by the author.
For three years (381-384), the Spanish Pilgrim Egeria and her entourage traveled throughout the Holy Land visiting various sites. According to the Pilgrim, in 384 she came to the place where Jesus taught and said it was only a couple hundred feet from the popular Via Maris. This gave locals and travelers easy access to hear Him preach. The hill is truly a “mount” and is located between Capernaum and Magdala at the northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee, hardly a hundred yards from the highway. This setting makes perfect sense, as Jesus would not have exhausted people by making them climb a distant and higher mountain to hear Him preach at today’s popular Mussolini site. Egeria left this valuable record of her visit to the Capernaum area:

In Capernaum, a church was made out of the house of the prince of the Apostles, the walls of which are standing to this day just as they were. That is where the Lord healed the Paralytic (cf. Mk. 2:2-12). The synagogue is also there in which the Lord healed the possessed man (cf. Mk. 1:23-26). The visitor climbs up to it by several steps; this synagogue is built out of square blocks of masonry. Not far from there, the stone steps can be seen on which the Lord stood (cf. Jn. 21:4). Above the lake there is also a field of grass with much hay and several palms. By it are the seven springs, each of which supplies a huge quantity of water. In the field the Lord fed the people with five loaves of Bread (cf. Mk. 6:31-44). The stone on which the Lord placed the bread has been made into an altar. Visitors take small pieces of rock from this stone for their welfare and it brings benefit to everyone. Along the walls of the church runs a public highway where the apostle Matthew sat to collect taxes (cf. Mk. 2:13-14). On the hill which rises nearby is a grotto, upon which the Lord ascended when he taught the Beatitudes (cf. Mt. 5:1).

Pilgrim Egeria

Israel has no shortage of so-called traditional sites. A third location for the site of the Sermon on the Mount is the top of a mountain known as the Horns of Hattin, an extinct volcano that is near the ancient road between Nazareth and Tiberias. This, and many other so-called traditional holy sites were created by the Crusaders so European pilgrims could travel from one site to another with relative ease in a small geographical area. The irony is that just as some traditional...
sites were chosen for the ease of visiting pilgrims a thousand years ago, so was the current site of
the Mount of the Beatitudes in the 1930s. Of all the places Jesus could have chosen to preach this
famous sermon, He chose a hilltop. Perhaps the hilltop is a “reflection” of when Moses gave the
laws of God to his people. Notice the comparison in poetic style:

Moses defined how people were to live while
Jesus declared the heart of God.
The Oral Law was thought to produce the ideal disciple of Abraham.
But Jesus gave instruction that would produce the ideal disciple of God.

The Sermon adapts and extends scriptural concepts into the issues of everyday life and was not
intended to be a form of doctrine. While the Oral Law of the leading Pharisees was extremely
legalistic and restrictive, Jesus gave freedom and liberty. The Sermon on the Mount illustrated
how the Kingdom of God will change individuals and the world.178 His sermon was then
followed and ratified by a series of mighty signs and wonders.

Highways have always been important in the Middle East, especially in this narrow section of
land that was transversed by armies and merchant caravans for thousands of years.179 During the
Inter-Testamental period, many traveled from foreign countries to bathe in the hot springs in the
Jordan River Valley, hoping to get healed from a variety of diseases. In the days of Jesus, they
came to get healed but also heard His sermon about a coming Kingdom of God. The Romans
built excellent roads and offered incredible freedom of movement – more than ever before. This
enabled people to listen to Jesus and helped the gospel reach distant areas of the Empire.180

178. Charry, By the Renewing of Your Minds. 64-65.
179. See comments by Dr. Bill Heinrich and Professor Gordon Franz in 05.05.03.V “The Strategic and Economic
Significance of Capernaum.”
Most major roads between the continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa led toward the Sea of Galilee where caravans were resupplied with fresh food and water before continuing their travels. It was in the Capernaum area where Jesus taught and performed miracles, so news of His ministry spread quickly through the known world. Courtesy of International Mapping and Dan Przywara.
While the Jewish leaders rejected Jesus, those who knew Him from childhood also rejected Him. Others weighed carefully His words and actions in relation to the prophecies given in centuries past by the prophets, as well as the popularly perceived three messianic miracles they expected the messiah to perform.
08.01.01 Introduction
Jesus warned the religious establishment that their sins would eventually cost them. In fact, they were so incredibly wicked, that, as will be shown later, even the Jewish writers condemned them.

08.01.02 Lk. 6:24-26

WOES PRONOUNCED

24 But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your comfort.
25 Woe to you who are now full, for you will be hungry.
Woe to you who are now laughing, for you will mourn and weep.
26 Woe to you when all people speak well of you, for this is the way their ancestors used to treat the false prophets

Luke and Matthew both gave dire warnings to those who failed to repent from their wicked lifestyle and corrupt religious service in the name of God. They placed their message in a slightly different order, but the styles are amazingly similar. It is important to notice that all too often these woe passages have been directed only towards the Pharisees (Mt. 23:1-12), when in reality, these were applied to most of the aristocratic leaders who served in the temples. That entire group – the leading Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, and elders – claimed to be the light of God’s holy law but failed to recognize their own short-comings; their shallowness and hypocrisy; their utter darkness. Since Jesus gave these warnings to the leaders of His day, the church leaders of today need to examine themselves to see if the same message might apply.

The woe statements are profoundly sobering. The Jewish leaders were entrusted with the souls of men and failed to perform their duties as required. Since Jesus was so powerfully direct with them, it is obvious that His message and expectations remain unchanged concerning church leaders today.181 Likewise, in later years, the rabbis wrote of these same religious leaders whom Jesus condemned, and those rabbis referred to the seven plagues of the Pharisees.182

181. See also 09.02.02, 11.02.05, and 13.05.02-05.
182. Jerusalem Talmud, Berakhot 9, 14b.
“Woe to you who are now laughing.” The term *woe* is both an announcement of guilt and the pending judgment that is about to follow.\(^{183}\) It is a dirge, a lament for the dead.\(^{184}\) The term *laughter* is seldom descriptive of humor or festive events, but rather, it is descriptive of scorn and mockery as in this passage, or as a pun or play on words.\(^{185}\) This adds insight to the phrase *woe* which in Greek is *ouai*, and also refers to both *anger* and *sorrow*.\(^{186}\)

**08.01.03 Mt. 5:13-16**

**SALT AND LIGHT OF BELIEVERS**

13 “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty? It’s no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled on by men.

14 “You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden.\(^{15}\) No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house.\(^{16}\) In the same way, let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

“You are the salt of the earth.” Salt has always been an essential for life, especially in desert regions such as those east and south of Jerusalem. Jesus said His disciples are to be like salt to the culture – being a life-giving preserving agent.
By the southwestern shores of the Dead Sea is a ten mile long salt mountain, from where the Dead Sea obtains its saltiness. It was also from where salt was shipped to the port city of Eilat in the south and to Tabgha and Magdala in the north (see Ezek. 47:11). In these two fishing villages, fish were salted and shipped throughout the eastern Roman and western Parthian Empires. In that sense, many in His audience were literally the “salt of the earth.” The Sea of Galilee was the primary fresh water lake for fish, which was the meat of choice both for travelers and local people. Josephus called the village of Magdala *Taricheaea*, which means “salted fish” in Greek. For centuries caravans purchased salt that is 98% pure and shipped it to distant markets. Judaea had been the salt of the earth physically, but now Jesus was speaking in a spiritual dimension.

On a more general note, salt was used to season food (Job 6:6) and meat offerings (Lev. 2:13) and in moderate amounts was eaten in hospitality with others. The ancients knew that without this precious mineral they would become weak and could die in the arid and semi-arid climates. It was not considered so much a source of seasoning, but one of strength and life. Hence, it became symbolic of life, strength, and truthfulness from the lips of Jesus. It was considered so valuable to the maintenance of life that it was even mixed with feed for cattle (Isa. 30:24). Contracts between two individuals were sealed with an exchange of salt and were known as a “Covenant of Salt” (Num. 18:19; 2 Ch. 13:5). To be “salt” to men is similar to being the “light to the world,” in that a person demonstrates to others how to live a godly life.

Israel was important to the Romans because this tiny Jewish nation had an inexhaustible supply of salt, so much so that taxes were often paid with salt. It was shipped via camel caravans to all parts of the eastern section of the Roman Empire. As salt was essential to the Roman Empire, so the “salt” of the believers is essential to the lost people of the world. Israel had been the salt of the earth physically, but now Jesus was speaking in a spiritual dimension.

Finally, it has been suggested that salt had an additional use – one that is often overlooked. In ancient times one of the household duties of children was to collect animal dung which was molded into patties, dried, and used as fuel in clay ovens. There was always an abundant supply of “cooking fuel” but also a scarcity of wood. Some scholars believe that a small block of salt

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187. Magdala had an Aramaic nickname *Dalmanutha*, which means “the harbor” because it was where fishermen brought their fish to be salted and where fish houses had small indoor pools to keep the fish alive until purchased by local residents.


189. Petroleum-based tars were harvested from the Dead Sea and shipped internationally to be used in boat construction, medicines, and other uses. For centuries the Egyptians also used Dead Sea tar to preserve and seal the wrappings of mummies.
was placed under the dung in the stove to improve its combustibility. If this was the intended cultural meaning, then some other references to salt in the New Testament could mean that it was an aid to making fires burn rather than as a flavor seasoning or preservative agent. However, in this case it would be also be a fitting Hebraic image to another comment, “You are the light of the world.”

08.01.03.A. THE DEAD SEA SALT MOUNTAIN. The so-called “Lot's wife” pillar stands atop a ten-mile long mountain of salt at the south-western end of the Dead Sea. It is from this mountain that the water obtains its saltiness. The mountain is 98 percent pure salt and the remaining two percent give it color. For centuries salt was taken from this mountain and transported by caravan to the Sea of Galilee where it was used to salt fish. Photograph by Paivi Heinrich.

“But if the salt should lose its taste.” Critics have long said that due to the chemical composition of salt, it is impossible for it to lose its flavor. Technically, they are right even if

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there are several varieties of salt, but Jesus was not speaking of chemistry, but local salt. Salt from the western cliffs of the Dead Sea is 98% pure, with the 2% giving it its color. Impurities can have a negative effect, which may be why the Pliny the Elder had observed that salt from the Dead Sea can lose its savory quality and become bland and tasteless. But there was a social component at well. Occasionally when salt was loaded aboard ships or on camels, Samaritans were known to throw dirt on the precious cargo to destroy its value. Clearly, the taste and value of salt could be destroyed.

“A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden.” Jesus again used imagery with which everyone was familiar, although the imagery could have referred to more than one particular place. Throughout Israel there were villages designated as “warning cities.” These were hilltop villages who would give warning signals to other designated hilltop villages of an encroaching enemy. Also, when the rabbis at the temple determined the moment the Sabbath had begun, the trumpets would blow and a fire signal was given at the pinnacle of the temple. The signal was seen and repeated at the nearest “warning city” so the next hilltop village could relay it. In a matter of seconds of the announcement in Jerusalem, the Jews of the Galilee knew the Sabbath had begun. Jesus perhaps was referring to such a “warning city.”

However, on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee there was a city, Hippos, located atop Mount Sussita and well known to everyone. The Greek name Hippos and Aramaic name Sussita both mean horse. It was one of the ten Greek cities known as the Decapolis with a significant Jewish population. Jesus could have referred to it because a small light shown there could be seen for miles.

192. See any chemistry textbook or website such as [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salt_(chemistry)] Retrieved September 13, 2014.

193. Pliny the Elder, Natural History. 3.31.34.


195. It is unknown when the first churches were established in Hippos, but by the fourth century church buildings were constructed and these congregations survived the Muslim conquest in 636. However the city was destroyed by an 6.6 magnitude earthquake (Richter scale) in January 18, 749. See Segal and Eisenberg. “The Spade Hits Suissita.” 40-51, 78 and [http://geology.geoscienceworld.org/content/31/8/665.abstract] and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/749_Galilee_earthquake] Retrieved August 26, 2014.
08.01.03.B. A CITY UPON A HILL. The city upon a hill which Jesus mentioned was possibly Hippos on the top of Mount Sussita along the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. A switch-back trail is visible that leads to the top. Photograph by the author.

08.01.03.X Examples of metaphors used by Jesus

Jesus used the metaphor of life-giving salt to underscore the significant impact His followers have upon the earth, meaning that they help sustain the life of all humanity. A metaphor affirms one concept by using another, a description of speech whereby an object is described as if it were another. The second concept is always directly related to the first and gives it definition. It is best explained with the examples below:

- “You are the salt of the earth.” Matthew 5:13
- “This is My body.” Matthew 26:26
- “The Lord God is a sun and shield.” Psalm 84:11
- “(He) is my refuge and my fortress.” Psalm 91:2
- “I am the bread of life.” John 6:35
- “I am the door.” John 10:7
- “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” John 14:6

196. Lockyer, All the Parables of the Bible. 15.
- “I am the true vine.” John 15:1
- “I am the good shepherd.” John 10:11

Therefore, a metaphor obviously cannot be literal, but it does convey the meaning to a more accurate degree. The classic example is the Parable of the Sower (Mt. 13:18-23, 37-43), which also has its interpretations.

v. 37 “The One who sows the good seed is (i.e., represents) the Son of Man.”
v. 38a “The field is (i.e., represents) the world.”
v. 38b “The good seed stands for (i.e., represents) the sons of the kingdom.”

“Your good works.” This phrase seems to be simple enough that it would not need explanation. However, from God’s perspective the good works or good deeds are not merely good, they are beautiful. The usual Greek word for good is agathos, but in this statement the Greek word is kalos, meaning beautiful. That means our good works are not only good, but attractive in a moral and spiritual sense. Furthermore, there is a sense of appreciation and love connected with this word kalos.

08.01.04 Mt. 5:17-20

LAW AND GOSPEL

17 “Don’t assume that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 18 For I assure you: Until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass from the law until all things are accomplished. 19 Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches people to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

If there was one thing Jews enjoyed doing, it was having theological debates and exchanging ideas. It encouraged learning and memory. Jesus was a Torah-observant Jew whose disagreements with the leading Pharisees are very much in the spirit of the enduring intra-Jewish debates so characteristic of rabbinic literature. Little wonder then, that Jesus in Matthew 5:17-20, clarified His position on the Torah. Ironically, Jesus embodies the paradox of uniting Jews with Christians and separating Jews from Christians.

197. Lang, Know the Words of Jesus. 222, 292.
The Torah, written about 1450 B.C., was a “type and shadow” of Jesus who was to come at some future point in time.\textsuperscript{198} While the Law/Torah did not bring anyone to salvation, getting rid of it, likewise, did not bring salvation. The Law, or \textit{Instruction}, indicates the lifestyle a person must live to reflect the character of God and the grace of God through Christ Jesus made it possible. Just as Jesus was a human being, the Law was a foreshadowing of Jesus. Just as a shadow resembles a person, a “foreshadow” represents a person before he arrives on the scene.\textsuperscript{199} Jesus did not come to destroy the Law of Moses or the writings of the Prophets, but to fulfill them.

Of the four levels of Pharisees,\textsuperscript{200} the lowest (local) level consisted of men who were truly concerned about the people in their congregations and being righteous before God. However, the upper echelon consisted of leaders who maintained their wealthy social-economic level, had no concern about righteousness, and constantly challenged Jesus. There were a few exceptions, such as Nicodemus. Across the entire Jewish spectrum there was a misunderstanding of the intent of the Law, which made it very difficult for them to receive the teachings of Jesus. This was illustrated when Nicodemus met Jesus as he had difficulty understanding His concepts.

\textbf{“The Law or the Prophets.”} Jewish scholars divided their Bible into three classifications: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.

1. The “Law” consisted of the five books written by Moses, known as the Mosaic Law. In Hebrew these books were known as the \textit{Torah}, but in Greek they were called \textit{The Pentateuch}, which means \textit{The Five Rolls}.\textsuperscript{201} The term \textit{law} (Gk. \textit{nomos} 3551) is translated from the Hebrew word \textit{torah} (309). There are distinct differences between the meanings of the Greek and Hebrew words. The Greek understanding of \textit{law} is restrictive, and that meaning has been passed on to English translations. However, the Hebrew meaning emphasizes \textit{instruction}, a vital concept that is lost in translations. Therefore, the Hebrew definition of key terms is critical to understanding their message. Greek dictionaries very seldom include the Hebrew meaning.\textsuperscript{202}

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\textsuperscript{198} See “type and shadow” in Appendix 26.
\textsuperscript{199} Brown, \textit{Our Hands are Stained with Blood}. 82.
\textsuperscript{200} See 02.01.14.Q1.
\textsuperscript{201} Barclay, “Matthew.” 1:127.
\textsuperscript{202} With all due respect to W. E. Vine’s incredible work and that of many other fine scholars like him, in his Greek dictionary he failed to show that the gospel writers were Jews who acted and wrote like Jews. Vine did not indicate the Hebraic definition of \textit{law} (= \textit{instruction}) within his Greek dictionary, therefore, many students of Scripture miss this concept that was vital to the gospel writers. While he did define it in his Hebrew dictionary, the connection is lost. He is typical of many Gentile scholars. See Vine, “Law.” \textit{Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary}. 1:133-34; 2:354-57. See “Law” in Appendix 26.
2. The “Prophets,” which is a classification of books consisting of the later prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel), and the former prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings), as well as the twelve minor prophets. It is a collection of writings from men who had divine insight of current and future events, and were proclaimers of God’s message.

3. All other books were classified as the “Writings.”

It should be noted that Jesus always based His teachings and arguments upon the entire Hebrew Bible. Furthermore, Paul underscored the words of Jesus when he said that the Law would never be nullified, but rather, needs to be upheld (Rom. 3:31). When Jesus said He did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets, He used a figure of speech to refer to the entire Hebrew Bible, even though He did not specifically mention the Writings. Furthermore, he stressed the promising character of Scripture.

“I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.” In this passage, Jesus clarified the purpose of His ministry. However, the word “not” can be confusing to the modern reader. Therefore, for the purpose of explanation, it is removed momentarily. The phrase, “to come,” is a Hebraic idiom that means mission, intent, or purpose. This statement is not at all related to His incarnation, but to His purpose or mission. With that understanding, the words “I did not come” in the Greek translation has two possible constructions:

1. Stop thinking that…

2. Never think that…

In this case, Jesus referred to the second construction, “never think that,” applies. There is no question that the purpose of Jesus was to live a perfect life, suffer and be the sacrifice for our sins, to rise from the grave that He can offer eternal life for all those who place their faith in Him. However, this was God’s plan from the foundations of the earth. Therefore, the Law, or Torah, has to be understood as the first written document in that process and Jesus came to fulfill that law.


204. New International Version Study Bible footnote on Mt. 5:17.


The term *destroy* (Gk. *Kataluo*, 2647) means to *overthrow completely*. Some translations use terms such as *abolish* or *disintegrate*. In rabbinic usage, the word *abolish* is a technical term to mean, *to cancel or nullify*, and *fulfill* is a technical term to mean *uphold or preserve*, based upon the correct or incorrect use of the text. When a sage or rabbi incorrectly commented on a text, his peers would say that he was abolishing the text. Since the people of this time were trilingual; they spoke Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew. Therefore, one messianic scholar suggests that the word *fulfill* needs to be examined in those languages to insure understanding.

1. Greek – *To make complete, to fill up, or to fill up the measure of.*
2. Aramaic – to *add, or fill out.*
3. Hebrew – to *uphold, preserve, establish, or sustain*. The teaching being given completely agrees with the text of Scripture in question and spells out it correct and complete implications.

The importance of preserving and communicating the Bible accurately is underscored in the proverbial “jot and tittle” passage of verse 18. That archaic phrase is translated as “the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter” and is further explained below.

**A Lesson in First Century Hermeneutics:**
**08.01.04.X** The Significance Of Letter Serifs.

*“Not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter.”* Some sources translate this phrase as “not one jot or tittle.” The smallest letter is the Greek word *iota* (2503), from the smallest Hebrew letter *yod* has the appearance of an apostrophe. It appears similar to, but is different from the “tittle” (KJV) that Jesus mentioned. That is the *one stroke* translated from the Greek term *keraia* (2762) and means *a little horn*. It is a small stroke that distinguishes one Hebrew letter from another. It might be considered similar to today’s *font serif* in size, but not in distinguishing one letter from another. Care must be taken when writing Hebrew because changing the stroke of a letter changes the word, and thus, changes its meaning. The statement

by Jesus is a pattern of speech similar to the modern English phrase, “dot your I’s and cross your T’s.”

The problem with a literal translation is that languages are in constant change. Everyone understood that the slightest change in the writing of a letter would change the word and its meaning. An inaccurate interpretation of Scripture was said to be an “abolishment” and an accurate interpretation of the Scripture was said to be a “fulfillment of the law.” The point that Jesus made was that not the slightest or seemingly least insignificant point of the Mosaic Law will ever pass away. God’s Word is eternal and, therefore, remains unchanged.

An example is found in the recorded debate of two rabbis at the end of the first century (A.D.), after the temple had been destroyed some three decades earlier. Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Akiba were arguing about sacrifices and sin offerings, when Rabbi Eliezer touted,

Would you uproot what is written in the law?

Mishnah, Pesahim 6:2

The word “uproot” the rabbi used means to abolish what was written in the Mosaic Law. No rabbi would ever consider such a thought. This was affirmed later by the Apostle Paul, who said in Romans 8:4 that those who are filled with the Holy Spirit fulfill the righteous requirements of the Torah.

The problem of modern interpretation is that, as in this case where an idiom is lost, there can be a possible misunderstanding of the text. Idioms are figures of speech that are unique to the language. For example, when Adam knew his wife Eve (Gen. 4:1), it refers to a sexual relationship, not that he finally met her and got to know who she was. Here Jesus was speaking of the absolute necessity of divine truth and righteousness coming to its completion, as intended


215. Brunn, One Bible, Many Versions. 157. This is an excellent source for Bible translations.
by every “jot and tittle,” and His words were not forms of legalism sometimes associated with linguistics. Rather it confirms the permanence and firmness of the Word of God. There are many similar statements throughout rabbinic commentaries, such as:

Should all the nations of the world unite to uproot one word of the Torah, they would be unable to do it.

Leviticus, Rabbah 19:2

08.01.04.A. ILLUSTRATION OF TWO HEBREW LETTERS WITH SERIFS. The letters yod and lamed are shown with and without serifs, the small angular decorative line at the top of each letter. Illustration by the author.

Changing the stroke of a letter changes the word, and thus, changes its meaning. The difference between the proverbial “jot and tittle” or “the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter” is quite significant in the Hebrew language. Two examples are as follows:

1. The slight change of a pen can change the Hebrew phrase, He alone is God, to He is just another god.


2. The difference between the Hebrew letters hay and het changes the phrase, praising God to profaning God.

The Pharisees were interested in the minute details of their own laws and traditions, but Jesus simply applied their method of interpretation to His Written Law. He assured them that He was not recommending an abandonment of the Old Testament, but was bringing a deeper and fuller understanding of its true meaning and purpose. Paul confirms this when he said:

**Do we then cancel the law through faith? Absolutely not! On the contrary, we uphold the law.**

*Romans 3:31*

The rabbis taught that the entire Torah needed to be taught in the same manner that today pastors proclaim the whole counsel of God. To do otherwise was/is considered an abomination. The Talmud also gives some insight into the meaning of the words of Jesus.

**Baraitha taught: “Because he has despised the word of the Lord” – this refers to him who maintains that the Torah is not from Heaven. And even if he asserts that the whole Torah is from Heaven, except a particular verse, which he maintains was not uttered by God but by Moses himself, he is included in “because he has despised the word of the Lord.” And even if he admits that the whole Torah is from Heaven, excepting a single point, a particular *ad majus* deduction or a certain *gezerah shawah*, he is still included in “because he has despised the word of the Lord.”**

*Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 99a*

To be included in the phrase “because he has despised the word of the Lord” was a condemnation because the sacred writ was compromised. Note that in this statement, the name “Heaven” is capitalized because it is a synonym for “God.” This is a typical Jewish expression today, just as it was 2000 years ago.

There is no lack of confusion among Bible students concerning the issue of law – whether the Written Law was “fulfilled” or “ended.” And if it was ended, why are the Ten Commandments still important? There were essentially three categories of laws, and while Jesus “fulfilled,” some of these laws, others continue to be operative in human life. Notice the three kinds of laws:

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1. The Hebrew term *mishpatim*, refers to moral and ethical laws that need to be observed for people to live together in peace and harmony. This term is sometimes translated as *judgments*.

2. The second group of laws pertains to the “Jewish” festivals and rituals. The festivals are in fact, festivals of our Lord intended to be observed by the Jewish people. These festivals all point, in some way, shape, or form, to Jesus in a prophetic manner. For example, Passover points toward His Passion Week when He died as the Lamb of God. The prophetic element of this festival was fulfilled, however, the Feast of Trumpets is not fulfilled, and some scholars believe it will be when Jesus returns for His church.220

3. The Hebrew term *chukim* or *decrees* refers to the moral, judicial, and civil laws of a nation.

Of these three categories of laws, obviously the first and third ones are still in effect and Jesus is the fulfillment of the second one – the Festivals of our Lord. However, the curse for breaking any of these laws is likewise broken, in that as we confess our sins, He is willing and able to forgive us of our sins. In the Old Testament Period, sins were *covered* by a sacrifice of some kind. In the New Testament Period (today) we have a better covenant – by the blood of Jesus our sins are *completely removed*, not covered.

“Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees.” This is another case where the literal translation presents difficulty, unless the phrase is understood as an idiom. Most certainly it seems possible that the righteousness of believers will far exceed that of the Pharisees and scribes whom Jesus condemned. These men were full of hypocritical self-righteousness.221 Obviously the believer is not to be like these corrupt religious elitists, but exceedingly more righteous and holy unto God than the good and honor-worthy Pharisees who served in the local synagogues.222 While most Jews observed Pharisic traditions, they did not officially belong to the religious group. As was stated previously, the leading Pharisees were usually synonymous with the teachers of the Law,223 which is why it is at times difficult to distinguish them from the

220. For an interesting study, note the “rapture” verses when the trumpets are blown and the Feast of Trumpets.

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


223. Mt. 3:7; 15:1; Mk. 2: 16, 24; Lk. 11:38.
scribes. All Pharisees who were members of the Sanhedrin were also scribes (cf. Mt. 23:7-8).

Today, the thought of observing the Law is considered a negative point among many Christians. In Acts the question arose as to whether Gentile converts were required to observe “the Law,” meaning the entire Torah (Acts 15:1, 5). The discussion was centered on what kind of laws were to be observed, and the synopsis is as follows:

1. Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice and, therefore, all laws pertaining to sacrifices of any kind are terminated. Ceremonial laws were clearly terminated, although the temple still stood when the book of Acts was written, thereby giving rise to the discussion.

2. Religious laws, such as kosher foods, were given to the Jews because they were to remain a distinctive people and not become intermarried with local pagans. They can chose to observe them if they wish.

3. Finally, there are divine laws such as the Ten Commandments, which pertain to all humanity and are still in force.

Ironically, history repeats itself, although in reverse. In the book of Acts, some believed that Gentiles had to become Jews first, so they could become believers in Jesus. Today, some Christians believe Jews have to give up their Jewishness and become like Gentiles to find salvation.

As previously stated, observing the Law did not bring salvation, but neither did its removal. After the Apostle Paul was converted on his trip to Damascus, Ananias, a devout Christian Jew


225. Jeremias, Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus. 236. Being a scribe was a family occupation, handed down from one generation to another. For a list of families of scribes, see I Chronicles 2:55, and for a “company of scribes,” see 1 Maccabees 7:12.

226. On an important side note, the Church has adopted a Roman view of law, that means restriction and is therefore bad, while the Hebrew Bible views law as instruction and freedom, and is therefore good.
who observed all the Laws, ministered to him (Acts 22:12). It is nearly impossible for Christians today to think of a law-observing Jew as one who is also free in Christ. Yet Ananias was precisely such a figure. Luke records that faith in Jesus exploded, resulting in thousands of Jews becoming followers of the Messiah, and all of them were zealous for the Law (Acts 21:20). After this Paul publicly preached that believing Jews should not turn away from the observation (Acts 21:21-25). The Law was considered by Paul to be holy, righteous, good, and even spiritual (Rom. 7:12, 14). Because of the sacrifice of Jesus, the Jewish observation of circumcision had become meaningless, but likewise, being uncircumcised, which had profound significance in ancient times, was now also meaningless. The important issue was the circumcision of the heart and a life of love (Gal. 5:2-6; 6:15; 1 Cor.7:18, 20). The conclusion was distinctive. It was Paul’s desire that Jews, who came to faith in Christ Jesus should, but were not required to, continue living like Jews. Paul, who said that he observed the Law, also stated that he did not live under the laws, meaning that the requirement of observation was removed.

08.01.05 Mt. 5:21-26

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

21 “You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, Do not murder, and whoever murders will be subject to judgment (Ex. 20:13). 22 But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Fool!’ will be subject to the Sanhedrin. But whoever says, ‘You moron!’ will be subject to hellfire.

23 So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

25 Reach a settlement quickly with your adversary while you’re on the way with him, or your adversary will hand you over to the judge, the judge to the officer, and you will be thrown into prison. 26 I assure you: You will never get out of there until you have paid the last penny!

“You have heard that it was said to our ancestors.” To the Jewish mind, nothing was valid unless it was handed down from great rabbis of the past. Therefore, a new theological concept from Jesus was invalid. However, new rules for interpreting the Scriptures were established.

227 The irony is that the Romans had a nearly identical understanding of religion. They believed that all religions were ancient, and if a certain doctrine or teaching wasn’t ancient, then it was a superstition. Superstitions were deemed to be bad and needed to be removed from society. Therefore, since the teachings of Jesus were not recognized as being ancient, the Romans labeled them and Christians as superstitious, and tried to eradicate them.
by Hillel and accepted by many, because these required a more legalistic observance of the Torah in the growing influence of the Greek culture. The phrase “You have heard” is often a reference to the Oral Law. If Jesus or another rabbi was speaking to a Jewish audience, then this phrase could have included the Written Law or Torah because it was read publically in the synagogue. As Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Law, He is now heralding the dawn of a new kingdom. John has his famous seven “I AM” statements of the Savior, but Matthew has the “I came” and I say” statements.

“But I tell you.” Six times Jesus said this because the Pharisees believed that a thought did not become a sin until it was an action. Jesus introduced a radical change when he said that a sinful thought or attitude was also sin. He said that to be righteous, one had to be perfect as He (Jesus) is perfect. Such righteousness is impossible for man to attain without the intervention of Christ Himself and, therefore, there is the need for a personal relationship.

With speech patterns like this, Jesus clearly demonstrated that He placed himself equal with God and the Torah. Throughout most of His ministry, He used indirect methods such as this to announce His deity. To make an outright statement would have been considered blasphemous, prideful, and arrogant, so Jesus spoke in an indirect manner. Those who accepted Him as their Messiah also accepted Him as God. The Pharisees and Sadducees, on the other hand, recognized this figure of speech immediately and were infuriated.

“Everyone who is angry.” The difficulty with this phrase is that everyone gets angry at one time or another. It is part of life. It is not the kind of anger that spouses have from time to time, or that between siblings, although if those issues are not properly resolved, they can lead to the anger (orge) of this magnitude. However, Jesus was not speaking about that kind of anger. Jesus referred to the Greek word for angry that is orge, which is a deep-seated, festering, brooding anger that is accompanied with bitterness and a sense of pleasure for hatred. Since this attitude is a gross violation of a godly attitude, one who does not repent will judged accordingly.

“Judgment ... fool ... Sanhedrin ... hellfire.” The culture of the Bible was definitely an honor society; where people are honored and respected. To degrade anyone without legitimate

228. Herford, Christianity in Talmud and Midrash. 8-10.
231. Lang, Know the Words of Jesus. 147.
232. See also 12.01.02.Q2 What are the differences among the terms “Hell, Hades,” and “Gehenna?”
reason was highly condemned. So to call someone a *fool*, for example, which includes the meaning of being *insane*, was highly condemned.\(^{233}\) Jesus used a literary device to build an escalation of the final judgment. He began with the local judicial court, then moved to the supreme court of the land, and ended with eternal damnation. The Master Teacher used a teaching technique involving cause and effect and built it to a climax. His words captured everyone’s attention, because they knew that murder led to damnation in hell (literally, the *hell of fire*),\(^{234}\) but Jesus added that even those who spoke abusively without righteous cause\(^{235}\) would be included.

One of the images of hell is “Gehenna,” which is the Greek representation of the Hebrew word *Ge-Hinnom* or *Valley of Hinnom*. It is a deep narrow valley on the southern side of today’s Old City of Jerusalem.\(^{236}\) In biblical times this valley was where two apostate kings sacrificed live infants to the fire-god Molech—

1. King Ahaz (reigned c. 728 B.C.; name shortened from Jehoahaz) also consulted wizards and necromancers (2 Chron. 28:22-25; Isa. 8:19) and,

2. King Manasseh (reigned c. 696 – 641 B.C.), like Ahaz (reigned 741-726 B.C.), revived ancient pagan worship in Jerusalem (2 Kg. 23:10).\(^{237}\) His was the longest reign (55 years) of all the kings of Judea and the most immoral one (2 Kgs. 23:26-27). Even though he repented in his later years, his corruption eventually led to the collapse of the southern kingdom (tribal areas of Benjamin and Judah).

In this inferno, parents watched their child burn while they worshiped Molech in Gehenna. The prophet Jeremiah called Gehenna the “Valley of Slaughter” (Jer. 7:31; 19:5-6). This brought an incredible reproach upon the Jewish people. Years later, Josiah (cf. 2 Kg. 23) had the artifacts of this pagan cult burned outside the city, along with the bones of those who were involved in its

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235. cf. Mt. 23:17; Mk. 3:5 for proper rebuke.


237. Manasseh and Ahaz are 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.
heinous rituals. Gehenna has the imagery of a man-made hell with a history of infants dying in agony as well as the apostasy of Ahaz and Manasseh.\textsuperscript{238}

According to the New Testament, hell is a very real place of unquenchable fire (Mt. 5:22; Mk. 9:43-47) and God will condemn the wicked to it (Mt. 10:28; Lk. 12:5).\textsuperscript{239} While the actual location is unknown, many believe it is in the center of the earth. Hell is the place of constant pain, as evidenced by the wailing and gnashing of teeth (Mt. 13:50). It is full of fire as well as darkness (Mt. 8:12). The imagery of Gehenna (Mt. 11:23; 16:18) is the eternal hell,\textsuperscript{240} whereas Hades is the abode of the dead during the Old Testament and Inter-Testament Periods and not a lake of fire.\textsuperscript{241}

Unfortunately, confusion is added to the subject because in the first century, the terms of “hades” and “hell” were at times interchangeable.\textsuperscript{242} Josephus describes hades as a “certain place set apart, as a lake of unquenchable fire,” prepared by God for those who have been disobedient, unjust, and who worshiped idols, etc.\textsuperscript{243} However, regardless, of the name, Jews believed, just as Jesus taught, that there was a lake of fire for the ungodly. The eternal punishment of sinful men, with its infinite horrors in hell, is intended to be a vivid demonstration of the infinite value of the grace and glory of God Almighty.

On the other hand, the term \textit{sheol} has been incorrectly translated as \textit{hell}. The Old Testament concept of \textit{sheol} is not a place of torment, but a land of shades, shadowy, and a joyless ghostly place. The New Testament understanding of heaven and hell is not related to \textit{sheol}, and there is hardly any concept of eternal life in the Hebrew Bible.\textsuperscript{244}

\textbf{“You moron!”} Literally, Jesus used the Aramaic word \textit{raca}, which is extremely difficult to translate because the tone of voice carries more meaning than the word itself. It has several

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{238} Barclay, “John” 2:35; Wuest, \textit{Wuest’s Word Studies}. 44-47.
\item \textsuperscript{239} 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 \textit{Jubilees} 9:15; 36:10 and in the Dead Sea Scrolls.
\item \textsuperscript{240} Carson, “Matthew.” 8:149.
\item \textsuperscript{241} Finegan, \textit{Myth and Mystery}. 116-17. It should be noted that the terms “Hades” and “hell” are often used interchangeably.
\item \textsuperscript{242} See “Hell” in Appendix 26.
\item \textsuperscript{243} Josephus, \textit{Discourse to the Greeks Concerning Hades}.
\item \textsuperscript{244} Barclay, “John.” 2:91-92.
\end{itemize}
closely related meanings such as empty headed, fool, idiot, or ignorant. Neither the phrase moron or fool give justice to the definition of raca. It reflected anger and animosity and was associated with the greatest insult one could give, and that is the key point. It was especially significant, because, in this culture, great value was given to hospitality and honoring others within one’s clan or tribe. In the Mediterranean world, every person was honored and every culture expected every member to uphold the honor of his family, clan, and tribe. To shame anyone was considered an incredible sin.

The Jews believed there were three sins that could damn one to hell. While Jesus did not agree with the entire tradition, He did, in fact, agree strongly on the severity of these sins. According to the Babylonian Talmud, these were,

1. To commit adultery,

2. To publicly put a neighbor to shame, and

3. To insult a neighbor.

In essence, Jesus said that anyone who destroys the name and reputation of another brother (believer) is subject to the severest punishment in the fire of hell. In addition, to call another Jew “a slave” was a serious charge and insult, and invited excommunication. That is because a “brother in the faith” is a reflection of the character and image of God. Yet Jesus called the corrupt religious leaders “blind fools” (Mt. 23:17). How can such strong language be justified when Jesus, Himself, used it? It was seldom used among the rabbis and sages and, hence, when it was spoken it had a profound effect. A rare example in the Mishnah reads,

A foolish saint and a cunning knave and a woman that is a hypocrite and the wounds of the Pharisees, these wear out the world.

Mishnah, Sotah 3.4

Notice the words of James, a kin brother of Jesus,

245. Lang, Know the Words of Jesus. 148-49.


248. Babylonian Talmud, Bava Metzia 58b.

249. Because the Jews experienced slavery and thankfulness was one (# 10) of their Eighteen Benedictions, for a Jew to unjustly call another Jews “a slave,” could subject him to excommunication from the synagogue. See Geikie, The Life and Works of Christ. 2:304.
My dearly loved brothers, understand this: Everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger, for man’s anger does not accomplish God’s righteousness.

**James 1:19-20**

In this culture the statement reflected an outward symptom of deep-rooted anger. It is the anger (lack of forgiveness) that is the condemning element and the phrase simply reveals what is in the heart. Why did Jesus call the religious hypocrites “blind fools?” There are three reasons why Jesus used such strong language.

1. It should reveal to us the deep-rooted righteous anger Jesus had against those who were in religious authority and who deliberately used their high office for their own financial reward, with no concern whatsoever for the common people for whom they were spiritually responsible.

2. In the biblical sense of the word, to be a fool virtually means to be an apostate or among the damned. As such, Jesus gave a prophetic prediction of where His critics would spend eternity. 

3. Jesus is the ultimate judge and authority. Jesus used the phrase in reference to the foolish builder (Mt. 7:26) and about the foolish virgins (25:2-3, 8). Paul used its equivalent in rebuking the Galatians (Gal. 3:1). Therefore, there are appropriate times to use it and other times when its use is a sin.

As stated previously, the imagery of hell or hellfire is often associated with Gehenna, a place in the Valley of the Sons of Hinnom, also known as the Hinnom Valley. Church traditions have two inaccurate legends associated with the Valley (located south and west of Jerusalem).

1. The Hinnom Valley was where the city residents burned their trash and garbage. This, unfortunately, is a gross misunderstanding of the culture, because city residents did not have a dump in the Hinnom Valley. In fact, “garbage” is a relatively modern invention. The ancients used all combustible material for fuel, including dried dung scraped off the

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


253. See Mt. 5:22, 29-30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15; Mk. 9:43, 45, 47; Lk. 12:5; Jas. 3:6.
city streets, so they would not have had anything to burn in a city dump. Furthermore, there has been no archaeological evidence, such as ashes and burned fragments, discovered that would identify a dump site.

2. Another inaccurate image of the Hinnom Valley is that it was where pottery kilns were located and they were the source of constant fires, an image of hell (literally, the hell of fire).\textsuperscript{254} The traditional opinion of the location of a burning rubbish dump is believed to have originated with Rabbi David Kimhi’s commentary on Psalm 27:13 around the year A.D.1200. But no Jewish or Christian literary evidence prior to Kimhi mentions this opinion. Furthermore, of the many archaeological investigations in the area, none indicate that there were any kilns in the Hinnom Valley.

The reason these two traditions are false is simple: The prevailing winds are from the west and would have blown the smoke and stench eastwardly into the palace of Herod the Great and over the city. He most certainly would have objected to the foul odors, as would have the Sadducees, who dedicated themselves to lives with every imaginable comfort and pleasure. That is also why thousands of tombs are to the east of Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives. There are no cemeteries to the west of the Old City, only a few scattered wealthy tombs.

\textbf{“You will never get out of there until you have paid the last penny.”} There is the possibility that the meaning in this idiom will be missed, rather than misunderstood. Jesus is speaking of the certainty of Divine justice, which all will encounter someday.\textsuperscript{255} The essential message of Jesus is to go the extra mile to forgive, and whenever possible, be reconciled.

\textbf{08.01.06 Mt. 5:27-30}

\textbf{THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT}

\textsuperscript{27} “You have heard that it was said, Do not commit adultery (Ex. 20:14). \textsuperscript{28} But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. \textsuperscript{29} If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. \textsuperscript{30} And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to go into hell!


\textsuperscript{255} Bullinger, \textit{Figures of Speech Used in the Bible}. 340.
Righteousness is broken before a sinful act is committed. Marriage was originally designed by God to symbolize the relationship between Himself and the believer. Just as a husband and wife are united for life, Jesus and His believers are eternally united. The original plan of God has not changed, but men have challenged both the relationship with God and the marriage covenant symbolic of the spiritual union. Therefore, any lust or action outside marriage is considered sin. To ensure purity of heart, Jesus went on to demonstrate that drastic action needed to be taken. He explained it as follows:

“If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away.” Concerning the first part of this phrase, “if your right eye causes you to sin,” is sometimes translated as “if your right eye offends you” or causes “you to stumble.” Clearly, there is an exaggeration in this phrase; it is not a literal command. The term is translated from the Greek word skandalon, but that translation issue is minor compared to the difficulty modern students have in understanding the two stages of sin according to Jewish thought.

08.01.06.X Understanding the Two-Stage Concept of “Light and Heavy.”

All instructions or laws are to be obeyed, but some are clearly more significant or “heavy” than others. For example, as is explained in the video below, tithing was expected but it was a “light” issue in comparison to some more important issues, such as caring for one’s elderly parents. The term “light” does not mean “insignificant” or “unimportant,” but only that some other issues of life are far more important.

One of the popular teaching methods was known as kal-ve-chomer, that is, lessons of “light and heavy.” It was commonly believed that there were two stages of sin. Before anyone committed a major sin (or “heavy”), one first committed a smaller sin (“lighter”) or a series of smaller sins. Rabbinic law stated that it was better to resolve the sin problem while it was small, rather than wait until it consumed an entire life. Hence, when there was a “small sin,” it was better to remove the eye or hand as opposed to losing life as the result of the final “big sin” (see


257. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 223.

258. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 223.

259. For more information on the importance of tithing, see 08.03.03.Q1 “Why isn’t there a strong teaching on tithing in the New Testament?”

Mt. 23:23). The phrase concerning the eye was, in fact, a common expression among Torah students. While Jesus used it in reference to sin, the Law used a similar scenario of forgiveness after a sin was committed. The Hebrew Bible, Oral Law, and Talmud made these observations respectively:

Even though a man pays (him that suffers the indignity), it is not forgiven him until he seeks forgiveness from him, for it is written, “Now therefore restore the man’s wife . . . (and he shall pray for you.” [Gen. 20:7]).

If a man said, “Blind my eye,” or “Cut off my hand,” or “Break my foot,” he (that does so) is guilty and accountable; (even if he said), on the condition that you are not guilty and accountable, he is (still) guilty and accountable.

Mishnah, Baba Kamma 8.7

Tooth and eye are only one limb of the man, and still (if they are hurt), the slave obtains thereby his freedom. How much more so with painful sufferings which torment the whole body of a Man!

Babylonian Talmud, Berakoth 5a

Jesus essentially said that believers should take radical steps to get sin out of their lives. The Jews understood this was not to be considered literally; it was an expression of sincerity to be holy before God. Gentile believers have difficulty with this passage because they do not understand the cultural mindset and some think it was to be taken literally. As stated previously, believers should not regard the statements of Jesus in Matthew 5:28, 32, 34, 36, and 44 as setting aside the Law, but as reflecting His authority by giving proper interpretation of the Law.

It would be wise to understand that some passages, such as this one, are not to be literally interpreted. Rather, Jesus and the gospel writers used the literary license of exaggeration to express the seriousness of their instructions. In the early third century, Origen Adamantius (c. 185-254) was a church father who had a lust problem and literally applied this passage for the solution. He read that some men became eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven in Matthew 19:12. So to resolve his lust issue, according to noted church historian Eusebius, Origen had himself castrated. Only later did he learn that this passage concerning gouging out the eye was not to be taken literally, but was spoken in this form to emphasize the importance of resolving sin issues before they become explosive.


262. Eusebius, Church History 6.8.
08.01.06.V The Concept of “Light and Heavy” in Torah Instruction. Messianic Rabbi John Fischer, discusses the Jewish concept of “light and heavy” elements of the law (instruction) relative to the words of Jesus (Heb. Yeshua). Click here if Internet connection is available.
08.02.00.A. JESUS TEACHES THE CROWDS by James Tossit 1885. In the first two and a half years of His ministry, Jesus was focused primarily on revealing Himself to the nation of Israel. However, in His last year He focused primarily on teaching His disciples.

08.02.01 Introduction
To live a righteous life within one’s own family can be most challenging. All people have shortcomings, and when righteousness fails repeatedly, relationships and marriages are stressed and sometimes end. It is as true today as it has been throughout history. Divorce and remarriage was debated as much in the first century as it is today, although divorces were not as prevalent then. Jesus addressed the problem by stating that marriage was an institution ordained by God, yet He recognized the challenges men and women may face. While the reasons for a divorce are
adultery, leaving the faith (1 Cor. 7:15), and emotional and physical abuse, for the purpose of this study only the issue of adultery as discussed by Jesus and the opinions common in His day are addressed here. But the entire matter must be seen within the context of Second Temple Judaism and God’s Divine Word.

When a young man and woman planned to get married, by either family-arranged or by their own choosing, a marriage contract was prepared. That legal binding contract, a/k/a a *katuvah*, described the obligations of the bride and bridegroom and, therefore, only a divorce or death could terminate it. There were of three kinds of marriage contracts:

1. A Katuvah based on a dowry (the price the bride’s family pays the future husband).

2. A Katuvah based on the bride price (the price the bridegroom pays to his bride’s family).

3. A Katuvah with both elements of the above but with an emphasis on the bride price.

The Jewish understanding of a home is where a husband, wife, and children lived and it served as a sanctuary. The table served as the altar, where bread was eaten to nurture and sustain the body and where the family prayed and shared biblical stories to nurture and sustain the soul. The husband-father served as priest of the family. It was his responsibility to insure the spiritual well-being of everyone under his care. The family was seen as being so sacred that it was seldom broken. This family unit was such an incredibly strong societal building block that breaking it would cause irreparable harm, not only to the family members, but also to the synagogue and community. Unfortunately, the growing influence of Hellenism and its pagan influences made for a growing divorce rate. Therefore, it was more of an issue in the days of Jesus than it was during the time of Moses (Deut. 24:1-4). In fact, it had become of such great concern that one first century rabbi suggested daughters be educated in this area of law, so they would not be taken advantage of in the event of a divorce in later life. The Mishnah records the following:

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263. Mt. 5:32; 19:9; Mk. 10:2-12.

264. Based upon numerous verses in light of the marriage covenant promise to care and protect one’s life-long spouse. This subject is discussed in the next section.


266. For more details on the *katuvah*, see 04.03.03 and 04.03.08.

267. See also 04.03.03.A.
Ben Azzai says: A man ought to give his daughter knowledge of the Law so that if she must drink [the bitter water]\(^{268}\) she may know that the merit [that she has acquired] will hold her punishment in suspense.

**Mishnah, Sotah 3.4**\(^{269}\)

In essence, Rabbi ben Azzai said that his daughter should have knowledge of the law so that, if she experiences a divorce, she will not become victimized. However, not all Jewish scholars were in agreement with Rabbi Ben Azzai as reflected in the following two statements.\(^{270}\)

Rabbi Eleazer said, “Let the words of the Law be burned rather than committed to women.”

“He who instructs his daughter in the Law instructs her in folly.”

**Mishnah, Sotah 3.4**

The differences between these quotations reflect the various rabbinic theological opinions. Girls were educated in the Galilee area, but not in Jerusalem.

Jesus recognized that due to the sin nature of humanity, divorces would continue but the innocent spouse should not be subjected to condemnation. He, therefore, did not prohibit the practice, but He did set limits on it. He focused his comment on husbands who are supposed to serve as the priest of the home, although they were generally the ones who initiated the breakup. An outlandish case is the account of Herod Antipas and Herodias. However, before going deeper into the issues of marriage and divorce among the Jews, it is important to briefly examine the Greek view of the subject. The primary reason is that when examining the opinions of two leading Jewish schools of theology, the School of Hillel and the School of Shammai, it becomes apparent that both of them may have been influenced by Hellenism.

The view of marriage held by the Greeks, which was adopted by the Romans, was an incredible paradox. In a nutshell, the wife was to be a submissive home-keeper and be sexually pure while the husband had no sexual restrictions. A woman of high respect lived at home, in solitude with a highly limited social life, if any. She was not permitted to be on the street by herself. Her

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\(^{268}\) The term “bitter water” was a concoction of consecrated water flavored with dirt from an open area of the temple. A woman suspected of adultery was given this bitter water to drink, and if she was guilty, her stomach would rupture and she would be killed. Parry, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Talmud*. 82.

\(^{269}\) Bracketed clarification by Danby, ed. *Mishnah*.

\(^{270}\) The wide range of rabbinic opinions is evident in various Jewish writings. See 02.02.01.V for more information on this subject.
primary responsibility was to raise the children, be the ideal home-maker, and establish security in the home. On the other hand, the husband, had free license to have any relationship (prostitute) outside of marriage that he desired – and as many as he could afford.

The Greeks in Corinth built the temple of Aphrodite and employed a thousand priestesses who were called temple virgins, but in fact, were professional prostitutes and not housewives. When the men of Athens discovered how much money these women generated, they established the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. Ironically, the entire structure was funded by revenue generated by prostitution. There was no question asked if a man decided to visit one of these two temples, or any other Greek temple.

Interestingly, in the course of time, a special class of women immersed known as the hetairai. They were the mistresses of significant politicians, philosophers, and businessmen. They established a high class of their own who functioned as a “second wife.” Consequently, in the Greek culture, a social system of relationships outside of marriage was created and considered to be normal and natural. There was nothing a wife could do about her wandering husband, because if she complained, he could simply divorce her. And a divorce did not require any legal action. A husband simply had to acquire two witnesses and tell her that she was dismissed. His only obligation was to return her dowry. The practice of the Greeks concerning marriage and divorce was incredibly similar to the teachings promoted by the School of Hillel. Therefore, it is apparent that Hillel (see below) adapted the Hellenistic model of marriage and wrapped it with Jewish theology and explanations.

Amazingly, centuries earlier, there was a time when Roman life was founded squarely on patria potestas, the father’s power. He had absolute power and authority over all family issues. Yet within this authoritative household, the wife had more freedom than did her Greek counterpart. In the early days of the Roman Republic, divorce was unheard of. In fact, it is said that the first divorce was in 234 B.C. by a Spurius Carvilius, who divorced his wife because she was

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Prostitutes were held in contempt and the men who visited them were counted among the dishonorable.

Then came the Greeks and, as stated, the Romans adopted their values by the time of Christ. The Roman culture had degenerated to that of the Greeks, and many men and women had serial marriages – one right after another. Note the comments by the following contemporary Roman writers of the time.

1. Lucius Annaeus Seneca, a/k/a Seneca the Younger or simply Seneca (ca. 4 B.C. – A.D. 65) was a Roman Philosopher and statesman. He said that some women were married to be divorced while others were divorced to be married.

2. Decimus Juvenalis (ca. A.D. 55-127), more commonly known as Juvenal, writing in the end of the first century (A.D.), spoke of a woman who had eight husbands in five years. He authored sixteen satires in which he ruthlessly criticized the moral vices and corruption of Roman society to the point that his property was seized and he was banished to southern Egypt, possibly to the frontier town of Syene, now Aswan.

3. The Roman orator Metillus Numidicus said,

If Romans, it were possible to love without wives, we would be free of trouble; but since it is the law of nature that we can neither live pleasantly with them, nor at all without them, we must take thought for the continuance of the race rather than for our own brief pleasure.

The influences of the Roman and Greek cultures upon the Jewish people and their leaders had a direct effect on issues of marriage and divorce. Into this social quagmire Jesus clearly and lovingly presented the intent of God without excuses or exceptions. The fact that the Jews and Romans were incredibly lax about marriage covenant was directly due to the influence of the Greek culture.


274. For further study on the various opinions concerning the status and influence of women in the Second Temple Period, see the excellent work by Tal Ilan, Integrating Women into Second Temple History, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999. Take note of Chapter 3 on the discussions of two first century historians, Josephus and Nicholaus of Damascus, and their comments about women.


08.02.02 Lk. 16:14-18

PHARISEES SCOFF AT PARABLE; DIVORCE ISSUES

14 The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and scoffing at Him. 15 And He told them:
A “You are the ones who justify yourselves
B in the sight of others,
C but God knows your hearts.
B’ For what is highly admired by people
A’ is revolting in God’s sight.

16 “The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then, the good news of the kingdom of God has been proclaimed, and everyone is strongly urged to enter it. 17 But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter in the Law to drop out.

18 “Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery,
and everyone who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.

What both the Pharisees and Sadducees missed; what they did not learn from the destruction of Solomon’s Temple and the exile is that God cares more about obedience, steadfast love, justice, righteousness, and humility than for sacrifices, festivals, offerings, and assemblies.278

“Scoffing at Him.” The Hebrew term scoffing literally means turned their noses up at Him.279 Such an act was highly insulting – some might say a criminal act, in a culture where honor was highly valued. Obviously the Pharisees understood the parable, or they would not have scoffed at Him. Jesus then referred to the permanence of the divine laws of God. These laws will last forever; not change with the stroke of a pen as did the traditions of the religious aristocrats.

“Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and everyone who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.” The


279. Bock, Jesus According to Scripture. 284.
translation of this passage has, without question, been problematic for many readers. That is because it places a severe punitive restriction (no future marriage) on the innocent person whose mate originated the divorce and, that is uncharacteristic of Jesus for at least three reasons:

1. This passage puts Jesus in conflict with the Torah, since God, through Moses, made a provision for divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1. While divorce is detestable to our Lord, where does God condemn the victim of divorce, the partner who was faithful, godly, and did not want a divorce? There is none.

2. To interpret the passage as an unconditional indictment without considering the circumstances or motivation is Pharisaic legalism, something that Jesus totally opposed. His emphasis was to focus on the spirit of the Law rather than the letter of the Law.

3. The typical translation of Luke 16:18 is in contradiction with Matthew 19:2 in which He made an exception for divorce.

The core issue of verse 18 lies in translation of the small word and, as found in the phrase, … and marries another … In Greek, the word for and is koi. (2532) but Jesus seldom spoke Greek. He spoke in Hebrew and its sister language, Aramaic. Therefore, Jesus would have used the Hebrew word vav that can be also translated into English as and, but vav also has a broader meaning that includes the phrase, in order to or so that. An Old Testament example is found in Exodus 5:1, 7:16, 8:1, 8, 20, 21, etc.

“Let my people go so that they may serve Me in the wilderness.”
“Let my people go and they may serve Me in the wilderness.”

The phrases in order to and so that both reflect intent or the purpose of a divorce, whereas the word and does not.

This verse 18 is also reflective of Herod Antipas and Herodias, where Herod divorced his wife so that he could marry another man’s wife. According to Jesus, that was certified adultery! When Josephus wrote of this, he stated that the illicit romantic entanglement between Antipas and his half-brother’s wife, Herodias, led them to divorce their spouses in order to marry each other. John the Baptist clearly condemned this action, and Jesus did likewise.

Another significant point is that the divorce certificate was always written for the protection of the woman. It was a legal document with terms and conditions that had to be honored, and

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permitted both parties to remarry. Considering the “spirit” of the biblical commands in light of what Jesus said, there are three reasons for a biblical divorce.

1. Jesus said that divorce was not permitted with the exception of adultery (Mt. 5:32; 19:9; Mk. 10:2-12).

2. However, the Apostle Paul said that the only reason for divorce was if the partner left the faith (1 Cor. 7:15). This is not in disagreement with what Jesus said because each conversation must be held within its context. But if one is legalistic about interpretation of what Jesus said, then obviously the conclusion is that the apostle was wrong – and that doesn’t make sense. Neither does legalistic interpretation!

3. A third reason is that of physical or emotional abuse. This is based on a “biblical construct” foundation because the abusive spouse has broken promises to love, protect and honor their mate.\(^{281}\)

In all of the above cases, there are valid grounds for the innocent partner to remarry.\(^ {282}\) Nowhere in either Testament is there a punitive condition ever imposed on the innocent party.\(^ {283}\) If the words of Jesus meant that divorce was never permitted, then the Apostle Paul would certainly have written 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 differently.\(^ {284}\) It should be noted however, that today, as in the time of Jesus, most divorces were caused by selfishness or unforgiveness, rather than for any of the three reasons listed above.

The Oral Law said that a woman who had an illicit lover was unclean because of the adulterous relationship and, being unclean, meant that she could not marry him.\(^ {285}\) If she was married and if, during that marital relationship she developed another relationship outside of her marital covenant that was sin. Jesus essentially said the same message to the husband. A careful reading of the original language translates as follows:

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\(^{281}\) Based upon numerous verses in light of the marriage covenant promise to care and protect one’s life-long spouse.

\(^{282}\) Bock, \textit{Jesus According to Scripture}. 300.

\(^{283}\) For further study, see Heth, “Another Look at the Erasmian View of Divorce and Remarriage.” 263-72 and Herron Jr.“Mark’s Jesus on Divorce: Mark 10:1-12 Reconsidered.” 273-82.

\(^{284}\) Bock, \textit{Jesus According to Scripture}. 301 n7.

Everyone who divorces his wife [in order] to marry another.\textsuperscript{286}

The writings of the Mishnah were still in oral form when Paul learned them as a child in the synagogue and later again from Rabbi Gamaliel, who some say was the grandson of Jerusalem’s famous Rabbi Hillel. The apostle was well aware of the divorce laws when he penned Romans 7:1-6 that restated what Jesus said years earlier. The meaning of adultery is restricted to the individual who desires a divorce in order to marry another. Such a new relationship is an adulterous one. The second part of this verse is focused on another individual, one who desires to enter the second marriage, knowing that the first covenant was deliberately violated. Ancient divorce decrees permitted women to remarry, because a single woman had no means of support and would become a destitute beggar, unless a family within her clan provided for her.

It has been generally taught throughout church history that a divorce could be initiated only by the husband while the wife had no rights to obtain a divorce.\textsuperscript{287} In Mark 10:12 Jesus clearly stated that some women divorced their husbands. But the historical assumption remained strong and only recently has been seriously challenged. An example is due to the discovery of the early second century A.D. Papyrus Se’elim 13. This divorce decree, written in Hebrew, was initiated by a wife against her husband and reads as follows:

\begin{quote}
I, Shelamzion, daughter of Joseph Qebshan of Ein Gedi, with you, Eleazar son of Hananiah who had been the husband before this time, that this is from me to you a bill of divorce\textsuperscript{288} and release.

Papyrus Se’elim 13, lines 4-7\textsuperscript{289}
\end{quote}

Whether the document was personally written by the wife or a scribe on her behalf is hardly important. Rather, this document is one of many that opens an entirely new insight and reveals Jewish women clearly had more legal rights than has traditionally been believed.

\textbf{08.02.03 Mt. 5:31-32} (See also Mt. 19:9; Mk. 10:12)

\textbf{DIVORCE ISSUES DEBATED}

\textsuperscript{286} Young, “Divorce and Adultery.” 4:3, 6, 7.

\textsuperscript{287} ChARRY, \textit{By the Renewing of Your Minds.} 74.

\textsuperscript{288} For a typical bill of divorce format, see 08.02.03.A as well as Lightfoot, \textit{A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica.} 2:124-25.

\textsuperscript{289} Brewer, “Jewish Women Divorcing Their Husbands in Early Judaism: The Background to Papyrus Se’elim 13.” 349-50.
“It was also said, Whoever divorces his wife must give her a written notice of divorce (Deut. 24:1). But I tell you, everyone who divorces his wife, except in a case of sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

The entire issue of divorce and remarriage was a hotly debated issue in the first century. Some desired a strict adherence to the Mosaic Law (Deut. 24:1-5), while others believed that such strictness, at times was too harsh. Into this religious environment entered the influences of Hellenistic culture resulting in a bottomless quagmire. The debates often centered on the meaning of the word “indecent” used by Moses (Deut. 24:1-5), as its definition, was thought to have changed in the fourteen centuries that had transpired since it was written.

The School of Hillel said that a man could consider a divorce “for any disgust, which he felt toward her.” This essentially was the first century equivalent of no-fault divorce. Opposing this view was the School of Shammai, which stated that divorce could take place only in cases of obvious unfaithfulness. Stoning was not discussed. To make matters worse, according to Jewish writings (Sif. Num. 99) Moses, himself, was divorced. He had married Zipporah (Ex. 2:21), but “sent her away,” (meaning a divorce) to her father (Ex. 18:2) and then married a Cushite (black African from Ethiopia) woman (Num. 12:1). This second marriage quickly became the subject of bitter discussions between Miriam and Aaron (Num. 12:1). Those discussions concerning divorce continued to the time of Jesus.

Clearly, Jesus forbids divorce, not on the Mosaic regulations of divorce, but on the purpose of God instituting marriage. In doing so He eliminated all the arguments between the schools of Hillel and Shammai. The Jews had a proverb on the matter that said, “Hillel loosed what Shammai bound.” In terms of moral and biblical interpretation, both rabbis and their schools had their faults. Neither one fully comprehended the ultimate plan of God for husband and wife. However, in this case, Jesus accepted the divorce regulations of the School of Shammai but also demonstrated forgiveness that this school generally failed to demonstrate.

Even though Judaism esteemed women higher than in neighboring cultures, women were confronted with four major disadvantages.

290. Miriam was so angry because Moses married a black woman, that God punished her by making her white with leprosy. Clearly God demonstrated His anger at racism. Eventually she was healed.

291. A few scholars do not agree with this interpretation and say that Zipporah and the Cushite woman was one and the same person.

1. Often but clearly not always, they were looked upon as an object of possession rather than a person of worth. There are numerous writings that support both viewpoints on this subject.

2. Obtaining an exit out of a brutal marriage was difficult, although not impossible.

3. The acquisition of a divorce by a man was far too easy (see below). Such divorces were based on a very broad interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1.

4. Once a woman was divorced, employment opportunities were almost non-existent. Single women, such as widows, often lived in poverty.

According to some rabbis, the reasons some rabbis gave men for a divorce included the following,

1. “Spinning” in the streets, which meant speaking to men in public.²⁹³

2. Being in public with her head uncovered, or allowing her hair to be visible. Only in a wedding procession could she have her head uncovered.²⁹⁴ Women were expected to have their heads covered in such a manner that their hair was not seen. This is most likely the reason why the Apostle Paul said that women should have their heads covered (1 Cor. 11:5-6) when he wrote to the church in the morally corrupt city of Corinth.

The divorce decree protected the rights of the woman so that she could remarry and her children would not be considered illegitimate.²⁹⁵

All are required to write a bill of divorce, even a deaf mute, an imbecile, or a minor. A woman may write her own bill of divorce and a man may write his own quittance, since the validity of the writ depends on them that sign it.

Mishnah, Gittin 2.5

No bill of divorce is valid that is not written expressly for the woman.

²⁹³ Mishnah, Ketuboth 7.6; Jeremias, Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus. 359-61; For further study, see Chapter 18 “The Social Position of Women” in Jeremias, Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus.

²⁹⁴ Mishnah, Ketuboth 2.1.

²⁹⁵ Mishnah, Gittim 9.4; Among the two major theological schools in Jerusalem, the School of Shammai was very strict while the School of Hillel was very relaxed (i.e. “no-fault” divorce permitted) concerning the issuance of a divorce decree.
Mishnah, Gittin 3.1

The position held by Jesus is similar to that of the orthodox rabbinical School of Shamai, as recorded in the Mishnah.296 The following passage reflects the differences between the two major theological schools.

The School of Shamai says: A man may not divorce his wife unless he has found unchastity in her, for it is written, “Because he has found in her indecency in anything.”

Mishnah, Gittin 9:10

The School of Shamai held that the phrase “because he found some uncleanness in her” from Deuteronomy 24:1, was a figure of speech meaning she was guilty of adultery.297 However, the School of Hillel said the phrase meant anything and everything that the husband did not like or approve of.

And the School of Hillel says, “[He may divorce her] even if she spoiled a dish for him, for it is written, “Because he has found in her indecency in anything.”

Mishnah, Gittin 9:10

In modern terms, it could be said that Rabbi Hillel instituted a form of no-fault divorce.

(If a man said) “Konam! If I marry the ugly woman such-a-one, though she was indeed beautiful; or the black woman such-a-one, though she was indeed white; or the short woman such-a-one, though she was indeed tall; she is (yet) permitted to him not because she was ugly and became beautiful, or black and became white, or short and became tall, but because it was a vow made in error.”

Mishnah, Nedarim 9.10

Both Shamai and Hillel were Pharisees, and that is why the following incident occurred:

Some Pharisees approached Him to test Him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife on any grounds?”


Matthew 19:3

08.02.03.A. A FIRST CENTURY BILL OF DIVORCE. This bill or certificate of divorce,²⁹⁸ written in Aramaic on papyrus, was discovered in one of the caves in the Judean hills. This type of legal document was to protect the woman when the marriage ended (see translation below).

²⁹⁸ For a typical bill of divorce format, see also Lightfoot, A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica. 2:124-25.
Divorce documents described any future payments that were due by the husband, although terms varied. The rabbis agreed that if a divorce document did not protect the wife, it was not a legal contract. The first century bill of divorce reads, in part, as follows,

Lines 1-11: **On the first of [the month of ] Marheshvan, year six, at Masada.**

I, Yehosef [Joseph] son of Naksan from [ ]h, living at Masada, of my own free will, do this day release and send you away, Miriam daughter of Yehonantan [Jonathan] from Nablata, living at Masada, who have, until now, been my wife, so that you are free on your part to become the wife of any Jewish man you may wish. Here you have from me [literally, from my hand] a bill of divorce and a writ of release. Likewise, I give back [to you the whole dowry], and if there are any ruined or damaged goods or [ ], I will reimburse you fourfold, according to the current price. Furthermore, upon your request, [if lost], I will replace this document for you, as is appropriate.

Lines 12-25: **[A repetition of the text is almost identical wording.]**

Lines 26-29: **{Signed} Yehosef son of Naksan, by his own hand**

Eliezer, son of Malkah, witness
Yehosef, son of Malkah, witness
Eleazar, son of Hananah, witness

**Divorce Decree (Courtesy of the Shrine of the Book, Israel Museum).**

Josephus not only confirmed the high frequency of divorces, but also that the divorce decree was for the protection of the wife, so she could remarry. He stated that,

**He that desires to be divorced from his wife for any cause whatsoever (and many such cases happen among men), let him in writing give assurance that he will never use her as his wife anymore; for by this means she may be at liberty to marry another husband.**

**Josephus, Antiquities 4.8.23 (253)**

It is evident that the right to remarry was understood and was not a matter of debate as it is in some Christian denominations today. Furthermore, neither Jesus nor the Apostle Paul prohibited remarriage even though they knew this practice was evident.

“Except in a case of sexual immorality.” Twice in his book, Matthew refers (5:32 and 19:9) to a reason for which divorce is permissible. It is interesting to note that in Mark 10:2-12, the only person initiating the divorce and subsequently remarrying is charged by Jesus as committing adultery. While God condemns divorce, Jesus shows that the Law is a demonstration of God’s willingness to accommodate Himself to human frailty and failure.

Ironically, the rabbis of the School of Hillel were morally right, but exegetically wrong, while those of Shammai were morally wrong, but exegetically right. Shammai actually recognized the “spirit” of the Mosaic Law, while Hillel was right only in that an opening for divorce was permitted. Since marriage is a covenant, there is little wonder then that Jesus went from the marriage issue directly to honesty without swearing or the taking of oaths. In the meantime, the Essenes believed divorce was considered illicit under all circumstances.

08.02.03.Q1 Did polygamy exist in the first century?

Beginning during the time of the Judges, the practice of polygamy slowly decreased, although the three famous kings (Saul, David, and Solomon) were not the best examples of that trend. Wherever there were multiple wives there were multiple problems. By the Inter-Testamental period, the book of Tobias refers only to a husband-wife family, a pattern well established by the Old Testament prophets. The prophet Ezekiel portrayed the husband-wife relationship as being similar to Israel-God in the allegory of Ezekiel 16.

By the first century, polygamy was rare, but not unheard of. Men, not women, had the approval of historic tradition to have more than one spouse at any given time. Polygamy was rarely practiced throughout the Talmudic Period until it was officially banned in A.D. 1240. (As will be later explained, it was practiced in the 17th century Yemen and was a topic of discussion in 1806 in France.) But evidently it was common enough that Josephus addressed it.

If anyone has two wives, and if he greatly respects and be kind to one of them, either out of his affection to her, or for her beauty, or for some other reason while the other is of less esteem with him, and if the son of her that is beloved be the younger by birth than another born of the other wife, but endeavors to obtain the right of primogeniture from his father’s kindness to his mother, and would thereby obtain a double portion of his father’s substance (inheritance), for that double portion is what I have allotted him in the laws.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 4.8.23 (249)

Obviously there were Jewish men with two or more wives, or the historian would never have written about the subject. He then continues in section 4.8.23 with the complexities of marriage and divorce. As for him, his first wife was killed at the siege of Jotapata, his second wife deserted him, and after he retired in Rome to pursue a literary career, he married his third wife. But some scholars believe he had four wives in serial marriages, who gave him a total of five sons.

Under Roman law bigamy and polygamy were strictly forbidden, although adultery was not. Nonetheless, the practice continued and in some Islamic countries, such as Yemen in the 17th century, persecution and death at the hands of Muslims was so severe that Jewish men had to take on multiple wives, (including widows) to keep the Jewish race alive and prevent Jewish women from becoming impoverished homeless outcasts. However, since the Second Temple Period the practice was discouraged, unless “the husband was capable of properly fulfilling his marital duties toward each of his wives.” But local customs varied and many katuvah (marriage deeds) forbade a future second wife. Yet examples of polygamy are as follows:

1. Amazingly, the Mishnah records that a Jewish king could have a limit of 18 wives. This is an interesting limitation since Israel did not have a king at the time the Mishnah was written, but was under the control of the Romans who forbade the practice. Without question, the codex of the Oral Law applied to Jews living outside of the Roman domain.


308. Falk, *Jesus the Pharisee*. 88-89, 99, 106-07. The marital contract is further described in 04.03.03.A and 08.02.01.

309. Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 2.4. However, the Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 21a, gives a greater number, 24. Clearly there was disagreement among the rabbis even though this was a hypothetical issue. See also Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 369.
2. Rabbinic writings do record one interesting incident of a rabbi, of all people, who had two wives. The Jerusalem Talmud has the account of a certain Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus who married his niece in his later years. The Babylonian Talmud preserved the same account (Sanhedrin 68A) with additional details and identifies Rabbi Hyrcanus’ wife as Imma Shalom, the daughter of Rabbi Simeon ben Gamaliel, and she outlived her bigamist husband. His second wife was also his niece. It is unclear if he was excommunicated for bigamy or being married to his niece. However, his actions did not appear to conflict with the School of Shammai, but the social discord this caused evidently discouraged others from the practice, as there is no further written evidence of Talmudic sages who engaged in this practice.

3. A well-known Jerusalemite by the name of Tobiad Joseph had two wives.

4. Alexander Jannaeus of the second century (B.C.) had several wives, one of whom was his “chief wife.” Since he was the monarch of the Holy Land, maybe he is the reason the Mishnah later recorded that a king could have up to 18 wives.

Those who believe that polygamy disappeared need to reconsider their position. While the provisions of the typical katuvah are credited to the great reduction of polygamy, it did not

310. Jerusalem Talmud, Yevamot 13:2; Avot D’Rabbi Nathan, Ch. 16.

311. This irony of this matter is that this Gamaliel is believed to have been the grandson of Hillel, the constant opponent of Shammai.

312. Babylonian Talmud, Bava Mezia 59B; Yet it is interesting that due to heavy persecution by Muslims, Jewish men in Yemen, as late as the 19th century, had to take more than one wife because so many men were murdered. In this case, polygamy preserved the Jewish race.

313. Jerusalem Talmud, Betsah 1:4

314. Falk, Jesus the Pharisee. 53, 100-02.

315. Josephus, Antiquities 12.4.6 (186-90).

316. Josephus, Antiquities 13.14.2 (380); Wars 1.4.6 (97).

317. Mishnah, Sanhedrin 2.4. However, the Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 21a, gives a greater number, 24. Clearly there was disagreement among the rabbis even though this was a hypothetical issue. See also Jeremias, Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus. 369.

318. Johannes Leipoldt in Jesus und die Frauen, Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1921 (reprint 2013), 44-49, gives many more examples in his notes. See also Jeremias, Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus. 93.
eliminate it. However, by the first century, the issue was not polygamy, but serial marriages – that is one wife after another. That is why divorce was a topic of heated debate. This subject continued into the Church Age. The church fathers, Cyril of Jerusalem and Jerome, made these comments concerning second marriages:

And those who are once married - let them not hold in contempt those who have accommodated themselves to a second marriage. Continence is a good and wonderful thing; but still, it is permissible to enter upon a second marriage, lest the weak might fall into fornication.

Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*  

What then? Do we condemn second marriage? Not at all; but we praise first marriages. Do we expel bigamists from the Church? Far from it; but we urge the once-married to continence.

Jerome, *Letter to Pammachius*  

In the Apostle Paul’s letter to Timothy, he said that a pastor/elder should be the husband of one wife (1 Tim. 3:2). A number of evangelical denominations today interpret this to exclude anyone from a ministry position who is in a second marriage. The position is held because it is believed that the divorce is still a marriage; that God does not honor the divorce. Furthermore, these evangelicals often believe that bigamy was outlawed in the first century Judaism. However, the comment by Jerome, “Do we expel bigamists from the Church?” clearly reveals that the church accepted men with two wives, but Timothy said they were not qualified to serve in the church. Bigamy was technically legal but rarely practiced.

Josephus recorded the account of King Izates of Adiabene (reigned A.D. 35-60) who ruled the small semi-independent kingdom of Adiabene. He and many in his family had converted to

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319. An interesting event occurred in the early nineteenth century, which challenges conventional Christian opinions that monogamy was the standard practice in the first century. When Napoleon conquered Europe, the Jews were encouraged to re-establish their ancient court system, the Sanhedrin. Because of this decree, in 1806 Jews assembled to discuss a number of pressing problems. Of the many questions discussed, the first one was, “Is it lawful for Jews to marry more than one wife?” While the response was negative, it revealed that it was still an issue in various places. For example, in the 11th century Jews in Worms, Germany practiced bigamy. And in 17th century Yemen, the Muslims killed so many Jewish men that the surviving Jewish men who were married previously, then married the widows so these women would not become destitute.


Judaism as the result of Jewish merchants who told them about the God of the Jewish people and
the Jewish religious traditions. As king, he even underwent the rite of circumcision. When he
felt his kingdom was threatened by the Parthians, he placed ashes on his forehead and told all his
wives and children to call upon God for help. The account reads as follows:

He (Izates) knew the king of Parthia’s power was much greater than his own; but
that he knew also that God was much more powerful than all men. And when he
had returned him this answer, he betook himself to make supplication to God, and
threw himself on the ground, and put ashes upon his head, in testimony of his
confusion, and fasted together with his wives and children. Then he called upon
God.

Josephus, Antiquities 20.4.2 (89)

The Lord apparently heard and answered his prayer for help and mercy, because he remained
undefeated and his kingdom prospered. When he died, he had 48 sons and daughters, but the
number of wives is unknown. A point of interest is that his mother, Queen Helena, after she
converted to Judaism, built a palace in Jerusalem so she could worship God in the Jewish temple.
When famine struck the Middle East in A.D. 45, the same famine of Acts 11:28-30, she provided
funds to purchase food for the needy. Eventually, when she and her two sons, Izates and
Monobasuz II died, their bones were buried in a tomb in the Hinnom Valley. Josephus and the
Jewish writings praised them for their contributions in time of dire need.

The irony of the acceptance of Queen Helena is that her husband, King Monobazus I, was also
her brother. Her two sons were essentially children of incest. Yet, in spite of all the laws of
purity, once she and her family accepted Judaism, the Pharisees and Sadducees no longer had
any issues with her – unlike Jesus with whom they had constant disagreements.

322. Josephus, Antiquities 20.2.3-4.

323. Ashes placed on the forehead were cultural signs of deep grief and mourning, and in this case, sincere appeal to

28-30.

325. This tomb was incorrectly identified as the “Tomb of the Kings.” See Notley and Garcia. “Queen Helena’s
Jerusalem Palace,” 28-39 for historical and archaeological information.

326. Josephus, Antiquities 20.2.1-20.4.3; Mishnah, Yoma 3.10.
Finally, as previously stated, it is worth repeating that Hillel was clearly influenced by the Hellenistic trends of the time. In the early days of the Roman Republic, marriage was considered sacred and divorce was unknown – an amazing tradition for a pagan culture. However, with the advent of Hellenism and the lax attitudes of marriage by the Greeks, the Romans followed. Hillel accepted some Greek ideas of marriage and restructured these theologically to fit the Jewish mindset. Has something similar happened in Western culture today?

08.02.04 Mt. 19:1b-10 (See also Mk. 10:2-9) Judea across the Jordan

PHARISEES QUESTION DIVORCE

1b He departed from Galilee and went to the region of Judea across the Jordan. 2 Large crowds followed Him, and He healed them there. 3 Some Pharisees approached Him to test Him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife on any grounds?”

4 “Haven’t you read,” He replied, “that He who created them in the beginning made them male and female,” 5 and He also said:

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?

6 So they are no longer two, Therefore, what God has joined together, man must not separate.”

7 “Why then,” they asked Him, “did Moses command us to give divorce papers and to send her away?”

8 He told them, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because of the hardness of your hearts. But it was not like that from the beginning. 9 And I tell you, whoever
divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”

10 The disciples said to him, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.”

As was previously discussed, this theological debate was an ongoing issue between the two major Pharisaic schools of theology. The School of Hillel permitted divorce for any reason (equal to modern no-fault divorce), which is why the question was asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife on any grounds?” This was in sharp contrast to the School of Shammai that permitted divorce but only for the reason of adultery as written by Moses (Deut. 24:1-4). But Moses did not command divorce but only allowed it. He recognized human frailty and he compromised. 327 But by the first century, as previously stated, the disregard for marriage vows evidently had a sufficient impact upon the culture that Josephus mentioned. 328

The Pharisees approached Jesus to ask which school was correct. Rather than giving them their desired answer, Jesus referred to the original purpose of God at the time of Creation. Divorce was granted only because of man’s evil heart. In the Jewish law, adultery was always between an unmarried woman and a married man who was not her husband, but not so for a married man and any woman who was not his wife. In that case he would have committed adultery against her husband. This was obviously an unjust system that Jesus opposed. Both schools of theology had lost sight of the fact that marriage is not a one- or two-way covenant, but a three-way covenant including God, man, and woman. Hence, while God hates divorce, it is permissible, but only on His terms.

As previously stated, there were four reasons in the Oral Law that permitted a man to divorce his wife. The last of these stated that a husband could essentially put his wife away (divorce) for any reason whatsoever. Jesus forbade divorce, not on the Mosaic regulations, but on the grounds that God instituted marriage. In doing so, Jesus eliminated all the academic arguments and brought to their attention the purpose of God. Evidently, this may have been a new concept for them.

The School of Hillel viewed marriage as a social institution, governed by the laws of men and for their convenience. Jesus and the School of Shammai recognized marriage as a divine institution and governed by God. Unfortunately, in most biblical interpretation, the School of Shammai was just as legalistic as the Sadducees and Pharisees and did not agree with Jesus. The irony of these laws was that during a couple’s betrothal period (about one year), the only reason for a divorce was immorality. After marriage, however, a man could divorce his wife for any reason.


Finally, marriage is the most intimate of all human relationships. It is spiritual, physical, emotional, and a union of deepest love and permanence. It is also symbolic of the relationship God desires with every person. For this reason, divorce and any kind of sexual union outside of marriage is of the highest abomination before God. Jesus defended both the indissoluble bond of marriage and the possibility of the celibate life without making a rule out of marriage or out of celibacy.

08.02.05 Mk. 10:10-12; Mt. 19:10-12

DISCIPLES QUESTION JESUS

Mk. 10 Now in the house the disciples questioned Him again about this matter. And He said to them,

“Whoever divorces his wife
 and marries another
 commits adultery against her.

12 Also, if she divorces her husband
 and marries another,
 she commits adultery.”

Mt. 10 His disciples said to Him, “If the relationship of a man with his wife is like this, it’s better not to marry!”
11 But He told them, “Not everyone can accept this saying, but only those it has been given to. 12 For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother’s womb, there are eunuchs who were made by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves that way because of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can.”

“If she divorces her husband.” This statement gives credence to the view that women had the right to divorce their husbands. This statement would never have been made if women were not permitted to obtain a divorce.

However, there were three occupations that were considered so dishonorable, that if a man decided to become employed in one of these, his wife could appeal to the court for a divorce and receive compensation for her loss.329 Even if she knew that he was involved in one of these

329. Mishnah, Ketuboth 7.10.
occupations before she married him, and she agreed that he could continue in that occupation, she could change her mind and file for a divorce. According to the traditions of the elders, these trades were,

1. Dung collectors

2. Leather tanners

3. Copper smelters

Amazingly, tax collectors, camel drivers, and shepherds are not listed in this group. If a wife did not have the right to divorce her husband, no comments about the subject would be either in the gospels or Mishnah.

“For some are eunuchs.” The first two sections of this passage can easily be understood. Some men were born eunuchs while others were castrated in infancy for their intended service to the royal court in later life as was the custom in the ancient Middle East. However, that is not what is being said in this text. It means that those who have the gift of celibacy should apply their energies for the Kingdom of God. Paul also referred to celibacy as a gift (1 Cor. 7:2, 7). A similar idiom was spoken by Jesus when He said that if an eye or hand would offend the believer, it ought to be removed. He used a figure of speech.

The early Church father, Eusebius, reported that Origen understood this text was to be taken literally and castrated himself. Later in life, Origen understood that this phrase was not to be taken literally and that wise counsel in his younger years would have been helpful in preventing his life-changing event. Clement of Alexandria, however, may have had the most accurate interpretation:

A true eunuch is not one who is unable, but one who is unwilling to indulge in pleasure.

Clement of Alexandria, The Instructor

330. For further study on the despised trades, see Jeremias, Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus. Chapter 14.

331. Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History. 6.8.2.

HONESTY WITHOUT SWEARING OR OATHS.

“Again, you have heard that it was said to our ancestors, You must not break your oath, but you must keep your oaths to the Lord. But I tell you, don’t take an oath at all: either by heaven, because it is God’s throne; or by the earth, because it is His footstool; or by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great King. Neither should you swear by your head, because you cannot make a single hair white or black. But let your word ‘yes’ be ‘yes,’ and your ‘no’ be ‘no.’ Anything more than this is from the evil one.

The words of Jesus are rather straightforward, which might make the modern student wonder why the matter was addressed in the first place. While there was solid biblical instruction on this matter, by this time there were three kinds of swearing – something that appears to be rather ridiculous today.

1. There was the frivolous swearing, that is, taking an oath when none was needed.
2. There was an oath that included the name of God which was absolutely binding.
3. There was the oath that did not include the name of God and, therefore, was not regarded as binding.

With three possible ways to affirm a commitment, little wonder that Jesus simply wanted to simplify the matter with the words, “Let your word ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes.’ ” Anyone who makes an oath (Gk. homologeo) makes a treaty with a deity, so that to lie under oath is to lie to one’s deity. The honor of one’s word was common practice among righteous Jewish people.

Jesus was obviously not talking to everyone, but to those who were breaking the divine commandment. Yet He most certainly was also aware that when His Passion Week would come, He would be on trial six times and, on at least one occasion, He would be under oath to declare whether He was the Christ, the Son of God (Mt. 26:63). Furthermore, anyone in a Roman court

333. Ex. 20:7; Lev. 19:12; Num. 30:2-3; Deut. 23:21-24; Ps. 49:14.
334. This had become such a complex matter in the Oral Law, that the entire tractate of the Mishnah, Shebouth, is dedicated to the subject of oaths.
was under oath.\textsuperscript{337} His primary concern was for the horizontal relationships between people. Jesus raised the level of personal integrity and added clarity to the meaning of “righteousness” that it is a matter of the heart (cf. Mt. 5:6).\textsuperscript{338} It should be noted that Scripture clearly indicates that God swore by Himself.\textsuperscript{339}

There were very few agreements between the Essenes and Jesus, yet on this issue, they were close. Josephus recorded their strict moral code regarding speaking only the truth:

\begin{quote}
They are eminent for fidelity, and are the ministers of peace; whatsoever they say also is firmer than an oath; but swearing is avoided by them and they esteem it worse than perjury. For they say that he who cannot be believed without [swearing by] God is already condemned.
\end{quote}

\textit{Josephus, Wars 2.8.6 (135)}\textsuperscript{340}

While Jesus supported the Mosaic Law, He did not refer to the law but to the principles of God. Moses said that one should not swear falsely by the name of God because it would profane the Divine Name (Ex. 20:7; Deut. 5:11). But Jesus said that the “yes” or “no” of an honest man was far more credible than a sworn name by someone with questionable character. His followers were to have unquestionable character.

A righteous man has no need to swear because every word he utters is truthful, but the sinful man has no respect for any higher authority and, therefore, swearing to him is meaningless. Again, Jesus did not refer to the Mosaic Law, but to the principles of God. There is a prohibition against perjury in Leviticus 19:12, which states that one should not swear by the name of God falsely, as this would profane the divine name (cf. Ex. 20:7; Deut. 5:11). Jesus was against the swearing of oaths because oaths were used to conceal dishonest intentions.

It was believed that whoever needed to swear to the truth was afraid and whoever swore about a falsehood was a deceiver and traitor. The first believed that the power evoked could punish him and the other is an imposter who profited by the faith of others. In both cases swearing is wrong. At the time of Jesus the Jewish people were under such heavy Roman economic bondage that swearing a falsehood to a tax collector was acceptable by the rabbis. Consequently, the Oral Law had many ways to break an oath. Yet in response, Jesus said that one’s word is to be bond. Truthfulness is essential to righteousness.

\textsuperscript{337} To place one under oath always meant a relationship with a deity of the one who administered the oath.

\textsuperscript{338} Brown, “Righteousness, Justification.” 3:352-54.

\textsuperscript{339} Gen. 22:16; Ps. 110:4; Isa. 45:23.

\textsuperscript{340} Insert by Whiston, ed.; See also Josephus, \textit{Antiquities} 15.10.5 (371).
Taking an oath was problematic for two reasons:

1. It was a failure of honesty, a characteristic concerning the image of God and,

2. A major objection to the taking of oaths is related to the civil court system. Jews who were called to testify were required to swear upon a pagan god, an action that violated their law.\(^{341}\) To foreigners it made little difference as to which god one would swear an oath, but to a righteous Jew or Christian, this was of paramount importance (cf. 1 Cor. 6:5-8).

The religious leaders had laws that permitted one to break a vow and disregard the commitment completely. Below are four reasons.

**Four kinds of vows the Sages have declared not to be binding:** vows of incitement, vows of exaggeration, vows made in error, and vows (that cannot be fulfilled by reason) of restraint.

*Mishnah, Nedarim 3.1* \(^{342}\)

Since a marriage covenant is held together by an oath, a man could divorce his wife for any reason whatsoever. In essence, this was no-fault divorce similar to what is found in most Western countries today. Vows could be broken for the so-called right reasons.

**Men may vow to murderers, robbers, or tax collectors that what they have is heave-offering even though it is not heave-offering; or that they belong to the king’s household even though they do not belong to the king’s household. The School of Shammai say: “They may so vow in any form of words except**

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342. See Mishnah, *Nedarim* 9.10 in 08.02.04, as this highlights how permissive divorce laws were at the time of Jesus. However, not all rabbis were in agreement with these laws.
in the form of an oath.” In addition, the School of Hillel says: “Even in the form of an oath.”

Mishnah, Nedarim 3.4

None may take change for money from the counter of excise men or from the wallet of tax collectors, or take any alms from them; but it may be taken from them at their own house or in the market.

If tax collectors took a man’s donkey and gave him another, or if robbers robbed a man of his coat and gave him another, they became his own, since the owner cherishes no hope of recovering them.

Mishnah, Baba Kamma 10.1b - 2a

If tax collectors entered a house (all that is within it) becomes unclean. Even if a Gentile was with them they may be believed if they say, “We did not enter,” but they may not be believed if they say, “We entered but touched nothing.” If thieves entered a house, only that part is unclean that was trodden by the feet of the thieves. What do they render unclean? Foodstuffs and liquids and open earthenware vessels; but couches and seats and earthenware vessels having a tightly stopped-up cover remain clean. If a Gentile or a woman was with them all becomes unclean.

Mishnah, Tohoroth 7.6a

Clearly, this is a volume of rabbinic comments concerning the exceptions of honesty of character, while maintaining so-called righteousness, and is indicative of the extent that dishonesty had permeated Jewish society. In contrast, Augustine made this comment about oaths:

Swear not at all; words, which were in my opinion spoken, not because it is a sin to swear a true oath, but because it is a heinous sin to foreswear one’s self.

Augustine, To Publicola

At this point there is some difficulty in understanding the first century Jewish mind-set concerning vows and oaths. While the Mishnah is seen as encouraging the making of vows, the

Babylonian Talmud advised great care in making solemn promises. The following example is in reference to a vow made for an offering:

For it was taught, “better it is that you do not vow, than that you vow and not pay” (Ec. 5:4). Better than both is not to vow at all.

Babylonian Talmud, Nedarim 9a

Concerning the differences, the following two explanations are suggested:

1. The Mishnah was recorded in the second century, while the more exhaustive Talmud was completed around the year 500.

2. Differences also exist because not all rabbis were in agreement on this matter.

08.02.06.Q1 What were the differences between the vow, the oath, and a ban (Mt. 5:33-37)?

In Jewish thinking, an oath was absolute while the vow was conditional because it had conditional phrases attached such as “if I...” or “that if.” Anything that was banned was restricted from common use and assigned to the temple priesthood. However, even these rules were broken.

08.02.07 Mt. 5:38-42; Lk. 6:31

REGARDING RETALIATION

Mt. 38 You have heard that it was said,

“An Eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth”(Ex. 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21).

39 But I tell you, “Don’t resist an evildoer.”

On the contrary, if someone slaps you on your right cheek,

344. See also Babylonian Talmud, Nedar 22a.

345. The wide range of rabbinic opinions is evident in various Jewish writings. See 02.02.01.V for more information on this subject.

turn the other to him also.

40 As for the one who wants to sue you and take away your shirt, let him have your coat as well.

41 And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two.

42 Give to the one who asks you, and don’t turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Lk. 31 Just as you want others to do for you, do the same for them.

When Jesus told them not to retaliate, not to resist an evil person (a Roman), and walk a second mile when so demanded (an occasional request by Roman soldiers), they were greatly perplexed.

When Jesus said, “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,” He used a figure of speech to say that the punishment must fit the crime, a law that predated the written Old Testament and had numerous counterparts in the Oral Law. When given by Moses, it was for the courts to judge a case and render a legal verdict it was not for an individual response. It was known among the Romans as Lex Talionis and had four important elements.

1. The name Lex Talionis was the beginning of mercy for the Romans, an act to establish justice without vengeance although it had long even earlier among the Jews (Lev. 19:18).

2. This law was never administered by an individual, but by a court (see. Deut. 19:18).

3. Even in semi-civilized societies, this law was never carried out literally. Rather, compensation was required for the following:

   a. Injury

   b. Pain suffered

   c. Healing

347. Lang, Know the Words of Jesus. 152.

d. Lost time of wages lost

e. For indignity suffered

4. While this law does call for justice, it is not the embodiment of the Hebrew Bible. Other sections call for feeding one’s enemy (Prov. 25:21).

The ancient law that appears to have been so incredibly ruthless was, in fact, the forerunner of modern liability law. Nonetheless, to make sure there would be no misunderstanding about it, Jesus removed the retaliation element of it. Neither Moses nor Jesus ever denied mercy, but the leading Pharisees and Sadducees were not as kind.

Critics have frequently discussed the issue of several laws of Moses that are nearly identical to those of Hammurabi written centuries earlier. They challenge the inspiration of Scripture, implying that parts of the Hebrew Code are dependent upon the older Hammurabi’s Code. To address this issue, an example of each lawgiver is presented as well as the comment by Jesus in Matthew 5:18. Therefore, the question is,

**08.02.07.Q1 Did Moses quote Hammurabi, and if he did, how does this affect the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:18?**

This topic is beyond the scope of this paper. However, a brief review is warranted since Jesus made reference to a Law of Moses that appears to have originated with Hammurabi. If one assumes that Jesus referred to the Mosaic Law and not to the Oral Law, then, critics say, He legitimized the Old Testament passages. On the other hand, if one assumes that the quotation by Jesus originated by Hammurabi, then the inspiration of Scripture is challenged. To explain this issue, it is important to briefly step into history.

An archaeologicaal discovery that caused phenomenal controversies occurred at the close of 1901 and at the beginning of 1902. A French archaeological team, excavating at the acropolis of Susa (or “Shushan the palace” in the book of Esther), unearthed a seven-foot four-inch tall stele with one of the longest cuneiform inscriptions ever discovered. It was the legal code of King Hammurabi (1792 -1750 B.C.), the sixth monarch of the first Babylonian dynasty. He expanded the Babylonian Empire that included numerous vassal states. To govern properly, he established a set of 282 laws that were uniform throughout the Empire and became known as the Code of Hammurabi, or Codex Hammurabi. These laws were inscribed on the black diorite stele, and scholars believe that copies were made and distributed. The Code became the standard of

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349. See Appendix 26.
conduct and culture throughout the vast section of western Asia. However, some of these regulations existed prior to Hammurabi in the Codex or Code of Ur-Nammu. Hammurabi selected those laws he felt would serve his people best and provide uniformity to his court system on legal and social issues.

Abraham (c. 2000 B.C.), the father of the Jewish people, came from Ur, a city within the ancient country of Sumer (the biblical Shinar). While he predated Hammurabi, many laws of the Codex Hammurabi existed in Abraham’s time. Five centuries later Abraham was followed by Moses who wrote the first five books of the Hebrew Bible. As stated previously, the major problem is that some laws written by Hammurabi are nearly identical to those given centuries later by Moses and Jesus. Note the following:

If a man has knocked out the tooth of a man who is his equal, they shall knock out his tooth.

Law No. 200, Code of Hammurabi

22 ‘When men get in a fight and hit a pregnant woman so that her children are born prematurely but there is no injury, the one who hit her must be fined as the woman’s husband demands from him, and he must pay according to judicial assessment. 23 If there is an injury, then you must give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, bruise for bruise, wound for wound.

Exodus 21:22-24

You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.

Matthew 5:38

While the judicial codes of Ur-Nammu, Hammurabi, and Moses were for judicial conformity, these laws did not prevent or limit the extension of mercy on the part of the judges. Both the Hammurabi and Ur-Nammu (see footnote above) codes are arranged in casuistic form, meaning, the law begins with a statement similar to “If a man…” after which the punished is described.

350. The oldest known code of law is a shorter legal codex known as the Code of Ur-Nammu of ancient Ur. It is of the same geographical area, predates Hammurabi by three centuries (2100-2050 B.C.), and has only 32 laws written in the Sumerian the Law. Law number 22 reads, “If a man knocks out a tooth of another man, he shall pay two shekels of silver.

351. Lang, Know the Words of Jesus. 152.
There is one major difference between the codes of Hammurabi and Moses – and that is one of mercy. For many of the 282 laws of Hammurabi, the punishment for a violation was death, even in matters considered to be trivial today. It is unknown if Hammurabi’s judges enforced all laws to their maximum punishment. However, the Mosaic Code, is overall far more merciful, it restrained revenge, and essentially stated that punishment must fit the crime.

In spite of some similarities, there are other distinct differences as well. Among the Hebrews, all people had equal rights, even slaves. However, in the Babylonian culture were three distinct societal levels:

1. The aristocrats, gentlemen, free citizens, professionals, officers, and tradesmen.

2. The poor and freemen who previously were slaves.

3. Slaves.\textsuperscript{352}

Legislation varied for each level. Another distinct difference from the Mosaic Code is that the Codex Hammurabi deals with outward expressions and actions but avoids issues of religion and matters of the heart.\textsuperscript{353} Many Greek and Roman laws were similar. However, the Mosaic Law is thus far superior as it has both outward expressions as well as issues of the heart. The latter is illustrated as follows,

1. “And you shall be holy men to me” (Ex. 22:31)

2. “You shall be holy for I am holy” (Lev. 11:45)

3. “You shall be holy, for I am the Lord” (Lev. 19:2)

These three examples are a keynote of the Mosaic Law; that men should be holy in deed and action before God, and this is the message that was reinforced by Jesus. Furthermore, when Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said,” He spoke to everyone – Jew and Gentile alike. He gave instructions that one should not retaliate with anger, but respond with love. It is the opinion of this writer, that God ordained some parts of the Code to be copied into the Bible because, at that time, they were part of the universal code of conduct.

\textsuperscript{352} Clay, \textit{Light on the Old Testament}. 207-08. Because the Jews experienced slavery and thankfulness was one (# 10) of their Eighteen Benedictions, for a Jew to call another Jews “a slave” could subject him to excommunication from the synagogue. See Geikie, \textit{The Life and Works of Christ}. 2:304.

\textsuperscript{353} Adams, \textit{Ancient Records}. 65.
If an injury and death occurred, even if it was accidental, a member of an injured clan or tribe had the duty to bring justice to the guilty party. The Old Testament phrase specifically stated this to keep angered justice from becoming a vengeful blood feud. All too often, the punishment far exceeded the crime and any sense of justice.

In the travels of this author throughout the Middle East, he discovered that this ancient tribal law is still being observed in many Muslim countries, especially in the rural areas. His friend, Imad, in Jordan had an experience as follows: Imad is an academic and by nature, is a very careful and observant individual. One day while driving in Amman, a pedestrian darted out in front of his car. This caused an unavoidable accident and Imad was clearly the innocent party. Yet the police placed him in prison to protect his life, until the family of the injured pedestrian said that their demands were met. Only then was he released from prison. Even though Imad was completely innocent, he had to pay for the damages to his car, the hospital bill of the injured person who caused the accident, and the lost wages of the injured. Insurance did not cover accidents of this nature in Jordan in the late 20th century.

Hammurabi’s Law Code was not limited to ancient Babylon, because many surrounding people groups eventually adopted some form of it. In 2010 Israeli archaeologists digging at a site in Hazor discovered two fragments of a clay tablet written in Akkadian cuneiform that parallels portions of Hammurabi’s decrees. The fragments contained the “tooth for a tooth” provision that appears to be parallel to the Old Testament passage “eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.”

The word from Jesus is that it was time to lay aside the tribal laws and live with compassion and mercy.

Did Moses copy part of the Hammurabi’s Code? Critics have assumed that he did. However, it was because God ordained some parts of the Code to be copied into the Bible because, at that time, they were part of God’s universal code of conduct that long pre-existed Moses and Hammurabi. For example, when Noah built the ark, he acknowledged the differences between clean and unclean animals – centuries before Moses wrote about them.


“Don’t resist an evildoer.” It hardly seems right that one should not resist evil. The word “resist” is a Hebraism that also reads, “Do not agree with an evil person,” or “do not fight an evil person.” While the word is translated correctly, its meaning is more encompassing and includes Psalm 37:1, 8 and Proverbs 24:19.

“If someone slaps you on your right cheek.” This phrase has nothing to do with physical violence, but has everything to do with insults. Notice that the slap is on the right cheek, not left. For one to slap another person on the right cheek, he would need to use his left hand. For centuries the right hand was symbolic of authority and blessings while the left hand was for personal hygiene and cursing. In this phrase, the cursing hand was used to slap someone. Furthermore, to slap someone with the back of the hand was considered twice as insulting as if he was hit with the palm of the hand.

“Turn the other to him also.” The reason Jesus said to turn the cheek was not to accept additional physical violence, but by doing so the victim disarms the individual who initiated the insult. Disarming the verbal assault with love is the preferred solution to returning insult with insult. The Apostle Paul essentially said the same thing – not to repay evil for evil – in Romans 12:17. Again, righteous Jews at the time already observed this command of love as preserved in one of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

I will repay on one with evil; I shall pursue him with goodness, for with God is the Judgment of all living.

Dead Sea Scroll 1QS 10:18; CD 8:5-6

The Dead Sea Scroll CD 8:5-6 and scroll fragment (1QS 10:18 demonstrate that this command was practiced by some Jewish people – namely the Essenes. But that may have been only to members of the Essene community because their Manuel of Discipline says to love all children of light (Essene members) but hate all children of darkness (non-members).

Other rabbinic writings indicate that it was observed among righteous Jews elsewhere as well. However, the fact that it appears in the Didache, is evidence that the command was taught by the early church, and also for a first century authorship of the book of Matthew (an opinion that critics oppose).

356. Freeman, The New Manners and Customs of the Bible. 412.


Abstain from gratifying the carnal [and bodily] impulses. When anyone gives you a blow on the right cheek, turn to him the other as well, and be perfect; when anyone forces you to go one mile with him, go two with him; when anyone takes your cloak away, give him your coat also; when anyone robs you of your property, demand no return.

*Didache (Teaching of the Twelve Apostles) 1:4*

“For the one who wants to sue you.” The Jews had a village court where the *magista* served as a judge. However, if a case came before a higher court, the oath was imposed upon those who testified by one called a *dawar*. While there was a judicial system, the Talmud was highly critical of the Jew who took another Jew to court, especially in a heathen court where the oath was pronounced in honor of a pagan god.

“Shirt, let him have your coat as well.” The coat, known as a *cetoneth*, was the ancient outer garment. Not wearing one was considered being “naked,” as only the inner garment was then worn. If an outer garment was held for security or pledge for any reason, Mosaic Law (Ex. 22:26-27) required it to be returned by nightfall. Poetic parallelism of Matthew 5:38-42 was used by Jesus to as a memory tool condemning vengeance and vindictiveness. This literary device is also found in the Inter-Testamental book of the *Testament of Benjamin*.

See then, my children, what is the goal of the good man? Be imitators of him in his goodness because of his compassion, in order that you may wear crowns of glory.

For a good man does not have a blind eye,
but is merciful to all, even though they may be sinners.
And even if persons plot against him for evil ends,
by doing good this man conquers evil, being watched over by God.

He loves those who wrong him
as he loves his own life.
If anyone glorifies himself,
he holds no envy.
If anyone become rich,
he is not jealous.

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359. Babylonian Talmud, *Baba Kamma* 113B.

360. See 15.02.09.Q1

361. 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.
If anyone is brave,  
    he praises him.  
He loves the moderate person;  
    he shows mercy to the impoverished;  
To the ill he shows compassion;  
    he fears God.  
He loves the person who has the gift of a good spirit  
    as he loves his own life.  

Testament of Benjamin 4:1-5

“And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two.” The word forces is from the Greek term aggareuein, meaning to compel. The origin of the word is from a Persian custom when couriers were authorized to force anyone into service for them, if assistance was needed. This practice was later adopted by the Romans. In the Roman world, a soldier could command any peasant into service immediately and he would have to carry whatever load was demanded of him. However, to protect the citizen from military abuse, the soldier could demand that the load be carried only one mile. This is precisely what happened to Simon of Cyrene when a Roman soldier compelled him to carry the cross for Jesus to Calvary. Jesus stated that the generosity of His followers should perform the task to a greater measure than that which was permitted or requested. Therein would the gracious love and kindness of God flow through the faithful believer and be revealed to the lost sinner.

08.02.07.Q2 Who challenged Jesus in various public discussions?

Scholars believe moderate Pharisees were followers of the School of Hillel, but those who frequently challenged Jesus were:

1. Wealthy leading Pharisee; the aristocratic elders of this sect,

2. Spies for the Herodian families (Herodians) and

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3. Followers of the School of Shammai

4. The Sadducees

As has been previously stated, while the total number of Pharisees was only six thousand, they were quite influential in shaping the religious structure of the culture. Modern students often condemn all of them for being hypocritical, but Jesus said this only of the leaders of the sect. The common Pharisees who ruled the local synagogues were kind and caring men who performed their duties as best as they could. However, many were manipulated by their leadership.

08.02.08 Mt. 5:43-47; Lk. 6:34-36; Mt. 5:48

LOVE FOR ENEMIES

Mt. 43 “You have heard that it was said, 
“Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.”

44 But I tell you, 
love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

45 so that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.

For He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, 
and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

46 For if you love those who love you, 
what reward will you have? 
Don’t even the tax collectors do the same?

47 And if you greet only your brothers, 
what are you doing out of the ordinary? 
Don’t even the Gentiles do the same?

Lk. 34 And if you lend to those 
from whom you expect to receive, 
what credit is that to you?


367. Josephus, Antiquities 17.2.4.
Even sinners lend to sinners to be repaid in full.

35 But love your enemies do what is good, and lend, expecting nothing in return.

Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

Mt. 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

“Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” Jesus was referring to both the written and oral laws. The first part was recorded in Leviticus 19:18, while the other was in the Oral Law and reflected the popular thinking of the elite concerning non-Jews (cf. Lev. 19:33-34; Ex. 23:4-5). Non-Jews were considered both as enemies and sinners. These words of Jesus were not only directed to these elitists, but also to the Essene movement, which explicitly commanded its members to love each other and hate all outsiders, including other Jews. Yet this concept was not a “new” idea, but was a common teaching in Jewish history and appeared in some pre-Christian writings.

“Love your enemies.” This command is distinctively different from many other commands in rabbinic writings. The love espoused by Jesus is a hallmark of divine significance. It was already understood that God desired His people to love their neighbors (Lev. 19:18). The word “neighbors,” however, had a narrow definition. The Jews desired an explanation to which Jesus responded with the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:25ff). According to Jesus, true love will cause the believer to pray for his enemy and persecutor and, thereby, reflect the loving character of God Himself. Here Jesus breaks all boundaries of the traditional concept of who needed to be loved and who would be rejected. The early church fathers had an interesting parallel to this in the early second century:

368. See the Dead Sea Scrolls 1QS 1:4,10; 2:4-9; 1QM 4:1-2; 15:6; 1QH 5:4.

369. Two examples are found within three books of The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs. They are The Testament of Dan 5:3; The Testament of Zebulon 5:1; and The Testament of Issachar 7:6.
Anything you do not want to happen to you, do not to another.

*Didache 1:2*\(^{370}\)

It is unknown why they placed this teaching in a negative format, but some scholars believe it is because the Ten Commandments were also written negatively.

“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” This is the summary statement of the Sermon on the Mount! Jesus requires perfection from His disciples, but that perfection is the attitude toward godly perfection that determines actions. No one can achieve perfection by his own efforts. Only by the grace and forgiveness of God is perfection acquired. It is a lifestyle of humility, knowing who we are before a perfect God, and a lifestyle of faith, knowing that a loving God desires to be an integral part of our lives.

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370. 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.
08.03.01 Introduction
As has already been noted, a number of Jewish writings have been presented to help illustrate the thoughts and opinions of some rabbis at the time of Jesus. There is a tendency among some scholars today to believe that some rabbis copied the teachings of Jesus without giving Him credit. However, they fail to recognize that many righteous rabbis lived at the time of Jesus, and like Jesus, they too, were interested in living lives honorable to God. Naturally, they would have made comments similar to those of Jesus, because they and He based their instructions on the
Hebrew Bible. The classic example is the Eighteen Benedictions, of which a shortened form is found in Matthew 6.

08.03.01.Q1 Are all rabbinic writings reflective of the time of Jesus?

Clearly the answer is “no,” and that makes discernment of those writings all the more challenging. Critics have often stated that the Mishnah and Talmud were written centuries after Jesus and, therefore, are not trustworthy sources for two reasons:

1. Many evangelical scholars today believe these writings idealize what first century Judaism should have been like and, therefore, are historically inaccurate.

2. Some beliefs of the Jews changed over time toward a Christian perspective and, therefore, these two writings are historically inaccurate.

What critics fail to acknowledge is that many of the Jewish teachings were taught centuries before they were recorded, as these were passed down orally from generation to generation. In fact, many originated before the time of Jesus. The portrait of the Jewish people has so often been stigmatized in a negative manner, that the very idea some Jews were righteous and sincere about God seems to be foreign to some scholars. Mary and Joseph were righteous not only when Jesus was born, but throughout their entire lives and were faithful to Old Testament teachings. And so were many others, including rabbis. Therefore, it should not be surprising that some New Testament and Jewish writings are similar. An example is this: This writer has often asked students what is the first word they think of when discussing the Pharisees. The answer is almost always the same – hypocrites. Yet only a small percentage of the 6,000 Pharisees were the leaders of the sect who confronted Jesus. There were many variations within the world of Pharisees, as illustrated by the differences between the two major rabbinic schools of theology: those of Rabbi Hillel and those of Rabbi Shamai.

371. See Appendix 18.
373. See the video 02.02.01.V “The Significance of Inter-Testamental Writings: By Dr. Douglas Finkbeiner.
374. While there is an element of truth to this statement, for the most part, both views are inaccurate perceptions.
375. See video 02.02.16.V where Messianic Rabbi Dr. John Fischer discusses Jewish writings and why they are important in understanding the New Testament.
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08.03.02 Mt. 6:1

PRINCIPLES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

1 Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of people, to be seen by them. Otherwise, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

“Practice your righteousness.” Righteousness was practiced by the giving of alms (Gk. eleemosune, 1654) mainly by giving to the poor. The term signifies pity and mercy. Jesus presented the three acts of life, at times known as three “Pillars of Faith” that demonstrated whether one was righteous. These were common knowledge, are found in various rabbinic writings, reinforced the Old Testament code of righteousness, and were considered the fruit of a holy lifestyle. These three acts were,

1. Giving to others (Mt. 6:2-4)

2. Prayer (Mt. 6:5-15), and

3. The secret personal discipline of fasting (Mt. 6:16-18)

The Jewish leaders believed that they would have eternal life simply because they were God’s chosen people, but they still needed to demonstrate these three acts of righteousness. Consequently, some of them were proud to demonstrate such in a public display (see also Mt. 6:2-4 below). Two books written in the second century B.C. illustrate the act of almsgiving and it was believed that sins could be pardoned with a “purchase” of almsgiving. These accounts have been preserved in a collection of books known as the Apocrypha. Note the following examples:

Give alms from your possessions to all who live uprightly, and do not let your eye begrudge the gift when you make it. Do not turn your face away from any poor man, and the face of God will not be turned away from you. If you have many possessions, make your gift from them in proportion; if few, do not be afraid to give according to the little you have. So you will be laying up a good treasure for yourself against the day of necessity. For charity delivers from death and keeps you from entering the darkness; and for all who practice it charity is an excellent offering in the presence of the Most High.

Tobit 4:7-11

Water extinguishes a blazing fire so almsgiving atones for sin.

Ben Sirach 3:30

Do not grieve the one who is hungry
nor anger the man in want
Do not add to the troubles of an angry mind
nor delay your gift to the beggar.
Do not reject an afflicted suppliant
nor turn your face from the poor
Do not avert your eye from the needy,
    nor give a man occasion to curse you.

Ben Sirach 4:2-5

Do not be fainthearted in your prayer nor neglect to give alms.

Ben Sirach 7:10

Store up almsgiving in your treasury and it will rescue you from all afflictions.

Ben Sirach 29:12

It is better to give alms than to lay up gold; almsgiving delivers one from death and it purges away all sin.

Tobit 12:8

Giving to the poor is an established principle in the Mosaic laws and was reinforced during the Inter-Testamental Period. By the first century some considered almsgiving as a sacred duty equal to righteousness. This and other acts of charity were considered acts towards perfection.

377. 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.
and becoming “fully righteous.” However, by the time of Jesus, some rabbis said the term “fully righteous” also included observing the entire Torah. A possible reason is that the Hebrew word ṭzedakah can be translated to mean both almsgiving and righteousness. Jesus did not challenge the idea that almsgiving would be a credit to one’s divine account, but He did say that it should be done privately in God’s sight without the praise and credit of men. The cultural meaning of righteousness has always been 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.

08.03.03 Mt. 6:2-4

THE PRINCIPLE OF GIVING ALMS

2 So whenever you give to the poor, don’t sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be applauded by people. I assure you: They’ve got their reward! 3 But when you give to the poor, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

08.03.03.Q1 Why isn’t there a strong teaching on tithing in the New Testament?

The doctrine of tithing has been challenged by some throughout church history and defended by others, just as it is today. Those who claim it is not necessary do so, in part, citing lack of a direct command by Jesus or the apostles to continue it. So why doesn’t support exist in the New Testament?


380. St. Cyprian (200-258) was the bishop of Carthage and wrote (De Unitate Ecclesiae 23) the need to tithe because it was an unchanging divine principle that predates Moses (Gen. 14:20).
At this time tithing was a well-established religious and cultural tradition that did not need to be explained, just as the need for giving alms was not addressed. The belief was so strong, that no one would have thought of going to the synagogue, if he had not first prepared his tithe. Note the words from the Oral Law:

**A man says within his house when darkness is falling on the eve of Shabbath; “Have you tithed?”**

*Mishnah, Shabbath 2.*

The Pharisees were known for tithing. In Luke 11:42, for example, Jesus stated that the Pharisees carefully tithed various garden spices, but neglected the justice and love of God. In the section of the Mishnah known as the *Maaseroth* (meaning “tithes”) is an extensive list of regulations of what to tithe and the “tithing season” of various crops. The Jewish community was evidently in compliance with this biblical requirement.

The New Testament epistles never mention tithing because, in addition to the established tradition, voluntary offerings were sufficient for the needs of the church. Since the early church was essentially Jewish, the members continued the practice of tithing they had been taught from childhood. In addition to the first tithe, there was a second tithe (Deut. 14:22). Known as the *maaser sheni*, this tithe was only on produce, crops, and livestock. It was to be given or spent only in Jerusalem when the family was there for a festival or other occasion. This second tithe could be spent on personal items or given to the poor, to a synagogue, or to the temple. When given to the poor, it was placed in a *quppah*, or poor basket. The *quppah* was

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

382. 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.


386. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 134. Not all Jewish writings indicate that the second tithe was on cattle herds, but mention crops and produce only.


the weekly allotment given to the poor and consisted of food and clothing. This biblical tradition continued in the primitive church as recorded in Acts 11:28-30 when Barnabas and the Apostle Paul sent relief to Jerusalem during the famine of A.D. 44-45.

The extra-biblical book of Tobit contributes an interesting insight to the tithing issue. From the early Alexandrius and Vaticanus versions of this Inter-Testamental book are the following comments:

6 I went to Jerusalem taking the first-fruits and the tithes of my produce and the first shearings, and gave them to the priests, the sons of Aaron, who served at the altar. 7 Of all my produce I gave a tithe to the sons of Levi who ministered in Jerusalem. And the second tithe I sold, and in Jerusalem. 8 And the third [tithe] I gave to those to whom it was due.

Tobit 1:6-8

It should be noted, however, that the second tithe was an annual obligation. Given the seven-year cycle of when fields were to remain uncultivated (lay fallow) in the seventh year, the second tithe was given on the fourth year of a new cattle herd, and on the produce of new trees and vines. This tithe appears to have been given to the Levites, who in turn were to give a tithe of their tithe to the priests. However, it seems that in later Judaism, the definition for this use was broadened and the tithe was to be given or spent in Jerusalem. There was also a third tithe for charity and was paid in the third and sixth year of the sabbatical year (Deut. 14:28-29). Some scholars have debated the second and third tithe and have concluded it was the same tithe that was used for different purposes. So the obvious question is, if the Jews and early Christians observed the second and third tithe, why would there not have been a first tithe?

Some scholars believe that tithing was also apparently an “indirect” factor when establishing a new synagogue. It was the common practice that a group of ten men could begin their own synagogue. But why were ten men needed? It has been suggested that it was because when


391. See also the book of Jubilees 32:8-14, which is dated to the early second century B.C.

392. Mishnah, Maaser Sheni 4.3-4; Jeremias, Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus. 134.


394. In fact, one Jewish source indicates that about this time Jerusalem had 460 synagogues and another sources stated 480 synagogues. The difference in number was probably due to the different decades when the synagogues were counted. Clearly, there were many synagogues in the Holy City.
ten men gathered their tithes, they could afford to employ a scribe who was qualified to teach the Scriptures. Since scribes were generally Pharisees, the Pharisees in effect, controlled or influenced all the synagogues in the country. In fact, after a boy had his bar mitzvah at the age of 13 years and one day of age, he could be one of those men, although his income was rather meager. This clearly suggests that tithing was a commonly accepted practice. However, some scholars believe that in Galilee, women were permitted to be part of the ten members needed to establish a new synagogue, and they seldom were income earners.

Unfortunately, certain wealthy priests were determined to obtain whatever tithes were due to them. Josephus said they even sent out armed servants to the threshing floors in order to take the priestly tithes by force; these ungodly violent acts were recorded later in the Babylonian Talmud. As a result, some lower-ranked priests had their tithes stolen and died of starvation because the “big men of the priesthood” took their wheat. This was especially true in the year A.D. 45 when Claudius reigned, and a severe famine caused the price of grain to skyrocket. The Pharisaic leaders and teachers in local synagogues suffered as much from their aristocratic leaders as did everyone else. The difference between giving a tithe because it is a divine principle, and the tithing demanded by wicked religious leaders, could not have been more profound.

Closing thoughts are as follows: Tithing was never questioned in the New Testament Period, it was simply a continuation of a well-established doctrine. According to Jesus, love would ask, “How much can I give?” But legalism will ask, “How little can I give?” This can be further demonstrated in what a pastor once said, “We make a living by what we get, but make a life by what we give.” Tithing is, in reality, given to the Lord.

397. This is a minority view among scholars, but it is well known that Galilee promoted education for girls and the rabbis were not as restrictive there as those in Jerusalem.
400. Another name for these priests was “men of violence.” See Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.8.8 (181); 20.9.2 (206); Babylonian Talmud, *Pesahim* 57a; Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 98, 106-07.
401. Josephus, *Antiquities* 3.15.3. Some scholars believe the price of grain increased thirteen times.
The phrase, “Don’t sound a trumpet,” is an interesting double play on words. According to the Mishnah,\textsuperscript{404} almsgiving was supposed to be a strictly private affair, so much so that these monies were to be placed into the Chamber of Secrets or in the Chamber of Utensils, both of which were in the temple. As stated previously, the Pharisees who paraded their almsgiving were violating their own rules of righteousness. There are two considerations concerning this verse:

1. In the Court of the Women at the temple there were thirteen trumpet-shaped vessels in which financial gifts were placed.\textsuperscript{405} When a number of coins were dropped at the same time, the clanging sound became known as “the announcement” or the “sound [of] a trumpet” because the vessels were in the shape of a trumpet and made of copper.\textsuperscript{406}

Herein is a classic example of Jewish expression and how it differs from modern ones. The phrase “Court of the Women” was not for women only, as it would be assumed in modern Western thinking. Rather, any Jewish person could enter this court, but it was the limit as to how far women could go, in that they were not permitted to get closer to the sacred temple. Likewise, the Court of the Gentiles was open to everyone, but it was the limit of how far Gentiles could go within the temple.\textsuperscript{407}

2. The phrase, “Don’t sound a trumpet,” does not appear in rabbinic writings. Therefore, scholars believe it is reflective of the influential Greek culture. As such, in Greek theaters, the leading actor was introduced to the audience with the sound of trumpets. There is no evidence to suggest the Pharisees walked around the city carrying trumpets that were blown when they placed money in the collection vessels.

\textsuperscript{404} Mishnah, Shekalim 5:6.
\textsuperscript{405} Edersheim, \textit{The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah}. 137.
\textsuperscript{407} Lightfoot, \textit{A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica}. 1:226.
Jesus equated the method of giving alms by the leading Pharisees with the actors of a Greek theater, since the sound of trumpets was not permitted in the synagogues when alms were given.\textsuperscript{408}

As stated previously in Matthew 6, Jesus spoke of the three pillars of faith:

1. Giving tithes
2. Giving alms
3. Prayer and fasting

In the Mishnah \textit{Avot}, Rabbi Simon ha Sadeek (Simon the Righteous), also spoke of three pillars of faith. These were

1. Temple service,
2. Acts of worship, and
3. Deeds of love and kindness.

Notice the similarities. Temple service was not only physical work around the facility, but also worship. Jesus refocused these and then added that alms are to be given in secret. Furthermore, He stated that meaningless repetition was not a part of worship.

\textbf{08.03.04 Mt. 6:5-15}

\textbf{THE PRINCIPLE OF A MODEL PRAYER}

5 “Whenever you pray, \textit{you must not be like the hypocrites}, because they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by people. I assure you: They’ve got their reward! 6 But \textit{when you pray, go into your private room}, shut your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. 7 When you pray, \textit{don’t babble like the idolaters}, since they imagine they’ll be heard for their many words.

8 Don’t be like them, because your Father knows the things you need before you ask Him.

\textsuperscript{408} Freeman, \textit{The New Manners and Customs of the Bible}. 412-13.
“Therefore, you should pray like this:

Our Father in heaven,
Your name be honored as holy.
Your kingdom come,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And do not bring us into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.
[For Yours is the kingdom and the power
and the glory forever. .]

“For if you forgive people their wrongdoing,
your heavenly Father will forgive you as well.
But if you don’t forgive people,
your Father will not forgive your wrongdoing.

The elements of this model prayer tell as much about us as about God. It is commonly called the “Lord’s Prayer,” but in reality, it is the Disciple’s Prayer. Virtually every element of this prayer has a connection with Jewish prayer tradition. For example, Matthew 6:13 is echoed in Benediction 6 and verse 11 is echoed in Benediction 9 of the Eighteen Benedictions. Matthew 6:9-13 has echoes from Proverbs 30:7-9. Yet amazingly, Jesus omitted the weekly requirements of scheduled fasts and ritual prayers that were so important to the Pharisees, especially those of the School of Shammai.

The Lord’s Prayer has been used to establish the pattern for prayer throughout church history. There are two forms of it (Mt. 6:9-13; Lk. 11:2-4) and the early church fathers had a third

409. It is interesting that dancing is the only kind of expression of praise and prayer that is not in the New Testament. In the Hebrew Bible there are eleven Hebrew verb roots related to dancing. For example, the verb bul, means to whirl, to dance, or to writhe, is found in Psalm 87:7. The fact, that there are so many expressions has led some scholars to conclude that the Israelites may have developed an advanced stage of choreography. Pilch, The Cultural Dictionary of the Bible. 124-25.


411. The Eighteen Benedictions were prayers that were prayed three times every day. See Appendix 18 “Eighteen Benedictions.” See also Byargeon, “Echoes of Wisdom in the Lord’s Prayer (Matt 6:9-13).” 353-66.
All three versions are simple, to the point, and are reflective of the prayers found in the rich Jewish traditions. Jesus desired to have His disciples continue the important points of the Jewish faith, while eliminating the dead traditional elements. Scholars believe the model prayer was composed entirely of selections of various liturgical prayers already in use in daily life. This is opposite to the spontaneous prayers often believed today to be the only ones heard by God.

For centuries it was the custom to pray three times a day, just as observant Muslims today face Mecca and pray five times a day. David prayed three times a day (Ps. 55:17) and Daniel, while in Babylon did likewise, facing Jerusalem (Dan. 6:10). Prayer was always a dedicated feature of Orthodox Judaism. The model prayer was prayed three times every day by the first Jewish believers\textsuperscript{413} when the temple trumpets blew signaling the formal times of prayer. These were as follows:

1. The morning prayers, called the \textit{Shacharit}, at 9:00 o’clock, occurred at the time of the morning sacrifice in the temple. It was at this time of prayer that the Holy Spirit fell on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:15).
2. The 12:00 o’clock noon prayer was known as the \textit{Mincha}, also known as the “sixth hour, “when Peter prayed (Acts 10:9).\textsuperscript{414}
3. The afternoon (also known as the “evening”) prayer was the \textit{Maariv} at 3:00 o’clock,\textsuperscript{415} known as the “ninth hour.”\textsuperscript{416} Peter and John went to pray in the temple at the \textit{Maariv}. It was also at this time that the “God-fearing” Greek Cornelius prayed when he saw his vision (Acts 10:3-5). Notice that Jesus never commented about prayers at specific times, as this was the Jewish custom. He did not forbid nor discourage specific prayer times.

The custom of organized prayers at set times has led some modern students to conclude that private prayers were minimal, but that was hardly the case. In Judaism, there was an emphasis on daily private and family prayers. The disciples certainly knew how to pray privately because during childhood, they learned to pray for the daily needs of life as well as the liturgical prayers for the synagogue. They asked Jesus this question because they saw the dynamic results of

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\textsuperscript{412} See 02.02.08 for additional information on the \textit{Didache}.

\textsuperscript{413} \textit{Didache}, 8.3.

\textsuperscript{414} De Vries, “Hour.” 2:657.

\textsuperscript{415} See discussion on “Evening” in Appendix 16.

\textsuperscript{416} Garr, \textit{Restoring Our Lost Legacy}. 137-38.
prayer in His life and desired the same results. There are a number of points that Jesus taught them.

1. All prayers are to go to God the Father, not to Jesus or the Holy Spirit.

2. Prayer is to honor God and

3. Prayers are to be prayed on behalf of those working in the Kingdom of God (missionaries, pastors, etc.).

4. There are prayers for one’s own needs as well as

5. The forgiveness of sins and spiritual welfare.

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 had been the Jewish custom. The early church recited the Shema morning and evening 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 the Lord’s Prayer, they prayed for whatever else concerned them.

“You must not be like the hypocrites.” Jesus reflected upon the Greek theater where plays were popular. The Greek word hypokrites (5695) meaning actor identifies the person who is not his real self, but portrays himself differently for the approval of the audience. The subject is discussed elsewhere, but the key point is that Jesus wants His followers to pray with honesty and sincerity, so prayers can be answered. Jerusalem had a theater, much to the chagrin of orthodox religious leaders and, therefore, everyone understood the role actors played. The


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

421. Hindrances to answered prayers are lack of honesty and sincerity (above), unconfessed sin (Ps. 66:18); carnal motives (Jas. 4:3); unbelief (Jas. 1:5-6); satanic activities (Dan. 10:10-13); domestic problems (1 Pet. 3:7); pride (Lk. 18:10-14); robbing God – failure to pay tithes (Mal. 3:8-10); disobedience (Prov. 1:24-28; 28:9; Zech. 7:11-14).

422. The location of the theater in Jerusalem has not been found as of this writing, but several seat tokens have been uncovered by archaeologists.
leading Pharisees and the entire class of Sadducees played an important part of the ministry environment of Jesus, and He hated their hypocritical attitudes. He called them “hypocrites” nearly two dozen times, primarily for the following several reasons.\textsuperscript{423}

1. The core issue was that they pretended to be religious when they were not. They equated legalism with righteousness in the way some people today equate religious conservatism equal to a relationship with Jesus. The hypocrite was one who, in the name of religion, broke God’s laws.

2. Religious leaders whose lives are filled with hypocrisy do incredible harm to others who look to their leaders as a role model of life (Mt. 23:13-15).

3. They were arrogant and prideful – the same sin that prompted the downfall of Satan (Isa. 14:12-15). This attitude places one’s self above the needs and authority of God.

4. Hypocrisy, with its arrogance, is in opposition to the character and purpose of God (Mt. 22:29-33). God calls the sinner to repentance while hypocrites condemn sinners, but then perform sins of their own behind closed doors.

5. The hypocrite was one for whom goodness was “theatrical goodness” (Mt. 6:2, 16). They were seriously concerned as to how they appeared to others, and could not care less how God saw them.

6. A hypocrite was one who was prideful, arrogant and often bitter, but hid his true feelings under a coat of deceptive piety.

7. The result is that eventually the hypocrite becomes blind to the truth, believing that his own opinions are truth. He then leads others astray.\textsuperscript{424}

The result is that eventually the hypocrite is a man of divine condemnation (Mt. 24:51). In the New Testament there is no sin more strongly condemned than hypocrisy, and likewise in secular culture.\textsuperscript{425} The religious leaders loved to pray in public where everyone could admire their fine speech and sense of holiness. Note that Jesus participated in public prayers which was a common practice in the synagogues and has continued in the church.\textsuperscript{426}

\textsuperscript{423}. Adapted from Barclay, \textit{A New Testament Wordbook}. 56-59.

\textsuperscript{424}. Gal. 2:13; 1 Tim. 4:2; 1 Pet. 2:1.


\textsuperscript{426}. Mt. 18:19-20; Acts 1:24; 3:1; 4:24-30.
“When you pray, go into your private room.” Jesus emphasized private prayer to develop a private relationship with God. The Greek word for “private room” is tameion, which means a room. Jesus simply indicated that when you pray you should be in a secluded area. It was commonly believed that when a man prayed, he went to a private area, wrapped his prayer shawl around his head, thereby shutting out the world and prayed. During His ministry, Jesus would at times retreat to a private area on a mountain where He could be away from the crowds to pray.

This tradition is centuries old, when the Jews, then known as the Children of Israel, wandered in the desert, they had a large tabernacle that functioned as their temple. Since not all the men could enter the tabernacle tent to pray, each man covered his head with a prayer shawl, creating his own private “tabernacle,” in which he could pray to God. Therefore, when Jesus said one should go to his “room” to pray, the cultural context means he covered his head with his prayer shawl and privately conversed with God. Some translations use the term “closet” even though closets did not exist at this time.

When people pray, just as in worship, they are to pray in spirit and in truth. God, who sees people as they really are, desires to have them come to Him in prayer so He can transform them into His image. He never intended to tell His disciples what to pray, but how to pray. To teach them how to pray, He reflected upon some prayers with which they were already familiar.

“Don’t babble like the idolaters.” The following examples most probably refer to this phrase:

1. This statement was reflective of the worshippers of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kg. 8:36) and the worshippers of Diana in the amphitheater at Ephesus who yelled and screamed for two hours (Acts 19:34). Pagan incantations heaped up names of gods hoping that one would respond (1 Kg. 18:26-29; Acts 17:33; 19:11-20). In addition, many magical papyri have been discovered with repetitive prayers to God and other deities. Those who prayed did so for hours.

427. Lang, Know the Words of Jesus. 86-87.

428. Bock, Jesus According to Scripture. 140.
2. The phrase also has implications of rehearsed lines spoken by theater actors in Jerusalem. Some scholars have suggested the phrase “babbling” was speaking in tongues to demonic spirits.

It should be noted that at this time, silent prayers did not exist, neither did silent reading as both skills were not developed for another three or four centuries. So wherever there was a prayer group, it was literally a joyful noise unto our Lord.

“Our Father in heaven, Your name be honored as holy. Your kingdom come.” There is little question that it was astounding when Jesus used the Aramaic word *Abba* for *Father*, just as He probably used *imma* for *momma* or *mamma*. It was commonly used in reference to one’s earthly father and one’s local rabbi, which is why it is translated as *Daddy*, although *abi* is the best translation for *father*. It goes beyond formalities and adds a personal and affectionate element to one’s prayer life. Yet those first four words are a balance of love and power. Only a few decades later during the time of the apostles, Rabbi Jonathan ben Zakkai, the last disciple of the famous Rabbi Hillel who taught between the years A.D. 50 – 80, used this phrase.

However, to address God in heaven in this manner was a new concept. A standard introduction to a Jewish prayer always began with, “*Our Father in heaven.*” This was to recognize their personal worshipful relationship to a holy God. This phrase was reflective of another prayer known as the *Kaddish*, which began, “Magnified and hallowed be His great name in the world …. And may He establish His kingdom in your lifetime and in your days … quickly and soon.” The phrase, “*Your kingdom come.*” is not a command, but rather, it has the connotation of “may it be” or “let it be.” The same Hebrew expression, found in 1 Chronicles 28:4-5 is relative to the Davidic Kingdom when ruled by his son Solomon and the phrase is translated “to cause to reign.”

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429. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus.* 87.


431. While the term *abba* has often been defined as a child’s expression of *daddy*, language scholar James Barr has suggested that *abba* was a solemn adult address to *father*; See Pilch, *The Cultural Dictionary of the Bible.* 2; Mould, *Essentials of Bible History.* 530; Vine, “Abba.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary.* 2:1.

432. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus.* 362-63.


“Your name be honored as holy.” In the Old Testament there are two ways that God’s name is sanctified.

1. The first is by the lifestyle of a community of believers and

2. By the way God responds to people. This phrase is an appeal that God’s name would be revered regardless of what we do.

Finally, the phrase, “Hallowed be your name,” (KJV) is a poetic parallel to “your kingdom come, your will be done on earth,” because God’s name will be hallowed when His will is done. The key Greek word is *hagiazo* (37), which means to make holy. Another translation is, “May you sanctify your name by the way I obey your will and in the way I submit myself to your kingdom and commandments.”

The location of the phrase indicates the “kingdom” is marked by acknowledging and referencing the holiness of God with doing His will and service. The clause that follows points to the perfection which believers are to attain, that being to do the perfect will of God as He would have it done in heaven. This has at times been construed to mean that anything other than the “perfect will” is sin. But that is hardly the case, as the grace of God works with people to do His will. It was never intended to be a paralyzing command. This kingdom is within the believer and reflects the attitude we are to have that honors God and our desire to be in complete obedience to him.

“The kingdom of heaven is within you.” Our submission to Him is our confession. Near the end of the first century, Rabbi Eliezer was noted for reciting a prayer that stated, “Do your will in heaven above and give peace to those who fear you below.” There was also a common belief that when Israel did the will of God, His name would be sanctified before the nations. Conversely, if Israel did not do the will of God, His Name would be profaned among the Gentile nations.


Notice that Jesus did not tell His disciples to pray, “If it be your will.” Rather, He taught them to think and pray biblically and to apply the Scripture to their lives (obedience). He knew that whatever was to be done on earth was first accomplished in heaven. The prime example of this occurred when He was in the Garden of Gethsemane and death was only a few hours away. It was then He prayed that His incredible sacrifice would be accomplished as was foreordained in heaven (Lk. 22:42).

“Give us today our daily bread.” Our petition is to God, and our faith is in God, who provides for all of our needs. This statement is an echo of the mealtime prayer as follows:

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who feeds the whole world with your goodness . . . you give food to all mankind. Through your goodness, food has never failed us: O may it never fail us forever and forever.

Jewish Mealtime Prayer

The term bread refers to the following:

1. It is synonymous for all food, not just baked bread.
2. It is representative of Jesus Himself.
3. It is representative of Scripture

To pray the Disciple’s Prayer is to invoke all three meanings into one’s prayer life.

“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” The key idea clearly is about forgiveness. Through Jesus we are forgiven (Gk. ἀφιεσθαι 918), from whatever sin separates us from God. The term has a wide variety of meanings, including an undeserved release of obligation, punishment, and other penalties that could be required. It is by His love, grace, and mercy that we are forgiven if we are repentant.

438. Freeman, The New Manners and Customs of the Bible. 413-14.
Our confession and His grace are sufficient to forgive us, as we are obedient and compassionate to forgive others. Another way of saying this is “forgive us of our sins (Gk. for debts is opheilema 3783) in proportion that we forgive the sins of others.” This portion of the Lord’s Prayer is reflective of the sixth benediction of the Eighteen Benedictions, or Shemoneh ‘esreh, that Jews commonly prayed. It stated, “Forgive us, our Father, for we have sinned against you; blot out our transgressions from before your eyes. Blessed are you, O Lord.” The phrase, “forgive our debtors” is an echo of a common teaching as found in Ben Sirach.

“Forgive the wrong of your neighbor, and then your sins will be forgiven when you pray.”

Ben Sirach 28:2

Matthew used the Hebrew word debts while Luke, writing in Greek, used the word sins. The difference is insignificant. The English words sins and debts are both translated from the Aramaic word hoba. Therefore when Jesus, who spoke He referred to sinners as well as to debtors. It should be remembered that each gospel writer wrote to a different audience. The Jews understood that the word debts had a spiritual significance, which needed divine intervention in the form of forgiveness. The Greeks, to whom Luke was writing, would not have understood debts in that context, but they did understand the meaning of sins.

About the year 170 B.C., the Jews, who were under the cruel dictatorship of Antiochus IV Epiphanes suffered severe persecution with possible extermination. It was a time when faithful Jews hated their brothers (Jewish anti-Semitism) who renounced their faith in order to escape persecution and death. God intervened in a miraculous manner through the Maccabean Revolt. But in the midst of their suffering there was a righteous Jewish slave who wrote a magnificent passage on forgiveness. A portion of his words is as follows:

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441. See 02.03.03 “Economy” for a brief description of the condition of the economy during the ministry years of Jesus.
443. Barclay, “Matthew.” 1:192; See also Appendix 18, “The Eighteen Benedictions.”
444. Freeman, The New Manners and Customs of the Bible. 415.
445. The book is known by several variations of the name ben Sirach, such as as Ecclesiasticus, Jesus ben Sirach, or Sirach.
446. Bailey, Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes. 252.
448. Young, The Jewish Background. 30.
449. See 03.04.17.
He that takes vengeance will suffer vengeance from the Lord, and he will firmly establish his sins.
Forgive your neighbor the wrong he has done, and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray.
Does a man harbor anger against another, and yet seek for healing from the Lord?
Does he have no mercy toward a man like himself, and yet pray for his own sins?
If he himself, being flesh, maintains wrath, who will make expiation for his sins?
Remember the end of your life and cease from enmity, remember destruction and death and be true to the commandments.
Remember the commandments, and do not be angry with your neighbor;

_Ben Sirach 28:1-6_\(^450\)

The teaching similarities between the _Ben Sirach_ and Jesus of Nazareth are at times profound.\(^451\) That is because both are based upon the same Old Testament Scriptures – but obviously _Sirach_ lacks divine inspiration. St. Augustine made this insightful comment about the biblical phrase:

_Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. What if God should answer, “Why do you ask me to do what I promised, when you refuse to do what I have commanded?”_

_Augustine, The Lord’s Prayer Explained_\(^452\)

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450. Cited by Freeman, _The New Manners and Customs of the Bible_, 415; _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.

451. The framework of a prayer in _Jubilees_ 12:19-20, written in the second century B.C., is strikingly similar to the Lord’s Prayer.

Why did Jesus pray, “do not bring us into temptation,” (Mt. 6:13) when James said that God doesn’t tempt us (Jas. 1:13-14)?

The phrase in question is found in the Lord’s Prayer, “And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” The difficulty is obvious: Why would a holy and loving God want to lead anyone into sin, especially when James 1:13-14 assures us that God will not tempt anyone with evil? This is another example of how a so-called “biblical difficulty” is the result of translation. The word temptation would better be translated as testing or challenging situations, when one decides to pass or fail the test or situation that he or she faces. Another interpretation is do not permit us to go. The English word tempt always suggests a seduction to commit evil, but this is wrong. The word does not mean surrender to evil, but it means a trial or test of any kind without a reference to moral quality. The support for this interpretation is that the Greek word peirazein is better translated as test. The testings of life are not intended to make anyone fall, but to strengthen them. An example is where God tested or tempted Abraham (Gen 22:1).

Clearly, God desires our dependence to be totally on Him. The phrase Jesus used was borrowed from liturgical morning and evening prayers that said “Cause me not to go into the hands of sin, and not into the hands of the transgression, and not into the hands of temptation, and not into the hands of dishonor.” A parallel passage in the Babylonian Talmud reads as follows,

**Bring me not into sin, or into iniquity, or into temptation, or into contempt.**

**Babylonian Talmud, Berakoth 60b**

To surrender to the temptation and commit sin is to succumb to the pressure of the test or trial. In the prayer we are to ask God to keep us strong and keep us from failing. Luke did not record the first phrase; Matthew gave us the second phrase, which is a restatement of the first, for God to deliver us from the evil one or to deliver us from what is evil. The fact that the concept is stated twice is a Hebrew method of declaring its importance. The same theme is found repeated in Matthew 26:41 and parallels, where one is to watch and pray to our heavenly Father that one does not fall under the pressure and trials of life.

453. Carson, “Matthew” 8:172-73; Young, The Jewish Background. 31-32; See also Mishnah, Avot 5:3.

454. Bailey, Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes. 131.


457. Freeman, The New Manners and Customs of the Bible. 415.
An old Jewish prayer said, “Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread” (cf. Prov. 30:8). The Hebraic word for bread (lehem) could also be translated “food,” and, in the cultural context, it means “all of man’s provisions.” Jesus usually taught in Aramaic while the gospels were eventually written in Hebrew and Greek. Modern students may discover that the Hebrew idioms, which present a richer and deeper meaning, are at times missing from the Greek translations. This is a classic example of the importance of understanding the Jewish roots of Christianity. In this case, when Jesus spoke of “bread,” He had reference to all the necessities of life.

The teachings of Jesus point to the desire of God to have people live in holiness. This principle is taught throughout the Old Testament Scriptures and was demonstrated by Jesus. By the power of the Holy Spirit, believers are able to obey the Word of God and not have sin dominate their lives. This has become known as the doctrine of sanctification. In fact, the phrase “kingdom of God,” means that God rules in one’s life. The daily sins that one commits are removed by the blood of Jesus. That accomplishes holiness.

**08.03.04.Q2 Is the Lord’s Prayer of Matthew 6:9-13 the same as in Luke 11:2-4?**

These two prayers are similar, yet different. He wanted His followers to pray issues of the heart rather than memorized liturgical prayers that can easily become rote and meaningless. It must be remembered that Jesus taught His principles in many different settings. Although His words may be slightly different from one location to another, the message was always the same. Clearly Matthew and Luke quoted the same teaching in two different settings, so the quotations may not be identical. (See also 08.03.04.Q4 “Ipsissima Verba” and “Ipsissima Vox” below.) Note the following:

Matthew 6:9-13 (NIV 1984)

>This, then, is how you should pray.
>Our Father in heaven,
>Hallowed be your name.
>Your kingdom come.
>Your will be done
>on earth as it is in heaven.
>Give us this day our daily bread.


>He said to them,
>“When you pray, say:
>   Father,
>Hallowed be your name
>Your kingdom come.
>Give us each day our daily bread

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459. For additional references on the doctrine of sanctification, see Heb. 12:14; 1 Pet. 1:14-16; 1 Thess. 5:23-24; 1 Jn. 2:6; Rom. 8:3.
And forgive us our debts
    as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And forgive us our sins
    for we also forgive anyone who sins against us.
And lead us not into temptation
    but deliver us from the evil one.

Another example of quotations not being identical is found in the following:

**Mt. 16:16** “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!”
**Mk. 8:29** “You are the Messiah!”
**Lk. 9:20** “God’s Messiah!”

Unfortunately, while Jesus did not want this prayer to become liturgical, that is precisely what happened and has continued for centuries. The model prayer was immediately adopted by His faithful followers. It became a part of the messianic Jewish synagogue liturgy and, by the end of the first century it was incorporated in chapter 8 of the *Didache*, a/k/a *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*. This instructional book was written to meet the needs of the early growing church.460 Scholars believe that Jewish liturgy was modified and used in the first Jewish churches,461 especially since the first churches were Jewish in nature and they were reflective of the Jewish traditions.

Some scholars have suggest that since Luke wrote to a Gentile audience, he probably omitted the expression “who is in heaven” because the Gentiles believed the god Zeus Olympus resided in heaven.462 No gospel writer wanted to confuse the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob with Zeus Olympus or any other pagan deity. Modern students are seldom aware of the strong influences of Greek religions upon the Jewish culture. The disciples never attacked other religions, but simply demonstrated that faith in Jesus was superior to other gods.

**08.03.04.Q3 How can the Kingdom of God be a future event if it has already arrived?**

Some passages state that the Kingdom of God is near or present,463 while others state the kingdom will be a future event.464 The two seeming contradictions are explained in that the Kingdom is near or present in part, but will be fulfilled at a future time. Consider these thoughts:


463. Mt. 3:2; 4:17; 12:34; Lk. 17:21. For further study, see John F. Walvoord. *Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come*. Chicago:
1. The present Kingdom of God: The Kingdom of God is established in one’s life as Jesus transforms the character of that person into the image of God. That process is known as sanctification and, since God reigns within that person, the Kingdom has arrived even though it has not fully matured. 465

2. The future Kingdom of God: On the other hand, the Kingdom of God will come at a future time when Jesus rules and reigns over all nations from His throne in Jerusalem. 466 His followers do not know when He will return to establish His thousand-year Kingdom, but there are signs of its nearness.

Therefore, the Kingdom of God is present in those who have committed themselves to Him, and yet it is coming in a future time as a political entity. For additional details, see 06.01.08.Q2 “Is there a difference within the phrases Kingdom of God/Heaven?” Both John the Baptist and Jesus preached repentance, but Jesus added the good news of the arrival of the Kingdom of God.

The unique feature of the Kingdom of God/Heaven is that it is built upon the Old Testament. There are no less than 295 Old Testament quotations found in the New Testament, as well as a number of general references.

A Lesson in First Century Hermeneutics:
08.03.04.X The Mystery of “Ipsissima Verba and Ipsissima Vox.”
Understanding these terms and their use in biblical times will bring considerable clarification for passages that do not seem to be in perfect agreement. The explanation begins with the following question:

Moody, 1974.

464. Mt. 25:1; Jn. 18:36; Acts 1:6-7

465. See Mt. 11:12; 12:28; 16:19; Lk. 11:20; 16:16; 17:21 as well as the parables of the Sower, the Tares, the Levean, and the Dragnet.

08.03.04.Q4 What is the significance of verbal statements, “ipsissima verba” and “ipsissima vox?”

It is the opinion of this writer that the importance of these two phrases have grossly been understated, and unfortunately, sometimes not at all. Knowing how people communicated clarifies many so-called biblical difficulties. In ancient times there were two ways of reporting what was said, and both were deemed accurate. Note the emphasis on “accurately repeating.”

1. The Latin phrase *ipsissima verba* (ip-si-si-ma ver-ba) means the *exact words verbatim*, that were spoken. The modern equivalent is an exact quotation.

2. On the other hand, the Latin term *ipsissima vox* means the *exact voice*. This phrase may not be a verbatim statement but the idea or theme that was spoken is precise. The *ipsissima vox* is more precise than the modern “paraphrase” and, in fact, there is no English counterpart to this Latin phrase. Therefore, any difference in wording does *not* undermine the essential theme or message, because two people might naturally convey the same idea differently.

Ancient writers had no difficulty in considering these two kinds of verbal expressions as identical. The gospel writers were not necessarily interested in recording the *exact words* of Christ, but they always recorded His *exact voice*. This view or understanding of the gospel writers is consistent with the Greek historian Thucydides, who made the following comments about repeating the exact substance of speeches:

> It was difficult for me to remember the exact substance of the speeches I myself heard and for others to remember those they heard elsewhere and told me of … I have given the speeches in the manner in which it seemed to me that each of the speakers would best express what was needed to be said about the ever-prevailing situation, but I have kept as close as possible to the total opinion expressed by the actual words.

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470. Hagner, “Jesus and the Synoptic Sabbath Controversies.” 270. A classic example are the descriptions of Jesus that were written on the *titulus*, which was then carried before Him as He was led to the crucifixion site. These descriptions are discussed later in this eBook.

Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War, 1.22.1*

It is evident from ancient Greek writers that it was permissible to record the primary theme or exact voice (vox) faithfully, rather than obtain an exact quotation or exact words (verba). Scholars agree that the accuracy of the gospel message does not demand verbal precision. An example of Jewish writers conveying ideas without exact wording was discovered in a Dead Sea Scroll fragment 4Q521, which is explained in this author’s commentary on Luke 7:18-23.

Finally, righteous Jews of the time, who apparently were lower level Pharisees, had a prayer similar to what Jesus had suggested as a model prayer. Note the similarity:

**May your will be done in heaven above,**
*and grant peace and contentment to those who fear You,*
*and do whatever seems best to You.*

**Mishnah, Berakoth 3:7**

**May it be Your will, O Lord my God,**
*to make me familiar with your Law,*
*and cause me to adhere to your commandments.*

**Do not lead me into sin,**
*nor into iniquity,*
*nor into temptation,*
*nor into dishonor.*

**Compel my impulses to serve You,**
*and keep me far from an evil man or evil temptations.*
**Give me good desires and good companions in this life.**

**And let me this day and every day find grace,**
*favor and mercy in Your eyes*
*and in all the eyes who see me,*
*and grant me Your best blessings.*

**Blessed are You, O Lord, who grants Your best blessings to Your people, Israel.**

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474. See 08.05.04.
Another example of the exact voice (vox) and the exact words (verba) is the Roman *titulus*, the sign on the cross that identified Jesus, where each of the four gospel writers wrote the same theme but used different wording.

Finally, the important significance of this comparison is that Jesus was not teaching a radical new theology. The Jews had already heard the essence of His teachings. He was simply bringing to them the “fullness,” as promised in their Hebrew Bible and applied to His message of the Kingdom of God and salvation.

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**Mt. 6:16-18**

**THE PRINCIPLE OF FASTING**

16 “Whenever you fast, don’t be sad-faced like the hypocrites. For they make their faces unattractive so their fasting is obvious to people. I assure you: They’ve got their reward! 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head, and wash your face, 18 so that you don’t show your fasting to people but to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Fasting originated as a single day event – the Day of Atonement – as written by Moses. These are a few of his words:

475. See “An Illustration of a Roman Titulus” at 16.01.11.A. The *titulus* was a wooden placard carried by the condemned or by the lead soldier, on which was written the reason for the execution.
29 “This is to be a permanent statute for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month you are to practice self-denial and do no work, both the native and the foreigner who resides among you. 30 Atonement will be made for you on this day to cleanse you, and you will be clean from all your sins before the LORD. 31 It is a Sabbath of complete rest for you, and you must practice self-denial; it is a permanent statute.

Leviticus 16:29-31

Prior to the exile in Babylon, the Jews were required to fast only on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29-31; 23:27-32; Num. 29:7). However, during the exilic period, regular fasts were introduced (Zech. 7:3-5; 8:19). In both the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, fasting is associated with a specific purpose, such as the confession of sin although fasting was prescribed in the Torah for only one day in the year, the Day of Atonement.

“Whenever you fast.” Many Jews believed that fasting was a form of self-punishment that would ward off divine punishment. They did not realize or acknowledge that biblical fasting is the denial of food for a period of time during which the believer is in pursuit of a deeper relationship with God. This pursuit was to be in the privacy of one’s home or a secluded area.

Centuries earlier, during the days of Isaiah, God rebuked the Israelites, because they fasted without a changed life (Isa. 38:1-7; cf. Mt. 6:16-18). Somehow, the religious leaders missed the lesson and had a distorted view of it. In this passage, Jesus applied the imagery of the theater to the actions of the Pharisees who were anything but private with their fasting. The Pharisees did not literally paint their faces when fasting, but they gave the appearance they were suffering and in severe discomfort. As they walked throughout the city in bare feet, un-bathed, and with ashes sprinkled on their heads; their procession was similar to actors of the Greek theater who painted and disfigured their faces to portray the characters they played. The Pharisees prided themselves on fasting twice a week (Lk. 18:12) – on Mondays and Thursdays, when the markets were open and everyone could see them. Jesus opposed this and desired prayer and worship to be in spirit and truth and, therefore, in secret rather than in any form of public display.

476. Neh. 9:1-2; Ps. 35:13; Isa. 58:3, 5; Dan. 9:2-20; 10:2-3; Jon. 3:5; Acts 9:9.
477. Lev. 16:29; 23:27; Num. 29:7.
478. Lang, Know the Words of Jesus. 176.
479. Ex. 34:28; 1 Sam. 7:6; 1 Kgs. 19:8.
“Put oil on your head, and wash your face.” Jesus said the tradition of ashes, appearance of sorrow and discomfort should be set aside and a mood of joy should accompany the one fasting. The placement of oil on the head and the face washing were social indicators of joyful events. Finally, ever since Moses wrote his passage in Leviticus, fasting had been instituted for several reasons as follows.

1. Fasting was connected with mourning when a loved one passed on.

2. The Jewish people fasted after everyone suffered from the results of a civil war (Jg. 20:26). Likewise, it was an expression of sorrow concerning personal or national loss (cf. the destruction of Jerusalem in 2 Kg. 25:8; Jer. 52:12).

3. The prophet Samuel required a fast of repentance because the people strayed from their God and worshipped Baal (1 Sam. 7:6).

4. Moses referred to fasting as an expression of remorse and penitence over sin (Lev. 16). Nehemiah called for a fast of confession of sin, repentance, and asking for forgiveness (Neh. 9:1).

5. Fasting draws the attention of God to the one who is afflicting himself.

6. Fasting is proof that repentance is real, but the potential problem is that fasting can become a substitute for repentance. Ultimately, the proof of repentance is a changed attitude and lifestyle.

7. Fasting can be vicarious, meaning that it is not for the benefit of the one petitioning God, but for the benefit of another person, church, or nation.

8. Fasting increases spiritual awareness which results in one’s ability to hear from God. Amazingly, members of the Sanhedrin were to pray and fast for the court decisions they were about to render. The purpose of prayer and fasting has always been to passionately ask for God’s guidance and blessing with thanksgiving.

481. New International Version Study Bible footnote on Mt. 6:17.

482. As is shown elsewhere in this study, the leading Pharisees fasted on Mondays and Thursdays which were the market days in Jerusalem. This permitted everyone to see that they were fasting, which was little more than a public display of self-righteousness that Jesus condemned.

483. Examples are found in these extra-biblical books: Reuben in The Testament of Reuben 1:10; Simeon in The Testimony of Simeon 3:4; and Judah in The Testament of Judah 15:4. These are found in a larger literary work known as The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. See Appendix 22 for further information.
9. Fasting can be a means of strengthening prayer.\textsuperscript{484} It was a way to prepare for entering the presence of Almighty God (Ex. 34:28; Dan. 9:3; 10:2-3). Prayer and fasting not only brings one closer to God, but should also reinforce a sense of holiness as evidenced by a changed life.

The fast is a physical expression of a heart-felt sorrow. A true fast must be done with an honest and pure heart. Note the words of an Inter-Testamental writer.

\textbf{The man who fasts to get rid of his sins, and goes again and does the same thing – who will listen to his prayer, and what profit is there in his humbling himself?}

\textit{Ben Sirach 31:30}

\textsuperscript{484} Jer. 14:12; Neh. 1:4; Acts 13:3; 14:23.
08.04.00.A. JESUS SPEAKS NEAR THE TREASURY by James Tossit. Jesus spoke on the spiritual treasures of the Kingdom of God while near the temple treasury where many kept their personal funds.

08.04.01 Mt. 6:19-24

SPIRITUAL TREASURES.

19 Don’t collect for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.
20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth and rust destroys, and where thieves don’t break in and steal.

21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22 “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.

23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.

So if the light within you is darkness—how deep is that darkness?

If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

24 “No one can be a slave of two masters. Since either he will hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot be slaves of God and of money.

At this time there was no institutionalized banking system, although there is clear evidence that the aristocrats and super rich stored their wealth in the temple. But for most people, what little they had was hidden somewhere in their home or possibly buried in a field. Since houses were generally constructed of stone, and sometimes of brick depending upon location, thieves could literally dig their way into a house.

“Moth and rust destroy.” The Greek term for rust is brosis (1111) and it literally means to eat away. Therefore, the word “moth” and “rust” are parallelisms to emphasize the futility of earthly wealth. Preventing loss was a major concern because these objects of value were easily stolen or subject to deterioration. Preserving wealth often became an obsession, which is why the

485. 4 Maccabees 4.3; Josephus, Wars 6.5.2 (282); See also banking discussion in 05.05.04.
Apostle Paul warned about getting engrossed with it (1 Cor. 7:31; 1 Tim. 6:9). In fact, all of the disciples had divorced themselves from material passions, something that was most certainly difficult in a peasant-slave culture under Roman oppression (Philip. 4:11-14).

“Eye is good ... eye is bad.” This idiom of the eyes was popular in all ancient Middle Eastern cultures and a modified version continues on today. The phrase, good eye, from the Hebrew aiyin tovah or Greek haplous, meant one was sound, kind, giving and generous, but today it has the meaning of good luck or good fortune. On the other hand, the phrase bad eye, (Heb. aiyin ra’ah) meant that one was jealous and greedy; although the phrase has been changed to mean evil eye.

“So if the light within you is darkness—how deep is that darkness?” How can light (Gk. phos) be darkness (Gk. skotos)? This statement is one of several oxymorons used in Scripture. It is intended to combine words that are naturally opposite, but, when used in this manner, they enhance the meaning of the speaker. In this case, if a small amount of light is considered to be darkness, how much more darkness would there be if there was absolutely no light whatsoever?

“You cannot be slaves of God and of money.” The word money in a general Aramaic or Hebrew sense means wealth. And the passion to obtain wealth often commanded and possessed a man’s allegiance and, thus, became his god. When he finally has financial security, he seldom needs divine security, and has no need to trust God for his daily provisions. Therefore, he cannot serve both God and his financial security. Jesus was often quick to condemn those who had great wealth, not because they were wealthy, but because He knew that their wealth was their security – a substitute for God Himself. The proper use of wealth is to help expand the Kingdom of God.

486. Carson, “Matthew” 8:177.


488. Lang, Know the Words of Jesus. 224; Bock, Jesus According to Scripture. 142-43.

489. Bock, Jesus According to Scripture. 221.

490. Moseley, Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church. 28-29; See Lk. 11:34; 09.02.01; 12.03.10.

491. Barclay, Jesus. 264.

492. Bullinger, Figures of Speech Used in the Bible. 816-18; See Appendix 26 for definition.
Finally, Jesus was not alone in this comment as some Old Testament prophets\(^{493}\) made similar statements as did some rabbis in later Judaism\(^{494}\) and in the Dead Sea Scrolls.\(^{495}\)

08.04.02 Mt. 6:25-34

**AVOIDING ANXIETY**

25 “This is why I tell you: **Don’t worry about your life**, what you will eat or what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Isn’t life more than food and the body more than clothing? 26 **Look at the birds of the sky:** They don’t sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren’t you worth more than they? 27 Can any of you add a single **cubit** to his height by worrying?

28 And why do you worry about clothes? **Learn how the wildflowers of the field grow:** they don’t labor or spin thread. 29 Yet I tell you that not even **Solomon in all his splendor** was adorned like one of these! 30 If that’s how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, won’t He do much more for you — you of little faith? 31 So don’t worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’

32 **For the idolaters** eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and **all these things will be provided for you.** 34 Therefore **don’t worry about tomorrow,** because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

There are certain key words and phrases that stand out in the gospels. One of them is “pray,” because Jesus often went somewhere to be alone to pray. Another is the term “don’t worry.” This term not only suggests His strength and poise that is to be within the believer, but is also an encouragement of faith. Over and over again Jesus told His disciples not to worry as there is only one supreme concern and that is the issues of the Spirit. It is a step of spiritual maturity when one can stop worrying and face challenges in faith. That does not negate honest concern about an issue, but the crippling effect of worry reflects lack of faith in God. The next step in maturity is to seek first the Kingdom of God (Mt. 6:33), that is, to pray about and accomplish the tasks

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\(^{493}\) Amos 5:10-12; Isa. 1:22-23; 5:8-10.

\(^{494}\) 1 Enoch 92-105.

assigned in building the Kingdom of God.

“Don’t worry about your life.” These words must have sounded like some kind of humor because was explosive tension between the Romans and Jews. In the midst of Roman occupation, high taxation, and economic stress, Jesus commented on the essential elements of life, which God continues to provide for His own. The Jews, and especially Jesus, were constantly under the watchful eye of the Romans, as well as the Herodian spies. In this explosive social setting, Jesus essentially said, “Do not worry about your life, God will take care of you.” The concept is simply an extension of His words on the fulfillment of the Law (Mt. 5:1-48; cf. 6:19, 24), where phrases such as “lay up treasures in heaven” and “serve God,” are in close context with this teaching.

On the other hand, this statement does not negate the curse of being lazy, apathetic, or indifferent. It means that believers ought to focus their faith in and devotion to God, while working toward the necessities of life and family. Neither does it mean that one should not plan for the future. Noah planned to build a boat, but did not worry about it even when under tremendous social pressure and ridicule. The Apostle Paul planned mission trips, but did not worry about his travels. Likewise, we are to make godly plans, but are not to worry about them. Being overly concerned for one’s welfare was not unique to the time of Jesus. One of the early church fathers made this comment about the attention given to the physical bodies at the expense of godly matters:

There are many people who exert greater care for their bodies than they do for their soul. But they should devote a greater solicitude for their souls, where the image of God is. When the flesh, which they love so much, begins to be devoured by worms in the grave, the soul is presented to God by the angels in heaven.

Caesar of Arles, Sermons

“Look at the birds of the sky.” Here the Master Teacher connected His teaching with the bountiful beauty of nature. The Holy Land lies between the Mediterranean Sea on the west and what was then known as the northern part of the Arabian Desert (today’s Jordan) on the east. It is the land bridge that connects the continents of Africa, Europe and Asia. This small parcel of fertile land is in the flight path of one-third of all migratory birds, an estimated five hundred million that fly over it every March and again every November as they migrate from one continent to another. This phrase was an excellent illustration of the love and care of God.

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496. Thomas, The Golden Treasury of Patristic Quotations: From 50 – 750 A.D. 262; Note: the term “Caesar” was a family name, but it became the title of the emperor who had the same family name. This Caesar was not affiliated with the Roman monarchy.

“Cubit.” A cubit is a distance measurement, but here Jesus used it as a figure of speech concerning time.

“The wildflowers of the field.” Only Switzerland has more natural wildflowers than Israel. Israel’s beauty is phenomenal by the time the winter rains end, but by late April and early May the hot, dry sirocco winds from the eastern desert dry them up quickly. The withered plants were harvested and used for fuel in home cooking and pottery kilns (cf. Ps. 103 and Isa. 40).

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08.04.02.A. WILD FLOWERS OF ISRAEL. Israel has more wild flowers than any other nation except Switzerland. About the time the winter rains end and temperatures rise (March and April) the plains and mountain regions are a carpet of wild flowers. Photograph by the author.

“Solomon in all his splendor.” The extreme wealth and power of King Solomon was proverbial. People spoke of him as they did of his legendary father King David and the great international empire he established. The conclusion of this passage is that one's life is to be focused on God in all daily activities (Mt. 6:33). These words were probably applauded by the

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499. 1 Kg. 3:12-13; 4:21-34; 2 Ch. 9:13-28.
Essenes who devoted themselves to every commandment of the Law of Moses, but Jesus emphasized this with kindness and love.

**08.04.02.B. A TYPICAL CLAY OVEN.** A clay oven, known as a *tabun*, such as this one is barely 24 inches high. It was used daily for basic “baking” pizza-shaped bread, which was laid upon its outer surface to bake. Fuel was anything that would burn, although dried grass and manure was the most common fuel. Notice the hanging frying pan, a rare item in the first century. Photograph by the author.

**08.04.03 Lk. 6:37-42** (See also Mt. 7:1-5)

**HYPOCRITICAL JUDGING**

37 “Do not judge, and you will not be judged.

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500. Dead Sea Scroll 1QS 1:1-2; 5:8-11.
Do not condemn,
and you will not be condemned.
Forgive,
and you will be forgiven.

38 Give,
and it will be given to you;
A good measure –
pressed down,
shaken together
and running over –
will be poured into your lap.

For with the measure you use,
it will be measured back to you.

39 He also told them a parable: “Can the blind guide the blind? Won’t they both fall into a pit? 40 A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.

41 “Why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but don’t notice the log in your own eye? 42 Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself don’t see the log in your eye? Hypocrite! First take the log out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck in your brother’s eye.

08.04.03.Q1 Are we to judge or not to judge others (Mt. 7:1 vs. 1 Cor. 5:12, etc)?

Matthew 7:1 and Luke 6:37 clearly say “do not judge,” but other passages such as 1 Corinthians 5:12) indicate otherwise. By definition, the phrase judge (Gk. katadikazete) as found in Matthew and Luke refer to sharp unjust criticism but could also be rendered as condemn not. Since all of humanity is a fallen race, no one has the right to condemn another or to be a “faultfinder.” In fact, God will either judge us or have mercy on us, depending on how we either judge or have mercy on others. The Hebraic poetry in this passage sets the parameters of the meaning of the word. The meaning is restricted to this use and does not have reference to discernment or general decisions that need to be made in human affairs. Jesus did not forbid the discernment


502. Lang, Know the Words of Jesus. 159.

between truth and error in doctrine or in the life of another, but He meant that one should not judge others self-righteously or condemningly (cf Mt. 23:13-39; Rom. 2:1). In addition, Scripture as a whole directs believers to carefully discern false or real prophets, as well as the fruitfulness of others. Based on careful judgment (meaning discernment), there are several situations were judgment is commanded:

1. Concerning those who are sexually immoral (1 Cor. 5:9),
2. Concerning those who masquerade as purveyors of truth (2 Cor. 11:14),
3. Concerning those who preach a false gospel (Philip. 3:2), and
4. Concerning those who are false prophets (1 Jn. 4:1)

Persons who reflect one or more of these and other characteristics or behaviors are to be avoided and, in some cases, they are to be excommunicated from the local church. This type of judgment or discernment was not what Jesus taught in this passage. He was specifically speaking of unjust criticism. Scriptures provides these considerations:

1. God will judge us by how we judge others (with mercy?) (Mt. 7:2)
2. Do not judge by appearance (Jn. 7:24)
3. Mercy triumphs over judgment (Jas. 2:13)
4. God alone is the ultimate judge

Yet care must be taken because one does not always understand all the events that occurred in another’s life. That is why the famous Rabbi Hillel once said,

**Do not judge your brother until you have come to his place.**

*Mishnah, Aboth 2.4*

Furthermore, there are two important phrases that are to be considered: **“Give and it will be given to you.”** This passage is frequently used in terms of tithing to the church. However, note that the context is a discussion on forgiveness, not tithing. Jesus said if we forgive much, He will forgive us abundantly. This same principle of giving forgiveness can be applied to other

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504. See the discussion on hypocrites/hypocrisy in 08.03.04 (Mt. :5-15) and in “Pharisees” in 02.01.14.
areas of life such as giving tithes, offerings, and alms. The second phrase suggests that divine forgiveness “will be poured into your lap.” Men’s clothing at the time were loose like women’s dresses are today. Since a belt was worn around the waist, the garment could be folded to create a large front pocket that could be used to carry a huge amount of goods, such as grain. The blessing of God that would be “running over,” is potentially far more than what could have been placed on one’s lap or pocket.

Concerning proper judgments, Jesus made an exaggeration when He said, “First, take the log out of your eye.” The phrase is a hyperbole, a ridiculous contrast, a statement of over-emphasis involving a word play of “speck” and “log/plank”\(^5\) to dramatize a point. In essence, Jesus said that we should take a tree or large piece of timber out of our own eye before taking a toothpick or splinter out of the eye of another, meaning that before attempting to help someone else, one had to clean up his own life. No one has the right to judge another’s conduct or motive until his own life has been cleaned up, then righteous men and women are to use discernment in their judgments of others. Therefore, there are times when judgments according to divine principles are in order.

08.04.04 Mt. 7:6

INAPPROPRIATE CONCERN

6 Don’t give what is holy to dogs
   Or toss your pearls before pigs,
   Or they will trample them with their feet,
   turn, and tear you to pieces.

“Don’t give what is holy to dogs.” The word *dog* was a degrading term used by Jews when speaking of a non-Jewish person.\(^6\) Today the phrase, “going to the dogs” meaning, “to ruin” comes from this phrase. But more degrading than the word “dog,” was an association with pigs. The Jews considered pigs the most unclean animal and on their list of forbidden foods.\(^7\) What is sacred is, of course, of great value and in this parable is compared to the high value of pearls. The poetic parallel form is obvious. The analogy is that the good things of God should not be taken lightly.

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506. Ex. 22:31; 1 Kings 21:23; Ps. 22:16, 20; 59:14; 68:23; Jer. 15:3; Mt. 15:26-27; Mk. 7:27-28; Lk. 16:21; Phil. 3:2; Rev. 22:15.

507. Lev. 11:7; Isa. 65:4; 66:3, 17; Lk. 15:15-16.
The problem with this verse is that it appears to demand a level of exclusiveness even though Jesus is the Savior for everyone. The early church interpreted it in two ways.

1. Some said that this passage was written for the Jews, since the term *dogs* was believed to refer to Gentiles. Therefore, if a Gentile desired to become a believer, first he had to become a Jew, accept the Law, and be circumcised. Only then could he be accepted as a believer. This issue of Gentiles first becoming Jews before becoming Christians eventually became the subject of debate at the first church counsel in Jerusalem.

2. Others believed that since the followers of Jesus were under constant threat of persecution, the term *dogs* was applied to anyone who betrayed fellow Jews or persecuted them.

In the decades following the ascension of Jesus, there was severe persecution of Christians. Because of this and the loss of key leaders to martyrdom, pastors were forced to

1. Examine new converts carefully to insure that they were genuine converts and

2. Make sure all who professed to be believers still held to the orthodox doctrines of faith.  

Matthew 7:6 quickly became a significant guidepost for admitting some and prohibiting others from attending the Lord’s Table, that is, the Eucharist. As church growth exploded, many false teachers entered various congregations and caused chaos and confusion. Tertullian complained that popular false teachers and heretics permitted everyone to our Lord’s Table, similar to “Open Communion” practiced by many churches today. He said,

**That which is holy they will cast to the dogs, and pearls to swine.**

*Tertullian, De Praescriptione 41*

The early church not only underscored the exclusiveness of our Lord’s Table, but also made a reference to Matthew 7:6 as follows.

**Let no one eat and drink from your Eucharist but those baptized in the name of the Lord: to this, too, the saying of the Lord is applicable, “Do not give to dogs what is sacred.”**

*Didache 9:5*

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508. This practice by pastors continues today in many areas of the world where believers are persecuted and martyred.
The gospel message was available to everyone. However, to become a part of the inner circle of believers and partake of the Communion Table, one had to show evidence of a changed and consecrated life. It has been said that the challenges that the first century faced immediately after the ascension will be the same immediately before He returns. If so, then church leaders today may need to re-evaluate their open communion policies.

08.04.05 Mt. 7:7-12

**PERSISTANCE OF PRAYER**

7 “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

8 For everyone who asks
   receives,
 and the one who searches
 finds,
     and to the one who knocks,
 the door will be opened.

9 What man among you, if his son asks him for bread,
   will give him a stone?
10 Or if he asks for a fish,
     he give him a snake?

11 If you then, who are evil,
know how to give good gifts to your children,
how much more will your Father in heaven
give good gifts to those who ask him!

12 Therefore, whatever you want others to do for you, do also the same for them —
this is the Law and the Prophets.

“If his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake?” The point of the message is that a father would never give his son a stone or snake
when he needs food. Likewise the Father in heaven would never give His children anything that would hurt them, but desires to give only the best.

In ancient times, bread was not baked in oblong pans that formed thick loaves, as is done today in the West. Some have mistakenly said loaves were in the same shape as stones and, therefore, Jesus made a visual connection. Yet this author has traveled all over Israel and never found an example of this proposed similarity. Residents of Israel agree that stones simply do not look like the thin pancake-shaped loaves of bread.

08.04.05.A. TRADITIONAL BREAD. Many bake shops in Jerusalem and other communities today bake bread as was done in biblical times. The bread is similar to a pancake and is laid on the flat surface of the oven, hot rock, or today, on the outer edge of a 55-gallon steel drum. Photograph by the author.

Once when teaching in Israel, one of the author’s students informed him that rocks were first placed in an open fire to be heated. They were then removed and the flat dough was spread over the stones to bake. The student also showed the author a gas-fired oven lined with rocks. Thin batches of dough were placed on the pre-heated rocks clearly demonstrating that the old tradition was adapted to the 21st century.

When Jesus was teaching along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, He was near the small fishing village of Tabgha. A short distance into the water are seven hot springs that is favorite habitat
area for fish and snakes during the colder winter months. This figure of speech was used because snakes occasionally were caught in the nets of fishermen. This was mentioned by the visiting Spanish Pilgrim Egeria (c. 383) and by Theodosius (c. 530).

Here, and again in Matthew 22:39, Jesus made an appeal to believers to ask their heavenly Father for what they need, and He will provide. Likewise, we are to treat others in the same manner as we desire to be treated ourselves. It rephrases what Moses said fifteen centuries earlier.

**Do not take revenge or bear a grudge against members of your community, but love your neighbor as yourself; I am Yahweh.**

**Leviticus 19:18**

Divine instructions for life have been in existence since Adam and Eve. That is why Abraham gave a tithe long before Moses wrote of the commandment concerning tithes. That is also why some basic principles of life in Judaism and Christianity (i.e. marriage = 1 man +1 woman) are found in other religions. The Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12) is found in negative form in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, as well as in the rabbinic writings. Variations have also been found in Greek and Roman ethical teachings. This suggests two things:

1. Even those who never heard of the Word of God have by consciousness, an awareness of right and wrong as defined by God.

2. The moral, social, and ethical codes of conduct from Noah’s post-flood day continued to be honored until the time of Christ.

Almost two centuries before Christ, a Jewish scribe by the name of Jesus, son of Sirach, wrote a text known as *Ben Sirach*, a/k/a *Ecclesiasticus*. This extra-biblical book has an interesting reflection on the writings of Moses. The following words indicate that at least some Jews were close to understanding the principles of the Kingdom of God before Jesus came:

**Forgive your neighbor the wrong he has done, and your sins will be pardoned when you pray.**

**Does anyone harbor anger against another,**

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509. The Jordan River Valley is dotted with locations where hot springs still exist. The most popular for tourists today are the hot springs resort in Tiberius and the family park of the Hamat Gader Roman Baths at the southeast end of the Sea of Galilee.

And expect healing from the Lord?

If one has no mercy toward another like himself, 
Can he then seek pardon for his own sins?

*Ben Sirach* 28:2-4

Many Jews had already put into practice what Jesus was teaching before He came. One Jewish scholar, David Flusser of Hebrew University in Jerusalem, went so far as to say that, “From ancient Jewish writings, we could easily construct a whole Gospel without using a single word that originated with Jesus. This could only be done, however, because we do, in fact, possess the Gospels.”⁵¹¹

“If you then, who are evil.” This is a general statement meaning that all men are sinners. The sinful nature of people does not mean they do not love their children and want to care for them. So how much more does God the Father care for His children? Jeremiah said that humanity was lost, deceitful, and wicked (Jer. 17:9), but God sent Jesus that people would not be condemned, but would be saved (Jn. 3:16). This is foundational to understanding the Christian faith.

“Whatever you want others to do for you, do also the same for them.” Again, the teachings of Jesus were reflected by some leading rabbis who had an accurate perception that the Law was not to legalize or restrict, but to point the way the heart should be guided. Two rabbis made these comments that are incredibly similar to Matthew 7:12. Rabbi Eliezer said,

Let the honor of your own fellow man be as dear to you as your own.

*Mishnah, Aboth* 2:10

And Rabbi Yose said,

Let the possessions of your fellow man be as dear to you as your own.

*Mishnah, Aboth* 2:12

“This is the Law and the Prophets.” Verse 12 is a summary statement. Jesus again clarified that He did not come to replace the Old Testament, but to fulfill it. He did not replace the Law *per se*, but instructed His disciples to fulfill the *intent* of the Law. The intent of the Law, as well as understanding the character of God, is explained in the following manner:

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⁵¹¹ Flusser, *Jesus*, 90.
Obeying the Old Testament Law = shallow understanding

Obeying the Old Testament Law with grace = deeper understanding

To say that the Old Testament is invalid is correct only in terms of the sacrificial system, as Jesus replaced that system with His body at Calvary. It is significant that all other portions are to be honored as reflected in obedience. On an important side note, it is unfortunate that the Church has adopted a Roman view of Law, that means restriction and is therefore, bad, but fails to see that the Hebrew Bible views Law as instruction and freedom, and is therefore, good.\(^{512}\)

An encounter was recorded between Rabbi Hillel and Rabbi Shammai both of whom lived just prior to the birth of Jesus and during His young manhood. The story is that of a pagan who asked both scholars to teach him the core issue of the Torah. Their responses reflect an interesting insight of their character and belief system.

A pagan came before Shammai and said to him, “Make me a proselyte, but on the condition that you teach me the entire Torah while I am standing on one foot!” Shammai drove him off with the builder’s measuring rod which he had in his hand. When he (the pagan) appeared before Hillel, the latter told him, “What is hateful to you, do not to your neighbor. That is the whole Torah, while the rest is commentary; go and learn.”

Babylonian Talmud, Shabbath 30b\(^{513}\)

Many of the teachings of Jesus confirmed what righteous Jews already knew. Those who opposed Him did so on the grounds that they held the Oral Law in a position superior to the Hebrew Bible. Likewise, they refused to recognize Him as their Messiah.

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512. See video 08.01.06.V by Messianic Rabbi John Fischer who discusses the term “light and heavy” elements of the Mosaic instruction from a first century Jewish perspective. He makes a comment about the definition of “Torah” as it means “guidance” or “instruction,” rather than “law.”

513. See also Babylonian Talmud, Shabbath 31a; cf. Didache 1:2.
NARROW AND WIDE GATES OF LIFE

13 “Enter through the narrow gate.

For the gate is wide and
The road is broad that leads to destruction,
and there are many who go through it.

14 How narrow is the gate and
difficult the road that leads to life,
and few find it.

The idea that the first would be last is the direct opposite of Jewish thought.\textsuperscript{514} Jesus again speaks to the Jewish people about their prevailing belief that just because they were descendants of Abraham, all would inherit heaven.\textsuperscript{515} This doctrine was promoted by the Pharisees who taught that all Jews would enjoy eternity with God and all Gentiles would be damned to hell – but Jesus clearly disagreed.

The metaphors “the gate” and “the road” are reflective of the decisions of life. Jesus spoke of the lifestyle that is grounded in His Word and compared it to the popular Hellenistic ideas and philosophies. The Hellenism of the first century was no different than the humanism of today. There are still two destinies from which one must choose; one leads to life and the other to destruction (Gk. \textit{phthora}).\textsuperscript{516} In essence, decisions determine destiny. The Hebrew Bible has some definite directives on making the right decisions concerning worship and obedience to God.

1. Joshua told his people to decide today whom they will serve (Josh. 24:15).

2. Moses told his people to choose life so their descendants might live (Deut. 30:15-20).

3. Jeremiah told his people that God said that He set before them a way of life and a way of death (Jer. 21:8).

\textsuperscript{514} 1QSa 2.11-12; 1 Enoch 62:14; 2 Enoch 45:2; 2 Baruch 30:4; Mishnah \textit{Aboth} 3.17.

\textsuperscript{515} Fruchtenbaum, \textit{The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual}. Class 17, page 12.

\textsuperscript{516} Barclay, \textit{Jesus}. 264.
Furthermore, Jewish literature, and especially poetry, was abundant in contrasting ideas because it was an integral part of the first century Jewish thought process. Themes such as “light” and “darkness,” or “wise men” and “foolish men” are found throughout both Testaments, extra-canonical books, and the Dead Sea Scrolls. A few of many examples are,

1. The contrast between the way of life and the way of death is found in Jeremiah 21:8 and the Didache 1:1.

2. The way of the wicked and the way of the righteous is contrasted in Psalm 1:6. Similar contrasts are found in Proverbs 14:2, Mishnah, Aboth 2:9, and in the Testament of Asher 1:3-5.

3. Light and darkness is contrasted in Barnabas 18:1 and Dead Sea Scroll 1QS 3:20-21.

These writings demonstrate that from Moses to Jesus, there were always those who were concerned with making godly decisions in life. An example from the second century B.C. era is the words of Jesus ben Sirach who said,

“The way of sinners (as) smoothly paved with stones but at its end is the pit of Hades.”

Ben Sirach 21:10

But the essential message is that most people will choose not to follow God and go the popular route; few will chose the road less traveled that leads to eternal life. Jesus understood very well that decisions determined destiny.

08.04.07 Mt. 7:15-20; Lk. 6:45; Mt. 7:21-23

TESTING RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Mt. 15 “Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravaging wolves. You’ll recognize them by their fruit.

Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles?

517. Lang, Know the Words of Jesus. 225.
17 In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit.

18 A good tree can’t produce bad fruit; neither can a bad tree produce good fruit.

19 Every tree that doesn’t produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

20 So you’ll recognize them by their fruit.

Lk. 45 A good man produces good out of the good storeroom of his heart. An evil man produces evil out of the evil storeroom, for his mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart.

Mt. 21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord!’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to Me, ‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in Your name, drive out demons in Your name, and do many miracles in Your name?’ 23 Then I will announce to them, ‘I never knew you! Depart from Me, you lawbreakers!’

“False prophets.” Throughout biblical history there were always warnings of false prophets and their related deceptions, such as Balaam who functioned only for personal gain. When Jesus preached His Olivet Discourse (Mt. 24) and described the events that would occur near the end of the age, His first warning was to be aware of deceptions. This was especially needed due to the number of deceptive writings and doctrines of Inter-Testamental and Post-New Testament Periods that became popular and have continued ever since then.

“Only the one who does the will of My Father in heaven.” Many of the words spoken by Jesus were common knowledge. An example of a Jewish saying is below.

518. For a partial listing of false prophets and false messiahs, see Appendix 25: “False Prophets, Rebels, Significant Events, And Rebellions That Impacted The First Century Jewish World.”

519. This includes extra-biblical books, but is not limited to, the Pseudepigrapha and Nag Hammadi Gnostic Gospels.

520. Bivin and Blizzard, Understanding the Difficult Words. 43.
Do His will (the will of God) as if it was your will that He may do your will as if it was His will. Make your will of none effect before his will, that He may make the will of others of none effect before your will.

Mishnah, Aboth 2.4

Jesus was generally in agreement with the theology of the Pharisees, but not with how they lived their lives. He was concerned with the corrupt religious elite and the theological confusion that had established itself with the influx of Hellenism.

“Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in Your name, drive out demons in Your name, and do many miracles in Your name?” This passage has been among the most controversial ones throughout the centuries. The primary point of difficulty is that someone who professed to exercise the power of Jesus is unknown to Him. Exorcists often called upon the names of several deities for combined supernatural powers to cast out a demon or demons. After the ministry of Jesus, some used His name for various healings and exorcisms.

Archaeologists uncovered two important documents that bring clarification to this issue. The first is an exorcism invoking the names of King Solomon and Yahweh against Belial and the liliths (devils). Solomon was mentioned because Scripture reported him to be the wisest of all men and had the gift of discernment. By the first century, supernatural powers were attributed to him as well.

[Text missing] of David. Concerning the words of the spell in the name of YHWH [text missing] of Solomon, and he will invoke the name of YHWH to set him free from every affliction of the spirits, of the devils, liliths, owls and jackals. These are the devils, and the prince of enmity is Belial who rules over the abyss of darkness [text missing] to [text missing] and to magnify the God of wonders... the sons of his people have completed the cure [text missing] those who have relied on your name. Invoke [text missing] guarding of Israel. Lean on YHWH, the God of gods, he who made the heavens, and the earth and all that is in them, who separated light from darkness.
The second example is a third century A.D. document found in Egypt that was written by a Jew who called upon more deities than God alone. A large portion of the text was omitted, in which the spirits were repeatedly adjured. It should be noted that the words “I adjure you” is a command that means “to cast out.” The abbreviated form is as follows,

For those possessed by demons, [here is] an approved charm by Pibechis. Take oil made of unripe olives, together with the plant Mastigia and lotus pith, and boil it with marjoram (very colorless), Saying, “Joel, Ossarthiomi, Emori...Come out of such-a-one.” But write on the phylactery... “Jaeo, Abraothioch, Phtha...and hang it around the sufferer: it is of every demon a thing to be trembled at, which he fears. Standing opposite, adjure him. The adjuration is this: “I adjure you by the god of the Hebrews Jesu, Jaba...you that appear in fire, you that are in the midst of the earth and snow and vapor, tannetis: let your angel descend, implacable one, and let him draw into captivity the demon as he flies around this creature which God formed in his holy paradise.” (continued below)

The magical formula closes with the following:

I adjure you by him who appeared unto you O Israel in the pillar of light and in the cloud by day, and delivered his word from the task work of Pharaoh and brought upon Pharaoh the ten plagues because he did not listen. I adjure you, every demonic spirit, whoever you are...I adjure you by God the light-bringer, invincible, who knows what is in the heart of all life, who from dust formed the race of men... I adjure you by the great God Sabaoth through whom the Jordan River flowed backward, the Red Sea also, which Israel journeyed over and it was impassable.

521. 1:1-13 = Column 1, lines 1-13; Martinez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*. 376.

522. The meaning of these names is unknown.

523. A common expression or formula used for the exorcism of demons. See Lk. 4:35; cf. Mk. 1:25, 5:8, and 9:25.

524. Phtha is the name of an Egyptian deity.

525. The phrase “A thing to be trembled at” has a similar reading in James 2:19.

526. The phrase “I adjure you” is another expression or formula to cast out a demon, but is always followed by the deity (God of the Hebrews, Jesus) who has the greater power and authority.

527. It is amazing that this Jewish exorcist referred to the “god of the Hebrews” as “Jesu” but failed to write out the full name of “Jesus.” Since a typical Jew would not use the name “Jesus,” the Jewish author abbreviated “Jesus” to “Jesu,” yet still acknowledged the deity of the Hebrews as being Christ.
I adjure you -- every demonic spirit -- by Him that looks down on the earth and makes the foundations tremble thereof, and made all things out of things which were not into being. But I adjure you, you who see the adjuration: the flesh of swine you must not eat, and there shall be subject to you every spirit and demon, whatever he may be. But when you adjurest, blow sending [your] breath from above [to the feet], and from the feet to the face, and he [the demon] will be drawn into captivity. Be pure and keep it. For the sentence is Hebrew and kept by men that are pure.

*Paris Magical Papyrus of Jewish Origins, Selections from lines 3,007-85*  

“*I never knew you.*” This profound statement is not one of an academic or casual knowledge, but the word “knew” refers to the knowledge of personal experience, as in a close personal friendship. The phrase had specific reference to those who were not committed to Him, persons who did not have a relationship with Jesus yet demonstrated incredible signs and wonders, possibly by demonic powers.

There is a theme of obedience in both the Old and New Testament; that is to claim that if one knows and loves God, he must be obedient to Him. This was expressed by Luke when he said why do you call me Lord, Lord and do not do what you are told to do (Lk. 6:46). The image of a disciple was one who patterned his life after his rabbi and mentor. Disciples of Jesus today must pattern their lives after Rabbi Jesus. Those who chose not to live like Him or obey Him are unbelievers and false teachers. That is why the prophet Isaiah said that the people speak well of God but their hearts are far from Him (Isa. 29:13).

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529. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 190.
What verbal formulas did exorcists use when casting out demons?

It is not the intent to teach demonic formulas or ancient witchcraft, but rather, to present evidence to show that exorcists who worshiped other gods (demons) also called upon the name of God and/or Jesus. As previously stated, the typical prayers of exorcism used by the Jews and Greeks had essentially the same elements.

1. There was the invocation of the names of deities,
2. The use of magical names,
3. The use of a religious object (such as a gem stone or piece of lead),
4. And some form of a religious rite.

Jesus, in contrast, simply commanded the demons to leave their victim. His disciples were told to do the same, but to add the authoritative phrase, “in the name of Jesus” (Mt. 10:1; Lk. 10:19). The command “come out” is the same word used by Jesus in Luke 4:35 (cf. Mk. 1:25, 5:8, 9:25) and was a common formula used in exorcisms. The word “Phtha” was the name of an Egyptian god. The term “adjure” is a formula to command a spirit to act and the name “Jesu” is the abbreviated name of Jesus, the power source used to cast out the demon. Jews had a high regard for the name of God. Even today many will spell the name of Deity as “G-d.” Likewise any Jew who considered the deity of Jesus spelled His name “Yeshua” in Hebrew or “Jesu” in Greek. It appears that some Jewish exorcists who did not believe in the divinity of Jesus still

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530. Witchcraft of any kind is strictly forbidden in the Bible. Deut. 18:10-11; Ex. 22:18; Lev. 20:27; 1 Sam. 28:9 and Isa. 2:6; See also Archer, “Crimes and Punishment.” 1:1031-32.

531 For further study on binding and loosening see 08.06.03; 11.02.08; 10.01.29; 12.01.03 as well as an excellent resource by Foster and King, Binding and Loosening: Exercising Authority over Dark Powers.

532. Arnold, Powers of Darkness. 78.

used His name to perform exorcisms because Jesus had literally cast demons out of people – something the Jewish leaders never denied.

Another column of the same scroll repeats the theme of communicating a command, in the name of God, (Heb. “YHWH”) to a spirit.

1 [text missing] 2 which [text missing] 3 the volunteers of your truth, when Raphael heals them. 4 Of David. Concerning the words of the spell in the name of YHWH. [Call on] 5 the heavens [at any] time. [When] Belial comes upon you, [you] shall say to him: 6 “Who are you, [accursed amongst] men and amongst the seed of the holy ones? Your face is a face of futility, and your horns are horns of a wretch. You are darkness and not light, 8 [sin and not justice. [Against you,] the chief of the army, YHWH will [shut] you 9 [in the] deepest Sheol, he will shut the two bronze gates through which no light [penetrates.] [On you there shall] not [shine the light of the] sun, which [rises] 11 [upon the] just man [to illuminate his face.]” You shall say to him; “Is there not perhaps [an angel] 12 with the just man, to go [to judgment when] Satan mistreats him?” [And he will be freed] from darkness by 13 [the spirit of truth, because justice is with him to uphold him at the judgment. 14 [text missing] not [text missing].

Dead Sea Scroll, Apocryphal Psalm of Exorcism (11Q11[11QPsApa]), 4:1-14\(^{534}\)

These manuscripts clearly indicate that first century Jews had a functional knowledge of using the name and authority of God to cast out demons. In the beginning of the third century, in Egypt, the following lengthy text was written by a Jew who called upon more than the God of his forefathers. A large portion of the text was omitted wherein where the spirits were repeatedly called upon.

Between the first and fourth centuries A.D. the works of several Christian writers were collected and became known as the Apocalypse of Elijah.\(^ {535}\) The authors were evidently familiar with the New Testament writings as they used phrases (2:41; 3:1) such as “man of lawlessness” a common motif in 2 Thessalonians while 4:13ff appears to be dependent upon Revelation 11:8ff. Interestingly, in the third chapter are the works of the antichrist which essentially replicate all the works that Christ did with the exception of raising the dead to life.\(^ {536}\) Clearly, since these

\(^{534}\) 4:1-14 = Column 4, lines 1-14; Martinez, The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated. 377. Words and letters within brackets are missing from the original text, but inserted by Martinez.

\(^{535}\) Charlesworth, The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. 1:721.

\(^{536}\) Apocalypse of Elijah 3:6-10; esp. 3:12.
miracles include healings and exorcisms, the authority of loosening and binding was not only a legislative matter, but also applied to the spiritual realm. There are two distinct methods of interpreting the term “binding and loosening,” and scholars continue to debate these terms today.  

1. Binding and loosening is understood as punishing or absolving men in the synagogue relative to religious law.

2. Binding and loosening is understood in a spiritual context, that is, to bind and loose the spirits that motivate, manipulate, or control people. But what it does not mean is that the disciples, nor the church, have the power to forgive sins or to send anyone to heaven or hell. In fact, throughout all antiquity is the idea that a person can be “bound” by demonic forces, is found in Greek, Syrian, Jewish, Mandaean, and Indian exorcism texts.

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**Video Insert**

*08.04.07.V The Conflicting Views on “Binding and Loosening.”* Drs. Joe Wehrer and David Clark discuss their understanding of this important phrase. Introduction by Dr. Bill Heinrich. () Click here if Internet service is available.

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So at this point, notice that Matthew 7:22 refers to individuals who functioned with the power of binding and loosening, yet were not permitted to enter heaven. The passage reads, “Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in Your name, drive out demons in Your name, and do many miracles in Your name?” The response from the Savior will be “I never knew you.” At issue is the fact that a personal relationship with Jesus is required, and this is certainly more important than having the ability to cast out demons. Yet those who perform exorcisms in the name of Jesus consistently state that a close relationship with Christ is essential in this kind of ministry. One of the earliest church fathers who acknowledged this divine power was Justin Martyr, who lived in Samaria about a century after Jesus. He stated that,

*We [are] believers in Jesus our Lord, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, cast out all devils and other evil spirits and thus have them in our power.*

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537. See additional comments on 10.01.29 “Bind on earth … loose on earth” and 11.02.09 on “Binding and Losing.”


539. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East.* 304; See additional comments on 10.01.29 “Bind on earth … loose on earth” and 11.02.09 on “Binding and Losing.”
Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 6:269

In the early third century, Tertullian constantly and aggressively attacked pagan philosophies and their accompanying lifestyles. In stark contrast, he spoke of the joys of being a follower of Christ and stated that as a Christian, what could be better...

> Than to find yourself trampling underfoot the gods of the Gentiles, expelling demons, effecting cures, seeking revelations, living to God? These are the pleasures, the spectacles of Christians, holy, eternal, and freed.

Tertullian, *De Spectaculis* 29

Origen was another church father of the early third century who recorded the signs and wonders of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians. In one of his apologetic writings he stated,

> By these [the names of God and Jesus] we also have seen many delivered from serious ailments, and from mental distractions and madness, and countless other diseases, which neither men nor demons had cured.

Origen, *Against Celsus* 3.24

Clement of Alexandria was one who warned against such use of demonic powers. He said this:

> Against whom does Heracleitus of Ephesus utter this prophecy? Against night-roamers, magicians, Bacchants, Lenaean revelers and devotees of the mysteries.

Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation* 2.19

The Roman-Greco world believed the spirit world had an overriding influence on every aspect of men. Therefore, when one prayed, he commanded the gods to a particular action and, of course, expected the requested results. In his letters to the Ephesian and Colossian churches, the Apostle Paul referred to the power of Jesus being victorious over demonic powers. It was normal to expect results from prayers and exorcisms.


543. cf. Eph. 1:21; Cor. 2:12-15; Phil. 2:9.
A Lesson in First Century Hermeneutics:

08.04.07.X Understanding Parables

This method of teaching is absolutely foreign to modern teachers and students. It is highly doubtful if any readers of this eBook ever had teachers who taught with the use of parables, yet these were common in biblical times. So that leads to the following question: Why did Jesus teach with parables?

08.04.07.Q2 Why did Jesus teach with parables?

For centuries church leaders believed that parables were allegories – stories with one or more “spiritual meanings.” Today, however, it is well accepted that every parable has a single point on modeling human behavior. Themes or ideas in parables come from a variety of sources, including the Old Testament, daily rural farming life, political and historical events, and so forth. There are a number of reasons why Jesus chose to communicate with parables as follows:

1. Parables connect abstract ideas with real life events; short narratives that make a spiritual point. They are structured from the concrete to the abstract; from the simple to the complex; from everyday objects to symbols or relations. They are used to represent a theological point, a mirror of spiritual truth, an image borrowed from the visible world to reflect the truth of the invisible world. They build up to a climax and are concise and to the point. In other words, a parable is a comparison between a familiar fact and a spiritual truth.

2. One of the most important features is that the use of parables permitted Jesus to speak directly against His critics without making a frontal attack. That seems like an oxymoron (two opposites), but in a culture where hospitality was nearly a sacred duty, confronting an adversary politely was deemed to be a sign of righteousness.


545. See the “Parables of Jesus” Appendix 10.

546. See Appendix 10, The Parables of Jesus.

547. Lockyer, *All the Parables of the Bible.* 11-12.

548. 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.
3. On the other hand, His critics who had an agenda of their own often did not understand the parables because they had blinded themselves to the truth (Mt. 13:9-11).

4. Reading material was almost non-existent and very expensive. Biblical Judaism was a culture of learning by hearing, repeating, and remembering and less by reading, although nearly all men and some women had elementary reading skills.

5. Parables were spoken in a poetic format and consisted of a single theme so they could be easily remembered. Rather than having rhyming lines, parables had either repeating or contrasting ideas and were usually in pictorial description. Lines or phrases could be of figurative language, such as similitudes, comparisons, proverbs, allegories, fables, common sayings, etc. This definition of a parable was formulated primarily during the Inter-Testamental Period, as evidenced in Apocrypha books, such as the Wisdom of Solomon and Ben Sirach, 1 Enoch (esp. Ch. 37-71), and others.

6. According to this definition, it can be understood that many parables, but not all, were historical events drawn from real life situations. One of the abstract concepts Jesus used is the Kingdom of God or, as Matthew recorded it, the Kingdom of Heaven. To help people understand the Kingdom, Jesus used eight parables, drawn mostly from farming and fishing occupations. In His later ministry, He used sixteen parables, all drawn from the daily lives of ordinary people.

For example, impoverished farmers who could not pay their taxes mortgaged their land to the tax collectors. For this reason, Jesus alluded to the debtor, creditor and the prison in his teachings. In another parable, a creditor met a debtor, and when the debtor could not pay, he and his family were thrown into prison (Mt. 5:25).

549. Lockyer, *All the Parables of the Bible.* 10-11.


551. The eight parables are the sower, the wheat and tares, the grain of mustard, the secret growth of a seed, the leaven, the hidden treasure, the pearl of great price, and the dragnet.

552. The sixteen parables are the two debtors, the two insolvent debtors, the good Samaritan, the three loaves, the rich man’s meditation, the watching householder, the barren fig tree, the marriage supper, the lost sheep, the lost piece of silver, the prodigal son, the unrighteous steward, the rich man and Lazarus, the importunate widow, the Pharisee and the tax collector, and the laborers in the vineyard.

553. Lk. 7:41; Mt. 18:23. See 02.03.03 “Economy” for a brief description of the condition of the economy during the ministry years of Jesus.

554. For further study of loans, debts, and how first century Jewish courts ruled, see the Mishnah and the chapter titled *Baba Battra.*
reason why buildings may not have been finished was that local governors at times could not collect all the taxes they desired, simply because the people were so poor. For those who were successful, some buried their coins in a field to protect them from the oppressive tax collector (Mt. 13:44). By the time Herod the Great died, the land and the people were nearly all bankrupt. So parables were very real stories about very real events and people that Jesus used to teach very real spiritual lessons.

7. In a number of cases, Jesus ended His parable with a question to the listener which required a judgment of the situation; then He made further comments (i.e. Parable of the Two Sons; Mt. 21:28-32). As parables were given, listeners found themselves entangled in the plot. For example, the parables of Luke 15 are lessons of sin and grace. The lost sheep, the lost coin, and the two lost sons are subjects of concern, crossing all social and economic strata of society. Everyone could identify with them. Jesus pointed out that sin crossed all social lines and grace was available to every soul who desired salvation. The simple Law revealed divine grace.

8. There are 58 parables in the Old Testament, the most famous of which is probably the prophet Nathan’s parable of the ewe lamb that brought King David to admit his sin (2 Sam. 12:1-4). These and many other parables are found in rabbinic writings that predate Jesus. So when the Master Teacher began teaching with parables, it was a well-established teaching method in the culture. Furthermore, it was a fulfillment of Isaiah 6:9-10.

On a side note, parables were not used in the book of Acts or by early church fathers. Some poems, particularly from the writings of Paul, are said to have been used in early church hymns.555

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555. Packer and Tenney, eds., Illustrated Manners and Customs. 378; See also Packer, Tenney, and White, eds., Nelson's Illustrated Encyclopedia of Bible Facts.
WISE AND FOOLISH BUILDERS.

Lk. 46 “Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and don’t do the things I say?

Mt. 24 “Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on the rock.

25 The rain fell,  
the rivers rose,  
and the winds blew and pounded that house.  
Yet it didn’t collapse,  
because its foundation was on the rock.

26 But everyone who hears these words of Mine and doesn’t act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.

27 The rain fell, the rivers rose  
the rivers rose,  
and the winds blew and pounded that house,  
and it collapsed.  
And its collapse was great! 556

“Lord, Lord.” In this passage Jesus again took on one of the names of God, Adonai, which means Master over Everything. 557 At issue is the fact that people honored Him with their lips but failed to do what was required for them. Therefore, Jesus connects words and faith with obedience. Furthermore, He identified Himself as the One who is in authority, in absolute rulership. To the Jewish listeners, the name Adonai, defined God as the One who was in absolute rule. 558

Many parables are based on Old Testament stories and themes. For example, the two builders of Luke 6:46-49 is related to Isaiah 28:14-18. 559 The essential fact of the parable is whether a house

556. Fleming, The Parables of Jesus. 58.

557. See Appendix 32 and Evans, Praying through the Names of God. 17-18.

558. See “Jesus, the Fulfiller of Selected Names of God” in Appendix 32 for additional attributes; Evans, Praying the Names of God. 17-18.

559. 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
has a secure foundation or just appears to have a foundation. The meaning of the parable is whether a person has a secure foundation in Christ or just appears to have a foundation. This Hebraic poem was written with two sets of three-step parallelisms.

1. The first step in each section (farthest to the left) refers to hearing (or the failure to hear).

2. The second step pertains to building the house

3. The third step is the flood and the results of a good or poor foundation.

There is dark alluvial sand in many areas around Galilee. It is unlike ordinary beige-colored sand which is found in a desert or along any seashore. The alluvial sand develops a firm hard surface in the dry summer months and appears to be solid ground, but obviously isn’t. In the winter when it rains or a nearby river floods, the alluvial sand will wash away like ordinary sand. But just a few feet below the sandy surface is firm bedrock. If one wanted to build a house, the builder would have to take the time and effort to dig through the sand and build upon the rock foundation.

When Jesus spoke of the “wise man who built his house on the rock,” he was not speaking of where to build, but how to build. The point of the story is to take the time and effort to build a strong house. Likewise, we are to take the time and effort to build a strong character – or foundation – in Christ. To the first century Jews, the interpretation was to see the rock as the Word of God and the sand as the teaching of the Pharisees. It is noteworthy that Jesus said storms will come into everybody’s life, whether a believer or not. How one survives those storms is not only dependent upon one’s faith, but also upon how strong their spiritual foundation is. In essence, Jesus was teaching right living to His people and telling them to choose between death and life (cf. Deut. 30:15-20). He did this many other times as well, including at the end of His Sermon on the Mount. The Apostle Paul later made a reference to building a foundation upon the teaching of Christ (1 Cor. 3:10-15).

Ironically, Herod the Great, one of the supreme architects and builders of the ancient world, constructed an artificial harbor at the Mediterranean seaport city of Caesarea, a city that he also built. To create his harbor, it is believed that he took barges, filled them with hydraulic concrete powder, floated them to the desired locations, and sank them. Sea water mixed with the

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561. While some scholars believe that hydraulic concrete was a Roman invention, others believe it was modified from hydraulic plaster that may have originated in the Aegean Sea area in the late second millennium B.C. by the Philistines.
powdered concrete, and artificial stones, or concrete blocks were created. However, during the
following centuries, the concrete blocks continued to sink as a result of the shifting sand on the
sea floor. After a few centuries, the harbor walls disappeared below the waterline.\textsuperscript{562} Today the
ancient harbor is little more than a point of interest for marine archaeologists.

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{black_basalt_sand.jpg}
\end{center}

\textbf{08.04.08.A. BLACK BASALT SAND OF THE SEA OF GALILEE REGION.}
The black basalt sand (from volcanic rock) along the shoreline of the Sea of
Galilee is not at all like ordinary sand. It is large and coarse and only a few
feet below is solid bedrock. The gravely sand is shown in contrast with a United States
quarter coin. Photograph by the author.

Houses were built between early spring and late fall, with the exception of the hot afternoons of
August. Construction was not suitable in the winter when cold wet weather was the norm. A
typical week in winter had two or three days of cool or cold cloudy weather followed by two or
three days of rain, and the cycle repeated.\textsuperscript{563} Now and then came a heavy storm. The key point
Jesus taught was that a house with a foundation will survive the storms of life; a life with Jesus
will survive the storms of life. Furthermore, His overall message was that \textit{now} is the time to
build the right foundation.

The “foundation” imagery of the messiah was not a new concept. The prophet Isaiah spoke of it
and the local rabbis knew those words concerned the messiah. Note the messianic prophecy:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{562} See 03.05.27 and the “Construction of the Seaport City of Caesarea” for more information.
\item \textsuperscript{563} Israel has five distinct climate zones, therefore, the ideal time for construction varied from area to area.
\end{itemize}
Therefore hear the word of the LORD, you mockers who rule this people in Jerusalem.

A 15 For you said, “We have cut a deal with Death, and we have made an agreement with Sheol; when the overwhelming scourge passes through, it will not touch us,

B  because we have made falsehood our refuge and have hidden behind treachery.”

C 16 Therefore the Lord GOD said: “Look, I have laid a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation;

D  the one who believes will be unshakable.

C’ 17 And I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the mason’s level.”

B’ Hail will sweep away the false refuge, and water will flood your hiding place.

A’ 18 Your deal with Death will be dissolved, and your agreement with Sheol will not last. When the overwhelming scourge passes through, you will be trampled.

Isaiah 28:14-18

The message is simple: Just as the cornerstone was critical in building a secure building, so Jesus is critical in building a secure life. A simplified illustration of Isaiah’s parable is as follows:

Section A refers to the covenant with death
Section B is a refuge (house?)
Section C is the divine building material (Jesus)
Line D is the focus of the parable; the inscription upon the believer

564. See “Cornerstone” in Appendix 26.
Section C’ refers to the use of the building material
Section B’ states that the refuge will be destroyed
Section A’ states that the covenant with death is annulled.

The similarities of the two parables are these: In essence, the foundation upon which a house or refuge (meaning one’s life) is built is Jesus. The hearing and doing is the extra effort equal to that of digging through the hard soil to uncover a solid rock. Both Isaiah and Jesus encouraged believers to hear the Word of the Lord, but Jesus also encouraged them to do His Word. Isaiah’s sections C and C’ refer to Jesus.

The rabbis believed that verse 16 clearly indicated that “the stone” is not an ordinary stone, but a Divine Being of some kind. They were convinced the “tested stone” and “sure foundation” could not be an “ordinary” person which is a reason why they rejected Jesus. To them, Jesus looked just like any other Jewish man; His divine qualities were not physical, but were revealed in His emotional, mental, and spiritual characteristics.

From the collection of the Dead Sea Scrolls is a scroll known as the Rule of the Community. Note the following phrase that has an incredible reference to this foundation:

In the Council of the [Essene] Community there shall be twelve men and three priests, perfectly versed in all that is revealed of the Law, whose works shall be truth, righteousness, justice, loving kindness, and humility …. When these are in Israel, it shall be that tried wall, that precious cornerstone, whose foundation shall neither rock nor sway in their place.

Dead Sea Scroll, The Community Rule

The opinions of the Essenes were certainly not accepted or even known by most of the Jewish people, but they clearly believed in the “essential foundation” concept.

565. Insert by the author of clarification.

08.04.08.B SYNAGOGUE CORNERSTONE AT SHILO. The cornerstone was a foundation stone from which all measurements were taken for the construction of a new synagogue. As such, it was an ornamental dedication stone that, when laid, was accompanied with considerable celebration of the anticipated future of the new facility. Photo by Linda Landis.
08.05.00.A. JESUS WITH FRIENDS IN THE HOUSE OF SIMON. Artwork by William Hole of the Royal Scottish Academy of Art, 1876. Jesus is illustrated being seated in the home of Simon, the Pharisee. He and the other guests are accurately shown dining as was the custom in the first century. He accepted the invitation of a wealthy Pharisee and, while conversing with him, a “sinful woman,” a euphemism generally (but not always) used for a prostitute, came and anointed His feet. When Jesus told her that her sins were forgiven, those present realized that He equated Himself with God, for only God could forgive sins. See Luke 7:36-38.
08.05.01 Mt. 7:28-29

CROWD IS ASTONISHED

28 When Jesus had finished this sermon, the crowds were astonished at His teaching, 29 because He was teaching them like one who had authority, and not like their scribes.

Every Sabbath the scribes and Pharisees read the Scriptures and blended their oral traditions into the interpretation and message. This practice had become so widespread that it made the Bible of little or no effect. However, Jesus focused only on the Bible and eliminated the restricting traditions of the Pharisees. His central focus was the Kingdom of God. He contained within Himself a new era: He not only announced it, but created it. His very soul and life was focused on ushering in the Kingdom of God, which would not be completed until He arose on the third day. In the meantime, He shared His life with all who would listen.

“When Jesus had finished this sermon.” This phrase reflects not only what Jesus did, but also Matthew’s literary style. His gospel was written in five distinct teaching sections and each one ends with a statement similar to this one. This was primarily a literary tool since there were no chapter headings or divisions, neither were there verse divisions. The four other “endings” are in 11:1; 13:53; 19:1 and 26:1.

The phrase, “one who had authority,” is often said to have been the way Jesus spoke, His charisma. Well, He certainly had charisma and self-confidence, but that is not the correct meaning of the phrase. In days of old, prophets would use a phrase such as, “Thus says the Lord your God.” They claimed to have their authority directly from God. However, by the first century, no rabbi would not dare use that phrase alone, but would quote other rabbi as well as the prophets to underscore the importance this message. What made Jesus uniquely different was that He did not quote anyone – not a rabbi; not a prophet – but spoke with confidence in a courageous manner and without hesitation. His authority was unlike anything people had ever seen or heard. He would say, “I say to you,” because He didn’t need to refer to any prophets or other rabbis. That was an outstanding change!

08.05.02 Lk. 7:1-9; Mt. 8:11-13; Lk. 7:10 Capernaum

CENTURION’S SLAVE HEALED

Lk. 1 When He had concluded all His sayings in the hearing of the people, He entered Capernaum. 2 A centurion’s slave, who was highly valued by him, was sick and about to die. 3 When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to Him, requesting Him to come and save the life of his slave. 4 When they
reached Jesus, they pleaded with Him earnestly, saying, “He is worthy for You to grant this, because he loves our nation and has built us a synagogue.” Jesus went with them, and when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to tell Him, “Lord, don’t trouble Yourself, since I am not worthy to have You come under my roof.” That is why I didn’t even consider myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be cured. For I too am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under my command. I say to this one, ‘Go!’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come!’ and he comes; and to my slave, ‘Do this!’ and he does it.”

Jesus heard this and was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following Him, He said, “I tell you, I have not found so great a faith even in Israel!”

Mt. I tell you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Then Jesus told the centurion, “Go. As you have believed, let it be done for you.” And his servant was cured that very moment.

Lk. When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

Capernaum was an important garrison town. A Roman military unit was stationed there and the centurion and his foreign soldiers were under the command of Herod Antipas. Centurions were the back-bone of the Roman military – responsible for executing orders, crushing revolts, maintaining the peace. And while the Jews hated them, evidently, this particular centurion was well respected by those under him and he, in turn, financed the construction of their synagogue.

For their success in command they were well paid. Any mistakes would generally cost them their lives. The centurion in Capernaum was part of a larger unit stationed in Damascus, Syria. When considering the economic slavery the Romans placed upon the Jewish people, centurions are represented in a surprisingly positive manner in the New Testament.  

Historians have written various accounts on the Roman military. For example, one historian stated that the Roman military consisted of legions and auxiliary troops. Each legion was made up of ten cohorts or sixty centuries, all together embracing from 5,000 to 6,000 soldiers. The nearest legion was the Tenth Legion stationed in Damascus. According to Josephus, there were no Roman legions stationed in Judea/Israel, only auxiliary units of centuries. Each century was

under the command of a centurion. The infantry and cavalry each was formed into cohorts, whose strength varied between 500 and 1,000 men. The centurion, or Latin centurio, was the commander of company of 50 to 100 soldiers. The centurion most likely was a Roman from Italy and his soldiers were either Italians or mercenaries. Herod the Great would have had similar soldiers as well as Idumeans.

Another historian wrote that 90 to 100 men formed a “century,” six centuries formed a cohort, and ten cohorts (5400 men) formed a legion. The strength of an army was generally about 30 legions. A legion’s officers were sixty centurions, six military tribunes, and a legate of senatorial rank, who commanded the entire legion. In addition, there were special forces such as the Praetorian Guard, Urban Cohorts and the vigils, who acted as police and fire brigade.

This passage in Luke and Matthew again demonstrates the interesting comparison between Jews and Gentiles. While the magi were the first Gentiles to honor Jesus, the Jews in Jerusalem did not even care to see who was born in Bethlehem. Likewise the centurion honored Jesus by his faith, while many Jews in Capernaum failed to recognize Him in spite of this incredible miracle. There were two occasions when Jesus was impressed by the faith of the Gentiles, especially in contrast to his fellow Jews.

1. The Roman centurion (Mt. 8:10), who was in a ruling position over Galilee, and

2. The Syro-Phoenician woman (Mt. 15:28), placed her faith in the Jewish messiah. Conversely, Jesus was equally affected by the unbelief of the sons of Abraham (Mk. 6:6).


571. A cohort at full strength consisted of approximately 600 soldiers, although the word was also used for a maniple, that is a detachment of 200 soldiers. See Harrison, *A Short Life of Christ*. 199.

08.05.02.A. RUINS OF THE ROMAN BATH HOUSE IN CAPERNAUM.
These overgrown ruins of a first century Roman bath house in Capernaum are situated near to what is today the Russian Orthodox Church. They confirm the presence of a Roman garrison and, possibly, a centurion, as mentioned by the gospel writers. Photograph by the author.

“He is worthy for You to grant this, because he loves our nation and has built us a synagogue.” The text implies that, because the centurion was extremely kind to the Jews, Jesus healed his servant. But the centurion was also extremely kind to his servant. It certainly is an interesting reflection upon Genesis 12:3 that reads,

I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse;

Genesis 12:3a

This phrase does not imply that a healing could be purchased, but rather, Jesus was moved by the kindness and faith of this military professional. Most Romans considered slaves merely as living tools and could not care less if one lived or died. But the centurion, who was well-trained in killing men, was radically different and had a compassionate heart.
“I am not worthy to have You come under my roof.” This was an amazing comment for a Roman centurion to say to a Jew. He stood in sharp contrast to most Romans, who considered Jews worse than lepers, pigs, or dogs. The Jews were a captive people, reduced to peasant servitude. The centurion was aware that he, a Gentile, was considered unclean in their eyes. In fact, according to rabbinic Oral Law, his entire house and everything he owned was deemed unclean. Therefore, any Jew who would have entered a Roman home was considered defiled and could not worship in the temple or participate in sacrifices. The Roman centurion had such great respect and faith in Jesus that he did not want Him to become impure by entering his home. The fact that he considered himself to be unworthy is precisely what made him worthy to receive the blessing of Jesus.

“I tell you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.” This was a shocking statement! The Jews knew that, the Assyrians relocated the ten northern tribes to the east and that King Nebuchadnezzar had relocated the tribes of Benjamin and Judah to Babylon. Only a few escaped to the west and settled in Spain and in northern Africa. So obviously, Jesus was referring to the Gentiles. The Old Testament has prophetic blessings for the Gentiles and now Jesus indicated this promise was about to be fulfilled. Obviously the message was not well received. On a side note, to “recline at the table” was a sign of wealth and freedom – freedom from being impoverished and bonded to sin.

“There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Jesus left absolutely no doubt that there will come a time when the unrepentant will be cast into the eternal fires of hell. It will be a place of unquenchable pain, an eternal death that has no end, no relief. This statement sounds like a word that John the Baptist would have preached.

573. Gen. 12:3; Isa. 60:3; Amos 9:12.

574. Other references are Lk. 13:28; Mt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30.
08.05.02.Q1 Who met Jesus, the centurion (Mt. 8:5) or the Jewish elders (Lk. 7:3)?

This narrative seems rather innocent, yet it is filled with cultural implications. It was a common practice, and still is, that the messenger is sent by and with the authority of the sender. In the same manner, if the Jewish leaders in Capernaum sent the centurion to Jesus, in essence, both went to Him even though only one physically went.

This account is an excellent example of social protocol. According to the passage, the centurion sent a delegation to meet Jesus and make his request known. The reason the delegation was sent was that, if by any chance, Jesus would have denied their request, the centurion would not have been embarrassed as he would have been had he met Jesus personally. Furthermore, to insure success in a possible meeting with Jesus, the delegation consisted of Jewish elders who revealed that a friendship existed between the Romans and Jews in Capernaum. This was obviously in stark contrast to the Jewish-Roman relationship in Jerusalem. The Capernaum Jews encouraged Jesus to visit the centurion’s house and, as they were traveling, they were met by a second delegation consisting of friends of the Roman commander. The second delegation pleaded for Jesus not to enter his home, but just to give the command to heal. Most important in understanding this social custom is that these friends spoke as if the Roman himself was speaking. Luke recorded that the Roman commander had such a high respect for Jesus that he asked him not to enter his house because the Jews believed that entering the home of a Gentile would cause defilement. Whether Jesus would have agreed with that, or if that would have kept him out of the house is not the issue. The point is that the centurion recognized Jesus as a very important person, more important than himself. The protocol that was demonstrated was just as significant as the centurion’s faith.

The accounts of Matthew and Luke are similar in a number of points, although the Greek word for servant is different. The word used by Matthew could also be translated to mean child, as well as a servant. Yet there is no problem between the words servant and child. The reason is that not all servants were treated harshly as is portrayed in the media – the centurion evidently had a young slave whom he affectionately referred to as his child, because he care for him, as the narrative clearly shows.

Matthew also said that the servant was in extremely poor health, “paralyzed and suffering terribly” (8:6), while Luke said he was in a near terminal condition, “sick and about to die” (7:2). Obviously, there is no disagreement here, only slightly different description of a gravely ill person. Being dead or near death were often deemed to be one and the same, especially since there was no basic medical knowledge, as is taken for granted today, to determine the difference. And even if the difference between these two states of being were known, there was no medical cure to improve the condition of the dying or near death patient.
The difference between the gospel writers is that Matthew says the centurion came to see Jesus and Luke reported that first some Jewish elders came on behalf of the centurion. They were followed by friends of the centurion, who came to meet with Jesus. The cultural context is that there is no difference between an official and the agent who represents him. But the most important difference is the passage in Matthew which is not in Luke. These words of Jesus read as follows,

11 I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. 12 But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Matthew 8:11-12 (NIV)

At this point, it is important to recall the recipients of each of the gospels. Matthew was written for a Jewish audience while Luke was written for Gentiles. The cultural and religious differences were tremendous. Matthew included the verses 11 and 12 above because these words of Jesus would be most significant to Jews who identified themselves with the patriarchs while verses 11 and 12 would be meaningless to Luke’s Gentile readers. Matthew structured the centurion’s comments because they would be of special interest to a Jewish audience. Luke demonstrated similar respect, but for a Gentile’s interest.

Clearly, the gospel writers were mostly interested in presenting the full meaning of the event to their specific audiences. Other information that would be considered helpful in modern thinking is missing. Therefore, it is difficult to reconcile the two narratives. Normally, one could state that an agent for the centurion would be the same as the centurion himself. However, the details of the conversation eliminate this interpretation. Therefore, the question persists: Did the centurion actually meet with Jesus? The conversation recorded by Matthew would certainly indicate this, but the details may never be known. What is known is that the centurion…

1. Was extremely wealthy

2. Loved and respected the Jewish people, enough to finance their synagogue,
3. Kept law and order in the Galilee region that was the hotbed of Zealot activity.

4. Highly valued his servant at a time in history when slaves (servants) were considered to be disposable property.

5. Demonstrated respect and faith in Jesus.

It is remarkable, that even though the Romans were the occupying power, all centurions recorded in Scripture are mentioned honorably. Among them was the centurion who witnessed the death of Jesus said, “Truly this was the Son of God” (Mt. 27:54; Lk. 23:47), and Julius, who courteously entreated Paul on his way to Rome (Acts 27:3, 43). Furthermore, Scripture never hinted negatively of their military duties.

![Image](MysteryUnveiled.png)

**08.05.03 Lk. 7:11-17 Nain A.D. 28**

**WIDOW’S ONLY SON RAISED FROM DEATH.**

11 Soon afterward He was on His way to a town called Nain. His disciples and a large crowd were traveling with Him. 

12 Just as He neared the gate of the town, a dead man was being carried out. He was his mother’s only son, and she was a widow. A large crowd from the city was also with her. 

13 When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said, “Don’t cry.”

14 Then He came up and **touched the open coffin**, and the pallbearers stopped. And He said, “Young man, I tell you, get up!”

15 The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. 

16 Then fear came over everyone, and they glorified God, saying, “A great prophet has risen among us,” and “God has visited His people.”

17 This report about Him went throughout Judea and all the vicinity.

Jesus and His group of followers left Capernaum and walked some twenty-five miles to the southwest, to the northern slope of a mountain commonly called the “Little Hermon,” or “Mount
Moreh.” There was the poor miserable village of Nain, whose name means *the beautiful*, 575 where they met a grieving widow who had lost her only son – an occasion that was especially devastating for two reasons.

1. The death of her only son meant that she would live the rest of her life in dire poverty.

2. More significant than that was the extinction of her family. The raising of a young man to life, as profound as that was, was insignificant in comparison to the restoration of a first century family. The continuation of a family in the Old Testament, as well as in the times of Christ, was considered nearly sacred. The significance and the sacredness of the family as portrayed in the Old and New Testaments appear to be without parallel in modern English or in Western culture.

Because of the extremely high view of the family in the Bible, when a young man got married he was exempt from military obligations in his first year of marriage. He was given the opportunity to see his firstborn and, hence, the continuation of his family. Therefore, this miracle not only touched upon the core of a broken heart in the most dire of times, but also upon the most sacred of all institutions.

News of the profound miracle at Nain spread like wildfire and quickly captured the attention of everyone including the temple elite. It was the first of three death-to-life miracles performed by Jesus. 576 When Jesus saw the funeral procession, as was the custom, they expected Him to join the family in mourning. According to the Talmud,

*Rahaba said in the name of Rabbi Judah: “Whoever sees a corpse on the way to burial and does not accompany it comes under the head of he that mocks the poor and blasphemes his Maker” (cf. Prov. 19:17).*

*Babylonian Talmud, Berakoth 18a-b*

Jesus shared in the sorrow of the family. As stated, proper protocol required a passer-by to join the grieving family in their loss, even if they were unknown to him. Therefore, culturally speaking, for Jesus to have avoided the grieving procession would have been considered a supreme insult. But He was not about to see the son get buried or a family destroyed.


576. The other two were the daughter of Jairus before her funeral (Mk. 5:35-43), and in Bethany when Jesus raised Lazarus four days after his funeral (Jn. 11:11-44).
“Gate of the town.” Some students have concluded that because there was a gate, there must have been a city wall. Not so. The phrase simply means the entrance of the village. An example is found in Deuteronomy 22:22-24. The context of the Mosaic passage pertains to the punishment of an adulterous couple where verse 24 states they must be stoned to death at the town gate. At the time Moses wrote this passage, the Hebrew children (later called “Jews”) were wandering nomads living in tents and obviously did not have fortified stone walls around their camps. Furthermore, no archaeological evidence of a protective wall has ever been found at the archaeological site of Nain. Therefore, obviously Luke referred to the entrance of the village.

“Touched the open coffin.” The “bier” or “coffin,” was not a closed wooden box as is common in western culture today, but a litter (similar to a platform) upon which the shrouded body was laid. This custom has not changed. In the Palestinian communities today this custom continues and has been occasionally shown on Western television. Jews in the first century had very strict laws concerning ritual purity. At the time of Jesus, if anyone touched the litter (coffin), that person would have been considered defiled and would have had to undergo the ritual purification. However, Jesus came along, touched the coffin, and was not defiled but the dead boy was returned to life. Jesus demonstrated His authority over death and life, and that action was a demonstration of His Deity!

The miracle at Nain had a clear resemblance to the miracle of Elijah (1 Kg. 17:17-24), who raised the son of a Shutamite woman from the dead. That event took place at ancient Shutam, or Shunem, today known as Solani. Some scholars believe ancient Shutam was on the opposite side of the same hill, while others believe Nain was in the same general location as Shutam. Regardless, the imagery was noticed by everybody. This demonstrated the equality of Jesus with Elijah, and eventually, He would perform miracles greater than all previous prophets combined.

There is an observation to be considered concerning the miracles of centuries past and those of Jesus. The prophets of old were instruments of God’s miracles only after agonies of supplication, wrestling in prayer, and finally, laying prostrate upon the dead body. Jesus, in contrast, calmly and with authority spoke only a few words. This miracle would identify Him as being the Messiah and a report of the account would be passed on to John the Baptist. It is interesting to note that, while the Baptist was functioning as Elijah, he did not raise anyone from the dead.


However, Jesus did so with a reflection upon Elijah’s miracle and with unheard of power unlike anyone else in Jewish history. Could these people judge for themselves that “God had visited His people?”

“A great prophet has risen among us,” What the crowd really said was “A great prophet has again risen among us.” News of this event spread like wildfire prompting people to bring their sick to be healed by Jesus. This in turn gave opportunity for Jesus to teach them in the ways of the Kingdom of God – that is, God’s rule in their lives.

However, the term “great prophet” has a significant implication beyond its literal translation, implying Jesus was the greatest prophet (Gk. prophetes) of all time and who came after four centuries of prophetic silence. The Jewish people had long been waiting for a messiah, and it was believed that he would identify himself by the performance of three kinds of miracles that eluded the rabbis over the centuries. These became known as “messianic miracles.” When these were first performed by Jesus, the people were stunned and referred to Him as a “great prophet,” as they could not believe that their expectation had been fulfilled. Their problem was that Jesus looked like an ordinary person and did not match their preconceived idea of what the messiah would look like.

08.05.04 Lk. 7:18-23 (See also Mt. 11:2-6)

QUESTIONS BY JOHN THE BAPTIST.

18 Then John’s disciples told him about all these things. So John summoned two of his disciples and sent them to the Lord, asking, “Are You the One who is to come, or should we look for someone else?”

20 When the men reached Him, they said, “John the Baptist sent us to ask You, ‘Are You the One who is to come, or should we look for someone else?’”

581. Brown, “Prophet.” 3:74-92; But prophetic silence does not mean that God was not influential among His people.

582. 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 06.03.08.V. See also Fruchtenbaum, Messianic Miracles. 4.

583. Research on the “Messianic Miracles” is credited to Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, a Messianic scholar and director of Ariel Ministries of San Antonio, Texas. For further study, see Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, Messianic Miracles. Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1983. See also http://ariel.org/. Retrieved September 26, 2013. See also 06.03.08.V, 06.01.03 as well as 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.
At that time Jesus healed many people of diseases, plagues, and evil spirits, and He granted sight to many blind people. He replied to them, “Go and report to John the things you have seen and heard: The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with skin diseases are healed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor are told the good news. And anyone who is not offended because of Me is blessed.”

Herod Antipas had arrested John the Baptist, who was now sitting in the Machaerus Fortress prison wondering if he would ever be released or face martyrdom. John had been certain that Jesus was that messiah, but now he was in the dungeon with no end in sight. Understandably, he was beginning to question if his perception of Jesus was correct. He never hesitated in preaching the truth; his was the proverbial “fire and brimstone” message, but there was a serious problem.

John was probably expecting Jesus to declare His messiahship or discuss the replacement of the corrupt temple Sadducees. But there were no less than three issues that were problematic for him:

1. Jesus made no preparations for the triumph of Israel or an overthrow of the oppressive Roman Empire.

2. Jesus made no suggestions of the wrath of God coming upon sinners who refused to repent.

3. Jesus made no mention of the encroaching paganism from the Greeks that had plagued the Jews for more than three centuries.

“Or should we expect someone else?” Since John’s message was not being confirmed by Jesus he questioned if Jesus really was the Messiah or if he had been wrong. The Baptist, like most people of today, would have appreciated a simple “yes” or “no” answer. Instead, the Master Teacher responded in such a manner whereby the prophet had to think through the answer for himself. For more than four centuries, the people of Israel had been expecting their political-messiah who would restore their national pride in the form of an empire like King David’s.

A major theme of John was, “Repent, judgment is near.” Jesus was extremely compassionate toward the poor, the crippled, the common folk of the land, and even to the common Pharisees in the community synagogues. Jesus was, however, extremely judgmental of the corrupt religious leaders of the temple in Jerusalem. Since John’s anticipated image of the Messiah did not reconcile with the person Jesus, he essentially asked, “Are you the Messiah who was to come, or

584. The proverbial “fire and brimstone” imagery, was not fulfilled by Jesus in His first coming, but will be upon His return.
The point isn’t that John was wrong in his statements, but that his perspective of time was confused. The apocalyptic and judgment prophecies that John was expecting will occur in their fulfilled time when Christ returns, a point that John may not have understood very well. Possibly, the most significant question that John had was that if Jesus was truly the Messiah, why was he still sitting in prison when Isaiah 61:1 clearly states that the Messiah would release all captives (prisoners)? Furthermore, John knew he was not an ordinary prisoner! He knew from childhood that he had a divine appointment to call the Jewish people to repentance for the coming of the Messiah. He was faithfully executing his duty and expecting the true Messiah to have him released from his prison chains. Consequently, it was important to ask why he was sitting in a fortress dungeon east of the Dead Sea. Jesus answered by identifying six signs that the Messiah would demonstrate, that are as follows:

1. He will make the blind see (Isa. 29:18; 35:5)

2. He will make the lame walk (Isa. 35:6; 61:1)

3. He will cleanse the lepers (Isa. 61:1)

4. He would make the deaf hear (Isa. 29:18; 35:5)

5. He would raise the dead (implied in Isa. 11:1-2, although not specific)

6. He would evangelize the poor (Isa. 61:1-2)

Essentially what Jesus told John’s disciples was, “Go and report to John the things you have seen and heard.” Jesus was not about to make a public or private statement to the Jewish community indicating that He was the Messiah. Rather, He simply fulfilled the prophetic words of Isaiah to let them determine for themselves that He is their Messiah. The answer Jesus proposed was essentially this: “Listen to what I say and do, then decide.” But what John so passionately wanted to hear, Jesus did not mention.

When to proclaim liberty to the captives and freedom to the prisoners.

Isaiah 61:1b

One can only imagine what John thought of when his disciples told to him the response by Jesus, and that the portion of Isaiah’s prophecy about being a released prisoner was not mentioned.

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“Jesus healed many people of diseases, plagues, and evil spirits.” Luke, a professional medical doctor, noted the differences between diseases and demonic possession.  

“The blind receive their sight … those with skin diseases are healed … the dead are raised.”

Not only did Jesus refer to His ability to fulfill prophecies about Himself, but He specifically pointed to the messianic miracles that first century Jewish people expected that their Messiah would be able to perform. Therefore, He clearly but indirectly said that He was their Messiah.

While Bible scholars often compare the expectations of John with the reality of Jesus, there were a number of differences between the two that most certainly must have entered the mind of John. Notice the following couplets:

John wore a rough garment and a prayer shawl (mantle)  
Jesus wore simple dress and a prayer shawl like any other rabbi

John preached repentance within the bounds of the Old Testament  
Jesus preached repentance and full life within the bounds of the Kingdom of God.

John preached nationalism for Israel  
Jesus preached the Kingdom of God for the whole world

John had taken the Nazarite vow  
Jesus enjoyed feasting

John upheld the traditions of the rabbis in fasting, prayers, and washings  
Jesus honored Torah traditions, not rabbinic traditions

The people loved John and believed he was a prophet  
The people loved Jesus and some believed in Him

586. These same distinctions were made in Lk. 6:18; 8:2; 13:32.

587. 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 06.03.08.V and 06.01.03. See also the comparison of Dead Sea Scroll fragments 4Q278 and 4Q521 with Luke 4:16-30 at 06.02.02; See also Fruchtenbaum, Messianic Miracles. 4; Fischer, The Gospels in Their Jewish Context. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 10, Session 2.

588. W. E. Vine is typical of many scholars who have made minimal reference to the Jewish characteristics of Scripture. For example, every Jew knows that the “mantle” was a prayer shawl, but it is not mentioned (Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary. 2:105-06). Another example is the Hebrew term “Torah” which is translated as “law.” Yet every Jew knows that it also means “instruction,” a definition that is missing from Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary. 2:354-56.
John was discredited and the religious leaders insinuated that he was a devil
  Jesus was discredited and the religious leaders said He used the power of the devil.

John did not give a prophetic utterance or perform a miracle
  Jesus gave numerous prophecies and performed many miracles

John was martyred and was buried
  Jesus was martyred, was buried, but rose again on the third day!

These differences, except for the last set, might make anyone question if they were on the path
God assigned them.

08.05.04.Q1 What is the miracle or mystery of Dead Sea Scroll 4Q521?

There is literary evidence that suggests the Essenes believed that an anointed figure or person
would come and bring sight to the blind. 589 Among the hundreds of scroll fragments found in
cave 4, one is most interesting. Fragment no. 521 (4Q521), often called the Messianic
Apocalypse, has a reading that is similar to, but not identical to, Isaiah 61:1-5. 590 Both the words
of Jesus and those recorded on the 4Q521 fragment contain an insertion of one phrase not found
in Isaiah – that is that the dead shall be raised to life. It clearly demonstrates the Essene writers
did not quote the biblical text, but wrote to declare that this prophetic passage would be a
messianic miracle. 591 The mystery of 4Q521 is how did the Essenes know that would happen?
What was their source of information? In both Jesus' teaching and 4Q521 this statement is
immediately before the reference to preaching good news to the poor. Scholars believe this scroll
fragment is a clear indication that the Essene community expected the messiah to perform at
least one “messianic prophecy.” 592 This presents two significant questions for scholars today:

1. How did the Essenes, who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls, know that the messiah would
   raise the dead to life long before Jesus was born?

2. And when Jesus did raise the dead to life, how did the news affect them?

589. Bailey, Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes. 161; Eisenmann and Wise, The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered. 237.

590. Wilkins, “Peter’s Declaration concerning Jesus’ Identity in Caesarea Philippi.” 325.

    324-326.

592. Bailey, Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes. 156.
08.05.04.A. DEAD SEA SCROLL 4Q521 WITH PHRASE “THE ANOINTED ONE” A record of the first century B.C. era of Isaiah 61, provides ample evidence that some first century Jews, the Essenes, understood this to be a Messianic passage. Photograph courtesy of the Israel Museum.

When Jesus responded to John’s disciples, he combined segments from two passages written by the prophet Isaiah: verses 61:1 and 35:5-6. They understood the messiah would rise the dead, even though this was not in the Isaiah passage.\(^{593}\) It is a classic example of *ipsissima verba* and *ipsissima vox* that was previously described.\(^{594}\) This fragment was written about three decades before the birth of Jesus and, therefore, is worth citing. It begins by announcing the coming of “the anointed one,” meaning the Messiah.

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593. It is important to note that the Essenes had great difficulty reconciling the prophetic passage of the suffering servant with the prophetic passages of the victorious king. Therefore, they concluded there would be two messiahs.

594. See 08.03.04.Q4.
The words of the Essene writer (above) and the words of Jesus were drawn from two passages from the prophet Isaiah.

**The Spirit of the Lord God is on Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and freedom to the prisoners.**

**Isaiah 61:1**

5 Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped.

6 Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will sing for joy, for water will gush in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.

**Isaiah 35:5-6**

Jesus responded to John by stating, in essence, that the prophetic messianic events (listed in Isa. 61) were being fulfilled. In all likelihood since John was very familiar with the Essenes near Damascus and those living on the edge of the Dead Sea (Qumran), he was familiar with this interpretation of Isaiah 61. Recall that his parents were of the same clan as the Essenes, and those near Damascus most likely raised him after his parents passed on. When he preached in

595. Martinez. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*. 394. Letters within the square brackets are either unreadable or missing in the original scroll.

596. See section on the Birth of John the Baptist.
the Judean Wilderness and ate the proverbial “honey and locust,” he was in Essene territory. So the forerunner of the Messiah and the Essenes may have had more in common than what scholars believe today.

Finally, the perspective that John the Baptist had was limited to the calling that was upon his life. He had no concept of the cross; that Jesus would die and rise again; and that through Him all humanity could find salvation and eternal life. As important as John’s ministry was, the irony is that he pointed men to the light which he himself did not see.

08.05.05 Lk. 7:24-28; Mt. 11:12-15; Lk. 7:29-30

JESUS PRAISES JOHN
Lk. 24 After John’s messengers left, He began to speak to the crowds about John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swaying in the wind? 25 What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft robes? Look, those who are splendidly dressed and live in luxury are in royal palaces. 26 What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and far more than a prophet. 27 This is the one it is written about:

Look, I am sending My messenger
ahead of You;
he will prepare Your way before You. (Mal. 3:1)

28 I tell you, among those born of women no one is greater than John, but the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”

Mt. 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been suffering violence, and the violent have been seizing it by force. 13 For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John; 14 if you’re willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who is to come. 15 Anyone who has ears should listen!
Lk 29 (And when all the people, including the tax collectors, heard this, they acknowledged God’s way of righteousness, because they had been baptized with John’s baptism. 30 But since the Pharisees and experts in the law had not been baptized by him, they rejected the plan of God for themselves.)

These passages also demonstrate that John was a historical, transitional figure, who had a foot in both the old and new ages. It is his proclamation of the coming king and kingdom that served as a bridge between the Old Testament Period of salvation history and the fulfillment inaugurated by the Christ event. Yet one of the difficulties in the passages of Matthew 11:13-14 and Mark 9:13 pertains to his identity because he clearly said that he was not Elijah (Jn. 1:21). The explanation of this apparent conflict is explained in 05.03.01.Q1.

“The kingdom of heaven has been suffering violence, and the violent have been seizing it by force.” It seems difficult to believe that men of violence would conquer the peaceful message of Christ and His kingdom. But the phrase “seizing it by force” literally means, to snatch away (Gk. harpazo 726) or to carry off by force. This passage is one that undoubtedly has challenged scholars for centuries and three interpretations are presented.

1. It has been suggested these men of violence are identified as such in their absolute determination to rid themselves of sin, satanic powers, and influences of the pagan culture.

2. Another suggestion is that now is the time for courageous souls to be forceful and take hold of the Kingdom of God.

3. Yet another interpretation is based upon an old rabbinic interpretation of Micah 2:12-13 in the Midrash. Note the following,

   I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob;
   I will surely bring together the remnant of Israel.

   I will bring them together like sheep in a pen;
   like a flock in its pasture,
   the place will throng with people.

   One who breaks open the way will go up before them;

598. Dake, Footnote on Mt. 11:12.
They will break through the gate and go out.

Their king will pass through before them,
the Lord at their head.

**Midrash on Micah 2:12-13**

In this Midrash, the House of Israel was “gathered” when the Jews returned to Israel after the Babylonian exile, a return that lingered in duration for several centuries. In the second stanza, the shepherd leads the sheep out in the morning, but after being penned up all night, they forcefully escape to freedom to enjoy the green grass with the morning dew.

4. However, the most likely interpretation is that the leading Pharisees, elders, and all the Sadducees were opposing the message of John the Baptist and Jesus. In fact, the message of John and Jesus would not be accepted and violent men within Israel would assault it. St. John Cassian (360-435) and St. Augustine (354-430) made the following comments concerning this:

> The Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force....Who then are the violent? Surely, they are those who show splendid violence not to others, but to their own soul, who by a laudable force deprive it of all delights in the things present, and are declared by the Lord’s mouth to be splendid plunderers, and by rapine of this kind, violently seize upon the Kingdom of Heaven.

**John Cassian, Conference of Abbot Abraham**

> The publicans and the harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you. They go before because they do violence; they push their way by faith, and to faith a way is made or can any resist, since they who are violent take it by force.

**Augustine, Psalms**

> Embrace the love of God and by love embrace God.

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Augustine, On the Trinity

All attempts to block the Jewish people from believing in Jesus were failing. Consequently, the religious leaders increased their level of violence and planned the death of Jesus.

An explanation from a cultural context is this: the sheep were gathered in a sheepfold for the night, as explained previously in the Midrash on Micah 2:12-13. It was a common practice that many herds of sheep were sheltered in a community pen overnight. Pens consisted of walls made with mud bricks or stones that often faced a cliff or cave as this provided added protection. Large barns did not exist at this time. Today, as in centuries past, when the shepherds come in the morning, the sheep anticipate freedom to graze in the grassy fields. Knowing this, they gather tightly in front of the pen door waiting for their shepherd to open it. As the gate opens they jump forth and “break through the gate and go out” to freedom. The Hebrew word for “break through” has the same parallel meaning as “forcefully advancing” in Matthew’s gospel. Likewise, when Jesus said that forceful men laying hold on it take the Kingdom of God, He was referring to a military term, but referred to the sheep jumping out the gate to acquire all the blessings that await them.

“For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John.” Everything the prophets and the Law prophesied in centuries past was future and distant. However, those divine words from the past were now being fulfilled beginning with John and culminating with Jesus.

08.05.05.Q1 In Matthew 11:11 and Luke 7:28, what is meant by the question, “There is none greater than John?”

What would appear to be a problem with this phrase is actually easily resolved, when placed into perspective in relation to the ministries of John and Jesus. John was the last of the Old Testament prophets. He was making the declaration of the coming Messiah and the new age in history which was about to dawn. Regardless of John’s stature and importance in his generation, he would be among the least significant, when compared to the New Testament believers who would be the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:25-27, 32).


605. Bivin and Blizzard, authors of Understanding the Difficult Words (85-87) credit the late Professor David Flusser of Hebrew University for this interpretation.
JESUS REPROVES REJECTION

31 “To what then should I compare the people of this generation, and what are they like? 32 They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to each other:

A We played the flute for you,
B and you didn’t dance;
A’ we sang a lament,
B and you didn’t weep.

33 For John the Baptist did not come eating bread or drinking wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon!’ 34 The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ 35 Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children.”

This short poem (note similarities of lines A and A’ and B and B’ of verse 32), is essentially a comparison of the adults of “this generation” and children who follow the patterns of life established by their parents.

“We played the flute for you, and you didn’t dance; we sang a lament, and you didn’t weep.” The explanation of this unique cultural phrase is as follows: Flute players (Gk. auletē̂s) performed at weddings, funerals, and other festive occasions. In fact, there were usually several flute players at weddings and everyone danced and celebrated the creation of a new family. When there was a funeral, there had to be a minimum of two flute players who played songs while professional mourners, called sappedans, sang elegant songs of lament. This cultural practice was not only among the Jewish people, but in neighboring communities as well. Mourning was and continues to be expressed loudly in public with the beating of the chest.

606. It is interesting that dancing is the only kind of expression of praise and prayer that is not in the New Testament. In the Hebrew Bible, there are eleven Hebrew verb roots related to dancing. For example, the verb ḫēl, means to whirl, to dance, or to writhe, is found in Psalm 87:7. The fact, that there are so many expressions of dance has led some scholars to conclude that the Israelites may have developed an advanced stage of choreography. Pilch, The Cultural Dictionary of the Bible. 124-25.


608. Mishnah, Ketuboth 4.4; Bock, Jesus According to Scripture. 168.


For example, in the Roman world, when Emperor Claudius died, the wailing of the flute players and professional mourners were so loud that Seneca said that the emperor, although dead, probably heard them. This writer has heard the eerie sounds of uncontrollable wailing and emotionally charged shrieks by professional mourners. This hysterical atmosphere will never be forgotten.

The historian Josephus recorded an account of how people expressed their sorrow over the loss of a beloved leader. In the year A.D. 68 the Romans conquered the city of Jotapata. During the conflict, rumors spread that the city’s leader, also named Josephus, was killed. When the news of the tragedy reached Jerusalem, the people mourned for him. The historian recorded the following.

But all mourned for Josephus, insomuch that the lamentation did not cease in the city before the thirtieth day, and a great many hired mourners, with their pipes (flutes), who should begin the melancholy ditties (song and dance) for them.

Josephus, Wars 3.9.5 (436b–437)

What Josephus reported was the pattern of life; it was what people were expected to do at such times. In ancient times, when mothers went shopping, they usually took their children along. Somewhere along the Cardo Maximus or in the marketplace there generally was a flute player or other musician who sat on a mat on which passersby would toss a coin or two. As soon as he played his flute, the children danced and played as children normally do. Whether at funerals, weddings, or other celebrations, the children imitated their parents by dancing and playacting. It is human nature that children imitate what they learn from their parents and Jesus used this social pattern for His lesson. He said that the Jewish leaders were not following this basic social pattern of life; this generation of leaders had their own religious agenda. Therefore, they are like disobedient children who do not dance and play in the market place; who do not mourn and lament at a funeral; who do not weep and comfort families who have lost a loved one. Jesus said that the Pharisees rebelled like disobedient spoiled little children.

612. Inserts by this writer for clarification.
613. The main street of a Roman city that had shops on either side.
614. Fruchtenbaum, Life of the Messiah. Tape 7, Side A.
08.05.06. A RELIEF OF MOURNERS BESIDE A DECEASED PERSON.
This relief carving was found in a tomb, in Rome, and depicts a dead woman laying on her bier, while women sing or wail dirges behind her, a musician plays a flute (lower right), and the family receives condolences. Wikipedia Commons.

“He has a demon!” The ancients believed that one of the three places where evil spirits lived was in the desert. Since John obviously did not live an ordinary lifestyle but came from a remote area of the Judean desert, some concluded that he had become demon possessed.

Jesus utterly shattered the prevailing opinions of how holy and righteous men ought to act. Leading Pharisees and Sadducees believed there was no place for tax collectors in heaven,

615. While this practice depicts an event that occurred in Rome, the custom was popular throughout the Middle East, and is mentioned in the Mishnah Shabbat 23:4 Baba Meziah 6:1; Geikie, The Life and Works of Christ. 2:330.

because they were Jews who betrayed their own people by becoming agents of the hated Romans. There was absolutely no love lost on tax collectors. In fact, the Oral Law permitted the common people to lie to them, even under oath.

Men may vow to murderers, robbers, or tax collectors that what they have is heave offering even though it is not heave offering; or that they belong to the king’s household even though they do not belong to the king’s household. The School of Shammai says: “They may so vow in any form of words except in the form of an oath.” And the School of Hillel says: “Even in the form of an oath.”

Mishnah, Nedarim 3.4

None may take change for money from the counter of excise men or from the wallet of tax collectors, or take any alms from them; but it may be taken from them at their own house or in the market.

If tax collectors took a man’s donkey and gave him another, or if robbers robbed a man of his coat and gave him another, they became his own, since the owner cherishes no hope of recovering them.

Mishnah, Baba Kamma 10.1b - 2a

If tax collectors entered a house [all that is within it]\(^\text{617}\) becomes unclean, even if a Gentile was with them they may be believed if they say [“We did not enter,” but they may not be believed if they say:]\(^\text{618}\) “We entered but touched nothing.” If thieves entered a house, only that part is unclean that was trodden by the feet of the thieves. What do they render unclean? Foodstuffs and liquids and open earthenware vessels; but couches and seats and earthenware vessels having a tightly stopped-up cover remain clean. If a Gentile or a woman was with them all becomes unclean.

Mishnah, Tohoroth 7.6a

“A friend of tax collectors and sinners!” While these words were said sarcastically, they were in fact, among the most accurate and compassionate descriptions of Him.

\(^{617}\) Clarification in brackets by Danby, ed., Mishnah.

\(^{618}\) Not all ancient texts contain the bracketed phrase.
ANOINTING BY A SINFUL WOMAN

36 Then one of the Pharisees invited Him to eat with him. He entered the Pharisee’s house and reclined at the table. 37 And a woman in the town who was a sinner found out that Jesus was reclining at the table in the Pharisee’s house. She brought an alabaster jar of fragrant oil and stood behind Him at His feet, weeping, and began to wash His feet with her tears. She wiped His feet with the hair of her head, kissing them and anointing them with the fragrant oil.

39 When the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, “This man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what kind of woman this is who is touching Him — she’s a sinner!”

40 Jesus replied to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.”

“Teacher,” he said, “say it.”

41 “A creditor had two debtors. One owed 500 denarii, and the other 50. 42 Since they could not pay it back, he graciously forgave them both. So, which of them will love him more?”

43 Simon answered, “I suppose the one he forgave more.”

“You have judged correctly,” He told him. 44 Turning to the woman, He said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she, with her tears, has washed My feet and wiped them with her hair. 45 You gave Me no kiss, but she hasn’t stopped kissing My feet since I came in. 46 You didn’t anoint My head with olive oil, but she has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. 47 Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; that’s why she loved much. But the one who is forgiven little, loves little.” 48 Then He said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

49 Those who were at the table with Him began to say among themselves, “Who is this man who even forgives sins?”

50 And He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.”
“He entered the Pharisee’s house and reclined at the table.” When Jesus entered the home of the Pharisee, He reclined on cushions at a table to eat with His host. When people “reclined,” they did so around a “U” shaped table known as a *triclinium*. It was the same type of table Jesus and the disciples reclined at during their Last Passover Supper. In earlier times, people sat on floor mats with legs crossed to eat meals. The custom of reclining on cushions appears to have been adapted by the Jews as early as the days of Amos. (See 6:4, 7). The custom was long in use among the Persians, Greeks and Romans. However, it also appears that, among the poor Jewish peasant farmers, sitting on mats at mealtime continued to be a first century custom.

“A woman in the town who was a sinner.” The phrase “sinner,” when applied to a woman, could have three possible meanings.

1. Any person who broke the moral laws of the written Scriptures. Quite often the word *sinner* was a euphemism for prostitutes. In fact, prostitution was the only kind of “occupation” she could have had that would have given her that social stigma.  

2. The term was applied to women who had their hair uncovered in public.

3. It should be noted, however, that the Pharisees defined a sinner as anyone who did not conform any one of their legalistic rituals – the Oral Laws – which included numerous prayers and washings throughout the day. For example, the ultra-strict Pharisees even considered anyone who touched a Roman or Greek coin as filthy because he violated the command against graven images. These coins had graven images of an emperor and/or a pagan deity.

The earliest tradition identifies her to have been Mary Magdalene from the village of Magdala, located along the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. Amazingly, the self-righteous Pharisee, who made certain that no one would ever see him with an impure person did not objected to having a “sinner” in his house. Rather, he focused on Jesus. Scholars have considered two possible reasons she may have been there.

1. She may have been invited, not by Jesus, but by the Pharisee so he could condemn Jesus; in essence, she was a set-up. But, such a person would probably not have been so emotionally affected by His presence.

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621. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 248; See also 02.01.14 “Pharisees.”
2. She walked in uninvited, honored Jesus and worshiped Him as her Lord.

08.05.07.A. THE RUINS OF MAGDALA. The village and watch tower ruins (left side with flag), south of Capernaum, as seen in 2010, has been suspected to be Magdala, the village home of Mary Magdalene (meaning Mary from Magdala). Photograph by the author.

The Hebrew name for Magdala is Migdol, meaning tower, and the lower portion of an ancient tower still stands from where watchmen once were stationed, looking for those who might steal fish and nets. To the founders of the ancient village, the name Magdala, or Migdal-El, meant the Tower of God. As to the village of Magdala, it was an important commercial fishing center where fish was salted and sold to traveling caravans. It is believed to have had the Aramaic nickname of Dalmanutha, which means the harbor. Today a few scholars believe that the village may also have been the home of a first century synagogue-church, but that opinion is based more on speculation than solid archaeological or literary evidence. However, that might change in the future.

08.05.07.B. THE RUINS OF MAGDALA FISH MARKET. Archaeologists uncovered three buildings that had masonry tubs which functioned as aquariums. Customers could purchase live fish for dinner or salted fish for traveling caravans. Photograph by the author.

In 2009 archaeologists unearthed a synagogue that is amazing well-preserved, and substantially more ornate than many of the other synagogues from the first century found in the area. They noted that the synagogue was located on the outskirts of what were then the city limits of Migdal (known in the New Testament as Magdala), rather than in the center of the city as in other communities. Its small size would accommodate only about 120 people, but the population of Magdala at the time was several thousand. All this likely means that the synagogue belonged to a small “outsider” sect that placed great value in its spiritual community life.623

08.05.07.D. FIRST CENTURY MAGDALA SYNAGOGUE STONE. In 2009 archaeologists uncovered a small ornate stone in the ruins of a small synagogue near the edge of Magdala. The unusual stone has carvings reflective of the temple design but its purpose remains unknown. It is also a mystery as to why the synagogue was built for less than a hundred people when several thousand lived in the community. Some have suggested the facility may have served an “outside group,” such as a messianic congregation, since groups of believers were too large for home churches but too small for regular synagogue building. Photo by the author.

The Pharisees sent their spies out to see if they could entrap Jesus. Rarely did a Pharisee invite Jesus to his home, but when such an invitation was given, Jesus accepted. It was at the banquet table, where the guests reclined around a low Greco-Roman table to eat. Then a woman of “low reputation” appeared in this pious household and met with Jesus. An early tradition of the church identified her as being Mary Magdalene.

“Alabaster jar of fragrant oil.” Alabaster, a/k/a Egyptian alabaster, or Oriental alabaster. Alabaster jars and vessels were manufactured in Egypt, often shipped by boat across the sea to

624. See 14.02.04.A. An illustration of a triclinium table.

625. Scientifically, it is known as carbonate of Calcium.
India and, by caravan shipped to the Indus River Valley and mountains in northern India, Nepal and the Himalaya Mountains. It was there that spikenard perfume was made from rare plants, placed in alabaster vessels, and returned to the western Indian coast to be shipped throughout the world. Because it was one of the costliest perfumes, it was often passed from generation to generation. The woman in this passage brought her most precious and expensive possession, Indian spikenard, and anointed Jesus with it. It was the best she could offer him. Visitors and tourists who purchase “Spike perfume” in Israel today do not purchase the authentic perfume, but a synthetic imitation.

The fact that she anointed the feet of Jesus with it speaks volumes of her love. As stated previously, throughout the Middle East, in ancient times and today, feet are considered defiled. Throughout most of history, wherever anyone walked, livestock did likewise and, therefore, stepping into animal dung was unavoidable. Sandals and shoes were, and still are, removed when entering a home and feet are washed. Only the lowest of servants or slaves untied sandals for visitors, and if there were no servants or slaves, then it was the woman's responsibility to do so. The anointing of fragrant oil was more than the cultural washing of the feet – it was the most she could do.

627. Farrar, Life of Christ. 137.
628. Bailey, Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes. 246 n16.
08.05.07.C. A FIRST CENTURY ALABASTER BOTTLE. Alabaster is stone that was mined and sculptured in Egypt, then shipped to India where the vessel was filled with perfume, and then shipped throughout the known world, including Israel. Artifact and photograph by the author.

“Kissing them.” Hospitality was a sacred duty in the Middle East. Whenever a traveler entered a village, it was not his responsibility to find a place to stay, but it was the duty of the villagers to invite him for the night. The kindest and most gracious gift of hospitality of the biblical period was a social dynamic that is difficult for Westerners today to comprehend. Therefore, when Jesus arrived at the house of the Pharisee, the host did not extend the three customary signs of hospitality to Jesus.

1. No water was given for His feet.

2. Jesus was not greeted with the customary kiss.

3. No oil was placed upon His head.

The Oral Law so strongly condemned these acts of hospitality violations that it said if one committed any one of these acts, he would be condemned to hell.629 Then came the “sinful woman,” who honored Jesus. Her actions were as follows:

629. Freeman, *The New Manners and Customs of the Bible*. 504.
1. She shed her tears on His feet, kissed them, and

2. She poured her expensive perfume instead of oil on Him.

3. It would have been inappropriate for her to kiss Him, and she didn’t.

The Pharisee had not demonstrated any religious or cultural courtesies, yet this woman, who previously had broken every religious and cultural rule, displayed repentance and courtesies. Clearly, in this moving scene there was a great polarization between the repentant woman and the insulting Pharisee. Jesus, however, forgave her of past sins and remained calm with His insulter. Jesus is not a respecter of persons, but a respecter of attitudes and motives.

Men’s opinions of women were not always very good. For example, Josephus and Nicholaus of Damascus seldom mention then names of women. On the positive side, the book of Proverbs has the well-known description of a wife of noble character (31:10-31). In a book of the Apocrypha, the position of a good wife is honored. Notice the Hebraic poetry:

Happy is the husband of a good wife,
the number of his days will be doubled.

A loyal wife rejoices her husband,
and he will complete his years in peace.

A good wife is a great blessing,
she will be granted among the blessings of the man who fears the Lord

Whether rich or poor, his heart will be glad,
and at all times his face is cheerful.

Ben Sirach 26:1-4


631. For further study on the various opinions concerning the status and influence of women in the Second Temple Period, see the excellent work by Tal Ilan, Integrating Women into Second Temple History, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999. Take note of Chapter 3 on the discussions of two first century historians, Josephus and Nicholaus of Damascus, and their comments about women. Nicholaus was the personal historian for Herod the Great.

632. Cited by Metzger, ed., The Apocrypha of the Old Testament, 161; 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.
On the negative side, there are several writings concerning the evilness of womanhood. These refer to women in general, not to sinful women such as the one Jesus encountered. Josephus refused to admit the testimony of a woman, because of the boldness of her sex. In the Oral Law, women were at times considered to have the same status as slaves and minors. Their curiosity was considered evil and, therefore, unclean. Several other writings are equally negative as a general attitude. Note the following from the Oral Law:

**He that talks much with womankind brings evil upon himself and neglects the study of the Law and at last will inherit Gehenna.**

*Mishnah, Aboth 1.5*

With the religious community and the common people rejecting her, she could easily have totally given up on any kind of reconciliation with God. But then came Jesus!

**“If He were a prophet.”** The Pharisees were so angry that they failed to think logically. They questioned if Jesus was really a prophet, and failed to realize that as a prophet, He could read their thoughts.

**“You have judged correctly.”** This was one of the highest compliments any rabbi could receive. It was always a challenge to correctly apply Scripture to the daily events of life.

**“Washed My feet and wiped them with her hair.”** This phrase, and the differences in the parallel accounts, has always given Bible students difficulty. In Luke 7:38 and John 12:3 she washed or anointed His feet, but according to Mark 14:3 and Matthew 26:7 she poured it on his head, Luke and John indicate that she wiped His feet with her hair, but Mark and Matthew do not mention this. Furthermore, there is a Mary, who may not be the same woman as in this narrative, in John 11:2 who also anointed the feet of Jesus. This difference cannot be explained. As is so often the case, what can easily be perceived as an error is clarified when additional details are presented. This has been the case repeatedly with other biblical difficulties. Therefore, whenever additional information is available, these passages will be clarified.

The fact that this woman took her head covering off and wiped the feet of Jesus with her hair is absolutely stunning. It was against all cultural courtesies, which reflects her passionate love of


635. Mishnah, *Tohoroth Tohoroth* 7.9
Jesus. To properly understand the cultural context behind her action, a brief study of a woman’s hair and her head covering is warranted.

Pious women *always* had their hair covered in the ancient Middle East. That cultural tradition was significant in many other cultures as well. In the Jewish communities it was for both physical protection from the sun as well as symbolic that she was under the protection of her husband, brother, or father. Even today in conservative Muslim communities, women have their heads covered – a tradition that dates back to the Old Testament Period. Those women who did not cover their heads in public were often deemed to be prostitutes or “temple virgins” in pagan temples (a/k/a “clerical prostitutes”). However, in some Greco-Roman cities the cultural taboo was dropped. This may be why the Apostle Paul, who wrote to the church in the very sexually promiscuous city of Corinth, that a woman should have her head covered (1 Cor. 11:5-6).

In the Jewish community, a virgin had her hair covered and her soon-to-be husband did not see her hair until their wedding night. Some did not even have their heads uncovered at home. For a Jewish woman to go out in public with her hair uncovered was a reason for divorce. According to the Mishnah divorce was possible if she went out,

**With her hair unbound, or spins in the street, or speaks to any man.**

*Mishnah, Ketuboth 6.6*

It is a point of interest that in Hebrew the word *Ketuboth* or *ketuvah*, that means *marriage deed.* In light of the cultural regulations and traditions, when Mary unbound her hair to wipe the feet of Jesus, this action was not missed by anyone. The cultural imagery in this statement suggests something more serious than lack of washing or praying. Since a bride put her hair down only on her wedding night, Mary’s action clearly underscored her love for Jesus. No greater contrast of the leading Pharisee’s behavior could have been given. By the fact that Jesus accepted and complimented Mary, and that this event was recorded in the Bible, helped elevate the status of women in the church, and eventually in Western civilization. However, the inherent problem with saying that Mary unbound her hair for Jesus as “a bride on her wedding night,” is that it suggests a number of implications to the modern reader that simply did not exist in first

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638. For related divorce issues, see Josephus, *Antiquities* 4.8.23.

century Judaism. This clearly illustrates the cultural divide between first century Israel and modern Western society.

“Your sins are forgiven.” As stated previously, the key idea clearly is about forgiveness. Through Jesus we are forgiven, Greek *aphiестhai*, from whatever sin separates us from God. The term has a wide variety of meanings, including an undeserved release of obligation, punishment, and other penalties that could be required. It is by His love, grace, and mercy that we are forgiven if we are repentant.640

With the statement “your sins are forgiven,” Jesus declared that He was God – an absolute declaration of divinity.641 Since the Jews believed only God could forgive sins, they were faced with the decision of what to do with Jesus. Clearly, He set Himself as equal with God. Furthermore, He not only forgave others as a man, but also as God. This account is full of interesting irony. The Pharisee invited Jesus into his home to insult Him and prove that He was not a prophet, while the sinful woman honored Jesus and worshiped Him as Lord.

08.05.08 Lk. 8:1-3 Galilee

**WOMEN PROVIDE SUPPORT**

After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod’s household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.


The gospels clearly illustrate that when it came to ministry to women, Jesus ignored many of the cultural taboos and politely presented the Kingdom of God. He conversed with the Samaritan woman and with other women in all levels of society. In this short narrative, a number of women supported Jesus and His disciples financially. While this was not common, it was not unprecedented either. The first century historian wrote of other women who supported their religious leaders.642

“Cuza, the manager of Herod’s household ... and many others ... were helping to support them.” It is most interesting irony that wealthy women from the royal court of Herod Antipas, including his chief financial officer (steward), were supporting Jesus by giving of their own personal finances. It was Herod’s father, Herod the Great, who had attempted to kill the Christ Child. Furthermore, some scholars believe that Cuza is a name found in Haman’s genealogy from centuries past.643 Now some financial support was flowing from Herod’s descendants and their servants. Clearly the message was going to and support was coming from the highest echelons of society.

Herod Antipas lived in Sepphoris, the regional capital of Galilee that was later moved to Tiberias. So he was close to the areas where Jesus was ministering. All this leads to questions of mystery.

1. Did Antipas believe Jesus was the babe of Bethlehem who escaped his father’s sword?

2. Could his father’s horrific action have haunted the minds of his sons?

3. In light of his murderous action against John the Baptist and what he knew of Jesus, why didn’t he take a proactive role in saving the life of Jesus during the Passion Week? Some questions remain mysteries.


08.06.00.A. JESUS COMMANDS THE WINDS AND THE WAVES. Artwork by William Hole of the Royal Scottish Academy of Art, 1876. The winds, either from the eastern Arabian Desert, or from the west, can quickly
change. When they do, they blow forcefully down through the steep valleys of the Golan Heights on the eastern side or the Valley of the Doves on the west. Regardless, anyone in a fishing boat will feel his life threatened. See Luke 8:22-25.

08.06.01 Introduction
In this segment of His ministry, Jesus ministered to the Greeks. For a Jew to heal a pagan was unimaginable to the religious establishment. Yet everything He did demonstrated that He was the true Anointed One – the One Israel and the world had been waiting for.

08.06.02 Mk. 4:35-41 (See also Mt. 8:23-27; Lk. 8:22-25) The Sea of Galilee

JESUS CALMS THE SEA

35 On that day, when evening had come, He told them, “Let’s cross over to the other side of the sea.” 36 So they left the crowd and took Him along since He was already in the boat. And other boats were with Him. 37 A fierce wind arose, and the waves were breaking over the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. 38 But He was in the stern, sleeping on the cushion. So they woke Him up and said to Him, “Teacher! Don’t You care that we’re going to die?”

39 He got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Silence! Be still!” The wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 40 Then He said to them, “Why are you fearful? Do you still have no faith?”

41 And they were terrified and asked one another, “Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey Him!”

One of the theological topics often discussed is how much control Satan has over elements of the earth. He certainly does have limited power – limited by God’s design. Yet he was given limited permission to send fire or lightning to destroy Job’s flocks (Job 1:12, 16) followed by a huge storm that destroyed the home where Job’s children were enjoying a banquet (Job 1:18-19). Satan attempted but failed to seduce Jesus with three temptations and appears now to have made an attempt to sink Him and the disciples while they were sailing across the Sea of Galilee to deliver a man from demonic bondage (see next section 08.06.03).
The image that Bible students often envision associates this narrative of Jesus and His disciples in a small fishing boat as illustrated in the picture above (08.06.00.A). However, there are some distinct problems with that image.

1. Due to the small size of a standard fishing boat, thirteen people onboard would have been enough to sink it in a calm sea, not to mention a stormy tempest. All three gospel writers said that water swept over the sides of the boat so that it was about to be swamped. A first century era fishing boat, commonly known as the “Jesus boat,” was discovered in 1986 and appears to be such a vessel. However, the boat used by Jesus and the Twelve had to have been a larger vessel than illustrated.

2. Jesus was in the stern (rear) of the boat, “sleeping on a cushion” (Mk. 4:38). If He was sleeping in an ordinary fishing boat, then obviously the water coming in over the sides would have awakened Him. But the disciples awakened Him, not the splashing waves. So He must have had some type of physical protection that kept Him dry. The common fishing boat did not have such a structure to it.

The description of the stormy tempest and the boat with its occupants leads this writer to conclude that the vessel was considerably larger than an ordinary fishing boat, possibly like the one shown in 08.06.02.A below. It is well known that there were many kinds of boats on the Sea of Galilee. It was a commercial area and the natural resources that permitted a wide range of occupations to flourish. Besides fishing and salting fish, local craftsmen made grinding stones, and numerous agricultural implements. The Greek residents of Gadara, a few miles east of the sea, were the major suppliers for the Roman Tenth Legion. In addition to raising pigs, they had one of the best growing areas for wheat which was shipped throughout the eastern Roman Empire. Therefore, a variety of vessels was needed for the transport of goods and passengers. The type of vessel Jesus and His disciples used is unknown, but it probably was one similar to the illustration below that had a protective shield at the stern.

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644. See 06.01.07.B.
08.06.02.A. A MODEL OF A HERODIAN GRAIN SHIP. This model of a Herodian grain ship was built according to a tomb graffiti design discovered in Masada. Notice that the stern end has a partial covering so someone could sleep and be somewhat protected from the weather. This vessel, thought to be at least twice the length of a typical fishing boat, is believed to have been used in the Sea of Galilee. Photographed by the author at the Dagon Grain Museum, Haifa.

08.06.02.Q1 Did Jesus experience an earthquake and a storm at the same time (Mt. 8:24)?

The gospel writer said there was “a fierce wind.” Many Bible translators have used the term storm in place of squall as the event was clearly difficult to describe. Mark and Luke used the Greek word Lailapa (2978), defined as a hurricane\(^\text{645}\) with heavy clouds, rains, darkness, and whirlwind.\(^\text{646}\) However, Matthew (8:24) used a distinctly different word, seismos, meaning earthquake,\(^\text{647}\) and he used it again in Matthew 24:7 when Jesus spoke of the earthquakes that would occur at the end of the age. That leads to an interesting question: Did Jesus experience an

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earthquake and a storm at the same time? When considering that all three synoptic gospel writers described the same event, it is obvious that He not only experienced an earthquake, but did so during an intense wind storm.

However, this storm may not have been accompanied with dark clouds and heavy rains. The Sea of Galilee is unique in that sudden and unexpected wind storms blow from the west, but more commonly from the east to west. The sea is about 680 feet below sea level while the extinct volcanic plateau of the Golan Heights on the eastern side is about 2700 feet above sea level. That is a huge vertical difference within a horizontal distance of a half mile or less. Near the sea where the Heights meet, there are numerous deep mountain ravines that funnel the winds across the lake with incredible intensity. Strong winds originate from the heights of Hauran,648 from the eastern plateau of Trachonitis,649 or from the northern Arabian Desert,650 or from the south, bringing fine desert dust and sometimes a dust storm. This wind is known as the Samum or Simoom, which blows north from the African deserts, across the Sinai and Negev Deserts and brings an overpowering heat. When the eastern desert winds come through the ravines and across the waters, they cause an instant storm.651 A unique feature of these storms, known as the “eastern sirocco winds,”652 is that they can appear without warning or even a cloud in the sky.

On the other hand, winds from the west can be equally challenging, being funneled down through the Valley of the Doves along the north side of Mount Arbel.653 These western wind storms in the winter can bring rain, but never in the summer dry season. How interesting it is that immediately after an earthquake and severe storm, Jesus encountered the demoniac on the eastern side of Galilee.

“Silence! Be still!” Since neither the written Greek nor Hebrew languages had exclamation marks at this time, the emphasis in modern Bibles are the contributions of translators and scholars. Therefore, how Jesus said those words is unknown to us. One scholar has suggested that He probably was not a shouter, but was a “Storm Whisperer.”

It is noteworthy to see that He used the same words to rebuke the sea as He did to rebuke the fever in Luke 4:39 and the demons in the possessed man of Mark 9:25. The significance of these


649. Located adjacent to heights of Hauran and was under the domination of Herod Phillip during the life of Jesus.


652. Levy, The Rain and Restoration of Israel. 89.

653. Mount Arbel is located a short distance northwest of Tiberias.
words was that the Jews knew that Jehovah also rebuked the sea in Psalm 65:7; 106:9 and Nahum 1:4. More remarkable, however, are the following passages from the books of Psalm and Proverbs:

9 You rule the raging sea;  
   when its waves surge, You still them.

Psalm 89:9

23 Others went to sea in ships,  
   conducting trade on the vast waters.
24 They saw the Lord’s works,  
   His wonderful works in the deep.
25 He spoke and raised a tempest  
   that stirred up the waves of the sea.
26 Rising up to the sky, sinking down to the depths,  
   their courage melting away in anguish,
27 they reeled and staggered like drunken men,  
   and all their skill was useless.
28 Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble,  
   and He brought them out of their distress.
29 He stilled the storm to a murmur,  
   and the waves of the sea were hushed.
30 They rejoiced when the waves grew quiet.  
   Then He guided them to the harbor they longed for.

Psalm 107:23-30

4 Who has gone up to heaven and come down?  
   Who has gathered the wind in His hands?  
Who has bound up the waters in a cloak?  
   Who has established all the ends of the earth?  
What is His name,  
   and what is the name of His Son—  
if you know?

Proverbs 30:4
The answer to … “Who then is this?” The disciples were quite knowledgeable of their Hebrew Bible. They most certainly had difficulty reconciling these passages with what they had just experienced. Without saying a word about His divinity, Jesus demonstrated that He was the God of the Hebrew prophets who wrote the Scriptures. He responded to the dangerous situation simply by telling the storm to be still. Yet to say that this miracle demonstrated His divinity over the natural forces of nature misses the point completely – He was/is God!

08.06.02.B. CROSSWIND WARNING SIGN. Just as the winds threatened the safety of Jesus and His disciples on the Sea of Galilee, today these winds surprise unsuspecting motorists traveling along the eastern side of the lake, as evidenced by this warning sign. Photograph by the author.

This is the situation of what the prophet Jeremiah had reference to when he said,

11b “A searing wind blows from the barren heights in the wilderness on the way to My dear people. It comes not to winnow or to sift; 12a a wind too strong for this comes at My call.”

Jeremiah 4:11b-12a

However, this demonstration of divine authority did more than reveal Jesus, it was also a demonstration of divine power and authority over Jewish and Greek myths. The ancient Jews
considered the bottom of the Sea of Galilee to be the abyss, a place where demons lived. The Greeks believed that Zeus ruled the sky and Poseidon ruled the sea and earthquakes. In the minds of both Jews and Greeks, only divine power could control the sea. Jesus demonstrated that He had that power. A similar event, apparently not as severe since Jesus did not need to calm the wind, occurred when He walked across the stormy waters to His disciples in a boat. At the dawn of creation, He spoke the world into existence; now His word controlled it.

The phrase, “Do you still have no faith?” would be better translated as, “you of little faith,” from the Greek word holigopistoi meaning little faiths. Matthew used it five times and always in reference to the disciples. The primary question, whether directly or indirectly, was in reference to where they placed their faith. This event should have opened their eyes to Jesus being the literal fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, which in this case were,

\[
\begin{align*}
& \text{I will be with you} \\
& \text{when you pass through the waters,} \\
& \text{and when you pass through the rivers,} \\
& \text{they will not overwhelm you.} \\
& \text{Isaiah 43:2}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
& \text{Greater than the roar of many waters —} \\
& \text{the mighty breakers of the sea —} \\
& \text{the LORD on high is majestic.} \\
& \text{Psalm 93:4}
\end{align*}
\]

Jesus challenged them to place their faith in His person and word. To those who trusted in their wealth or labor for a safe and secure future, Jesus said that it would be easier for the proverbial camel to go through the eye of a needle. When He challenged the rich man to give all he had to the poor, which was symbolic of his conversion, the rich man sadly went away, not because he

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655. Job 38:8-11; Ps. 29:3-4,10-11; 65:5-7; 89:8-9; 107:23-32; Isa. 51:9-10.
656. Mt. 14:22-23; Mk. 5:1-21; Jn. 6:15-21
657. Lang, Know the Words of Jesus. 47.
658. Mt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; Lk. 12:28.
was wealthy but because his security was in his wealth. St. Augustine had an interesting comment concerning faith:

There are three kinds of credible things. First, there are those which are always believed and never understood. An example of such is history.... Second, there are those things which first are understood, so that they can be believed. Of this class are all human reasonings ... The third class is of those things, which are believed first and understood afterwards. Of such kind as this are the aspects of divine things, which cannot be understood except by those who are pure in heart.

Augustine, Eighty-Three Diverse Questions

As amazing as this account is, there is an incredible parallel with the story of Jonah. Notice the comparison below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matthew 8:23-27</th>
<th>Jonah 1:3-16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:23 and he entered the boat</td>
<td>1:3 Jonah went down and found a boat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:24a and a great storm came upon the sea so that the boat was in danger</td>
<td>1:4 and a great storm came upon the sea so that the boat was in danger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:24b but he was asleep</td>
<td>1:5 Jonah was asleep and snoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:25 and they went and woke him Saying, “Lord, save us, we are perishing.”</td>
<td>1:6 and the master of the boat came to him and said, “Call upon your God that your God may save us, that we may not perish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:26 and there was a great calm</td>
<td>1:15 and the sea became still</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:27 and the men marveled exceedingly</td>
<td>1:16 and the men feared the Lord</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This was an experience that might be said in modern English slang, “a double whammie.” The disciples were clearly stunned and marveled when Jesus calmed the sea. But they must have


660. Adapted from Feiler, “Stilling the Storm in Matthew: A Response to Gunther Bornkamm.” 404-05.
recognized at a later time, the incredible connection of their experience and the events of Jonah. Could it have been a divinely inspired “encouragement” not to flee from their appointed calling?

08.06.03 Mk. 5:1-20 (See also Mt. 8:28-34; Lk. 8:26-39) Gerasa in Gadara

DEMON-POSSESSED GERASENE

1 Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the region of the Gerasenes. 2 As soon as He got out of the boat, a man with an unclean spirit came out of the tombs and met Him. 3 He lived in the tombs. No one was able to restrain him anymore — even with chains — 4 because he often had been bound with shackles and chains, but had snapped off the chains and smashed the shackles. No one was strong enough to subdue him. 5 And always, night and day, he was crying out among the tombs and in the mountains and cutting himself with stones.

6 When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and knelt down before Him. 7 And he cried out with a loud voice, “What do You have to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You before God, don’t torment me!” 8 For He had told him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!” 9 “What is your name?” He asked him.

“My name is Legion,” he answered Him, “because we are many.” 10 And he kept begging Him not to send them out of the region.

11 Now a large herd of pigs was there, feeding on the hillside. 12 The demons begged Him, “Send us to the pigs, so we may enter them.” 13 And He gave them permission. Then the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs, and the herd of about 2,000 rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned there. 14 The men who tended them ran off and reported it in the town and the countryside, and people went to see what had happened. 15 They came to Jesus and saw the man who had been demon-possessed by the legion, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. 16 The eyewitnesses described to them what had happened to the demon-
possessed man and told about the pigs. \textsuperscript{17} Then they began to beg Him to leave their region.

\textsuperscript{18} As He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed kept begging Him to be with Him. \textsuperscript{19} But He would not let him; instead, He told him, “Go back home to your own people, and report to them how much the Lord has done for you and how He has had mercy on you.” \textsuperscript{20} So he went out and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and they were all amazed.

This passage is in need of cultural and historical explanations which are below the explanations of the underlined verses.

“\textbf{Even with chains.}” The encounter Jesus had with the demoniac certainly had a profound influence on the Jewish people, as they reflected upon the story of the ancient super-strong man named Samson. He was chained to a Philistine pillar until God restored his strength and he moved the pillar causing the pagan temple to collapse. Now Jesus confronted a man who apparently was stronger than Samson – as no chains could hold him, and Jesus freed him of his demonic powers and healed him.

“\textbf{Cutting himself with stones.}” The fact that he was cutting himself suggests that he was afflicted by what some call, “suicidal spirits.” Satan and his demons not only attempt to thwart the plan of God, but also seek to kill and destroy people because they were created in God’s image. Little wonder then, that the suicidal demons entered a herd of pigs who immediately committed suicide.

“I beg You before God, don’t torment me!” The spirit spoke using the man’s body. Jesus would not torture anyone, but the demons know that one day they will be thrown into an everlasting lake of fire (Rev. 20:10). All Scriptures agree that judgment of angels and demonic spirits is yet to come (1 Cor. 6:3); they will be in chains and darkness until their final judgment day (Jude 6).

“What is your name?” The question is one of authority and not a request for information. Jesus always took immediate command of a situation and the demons obeyed.
“My name is Legion.” Precisely how the demon responded is unknown, but he probably identified himself with the name of ligyona, the Aramaic name for soldier. Or he could have identified himself with a short statement that included all the other spirits. It seems ironic that the response to the question was “Legion” as he did not give the name his parents gave him, but rather, he identified himself with the demons.

Gadara was the home for the the famous Legio X Fretensis, or Legio Dicima Fretenis, better known as the Tenth Roman Legion. Did the demons have a spiritual connection with the pagan Roman soldiers stationed at Gadara? Every Roman military unit traveled with its pagan priests who prayed and offered sacrifices on behalf of the troops. Clearly there appears to have been a spiritual connection to not only the legion, but also to the area of Gadara.

“And he kept begging Him not to send them out of the region.” Why would the demons beg Jesus not to send them out of the area? According to Jewish tradition, some evil spirits were assigned to various regions. Hence, some of them have become known as “territorial demons.”

“The man who had been demon-possessed.” Those who are demon-possessed often lose their ability to separate their own consciousness and ideas from those of demonic influence. The person’s identity is blended into that of a demon and the demon has some control of the individual’s mind and body. In severe cases, the demon has complete control. Jesus always spoke of demoniacs, not as persons with mental disorders, but as those who had alien spirits. Jesus addresses the evil spirit as distinct from the man (demoniac), when He commanded the spirit to come out of him.

The belief in demons was so common, along with the number of people who claimed to be exorcists, that by the year 340 the church established the Order of Exorcists, to properly control

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661. Lang, Know the Words of Jesus. 60.
662. There were four legions stationed in the province of Syria. While Judaea was considered part of Syria, it had a number of military units but no legions. Webb, “The Roman Examination and Crucifixion of Jesus.” 725; See also Josephus, Antiquities 17.10.2-3, Wars 2.3.1-4; 2.17.7-8; 5.4.3-4; Hendin, Guide to Biblical Coins. 118-19.
663. Pagan priests praying and offering sacrifices on behalf of Roman soldiers is portrayed very well in the movie Masada, starring Peter O’Toole.
664 Trench, Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord. 133.
665. Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah. 419.
those who claimed to have the power of performing such acts. To this day the Roman Catholic Church, as well as many other denominations, train individuals who perform exorcisms.

Finally, Luke, a professional medical doctor, clarified the distinctions between diseases and demonic possession four times. He did not do so in this passage because there were no sick people present, only those afflicted with demonic spirits.

“Report to them how much the Lord has done for you.” This instruction is in sharp contrast to the previous command of silence Jesus gave to the Jews whom He healed (i.e. Mk. 1:40-45; 5:43). A difference between the Greeks and Jews was that the Greeks did not have any problem living in a decadent culture and believing in a Messiah who could deliver them; the exorcism did not challenge their religious traditions.

“He has had mercy on you.” Clearly, Jesus acted as the God of Mercy, or as the Jews would have said, Elohe Chasseddi. Anyone could have claimed to have been god, as pharaohs, emperors, and kings have done throughout history, but Jesus refrained from stating it, but demonstrated that He is God.

Now, as to important cultural and historical explanations, the Greek city of Gerasa was an important commercial and military center for the Romans. Archaeological investigations have revealed that it was among the finest Decapolis cities and it was located along a major caravan route. It had public baths, a theater near its splendid baths, two great amphitheaters, several temples, a hippodrome, and mile after mile of colonnaded streets with a triumphal arch – all of which revealed the splendor of Greek philosophy and Roman might. Roman soldiers and cavalry units protected the caravan routes and cities from Bedouin hordes and robber bands.

Gadara was a famous fortified city that some ancients said was as Hellenistic as Athens. It was the capital of a toparchy and minted its own currency. Alexander Jannaeus laid siege against it for ten months, finally destroying it. But it was rebuilt by General Pompey. It belonged to the Kingdom of Herod the Great, but upon his death the Roman senate made it part of Syria.

666. Barclay, “Mark.” 60.
668. These same distinctions were made in Lk. 6:18; 7:21; 8:2; 13:32.
669. See Appendix 32 and Evans, Praying through the Names of God. 21-22.
671. For more details, read Josephus, Antiquities, 13.13.3 through 14.5.4.
On occasion Jesus and His disciples sailed across the Sea of Galilee to the eastern side near Gerasa to the harbor of Gadara. Before them were the rocky cavern-tombs of the Wadi Semakh. As was so often done until recent times, since the caverns are cool in the oppressive summer heat and warm in the cold winter, they were used as homes or for the back room of homes. A visitor to this region in the 1890s reported that as many as two hundred Arabs lived in caves and former tombs along this wadi. Small caves were used as tombs, but larger subterranean dwelling places could accommodate twenty to thirty people. Many of these earthly caverns, which were originally smaller caves and tombs, were enlarged since the soft limestone was easy to remove. 673

The fact that a deranged man lived in a cavern was not unusual; but that he chose to live in a cavern that was used as a tomb, was unusual. Those who attended to the herd of pigs were probably also cavern dwellers, although the description of this demon-possessed individual would indicate he did not appreciate close neighbors.

Previous attempts to bind or control him had failed. Clearly his behavior suggests that his superhuman strength was of a demonic source. Suddenly a boatload of visitors arrived at the harbor and the frightful, naked, and homicidal maniac came forth to greet them. A second demoniac also arrived, but apparently stayed some distance away and played no part in the narrative. The first demoniac immediately recognized Jesus and came to Him. 674

The residents of Gadara were, for the most part, employed in supplying the Tenth Roman Legion, the Legio Dicima Fretenis, 675 with daily supplies of food and other necessities. Since pork was the primary meat staple of the Romans, raising a huge herd of two thousand swine is understandable. Some have said that pigs were raised in the city proper and the herd ran the distance of six miles into the Sea of Galilee. There are several reasons for this not to be the case. Rather, the pigs were raised near the sea itself.

1. Pigs do not have sweat glands, so they must always be near water or mud to cool themselves. This is especially true in the Galilee area where the summers are rather hot, and without proper cooling, they die quickly.


674. 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.

2. While wild pigs, known as boars, are extremely vicious and have a great capacity to run while domesticated pigs have limited physical endurance. Therefore, they could not have run the huge distance from the city to the sea.

3. Pigs produce pungent odors. Two thousand of them, even in an open space, would produce an unbearable fragrance that even the ancients could not tolerate. They would not be welcomed guests in any community.

4. Pigs like to eat acorns, the nuts from oak trees. The Golan Heights and nearby plateau was covered with oak trees, whereas, the root systems of these trees tend to break up building foundations, so these trees are not planted close to buildings in cities.

Yet pigs were a primary meat staple throughout history in other non-Jewish cultures as well. They were a quick supply of meat, as the time required from birth to slaughter is only about six or seven months. Ironically, the Tenth Legion had the image of a wild boar on its military standard. The effigy did not represent their favorite delicacy, but the viciousness, speed, and tenacity that a wild boar exhibited when fighting. This wild unkosher beast was not only the symbol of the Tenth Legion, but when the soldiers constructed buildings, they often placed their Tenth Legion symbol (“LEG-X-F”) somewhere on the building, and sometimes it was with the image of their mascot.\footnote{676}

In addition to supplying meat, the city residents also supplied wheat for bread and barley for horses. Local craftsmen built and repaired necessary military supplies that not only served the regiments in the immediate area, but were also shipped to Damascus and other Tenth Roman Legion posts. Supplies were shipped by camel caravans to points north, east, and west. For west-bound supplies, Gergesa had the largest artificial port along the Sea of Galilee – the harbor of Gadara. Supplies were loaded on freight ships that sailed to the western shore from which caravans transferred the cargo to the Mediterranean Sea for overseas destinations.

As to the biblical passage, Jesus encountered an outcast who lived in the tombs. He cast out demons because evil spirits are real; not the result of superstitions. Luke recorded that the seven sons of Sceva used the name of Jesus as if it were a magical formula for exorcism (Acts 19:13-16) and had no desired results. The Greeks sacrificed pigs to appease the gods, but Jesus not only demonstrated that He is the only atonement for sin, but that He had complete authority and power over every demonic spirit.

\footnote{676. An illustration of a roof tile found in Jerusalem has the engraved image of a ship and wild boar and Tenth Legion initials. See 06.03.09.C.}
Demons are synonymous with unclean spirits,\(^{677}\) who are connected with Satan,\(^{678}\) are in total opposition to God and the work of God\(^{679}\) and as such, promote all forms of idolatry.\(^{680}\) They oppose the faith of believers,\(^{681}\) and attempt to influence and disturb the physical, mental and emotional well-being of people.\(^{682}\) However, while certain ailments may be connected with demonic powers, the laws of Moses that pertain to sanitation clearly indicate that good health is also a matter of cleanliness – meaning that many diseases are not related to demonic influences, but can be prevented.

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**08.06.03.A. HILL OF THE SWINE.** This is one of two steep hillsides along the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee where this miracle could have taken place. The area was inhabited by Greeks, who raised sacrificial pigs for the worship of Zeus in the nearby city of Gadara. Photograph by the author.

The location of the miracle is debated among scholars, as there are two possible locations.

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\(^{677}\) Mk. 5:12, 15; 3:22, 30; Lk. 4:33.

\(^{678}\) Lk. 10:17-18; 11:19-20.

\(^{679}\) 1 Cor. 10:20-21.


\(^{681}\) 1 Tim. 4:1.

\(^{682}\) Lk. 13:11, 16; Mk. 5:2-5; 7:25; Mt. 12:45.
1. Some believe the miracle took place along the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee at a place known today as Kursi. Queen Helena, who, in the early fourth century, built a Byzantine chapel nearby, preserved the site. However, the site was abandoned after a devastating earthquake on January 18, 749 (estimated 6.6 Richter scale), and was forgotten until accidentally discovered and identified in 1970. It is a short distance from a steep hillside, the only one in this part of the lake that fits the description of where the pigs could have rushed down into the water (8:32). However, there is no harbor at this location, and the shoreline is too rocky to land a boat without causing severe damage.

2. The second possible site of the miracle is the harbor of Gadara. Harbors are generally part of a village or city with considerable commercial activity. However, at this harbor, to date archaeologist have not uncovered any evidence of human occupation and Gadara is about six miles to the southeast (in modern Jordan). Ironically, of the fifteen harbors along the perimeter of the Sea of Galilee, the Gadara harbor is the largest – some 200 meters (600 feet+) long.

Gadara was an important Decapolis city as it was a major supplier of goods and services to the Tenth Roman Legion. Its harbor along the Sea of Galilee was the largest on the lake, and could accommodate the variety of ships, especially the larger grain ships. Coins have been found with the word “Naumachia” featuring mock naval battles in their fishing harbor. Obviously this was not an ordinary village. It was one of the many “backbones” for the Tenth Legion sub-units of the Roman army, as most of its citizens were employed to produce supplies. Scholars believe that many sections of the town were constructed by Roman soldiers, who built roads and public buildings when not engaged in battle. The Greek poet Meleager was born in Gadara and said the city was known as the Syrian Athens because of its many temples and shrines. Clearly then, by even Greek confession, the city was steeped in pagan practices. A similar comment was made by Josephus, who said Gadara was a Greek city.


684. Tzaferis, “A Pilgrimage to the Site of the Swine Miracle.” 47.


686. See 08.06.02.A.


688. Farrar, Life of Christ. 42.

689. Josephus, Antiquities 17.2.4.
08.06.03.B. GADARA COIN WITH WORD “NAUMACHIA.” A second century (A.D.) “War Galley” coin found at Gadara with the Latin term naumachia was derived from a Greek word meaning mock naval battle. The city had the largest harbor on the Sea of Galilee that was used at times for mock naval battles which entertained the crowds. For more than 250 years, coins depicted boats that reflected upon the grandeur of the city, possibly even back to the days of Jesus. Photo by Wikipedia Commons.

08.06.03.C. VILLAGE RUINS OF GADARA. The modern village of Umm Quas was known in the days of Jesus as Gadara, home of the pig herders. Excavations uncovered a third century church which commemorated the miracle of deliverance of the demoniac. Photograph by the author.
08.06.03.D. A MOSAIC FLOOR FEATURING A VARIETY OF ANIMALS, INCLUDING A WILD BOAR. Domesticated pigs were raised for food and Gentile sacrifice but the wild boar was the mascot for the Roman Tenth Legion. This mosaic was uncovered in Jerash, in Modern Jordan, known as Gerasa in Mark 5:1-10. Photo by Jeff Herot.

08.06.03.Q1 Was Gerasa really the home of the pig farmers (Mk. 5:1; see also 08.06.03.Q3)?

As previously stated, critics have said that since Gerasa more than six miles from the miracle site, the biblical account cannot be seriously considered as true because domesticated pigs cannot travel that far. Furthermore, since pigs do not have sweat glands they need a cool environment, preferably a wet or muddy area, to regulate body temperature. Otherwise, in this region they would die quickly in the summer heat. Due to the incredibly unpleasant fragrance swine produce, especially two thousand of them, they were maintained far outside and downwind of villages. Their need for water in a semi-arid climate meant they were close to the Sea of Galilee or to one of the small streams that flows into it. It was the Gentile pig owners 690 who lived in Gerasa, not the pigs. Therefore, the biblical narrative stands.

690. There is an old opinion that the pigs were raised by apostate or Hellenized Jews. However, that theory has in recent decades been proven wrong and is now universally agreed upon by scholarship.
At this point, it is important to recall the origins of the ten cities of the Decapolis. Some fourteen centuries earlier when Joshua entered the land, he drove out the seven pagan tribes of the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites, and Jebusites (Jos. 3:10). Isaiah referred to the Canaanites when they sacrificed pigs on mountaintop altars (65:4-8) and their descendants at the time of Jesus continued the practice.

They were not the only ones who considered pigs to be sacrificial animals; the Romans did likewise. In fact, the emblem of one of the Roman legions, the *Decima Fretensis*, was the wild boar (pig). Pigs were an important source of food and significant in religious worship. Therefore, it is not surprising that the descendants of the ancient Canaanites, now absorbed into the Greek culture, believed that pigs needed to be sacrificed to their gods. The following is from an inscription written by Epidaurus in the late 4th century A.D., but it reflects the belief of the Inter-Testamental Period. Religions and social values such as these changed little in the course of time.

**The cure affected by Apollo and Asclepius.** Ambrosia of Athens was blind in one eye. She came with supplications to the god and as she walked around the temple she smiled at the accounts of some of the cures which she found incredible and impossible, accounts which related how the lame and blind had been cured by a vision which came to them in a dream. She fell asleep and had a vision. (In the vision) the god appeared before her, telling her that she would be cured and that she had to dedicate in the sanctuary a pig made of silver as a token of her ignorance. Having said this he (the god) cut out the bad eye and immersed it in a medicine. She awoke at dawn, cured.

**Inscription of Epidaurus**

When Jesus arrived on the eastern shores of the Sea of Galilee, He was met with a demon-possessed man who was from one of the nearby Decapolis cities. When Jesus spoke to him, he responded by indicating he had a “legion” of demons. A legion was a Roman military unit of about 6,000 soldiers, one hundred horsemen plus cavalrymen, and support troops. Needless to say, this man was seriously possessed with multiple demons. Jesus single-handedly demonstrated His power over a superior number of demonic forces with His spoken word as they recognized

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692. Parenthesis for clarification are mine.


694. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 60. Historians differ in the size of various military groups.
and obeyed Him immediately. He made no reference to any incantations, a higher authority, or to God. They knew their own destiny; they would be tortured and rejected forever. This was no doubt an awesome sight for the disciples to witness!

08.06.03.Q2 What is significant about the demons entering the pigs (Mk. 5:1-20)?

At this point in the biblical narrative, the evil spirits entered the pigs, which was another demonstration of the greatness of Jesus and the failure of the pagan gods. The pigs, which evidently were most unhappy and miserable with demons in them, ran down the embankment and into the Sea of Galilee where they drowned by suicide. Ironically, the Greeks believed that the Abyss was at the bottom of the Sea (cf Rev. 9:1; 11:7) where the demons lived. To the Greeks, Jesus not only demonstrated that His power was superior to their gods, but He also sent the evil spirits back to their “home,” and in the process killed a herd of their sacrificial animals.

Centuries earlier, just as God demonstrated His power against the Egyptian gods through Moses and Aaron, so likewise Jesus demonstrated His power against the Greek gods. Little wonder that they asked Him to leave. The Egyptians did the same to Moses. However, God’s grace did not end there.

08.06.03.E. A RELIEF OF SACRIFICIAL ANIMALS, INCLUDING A PIG.

A ceremony in Rome known as the suvetaurilia, is the sacrifice of a bull, ram and

When the man freed of demons asked Jesus if he could journey with Him, the request was denied. Rather, Jesus told him to return to his home and tell others of what had happened to him. He did so and evidently prepared the way for Jesus’ visit later as described in Mark 7:31. The gospel had taken root so well in this community that in the first centuries of the early church, whenever there was a church council or gathering to discuss doctrine, policy, or other church business, there was always a representative from Gerasa. This is dynamic evidence again that God desires to use every willing person, even one who had been possessed by demons, to spread His good news, regardless of past events.

08.06.03.F. RUINS OF THE ORIGINAL KURSI MEMORIAL. A trail goes up a steep hillside to the ruins of a 4th century memorial that commemorated the miracle of the demoniac about six miles from Gadara. Kursi is believed to be the site of the biblical Gergesa which a growing number of scholars believe was incorrectly identified. Photograph by the author.
08.06.03.G. THE RUINS OF THE 6TH CENTURY BYZANTINE MONASTRY AT KURSI (ANCIENT GERGESÁ). The author stands in a 6th century church adjacent to the previous memorial (above) that commemorates the miracle of the demoniac. As with the original memorial, it too was destroyed by an earthquake on January 18, 749. Photograph by Paivi Heinrich.

Finally, as an interesting side note, the Jews considered the pigs to be unclean and unholy, but the Greeks felt just the opposite – fine dining and the ideal sacrificial animals. So when archaeologists work at a village dig site today, the lack of pig bones is an indicator that the village was a Jewish one, while in Roman or Greek villages there is almost always a discovery of pig bones.

696. See http://israel-tourguide.info/2011/01/10/earthquakes-history-archaeology/ Retrieved August 25, 2014. The Jordan valley is one of the most active earthquake zones in the world. There have been hundreds of minor earthquakes and major ones have dammed the Jordan River repeatedly, sometimes for days, in 1160, 1267, 1534, 1834, 1906 and 1927. At such times, buildings are destroyed, thousands of lives are lost, and the river often redirects itself as a new river bed is formed.
08.06.03.Q3 Why are there name variations for the Gadara region (Mk. 5:1-20; Mt. 8:28-34; Lk. 8:26-39)?

### Video Insert

**08.06.03.V1 Interesting Issues of Gadara.** Professor Gordon Franz discusses the interesting issues of Gadara, including the clarification of names, the first evangelist to the Gentiles of this region, and the mystery of Gadara’s harbor. Click here if Internet connection is available.

This region southeast of the Sea of Galilee has three communities: Gerasa, Gadara, and Gergesa.\(^{697}\) There has been much discussion concerning the name “Gadarenes.” Critics have said it does not agree with parallel verses in Mark and Luke that record the town as “the region of Gerasa.” There is no conflict, however, as the latter was the capital of the political district. Regions were often called by the name of their capital cities or by a major city. Gadara was the capital city of the toparchy.\(^{698}\) The region was known by all three names.\(^{699}\) In a similar manner, Babylon was the name of a region as well as the name of the region’s capital city. Furthermore, the name Gergesa is Hebrew in reference to the clay ground, while the other two names are Greek.\(^{700}\) So the gospel writer writing to the Jewish people would use the name Gergesa while those writing to a Gentile audience would use the Gentile names.\(^{701}\)

### Video Insert

**08.06.03.V2 The Mystery of the Harbor of Gadara.** Mr. Joel ben Yosef discusses the unique mystery of the harbor of Gadara. Introduction and cultural background comments by Dr. Bill Heinrich. Click here if Internet connection is available.

As previously stated, each gospel writer wrote from his perspective. Matthew stated that the event took place in the region of Gadarenes (v. 28), which was one of the ten taxation districts of

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697. See Map of Decapolis Cities and Region, 03.04.17.Z.


701. See 08.06.03.V1.
the Decapolis. Since Matthew was a former tax collector, it would have been natural for him to refer to a region of the legal tax district. More specifically, the ancient village known as Gadara is now called Umm Qas. It is about six miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee in the district of Gerasa. Since Matthew 8:34 states that the whole town came to plead with Jesus to leave, it can safely be assumed they came from this city.

It was common practice that people and places often had two names. Place names often changed whenever a new foreign power or king ruled the region. For example, in the years following Jesus' resurrection, Herod Agrippa II renamed Caesarea Philippi to Neronias in honor of Emperor Nero. However, after Nero committed suicide, the name was quickly changed to Paneas, the original name prior to Caesarea Philippi. Other names of this city are Banias, Banyas, Baniyas, Paneas, Pnias, Paneias, Paneion, and Panium. Therefore, confusion of the name of Gadara and its regions around it confirm that this biblical passage is authentic to fluid changes of first century life in the Holy Land.702

08.06.03.Q4 Were there one (Mk. 5:2) or two demoniacs (Mt. 8:28)?

One of the challenges scholars have had, has been to reconcile the differences of these passages. Some critics have said these narratives were created in the second or third centuries by church leaders. If what they say is true, then the phantom church writers made huge errors because anyone fabricating an event would not deliberately write a narrative with problems. Why, then, did the gospel writers record the obvious differences?

Matthew refers to two demoniacs as being healed while Mark and Luke said only one was healed. Critics have stated that this reflects Matthew’s exaggeration of the story to make a theological statement. Furthermore, critics have said that the point of the gospels is not to give a chronological account of the life of Christ, but to construct an interpretative portrait of a man with a religious agenda. They assume that the scribe writing the portrait was never interested in factual historical events, but only in the message of the individual who is portrayed.

In this narrative, when Jesus came close to the demoniacs, they placed themselves on the ground before Him, indicating they recognized who He was and willingly submitted themselves to Him. Demons will always recognize the authority of Jesus and, the fact, that He is their judge. The precise reason why Mark and Luke recorded only one individual may never be known. We can only conclude that Matthew reported that there were two, and the fact that the other writers reported only one does not mean that a second individual was not present. Mark and Luke both

noted that after the man was healed, he was dressed, in his right mind, and listening to Jesus. Suggestions for the differences between Matthew and the two other accounts are as follows:

1. Mark recorded that one demoniac met Jesus as He got out of the boat. The entire discourse appears to have been between Jesus and this single demon-possessed man. If a second demoniac stayed in the background, it would be normal for Mark and Luke to refer only to the one Jesus encountered.  

2. One demoniac was more notable to the community than the other

3. Since only one appears to have been set free of his evil hosts, the second demoniac may have retreated into a tomb, or at least, did not offer himself to be set free. Hence, his account did not become part of the biblical record.

Notice that one of the two demoniacs was very vocal and made some profound statements. Mark and Luke said that the demon-possessed man recognized Jesus by calling Him “Son of the Most High God,” and when Jesus took control of the conversation by asking him his name, he answered, “Legion.” The focus of the biblical narrative is not on the number of individuals who were healed, but on how Jesus took command of the most serious situation: the demons obeyed Him.

Matthew was a Pharisee and certainly knew the Mosaic Law. He quoted Deuteronomy 19:15 (Mt. 18:16) to say that all matters are to be settled with two or three witnesses (Deut. 17:6). Since he was conscious of the function of the law, he made certain that his readers understood that there were two men who were healed and were witnesses of the divine power of Jesus. Mark and Luke appear not to have an equal concern to reflect this law. Apparently, they felt that because of the divine majesty of Christ, they did not have to underscore the event with a record of a second witness. It is important to remember that the ancient mind-set was different from western thought and logic. Some elements of an event that are considered critical today were considered unimportant in the first century. The perspective from which Mark and Luke wrote their accounts is actually rather easy to understand.

This author recalls a class of Russian students he once taught in Israel in which two women were not only very vocal, but were very intelligent and knowledgeable of Scripture. Upon reflection of the class Bible students, he can only remember these two women because they made a lasting impression on him. Likewise, clearly one of these two demoniacs made a lasting impression on Mark and Luke.

If Jesus cursed Capernaum, Chorizim, and Bethsaida, why didn’t He curse Gadara?

When considering that the three villages of Capernaum, Chorizim, and Bethsaida were cursed by Jesus for their rejection of Him, the question arises as to why He didn’t do likewise to the Greek city of Gadara. The Greeks were certainly more adamant about sending Jesus on His way than were the Jews who politely rejected Him. Scripture is silent on the matter, but apparently He may have done so. The first century historian preserved an interesting account on the subject.

History records that not only did Gadara fall to the Romans, but it was the first Greek city to fall. Josephus recorded that when the First Revolt started (66 A.D.), all its youth were killed and other residents were sold in the slave markets. He wrote:

So Vespasian marched to the city Gadara and took it upon the first onset, because he found it destitute of any considerable number of men grown up and fit for war. He came then into it and slew all the youth, the Romans having no mercy on any age whatsoever; and this was done out of hatred they bore the nation ... He also set fire, not only to the city itself, but to all the villas and small cities that were round about it; some of them were quite destitute of inhabitants and out of some of them he carried the inhabitants as slaves into captivity.

Josephus, *Wars* 3.7.1 (132-134)\(^{704}\)

Apparently Jesus did curse the city, and its destruction came quickly – long before it came to Capernaum, Chorizim, and Bethsaida. The Gadara residents were witnesses to the great and mighty miracles and most certainly were aware of His ministry only a short distance across the lake. Jesus granted them many years to repent, but evidently they chose not to and their city was destroyed. The survivors of the Roman massacre who escaped the carnage rebuilt Gadara, but it was destroyed again on January 18, 749 by an earthquake (estimated 6.6 Richter scale).\(^{705}\) It was never rebuilt although with the migration of Arabs, a new village was established nearby. Jesus demonstrated His compassion for those who were demonically possessed. But rather than accepting Him, they were fearful. In fact, they were more fearful of Jesus than of the demoniac before he was healed, not to mention their concern for their lost pigs.

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\(^{704}\) See also Josephus, *Wars* 4.7.3.

Some scholars, especially those with an interest in biblical prophecy, have noted that the site of the miracles is adjacent to what may someday be called a Valley of Judgment, a/k/a the Valley of Hammon Gog. Ezekiel prophesied (39:11) that an apocalyptic battle of the armies of Gog and Magog will one day fight Israel and the invaders will be buried in a valley east of the Sea of Galilee. The Valley of Hammon Gog (Hamon-gog), known today as the Wadi Semakh, best fits the geographical description and it is at the western edge of this wadi that these miracles occurred. The prophecy is

Now on that day I will give Gog a burial place there in Israel — the Valley of the Travelers east of the Sea. It will block those who travel through, for Gog and all his hordes will be buried there. So it will be called the Valley of Hamon-gog.

Ezekiel 39:11

Jesus returned to His home in Capernaum, saddened, but not in anger. Their rejection was strikingly similar to that of the Pharisees. But now there was one soul saved and healed who was going through various Decapolis cities proclaiming the radical change Jesus performed in His life. History would reveal the fruitfulness of his work.

08.06.03.Q6 What happened to the healed demoniac (Mk. 5:1-20)?

History has forgotten what happened to him, but evidently he became a significant figure in the Decapolis region. Only a few months later Jesus returned to the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee and fed thousands by a miracle of bread and fish. That miracle of multiplication resulted with seven large baskets filled with leftovers. Clearly the miracle of exorcism resulted in a radical change of attitude for many of the local Gentiles. A hundred years later a significant church was established in Gadara headed by a bishop. By the second century the city was home to several churches, and by the fourth century, it was the seat of one of the most important bishops in the early church. One can never overestimate the power of God to transform a life and make it significant for future generations. Christianity spread quickly and by 325, the church of Gadara sent a bishop to the highly esteemed Council of Nicea. A bishop from the nearby city of Hippos was also present at the first Church Councils of Nicea and Constantinople. It appears that the demoniac became an important and outstanding apostle and evangelist. This is an example of how quickly Christianity took root in the Greek cities.

708. Pixner, With Jesus through Galilee. 46.
JAIRUS BEGS JESUS TO HEAL

21 When Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered around Him while He was by the sea. 22 One of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at His feet and kept begging Him, “My little daughter is at death’s door. Come and lay Your hands on her so she can get well and live.” 24a So Jesus went with him.

When Jesus arrived, He was met by Jairus, the administrator (Heb. chazzan) of the local synagogue. As the synagogue ruler or president he maintained the facility and controlled the religious services and most likely, he was a low-level Pharisee. Previously, it was his responsibility to represent the Roman centurion to Jesus when the centurion’s slave/servant was sick. They were good friends since the centurion was a Gentile of fine character and personally paid for the construction of the synagogue. Therefore, he was probably well acquainted with the healing ministry of Jesus; and, since he was not under the control of the Jerusalem Sanhedrin, he had considerably more freedoms than did some of his southern counterparts. He probably had seen Jesus cast a demon out of someone who had previously visited the synagogue, and he invited Jesus in spite of potential objections from other rabbis. In light of the grave situation of his little daughter (Gk. thugatrtion), he would have come to Jesus in spite of any objections. Then a woman who also needed healing interrupted the occasion. For an unknown reason, the gospel writers interrupt the account of the Jairus’ daughter with that of the woman who suffered from the proverbial “issue of blood,” and then return to account of the young girl.

In this passage Matthew coordinates the beauty of the ministry of Jesus with the beauty of his writing. It is no mistake that the daughter of Jairus, who is 12 years old, is contrasted by the woman who was ill for 12 years. The daughter obviously could not function in faith, she was nearly dead, but her father could, and so could the woman who was ill. The synagogue leader wanted Jesus to touch his daughter and the woman wants to touch Jesus. Critics have said that early church fathers created these (false) accounts to illustrate a divine truth. It may not have occurred to them that God orchestrated these events and Matthew placed them together for modern readers to discover. The authority of Jesus goes beyond illness, even to the door of death (and beyond). His authority over illness and death were clearly demonstrated again.

709. Barclay, “Mark.” 30-31; Lang, Know the Words of Jesus. 276, 308-09.

710. His responsibilities as president of the synagogue are listed at 02.03.11.

711. Lang, Know the Words of Jesus. 47.
WOMAN TOUCHES GARMENT

24b So Jesus went with him, and a large crowd was following and pressing against Him. 25 A woman suffering from bleeding for 12 years had endured much under many doctors. She had spent everything she had and was not helped at all. On the contrary, she became worse. 27 Having heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His robe. 28 For she said, “If I can just touch His robes, I’ll be made well!” 29 Instantly her flow of blood ceased, and she sensed in her body that she was cured of her affliction.

30 At once Jesus realized in Himself that power had gone out from Him. He turned around in the crowd and said, “Who touched My robes?”

31 His disciples said to Him, “You see the crowd pressing against You, and You say, ‘Who touched Me?’”

32 So He was looking around to see who had done this. 33 Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came with fear and trembling, fell down before Him, and told Him the whole truth. 34 “Daughter,” He said to her, “your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be free from your affliction.”

One Church tradition reports that this woman was a Gentile by the name of Lydia. Another says her name was Veronica (Latin) or Bernice (Greek) and the tradition also states that when Jesus carried His cross to Calvary, she gave Him her veil for Him to wipe His forehead. However, these traditions are clearly false since Jesus referred to her as “daughter.” This title would have been given only to a Jewish woman, and her identity reveals the social difficulties she endured. As a Jewish woman, she would never have been in public with such a health problem knowing that she would defile others. Her bleeding and the rules of feminine modesty rendered her untouchable (Lev. 15:19-30) and a social outcast. She had spent all her resources on doctors, and Mark implies that she even suffered from the remedies prescribed by doctors. Regardless of her illness, she was desperate enough to put aside her religious restrictions, risk punishment from the local rabbis, and pursued her healing. It is difficult to know if she suffered more from the illness or the social stigma that resulted from it. Nonetheless, when she heard of a Healer named Jesus,


she believed that if she could get close enough simply to touch His prayer shawl, she would be healed.\textsuperscript{714}

\textbf{Video Insert}  

\textit{08.06.05.V Understanding the Jewish Fringes.} Dr. Bill Heinrich discusses the custom of Jewish men wearing fringes, also known as strings, on their garments. Click here if Internet connection is available.

\textbf{“If I can just touch His robes.”} The term \textit{robes} is not the most accurate translation, but neither is the word \textit{hem} as found in most Bibles.\textsuperscript{715} The original Greek word is \textit{kraspeda} or \textit{kraspedon}, which in Hebrew is \textit{zizith}, meaning \textit{tassel of twisted wool}.\textsuperscript{716} These tassels and their knots were a command of God through Moses for all men to wear (Num. 15:37-41; Deut. 22:12) and reminded them of the 613 commandments God had given them.\textsuperscript{717} The tradition of wearing tassels is still observed among orthodox Jews today, who are quick to cite Num. 15:32-41 for the basis of their belief. Each of the fringes consisted of eight threads, of which one was wound around the others; first seven times with a double knot, then eight times with a double knot, then eleven times with a double knot, and finally thirteen times.\textsuperscript{718} Since Hebrew letters have numeric values, the numbers spell \textit{Jehovah One}.\textsuperscript{719} It was \textit{Jehovah One} that the woman touched since Jesus wore them (Mt. 9:20; 14:36).\textsuperscript{720} She not only touched Jesus but she also touched Judaism, a most significant point (because salvation and healing comes from the Jews). It was common knowledge, that if Jesus touched her, or if she touched Him, He would become unclean until evening.\textsuperscript{721} So when they did the crowd was stunned. Furthermore, it was not that He who

\begin{footnotes}
\item[717] The 613 laws were observed only during the times of the tabernacle or temple. Today, only 271 of those Mosaic commands can be observed. See Parry, \textit{The Complete Idiot’s Guide to the Talmud}. 221.
\item[718] Moseley, \textit{Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church}. 21-22; The knots had alpha-numeric values which represented the receipts of the Law. See also Geikie, \textit{The Life and Works of Christ}. 1:189-92.
\item[720] Smith, \textit{Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew}. 272-73. It is most unfortunate that Christian artists almost never depicted Jesus as wearing fringes on His garments.
\item[721] Lev. 15:19-23; Mishnah, \textit{Taharat} 5.8; Mishnah, \textit{Zabin} 5.6.
\end{footnotes}
became defiled, but rather that she become pure, cleansed, and healed. Now Jairus was again able to see again the power of faith of Jesus.

08.06.05.A. A RABBI WITH PHYLACTERY AND PRAYER SHawl. A rabbi is shown wearing a phylactery on his forehead and left arm and a prayer shawl over his shoulders. Tassels or strings, are on the prayer shawls as well as the “four corners” of a man’s garment. Photograph by the author.

Being an orthodox Jew, Jesus wore tassels that hung from His belt as prescribed in the Torah. One distinctive feature of Jesus that is difficult for modern students to accept is that He dressed and acted like an orthodox rabbi. Because of this, some translations refer to the woman’s touching of the “hem of his garment.” Tassels of the prayer shawl (Heb. tallit) were the sacred symbolic garment worn by every adult male Jew. Tassels were the blue and white wool threads worn at each corner. Each tassel has five knots, representing the Torah. Christian artists almost never depict Him in robes with a phylactery, nor tassels hung from the “four corners” of his belt, nor the strings at the corners of his prayer shawl (Heb. tallit). Amazingly, it is easier for modern students to understand the actions of the woman than it is to realize that Jesus lived and functioned as a Jewish rabbi at the end of the Old Testament Period.

722. See video comments by messianic scholar Timothy Hegg in 01.01.02.V.
Some messianic scholars have suggested that she touched the corner or border of His prayer shawl (Num. 15:38) which is known as in Hebrew as the kanaph. This word has been translated some seventy-six times as “wings” in the Old Testament. For example, Psalms 91:1-4 states we are to be hidden “under His wings” is a play on words that means to hide under a prayer shawl. This woman of faith was healed by touching the tassels that were on His prayer shawl and, therefore, she was literally a fulfillment of the prophecy in Malachi 4:2 that read “healing in His wings.”

This was most difficult for them to comprehend and rationalize without concluding that, in some manner unknown to them, it was Jesus who created the Mosaic Law. When she reached out to Jesus, she touched the name of God. By faith she was healed, while other people in a crowded street simply bumped or brushed by Him with no response. The miracle was repeated later in Matthew 14:36 when many others were healed.

On an interesting side note, did the Apostle Paul really support himself financially by making tents? Three-quarters of the one hundred references to tents are in the first seven books of the Bible. When Moses wrote the Torah, the Hebrew children lived in tents and over the centuries they gradually moved into permanent dwellings. By the New Testament period, the only people who lived in tents were Arabs and Bedouins. Do modern scholars really believe that the orthodox Jewish Rabbi Paul made tents for Arabs and Bedouins?

Could it possibly be that the apostle made tents for a nomadic people who did not live anywhere close to him? That is highly doubtful, yet modern translators and preachers insist he was a “tentmaker.” Paul was a Pharisee of Pharisees and a scholar of scholars. He studied under the famed Gamaliel, the grandson of Hillel, one of the two most honored rabbis of the Second Temple Period. He made prayer shawls. When a Jewish man desired to be alone with God, he would place his prayer shawl around his head to create a “little tent.” In light of that, is it possible that the apostle, who preached the gospel to bring men closer to God and wrote most of the New Testament letters, would weave prayer shawls so Jewish men would get closer to God?


You decide. It should be noted that Jesus did not criticize anyone for wearing tassels, but He only criticized those Pharisees who proudly made their’s long (Mt. 23:1-12). Jesus lived and functioned as a Jewish rabbi at the end of the Old Testament Period.

“Who touched My robes?” Jesus did not ask the question because He was unaware of her identity, but because her confession would be an expression of her faith. Was it possible for healing power to go forth from Him without the full consent of His will? If she would have been successful in attaining her healing in secret, would it have been stolen? Jesus wanted to know who she was so He could freely give her the gift she so desperately desired. Only in complete honesty can one enjoy the gifts of the Savior. He then blessed her with the words, “go in peace.”

“Your faith has made you well.” This is one of several accounts where Scripture indicates that the healing came as a result of the faith (or trust) of the sick person. There are also accounts where the healing came as a result of the faith of others (Mk. 2:5) and accounts where Jesus could do no miracles because there was no faith. Wherever the gospel writers said Jesus could not perform any miracles, it was not because He had any limitations on His divinity, but because He refused to cast pearls before swine; to heal those who had ulterior motives. Jesus never met a demon He could not exorcise; sickness He could not heal; but He could not convert an unbeliever or skeptic who refused to be convinced of who He was.

Finally, it should be noted that in Hebrew and Aramaic there is no distinction between “body” and “soul.” Therefore, when Jesus healed He always healed the whole person. For that reason, when He healed people of physical diseases, He made comments such as “Your faith has saved you,” or “Go in peace,” (i.e. Mk. 10:52; Lk. 7:50).

08.06.06 **Mk. 5:35-43** (See also Mt. 9:23-26; Lk. 8:49-56) Capernaum

**JAIROS’ DAUGHTER RAISED**

35 While He was still speaking, people came from the synagogue leader’s house and said, “Your daughter is dead. Why bother the Teacher anymore?”

36 But when Jesus overheard what was said, He told the synagogue leader, “Don’t be afraid. Only believe.” 37 He did not let anyone accompany Him except Peter, James.


726. Mk. 10:52; Lk. 7:50; 17:19; 18:42.

727. Mt. 13:58; Mk. 6:6 i.e., Nazareth.

728. See 02.04.10.
and John, James’s brother. 38 They came to the leader’s house, and He saw a
commotion — people weeping and wailing loudly. 39 He went in and said to them,
“Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but asleep.”

40 They started laughing at Him, but He put them all outside. He took the child’s
father, mother, and those who were with Him, and entered the place where the child
was. 41 Then He took the child by the hand and said to her, “Talitha koum!”
(which is translated, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). 42 Immediately the girl got
up and began to walk. (She was 12 years old.) At this they were utterly astounded. 43
Then He gave them strict orders that no one should know about this and said that
she should be given something to eat.

08.06.06.Q1 Was the daughter of Jairus dead (Mk. 5:35; Lk. 8:49) or asleep (Mk. 5:39; Mt.
9:23; Lk. 9:52)?

The question arises not because there is a conflict in the Synoptics, but because Scripture
recorded that it was the opinion of the people that she was dead. While the word “sleep” is often
used as a metaphor for death, this interpretation was clearly eliminated by Jesus Himself.
However, it can be assumed that the young girl was unconscious, in a coma, or near death. Jesus
would have understood that she was not dead, but the people had no concept of someone being
unconscious or in a coma. The passages read as follows:

Mk. 5:35 “Your daughter is dead.”

Mk. 5:39 “The child is not dead, but asleep.”

Mt. 9:24 “The girl isn’t dead, but sleeping.”

Lk. 8:52 “She is not dead but asleep.”

It was the Jewish belief that sleep was regarded as a kind of death, in which the soul leaves the
body but returns to it on its waking.729 In addition, Mark 5:35 reflects the opinion of several men
who presumed she was dead. The other references indicate that the girl was either unconscious or
in a coma. If she was merely sleeping, no one would have called Jesus to wake her up. Being
dead or near death were often deemed to be one and the same, especially since there was no
basic medical knowledge, as is taken for granted today, to determine the difference. And even if
the difference between these two states of being were known, there was no medical cure to

improve the condition of the dying or near death patient. Whether the girl was clinically dead is hardly the question; rather, she had all appearances of death and was evidently close to it.

Matthew used the Greek word *katheudein*, (2518) which usually means natural sleep. However, the girl may have suffered a medical case of catalepsy, which is a condition in which the person’s body becomes stiff, ridged, and stops moving. The person remains rigid in whatever posture he or she was in at the time of suffering catalepsy and the ability to communicate is lost. It has all the signs of death, and is either a coma or close to being a coma. Throughout history, and even today, in most areas of the Middle East a person was buried on the day of death without embalming. Some excavated tombs have revealed some buried persons may have suffered from catalepsy, then woke up only to find no escape from the tomb. Jesus performed an incredible healing in the young child much to the astonishment of the people and the leader of the local synagogue. Nonetheless, there are three points to consider:

1. To speak of death as sleep is an image common to all the Laws and cultures. Therefore, the reality of death in this case cannot be denied.

2. Death is followed by a resurrection just as sleep is followed by an awakening.

3. Jesus used the exact same Law when describing Lazarus in John 11:11. Possibly, to Him, both she and Lazarus were merely sleeping, since in Him there is no death.

Jairus was a synagogue ruler in Capernaum, a position that would have been comparable to today’s position of a senior pastor or rabbi. Most village and country synagogue rabbis honestly and sincerely cared for the spiritual well-being of their people. Unfortunately, while Jairus believed in Jesus, his fellow villagers were doubtful which is probably why Jesus eventually cursed the village.

“Peter, James, and John.” While Jesus had twelve disciples, He had an inner-circle of three who were particularly close to Him – Peter, James and his brother John. There is no reason given as to why they were chosen, but the three times when Jesus called them aside are as follows:

1. With Jesus when the daughter of Jairus was raised to life

2. At the Transfiguration

3. During His agony in the garden

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The close relationship Jesus had with them, particularly with Peter, made Peter’s denial during the Passion Week all the more dramatic.

“A commotion — people weeping and wailing loudly.” Grief was openly expressed with uncontrolled outbursts of crying and wailing. The term *commotion* (Gk. *thorubeo*, 2350) means *to make an uproar, or to throw into confusion*. Professional mourners were often a part of such an event. As stated previously (08.05.06), when there was a funeral, there were also flute players who played songs while professional mourners (Gk. *sappedans*) sang elegant songs of lament. A poor family had at least one woman mourner and a minimum of two flute players who played songs of lament as family and friends mourned their loss as stated in the Oral Law.

*Rabbi Judah says, “Even the poorest man in Israel should not hire fewer than two flutes and one professional wailing woman.”*

*Mishnah, Ketuboth 4.4*

So in this case the president of the local synagogue would probably have had a small band – not because he was wealthy – but because so many would contribute and share his sorrow. This cultural practice was not only among the Jewish people, but in neighboring cultures as well. For example, in the Roman world, when Emperor Claudius died, the wailing of the flute players and professional mourners were so loud that Seneca said that the emperor, although dead, probably heard them. The eerie sounds of uncontrollable wailing and emotionally charged shrieks by professional mourners will never be forgotten by any Westerner who hears them, including this writer.

“She was 12 years old.” This was an important year in the life of a Jewish girl and her family. It was the age of examination prior to becoming a daughter of the commandment at the age of 13 years and one day. She would be responsible for her own spiritual welfare. Then she would also be a candidate for marriage and a new family. The family and village not only mourned the loss of the young life, but also of the loss of a future family.

“At this they were utterly astounded.” The astonishment shook the community; not just because the young girl was instantly restored to life and health, but because everyone know that

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734. Mishnah, Ketuboth 4.4; Bock, Jesus According to Scripture. 168.
previously the prophets Elijah and Elisha had both restored dead children back to life (1 Kgs. 17:17-24; 2 Kgs. 4:18-37). Now the people of Capernaum realized that someone of prophetic magnitude was in their presence. Little wonder then, that when Capernaum and two other villages show little interest in the message of Jesus, that Jesus said they would be destroyed.

“No one should know about this.” This is an utterly amazing statement. Picture this: There is a crowd of people packed into the house of the president/chief elder, the rosh hakkeneseth of the synagogue— the most important person in the community. His 12-year old daughter is in bed either dead or dying when Jesus and His disciples arrive. Everyone is weeping and singing mourning songs of lament. The air is tense with sorrow, because if she isn’t dead now, she soon will be. Then Jesus enters the room with her parents and His three innermost disciples—Peter, James and John, and the following steps occur:

1. Upon entering the room He quieted everyone and said that girl was sleeping.

2. He removed the paid professional mourners and others who ridiculed Him.

3. He then uttered two Aramaic words Talitha koum!” meaning, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!” She responds and gets up, completely healed.739

4. The family presented the girl to the waiting audience who cheer and express both excitement and joyful disbelief. The reputation of Jesus traveled far and wide.

5. Then Jesus exits the room and tells the family, “No one should know about this!” Who was He kidding? How could anyone possibly be quiet about this incredible miracle? Why did He make this statement?

Jesus had a continuous serious problem: How could He communicate to the Jewish people that He was their Messiah without having them misinterpret Him and conclude that He was a political-messiah? This dilemma did not exist to the same intensity in Greek communities (i.e. Mk. 5:1-20). The miracle publicly demonstrated that Jesus had power over life and death. In their minds, only the Messiah could do such great works, so they were forced to ponder if Jesus really was the Messiah. He obviously challenged their preconceived ideas that the Messiah would destroy the Romans.740 He did not want to tell anyone that He was their Messiah. He


740. See 12.03.01.Q1 “What ‘Messianic problems’ did the Jewish leaders have with Jesus?” and 12.03.01.A “Chart of Key Points of the Messianic Problems.” See also 02.03.09 “Messianic Expectations”; 05.04.02.Q1 “What were the Jewish
wanted them to make that determination for themselves so that whatever their answer would be, they would take ownership of their final decision.

However, the people wanted the tyranny of Roman oppression to end and Israel to be restored to its glory days of King David. They would naturally expect that anyone who had power over life and death would most certainly also be able to bring Israel to international superpower status. However, that was not the intent of Jesus. He told them not to tell others of this great feat. When considering the great joy the people had over the second life of the twelve-year-old girl, and that Jesus could possibly be the one to bring Israel to its promised greatness, one must wonder why Jesus even bothered to tell these people to be quiet. In a culture where “next-to-nothing” brought excitement, this was ecstatic! The Living Word who once spoke the world into existence; formed man into the image of God; and breathed life into him, now restored life to the young girl.

There were three distinctly different reactions to this miracle; reactions that were repeated time and time again. Clearly the interpretation of what was seen and experienced is ultimately defined by the condition of the heart.

1. The crowds were amazed and wondered what kind of man Jesus could be.

2. The leading Pharisees were angered with great passion. They obviously could not deny the powers that Jesus had, so they attributed them to demonic forces.

3. Another group simply could not reconcile their concept of the messiah to the words and actions of Jesus. Nearly everyone was expecting a military messiah, yet this Jesus did meet all of the messianic prophecies of Scripture. Making a decision was clearly difficult.

Finally, the question arises of how Jairus may have then interacted with his peers in other synagogues. Everyone had heard of the Jewish Jesus healing the Gentile centurion’s servant and the son of Herod’s court official. So why did Jairus wait until his daughter was near death to call expectations of the Messiah?” and Appendix 25: “False Prophets, Rebels, Significant Events, and Rebellions that Impacted the First Century Jewish World.”
Him? Was he worried about possible criticisms from the upper echelon Pharisees? This is a very strong possibility. However, when he realized he was about to lose a daughter, he was desperate enough to go to Jesus for help.

08.06.07 Mt. 9:27-31

TWO BLIND MEN HEALED

27 As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed Him, shouting, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!”

28 When He entered the house, the blind men approached Him, and Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I can do this?”

“Yes, Lord,” they answered Him.

29 Then He touched their eyes, saying, “Let it be done for you according to your faith!” 30 And their eyes were opened. Then Jesus warned them sternly, “Be sure that no one finds out!” 31 But they went out and spread the news about Him throughout that whole area.

This is the first of many healings of the blind recorded (Mt. 12:22; 20:30; 21:14; Jn. 9) or alluded to (Mt. 11:5) in the gospels. In fact, this miracle has been called a doublet because of the similar account in Matthew 20:29-34, Mark and Luke 18:35-43. Each one was a literal fulfillment of the prophetic word of Isaiah, who said of the coming Messiah,

Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped.

Isaiah 35:5

The healing of a demon-possessed person who was mute, or “dumb,” was considered to be a messianic miracle, as was the healing of an ordinary person who was born blind. 741 Here were two blind men that the rabbis would not or could not heal. 742 The performance of such an

741. 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 06.03.08.V. See also the comparison of Dead Sea Scroll fragments 4Q278 and 4Q521 with Luke 4:16-30 at 06.02.02.

742. 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.
incredible healing also reveals the spiritual blindness of so many religious leaders. Throughout Scripture, sin is often described as moral blindness and the deliverance from sin is described as a removal of this blindness. To say that Jesus is the proverbial “light of the world” has more to do with spiritual blindness than it does with physical blindness. At times Jesus healed by simply touching the person (Mt. 20:34). On another occasion, he used clay mingled with spittle (Jn. 9:6-7), and on another He used moisture from His mouth (Mk. 8:23). But nowhere did He simply speak healing to the blind. The reason for the variation remains a divine secret.

08.06.08 Mt. 9:32-34

MUTE MAN HEALED

32 Just as they were going out, a demon-possessed man who was unable to speak was brought to Him. 33 When the demon had been driven out, the man spoke. And the crowds were amazed, saying, “Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel!”

34 But the Pharisees said, “He drives out demons by the ruler of the demons!”

It was common opinion that those who were blind and/or mute, suffered in this condition because God cursed them or their parents. Regardless of how good and righteous the handicapped person and his family were, the social curse could not be removed. The idea that an accident or illness could be the natural result of living in a fallen world had never occurred to them.

The tradition had arisen that only the Messiah would be able to bring healing to those born with blindness became known as a “ messianic miracle.” It was based on the prophet Isaiah, who said that the Messiah would bring vision to the eyes of the blind and that the ears of the deaf would be opened (Isa. 35:5-6). This is precisely what Jesus did to demonstrate His Messianic authority. Once He captured people’s attention, He taught them the Kingdom of God.

“Unable to speak.” The Greek word kophos in all grammar forms refers to a deaf mute, indicating that the man could neither speak nor hear. These two ailments were commonly linked


744. Isa. 16:18; 43:8; Eph. 1:8; Mt. 15:14.

745. Research on the “Messianic Miracles” is credited to Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, a Messianic scholar and director of Ariel Ministries in San Antonio, TX, formerly of Tustin, CA. For more information on his excellent scholarship, see http://ariel.org/. Retrieved September 26, 2013. See also 06.03.08.V (Video), 06.01.03 and the comparison of Dead Sea Scroll fragments 4Q278 and 4Q521 with Luke 4:16-30 at 06.02.02; See also Fruchtenbaum, Messianic Miracles. 4.
The fact that Jesus healed this man was absolutely profound because in various Inter-Testamental Jewish writings, the advent of the Messiah meant that evil would be defeated. Now they were witnesses of Jesus performing the acts that were predicted that the Messiah would perform.

Please note that all references to footnotes are in the “Works Cited” section located in the last volume.
