

MYSTERIES OF THE MESSIAH

Mini-Vol. 3: Answers to Questions Presented by Critics and Analytical Thinkers

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Categories of Questions and Issues

Theological Issues Related to the Gospel Narratives

Questions Concerning the Birth and Childhood of Jesus

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Questions of History, Culture, and Religion

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**Questions and explanations related to Hermeneutics – the Art and Science of
Interpretation.**

The Teaching and Ministry of Jesus

Questions on the Passion Week and Resurrection

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Please Consider this....

If you are a skeptic and question who Jesus was, then hopefully this website will bring answers to your life. You might be overwhelmed at the phenomenal amount of evidence there is about Him. But this evidence is often hidden within the cultural context. For example, I have often been told that Jesus never claimed to be God, meaning “deity” as being separate from “messiah.” That is true in the sterile analytical vacuum of a literary microscope, but within the religious and cultural environment, His words and actions frequently revealed His deity. This website explains those hidden details.

Therefore, consider the seminary professor who once asked, “Did Jesus know that He was God?” Had he understood first century Jewish culture and how Jesus communicated His deity, he would have known the answer. Critics and inquiring minds have always been confronted with passages they did not fully understand and, therefore, often made inaccurate interpretations.

Now for those who believe they have read just about everything there is on the most significant person in history, hopefully this website will reinvigorate your quest to know Him more fully. However, regardless of where you are in your spiritual journey and/or academic career, if my work does not bring you into a closer relationship with our Lord, then I have failed miserably. You may not agree with all my comments and interpretations, but you do have to agree that Jesus is Lord of Lords, King of Kings, and He desires to be the personal Savior of every person.

Keep in mind that we, in the Western tradition, study and examine the Scriptures with logic and reasoning. However, while this is important, Jesus created meaning with the use of metaphor, simile, dramatic stories, and parables to teach the theology of the Kingdom of God, more than He did with logic and reasoning. Clearly there is a bridge to be crossed for the reader to fully understand the words of Scripture that can be incorporated with the Holy Spirit.

I am indebted to both those with whom I agree as well as those with whom I disagree. Both have expanded my field of understanding. Those with whom I disagree have challenged me to further study and research for truthful answers. On some issues I am very dogmatic in my opinion, and on other issues there is plenty of room for further research. John said in his gospel “These are written that you may believe....” (Jn. 20:31) and so it is with this book. Enjoy!

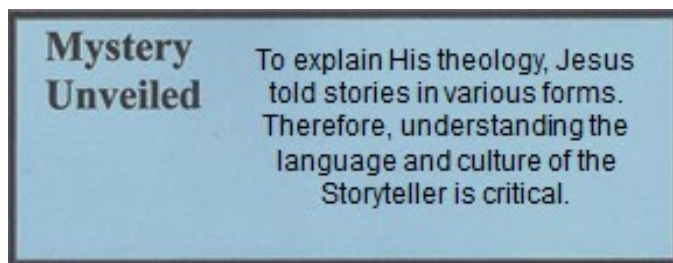


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[10.01.12.Q1](#) Is there a “wilderness” near Bethsaida (Mk. 6:31)?

[10.01.23.Q1](#) Why did Jesus go to the regions of Tyre and Sidon and later to the Decapolis cities (Mt. 15:22-28; Mk. 7:24-26)?

[11.02.21.Q1](#) Why did Jesus use spit and mud to heal the blind man in John 9:1-12?

[12.03.01.Q1](#) What “Messianic problems” did the Jewish leaders have with Jesus?

[13.03.07.Q1](#) Was Jesus familiar with non-biblical literary sources?

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Questions On The Passion Week And Resurrection

[12.04.08.Q1](#) What were the 12 reasons the Jewish leadership planned the death of Jesus?

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- [13.01.02.Q2](#) How is the apparent conflict of the number of donkeys explained (Mt. 21:4-7; Mk. 11:4-7; Lk. 19:29-31; Jn. 12:14-16)?
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14.02.05.V *The Last Passover and Possible Connection to the Essene Calendar.* Dr. Paul Wright discusses the “biblical difficulty” of Jesus celebrating the Passover the day *before* most other Jews celebrated it. Did Jesus observe Passover according to the Essene Calendar?

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17.01.02.V *The Legend of Rabbi Eliezer and the Sanhedrin.* Mr. Avinoam Boyer discusses the Legend of Rabbi Eliezer and his confrontation with the Sanhedrin. Introduction by Dr. Bill Heinrich.

17.02.02.V1 *The Garden Tomb.* Archaeologist Dr. Bryant Wood discusses the date of the Garden Tomb as an Iron Age II tomb, meaning it was used in the 8th to 7th century B.C.

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17.02.02.V3 *The Church of the Holy Sepulchre as the former Shrine of Venus.* Dr. Petra Heldt discusses the reconstruction of Jerusalem by Emperor Hadrian in A.D. 135, and how his work is believed to have preserved the identity of the tomb of Jesus. Dr. Paul Wright discusses some stones in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre that may have been used previously in Hadrian's shrine to the Roman goddess Venus. Introduction and comments by Dr. Bill Heinrich.

17.02.02.V4 *The Shroud of Turin.* Michael Keating, a research and development engineer, discusses the amazing discoveries concerning the Shroud of Turin that some say was the burial cloth of Jesus. Introduction by Dr. Bill Heinrich.

Important Notice:

This eBook makes numerous references to other areas for further study, which can only be found in the single volume of *Mysteries of the Messiah*. All reference numbers (i.e., 04.01.03) in this text match those of the single volume eBook.

Theological Issues Related To The Gospel Narratives

04.01.03.Q1 Was/is Jesus God (Jn. 1:1-18)?

The most important question in life pertains to the identity of Jesus. It was the question posed by Jesus when He took His band of disciples to Caesarea Philippi – to the most pagan place in the ancient Middle East – and asked them, “Who do you say that I am?”¹ While this is obviously a theological question, brief biblical identity of Jesus must be given.

1. God and the Lamb (Jesus) are worshiped (Rev. 5:8-17)
2. God and the Lamb (Jesus) are the Temple (Rev. 21:22)
3. Jesus was worshiped on earth (Mt. 2:11; 8:2; Mk. 5:6; etc.)
4. Jesus was worshiped after the resurrection (Mt. 28:9, 17)
5. Jesus was worshiped during the Ascension (Mt. 28:9, 17)
6. Angels worship Jesus (Heb. 1:6)
7. Multitudes worship God and the Lamb in heaven (Rev. 7:9-10)

Clearly, there are some challenges to understanding the dual nature of Jesus, due primarily to the limited human capacity to understand God. In Luke 4:8 Jesus told the devil to worship the Lord God only. In addition, the first commandment says to have no other god before God. While Jesus is the Son of God and submitted to the Father, the Word was God and became human flesh (Jn. 1:1, 14). Jesus came from the bosom of the Father (Jn. 1:18) to reveal God the Father to humanity.²

This question is obviously in response to the statement, “**No one has ever seen God,**” which appears in direct conflict with other biblical passages. For example, Moses and the leaders of the Israelite children “saw God, and they ate and drank” (Ex. 24:11b). While this verse affirms a visual appearance, it is in the context of Exodus 33:19-20. They may have seen God, but not His face. Yet Exodus 33:11 states that “the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face,” but in verse 18, Moses asked God to “show me your glory.” At first God refused, but then conceded and made His “goodness to pass” in front of him (Ex. 33:19), because “you cannot see my face, for

1. 10.01.29; Matthew 16:15.

2. See also Appendix 8 “The Two Natures of Jesus.”

no one can see my face and live” (v. 20). But verse 20 redefines the meaning of the phrase “face to face,” and it obviously was not in the sense of modern interpretation. Therefore, there is no conflict with John 1:18.

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04.01.03.V *Jesus in the Old Testament and Eternity Past.* Professor John Metzger discusses the Deity of Jesus in the Old Testament and in eternity past. Click here if Internet connection is available.

04.01.03.Q2 How can it be said that no one has ever seen God (Jn. 1:18) when other passages (Ex. 33:11, 19-20; Ezek. 1:26-28) clearly indicate otherwise?

Centuries later Ezekiel was granted the unusual opportunity to get a glimpse that was only a vision in which he saw a form on a throne, not a clear image (Ezek. 1:26-28). Therefore, the Old Testament references that seem to conflict with John are, in fact, clarified by Moses.

Elsewhere, Isaiah saw God high and lifted up upon a throne (Isa. 6:1) and the seventy elders of Israel saw God (Ex. 24:9-11). Yet as stated above, Exodus 33:20 reads that no one can see God and live. This passage and John 1:18 mean that the ultimate glory and nature of God are hidden from sinful humanity. The word *seeing* in John’s passage is related to seeing the *divine essence* rather than the *divine person*, which also is indicated by the absence of the Greek article from *Theos*, meaning *God*.³

Finally, God was the author of the human body and soul of Jesus Christ. In Him the divine and human natures were united, so that “the Word,” who “was in the beginning with God” and “was God,” “was made flesh and lived among us.” It was on both accounts that Jesus was called “the Son of God.” Therefore, He was also said to be “God manifested in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16). Technically, He is Jesus the Messiah, Son of God (Heb. *Yeshua Meshiach, ben Elohim*).

3. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 2:58-59.

04.03.08.Q5 What is the significance of the virgin birth (Mt. 1:18-25)?

This is a theological question that is beyond the scope of this paper, but three brief answers are as follows:

1. Throughout the Old Testament Period, the miraculous birth of a child to elderly parents was a well-established pattern that God used to announce that a special person was born – usually a prophet. The virgin birth of Jesus was the culmination of all the miraculous births recorded throughout Jewish history.
2. The virgin birth is critical in that it broke the generational curse of sin that has plagued humanity since Adam and Eve succumbed to the temptations of Satan.⁴ The basic understanding of sin is critical in order to comprehend the significance of what Jesus saved us *from*, as well as what He saved us *to*.⁵ The absolute purity and holiness of Jesus could begin only with a virgin birth. Thus He did not receive the curse that had been transmitted from generation to generation since Adam. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus were nothing less than a continuance of that purity and holiness.⁶
3. Another reason for the virgin birth, one that is often overlooked, arises in Jeremiah 22:24-30. This passage pertains to the curse of Jechoniah, who is in the line of Joseph. Joseph could not have been the biological father of Jesus, because of two issues (mankind's sin and the curse of Jechoniah), but he became the legal adopted father, or step-father of Jesus. According to rabbinic writings, Mary is referred to as "Miriam, the daughter of Heli" meaning the genealogy of Jesus was recognized as being through Mary and not Joseph.⁷

By a gracious and merciful God, we have Christ Jesus who bore our sins (past, present, and future) on the cross. The parallel between Adam and Jesus in Romans 5:12-21, and to a lesser extent, in 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 are important. Every person who has ever lived has inherited a sin nature from Adam. But Jesus, born of a virgin, did not have that sin nature, although He had the opportunity and temptations to sin. Yet He chose not to sin. By His sinless life, death, and resurrection, He not only brought salvation by which man would be saved *from* the consequences

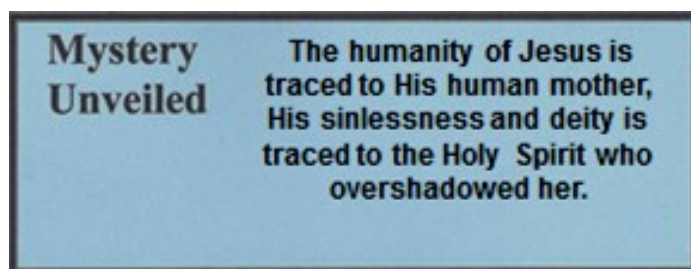
4. Critics have posed four questions: 1) Was Jesus born of a virgin? 2) Was Jesus the Son of God? 3) Is the Bible the Inspired Word of God? 4) Did He rise from the grave? To affirm negatively to one of more of these questions reflects a loss of faith and denial of who Jesus was in the first century and who He is today.

5. Marino, "The Origin, Nature, and Consequences of Sin." 255-58.

6. See a King James Version or New American Standard Version of the Bible.

7. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor's Manual*. Class 2, page 12.

of sin, but also be saved *to* salvation with Himself. This incredible gift of eternal life is available to anyone who accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior and commits their life to Him. Acceptance of the virgin birth as a historical fact is foundational in understanding who Jesus is and the development of one's relationship with Him. It was through Eve, a virgin in the Garden of Eden, that death entered into the world. Now through Mary, a virgin, life would enter into the world.



Finally, there is a teaching that the blood of the unborn child comes from the father and, therefore, the transfer of sin was broken by the virgin birth. However, modern science has proven this blood theory to be wrong. As previously stated, Roman Catholics also grappled with the problem of the transfer of sin from the Virgin Mary to Christ Jesus. They resolved the issue with the belief that she too was born of a virgin, so she too was pure and holy. Protestants disagree because this does not reconcile with Scripture as Psalm 51:5 suggests states that the sinful nature is generational, passing from one generation to another at time of conception. The complete answer remains a divine mystery. However, the miracle of Jesus is that He not only was born of a virgin, but He also received His human nature from His sanctified mother and, hence, her sinful nature did not enter Him.⁸ Holiness is a work of the Holy Spirit, not the absence of a male sperm.

04.03.10.Q2 Why was Jesus born?

This question is obviously of a theological nature. However, to summarize, Jesus was born to reveal God the Father to mankind (Jn. 1:18), to redeem mankind from sin (Jn. 1:19; 3:16), to bring all people unto Himself, and to rule His kingdom (Mt. 3:2-3; Jn. 18:37). He was born, that He could die, that you could choose to live with Him forever.

04.04.07.Q1. Concerning Matthew 2:9-12, did God approve of the Magi's use of astrology?

The fact that God used the magi to honor the Christ child has at times been interpreted to mean that God approves of astrology along with similar arts related to witchcraft and the occult.

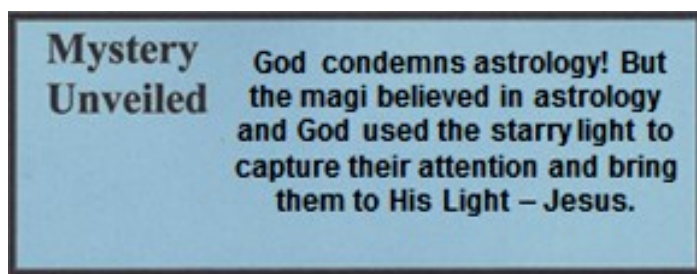
8. Lawlor, *Almah*. 25-35.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Any involvement with astrology has always been strictly forbidden.⁹ God, by His grace, led the magi to the Savior since many other people were also looking for a Him. It has often been stated that the visit of the magi was indicative of the many Gentiles who would eventually come to recognize Jesus as the true Messiah.

Did Jesus endorse astrology when he said, “At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky and all the nations of the earth will mourn” (Mt. 24:30)? This question is in reference to Christ’s return and has two elements which some might associate with astrology.

1. The word “sign” as to how it is related to starry sky (astronomy), and
2. It is the predictive phrase that people will be in mourning.

In response to the question, it is God who created the heavens and the earth and He predicted that there will be physical signs in the sky and on the earth prior to the return of the Messiah. These events are not related to astrology, but rather, to the events of mankind and God, who knows the future, knows what will occur and when. Not only does God *not* endorse astrology, He *forbids* it.¹⁰



Finally, Ephraim, the Syrian (306-373), a highly respected church deacon and theologian, wrote this poetic hymn to illustrate the distinctions between Gentile royalty and Jewish leaders:

**The magi exalted from afar,
 The Scribes murmured near at hand.
 The Scribes showed their doctrine,
 The Magi showed their offerings
 It is a marvel that to Him, the Babe, they of His own house hurried with their
 Swords and they that were strangers (hurried) with their offerings.**

9. Deut. 4:19; 17:2-7; 18:9-14; Isa. 47:13; Jer. 10:2.

10. 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.

Ephraim the Syrian, *Hymns on the Nativity*¹¹

04.05.04.Q1 How could the prophet Isaiah (11:1) identify Jesus as a “Nazarene” when there was no village by that name when the prophet lived?

This is an interesting question since Isaiah lived around 700 B.C., and Nazareth was established late in the Inter-Testamental period, meaning, there were about 500 to 600 years between the prophet and the establishment of the small farming village. Previously Matthew mentioned that the birth of Jesus was announced by a “rising” star (Mt. 2:1-2). The term “rising” (*anatole*) can also mean *growth* or *shoot* and in Isaiah 11:1 *shoot* and *branch* are parallels.¹² At Qumran, the writers of the Dead Sea Scrolls called the Messiah the *Branch of David*, a term that precisely fits the wording of Matthew.¹³ Therefore, the phrase, “**That He will be called a Nazarene,**” is a play on words (*mnemonic*)¹⁴ that reflects upon *the shoot of Jesse*, referring to a prophecy given by Isaiah and explained below.

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

Isaiah 11:1

A Lesson in First Century Hermeneutics:

04.05.04.X A Word Play Known As A *Mnemonic*

In every language there are word plays – two words that sound alike but have different, sometimes opposite, meanings. At times word plays create humor and other times they are ideal teaching tools. The words *shoot*, *branch*, and *Nazareth*, have the same root word (*Netzer*). The debate hinges on whether the Greek word for “Nazareth” derives from Hebrew *netzer*, or *nezer*, meaning *branch*, or *nazar*, meaning *to consecrate*.¹⁵ Those who claim there is a connection to *netzer*, base their opinions on the phrase “Netzer-shoot planted by God” found in the Dead Sea Scroll 1QH 6:15; 7:5, 8, 10. Since *Netzer* is the root word for Nazareth, what Matthew is saying

11. Thomas, *The Golden Treasury of Patristic Quotations: From 50 – 750 A.D.* 190. Parenthesis by Thomas.

12. See also Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:2

13. Dead Sea Scroll 4QpIsa; 4QPat. Bl. 3.4; 4QFlor. 10; Cited by Smith, *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew*. 45.

14. See “mnemonic” in Appendix 26.

15. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:22; Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 73.

is that Jesus is the *Netzer* or *Branch* that came out of the root of Jesse – the father of King David. This is clearly a play on words known as a *mnemonic*,¹⁶ that is, a word arrangement in such a manner that it is easily remembered by the listeners.¹⁷ This functioned,

1. As a memory tool and
2. Indicated that the matter was of Divine origin.

Jesus, as the Master Teacher and like a typical rabbi, used puns and plays on words. In this case, the memory tool of *nazar* and *Netzer* apparently had a divine origin.

05.01.03.Q1 What is the primary difference between immersion in a mikvah, and baptism?

Baptism was for the repentance of sin as well as a commitment to something – an office, a calling, or a way of life. It represented a change of lifestyle. Immersion in a mikvah was for the removal of defilement, such as walking over a grave or touching a corpse. However, the ritual of dipping or immersion daily in a mikvah was not for baptism (repentance of sin) but for the cleansing of defilement. Priests immersed themselves daily before entering the temple. Also, the Essenes in Qumran immersed themselves three times daily to remain ritually pure.¹⁸ In Jewish thinking, purity (Gk. *katharos*) was defined within the realm of physical, religious, and ethical purity; a term that has both figurative and literal requirements of behavior.¹⁹ There are several unique features of John's ministry and baptism.²⁰

1. The people remembered his miraculous birth and, so when he began to preach, crowds came to hear him.
2. There were no miracles in the ministry of John, but the Holy Spirit functioned through his sermons of repentance.
3. His baptisms did not have a concept of the death, burial, and resurrection as in the baptism of Jesus.

16. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*. 710.

17. Barclay, "Matthew." 1:13.

18. Harrison, *A Short Life of Christ*. 66-70.

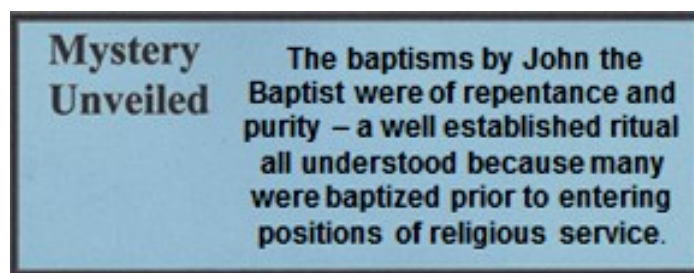
19. Link and Schattenmann. "Pure, Clean." 3:102-03.

20. According to Scott, Jr. *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament*. 146, one of the earliest scholars to research Jewish baptisms was a French scholar, Joseph Thomas, who authored *Le Mouvement baptiste en Palestine et Syrie* (Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1935). For more on Jewish baptisms, see 05.05.02 and Nicodemus in 05.05.05.

4. His was a baptism of repentance and purity — that those who were baptized were sorry (repentant) for their sins and they dedicated themselves to live according to the precepts set forth in the Hebrew Bible.²¹ The baptisms by the disciples were like those of John.

5. John was the forerunner of the Messiah. Those who were baptized by him also identified themselves with him – and as such – they would identify themselves with the coming Messiah and the Messiah’s message about the Kingdom of God.

In 1947, when the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered, Hebrew and Christian scholars were surprised to learn that the Essenes, who predated Christ by more than a century, had a doctrine and practice of baptism with amazing similarities to early Christianity. Namely, immersion with a repentant heart is a practice that is not found in any other Jewish writings of this time. In one of the scrolls known as the *Damascus Document* (a/k/a the *Community Rule*) is a rule in column three that states if a person immerses himself and is not sorry for his sins, he will not be forgiven, even with all the water in the world. Repentance was to be coupled with water immersion; the water cleans the body, the Holy Spirit cleans the inside of the person.²² Therefore, many scholars believe the doctrine of baptism was not a new concept for the early church, but was patterned from the Essenes and their ritualistic baths.²³ However, this writer believes that the Essene practice of baptism may have been part of the meaning of the phrase “in the fullness of time,” Jesus came to this earth (Gal. 4:4). Men were ready for Him in ways beyond our comprehension.



Finally, for a point of clarification, John’s baptism was a repentance baptism for the forgiveness of sins. The baptism of Jesus is not only for the forgiveness of sins, but also for His redemptive work that is essential for salvation and eternal life.²⁴ It is the first step in the restoration of mankind to the image of God (see 16.1.18.Q3).

21. Farrar, *The Life of Christ*. 109.

22. Martinez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*. 5.

23. For more information on baptism, see 05.05.05.Q2 and Q3.

24. Beasley-Murray, “Baptism.” 1:146.

05.02.03.Q1 Why was Jesus baptized (Mt. 3:13-17; Mk. 1:9-11; Lk. 3:21-23a)?

Jesus was baptized **to fulfill all righteousness**, but there are reasons or insights that define the meaning of that phrase. The term *righteousness* (Gk. *dikaiosyne*) is defined by a number of phrases such as *uprightness, upright, just acquitted*²⁵ or as said in a simplified manner, *as if I never sinned*. But obviously everyone does sin, and baptism is the symbolic act to declare one has accepted divine forgiveness *as if he never sinned*. But since Jesus never sinned, His baptism was for the fulfillment or purpose of righteousness as follows:

1. According to the Law of Moses (Lev. 16:4) a priest was consecrated to his office by the ritual cleansing of washing with water. While Jesus was to function in the office of Messiah and not as a priest, He still took on the symbolic priestly cleansing in order to fulfill the demands of the Law, which signified He was consecrated to God and ready for public ministry. The baptism itself didn't result in the forgiveness of sin, but rather, it was an expression of the repentance which already occurred when one accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, including the forgiveness of sin.²⁶
2. It was to identify with the preaching of the Kingdom of God.
3. To identify with the believing remnant of John's baptism.
4. To identify with sinners (2 Cor. 5:21). Since Jesus took upon Himself the nature of sinful men, and placed Himself in their position, it was proper that He should submit Himself to every ordinance of God's appointment concerning sinful men.
5. To receive the anointing of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38).

His baptism was the last act of his private life and first act of his public ministry. While the baptism has symbolism (described above), so does its location. Note the following:

1. It was the same place where Joshua and the Israelites crossed the Jordan River to enter Canaan some fifteen centuries earlier.²⁷ Joshua's entrance into the new land symbolized a new life for God's people and new era. The crossing point was named "Beth-Abara," meaning "house of the crossing." In the course of time it was abbreviated to "Bethany,"

25. Brown, "Righteousness, Justification." 3:352-54.

26. Acts 3:19; 5:31; 10:43; 11:18; 13:38; 26:18.

27. Older references to the location identified it as being just south of the Sea of Galilee. However, more recent scholarship agrees with ancient witnesses who place the location north of the Dead Sea.

but the term “beyond the Jordan” was also attached to it as not to confuse it with the village of Bethany located near Jerusalem, the home of Lazarus (Jn. 1:28). Therefore, the baptism at this site represented a new era; a new beginning.

2. It was where Elijah was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind on a chariot of fire.
3. It was where Gideon defeated the Midianites and killed two of their princes.

The Jewish people practiced two rituals in water:

1. Baptism (which most Christians are unaware was practiced by Jewish people)
2. Ritual immersions (which most Christians do not understand)

Baptism was a one-time event for the repentance of sin. It was usually practiced for a number of reasons,²⁸ such as when someone became a member of the Sanhedrin. The Essenes also baptized new members into their sect,²⁹ and many scholars believe the Pharisees did likewise, but evidence for a firm conclusion on this matter is still lacking.

The ritual immersion in a *mikvah*³⁰ was in response to defilement caused by a physical transgression (touching a dead body, walking over a grave, etc.), whereas baptism was for repentance of sin and the coming to faith. Since there is no Christian counterpart to ritual immersion, it is difficult for Gentile believers to understand its purpose.

05.02.03.Q2 Why did Jesus have to wait *past* age 30 to begin His ministry (Lk. 3:23)?

The age of ministry according to Moses was from the age of 30 until 50 (Num. 4:3-43). Scripture states that “**Jesus was about 30 years old**” which is obviously indicative that He was not age 30 when He began His ministry. That raises the question of why was Jesus “*about* thirty years old,” when He began.

John and Jesus were cousins who were six months apart in age. John had to obey Numbers 4:3-43 and could not begin his ministry until he was the age of 30. In the meantime, Jesus had to wait

28. For more information of various reasons for baptism, see baptism as related to Nicodemus in 05.05.05.Q2 and Q3.

29. See 05.01.03 and 05.03.02.Q1 “Was the baptism by John similar to the baptism ritual that the Jews performed when a proselyte joined them?” 05.05.05.A “Dead Sea Scroll 4Q414 With Baptismal Liturgy;” see also chapter 7 of the *Didache*.

30. See 05.05.05.D “First Century Mikvah;” and the video of Dr. Paul Wright who discusses the mikvah at the southern temple steps (04.04.03.V).

until the “time was fulfilled” (Gal. 4:4) before He could begin, and that included waiting for John to,

1. Get his ministry established, including the acquisition of disciples, and
2. Sufficiently proclaim that the Messiah was coming. This most certainly required more than a year, possibly two.
3. Furthermore, since there were many itinerant preachers in the countryside, John had to establish himself as a trustworthy and respectable rabbi. Being dressed as the prophet Elijah brought people’s attention to him and his message, and distinguished him from all the others.

Therefore, it can be assumed that Jesus was probably between the ages of 31 and 33 when He began His ministry.

05.02.04.Q1 In Matthew 4:6 and Luke 4: 10, did Satan speak the truth?

Satan gave the appearance of quoting Scripture. But a careful reading, however, reveals that he misquoted it. For example, in Matthew 4:6, Satan incorrectly quoted Psalm 91:11-12 when he failed to mention the phrase “to guard you in all your ways” in verse 11. Satan cannot communicate divine truth, but he does very well with half-truths, misapplied truths, or revengeful truths for the purpose of deception, hurting people, and furthering his evil kingdom.

05.02.04.Q2 Was Jesus capable of committing a sin?

Absolutely! Otherwise, He would have been immune to temptations. The two most grievous struggles He experienced were at the beginning and the end of His ministry: Forty days in the desert wilderness and one night in the Garden of Gethsemane followed by six trials and the crucifixion. The miracle of Jesus is that He was tempted in every area of life as we are – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – yet He remained completely sinless (Heb. 4:15). He was totally God and totally human, a concept that mere mortals find contradictory and impossible to understand. If He had not experienced victory over the temptations of humanity, then He would not have been the promised sinless and spotless Lamb of God.

On a related issue, Satan is the archenemy of God as well as mankind, since mankind was created in the image of God. Therefore, Satan is the archenemy of mankind as well. Since Satan’s principal method of attack is temptation, this makes the temptations of Jesus especially significant.

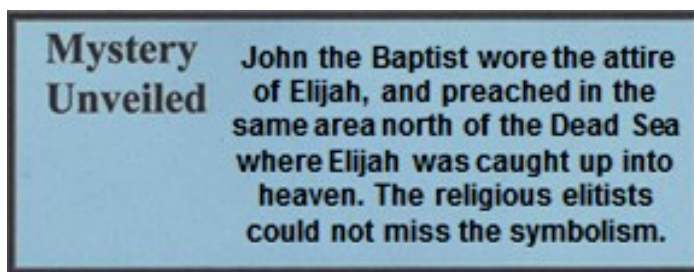
05.03.01.Q1 Why did John the Baptist say he was not Elijah (Jn. 1:21), but Jesus said that he was (Mt. 11:13-14; Mk. 9:13)?

Clearly there is an apparent contradiction between these two passages. However, the meaning goes beyond the literal understanding of the words. Assume for a moment that the conversation would have taken place with modern terms. When John was asked “Are you Elijah?” he probably would have said, “No. My name is John.” The context of the passage is a request for a physical identity, not a prophetic one. John also denied being “the Prophet” because that had messianic implications.

But there was a reason when they asked the question, “**Are you Elijah?**” The question had to be asked because John’s dress and lifestyle was that of the ancient prophet. By doing so John followed the Jewish tradition of emphasizing the importance of his message and work. Two examples are Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

1. Jeremiah once instructed the people not to mourn for their deceased loved ones to symbolize the coming disaster for Judah and Jerusalem (Jer. 16:5-9).
2. Ezekiel refused to mourn the death of his wife as a sign of the pending destruction of the temple and Jerusalem (Ezek. 24:16-24).

After John’s 30th birthday, the priests, Levites, and even Sadducees took special attention. So when they saw him dressed like Elijah and listened to his message, they immediately recognized him to be a prophet – the first in nearly four centuries. Later, when Jesus said Elijah had already come, He meant that John fulfilled the Elijah prophecy – John was not the physical return of Elijah, but fulfilled the prophetic words of earlier prophets.



06.03.09.Q1 Did the phrase “Your sins are forgiven,” proclaim Jesus as Deity (Lk. 5:20)?

Jesus made a stunning statement when He said, “**Friend, your sins are forgiven you.**” In Mark’s narrative Jesus used the word *teknon* that means *child* or *son*.³¹ It is a word of endearment that reflects the compassion and love that the leading Pharisees lacked. The statement, “your sins are forgiven you.” is used 13 times in the Hebrew Bible, including nine times in the Torah.³² It should be noted that the religious leaders forgot the discussion Nathan had with King David. After the king repented, Nathan said,

The LORD has taken away your sin; you will not die.

2 Samuel 12:13

In that case, Nathan did not forgive David’s sin, but rather, he conveyed God’s forgiveness and assured David of it. However, when Jesus forgave sin, He did so by the authority and power of God Almighty. This phrase was reserved for God alone and the Pharisees were horrified when Jesus used it. When Moses wrote Leviticus chapters 4, 5, and 6, he used the passive Hebrew voice. When Jesus said it, He also used the passive voice, a bold self-proclamation of deity.³³

Nonetheless, there must have been some who questioned, “Where is the evidence that His statement, ‘your sins are forgiven,’ is permitted and ratified in heaven?” Anyone could have said this with a degree of boldness. Jesus attested His right and power to do that which, by its very nature, lies outside of the realm of visible proof.³⁴ Therefore, He performed the miracle of healing to convey to the audience that He did, in fact, have divine power to perform a messianic miracle.

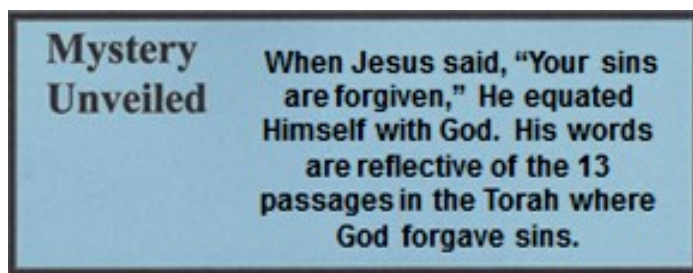
It had not occurred to them that God might take on human form. No one had ever performed these kinds of miracles before, and yet Jesus performed all three messianic miracles that demonstrated His deity and for this reason, the Jewish leadership responded with, “He’s blaspheming!”

31. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 322.

32. Lev. 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13, 16, 18; 6:7.

33. Fruchtenbaum, *Life of the Messiah*. Tape 5, Side B.

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



Since the Jews were so intent on an expected political-messiah, they could not imagine a messiah who would heal the sick, raise the dead, and forgive sins. Their preconceived ideas blinded them to the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies about the ministry of Jesus. Ironically, from their own tradition is an interesting verse recorded later in the Babylonian Talmud that reads,

**This sick man is not healed
Until all his sins are forgiven him.**

Babylonian Talmud, *Nedarim* 41a³⁵

As previously stated, Jews, Greeks and Romans also associated illnesses with sin. There was an association between those who were sick and their physician; the sick were to pattern their behavior after their healer. The Greek writer Lucian (120-185 A.D.) preserved this interesting account, in which the sick are to get well by not becoming angry or excited, which were seen as "sins."

He (Demonax) never was known to make an uproar or excite himself or get angry, even if he had to rebuke someone; though he assailed sins, he forgave sinners thinking that one should pattern after doctors who heal sicknesses but felt no anger at the sick. He considered that it is human to err, divine or all but divine to set right what has gone amiss.

Lucian of Samosata, *Demonax* 7³⁶

Lucian of Samosata and others like him were in sharp contrast to Jesus who simply healed people and told them not to continue in their sinful lifestyle. Some critics claim that Jesus did not understand His Messiahship because he failed to specifically tell the people He was the Messiah. Unfortunately, these critics fail to realize that Jesus frequently *demonstrated* His Messiahship

35. See Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 341.

36. Boring, Berger, and Colpe, eds. *Hellenistic Commentary to the New Testament*. 65, 74.

and deity. Throughout history there have been many who claimed to be the Messiah, but only Jesus *demonstrated* His calling.

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

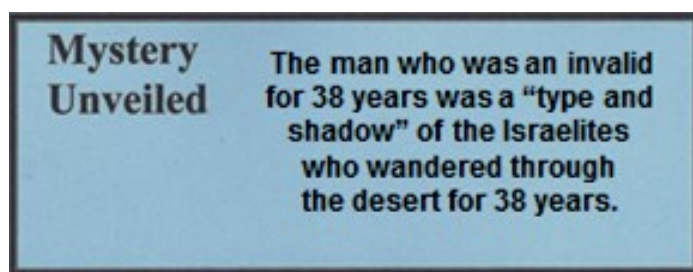
Many translators use the word “invalid” rather than “sick,” which suggests that his physical condition existed since birth. His life and the lives of other handicapped people were reduced to begging with no hope or purpose for which to live. Most certainly all of them wanted to be healed and, Jesus, 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 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).

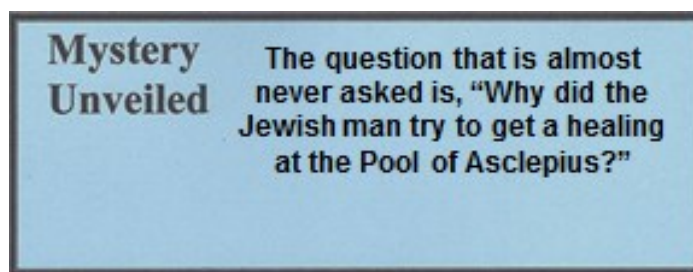
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was, into the full enrichment of life by faith in Him. He came to give life and to give it more abundantly to anyone who desires it (Jn. 10:10).



NOTE: to understand the full context of the narrative to which this question refers, read 07.01.04 in its entirety. With the advent of Hellenism, pagan images existed in many parts of Israel, outside of the Holy City of Jerusalem as seen in image 07.01.04.C.



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. There have been several possible reasons debated.

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.³⁷ 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.³⁸

07.01.04.Q3 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.³⁹ 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.⁴⁰ The miracle power of God as performed through Jesus must have revealed the shallowness of Greek mythology and religions.

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

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

39. 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).

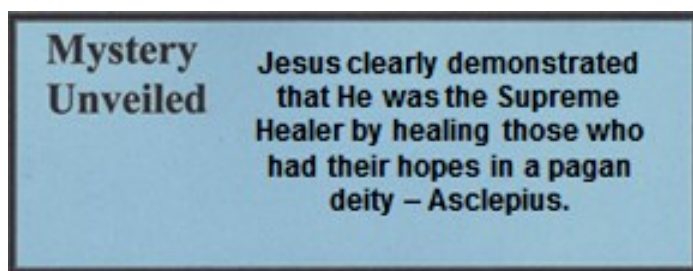
40. For more information, see 03.05.12, “Summary Influence of Hellenistic Reform” (331-63 B.C.)

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.⁴¹ 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 accidentally broke off a horn when feeding the infant milk. Hence, the horn has become known as the “horn of plenty.”



07.01.04.D. COINS 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.



41. Ancient coins are cleaned and restored by a process known as the Deep Proton Activation Analysis.



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.

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.⁴² The person in need of healing and the artificial body part were then anointed with prayer.

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,

42. In churches that still consider votive offerings today, the parishioner can give gifts such as candles, flowers, or monetary donations.

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.

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.
And forgive us our debts
As we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from the evil one.**

Luke 11:2-4 (NIV 1984)

**He said to them,
"When you pray, say:
Father,
Hallowed be your name
Your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread
And forgive us our sins
for we also forgive anyone
who sins against us.
And lead us not into temptation.**

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.⁴³ Scholars believe that Jewish liturgy was modified and used in the first Jewish churches,⁴⁴ 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.⁴⁵ 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,⁴⁶ while others state the kingdom will be a future event.⁴⁷ 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:

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.⁴⁸

43. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*. 35.

44. Ajamian, “People, Land, and Faith – An Armenian-Orthodox Perspective.” 74.

45. Young, *The Jewish Background*. 4.

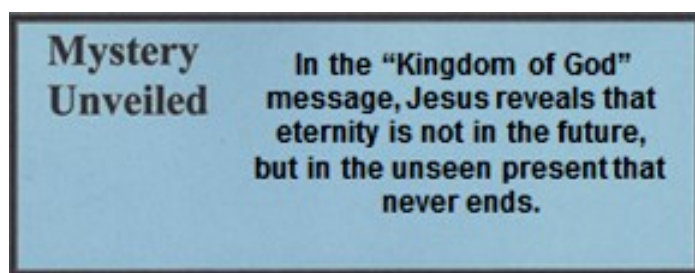
46. Mt. 3:2; 4:17; 12:34; Lk. 17:21. For further study, see John F. Walvoord. *Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come*. Chicago: Moody, 1974.

47. Mt. 25:1; Jn. 18:36; Acts 1:6-7

48. 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.

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.⁴⁹ 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:

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.”⁵⁰

49. See Dan. 7:27; Mt. 13:43; 19:28; 25:34; 26:29; Mk. 9:47; 2 Pet. 1:11; 1 Cor. 9:9; Rev. 20. See also Richardson, “Kingdom of God.” 119-21. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:310-11.

50. Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*. Appendix; Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages*. vii.

1. The Latin phrase *ipsissima verba* (ip-sis-si-ma ver-ba) means the *exact words verbatim*, that were spoken.⁵¹ The modern equivalent is an exact quotation.

2. On the other hand, the Latin term *ipsissima vox* means the *exact voice*.⁵² 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.⁵³

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*.⁵⁴ 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.

Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1.22.1⁵⁵

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.⁵⁶ An

51. Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism*. 166; Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages*. vii.

52. Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism*. 166; Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages*. vii.

53. 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.

54. Barclay, *Jesus*. 243; Hagner, “Jesus and the Synoptic Sabbath Controversies.” 268.

55. Cited in Bock and Herrick, *Jesus in Context*. 73-99. See expanded comments by Thucydides in sections 1.21-22.

56. These scholars hold to the Reformed Doctrine of Biblical Inspiration on the concept of *Ipsissima Vox*: Stonehouse, *Origins of the Synoptic Gospels*. 109-10; Murray, *Calvin on Scripture and Divine Sovereignty*. 30; Hodge and Warfield, “Inspiration.” 238.

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 7:18-23.⁵⁷ 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.**

Babylonian Talmud, *Berakoth* 60b

Another example of the *exact voice* (vox) and the *exact words* (verba) is the Roman *titulus*,⁵⁸ the sign on the cross that identified Jesus, where each of the four gospel writers wrote the same theme but used different wording.

57. See 08.05.04.

58. 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.

Video Insert >

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. Click here if Internet connection is available.

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.

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*⁵⁹ but could also be rendered as *condemn not*.⁶⁰ 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.⁶¹ Jesus did not forbid the discernment 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 where judgment is commanded:

1. Concerning those who are sexually immoral (1 Cor. 5:9),

59. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. 60.

60. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 159.

61. Liefeld, “Luke.” 8:895.

2. Concerning those who masquerade as purveyors of truth (2 Cor. 11:14),⁶²
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 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

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

involving a word play of “speck” and “log/plank”⁶³ 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.

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

At this point the religious leaders clearly recognized that Jesus had supernatural powers, and they attributed His miracles to the demonic forces of Beelzebub – and that was the point of their official rejection of Jesus. It was the proverbial “line in the sand,” a turning point in His ministry of how He would respond to various individuals.⁶⁴ The trials and crucifixion that came later would be the consequence of this rejection. Note the differences in the chart below.

This also marked a turning point in the ministry of Jesus. After the rejection, He healed only individuals, not groups or multitudes, and only on the basis of faith. Whenever He healed someone, if that person was a Jew He told him not to tell anyone, but if he was a Gentile, this command was not given.

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

63. Liefeld, “Luke.” 8:895.

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

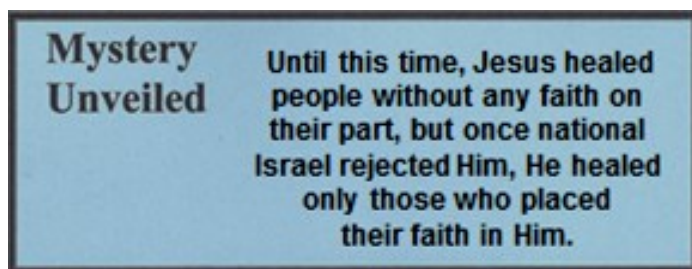
Teaching method

Plain instruction

Taught with parables

**09.01.03.B CHART OF COMPARATIVE ACCEPTANCE – REJECTION
ATTITUDES OF JEWISH LEADERSHIP TOWARD JESUS⁶⁵**

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



Finally, the matter of miracles in the name of Beelzebub, or Beelzebul, would come up again during the trials of Jesus. It was the most damning accusation they leveled at Jesus. Furthermore, witchcraft was not appreciated by the Romans any more than it was by the Jews. In fact, Emperor Tiberias had a hundred and thirty sorcerers and sorceresses executed in the years A.D. 16 and 17.⁶⁶ That was about a decade before Jesus began His ministry. So the accusation of Jesus of being Beelzebub or using Beelzebub's power was just as damaging politically as it was spiritually.

14.02.19.Q1 Was Jesus equal or less than the Father in heaven (Jn. 14:28)?

The question is, of course, centered on this statement: “**The Father is greater than I.**” This phrase reveals the fact that Jesus functioned in a subordinate role to the Father during His limited capacity as a human being. It is difficult to understand this in light of the number of times He said He was equal to the Father (Jn.1:1, 18; 5:16-18; 10:30; 20:28). This matter is compounded by the fact that Jesus clearly stated His dependence upon the Father (Jn. 4:34; 5:19-30; 8:29; 12:48-49). Since these two themes are presented a number of times by the same gospel writer, it

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

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

can be safely assumed that John not only understood them, but by repetition he emphasized their importance. The parallel themes are dependence and equality.

It should be noted that John 14:28 is not to be interpreted that Jesus was/is a lesser God. Two thousand years of church history has not only rejected this concept, but the doctrine was at one time known as Arian heresy. For Jesus to hold this “lesser God” position would contradict all other biblical concepts of God and, most notably, introduce polytheism.

The dependency of Jesus upon the Father was only while He was in human form. In that sense and time frame, God the Father was greater than He, as Jesus left His glory and some of His divine attributes to live among men. However, in the broad space of eternity, He and the Father are one and the same, being equal in all things. Finally, it is impossible for mortal men to understand an immortal God and even more so, to understand the Holy Trinity.

14.02.19.Q2 Why was the omniscience of Jesus sometimes clearly noticeable and other times it wasn't?

Prior to answering this question, it is important to examine the theological term “omniscience.” It means to have full knowledge or to be “all knowing;” to have infinite awareness. Jesus was 100% human and 100% man. That is known as the hypostatic union, and is a concept that is impossible for any mere human to understand. Jesus took on a human nature and submitted the use of His divine attributes to the will of His Father. Therefore, there are times when His “full knowledge” or “omniscience” is clearly recognizable.⁶⁷ However, there were other times when it was hidden or veiled by His humanity (Mk. 13:32).

16.01.14.Q1 Did Jesus take the repentant thief to heaven on the day they died (Lk. 23:43)?

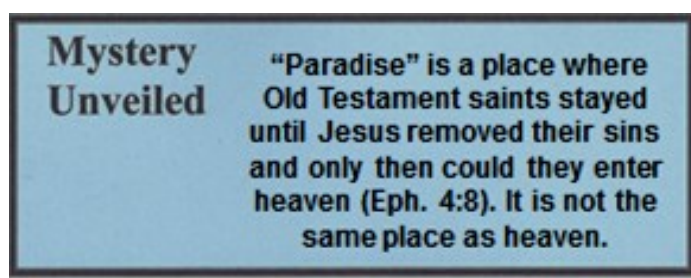
The passage in Luke 23:43 has been problematic because Jesus said He would take the repentant thief to heaven “today,” but it is well known that Jesus did not ascend to heaven until forty-three days later. Like many others, this writer once believed that paradise was the same place as heaven. It isn't. Consider the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The former was in a world of torment while Lazarus was in paradise – but not in heaven. Paradise was a holding area that had two areas:

1. One for those going to heaven
2. Another for the damned

67. Mt. 9:4; Jn. 2:24-25; 4:17-18; 11:11-14; 16:30.

The word *paradise* is a/k/a “Abraham’s bosom” to which Jesus referred to in Luke 16. The Apostle Paul also made a reference to it in Ephesians 4:8 when he said that Jesus led “captivity captive” – those in paradise destined for heaven. When the plan of salvation was completed, the captives went to heaven and therefore, there is no problem or conflict with Jesus having said, “Today, you will be with me in paradise.”⁶⁸

Godly saints of the Old Testament period went to paradise, not heaven, because their sins were **covered** by sacrificial animals (Heb. 10:1-4) but **not removed** by the blood of Jesus. No one can enter heaven with covered sins. Jesus paid the price for all pre-cross sins. Since no one could/can enter heaven without the blood of Jesus *removing* their sins, the saints of the Old Testament era stayed in Paradise, a/k/a Abraham’s Bosom, Hades, until Jesus paid the price of their sins. But when Jesus died, He went to Paradise with the last “new” saint of the Old Testament era – the Zealot – and proclaimed the gospel. Only His death could accomplish the removal of the pre-cross sins.⁶⁹ From there the fellowship of Old Testament saints were then taken to their heavenly abode.



The classic example is the parable of the rich man and Lazarus found in Luke 16:19-31.⁷⁰ It is the story of the rich man who died and was in torment while Lazarus was on the other side of a great gulf – in paradise – from where he would eventually go to heaven. Sometimes paradise is called “Hades,” especially the section of torment. Jesus is the triumphant Lord of heaven and hell (Rev. 1:18; Phil. 2:10) and has ultimate power over death (1 Pet. 3:19).

The Apostle Peter, in his first letter, said that Jesus preached to those who had died. Obviously, they were unaware of future events and had not heard of the gospel until Jesus shared it with them. Peter stated:

For this reason the gospel was also preached to those who are now dead, so that,

68. <http://www.bereanbiblesociety.org/articles/1115147624.html> Retrieved October 15, 2011.

69. Acts 17:30; Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:15, 10:4.

70. See 12.03.08.

although they might be judged by men in the fleshly realm, they might live by God in the spiritual realm.

1 Peter 4:6

The Apostles Creed on the end of line 4 states “He [Jesus] descended into hell.”⁷¹ An earlier form of the Apostles Creed formed the basic structure of the Nicene Creed, which led to the fifth century Athanasian Creed, which states that “[Christ] suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead.” Because of His descent into hell and rise to life, He conquered sin and death, and more importantly, Jesus took the keys of Satan’s authority.⁷²

This does not indicate that those who died can still be saved, nor should one pray to or for the dead. Rather, it states that Jesus went to those who had died and told them of Himself. That is why Ignatius said,

He descended, indeed, into Hades alone, but He arose accompanied by a multitude; and rent asunder that means of separation which had existed from the beginning of the world, and cast down its partition-wall.

Ignatius, *Letter to the Tralhans*⁷³

Finally, the names of the two Zealots who were crucified with Jesus have been lost in human history. Only one of them will be known throughout eternity. However, that has not prevented self-inspired writers for becoming creative historians.⁷⁴ Several books within the classification of Pseudepigrapha, have listed their names. Unfortunately, there is some serious disagreement on their identity. Suggested names are Dismas and Gestas, as in the *Acts of Pilate*. But other books identify them as Zoathan and Chammata, or as Joathas and Maggatrass, or as Titus and Dumatchus. Clearly this demonstrates why the Pseudepigrapha books must be evaluated with great suspicion.⁷⁵

71. <https://www.ccel.org/creeds/apostles.creed.html> Retrieved July 31, 2014.

72. Scaer, “He did descend to Hell: In Defense of the Apostles’ Creed.” 93.

73. Thomas, *The Golden Treasury of Patristic Quotations: From 50 – 750 A.D.* 39.

74. Creative writers and other “false teachers and prophets” have existed throughout the centuries. Ron Charles 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). Another researcher is Nicholas Notovich, whose book, *The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ*. Trans. (Virchand R. Gandhi, Dover Pub.) is a so-called historical account of when Jesus went to Asia to study between the ages 13 and 29. All of these accounts are truly fanciful.

75. Jordan. *Who’s Who in the Bible*. 240.

18.01.03.Q1 Is there an explanation concerning the conflicting accounts of who was at the tomb on Sunday morning (Mt. 28:1; Mk. 16:1; Lk. 24:10; Jn. 20:1-2)?

Critics have had a field day with the gospel accounts concerning the names of the women who were at the tomb. Obviously the number of Marys adds to the confusion, but that does not mean error.

1. Matthew said in 28:1 that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (mother of Jesus?) were there.
2. Mark said in 16:1 that Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome brought spices to the tomb.
3. Luke said in 24:10 that Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and several “others” were there, and then told the disciples of the resurrection.
4. John said in 20:1 that Mary Magdalene was present, and whoever was included in the “we” statement of 20:2.

Granted, this is somewhat perplexing, but as previously stated, that does not mean the event was untrue. Most importantly, is the fact that all four gospel writers said that women were the first to discover the missing body – and concluded that Jesus had indeed been raised. This is significant, because women were not deemed to be legal witnesses. Men’s opinions of women were not always very good. For example, the two historians Josephus and Nicholas (Nicholas) of Damascus seldom mention the names of any women.⁷⁶ If the gospels were fabricated stories, then the writers made two huge errors.

1. They should have written that men discovered that the tomb was empty, because only a man’s testimony was considered valid in *Jewish law*. This was clarified by Josephus:

Let not the testimony of women be admitted, on account of the levity and boldness of their sex.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 4.8.15 (219b)

2. They should have written or edited all four gospels to agree perfectly with each other as to who was there and who was not.

76. 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 Nicholas of Damascus, and their comments about women. See also Stemberger, *Jewish Contemporaries of Jesus: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes*. 15.

To believe that the gospel accounts were fabricated is a greater leap of faith than to believe that Jesus arose from the grave. Therefore, to account for the variations of names, the following must be considered.

1. No gospel writer refutes another.
2. While some of the names are different, both Luke and John mention unnamed individuals. There is no reason to believe that those individuals were women only.
3. Not a single gospel writer claimed to have written all the names of the attending group.

So why are there variations? It is because each writer simply mentioned some of the women he thought were important to his audience. However, even though the testimony of women was not considered valid, each account is of two or more witness – a requirement for validation according to *God's law* in Deuteronomy 17:6. This code of law became a defining rule for all situations, even counting the stars to determine when the Sabbath began.

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

Finally, since the crucifixion and burial occurred so quickly, there was no time for the formalities of mourners and flute players.⁷⁷ The Jewish custom was for women to visit the tomb up to seven days after the burial.⁷⁸ Obviously, in this case, a lot changed within that time period.⁷⁹

“At sunrise.” The first day of the week Jesus arose from death and the women found the tomb empty. It is for this reason that the first Christians, who were nearly all Jews, gathered for worship on Sunday instead of the traditional Sabbath.

18.01.03.Q2 How could the Jews, who honored the Sabbath Day (i.e., Ex. 16:23-30) move it to the first day (Acts 20:7)?

The Sabbath The day of rest on the first day of the week is an interesting study. It should be

77. Mishnah, *Ketuboth* 4.4; Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 168.

78. Osborne. “Jesus’ Empty Tomb and His Appearance in Jerusalem.” 786.

79. Some critics have looked to the *Gospel of Peter* as evidence that refutes the biblical narratives. However, that account records people eating a meal and sleeping overnight in the cemetery both of which reflect the writer’s ignorance of Jewish customs and this is evidence that the *Gospel of Peter* is a fabricated story of little historical value.

noted that in the Jewish calendar the days of the week did not have names, but were numbered. Today, the names of both the days of the week and the months of the modern calendar are based on the Roman calendar system. “To rest” on the seventh day is what one did in ancient times and, hence, the seventh day became known as the “day of rest,” or “Shabbat” because it was a sacred designation. The word “Sabbath” is a noun, but it was originally a verb meaning “to cease, to abstain,” or “to put an end to.” A secondary similar meaning is “to be inactive, to rest.”⁸⁰ To the Jews, who followed Jesus, they felt that God told them “to rest,” and what better way to honor God than “to rest” on the day when He arose from the tomb. Since they were still “resting,” they felt they were in complete compliance with the Mosaic Law.⁸¹ Jesus “rested” on the seventh day, meaning that He did no creative work. However, Jesus sustained His Creation on the seventh day and every day of rest since the Creation. “Working” is defined not only in terms of holding the universe together and doing good works, but also protecting it from the evil one.

Jewish Christians observed the evening of the seventh day of the week as their day of worship. Sunday worship is also reflected in 1 Corinthians 16:2, where believers collected funds for God’s people on the first day of the week, which was their day of worship. Some scholars believe that when the early church met on the first day, it was not on a Sunday morning, but rather, on a Saturday evening. Sunset was considered the beginning of a new day, and meeting in the evening would not conflict with normal work activities of the first day.

In Colossians 2:16 Paul told the church in Colosse not to let any one judge them. Why? It was because they did not worship on the traditional Sabbath, but on the first day. The Epistle of Barnabas referred to worship on the first day of the week as the “eighth day.”

This, by the way, is the reason why we joyfully celebrate the eighth day – the same day on which Jesus rose from the dead; after which He manifested Himself and went up to heaven.

The Epistle of Barnabas 15:9

Ignatius in his work *Magnesians* (Ch. 8-10) agreed with the early church fathers who said in their own instructional book that the,

Assembling on every Sunday of the Lord, break bread and give thanks, confessing your faults beforehand, so that your sacrifice may be pure.

80. Ex. 21:19; Lev. 26:34-35; 2 Chr. 36:21.

81. Funderburk, “Calendar.” 3:322-24.

Didache 14:1⁸²

The believers moved their day of rest from the last day of the week to the first day because it was on the first day of Creation that God created light (Gen.1:3-5). It was also on the first day of the week that Jesus, the Light of the World, arose from death and brought light and resurrected life to humanity.⁸³ Evidently, Jewish believers, who remained faithful to their Mosaic Law, had no problem worshiping on a day that honored the resurrection of Jesus. They did not discard their Jewishness. Justin Martyr and Pliny the Younger, the nephew and adopted son of Pliny the Elder, (c. 112) made these comments concerning worship on the first day of the week.

The Day of the Sun is the day on which we gather in a common meeting, because it is the first day, the day on which God, changing darkness and matter, created the world; and it is the day on which Jesus Christ our Savior rose from the dead... and the memoirs or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits.

Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 67⁸⁴

They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang an anthem to Christ as God, and bound themselves by a solemn oath not to commit any wicked deed, but to abstain from all fraud, theft and adultery, never to break their word, or deny a trust when called upon to honor it; after which it was their custom to separate and then to meet again to partake of food, but food of an ordinary and innocent kind.

Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 10.96-97⁸⁵

“Before it was light.” Historians believe early Christians went to the synagogue Saturday morning, and met again for church after sunset the same day, which was the beginning of Sunday.

Justin Martyr wrote in chapter 47 of his *Dialog against Trypho*,⁸⁶ that Jewish believers should be considered as “brethren” provided that they do not require Gentile Christians to be circumcised,

82. 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.

83. *The Epistle of Barnabas* 13:9-10.

84. Thomas, *The Golden Treasury of Patristic Quotations: From 50 – 750 A.D.* 266.

85. Pliny the Younger was a Roman governor and friend of Tacitus. Pliny said that Christians recognized the deity of Christ.

86. Cited by Flusser. “Who is it that Struck You?” 47.

observe the Sabbath, or other Jewish ceremonies. However, Martyr also said that not all church fathers agree with him. It should be noted that the change from observing the Sabbath to the Day of Resurrection has nothing to do with Constantine (early 4th century) or the Hellenism of the Church.

Another witness to the change of Sabbath to Sunday was Ignatius Theophorus (A.D. 35 or 50-98 to 117) a/k/a Ignatius. He was a disciple of the Apostle John, became the third bishop of Antioch, and said this:⁸⁷

If then those who had walked in ancient practices attained unto newness of hope, no longer observing Sabbaths but fashioning their lives after the Lord's day, on which our life also rose through Him and through His death which some men deny – a mystery whereby we attained unto belief, and for this cause we endure patiently, that we may be found disciples of Jesus Christ our only teacher.

Ignatius, *Letter to the Magnesians* 9:1

Pliny (c. 112) wrote his comments which are significant for several reasons.

1. It demonstrates, from a secular source, how quickly the Christian faith spread throughout the Roman Empire.
2. He preserved a segment of their worship service and reverence for Jesus.
3. He mentioned their “solemn oath” was their steadfast refusal to worship another god.
4. Their refusal to be a part of any crime was unbelievable to Pliny, who later described it as part of their “superstition.”
5. This writing by the Roman governor and historian is the oldest record of the agape meal or communion, outside of Scripture.

Finally, it is believed by some that the modern name “Saturday” came from the Hebrew “Shabbat”. Such a conclusion is understandable, because both names sound similar. The name “Saturday” honors the Roman god Saturnius, for which the heavenly light “Saturn” was also named. The Romans had their greatest seven-day pagan holiday, “Saturnalia,” in mid-December to honor their god.⁸⁸

87. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignatius_of_Antioch. Retrieved September 6, 2014.

88. Lloyd, “Saturn.” 19:1088; Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 45-47.

The Romans, however, had a passionate hatred for the Jews, and they certainly did not respect Jewish customs, traditions, or laws. After many revolts between the years 63 B.C. and A.D. 70, two major revolts (A.D. 70 and 135), thousands of Jews were either massacred, sold as slaves, or driven from their homes and land.⁸⁹ The Jewish people were the proverbial “thorn in the flesh” for the Romans. The Jews no longer had any rights to life, much less to their ancient religion. Obviously the Romans would never honor them by assigning a Hebrew name to any day of the week.

One of the major difficulties emperors had with Jews and Christians was their insistence not to work one day in every week. For nearly three centuries the believers gathered to worship our Lord on a day when they were expected to be active in employment. Hence, it would have been much easier for them to *not* gather on the first day of the week and not violate any laws or be stigmatized as being lazy. For this reason, in the early fourth century, Emperor Constantine declared the first day a holiday, which relieved the social pressure on fellow believers. Many today believe that Sunday worship originated with Emperor Constantine. It didn’t, but he did make it a legal holiday (meaning holy day) for a practice that was already well established.

18.01.04.Q1 How does the name “Easter” relate to the resurrection of Jesus?

It doesn’t. Courtesy of Emperor Constantine, the resurrection day of Jesus was renamed “Easter” in honor of the goddess Ishtar of Babylon. Yet this name is one that the Church continues to use without a thought given as to how it might insult the holy name of Jesus. The Church needs to return to its pre-Constantine days and honor our Lord by praising Him for His Resurrection Day and call it that. Does anyone seriously think that, when Christ returns and reigns during the millennium, He and His Church will celebrate “Easter?” Would it not be better to call it “Resurrection Day.”

18.01.04.Q2 When did the Church Age begin?

Before addressing this question, these thoughts are presented:

1. The sacrificial death of Jesus on Passover (Good Friday), was the culmination of the Old Testament and, therefore, is the beginning of the Church Age.

89. 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.

2. Resurrection Morning was the *evidence* that the Church Age had begun, a New Covenant was now in effect.
3. The Day of Pentecost was the empowerment of the true believers for the life and calling that is upon them.

Now for some additional details: The answer is somewhat theological, but ever since the days of the apostles there has been anticipation as to when the Church Age will close by the return of Jesus. It appears that seldom has anyone seriously considered the *beginning* of this Age; the accepted traditional beginning seems never to have been seriously questioned. Therefore, some basic facts will be examined that may lead the reader to reconsider the Day of Pentecost as the first day of this period. Let's look at some basic facts regarding the beginning of the Church Age.⁹⁰

1. It has been commonly said that the Church Age began on the Day of Pentecost in the crucifixion year thought to be either 30 or 33.
2. The modern calendar is linked to the birth of Jesus, not to Pentecost. However, the birth of Jesus was inaccurately calculated. It is well known that Herod the Great died in 4 B.C. To be true to the calendar would mean Jesus was born between the years 7 and 5 B.C. This is probably the most accurate conclusion.⁹¹
3. Some say He will return at the end of the two-thousand year period, which began at the time of Christ's death and resurrection. Considering an adjusted calendar, that would place it anywhere between the years 2029 and 2030, depending on the crucifixion date. The beginning of the Christian era, known as the "Church Age," or "New Covenant Period,"⁹² is generally believed to have begun on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1).⁹³ A majority of scholars from varied theological positions, Pentecostal, evangelical, or liberal, argue that this is the beginning day of a new dispensational period.⁹⁴ This author does not hold to that view, but rather, that the New Covenant Period was birthed the moment Jesus walked out of the tomb. Anything else equates the sacrifice of Jesus equal with the

90. One of the incredible features of the Bible, that elevates it far above other books deemed to be holy, is the number of prophecies that have been literally fulfilled and so verified by extra-biblical sources.

91. See [04.03.10.Q2](#), "When was Jesus born (Lk. 2:1-7)."

92. The term appears 33 times in the New Testament, half of them in the book of Hebrews. The noun is translated as "covenant" twenty times and "Testament" thirteen times. Payne, *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*. 1:995.

93. Rylaarsdam, "Pentecost." 4:727.

94. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*. 51; Dusing, "The New Testament Church." 528.

sacrifice of lambs, oxen, etc., of the Old Testament Period.

The essence of the New Covenant was predicted when the prophet Jeremiah spoke of a time when God would make a New Covenant (31:31-34). Also, the writer of Hebrews stated (10:15-17) that the death and resurrection of Jesus is that New Covenant. The essence of the gospel has always been that one must confess Jesus as Lord and Savior, confess their sins, and believe that Jesus was raised from death to life (Rom. 10:9). The work of salvation was completed when Jesus walked out of the tomb.⁹⁵ The moment Jesus died, all heaven understood the significance of His death, but humanity would not understand it until He arose. Fifty days later the Holy Spirit came to the believers to teach them the truths of the gospel of Jesus (Jn. 14:25-26), not to complete it or to enhance it. Nowhere did Paul state that one had to receive the Holy Spirit or speak in other tongues to be saved. Romans 10:9 is the central thrust of the apostolic teaching in Acts 2:31-32; 3:15; 4:10; and 10:40. The apostles believed that Jesus not only lived in eternity past, but that He also was still alive and will continue to live through eternity future – as will His believers. These are key points on which the foundation is built to argue that the Resurrection Day was the beginning of the New Covenant Period.

If salvation was available from the moment Jesus walked out of the tomb, then what is the significance of Pentecost? It was the beginning of a new relationship between the Holy Spirit and humanity. Just as Jesus received the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove after His baptism to enable Him in His ministry, so the church received that same Holy Spirit to be empowered to ministry, as per Acts 1:8. That Spirit came first upon His inner circle of disciples in Jn. 20:22. By this time Matthias had been selected to replace Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:23-26), indicating that the 120 had indeed functioned as a corporate body to continue the work of Jesus before the Pentecost experience of Acts 2. This shows that some type of religious governmental structure was already in place.⁹⁶ Thereafter, the Holy Spirit continued to fall upon others, as well. Pentecost was an empowerment and confirmation of what God was doing among His believers. The church had been coming to birth in the previous years during the ministry of Jesus.⁹⁷

The Greek phrase *anōthen* means *born again*⁹⁸ or *born from above* as the new birth is described in terms of its origin, God⁹⁹ (Jn. 3:6) and of the water and the Spirit (Jn. 3:5).¹⁰⁰ In Ephesians

95. 1 Cor. 15:3-4, 17, 20-34; Heb. 7:27.

96. Fowler, *The History and Literature of the New Testament*. 50-51; Kostlin, "The Christian Church." 3:78.

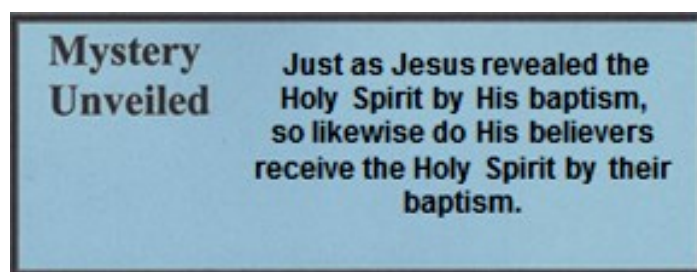
97. Clemens, "Pentecost." 2:160-64.

98. See also Jn. 3:31; 19:11, 23.

99. Jn. 1:13; 1 Jn. 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:18.

100. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 203-04.

3:17-19 and 4:17-24 is the doctrine that new life or regeneration is found in Christ whereas darkened understanding and ignorance of the natural man leads to the corruption of deceitful desires and eventually death (Rom. 3:9-20).¹⁰¹ This concept was not so far from Jewish thinking – when a person came out of the waters of the *mikvah*, which was considered to be “the womb of the world” (as an unborn child is in the waters of his mother’s womb), he was considered born again and rendered a new creation.¹⁰²



The church is seen as the beginning of a new creation; a new humanity as the result of the work of Christ.¹⁰³ Jesus died for the sake of all who became subject to Adam’s sin, and thus, have been condemned to die (Rom. 5:6-11). Because of His resurrection and life-giving Spirit, humanity now has the opportunity to receive eternal life and freedom from the curse of sin (1 Cor.15:20, 45). Clearly, the hope of life given to mankind exists because Jesus walked out of the grave. Some theologians will correctly go to great lengths and proclaim the work of Jesus, yet at the same time proclaim the church “did not begin until Pentecost (Acts 2).”¹⁰⁴

A minority of scholars consider the Church Age as beginning on the evening of His resurrection, when Jesus appeared to some of His disciples and breathed upon them (Jn. 20:22).¹⁰⁵ However, if Romans 10:9 is the “born again” test for the New Covenant, then John 20:22 could not be the beginning of this new era, any more than is the Day of Pentecost.

Other scholars state the event of John 20:22 was only a “down payment” or “deposit”¹⁰⁶ for the event that occurred about fifty days later. However, there is no suggestion of this in the Greek

101. Bromiley, “Regeneration.” 4:69.

102. Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 127.

103. Minear, “Church, Idea of.” 1:615.

104. The opinion of Lewis, “Feasts.” 860. Also, C.L. Feinberg mentions near universal agreement of theologians on this matter. “Pentecost.” 4:694.

105. Ervin, *Conversion Initiation and the Baptism*. 133-37.

106. Kay, *Pentecost: Its Significance in the Life of the Church*. 31.

text. Clearly, the disciples received the Holy Spirit (Jn. 20:22) in a significant manner and did so again on the Day of Pentecost.

John connected the life of Creation with the renewed life of mankind (Jn. 1:1). This was the first of many events in which the Holy Spirit moved in a manner to fulfill the prophecies of Joel and Jesus. The breathing of the Spirit in John 20:22 is related to the breathing in the prolog in which John referred to breathing life into man in the Creation narrative (Gen 2:7). There was a new birth on the day of creation and there was a new birth (in the New Testament sense of the word) the day Jesus arose from the grave. By their faith in the risen Lord they became born again; by divine breathing they became the empowered church.

The resurrection was the day of the birth of the church, but Pentecost was the day of Holy Spirit baptism and confirmation of the church and New Covenant era. For the purpose of this discussion, it is limited to the application of Romans 10:9 to one's life as the covenant to be drawn close to God.¹⁰⁷

There is an interesting cultural-religious implication for the Jews. Passover was marked by the barley harvest and the Festival of Weeks ended with the wheat harvest at the Feast of Weeks and the beginning of the offering of first fruits.¹⁰⁸ To the first believers who were Jewish, the significance of the second feast, known as Pentecost, is that on that date the law was written on tablets of stone and was an incomplete and partial revelation of God.¹⁰⁹ However, on Pentecost the Holy Spirit came to write the perfect law of liberty on men's hearts, which is the law of the Spirit of Life.¹¹⁰ The significance of the imagery is found in Romans 8:53, where Paul referred to the Pentecostal gift as the "First Fruits of the Spirit." To fully understand the full significance of this passage, one must note that Paul's reference to the "first fruits of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:23) contains a direct reference to the Jewish festival of Pentecost – the festival of the "first fruits" of the summer harvest.

During the times of the Old Covenant the Holy Spirit came upon a chosen few prophets as a transitory visitation. That has changed. In the New Testament the Spirit comes upon all believers. Formerly the Spirit stayed for a season and then departed, but in the New Covenant Period the Spirit remains in the believer to transform him into the image of God. The promise of

107. Scott, C. "What Happened at Pentecost?" 129.

108. Ex. 34:22; Num. 28:17; Deut. 16:10; 2 Ch.. 8:13; Feinberg, "Pentecost." 4:692.

109. Scott, E. *The Spirit in the New Testament*. 96.

110. Kay, *Pentecost: Its Significance in the Life of the Church*. 28.

Jesus is a permanent, inward, and abiding Spirit.¹¹¹

It has been suggested that the New Covenant began at the Last Supper. The wording would certainly suggest this. However, this was only anticipatory, as it could not have had any effect upon anyone unless Jesus died and arose from the grave. Jesus said “This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out” (Jn. 26:28). Obviously His blood was not poured out then, but it would be when He died on the cross.¹¹²

There are several arguments for the Resurrection Day vs. Pentecost as being the beginning of the New Covenant Period / Church Age / New Testament Period. The disciples were born again one by one as they witnessed the incredible event of the resurrection. Most certainly Mary Magdalene was “born again” the moment she realized the gardener she was talking to was Jesus, even though she may never have learned that He was also the Gardener of Eden. Peter and John most certainly believed when they came to the empty tomb (Jn. 20:3) and discovered Jesus was not in it. However, if there was any doubt, it was clearly removed that same evening when all gathered in the Upper Room and Jesus appeared before them. If the New Covenant Period or Church Age really did begin on the Day of Pentecost, there are some difficult questions that need to be addressed.

1. Since Pentecost is fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus, does this interpretation not place His entire ministry, death, and resurrection into the Old Covenant Period? If the Old Covenant was still in effect until Pentecost, then the blood of Jesus was equal to the blood of bulls, lambs, and goats of the Old Covenant sacrificial system. Is Jesus not the defining personality of the New Covenant? Then how could Jesus possibly have come to fulfill the Old Covenant promises and remain totally within that era? His resurrection of life is the resurrection into the New Covenant/New Testament Period/Church Age.

2. If the Old Covenant ended with the death and resurrection of Jesus, then, under what covenant did the people of God live during those fifty days until the Day of Pentecost? It should be noted that there is no way to God without a covenant. There was no “transitional covenant” between the Old and New Testament Periods and, therefore, there was no transitional period.¹¹³

3. If Pentecost was the date the church was to be birthed, then Luke, John, and Paul are strangely silent on the subject, while focusing their attention only on the Holy Spirit. No

111. Kay, *Pentecost: Its Significance in the Life of the Church*. 63-64.

112. Mendenhall, “Covenant.” 1:722.

113. Kay, *Pentecost: Its Significance in the Life of the Church*. 31.

mention is made until Acts 5:11, where the “church” appears as an existing institution in connection with the story of the dishonesty and death of Ananias and of Sapphira. Thereafter, the church is not mentioned until the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 8:1) and the persecution of the church that followed.

4. If Romans 10:9 would be ignored so that Pentecost could be considered the beginning of the New Covenant, then all that would be needed to receive salvation would be the Baptism of the Holy Spirit with evidence of speaking in tongues. The point is that the resurrection is the essence of the New Covenant and without the work of the Holy Spirit, there is no renewal or regeneration. Many early theologians, such as St. Athanasius (296-298) and St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), argued that the center of the Christian faith was His death and resurrection and the justification of humanity by the blood of Christ.¹¹⁴

5. If the ten disciples (Thomas and Judas were excluded, of course) were born again on the day of resurrection, when Jesus breathed the Holy spirit upon them (Jn. 20:22) and if the Day of Pentecost was the beginning of the Church Age, then were they born again on Pentecost? Or were they simply born again on the Day of Resurrection and filled with the Holy Spirit on Pentecost? Furthermore, if the position is held that this was a one-time event, unique to the disciples, then the question must be asked as to what the biblical basis is for this and what other biblical blessings have been so limited.

6. After the ascension there was a meeting during which the saints prayed to our Lord (1:14). Could they have prayed to God without a covenant? Hardly! Again, one can only come to God if there is a covenant. Were these praying saints Jews or Christians, or were they disciples waiting for the promise of the Comforter spoken of by Jesus?

7. If it is assumed that the Old Covenant ceased to be effective on Good Friday, and the New Covenant did not begin until the Day of Pentecost, then there is a short time period between the Covenants when God had no Covenant with His people. That is hardly acceptable in any theological interpretation.

8. Every evangelist who has ever given an invitation to a sinner to accept Jesus as his Lord and Savior, has done so because Jesus died and arose from the grave, not because the Holy Spirit fell on the Day of Pentecost. Jesus is the essence of the New Covenant, not the Holy Spirit.

The real significance of Pentecost is that the disciples were empowered by the Holy Spirit for the

114. Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds*. 93, 143; See Appendix 20.

task of evangelizing the world, as instructed in Acts 1:8.¹¹⁵ As if seeing Jesus alive was not already exhilarating, now they were ready to conquer the world with transformed bold conviction.¹¹⁶ The indwelling Holy Spirit was the new essence of Jesus embodied in every believer. Furthermore, the promise of Joel 2:28-29 was not limited to Pentecost, as it was given to ten disciples previously in John 20:22 and later to many others. Pentecost was a defining moment; however, the once cowardly Peter was now preaching with boldness before the Spirit fell on that day. This is a tribute to the “breath” of God he received (Jn 20:22) on the first coming of the Spirit on the evening of Resurrection Day. The disciples had an experience parallel to that of the baptism of Jesus.¹¹⁷ Clearly, the intent of Jesus was to bring Himself into the lives of His believers prior to them going to fulfill the Great Commission.

Therefore, the New Covenant Period sets forth a new relationship with God that is possible only because Jesus sacrificed Himself and rose from the grave. The Holy Spirit functions as the purifying agent that also empowers and comforts the believer in his quest to be conformed into the image of God, as Adam was before the fall.¹¹⁸

Why is the Day of Pentecost not the first day of the New Covenant? The primary reason is that nowhere is there an indication that the work of the Holy Spirit would be the New Covenant. Regeneration is possible because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is followed by the work of the Holy Spirit to empower the saints. In chronological history, the work of Jesus came first and, hence, the date of the Church Age needs to be adjusted to its proper setting, the morning of Resurrection day.

The dispensation of the Spirit could not begin until the work of Jesus, as Redeemer, was finished. There could not have been a Pentecost until there was a Calvary. Only after Jesus was exalted in heaven did the Spirit celebrate the coronation. Only after the Rock (Jesus) was smitten could the rivers of water (Holy Spirit) flow. The extent to which the Holy Spirit flows is dependent to a large extent on how much the Church desires the living water of God and believes in the glorified Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “If any man thirst” (Jn. 7:37), and Jesus continued to speak of the Holy Spirit. Nothing could stop Resurrection Day and nothing could stop Pentecost that would be the living water of Jesus.

Just as a sinner’s reaction to Jesus is a test of his faith in God, so a saint’s reaction to the control

115. Andrews, “The Acts of the Apostles.” 46.

116. Foakes-Jackson, “The Acts of the Apostles.” 9.

117. Decker, *The First Christian Pentecost*. 62.

118. Erickson, *Christian Theology*. 943.

of the Spirit is a test of his love and devotion to Jesus. The New Covenant / Church Age / New Testament Period began when Jesus walked out of the tomb. The promised Holy Spirit appeared afterwards, most significantly on the Day of Pentecost, to empower and energize the believers to do the work of the Great Commission and build the Kingdom of God.¹¹⁹

Questions Concerning The Birth And Childhood Of Jesus

04.02.02.Q1 Concerning Matthew 1:9, was Uzziah really the father of Jotham?

Matthew's genealogical record has been somewhat challenging because Jotham's father is known as Azariah,¹²⁰ as well as Uzziah.¹²¹ The two names have been a favorite subject for critics. However, it is also known that people would occasionally change their name when there was a dramatic change in their life. There is no reason given for the name change or if the king maintained two names, but the fact that these refer to the same person has been well established. There are several other examples of name changes in both the Old and New Testaments, as well as in the surrounding cultures. Examples are as follows:

1. When Gideon destroyed the Canaanite altar to Baal at Ophrah (Jg. 6:32, 7:1), his name was changed to Jerubbaal.
2. Jehoahaz, who was the son of Josiah, had his name changed to Shallum.¹²²
3. When the famous Saul became the Apostle Paul, he went from a Hebrew name to a Greek name.
4. Name changes were also common in other cultures, as exemplified by the Egyptian Pharaoh Necho, who changed the name of Eliakim to Jehoiakim (2 Kg. 23:34).¹²³

119. For further study, see John F. Walvoord. *Matthew: Thy Kingdom Come*. Chicago: Moody, 1974.

120. 2 Kg. 15:1-7, 1 Ch. 3:12.

121. 2 Kg. 15:32, 34; 2 Ch. 26:1-23, 27:2; Isa. 1:1, 6:1; 7:1.

122. 2 Kg. 23:21, 1 Ch. 3:15, Jer. 22:11.

123. Pharaoh Necho is among fifty biblical names whose existence has been verified by archaeological studies in a published article by Lawrence Mykytiuk titled, "Archaeology Confirms 50 Real People in the Bible." *Biblical Archaeology Review*. March/April, 2014 (40:2), pages 42-50, 68. This archaeological evidence confirms the historical accuracy of the

5. Evidently, a reason for the dual identity of Uzziah/Azariah was not considered significant by the biblical writers.

04.02.02.Q2 Is there a mistake in Matthew 1:11 concerning the name of Jeconiah?

The phrase in question is, “**Jeconiah and his brothers.**” The biblical record of Jeconiah (a/k/a Jehoiachin or Coniah)¹²⁴ has given critics fuel for their arguments that the Bible contains errors. At issue is the verse where Matthew states that Salathiel (a/k/a Shealtiel) is the son of Jehoiachin while Luke ascribes him to be the son of Neria. Jeremiah 27:24-30 predicted that Jehoiachin would leave no heirs. Yet, it is altogether possible for him to have adopted the seven sons of Neria, as implied in Zechariah 12:12. Matthew made a special note of Jeconiah and his brothers because the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar had all of them and their wives imprisoned. But in April, 561 B.C., the Babylonians released them and gave Jehoiachin a lifetime pension. As a result, the first century Jews were convinced that the Messiah would come through one of Jehoiachin’s descendants, which is precisely what happened.¹²⁵

04.02.02.Q3 Why did Matthew omit several names from his genealogical list (Mt. 1:1-17)?

Matthew’s purpose was not to present every single name, but to present a general listing with an emphasis on King David that his Jewish audience clearly understood. But in modern thinking, why did he divide the list of names into three groups?

This is a clear example of how written communication is at times beyond the common definition of words. In this case, there is a mystery of the term “**fourteen generations.**” In biblical times there was no standardized numerical system of numbers, but rather, alphabet letters also had numeric values. For example, students today are familiar with the system of Roman numerals. In this system, I = one, V = five, X= ten, etc. Letters are combined to create specific numbers, such as XXIV is 24. Likewise, the Jews had their system.

When Matthew presented his genealogy, he wrote it in a manner so the Jews would recognize the Hebrew numeric value of the most important king in their history, King David. The name

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.

124. Franz, <http://www.lifeandland.org/2009/02/the-angelic-proclamation-to-the-shepherds-luke-28-15/> Retrieved July 22, 2015.

125. Gilbrant, “Matthew.” 27.

“David” spelled with three consonant letters¹²⁶ with their corresponding numeric values are as follows: *daleth* = 4, *waw* = 6, and *daleth* = 4. The name of “David” is a simple arithmetic problem of $4+6+4=14$.¹²⁷ Therefore, to see the written number 14 is also to see the name “David.”¹²⁸ Messianic Jews and many other scholars agree on this point, including the fact that the last group has only 13 names, not 14. So why is the last group counted as 14? Jechoniah is named twice, rightly as the last member of the second group.¹²⁹ Or perhaps Matthew counted “Jesus” (pre-resurrection name) as number 13 and “Christ” (post-resurrection name) as number 14.¹³⁰ It is a bit unnerving to modern readers when names are skipped as in a case like this. Yet this was part of first century biblical hermeneutics and every Jew understood and accepted it.

To Matthew, the expressed numeric value is of far greater importance than recording every name. In addition, Matthew had no problem skipping names, because a grandson or great-grandson was also considered to be a “son.” No one in Western culture today would consider calling a grandson as a son, but this was typical in the biblical world. Therefore, there are no mistakes in the genealogical record. The Hebrew term for this alphanumeric system is *gemetria*.¹³¹ He omitted names in order to have three groups of “14” that spelled “David.”

At this point it is also important to explain why there are three groups of names, not two or four groups. The most emphatic way to say anything in Hebrew was to repeat it three times. In this case, the numerical value of King David was underscored three times to emphasize its importance, and was also a convenient memory technique. Two other examples are as follows:

1. When the prophet Isaiah wanted to emphasize the holiness of the Lord, he repeated the word *holy* three times (Isa. 6:3).
2. When the apostle John described the future horrible plagues, he said, “woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth” (Rev. 8:13).

There simply was no other way for a Jew to express an idea in the most emphatic way possible but to repeat it three times. Only a Jewish audience would have understood the numerical meaning of Matthew’s genealogy, and this literary device also implied “holiness” to Jesus.

126. Hebrew does not have vowels. It is a consonantal language although vowel “points” were added to the language in the 9th or 10 century (A.D.), thus making it easier to read.

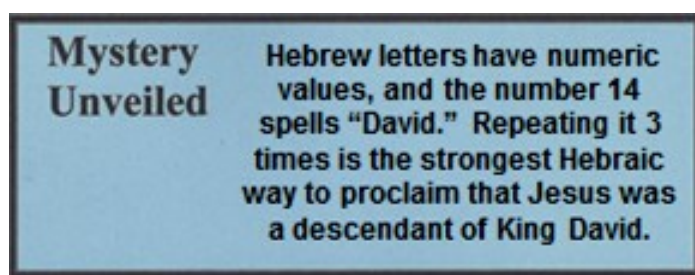
127. See Appendix 14 for the Numerical Values of Hebrew letters.

128. Johnson, “Matthew.” 7:252; Hagner, “Matthew 1-13.” 7.

129. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 294.

130. Smith, *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew*. 33.

131. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 56.



04.02.02.Q4 What was the purpose of a genealogical listing (Mt. 1:1-17; Lk. 3:23-28)?

It was most important for Matthew and Luke to inform their audiences that Jesus was both a physical man and the fulfillment of many messianic prophecies.¹³² The genealogical records were important for these reasons:

1. From the earliest days as a nation, the Jewish people considered their ancestry important. Their promised land was divided into tribal areas. In the course of doing business, at times land was sold or mortgaged. Every fifty years the lands reverted to their original owners, so a record of genealogy was important.
2. Genealogies gave a clear identity of ancestral and tribal origins,¹³³ which led to another reason,
3. Genealogies were critically important for certain religious or political offices. Amazingly, a priest gained his position by birth as proven by the records, but a rabbi owed his position to himself and dedicated study.
4. The genealogical record demonstrates the divine purpose for the restoration of man from the beginning of Adam.

The promise of the Davidic Covenant was fulfilled by Jesus. The common interpretation is that Jesus received His "blood right" to King David's throne through Mary and His "legal right" to

¹³². See 04.02.01 "Introduction."

¹³³. David, Uzziah, Ahaz, Hezekiah and Manasseh 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.

the throne through His adopted earthly father Joseph.¹³⁴ The records of Matthew and Luke reflect not only their Jewishness, but also their commitment to convey information deemed important to Jewish audiences. Other examples of genealogical records are as follows:

1. The historian Josephus preserved his genealogy for posterity (*Life* 1.3).
2. The Babylonian Talmud records that one rabbi, with a desire that his son would marry only into the right family, traced the genealogy of a prospective daughter-in-law to King David.¹³⁵
3. There is a reference to genealogical records (presumably military enrollment lists) made in the time of King Jotham of Judah and King Jeroboam II of Israel. This would have been about the year 745 B.C.
4. In Jewish history, when the Jews returned from Babylon, three families, Hobaiah, Hakkoz and Barzillai, claimed to be of priestly stock, but Nehemiah denied them that privilege of service because no record was found of them (Ezra 2:61-62).
5. At the time of Ezra, another group of 652 people — apparently Gentiles — wanted to “return” to Jerusalem, but could not prove they were descendants of Israel (Ezra 2:59). They were denied the opportunity because it was uncertain whether their families ever came from Jerusalem or if they were truly Jewish.
6. The Apostle Paul reflected upon his genealogy when he claimed that he was of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3:5).¹³⁶
7. Of all people, even Herod the Great was concerned about his genealogical record, for since he had an Idumean father and Nabatean mother, he destroyed those records in the temple. But the account was preserved by Julius Africanus, whose writings were eventually also destroyed, but not until the church historian Eusebius copied some of them. According to the church historian, Julius wrote,

134. The messianic title “Son of David” appears in the following three groups of passages in the gospels where it is always reflective of the Davidic Covenant: 1) In various healings by Jesus — Mt. 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; Mk. 10:47-48; Lk. 18:38-39. 2) In connection of the harassment the religious leaders gave Jesus — Mt. 22:42-43, 45; Mk. 12:35, 37; Lk. 20:41, 44, and 3) The praise the crowds gave Jesus at His entry into Jerusalem — Mt. 21:9, 15; Mk. 11:10. See Rogers, “The Davidic Covenant in the Gospels,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*. Part 1 of 2. 158-78.

135. Babylonian Talmud, *Ketubot* 62b.

136. Golub, *In the Days*. 41.

But in the archives were still [to the time of Herod] inscribed [first] Hebrew families and [second] those descended from proselytes, such as Achior the Ammonite and Ruth the Moabitess, and people of mixed blood¹³⁷ who came out of Egypt at the same time [as the Jews]. Herod who had no drop of Jewish blood in his veins, was stung by the consciousness of his base origin, and burnt the registers of these families, thinking to appear nobly born if no one else was able by reference to public documents to trace his line back to the patriarchs or [to proselytes and] to whose called [mixed blood].¹³⁸

Julius Africanus, *Letter to Aristides*¹³⁹

The phrase, “A record of the genealogy,” could also be translated as reading, “the book of the generations of,” or “the book of origin,” and is similar to records found in Genesis 2:4, 5:1, 6:9, and 37:2.¹⁴⁰ Priests and Levites always examined the genealogical records of a future spouse going back five generations, to insure that she met all the requirements of rabbinic purity concerning being a “true Israelite.”¹⁴¹ Elders and wealthy aristocrats also reviewed the genealogical records before a son or daughter got married. A bride-to-be had to be a virgin, preferably from a priestly or Levitical family, she could not have been a prostitute, divorced, or held captive by an enemy.¹⁴² Likewise, a future son-in-law had to be of “pure Israelite stock” without any proselytes for at least four generations.¹⁴³ The Hebrew word *kiddushin*, means *betrothals*.¹⁴⁴

If a man would marry a woman of priestly stock, he must trace her family back through four mothers, which are, indeed, eight: her mother, mother’s mother, and mother’s father’s mother, and this one’s mother; also her father’s mother, and this one’s mother, her father’s father’s mother, and this one’s mother. [If he would

137. Ex. 12:38; Num. 11:4.

138. “Mixed blood” meaning “full proselyte.” LXX Ex. 12:19; Isa. 14:1.

139. Quoted by Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History*. I 7.13; Bracketed inserts by Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 281.

140. Gilbrant, “Matthew.” 19; Dalman, *Jesus Christ in the Talmud*. 31; Jerusalem Talmud, *J’bamoth* 49b.

141. For further study on the marriage requirements, see the Mishnah, tractate *Kiddushin*; See also various chapters in Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* including pages 270-85.

142. Lev. 21:13-15; Mishnah, *Yebamoth* 6.4. It was assumed that if she was held captive by an enemy, that she was no longer a virgin, but was raped by the enemy guards.

143. Some Jewish writings list five generations.

144. Danby, ed., *Mishnah* x.

marry] a woman of Levitic or Israelitish stock, he must trace the descent back to one mother more.

Mishnah, *Kiddushin* 4.4¹⁴⁵

The traditions of the elders, as recorded above in the Mishnah, were essentially confirmed by Josephus in the following statement.

For our forefathers did not only appoint the best of these priests, and those that attended upon the divine worship, for that design from the beginning, but made provision that the stock of the priests should continue unmixed and pure, for he who is a partaker of the priesthood must propagate of a wife of the same nation, without having any regard to money, or any other dignities; but he is to make a scrutiny, and take his wife's genealogy from the ancient tables, and procure many witnesses to it; and this is our practice not only in Judea, but wheresoever any body of men of our nation live; and even there, an exact catalog of our priest's marriages is kept.

Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.7 (30-32)

The Essenes were also interested in one's genealogy. Those who desired to be a member of their exclusive group were recorded according to their racial/ethnic heritage.

They shall be written down by name, each man after his brother, the priests first, the Levites second, the children of Israel third, and the proselytes fourth.

Dead Sea Scroll, *Damascus Document* 14.4

And the priests and Levites were not the only ones who searched genealogical records. Scribes and those of wealth did likewise. The famed philosopher, historian, and theologian Philo, who lived in Egypt, made use of the genealogical library. When he became interested in a certain future wife, he sent someone to the Hall of Pedigrees in the Jerusalem temple and had her genealogy examined.¹⁴⁶

One's heritage was always important, not only in the Jewish world, but throughout all ancient cultures in this area. Lineage was reckoned through the father from whom the son received his heritage. It made no difference if a father was a biological father or a legal father through

145. Brackets inserted by Danby, ed., *Mishnah*.

146. Mishnah, *Hallah* 4.10.

adoption or marriage. This is explained in the second century B.C. Apocrypha book of *Ben Sirach*.

**A covenant was also established with David,
the son of Jesse, of the tribe of Judah:
the heritage of the king is from son to son only;
so the heritage of Aaron is for his descendants.**

Ben Sirach 45:25

This ancient custom continues today among some Muslim leaders, who trace their record of ancestry from Muhammad. Likewise, the Samaritans claim to have their priestly genealogy recorded from Adam to the present day priests. Their genealogical record is known as the *Adler Chronicle* or *Chronicle 7*.¹⁴⁷ Therefore, the genealogy presented by the gospel writers was perfectly in tune with the cultural requirements for anyone functioning in any religious office.

The incredibly amazing feature is that while the genealogical record existed for the purpose of verifying Israelite purity for the priests and Levites, when Matthew wrote his gospel, he completely ignored the purity aspect.¹⁴⁸ No priest or Levite would ever be considered worthy if there was a prostitute or other “impure” woman in his record. Yet Matthew recorded four of them at a time when doing that would have eliminated Jesus from serious consideration because the son of David was expected to be of pure stock. At a time when skipping a name or two was acceptable, the he could have overlooked these questionable women and given Jesus a genealogy that would have “looked good” to his Jewish audience. But rather, Matthew wanted to emphasize that Jesus had a “connection” with those whom the Jews despised and considered unworthy.

04.02.02.Q5 Do some biblical genealogies suggest a hidden message?

No, but a rare exception has been suggested. For example, Genesis 4:17-18 has the names of six generations that followed Adam; a number that represents mankind. Genesis 5 has the names of seven generations that followed Seth; a number that represents perfection and wholeness. Jewish

147. Information obtained during a personal interview with Hosney Kohen, a Samaritan priest in August of 1999; See also Neusner and Green, eds., *Dictionary of Judaism*. 13.

148. It should be noted that scholars have uncovered some falsification of genealogical records as found in some Jewish writings. Apparently, there were those who desired to hide some less-than-desirable forefathers for the purpose of acquiring a good spouse for a child or well-paying employment opportunity. See Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 283-84, 290.

readers would have been aware of both the names and what the meaning of the number of names implied.¹⁴⁹ Genealogies were important to identify those who qualified for temple service, and that is all.

04.02.02.Q6 Why did Matthew include four women of unfavorable character (Mt. 1:1-17)?

Men's opinions of women were not always very good. For example, Josephus and Nicholaus of Damascus seldom mention the names of women.¹⁵⁰ Therefore, it is most unusual that Matthew violated the traditions of every culture in the ancient Middle East by including women. Furthermore, if he wanted to highlight the character of noble women, he could have chosen Sarah, Rebekah, or several other matriarchs. Instead, he chose four who were the shame of Judaism – women with an historic less-than-favorable reputation: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. Genealogies almost never contained the names of women, unless they were significant heroines. However, these women were anything but heroines. Note the brief description of each:

1. Tamar, according to *Jubilee* 41:1 was Aramean and not Jewish. After her first two Jewish husbands died, her father-in-law was supposed to provide a husband for her according to the Jewish law (Deut. 25:5-10). However, he abandoned her to poverty. Consequently, she cleverly disguised herself as a prostitute and invited her father-in-law to sleep with her. She became pregnant and later delivered twins. Her father-in-law eventually admitted to mistreating her.
2. When Joshua sent two spies into Jericho prior to the Israelite invasion, Rahab, a Canaanite prostitute, provided protection for them. When her neighbors searched for them, she provided a means of their escape (Josh. 2).
3. Ruth was a pagan Moabite, ancient enemy of Israel. She slipped under the covers of a sleeping man named Boaz, who later married her. The Moabites eventually assimilated into the larger neighboring Arab tribes. But the great-grandson of Ruth was King David. According to the Law of Moses, no Ammonite or Moabite was permitted to enter the assembly of the Lord (Deut. 23:3), yet she was included in this list – amazing.

149. See footnote to Genesis 4:17-18 in the *New International Version Study Bible*.

150. 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.

4. Bathsheba committed adultery with King David. Since her deceased husband Uriah, was from the pagan Hittite tribe, there is good reason to believe that she was also of the same tribe. Later she gave birth to Solomon.¹⁵¹

The focus of Matthew's gospel is to demonstrate that Jesus had the credentials to bring salvation to humanity and break down ancient cultural and religious barriers; barriers between Jew and Gentile and barriers between male and female. Scholars have concluded the following possibilities of concerning the motive of Matthew to include these women:

1. These women became part of the written Hebrew Bible in spite of their actions or heritage. In that culture they most certainly suffered discrimination for what they did and who they were. So likewise, Mary, the mother of Jesus, suffered discrimination from her neighbors in Bethlehem and Nazareth for being pregnant while out of wedlock. Matthew demonstrated that Jesus came *through* and *to* the lowest, most despised people, as well as those of wealth and esteem. Sexual sin and being a Gentile placed one on the bottom of the Jewish social ladder. The genealogy was a powerful statement of the forgiveness of God and revealed His messianic plans for the Jews and Gentiles.
2. As foreigners, these women were historic demonstrations of the love of God for the Gentile people. Rahab, Ruth, and possibly Tamar and Bathsheba were of Gentile ancestry.
3. All these women were eventually vindicated, as would be Mary, the mother of Jesus.

However, there is an amazing feature of this genealogy that challenges critics. If Matthew wanted to show the Jewish "purity" of Jesus, he would never have listed these women. In fact, he should not have chosen *any* women. To the religious leaders of the time, nothing was more important than purity as it was a constant point of contention between them and Jesus. And to the subject of the messianic figure, the "impure bloodline" of Jesus would have been reason for condemnation. If he *had* to list women, at least he could have identified some Jewish heroines. Furthermore, men's opinions of even good women were not always very good. For example, Josephus and Nicholas (Nicholas) of Damascus seldom mention the names of any women.¹⁵² But Matthew recorded four women of poor reputation. Only God could have created a literary document as this gospel.

151. Notice that Matthew refers to Bathsheba only as "the wife of Uriah," and not by her name. He evidently had no appreciation for her, yet included her in the genealogy when writing his gospel.

152. 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 Nicholas of Damascus, and their comments about women.

04.02.03.Q1 What are the three genealogical interpretations of Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-28)?

Over the years scholars have adopted three views on these two genealogical records. As is at times the case, some opinions may contradict. Note the following which includes a recent fourth viewpoint:

1. Both genealogies give the descent of Joseph: Matthew's is *real*, and Luke's is *legal*.
2. Matthew gives Joseph's *legal* descent as successor to the throne of David, and that Luke gives his *real* parentage, and finally,
3. Matthew gives the *real* descent of Joseph and Luke gives the *real* descent of Mary.¹⁵³ Matthew's genealogical record is traced from David through Solomon, while Luke traced his record from David through Nathan. Both Mary and Joseph are descendants of the King David.¹⁵⁴ Two centuries later Tertullian claimed that the Roman census records listed Mary as being a descendant of David.¹⁵⁵ The common explanation that Matthew's genealogy traces the lineage of Jesus through Joseph and Luke's genealogy traces it through Mary, is said to have been originated by Annianus of Viterbo in the year 1490.¹⁵⁶
4. However, a new interpretation has emerged that should be given serious consideration. The new suggestion is that *both* genealogies pertain to Joseph,¹⁵⁷ and this writer believes it has the most viable possibilities. Since it was common *not* to include a woman's name in a legal document, Matthew's genealogy is through Joseph's maternal grandfather and Luke's genealogy is through his mother whose name was not recorded, but her father was Jacob. The fact that four women were mentioned in Matthew's gospel was the exception, not the standard. Luke applied the standard practice of Jewish "purity."

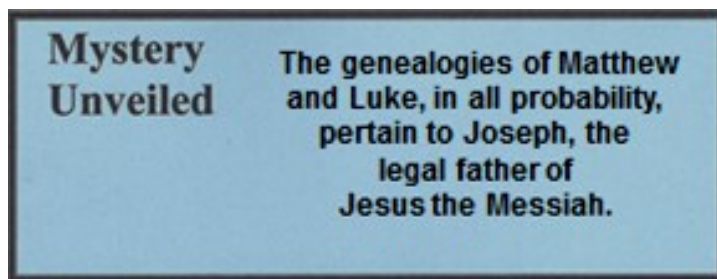
153. The interpretation that Luke's genealogy is the real descent of Mary is not widely accepted today. See note on Lk. 3:23-38 in the ESV Study Bible.

154. Graham, *A Guide to the Gospels*. 509.

155. Tertullian, *Against the Jews*. 9.

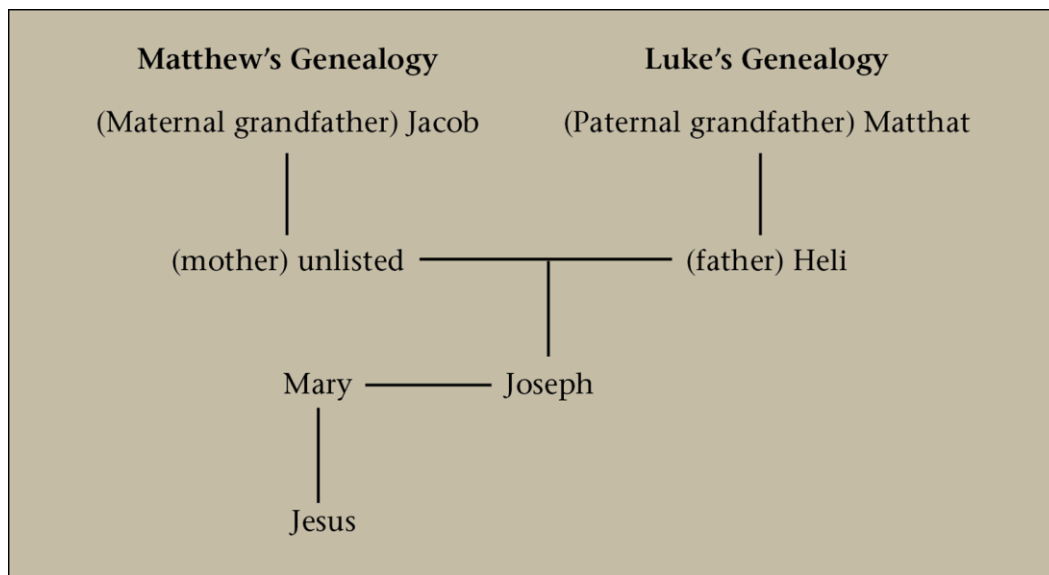
156. Nettelhorst. "The Genealogy of Jesus." 170.

157. For further study, see Nettelhorst, R. P. "The Genealogy of Jesus." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. 31:2 (June 1988) 169-72.



04.02.03.Q2 Why is Joseph's father named Heli in Luke 3:23 but is named Jacob in Matthew 1:16?

The issue of Joseph's father, mainly – who was he – has been a joyful subject of critics. In Matthew 1:16 he is Jacob while in Luke 3:23 he is Heli. Could there have been more than one man in the life of Joseph? Consider this: According to the Levitical laws of Moses (Deut. 25:5 ff.) if a man died without children, his brother must, if he is free to do so, marry his widow and children will be considered heirs of the deceased brother or of the second husband. Some scholars have suggested that Joseph's mother was married twice and that Joseph was the son of Heli (second husband) but legally he was the son of the first husband who passed away. To add to the mystery, Heli and Jacob may have had the same mother, but Heli's father is a descendent of David through Nathan while Jacob's father is a descendent through Solomon. There seems to be no end to the many attempts to understand this mystery.¹⁵⁸



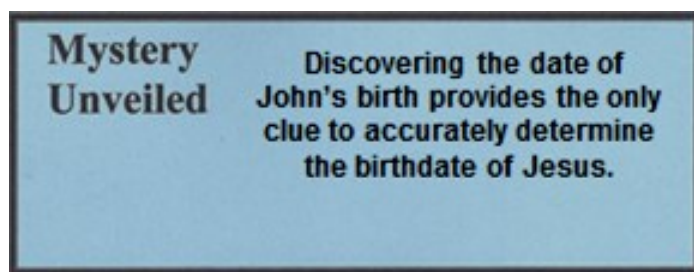
158. A. T. Robertson listed a number of interpretative possibilities in *A Harmony of the Gospels*, 261-263.

04.02.03.A GENEALOGICAL CHART OF MATTHEW AND LUKE. The two genealogies as shown are typical of the time. Sons were named “ben” or “bar,” meaning “son of” which was followed by the father’s name. Courtesy of International Mapping and Dan Przywara.

While scholars have made many attempts to reconcile the parental issue of Mary and Joseph, this writer has not found a single commentary that suggests that the mother of Joseph was unlisted, as was often the custom, and the name of the maternal grandfather was. This chart could reveal the solution.

04.03.04.Q1 Why was it important for Mary to visit Elizabeth?

While the specific reason is not given, understanding the cultural values of the time can frame out a relatively accurate answer. Mary was single and pregnant, and that situation had serious social consequences. Before the town elders of Nazareth had opportunity to judge her at the town gate (Deut. 22:15), she went to the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth because their home provided her a protective environment. Since Zechariah was of a priestly line, his comments concerning her condition had greater authority than did her neighbors in Nazareth. Furthermore, his wife Elizabeth was also pregnant and, therefore, the three of them realized that God was about to do something incredibly profound. Without the miraculous pregnancy of Elizabeth, Mary’s situation could have been dire. She stayed for three months until John was born.

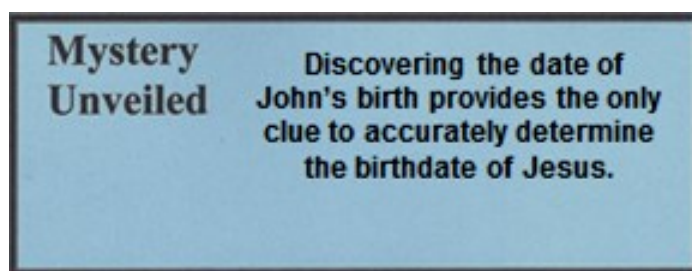


04.03.06.Q1 When was John the Baptist born and why is this date significant to the birth of Jesus (Lk. 1:57-66)?

Knowing the date of birth for John the Baptist provides the *only* significant clue in determining when Jesus was born. According to Luke 1:5, Zechariah belonged to the priestly division of Abijah. In a tradition established by King David (1 Ch. 23:1-2 ff.), who divided the land into twenty-four divisions, each division sent a delegation to the temple to minister to the Lord and to the people. As previously stated, every division served for a one-week period, twice a year, but

all divisions were required to come to Jerusalem for the Feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.¹⁵⁹

The divisions served in chronological order according to the weeks of the religious calendar. The first division was that of Jehoiarib (1 Ch. 24:7a) who served in the first week of the first month (Nisan), the second division of Jedaiah (1 Ch. 24:7b) served in the second week, etc. Nisan is the first month of the religious calendar year, as established by God in Exodus 12:2 (while Tishrei is the first month of the secular calendar). Zachariah belonged to the division of Abijah, which was the eighth division in accordance to David's directive (1 Ch. 24:10b). Allowing for the weeks when all twenty-four divisions served, Zechariah and his division of Abijah would have served in the tenth week. Calculating time for the elderly priest to return home, the two weeks of required separation (Lev. 12:5; 15:19, 24-25), and counting forward nine months would have placed the birth of John the Baptist during the Passover festival. The significance of this timing lies in the fact that during the Passover ritual, each Jewish family had, as is done today, an empty seat at the table waiting for the coming of Elijah.¹⁶⁰ Since all seven Jewish festivals (technically, these are festivals of God, not the Jews) and in some manner each one points to an aspect of the life and ministry of Jesus. This calculation makes logical sense.



04.03.07.Q1 Was there a connection between the family of John the Baptist and the Essene Community (re: Lk. 1:67-80)?

This question has been a subject of considerable debate among scholars. Zechariah, along with many other orthodox Jews, was opposed to the Sadducean corruption in the temple, yet performed his obligations to the best of his abilities. Zechariah was of the clan of Abijah of the priestly Zadok family. It was the Zadok forefathers of Zechariah and John the Baptist, who more than a century earlier, had established the separatist Essene movement with enclaves in the desert wilderness outside Damascus, in Qumran by the Dead Sea, and in a small section in western

159. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:254; When priests and Levites served in the temple, they stayed in rooms within the temple buildings. Otherwise, they lived in communities throughout the countryside. Deut. 16:16; Ex. 23:14-17; 34:20, 23-24; Geikie, *The Life and Works of Christ*. 1:93.

160. Chumney, *The Seven Festivals of the Messiah*. 178-81.

Jerusalem. Those living in Qumran are now credited for having written the world-famous Dead Sea Scrolls.

It would have been only natural for Zechariah's extended family to care for young John when his elderly parents died, especially since the Essenes were known to take in orphans. As the son of a priest, John was destined to become a priest and, as such, he learned of all the temple services, rituals, as well as the depth of corruption. He could have enjoyed life with flattering respect and envy along with a life of modest plenty. But from birth he was on a mission and determined to fulfill it.

John's strong childhood training in the Torah was reflected in his later years when he was preaching. He rejected the Essene theology of strong and legalistic ritual observances but preached a message of salvation and repentance. Zechariah was most certainly looking for the coming of the messiah. A careful examination of John's words reveals that he was, in fact, looking forward to the coming of the political-messiah who would deliver the Jewish people from Roman oppression. His understanding of who the messiah would be and what he would do was very typical of the common Jew. Nonetheless, even though there is a historical and genealogical connection between John and the Essenes, as well as a mutual disgust for the temple leadership, there is no other known relationship between John and those who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls.

04.03.08.Q1 What wedding customs in Galilee shaped the betrothal of Mary and Joseph?

In the Old Testament era of the judges and kings, parents frequently played the role of match-maker. By the first century, those who were getting married had a greater role in the decision. Customs varied from area to area, even the ritual in Galilee were different from those in Jerusalem. But some basics remained the same.

The minimum age for betrothal was twelve for girls and thirteen for boys, although the mid-teens were preferred for girls and eighteen for boys. The formality began when the young man came to the girl's family and presented them with a formal, legally binding contract known as a *katuvah*. This covenant contract stated the marriage proposal and the sum of money or other valuables he would pay to her parents to have her as his wife. This payment was known as the "bride price."¹⁶¹ The purpose was to compensate the father for the loss of a worker in the family. But more importantly, the "price" was to assure that his wife was costly and, therefore, she was to be cherished.¹⁶² The *katuvah* also stated that the young man promised to honor, love, support,

161. Lash, *The Ancient Jewish Wedding*. 6.

162. Roman, *Jesus of Galilee*. 246-47.

and care for her, providing all the necessities of life. If the terms of the contract were accepted by both families, it was signed and the couple celebrated by sharing a cup of wine together. Only then was the covenant sealed and the couple considered betrothed.¹⁶³ Thereafter the bride wore a veil whenever in public which signified to any possible suitors that she had made a marriage commitment. While in the ancient world women were often considered to be mere property, Judaism elevated them to a higher status.

Because a *katuvah* was a legal contract, a termination resulted by one spouse receiving a certificate of divorce from the other and each party was permitted to re-enter another betrothal.¹⁶⁴ The Talmud stated that, the bond, created by God is so strong that, after betrothal, a woman requires a divorce before she can marry another man.¹⁶⁵ If there was a divorce or death, the tragic event was recorded in the genealogical records in the temple.

During the betrothal time, the bridegroom would “prepare a place for her” while the bride prepared herself for her bridegroom and new home. The new home was simply another room added onto the existing home of the groom’s family home. Seldom did a young bridegroom build a single-family dwelling on a building lot away from his family. While the young bridegroom constructed the room, there was plenty of help from family and friends and his father eventually declared its completion.

Jesus was born during the one-year period of Mary’s betrothal. After Jesus was born they had their wedding ceremony, after which the couple had a very short honeymoon. Then they returned, and with family and friends, they celebrated with a feast.¹⁶⁶

The Jews were not alone in this practice; it was the cultural norm among many people groups in the ancient Middle East. Centuries earlier the code of Hammurabi stated in Acts 159-160¹⁶⁷ that if a bridegroom broke the betrothal, the bride’s father retained the bride’s price (gift). However, if the future father-in-law broke the covenant, he would have to pay double the bride price to the bridegroom. The legal codes of Lipit-Ishtar (No. 29) and Eshnunna (No. 25) had similar

163. Matthews, *Manners and Customs*. 225; Trutza, “Marriage.” 4:94-96; Maier, *In the Fullness of Time*. 21; Lash, *The Ancient Jewish Wedding*. 7-10, 14.

164. Maier, *In the Fullness of Time*. 16-21; Trutza, “Marriage.” 4:94-96; Goldberg and Rayner, *The Jewish People*. 372-74; See also Deut. 24:1-4.

165. For further study, see the third division of the Mishnah is titled *Nashim*, (Women). The chapters include instruction pertaining the *Ketuboth* (Marriage Deeds), *Nadarim* (Vows), *Gittin* (Bills of Divorce), and *Kiddushin* (Betrothals).

166. Lash, *The Ancient Jewish Wedding*. 9.

167. Acts 159-160 is a reference to the legislative acts recorded in Hammurabi’s Code.

requirements.¹⁶⁸ These are mentioned because to the modern student, the cultural and religious norms tend to blend together at times. One is not always certain if a belief or action is for religious or cultural reasons. Many of the daily activities of the average Jew were similar to those of Gentiles. The important difference, of course, was the religious element and whatever influences that would have had upon daily life.

During the betrothal period the couple was considered to be husband and wife, although the wedding was still in the future. If either one died prior to the wedding the surviving partner would have been considered a virgin and as a widow or widower, and would be free to marry someone else.¹⁶⁹

04.03.08.Q2 Why could Joseph *not* have stoned Mary to death (Deut. 22:23-24; Mt. 1:18-25)?

The Mosaic Law requires the stoning of an unfaithful man and woman (Deut. 22:23-24) and, as stated previously, but by the first century this punishment was seldom enforced *among Jews*.¹⁷⁰ By this time Jewish leaders differentiated between two types of adulterous women – the married woman and engaged virgin. According to the Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 50a, the punishments were as follows:

1. The adulterous married woman was sentenced to death by hanging
2. The adulterous betrothed virgin was sentenced to death by stoning.

Granted, in either case the punishment was death. It was simply a matter of how the execution was to be performed. However, the Romans removed the authority for the Sanhedrin to exercise capital punishment in Judea. The Babylonian comment could have been written for two reasons:

1. For Jews living in the Diaspora who were not under the authority of the laws of Judea.
2. To reflect the ideals of Judaism, not for the actual intended punishment.

168. Wright and Thompson, “Marriage” 2:955.

169. Lash, *The Ancient Jewish Wedding*. 9-11.

170. The practice of killing a woman suspected of sexual activity prior to marriage was practiced among some pagan tribes, and still is practiced in many Muslim communities who call it “honor killing.”

Either way, if she was found guilty by the rabbinic court, the end was the same. Nonetheless, being unfaithful was one thing, but being pregnant and unfaithful was another. Joseph could not, would not, have stoned Mary for four reasons:

1. As previously stated, the custom of stoning an adulterous woman was completely out of use by the first century in most areas where Jews lived. At a later time the scribes and Pharisees brought before Jesus a woman they accused of adultery. But that was only a hypothetical question, which leads to the second reason.
2. Capital punishment was eliminated by the Romans under the reign of Herod the Great with the exception of Gentiles who entered restricted areas of the temple. Herod's domain included the district of Galilee, but the legal authority of the Sanhedrin was limited to Judea.
3. The stoning could not have been committed by Joseph, because the couple's wedding had not yet taken place. Cultural rules required her father or older brother to carry out the death sentence. The same is true today among orthodox Muslims, where the family execution is known as an "honor killing" and is supported by Sharia Law. However, such an execution would have only occurred after a judicial action, not by a family in revenge.¹⁷¹
4. But the most important reason is the fact that since Mary was pregnant, stoning her would have resulted in the death to an innocent child, which would have made the executioner guilty of the child's murder.

Therefore, a divorce was Joseph's only option until an angel directed him to do otherwise.¹⁷² But a quiet divorce was an expensive option for Joseph because he would have been obligated to support her. His decision to consider this, illustrates the fact that for Mary's sake, he would take the expensive route rather than the honorable and economically affordable one.

Mystery Unveiled

A quiet divorce would have obligated Joseph to make payments to Mary. He considered her honor over his and was willing to accept responsibility for her "sin."

171. This subject is explained in further detail in 08.02.07.Q1 "Did Moses quote Hammurabi, and if so, how does this affect the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:18?"

172. If the betrothal of a young girl was terminated, then she and her father received the bill of divorce. Mishnah, *Gittin* 6.2.

And this is why: during the previous two centuries, the Pharisees attempted to bring the people back to basic Torah instruction by emphasizing the kindness of God rather than legalistic attitudes. This was obviously contradictory to many of their other rules and contrary to what many students of the Bible learn today. One of the reforms they instituted was that a husband had to pay support for the wife he divorced.¹⁷³ Not all Pharisees agreed as there were many religious sects under the Pharisee umbrella. Amazingly, while they are justly criticized for their legalistic harshness, they should also be noted for some of their kind and responsible landmark decisions.¹⁷⁴

If Joseph had accused Mary of adultery, a public divorce based on adultery would have cost him nothing. He would have saved his family's honor, and kept her dowry. A quiet divorce would have cost him alimony payments. But then he received a message from an angel and he chose to follow the difficult road of life that God had chosen for them.

04.03.08.Q3 Why do the gospels fail to call Jesus the “Prince of Peace?” as predicted in Isaiah 9:6 (see Mt. 1:18-25)?

Isaiah 9:6 refers to the Messiah as the “Prince of Peace,” yet nowhere is the title found in the gospels or in the New Testament. Jesus is, however, referred to as “the Prince of Life” (Acts 3:15), “a Prince and Savior” (Acts 5:31), and “Prince of the kings of the earth” (Rev. 1:5). The book of Isaiah is sometimes referred to as the “Gospel of the Old Testament,” because it contains so many prophecies of His first coming as well as His second. When Jesus was on earth He came as a servant and teacher. When He returns He will rule the nations of the earth for a thousand years and, as such, *then* He will be the Prince of Peace.

In His first coming, Jesus taught the principles of the Kingdom of God, whereby men's hearts can be changed and, consequently, they can obtain an inner peace that is beyond all human understanding. In His second coming, Jesus will rule this earth and institute international peace. He may not have received the official title of “Prince of Peace” by any New Testament writers, but those who accepted Him and allowed Him to transform their lives, certainly know Him as such. In Bible times, the definition of a word, phrase, or title was no different than the word, phrase, or title itself.

173. Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 134-35.

174. See “Pharisees” 02.01.14.

04.03.08.Q4 Can the concept of the virgin birth be supported historically (Mt. 1:18-25)?

Throughout Church history there has been unanimous agreement on this biblical subject. Only on rare occasion did anyone challenge this basic doctrine, and those individuals were identified as heretics and quickly removed from Church. Only in modern times has it been controversial, and in some circles, popular, to challenge it. Yet, there are a number of non-Christian witnesses to the event. One of them is the Qu'ran, which reads as follows:

Jesus was of virgin birth and performed many miracles. But those to whom he came as a Prophet rejected him, and plotted for his death. Their plots failed for God's plan is above man's plots.

Qu'ran, Sura 3:35¹⁷⁵

The virgin birth is also evidenced by the number of hostile witnesses who wrote against it. If the birth was a myth, then the witnesses would have been dismissed as such. But so many believed it, so that about the year A.D. 180, Celsus, a Greek philosopher, vigorously attacked all aspects of Christianity and espoused the virtues of classical paganism in a writing titled *On the True Doctrine*. He claimed that Jesus was not born of a virgin, but had a father by the name of Panthera.¹⁷⁶

In the Greek, this name sounds nearly the same as the same word for “virgin” and, therefore, it was an insulting pun. While his work has been lost in history, portions of it were preserved through the literary work of church father, Origen of Alexandria. In the year A.D. 248, Origen wrote a rebuttal entitled, *Against* (or *Contra*) *Celsus*. It is from this academic discussion that historians know that Celsus promoted philosophical hatred against the Christian faith.

Let us imagine what a Jew - let alone a philosopher - might put to Jesus: “Is it not true, good sir, that you fabricated the story of your birth from a virgin to quiet rumors about the true and unsavory circumstances of your origins? Is it not the case that far from being born in royal David's city of Bethlehem, you were born in a poor country town and of a woman who earned her living by spinning? Is it not the case that her deceit was discovered, that she was pregnant by a Roman soldier named Panthera she was driven away by her husband, the carpenter, and convicted of adultery? Indeed, is it not so that in her disgrace, wandering far from home she

175. Muhammad founded Islam in the 7th century A.D. and the Qu'ran (Koran) was compiled a century or two later. The more distant a literary work is from the time of its subject, the less reliable it is. Nonetheless, the Koranic quotation is included anyway for the benefit of Muslim readers.

176. Barclay, “John.” 2:28.

gave birth to a male child in silence and humiliation? What more? Is it not so that you hired yourself out as a workman in Egypt, learned magical crafts and gained something of a name for yourself which now you flaunt among your kinsmen?”

Celsus, quoted by Origen in *Contra Celsus* 1.28-34¹⁷⁷

Celsus claimed that there was an error by the gospel writers in writing the Greek word *panthenos* (meaning *virgin*), and what was meant was *Parthera*, a masculine name. His theory may have come from Jewish sources who also opposed the Christian movement because it was emptying synagogues and converting others into churches. Like Celsus, Jewish critics claimed that Jesus was not born of a virgin, but His mother was a prostitute and His true father was a Roman soldier known as Pandira or Parthera.¹⁷⁸

Yet while the Jewish leadership looked upon Jesus with great disdain, some admired His ability to perform miracles. This is evidenced by two interesting accounts that happened later – possibly in the second or early third century. In both stories someone was sick and someone else offered to pray in the name of Jesus, but it is a prayer in the name of Jesus, the son of Pandira, a/k/a the son of Parthera. These are examples of the unique healing power of Jesus – one is accepted, the other, denied.¹⁷⁹

1. Rabbi Joshua ben Levi had an ill grandchild with a life-threatening disease in the throat. Someone came and mumbled a prayer “In the name of Jesus, the son of Pandira” and the child was healed.
2. A certain Rabbi Eliezer ben Damah was bitten by a poisonous snake and a Jacobus Capharsamensis came to visit him. Jacobus offered to pray a prayer of healing in the name of Jesus the son of Pandira, but Rabbi Ishmael denied the offer of prayer. Consequently, he died.

While these accounts occurred long after the resurrection of Jesus, they reflect three important insights:

1. The power that was in the name of Jesus, even if He was incorrectly identified (“son of Pandira”).

177. Stein, R. *Jesus the Messiah*. 33.

178. See 04.03.08.Q4 Can the concept of the virgin birth be supported historically?

179. Adapted from Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:150.

2. The power associated with the name of Jesus and how rabbis reacted to it.
3. The on-going struggle the Jewish people had with the identity of Jesus.

The core issue was that the rabbis did not want to admit who Jesus was; certainly not that He was born of a virgin, even though He had demonstrated all the signs and wonders predicted in the Bible.

In the Babylonian Talmud, Jesus is described as a Balaam, one who deceived the Jewish people. While the Talmud does not give proper names, it does record a story of a woman who “played harlot with carpenters.”¹⁸⁰ The context of the account obviously reflects upon Mary and Joseph. By stating this, the Talmud does provide witness of the dynamic impact Jesus had upon the Jewish community and their rejection of Him throughout history.¹⁸¹ On a side note, to use a name dignified someone, to speak of them without a name added insult.

In the Greek culture, with its cultural passion of sexual desires, the Athenians named their city’s patron goddess Athene, *He Parthenos* meaning “the Virgin.”¹⁸² Even within the pagan culture, the word was commonly understood to mean “virgin.” While some critics have suggested that the virgin birth was invented by the Church, there are three distinct reasons that, when taken together, suggest otherwise and support the biblical account.

1. The first century church believed in the historical virgin birth;
2. There was no pre-Christian speculation that the Messiah would have been born as a virgin. Isaiah 7:14 was not recognized as a prophecy until *after* Jesus was born.¹⁸³
3. Since the messiah would be a son of David it was thought he would have to be naturally conceived. The idea of a virgin birth was a radically new concept within the Jewish community. No one writing a fictitious account would deliberately create an issue that would have caused criticism. Therefore, for church leaders to invent the idea of a virgin birth would have been an invitation for criticism.¹⁸⁴

180. Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 106 a-b.

181. Stein, R. *Jesus the Messiah*. 33, 67.

182. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*. 39.

183. See an interesting parallel account in Shepherd, Massey H. “An Unpublished Dead Sea Scroll Text Parallels Luke’s Infancy Narrative.” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 16:2 (Mar/April, 1990). 24-26.

184. For further study, see 04.03.08.Q7 “How does one explain other so-called virgin births in history?”

By the fifth or sixth century a Jewish writer picked up the heresy of Celsus and placed it in an anti-Christian book titled *Toledot-Yeshu* meaning *Generations of Yeshua* that was obviously written for a Jewish audience. The writer identified the Roman soldier as Yosef ben-Pandera (Jewish name?) and the factitious account became part of the Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbat* 104b, and *Sanhedrin* 67a, as well as the *Tosefta Chullin* 2:22-23.¹⁸⁵

04.03.08.Q5 What is the significance of the virgin birth (Mt. 1:18-25)?

This is a theological question that is beyond the scope of this paper, but three brief answers are as follows:

1. Throughout the Old Testament Period, the miraculous birth of a child to elderly parents was a well-established pattern that God used to announce that a special person was born – usually a prophet. The virgin birth of Jesus was the culmination of all the miraculous births recorded throughout Jewish history.
2. The virgin birth is critical in that it broke the generational curse of sin that has plagued humanity since Adam and Eve succumbed to the temptations of Satan.¹⁸⁶ The basic understanding of sin is critical in order to comprehend the significance of what Jesus saved us *from*, as well as what He saved us *to*.¹⁸⁷ The absolute purity and holiness of Jesus could begin only with a virgin birth. Thus He did not receive the curse that had been transmitted from generation to generation since Adam. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus were nothing less than a continuance of that purity and holiness.¹⁸⁸
3. Another reason for the virgin birth, one that is often overlooked, arises in Jeremiah 22:24-30. This passage pertains to the curse of Jechoniah, who is in the line of Joseph. Joseph could not have been the biological father of Jesus, because of two issues (mankind's sin and the curse of Jechoniah), but he became the legal adopted father, or step-father of Jesus. According to rabbinic writings, Mary is referred to as "Miriam, the

185. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*. 113. See also Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash*.

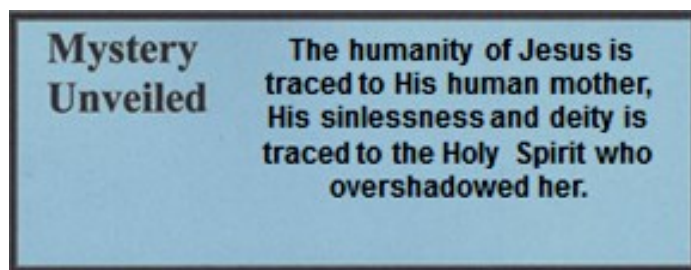
186. Critics have posed four questions: 1) Was Jesus born of a virgin? 2) Was Jesus the Son of God? 3) Is the Bible the Inspired Word of God? 4) Did He rise from the grave? To affirm negatively to one of more of these questions reflects a loss of faith and denial of who Jesus was in the first century and who He is today.

187. Marino, "The Origin, Nature, and Consequences of Sin." 255-58.

188. See a King James Version or New American Standard Version of the Bible.

daughter of Heli” meaning the genealogy of Jesus was recognized as being through Mary and not Joseph.¹⁸⁹

By a gracious and merciful God, we have Christ Jesus who bore our sins (past, present, and future) on the cross. The parallel between Adam and Jesus in Romans 5:12-21, and to a lesser extent, in 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 are important. Every person who has ever lived has inherited a sin nature from Adam. But Jesus, born of a virgin, did not have that sin nature, although He had the opportunity and temptations to sin. Yet He chose not to sin. By His sinless life, death, and resurrection, He not only brought salvation by which man would be saved *from* the consequences of sin, but also be saved *to* salvation with Himself. This incredible gift of eternal life is available to anyone who accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior and commits their life to Him. Acceptance of the virgin birth as a historical fact is foundational in understanding who Jesus is and the development of one’s relationship with Him. It was through Eve, a virgin in the Garden of Eden, that death entered into the world. Now through Mary, a virgin, life would enter into the world.



Finally, there is a teaching that the blood of the unborn child comes from the father and, therefore, the transfer of sin was broken by the virgin birth. However, modern science has proven this blood theory to be wrong. As previously stated, Roman Catholics also grappled with the problem of the transfer of sin from the Virgin Mary to Christ Jesus. They resolved the issue with the belief that she too was born of a virgin, so she too was pure and holy. Protestants disagree because this does not reconcile with Scripture as Psalm 51:5 suggests states that the sinful nature is generational, passing from one generation to another at time of conception. The complete answer remains a divine mystery. However, the miracle of Jesus is that He not only was born of a virgin, but He also received His human nature from His sanctified mother and, hence, her sinful nature did not enter Him.¹⁹⁰ Holiness is a work of the Holy Spirit, not the absence of a male sperm.

189. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor's Manual*. Class 2, page 12.

190. Lawlor, *Almah*. 25-35.

04.03.08.Q6 How does one explain other so-called virgin births in history?

Critics have long stated that the claim of a virgin birth was typical of the day; the early Church simply mimicked what existed in the neighboring pagan cultures. The Egyptian pharaohs claimed it, as did Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, and Augustus Caesar even claimed to have walked on water. Virgin births were associated with deity, meaning that those who claimed to have been born without an earthly father were, in fact, gods. However, when the so-called pagan virgin births are compared to the biblical account, the differences are profound. It leads the reader to conclude that critics simply cannot relate the birth of Jesus to any historical figure.

No pagan account credits the Holy Spirit, or any other spirit, for the conception. Rather, various kings and emperors claimed their virgin act was generally the result of the sexual action of a serpent. Because snakes shed their skin annually, they were symbolic of renewed life, rather than representative of Satan and death, which is a later Christian interpretation. Therefore, it was only natural that the ancients created a myth in which the symbol of renewed life was also the explanation of a new life conceived by a “virgin birth.”

For example, in the second century (A.D.), the Roman historian Suetonius wrote *The Lives of the Caesars: the Deified Augustus* in which he described the so-called virgin birth of Octavian, later known as Caesar Augustus. Suetonius said that he acquired his information from Asclepius of Mendes, who authored *Theologumena (Discourse about the Gods)*.¹⁹¹ Note the words of Octavian’s mother Attia:

Then a serpent glided up to her and shortly went away. When she awoke she purified herself, as after the embraces of her husband, and at once there appeared on her body the mark in colors like a serpent, and she could never get rid of it; so that presently she ceased ever to go to the public baths. In the tenth month after that Augustus was born and was therefore regarded as the son of Apollo.

Suetonius, *The Deified Augustus* 94.4

Alexander the Great also claimed to have been born of a “virgin.” Whether his mother was a virgin at the time of her conception, or if she, after a normal marital relationship, conceived him by non-human means is unknown. Nonetheless, according to one myth, Alexander was conceived by a divine snake and another myth claimed the conception was by a lightning bolt. The Greek historian Plutarch¹⁹² said the following of Alexander,

191. Franz, <http://www.lifeandland.org/2009/02/the-angelic-proclamation-to-the-shepherds-luke-28-15/>. Retrieved July 22, 2015.

192. Plutarch a/k/a Lucius Mestrius Plutarchus, (A.D. 45-120) was a Greek historian, essayist and biographer who is known for two books, *Parallel Lives* which included the *Life of Alexander*, and *Moralia*. His few surviving works appear to

[2] ... It is said that his father Philip fell in love with Olympias, Alexander's mother, at the time when they were both initiated into the mysteries at Samothrace.... On the night before the marriage was consummated, the bride dreamed that there was a crash of thunder, that her womb was struck by a thunderbolt, and that there followed a blinding flash from which a great sheet of flame blazed up and spread far and wide before it finally died away [The soothsayer] Aristander of Telmessus ... declared that the woman must be pregnant. At another time a serpent was seen stretched out at Olympias' side as she slept, and it was this more than anything else, we are told, which weakened Philip's passion and cooled his affection for her, so that from that time on he seldom came to sleep with her. The reason for this may either have been that he was afraid she would cast some evil spell or charm upon him or else that he recoiled from her embrace because he believed that she was the consort of some higher being.

[3] ... According to Eratosthenes, Olympias, when she sent Alexander on his way to lead his great expedition to the East, confided to him and to him alone the secret of his conception and urged him to show himself worthy of his divine parentage

Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*, Selections from Chapters 2 - 3¹⁹³

History is filled with religious and political figures who claimed to have been born of a mortal woman and divine father. One critic stated how stupid other people's myths are, implying that Christians are likewise as foolish for their belief.¹⁹⁴ Yet he fails to recognize that the biblical account is radically different from other accounts. Those who claim that the church fathers copied the virgin birth concept cannot explain the huge difference between the gospel account and pagan accounts. Therefore, it could not have been a "copycat" version.¹⁹⁵

04.03.08.Q7 Could the idea of a virgin birth have been borrowed from pagan sources as critics claim (Mt. 1:18-25)?

have been written in Koine Greek, the common Greek language of the first century. See Warmington, ed. *Plutarch's Lives: Demosthenes and Cicero, Alexander and Caesar*, Vol 7.

193. http://www.medmalexperts.com/POCM/pagan_ideas_virgin_birth.html Retrieved July 8, 2011. See Warmington, ed. *Plutarch's Lives: Demosthenes and Cicero, Alexander and Caesar*, Vol 7.

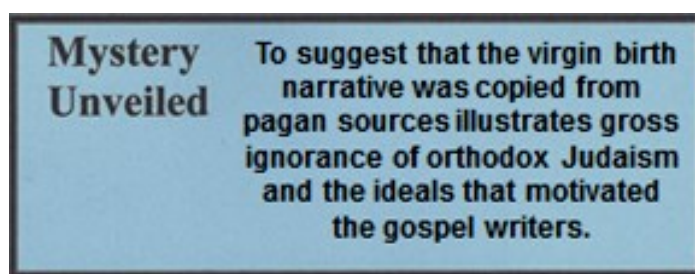
194. http://www.medmalexperts.com/POCM/pagan_ideas_virgin_birth.html. Retrieved July 8, 2011.

195. For further study see Dewayne Bryant, "The Pagan Christ in the Popular Culture." 45-47.

Impossible! While this question has been answered to some degree in the preceding paragraphs,¹⁹⁶ the following is to be noted: Pagan mythologies, primarily those of the Babylonians, Greeks and Romans, were extremely hostile to Judaism. Therefore, no respectable Jew would ever have considered taking an element from a pagan religion, especially one as radical as a virgin birth. The concept of stealing such an idea would have caused riots in the synagogues. Yet the Jews were known to acknowledge miraculous births to elderly parents, but a virgin birth was too close to paganism for them. Another observation is that the gospels were written in a Jewish context, which included the firm belief that no mere human could be a god or be transformed into a god. The Greeks, however, believed that certain individuals could be deified.

There are some noteworthy observations that have been made of legendary figures. For example, concerning Alexander the Great, none of the legends and myths about him existed during or shortly after his life. Plutarch, who authored *Life of Alexander*, (see quotation above) lived some four centuries after the world conqueror died – which was more than sufficient time for fanciful stories to become touted as truth. No ancient manuscripts written by eyewitnesses have been uncovered, whereas the gospels, which were written within three or four decades after Jesus, report numerous eyewitnesses – a time far too short for any legends or myths to develop. Furthermore, all but one of the apostles died a martyr's death. Would anyone die an agonizing death for a fanciful myth? Their commitment to the truth until their dying day is a profound testimony to the accuracy of the four gospels.

Finally, it was common among non-Jewish cultures to freely borrow ideas and philosophies from each other. Jewish people who did likewise became known as “Hellenized Jews” and were severely frowned upon by orthodox Jews who maintained the biblical command to “be a separate people.” Later, the Apostle Paul gave similar instructions in Colossians 2:6-8 and 1 Timothy 6:20. The suggestion that the church fathers borrowed pagan ideas and inserted them into the New Testament demonstrates gross ignorance of the first century Jewish culture and the passion for which the apostles lived and died.¹⁹⁷



196. See 03.04.08.Q4.

197. For further study on this subject, see Gregory A. Boyd. *Jesus under Siege*. Chapter 4.

04.03.08.Q8 If Jesus was born of a virgin, why did the Apostle Paul refer to it only once (1 Cor. 15:8)?

He hardly mentioned it because it was an assumed historical fact. Everybody understood this to have occurred and there was no need to question it. Even the pagans who lived in the Bethlehem area admitted the occurrence of the event. The fact that the apostle was silent on the matter simply means that he had more important issues to discuss. But an argument from silence is always a weak argument, especially in this case, when some of the original apostles were still alive.

Yet the Apostle Paul made a number of comments.

1. He affirmed the Jesus connection to Abraham (Gal. 3:16)
2. He affirmed the genealogy of David to Jesus (Rom. 1:3)
3. He affirmed the true humanity and life of Jesus under the Law (Gal. 4:4)
4. He affirmed many discussions of inter-personal issues, such as divorce (1 Cor. 7:10), made by Jesus.
5. He affirmed the events of the Last Supper, (1 Cor. 11:23-26), and His death, burial, resurrection, and appearances after the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:3-8). In light of all that the apostle said and his purpose of writing, it is easy to understand why there was no need to discuss the birth of Jesus or anything else about His human paternity.
6. However, Paul did make an interesting reference to the miraculous birth when he mentioned “**one abnormally born**” (see 1 Cor. 15:8 below).

In his second letter to the Corinthian church he recited a four-line hymn of the early church (15:3b-5), after which he added additional witnesses of the resurrected Jesus. In verse 8 he mentioned the unusual birth, an obvious reference to Jesus.

^{3a} For I passed on to you as most important what I also received:

^{3b} That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

⁴ that He was buried,

that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

⁵ And that He appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve.

**⁶ The He appeared to over 500 brothers at one time; most of them are still alive,
But some have fallen asleep.**

⁷ Then He appeared to James,

then to all the apostles.

⁸ Last of all, as to one abnormally born, He also appeared to me.

1 Corinthians 15:3-8

04.03.09.Q1 What is the significance of Luke's term, the "first registration" in Luke 2:2?

As stated above, critics have long pointed to Luke's account as proof of error in Scripture. Luke carefully said it was the **first registration** or *census* while Quirinius was "governor," which obviously implies a second census.¹⁹⁸ It is an important point because he took a second census about eleven years later in A.D. 6-9.¹⁹⁹ It is easy to examine the second census and assume it was his only one. If that were so, then there would not have been a need to identify the first one as the "first registration."

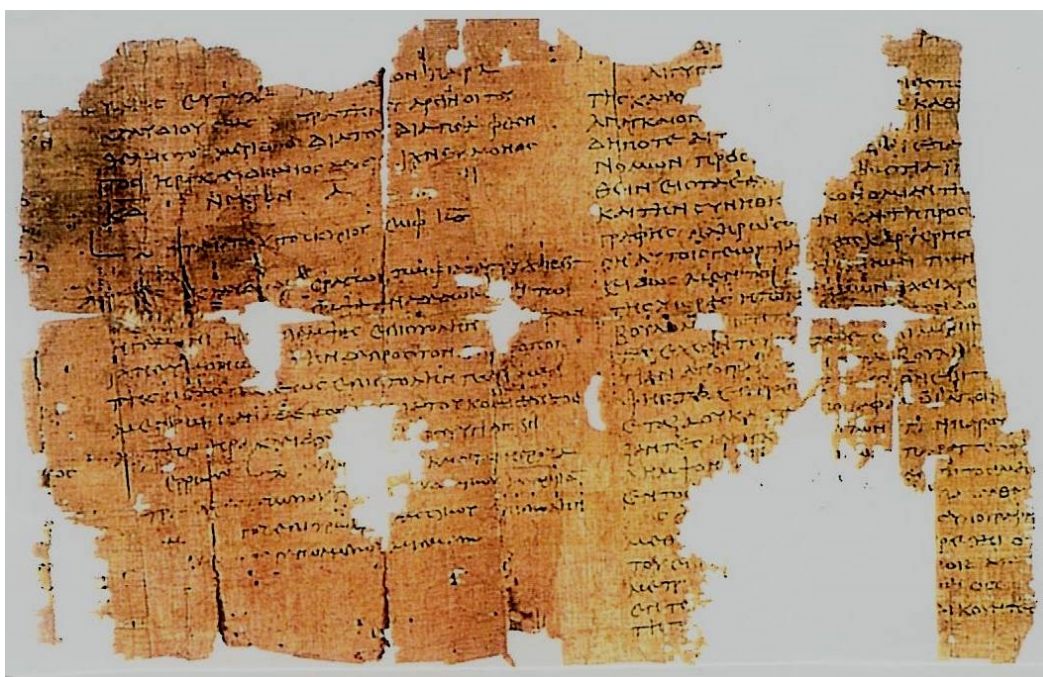


04.03.09.A. A RELIEF STONE CARVING OF A ROMAN CENSUS. There was hardly anything that the Romans did that caused deeper resentment than a census. In this relief carving, Jews line up under the watchful eye of Roman soldiers and officials. The population count was used to determine tax potential and the size of the Roman military needed in the event of a rebellion.

198. McDowell. "The Historical Reliability of the New Testament." 47-48.

199. Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.2.1; Acts 5:37; Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:267. However, in the year A.D. 9 Quirinius was sent to Germany where he lost his life in battle.

But there is an interesting point to consider: It was this same Publius Quirinius Varus, a/k/a Quirinius, not Herod the Great, who probably appointed Annas in A.D. 6, as the temple high priest – the same Annas who would later clash with Jesus.²⁰⁰ As to Quirinius, his life was near an end. In A.D. 9, he was transferred to Europe as the Imperial Legate in Germany. He crossed the Rhine River with three legions into Germania Magna, which had been occupied by Roman soldiers for the previous twenty years. He was enticed by German tribesmen to enter the Teutoburgian Forest where he and the entire Roman regiment were slaughtered.²⁰¹ Only a few survivors returned to Rome to report of the legendary defeat.



04.03.09.B. ROMAN CENSUS EDICT IN EGYPT (Papyrus 904).

Archaeologists have uncovered several ancient documents that refer to a census. Shown here is an example of such a decree. It was issued in A.D. 104 in the village of Bacchias in Egypt. Photograph courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum Library.

A portion of the census edict above reads as follows:

200. Tenney, *New Testament Times*. 129.

201. See Strabo, *Geography* 12.6.5, and Tacitus, *Annals* 3.48; Keller, W. *The Bible as History*. 372; Stein, R. *Jesus the Messiah*. 54.

Gaius Vibius Maximus, Praefect of Egypt, states: “The enrollment by household being held, it is necessary to notify all who, for any cause whatsoever, are outside their homes to return to their domestic hearths, that they may also accomplish the customary dispensation of enrollment and continue steadfastly in husbandry that belongs to them.”²⁰²

Roman Census Edict in Egypt (Papyrus 904)

This public announcement, whose ending was lost, made specific reference to citizens returning to their village for the purpose of a *customary dispensation* census. While it requires people to return to their homes, it does not suggest the return to one’s ancient tribal home. That poses a problem for some scholars who believe that the Romans required the Jews to return to their own homes because they were sensitive to the Jewish faith. There are two questions to be noted here:

1. How or why would such a decree demonstrate sensitivity, when the Jews have a history of hating a census?
2. Why did the Romans require the Egyptians to return to their homes? They certainly were not Jewish.

It must be noted that the Oxyrhynchus Papyrus and some 270 other documents found in Egypt indicate that a census was taken every fourteen years from 5/6 B.C. to A.D. 258.²⁰³ Fragments of various announcements discovered elsewhere also indicate the Roman custom of population counts at fourteen year intervals, although no discoveries have been made for the years A.D. 76 and 90.²⁰⁴ The historian Suetonius noted that censuses in the years 28 B.C., 8 B.C. and A.D. 14 included Roman citizens.²⁰⁵ On occasion, a census required women be counted with their husbands or fathers.

The combined taxes of its many provinces allowed the Roman emperors to give their people in Italy free “bread and circuses,” on a grand scale never seen before or since. Nearly all

202. Deissmann, *Light From the Ancient East* 270-72; Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*. 46-48.

203. On the census in Roman Egypt, which was typical of the entire Near East, see S. L. Wallace, *Taxation in Egypt from Augustus to Diocletian*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University. 1938, 96-115.

204. Deissmann, *Light From the Ancient East* 270-72; Blaiklock, “Census.” 1:771-72; See also Llewelyn, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*. 6:112-146 for other documents related to this subject.

205. Suetonius, *Augustus* 27.5.

construction projects were built by thousands of slaves from captured lands and the materials paid for by foreign tax revenue.²⁰⁶

When a decision was made to have a census taken, the public announcement was generally made in the month of Epeiph (late June) and the subjects had a year to be counted. However, some historians believe it may have taken as long as three years to count the entire population of a given province or country. Those who failed to register could have up to a fourth of their possessions confiscated as a fine. If they failed for two consecutive censuses, then they could lose up to half of their property.²⁰⁷

The census included a brief description of the husband, the age of his wife, and an inventory of their possessions, such as the number of flat-tailed sheep and camels, and their house. It had to be signed, under oath, by the individual submitting the document. Likewise, a notice was given that punishment was to be meted out for those who provided false information. The oath was especially offensive to an orthodox Jew, such as Joseph, as it contained wording whereby he had to swear to his truthfulness and allegiance to the Roman emperor or deity.²⁰⁸ An example of an enrollment was found in Egypt that was written by a small Egyptian farmer. The sworn letter was signed on July 24, A.D. 66, in which he said,

To Papiscus, former cosmetes of the city and now strategus of the Oxyrhynchite nome, and Ptolemaeus, royal scribe, and the writers of the nome, from Harmitsis, the son of Petosiris (the son of Petosiris), his mother being Didyme, the daughter of Diogenes, of the men of the village of Phthochis which is in the eastern toparchy.²⁰⁹ I enrolled in the present 12th year of Nero Claudius Augustus Germanicus Imperator, nigh unto that same Phthochis, of the young of the sheep that I have, twelve lambs. And now I enroll those that since have been born, for the present second enrollment; of the young of those same sheep seven lambs – there are seven lambs. And I swear by Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus Imperator that I have kept nothing back. Farewell.²¹⁰

206. Keller, W. *The Bible as History*. 357; Stein, R. *Jesus the Messiah*. 54-55.

207. Vardaman, Jerry. "The Roman Census." 71.

208. Link and Tuent. "Swear, Oath." 3:737-43. Josephus, *Antiquities* 3.16.10-11.

209. The word *toparchy* is translated as *province* in *1 Macc.* 11:28.

210. This sworn document was found on a piece of parchment that was so narrow that it took 31 lines to write it. See Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*. 172-74.

When Quirinius ordered a second census in A.D. 6, it generated a major controversy. There can be little question that paying taxes to a foreign pagan power and the requirement of swearing upon a pagan emperor or deity were major reasons why Judas of Galilee and his nationalistic followers revolted. This suggests that the special census that predated the birth of Jesus significantly increased social tensions – tensions that exploded into conflict during the second census.²¹¹

04.03.09.Q2 Did Luke make an error concerning Quirinius (Lk. 2:1-7)?

Luke said that the birth of Jesus occurred when Augustus was emperor and **Quirinius was governing Syria** (Lk. 2:1-7). However, the problem is the lack of evidence that Quirinius (46 B.C. – A.D. 9) was governor when Jesus was born (7-5 B.C.). Critics have a legitimate reason to question this matter, but it can be addressed by examining the official of the office as well as one who *functions* temporarily without the official title.

According to two ancient historians, he was a special legate (diplomatic representative with military authority) charged by the Roman Senate to quell the Homonadensian Revolt in the Taurus Mountains in Asia Minor (now southeastern modern Turkey) which then was a part of Syria.²¹² In fact, Tertullian said that Sentius Saturninus ruled from 9-6 B.C. and Quinctilius Varus ruled from 7-4 B.C. (note the one-year overlap), so there is obviously doubt if Quintilius was the “official” governor at all.²¹³

To add additional confusion, Josephus recorded Varus as reigning in A.D. 6. The fact remains that Quirinius was not in the official position of governor, but functioned as governor as he was in charge of Syria’s defense and foreign policy under Varus. Since Galilee, Perea, and Judea were within Syria’s administrative district, Quirinius would have supervised the census and accompanying registration. Yet critics claim Luke make an error when he wrote the biblical account. Amazingly, “the stones cried out” the truth concerning this issue.

In 1764, a fragmented stone inscription was discovered near Tivoli, twenty miles east of Rome. It is known as the Tibur Inscription or the Lapis Tiburtinus (CIL XIV 3613) and is now in the Vatican Museum. This stone monument honored an official who had twice taken control of the affairs of Syria as the personal representative of Caesar Augustus.²¹⁴ Due to the fact that only

211. Vardaman, Jerry. “The Roman Census.” 72-73.

212. Strabo, *Geography* 12.6.5; Tacitus, *Annals* 3.48; Stein, R. *Jesus the Messiah*. 54; Keller, W. *The Bible as History*. 358.

213. McDowell. “The Historical Reliability of the New Testament.” 48.

214. Tenney, *New Testament Times*. 137; Stein, R. *Jesus the Messiah*. 54.

part of the entire inscription was found, the honored official cannot be identified. Many scholars believe this individual was Quirinius. Then, in 1880, the other missing part of the Tibur Inscription was discovered as part of a tomb, but the name of the official remains unclear. Scholars believe that the inscription of both pieces reads as follows:

At Quirinius's command I carried out a census in Apamea, a city of 117,000 inhabitants. Also at Quirinius's command I marched against the Ituraeans and captured their fortress on the mountains of Lebanon.

Tibur Inscription²¹⁵

Therefore, from archaeological discoveries, inscriptions written in stone begin to clarify the status of Quirinius at the time when Jesus was born. Luke did not make an error in his report, but that leads to the next question (04.03.09.Q3).

04.03.09.Q3 Why did Joseph have to return to Bethlehem for a *Roman* census?

When the Romans conducted a census, they cared little for the family or tribal affiliations of their subjects, but they did want peace. They were essentially interested in the tax potential and required military in the event of an uprising. The question is of particular interest because, according to history, the Romans almost never required anyone to return to **“each to his own town.”** There is no record of a Roman census anywhere else that required residents to return to their ancient tribal lands, except in Egypt (see 04.03.09.B). They could not have cared less about Jewish ancestral tribes or lands, yet Joseph had to return to his ancient home. However, if this was a Jewish census, then the question would be understandable since all Jews inherited land from the distribution during the days of Joshua. The following suggestions have been presented to explain his trip to Bethlehem.

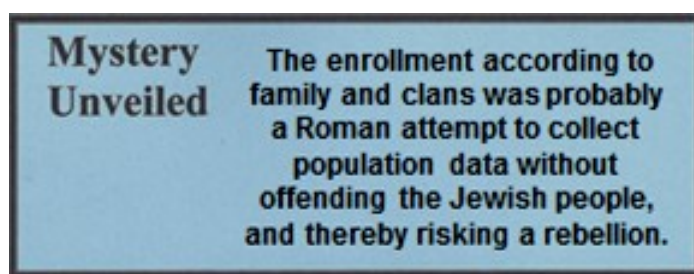
1. The Jews have always looked upon a census with disdain. When King David took a census, the wrath of God fell upon the nation. Neither Rome nor the Jewish leaders wanted another rebellion, so some scholars believe that the Sadducees, who were friends with the Romans, suggested that if everyone was required to return to their original tribal area, then a rebellion would be less likely.

215. Santala, *The Messiah in the New Testament*. 98. A complete translation is found in Caiger, *Archaeology and the New Testament*. 141. See also <http://www.harrington-sites.com/Carrier.htm#Tiburtinus> Retrieved Oct., 15, 2011; See also <http://www.ibri.org/RRs/RR004/04census.htm>. Retrieved June 6, 2015.

2. Another suggestion is that the census was for the purpose of taxing land products. Since Joseph's family came from the tribe that settled in Bethlehem, he may have had vested interest in the land. Therefore, he would have been required to return to his hometown for the tax census.²¹⁶

While the answer may never be fully known, what is known is that there was peace at the time of this census. But when Quirinius instituted another census in A.D. 6, it appears that he levied two kinds of taxes.²¹⁷

1. A property tax, or *tributum soli* or *agri*. This was a tax on agricultural or other products and could be paid in kind or in cash.
2. A poll tax, or *tributum capitis*. This tax was an equal amount, that varied from region to region, that had to be paid by every qualified person – only children and old men were excluded (no mention of old women).



Since the second census appears to have been more extensive registration than the first, the result was a rebellion and discussions of it extended throughout the first century. The rebellion of the second census is well known, for even Luke wrote of it in Acts 5:37, "in the days of the census." The obvious question then arises as to why he didn't follow the advice of Jews as he had done previously? The mystery remains veiled. Whether Quirinius was governor when Jesus was born is a moot point; he evidently was in a position of authority at the time. There are two concluding points to be considered:²¹⁸

1. At the command of Quirinius of Syria, the first census was taken while Herod the Great was still king. Rome knew all too well of Herod's health issues, that he was a brutal dictator, and there was always imminent danger of a rebellion. They were not about to take any chances in this volatile part of the world. The death of Herod the Great

216. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor's Manual*. Class 3, page 10.

217. Schurer, *A History of the Jewish People* First Division, 2:109-10.

218. Brindle. "The Census and Quirinius: Luke 2:2." 52.

and the rivalry of his sons that followed provided ample opportunity for another Jewish revolt.²¹⁹

2. The first census was taken *before* the more well-known census which was also issued by the same Quirinius.

3. Augustus may have wanted the census to be taken gradually as not to stir an uprising.

04.03.09.Q4 Why was Quirinius appointed to the rulership position of the Roman district of Syria?

The specific reasons for the appointment have been lost in history, but enough is known to reconstruct three reasons with a high degree of accuracy.

1. The corruption in Syria was well established

2. Rome was losing tax revenue from this area

3. There were constant rumors of pending Jewish rebellions.²²⁰ Impoverished Jews who could not pay their taxes had mortgaged their land to the tax collectors.²²¹ For this reason, Jesus alluded to the debtor, creditor and the prison in his teachings.²²² For example, a steward owes the king and the servant owes the steward (Lk. 7:41; Mt. 18:23).

Historians agree that the problems in Syria at the time go back to at least 57 B.C. when Gabinius was appointed to the office of governor-general or proconsul. Under his leadership (57-55 B.C.) corruption became paramount and did not dissipate upon his departure. Therefore, when Quirinius was installed as governor-general of Syria, corruption of the highest order was well established. For this reason, the Roman historian Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 – 43 B.C.), said,

Gabinius extorted, daily, an incalculable weight of gold from the well-stocked and rich treasures of Syria, and made war on the peaceful [people] that he might cast their ancient and hitherto untouched riches into the bottomless gulf of his own lusts.

219. From the time the Romans came in 63 B.C. until the “First Revolt” that caused the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem in A.D. 70, there were thirteen other revolts and many more riots. See Appendix 25.

220. Geikie, *The Life and Words*. 1:281, 570-72.

221. For further study of loans, debts, and how first century Jewish courts ruled, see the Mishnah and the chapter titled *Baba Bathra*. See also Sanders, “Jesus in Historical Context.” 430.

222. See 02.03.03 “Economy” for a brief description of the condition of the economy during the ministry years of Jesus.

Cicero, *Pro Sestio*, 100.43

Elsewhere Cicero said,

In Syria his one employment was to make corrupt agreements with tyrant's interested decisions, robberies, pillages, and massacres.

Cicero, *De Provinciis Consularibus*, 100.4

While Gabinius ruled five decades before Quirinius Varus and the birth of Jesus, his actions reflect the corrupted standard of government operation in Syria, of which the Jewish Promised Land was a district. The fact that the Persian Empire was a threat on the eastern front coupled with the corruption was a primary concern to Rome. Therefore, Quirinius was installed as a temporary ruler to take a census and straighten out the mess.

Justin Martyr said that Quirinius had been sent to Syria with the title of *procurator* at the time Jesus was born.²²³ Scholars maintain that he was an interim “governor” and that the census was made when he was ruling or administering his duties in Syria. According to Roman governmental procedures, each province had its equestrian procurator, who in the eyes of the provincials was almost as important as the governor himself. Therefore, the title of “governor” would have been applied by the common people.²²⁴

It must be noted that while Quirinius' command was the District of Syria, the three Jewish provinces within that district comprised only a small area of his responsibilities. According to Tacitus, it was a common practice during the iron rule of Augustus that when a governor failed to perform as desired, a replacement was sent in to take a census and assume control. Other provinces where Augustus exercised this action were in Gaul (27 B.C., 12 B.C.), Cyrene (7 B.C.), and Egypt (30 B.C., 9 B.C.). It has been well documented that a census was taken every fourteen years thereafter until about A.D. 270.²²⁵ Therefore, many scholars believe that the 1764 discovery reveals that he was the Quirinius mentioned in the gospels. If Saturninus ruled from 9-7 B.C., he did so inadequately and, therefore, Quirinius was ordered by Augustus to take temporary control. This theory is a very real possibility.²²⁶ As previously stated, when a new governor took command, one of his first priorities was to take a census to improve the revenue

223. Justin Martyr, *First Apology*. Ch. 34.

224. *The Cambridge Ancient History*. Vol. X. 216.

225. Tacitus, *Annals* 2.42; Barclay, “Luke.” 20.

226. See also <http://www.ibri.org/RRs/RR004/04census.htm>. Retrieved June 6, 2015.

flow to Rome. This is precisely what Augustus did in 30 B.C. when he took control of Egypt and initiated the “first census” shortly thereafter.²²⁷

In addition to the corruption issues in Syria, the domain of Herod the Great had its own unique set of problems. As previously stated, the Jewish land was subject to the Last Will and Testament of Herod. The Roman puppet made three changes to this document in his last few years of life and each change had to be approved by Rome. Augustus was aware of Herod’s health problems as well as his reputation of being a brutal tyrant and taskmaster. These were the ideal ingredients for a peasant uprising, a potential rebellion the Parthians also recognized.²²⁸ Therefore, a census in the Holy Land would inform Rome of the following:

1. The number of men who could potentially rebel at the death of Herod – an important fact for any emperor to know.
2. The tone of the political stability. This was not a numerical figure, but those taking the census could gauge the feelings of the people in various communities concerning their hostility. This was as important as knowing the number of men who could potentially be in a revolt, especially, since by this time there were already a number of small revolts against the Romans.
3. The potential maximum tax revenue of the region. Josephus said that the entire province of Judaea had to pay an annual tax of 600 talents.²²⁹ Since he received his information from Nicholas of Damascus, the personal historian for Herod the Great, his information can be deemed to be highly accurate.²³⁰ That was a huge amount and placed the Jewish people in economic slavery.²³¹
4. Since tax collectors not only cheated the peasant population, but also the government officials, a census could give an estimation of how honest they were. It was common

227. Santala, *The Messiah in the New Testament*. 97.

228. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*. 22-23.

229. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.11.4 (320)

230. Josephus, *Antiquities* 16.7.1 (183).

231 The subject of high taxation that resulted in economic slavery is presented by Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.11.2 (307-308). See also 02.03.03 “Economy” and 03.06.04 “4 B.C. The Death of Herod the Great.” See also Sanders. “Jesus in Historical Context.” 430.

knowledge among governors that at times the collectors had cheated them as well as merchants and peasants.²³²

According to Josephus, Herod found himself in serious disfavor with Rome as well as with his political allies in Syria.²³³ Herod was a puppet king under the direct control of the Roman governor Damascus. When Herod died, his kingdom was divided into four sections, one of which went to the acting Syrian governor. In this politically chaotic environment, scholars believe Quirinius established law and order – precisely what Rome needed. This opinion has gained virtually total support by scholars when two other inscriptions were discovered in Pisidian Antioch, Syria, which stated a certain citizen served in the military under the reign of Quirinius at this time. Both inscriptions honored the same citizen.²³⁴ Luke did not record the name of the official political governor of Syria, but rather, recorded the name of the acting governor who held temporary rulership. He initiated the census and reported directly to the emperor himself. For this reason, Joseph had to take Mary and travel to his ancestral village of Bethlehem.²³⁵

04.03.10.Q1 Where was Jesus born?

The birthplace of Jesus was hardly the quaint stable frequently seen in Christmas cards and decorations. Most of the mountains in central Judaea (modern Israel) are dry limestone, which developed caves. Westerners today tend to think of caves as wet, cold and having stalagmites and stalactites. But the caves of the Middle East are without these internal formations because the semi-arid climate conditions prevent their development. Rather, caves tend to be small, barely large enough for homes or to stable livestock during cold winter nights and hot summer days. If animals were kept indoors, they were in one of two possible places:

1. Caves

2. On the ground floor of homes²³⁶

232. See 06.03.11 for further information.

233. Josephus, *Antiquities* 16.9.3.

234. Harrison, *A Short Life of Christ*. 37.

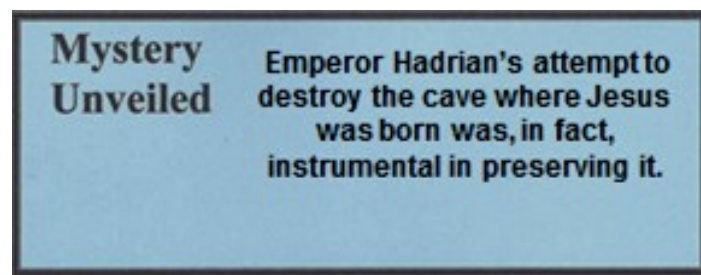
235. Connick, *The Message and Meaning of the Bible*. 112-24; Metzger, *The New Testament*. 30-32; Tenney, *New Testament Times*. 130-32.

236. The keeping of animals in caves or in a home was common practice throughout the entire ancient Middle East, and there have been numerous archaeological excavations that confirm this.

Barns as are common today did not exist in the first century. Herds of flat-tailed sheep were gathered at night in large outdoor pens, but not indoors. Since many hills consist of soft limestone, some caves were enlarged to serve as living quarters adjacent to homes. Since the entire Middle East was filled with lions, bears, and other wild animals as well as thieves, animals of value such as an ox or donkey would have been placed in a cave or house to protect them. Likewise, sick or young animals were placed in homes for safekeeping and health maintenance.²³⁷

Concerning the place where Jesus was born, there was a strange irony of history that occurred about a century after Jesus. After A.D. 135 when Hadrian destroyed Jerusalem, he was determined to destroy any evidence of Judaism and Christianity. Therefore, when he found the cave of the Savior's birth – the cave that had been used as a stable – he built a shrine on top of it to honor his pagan god Adonis²³⁸ and planted a grove of trees around it.

Two centuries later the politics of Rome changed radically and Constantine became the first Christian emperor of Rome. To commemorate Christian sites, he sent his mother Queen Helena to the Holy Land to locate those that were significant to the life of Jesus and to build a church or basilica over each one. She found the shrine of Adonis built by Hadrian which preserved the identity of the site, and in the year 326 she ordered the construction of a basilica which is known as the Church of the Nativity.²³⁹



The structure was later partially destroyed, but in the sixth century, the Byzantine Emperor Justinian rebuilt it. During the Crusader era, it was expanded to what is seen today. The location of our Savior's birth has a solid legacy. Similarly, his attempt to destroy the crucifixion site also became crucial to its preservation for the site identification and construction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

237. Tenney, ed., "Bethlehem." 2:273.

238. Barclay, "Matthew." 1:25.

239. Duffield, *Tourist's Handbook*. 59; Achen, *The Holy Land*. 20.



04.03.10.A. THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY. The original Church of the Nativity was a basilica constructed by Queen Helena in the early fourth century and many additions and changes have been made since then. The present church seen above was built by Justinian (c. 527-565) and expanded by the Crusaders.²⁴⁰ The small doorway was constructed within a larger entrance by the Crusaders to prevent Arab horsemen from entering the house of worship.²⁴¹ Photograph by the author.

In the ancient Middle East, major historical events were the subjects of discussion long after the participating personalities had passed on. Within two decades of Hadrian, the early Church father Justin Martyr (c. 110-165) wrote of the cave where Jesus was born. He was an ardent defender of the faith and opposed a leading skeptic of his time by the name of Trypho. In a written defense titled *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin mentioned Bethlehem as the place of the birth of Jesus. He wrote:

The child was born in Bethlehem. Since Joseph could not find lodging in that village and while they were there Mary brought forth the Christ and placed Him in a manger and here the magi who came from Arabia, found him.

240. Masterman, 1:472-73.

241. Maier, *In the Fullness of Time*. 34.

Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 78²⁴²

Another writer, Origen (c. 250), was a highly respected defender of the faith. In his apologetic writings titled *Against Celsus*, Origen said that Jesus was born in a stable in a cave. Such stables had troughs, or mangers, cut from cretaceous limestone in which water or grain (usually barley) was placed for the animals.²⁴³ His text reads,

With respect to the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, if anyone desires, after the prophecy of Micah and after the history recorded in the Gospel by the disciples of Jesus, to have additional evidence from other sources, let him know that in conformity with the narrative in the Gospel regarding His birth, there is shown at Bethlehem the cave where he was born, and the manger in the cave where he was wrapped in swaddling clothes. And this site is greatly talked of in surrounding places. Even among the enemies of the faith, it being said that in this cave was born that Jesus who is worshiped and revered by the Christians.

Origen, *Against Celsus* 1:51²⁴⁴

Throughout Jewish history it was common for caves to be used for tombs, homes, stables, and temporary shelters.²⁴⁵

Homes generally had only two rooms, a family bedroom and another “family room,” which included a kitchen and was the only room in which guests were invited.²⁴⁶ A third or fourth room was indicative of financial prosperity. The homes in which Jesus lived in Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Capernaum, were typical of the period; homes which were also shelters for valued domestic animals.²⁴⁷ An example is found in 1 Samuel 28 where King Saul went to see the witch (medium) of Endor. She took a calf from “within her house” (v. 24), killed it, prepared it, and served the king and his servants. Jesus said in Matthew 5:14-15 that a lamp that has been lit will

242. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:237.

243. Thompson, “Manger.” 2:944.

244. Origen, *Against Celsus* 1:51; Also found in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*. 4:418.

245. Cave where God spoke to Moses (Ex. 33:21-23); The cave of Lot (Gen. 19:30); Machpelah – Abraham’s tomb (Gen. 23:19); Makkedah – A hiding place of kings (Josh. 10:16-17); En Gedi – A hiding place for David (1 Sam. 22:1); Obadiah’s large cave where he hid 150 prophets (1 Kg. 18:4).

246. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 263.

247. Maintaining animals in or close to human living quarters was not limited to ancient times. The author’s father and grandfather lived in Banfe, Germany, where in the 19th century, the barn and living quarters were adjacent to each other within the same building.

give light to the whole house. That was because houses were of simple design and consisted of a large room and a smaller sleeping room. The wall separating the two rooms often had square openings called “windows” through which fresh air flowed and allowed some light to shine in.

Families, who lived in areas that were not subject to freezing, such as Nazareth, the Sea of Galilee, or southern desert areas, often had open courtyards. At times four houses were constructed in such a manner that they enclosed a courtyard where children and livestock were safe.

One tradition, found in the New Testament Apocrypha book known as the *Protoevangelium of James*,²⁴⁸ says that Jesus was born late in the evening in a cave outside Bethlehem.²⁴⁹ In fact, the text confirms the tradition seven times.²⁵⁰ The fact that the narrative states Mary and Joseph were outside the village proper does not necessarily conflict with the biblical account, as a nearby cave would still be considered part of the community. An excerpt reads.²⁵¹

And he went to the place of the cave, and behold, a dark cloud overshadowed the cave. And the midwife said: “My soul is magnified today, for my eyes have seen wonderful things; for salvation is born to Israel.”

Protoevangelium of James 19:2²⁵²

Caution is expressed to the reader because church leaders throughout history have a justifiable reason to question this writing. The *Protoevangelium of James* is so fanciful that the story is borderline mystical. But since historical novels generally contain a degree of geographical

248. Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*. 2:370-88.

249. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 76.

250. *Protoevangelium of James* 19:1, 2, 3; 20:4; 21:3. The text makes use of the narratives familiar to us from Matthew and Luke, as well as the traditions of the time. To this, the writer added a creative but false account of the so-called miraculous birth of Mary and her marriage to the so-called widower Joseph. The reader must separate the creative writing from what is biblically and historically correct. The author of *Protoevangelium* was neither Jewish nor the disciple James.

251. 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.

252. Finally, the *Protoevangelium of James*, a popular apocryphal gospel written in the latter half of the second century records the story of the birth of both Mary and Jesus. Historians generally believe that factual events and places – such as the cave and the presence of a midwife – are probably true but the quotations are probably rather fanciful. See *Protoevangelium of James* in Appendix 26.

accuracy, the quotation is included within this study.²⁵³ In all probability, Mary and Joseph gave birth in the stable area of the home because the guest room of the same house was already occupied. However, according to ancient Middle Eastern hospitality and protocol, it is amazing that the visitors in the guest room did not offer their room to Mary when she was in labor.

04.03.10.Q3 When was Jesus born?

The answer is presented in two parts:

1. What year was Jesus born?
2. What time of year was Jesus born?

The question has been often raised that ... if Jesus was such an important figure in history, why doesn't anyone remember His birthday? The answer lies in the fact that in the Hebraic culture, the date of one's death was remembered and observed rather than the date of one's birth. Nonetheless, a scholarly attempt has been made to calculate his date of birth, and while one cannot be dogmatic about the conclusion, there is a better than average probability that it is correct.

1. The popular opinion today is that December 25 is the all-important birth date. This date was promoted by Hippolytus (A.D. 165-235), and became official by Constantine the Great in his attempt to eradicate Christianity's Jewish roots and because this date was already a pagan Roman holiday. Likewise, Constantine separated the death and resurrection date of Jesus from Passover and renamed it "Easter" in honor of the Babylonian god Ishtar, and placed it on an earlier date for celebration.
2. But not all agreed with Constantine. For centuries the Eastern Orthodox Church celebrated the birth on January 6. According to their tradition, it was on this same date two years later that the magi visited the Christ child.
3. Another opinion was promoted by church father Clement of Alexandria in about A.D. 200. In his book *Stromata*, he recorded that Jesus was born in the twenty-eighth year of the reign of Augustus and on the 25th day of Pachon of the Egyptian calendar, which is

253. It is considered by the author to be "supportive evidence," not "primary evidence" that supports the argument that Jesus was born in a cave or in a house with a cave. See previous footnotes.

reconciled to May 14, 6 B.C. on the modern Julian calendar.²⁵⁴ This may be farfetched, but it is a better estimate than December 25.

Since Matthew mentions a star, there have been numerous attempts to calculate the date He was born with a celestial light. Halley's Comet passed by in 11 B.C. and other comets were seen in 44 B.C., 17 B.C., and A.D. 66. Supernovas have been calculated as well as alignments of planets. But, as will be shown, all these attempts have failed.

But the secret to determining the date of His birth is not in the star, but with the ministry of Zechariah. As will be shown, it is important to determine the date of the birth of John the Baptist (see 04.03.06.Q1), then count forward. By the process of calculating parameters, a time window is established in which the birth occurred. Significant events that have been verified are delineated below which lead to an accurate estimated date. As various events are evaluated, by the process of elimination, the time window is narrowed.

What year was Jesus born?

1. Josephus said that Herod the Great reigned 37 years from the time of his appointment (in 40 B.C.) and 34 years after his conquest of Jerusalem.²⁵⁵ This clearly places his death exactly within the time frame of 4 B.C.
2. Since the magi came to Herod's Jerusalem palace, it is obvious that Herod was alive with no indication of any illness. His death has been calculated to March 4 B.C.; because Josephus recorded that there was an eclipse of the moon on March 13.²⁵⁶ This was shortly before Passover,²⁵⁷ so Jesus had to have been born prior to the eclipse in 4 B.C.²⁵⁸
3. It is a well-established historical fact that Herod's three sons began their reigns in 4 B.C.; each over a segment of land inherited from their father. This also confirms that Jesus was born prior to 4 B.C.

254. *Ante-Nicene Fathers* 2:333. See Appendix 1 for dates of reign. Franz, <http://www.lifeandland.org/2009/02/the-angelic-proclamation-to-the-shepherds-luke-28-15/> Retrieved June 15, 2010.

255. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.8.1 and *Wars* 1.33.8.

256. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.6.4-5.

257. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.9.3 and *Wars* 2.1.3.

258. To add fuel to the debates there were four eclipses: September 15, 5 B.C., March 12-13, 4 B.C., January 10, 1 B.C., and December 29, 1 B.C. Since Herod's death was just prior to Passover, only the March date can be taken seriously.

4. It is a well-established fact that Herod's son Archelaus was removed from office by Caesar in A.D. 6, when he was in his *tenth* year of reign.²⁵⁹ Therefore, he began his rule at age 18 over Judea and Samaria in 4 B.C. Furthermore, before he could begin his reign, the Roman senate had to approve his late father's will and authorize his appointment to the throne. All this occurred in 4 B.C.

5. According to Josephus, prior to his death, Herod lived in Jericho where he died of an excruciating disease. Scholars believe his stay there was approximately a year, possibly a little less. Since the magi visited him in Jerusalem, this would place the birth of Jesus prior to the year 5 B.C.²⁶⁰

6. The Census Decree of Quirinius was in 8 B.C. Therefore, Jesus must have been born between the years 8 and 5 B.C., and in all probability, in 6 B.C.

7. When the magi left Herod, Jesus was less than two years old.

8. The command by Herod to kill boys 2 years and younger suggests that the magi may have seen the star for two years. In biblical times mothers often nursed their infants until the age of two.²⁶¹ Some ancients believed that when a king was to be born, strange events could be noticed in the night heavens.

9. Therefore Jesus must have been born between the years 7-5 B.C.

In addition to these parameters, scholars have also considered the following clues:

1. Herod the Great began rebuilding the temple in 20/19 B.C. The Pharisees in John 2:13-35 stated that it had been 46 years since reconstruction began.²⁶² When adjusted to the modern calendar, that conversation took place in the year A.D. 27 or 28, in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius.²⁶³

2. If Jesus was *precisely* thirty years old when He began His ministry in the year A.D. 27/28, then His birth year had to have been in 3 or 4 B.C. or earlier. However, this writer suggests that since the Bible says that He was "approximately" 30 years old, He was in

259. Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 55.27.6; Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.13.2.

260. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.6.5.

261. Smith, *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew*. 43.

262. The remodeling of Herod's temple took more than 80 years. It was completed six years prior to its destruction in A.D. 70.

263. Snodgrass, "The Temple Incident." 447.

fact, older. Since John the Baptist could not begin his ministry until the age of 30, and he preached over a year before Jesus began, obviously Jesus was 31 years old or older. Josephus said that priests and Levites served between the ages of 30 and 50.²⁶⁴ Remember, they were only 6 months apart. All that said these events place the year of His birth into the 7-5 B.C. time window.

The pregnancy of Elizabeth is the most significant clue, which has been overlooked historically, and is again presented below.²⁶⁵ A growing number of scholars believe that Jesus was born in the autumn of the year. Carefully follow the outline of events to see why.

What time of year was Jesus born?

1. The father of John the Baptist, Zechariah, was a priest who served in the eighth rotation of Abijah (1 Ch. 24:10). There were twenty-four groups, called courses, of priests who served in the temple twice a year for one week. Josephus reported that each week consisted of two Sabbaths, in essence – an eight day week.²⁶⁶
2. Jewish records indicate that the first course of priests served in the first half of the month of Nissan, the first month of the Jewish religious calendar. Zechariah's group was scheduled for service in the second half of the Hebrew month of Tammuz.
3. After completing his tour of priestly duty at the temple, Zechariah came home and soon thereafter, his wife became pregnant (Lk. 1:23-24). The conception would have occurred approximately on the first day of the Hebrew month of Av.
4. Six months into her pregnancy (Lk. 1:26, 36), her cousin Mary (Heb. *Miriam*) also became pregnant, which would have been in the first half of the month of Tevet.
5. Mary quickly traveled to visit Elizabeth who was now pregnant after being barren all her life (Lk. 1:39). Mary stayed with Zechariah and Elizabeth for three months until Elizabeth gave birth to John (Lk. 1:56-57).
6. Nine months after the month of Av, John was born in the month of Nissan, during the time of Passover. Every year at the Feast of Passover a passage was read in the

264. Josephus, *Antiquities* 7.14.7 (363).

265. See previous comments on 04.03.06.Q1 "When was John the Baptist Born?"

266. Josephus, *Antiquities* 7.14.7 (365); It should be noted, that of the original courses, only four returned from Babylon (Ezra 2:36-39). Therefore, the other courses were with the same names as previously used. For further study, see Geikie, *The Life and Works of Christ*. 1:86-87.

synagogues that said, “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.”

7. Therefore, Jesus was born six months later on the 15th of the month of Tishri at the beginning of the Feast of Sukkot, also known as the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast commemorated the time when the Israelites lived in booths, also known as *Tabernacles* that were hastily constructed from palm branches and other vegetation, as they left the bondage of Egypt. Too often the focus has been on their hindsight, coming out of bondage, rather than foresight in that they were going to enter a new era living in the freedom of the land promised to them by Abraham.²⁶⁷ More importantly, the fall festival celebrated “God living with us” – the definition of *Immanuel*.

There is further insight to support the theory of His birth on this festival. While most scholars believe He ministered for three and a half years, there are others, including this writer, believe that four and a half years of ministry may be more accurate. Regardless, everyone believes it was a certain number and a half years. Since Jesus was crucified on the spring festival of Passover, that one-half year difference would have placed His birth on or about the time of the Feast Tabernacles.

The implication is strengthened in John 1:14 where the gospel writer recorded that Jesus dwelled or “tabernacled” among men. What better time for Jesus to have been born than when He “tabernacled” with His people?

While the above calculation is based on historical and sequential logic, there are two other observations to support this conclusion.

1. The Feast of Tabernacles, also known as *Weeks* or *Sukkot*, is a feast of joy. There is a Hebrew wordplay in Scripture in that the angels told the shepherds that this was a season of great joy (Lk. 2:10).²⁶⁸ The “Season of Great Joy” is synonymous with the Feast of Tabernacles (Sept. - Oct).²⁶⁹

2. Another point is that while the Israelites were wandering around in the desert for 40 years, God was in the midst of them and His presence was in the tabernacle, a huge tent. The twelve tribes were camped round about the tabernacle. Just as God lived among men

267. Garr, *Restoring Our Lost Legacy*. 149.

268. Barclay, “Matthew.” 1:13.

269. See Appendix 5; Chumney, *The Seven Festivals of the Messiah*. 180-86.

in the desert, Jesus came to live among men in the Promised Land during the Feast of Tabernacles.

Therefore, according to those who study the Jewish roots of Christianity, the Christmas celebration of the birth of Jesus living among men should coincide with the Jewish Feast of Tabernacle celebration rather than with December 25. Just as God lived among men in the desert, Jesus came to live among men in the Promised Land during the Feast of Tabernacles.

Finally, many scholars have attempted to determine the date of the birth of Jesus to a lunar eclipse,²⁷⁰ since Josephus said that an eclipse occurred near the time of death for Herod the Great.²⁷¹ Within the possible time frame there were four eclipses: September 15, 5 B.C., March 12-13, 4 B.C., January 10, 1 B.C., and December 29, 1 B.C. Since his passing was just prior to Passover, only the March date can be taken seriously. However, a few scholars have argued for a 1 B.C. date,²⁷² but the arguments against this position are as follows.

1. Since Herod the Great died shortly *before* Passover which is in the springtime,²⁷³ the lunar eclipse in March of 4 B.C. is a better candidate than any other month.
2. The historian said that Herod reigned 37 years from the time of his appointment (in 40 B.C.) and 34 years after his conquest of Jerusalem.²⁷⁴ This clearly places his death exactly within the time frame of 4 B.C.
3. It is a well-established fact that Herod's son Archelaus was removed from office by Caesar in A.D. 6, when he was in his tenth year of reign.²⁷⁵ Therefore, he began his rule at age 18 over Judea and Samaria in 4 B.C. Furthermore, before he could begin his reign,

270. In an interesting side note, *The New York Times* reported in late November, 2014 of a mechanical device built by the Greeks around 205 B.C., that was able to predict eclipses. Researchers James Evans, professor of Physics at University of Puget Sound, and Christian Carman, history of science professor at University of Quilmes, Argentina, said the computer-like device made predictions on Babylonian arithmetical methods borrowed by the Greeks, not on Greek trigonometry. There are no enlightening comments on the star of Bethlehem or the darkness of Good Friday, but it did predict lunar and solar eclipses. Cited by Bullinger, Clyde, ed. "Clues to an Ancient Greek Riddle" *Artifax*. 30:1 (Winter, 2014). 12, 14.

271. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.6.4.

272. Simmons, "The Origins of Christmas and the Date of Christ's Birth." 310-14, esp. 312.

273. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.9.3 and *Wars* 2.1.3.

274. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.8.1 and *Wars* 1.33.8.

275. Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 55.27.6; Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.13.2.

the Roman senate had to approve his late father's will and authorize his appointment to the throne. All this occurred in 4 B.C.

04.04.06.Q1 How does the prophecy in Matthew 2:6 agree with Micah 5:2?

The apparent conflict arises because part of Matthew's quotation is found in Micah but another part is found in 2 Samuel 5:2. The answer lies in understanding how first century rabbis interpreted Scripture; a matter of first century hermeneutics.

Rabbis often took the liberty to cite quotations given by two prophets, but gave the credit to the better known prophet. Therefore, Matthew's prophecy does agree with the Old Testament because he used the common method of quoting Scripture. He presented a paraphrase of Micah 5:2 with emphasis on the small village of Bethlehem as the fulfillment of prophetic words.²⁷⁶ Matthew said that the smallest village of Judea was from where God's greatest gift came in fulfillment of Micah's prophecy. NOTE: Concerning Matthew 2:6 and Micah 5:2, please see the video "Insights into Selected Biblical Difficulties" 04.04.06.V.

"Wise men from the east." The phrase in Greek is *magoi apo anatolon*, which is where some translators obtained the word *magi*. This scriptural phrase gives us one of the most dynamic insights into the religious and political setting at the time of Christ. Few phrases in the New Testament have provided more fuel for debate than this one. Hence, special attention is given to it here.

Video Insert >

04.04.06.V *Insights into Selected Biblical Difficulties*. Dr. Joe Wehrer discusses Jewish hermeneutics to clarify three so-called biblical conflicts in the gospels. Click here if Internet connection is available.

276. Hagner, "Matthew 1-13." 29; Archer, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Difficulties*. 318.

04.04.06.Q2 Could the magi have come from Arabia, rather than from Parthia in the east?

In Hebrew, the word *east* not only refers to a compass direction, but also means *the rising*, with an obvious reference to the *rising of the sun*.²⁷⁷ There are several points to consider in this study:

1. If the Scripture verse had only that word – *east* – then the wise men could have originated anywhere east of the Jordan River.
2. However, the word “magi” places the focus on the ancient Babylonian Empire.
3. Consequently, the word *east* is limited to ancient Babylon, later known as Persia and Media (Ezek. 25:4; Isa. 2:6), but in the first century was part of the Parthian Empire — an enemy of the Rome.²⁷⁸ (Although some scholars have suggested that Isaiah 60:6 implies Arabia as the point of origin.)²⁷⁹

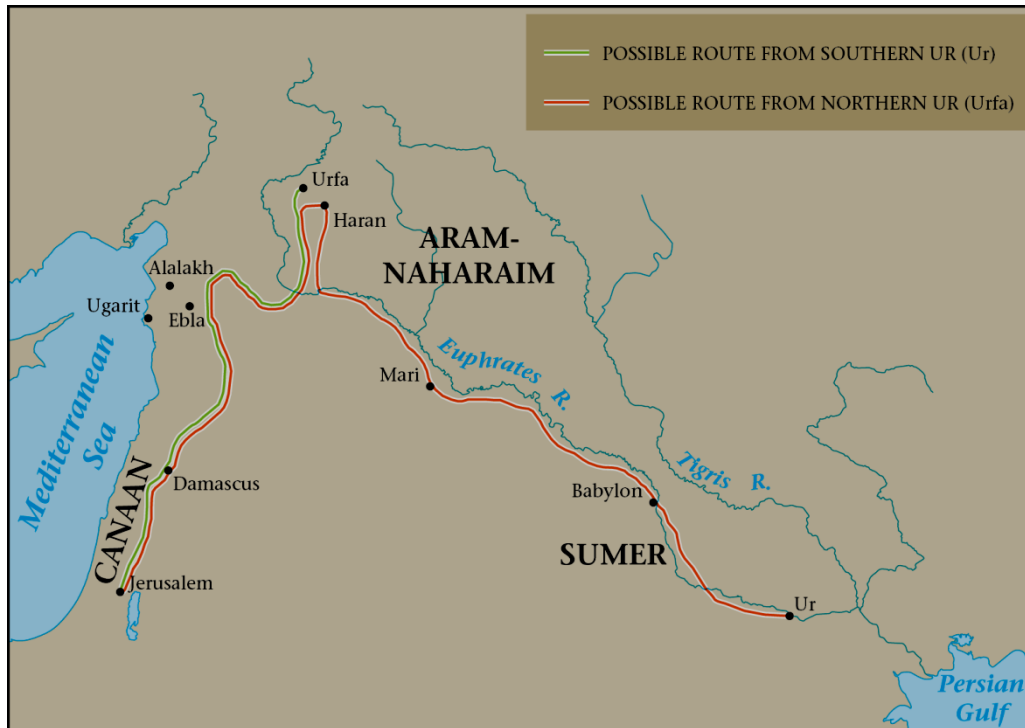
Most scholars believe the magi traveled from Ur or Babylon northwest along the Euphrates River, the westward and southwest to Damascus and on to Jerusalem. They most likely avoided the searing hot desert and traveled within the Fertile Crescent²⁸⁰ along a road known as the *Via Maris*.

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

278. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*. 639.

279. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 69.

280. Packer, Tenney, and White, eds. *The Bible Almanac*. 187-91.



04.04.06.Z A MAP OF THE POPULAR ROUTE FROM UR AND BABYLON TO JERUSALEM. The ancient road the magi followed was probably the same one in the Fertile Crescent that Abraham had used centuries earlier. It was the most feasible route to avoid the massive northern section of the Arabian Desert (today part of Jordan) that lies directly between Babylon and Jerusalem. Whether they came from Babylon, Ur, or elsewhere, they could not travel in a straight line from east to west because there were no sources of water in that area of the desert. Courtesy of International Mapping and Dan Przywara.

However, there seems to be a different opinion concerning their origin among some historic sources. Justin Martyr said in his apologetic book that,

The wise men from Arabia came to Bethlehem and worshiped the child and offered to him gifts [of], gold and frankincense and myrrh.

Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 78²⁸¹

Apparently Justin Martyr was not the only one who held this opinion, Tertullian and Clement of Rome made similar comments and may have used Martyr as their source.²⁸² However, this

281. Justin Martyr, *Selections from Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho, a Jew*.

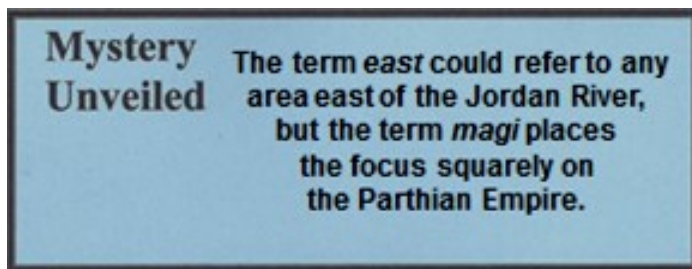
priestly-kingly class of men did not function in Arabia. Therefore, Arabia was probably not their home or point of origin, but part of their travel itinerary. Isaiah also gave prophetic evidence that the magi would come from Arabia, but again that does not mean they originate from there. The passage reads as follows:

Caravans of camels will cover your land — young camels of Midian and Ephah — all of them will come from Sheba. They will carry gold and frankincense and proclaim the praises of the LORD.

Isaiah 60:6

Notice that the passage indicates that young camels came from Midian and Ephah. These were two Arab tribal areas in northern Arabia. The narrative continues to say that people from Sheba would also come – Sheba is from the southern region of Arabia from where came the famous queen of Sheba with a huge amount of gold (1 Kgs. 10:2). Southern Arabia was known for its fine quality of frankincense.²⁸³ There are three noteworthy thoughts concerning this matter:

1. If the magi came from Arabia, that would explain why Herod the Great was not very concerned about them, since he was an Idumean, a tribe that was closely related to the Arabs and eventually became part of the Arab nation.



2. On the other hand, very little is known about the office and function of magi in the Arabian world. Some believe they hardly existed, if at all. There is no mention of them in the *Qu'ran* other than possibly a degrading comments about a religious group known as “Magians,” (Sura 22:17) which is coupled to the Jews, Christians, and a group known as the “Sebeites.”²⁸⁴ If there ever were any magi in Arabia, they certainly did not have the

282. Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*. 169-70.

283. Isa. 60:6; Jer. 6:20.

284. The religious group known as “Magians” is mentioned only once in the *Qu'ran* 22:17, the holy book of Islam that originated more than six centuries after Jesus. See <http://corpus.quran.com/concept.jsp?id=magians>. Retrieved December 2, 2012.

status, power, wealth, or influence as did their counterparts in Parthia. If the magi did originate from Arabia, then why is there no evidence of such a kingly class of men?

3. It has generally been assumed that the magi came from Parthia by way of the popular northern route – traveling along the Euphrates River, then turning westward toward Damascus, and then turning southwest toward Jerusalem (see map 04.04.06.Z). However, if they came from Parthia by way of a southern route through Arabia, it would be natural for Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Clement of Rome to say that they came from Arabia even if that was not their point of origin.

Finally, the magi are known to have visited at least one other monarch. In the year A.D. 66 they traveled to Naples to honor Nero and, for an unknown reason, when they left, they traveled home by way of a different route.²⁸⁵ After this they departed from history. There is no mention of them in Scripture, secular history, or apocryphal tradition. It is generally believed they simply vanished because, in the course of time, the needs of kings changed. But their generosity created the tradition of a Christmas gift exchange that is well known throughout the Western world and beyond.

Concerning Isaiah 60:6, only a few scholars believe Isaiah's prophecy refers to the magi; most believe this passage refers to a future time and, therefore, cannot be connected with the magi of the first century. So their origin remains a veiled mystery known only to God, but the probability is very high that they came from Babylon.

04.04.06.Q3 Who were the wise men/magi?

The Greeks designated the Persian priests as “magi,” and the Persian state religion of Zoroaster as “magianism.”²⁸⁶ Their focus was to study the starry skies for the coming of a savior. It was Cyrus who first established magianism in Persia, and the powerful and influential group men were known as “magi.”²⁸⁷ The *rabmag*, or *head of the magi*, was first mentioned in the Bible in Jeremiah 39:3 and in Daniel 2:2 and 4:7.²⁸⁸ The magi (*magoi*) were the proverbial “wise men” from a royal court of the Parthian Empire, although other kingdoms such as China, India, and possibly Arabia, also had magi. They were wise men who were knowledgeable in mathematics, the sciences, astronomy as well as astrology. However, over the centuries the definition of the

285. Johnson, “Matthew.” 7:257; Hagner, “Matthew 1-13.” 25.

286. See Appendix 26; <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Magianism> Retrieved June 26, 2015.

287. Schaff. “Magi.” *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*. 3rd ed. 1385-86.

288. Geikie, *The Life and Works of Christ*. 1:144.

name changed with an emphasis on astrology, or Oriental soothsayers (as in Acts 12:6). They were advisors to kings and held positions of educators and ambassadors. Kings ruled over the people but the magi directed the kings. No king went to war without first consulting them. The magi of the biblical text are believed to have been originally from Media and Persia, which was within the expanding Parthian Empire. So they clearly were no strangers to the Jewish people.

One of their primary functions was to insure transition in government. They were responsible for educating the children of the royal court and, therefore, were called the king makers, but they were not kings.²⁸⁹ They also re-educated the nobility of conquered nations, which put them in direct contact with Daniel and his comrades. They taught a wide range of subjects, including mathematics, astronomy, astrology, the sciences, divination, military skills, and magic, but mainly religion.²⁹⁰ Their status of royalty was not only acknowledged by the early church, but was also predicted by the prophet Isaiah (60:3).

The magi served their kings in various capacities from the cradle to the grave. When a son was born into a royal home, whether at home or in a neighboring country, it was customary for the magi to honor that family. It was for this reason they traveled first to the home of Herod the Great, since this was obviously the most likely place where the son of a king would be born.²⁹¹ It is an interesting point of history that these magi, who studied the stars and were looking for a messiah, were led to the real Messiah by a star/angel of divine appointment. But the temple Sadducees, who supposedly represented the people before God, did not want to have anything to do with this infant born in Bethlehem, a paradox well documented throughout Matthew's gospel.²⁹²

The magi were hardly the men often depicted on modern Christmas displays. The usual image of the magi is three men dressed as kings or knights on camels who arrived alone, dressed in fine colorful clothing and having huge chests of gifts. They were of such a high order that they never rode camels, but only on horses, ideally the world-famous Arabian horses. Ordinary and wealthy people of the Babylonian, Persia, and later Parthia, rode donkeys, mules, and camels. Long distance haulers of merchandise used camel caravans. Note the following from Parthian history:

289. Jayne, "Magi." 4:31-34.

290. The Babylonians, followed by the Persians, who in turn were followed by the Parthians, all had a reputation for predicting the future. Two ancient writers who made specific mention of this art among the Persians are Cicero, *De divinatione* 1.47 and Plutarch, *Alexander and Caesar* 3.2. See also Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible*. 472.

291. Masterman, 1:472.

292. Matthew 3:9; 8:10-12; 15:28; 21:43; 22:5-10; 24:14; 28:19.

1. When the Persian King Cyrus II (reigned 550-530) united the Persians and Medes to defeat the Babylonians in 539,²⁹³ his processional march into Babylon on a horse was quite typical for a victorious monarch.

2. The Parthians had two types of cavalry: the heavy-armed and armored cataphracts²⁹⁴ and the light brigades of archers who were skilled horsemen.²⁹⁵

Horses were more common in the semi-arid deserts of antiquity than many believe. The magi were exclusive and unique. Not only did they ride horses, but their clothing was entirely white. And they certainly did not arrive alone. Traveling in remote areas was always an invitation to be robbed or murdered, especially if the traveler appeared to be wealthy. They were escorted with an entourage of soldiers, cavalry, food and water supplies, and comfortable sleeping tents. They were far too dignified to sleep out under the stars with commoners.²⁹⁶

Once they arrived in Jerusalem, they obviously displayed wealth, the power of a foreign government, and a degree of mysticism since they were following what they perceived to be a star. What kind of effect did they have on those who saw them arrive in Herod's palace in Jerusalem? It is unknown, but the mystery that remains is this: Since the Parthians invaded and controlled Jerusalem briefly in the year 40 B.C., why was Herod the Great apparently so complacent when they arrived? This question remains unanswered.²⁹⁷

Finally, the names of the magi have been lost in history. Yet it seems that every few years there is a "recent re-discovery" in the Western media which reveals their identities. One report states that in the 12th century, three skulls were "discovered" by Bishop Reinald in Cologne, Germany, that were identified as being Melchior, Caspar and Balthazar – the magi of the Bethlehem.²⁹⁸ Unfortunately, church history is full of absurd traditions by fanciful writers.²⁹⁹ This matter is

293. The grandson of Cyrus I.

294. See "Cataphracts" in Appendix 26.

295. See 03.05.18.

296. Stearman. "Those Mysterious Magi." 9, 10.

297. See 04.04.07.Q2?

298. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:20; Geikie, *The Life and Works of Christ*. 1:153-54.

299. Two examples are: 1) Ron Charles, who has gathered scores of fanciful legends and myths, mostly written between the sixth and sixteenth centuries, that pertain to the life of Christ in his book titled, *The Search: A Historian's Search for Historical Jesus*. (Self-Published, 2007); and 2) Nicholas Notovich, whose book, *The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ*. Trans. (Virchand R. Gandhi, Dover Pub.) is a so-called historical account of when Jesus went to Asia to study between the ages 13 and 29.

mentioned simply because there are no reliable ancient sources to verify the claim and, therefore, these names have no historical value.

04.04.06.Q4 Why were the wise men/magi interested in a Jewish Messiah?

By the first century the magi were very much aware of the prophecy recorded in Numbers 24:17 because historically, the Babylonians were eager to learn from other cultures. In fact, the Persian state religion had priests who taught and studied “magianism,”³⁰⁰ the study of the skies they believed would signal the coming of a savior. Hence, they were looking for a messiah as much as were the Jews. Without question there was a connection between the wise men (magi) of Daniel and the magi who came to honor Jesus.³⁰¹

However, there is another reason why these magi would have had a strong interest in the Jewish messiah. Throughout the ancient Middle East at this time there was a growing frustration among the populous with local monarchs who were puppets of European dominance, first by the Greeks and later by the Romans. These subjugated people were crying to their gods for someone who would deliver them. Archaeologists discovered a fragment which provides evidence that the fourth century B.C. magi had a great disdain for Alexander the Great.³⁰² And herein is another mystery – why would the agents of royalty – those who subjugate the common people, come to worship One who would free them? Furthermore, when they arrived in Bethlehem, they broke the rules of royal protocol – they, the king makers and ambassadors of the Parthian Empire, knelt down before common Jewish peasants and worshiped an infant child. Wealth and power prostrated itself at the feet of poverty.

While no written documentation concerning their interest has survived the centuries, history reveals some clues that provide answers. The historians, Tacitus, Suetonius, and Josephus, indicated that there was a prevailing belief throughout the ancient Middle East that a powerful monarch would arise from Judea. The relocation of the Jews by the Assyrians³⁰³ and Babylonians, as well as the Jews who decided on their own to relocate to foreign lands, all spread the idea that a global ruler would one day arise in the land of Israel. Note what these historians said,

300. See Appendix 26; <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Magianism> Retrieved June 26, 2015.

301. Eddy, *The King is Dead*. 67.

302. The fragment known as TM 393, mentions in 11.24-29. It was translated and published by W. B. Henning under the title of “The Murder of the Magi.” *Journal of the Royal Academy Society*. London: 1944, 133-44.; See also Eddy, *The King is Dead*. 68-69.

303. See 03.02.04 and 03.02.05.

There had spread over all the Orient an old and established belief, that it was fated at that time for men coming from Judaea to rule the world.

Suetonius *Life of Vespasian* 4:5

There is a firm persuasion ... that at this very time the East was to grow powerful, and rulers coming from Judaea were to acquire [a] universal empire.

Tacitus, *Histories* 5:13

But now, what did most elevate them in undertaking this war, was an ambiguous oracle that was also found in their sacred writings, how, “about that time, one of their country should become governor of the habitable earth.”

Josephus, *Wars* 6.5.4 (312)³⁰⁴

Since the messianic expectation³⁰⁵ was well-known throughout the entire Mediterranean area, this may be the reason the Roman Emperor Augustus called himself the “savior of the world.” In the meantime, another well-known figure, the poet Virgil (70-19 B.C.), wrote of the wonderful and prosperous golden age that was about to come in his fourth literary work known as the *Fourth Eclogue* (published between 42 and 38 B.C.),³⁰⁶ but also known as the *Messianic Eclogue*.³⁰⁷ In light of the common expectation of the time, it is amazing that Herod the Great appeared to be rather indifferent about the unexpected visit by the magi.

Previously, in 605 B.C., the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem and relocated Jewish families of royalty and priests to Babylon. These captives included a number of prophets, including Daniel. Because Daniel was of Jewish royalty and nobility (Dan. 1:3), he received three years of instruction by the Babylonian magi prior to his service to the court (Dan. 1:3-5). Eventually he became the chief of the magi (Dan. 2: 4, 10, 12, 48). While in Babylon, he wrote the book that bears his name and includes several insights that pertain to the Babylonians. Some

304. The words of Josephus were specifically directed toward the Zealots fighting the Romans in the First Revolt (A.D. 66-70). However, this was a deeply held opinion for well over a century among the Jews.

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

306. See 03.05.24 “42 - 38 B.C. Messiah Predicted by Roman Poet Virgil.”

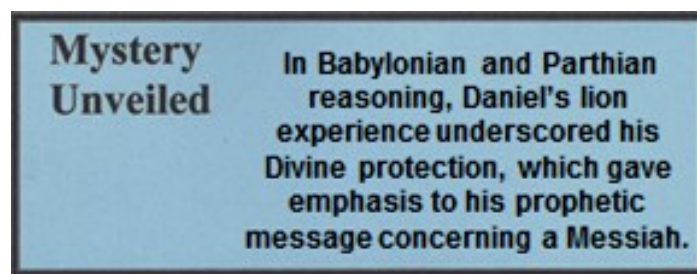
307. Barclay, “Matthew.” 1:26-27.

scholars have suggested that Persian historians recorded that Zoroaster, the founder of the Zoroastrianism religion, was a student of the prophet Daniel. Clearly, he had a high level of influence in the Babylonian and Persian halls of government. Some scholars believe that the ancient books of the Zoroaster predicted that the next prophet would be born of a virgin, although it does not indicate who or where that prophet would be born.³⁰⁸

It does not indicate that he would be Jewish, and furthermore, John the Baptist was the next prophet, not Jesus. It is interesting, however, to see that so many people groups had a concept of a messianic figure that was expected to perform great feats – even though those messianic figures were all sculptured within various cultural and religious frameworks.

Daniel 4 records that the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar had a horrific dream and none of his magi could give him the interpretation, even after being threatened with death. But it was Daniel, the headmaster of the Babylonian school of astrology-astronomy (Dan. 4:9), who was given the interpretation by God. When he explained the dream to the king, he saved not only his own life, but also those of the court magi. Consequently, he was highly respected and appreciated, and others carefully listened to him.

Furthermore, the event of Daniel in the lion's den left a profound impact on the royal court and beyond – one that lasted for centuries. Just as Balaam was a prophet whose reputation lasted for centuries (see 03.01.05.A), so likewise did Daniel's reputation. In the ancient world there were many prophets and many aspiring prophets, but none stood the test of a den of lions. Therefore, when at a later time he spoke of and recorded the coming of the Messiah (Dan. 9:24-27), everyone listened. Six hundred years later they were still watching and waiting for Daniel's Messiah. The ancients believed that the gods controlled the events of life, which added emphasis to Daniel's prophecies after his grand re-entry into the royal court.



But interest in a Jewish messiah predates Daniel. Even in the days of Moses there was a Balaam who blessed the Israelites when he was asked to curse them. But was this pagan prophet important? When considering that a shrine was built in the 8th or 7th century B.C., and that was centuries after he lived, then the only reasonable conclusion is that this man had god-like status

308. Geikie, *The Life and Works of Christ*. 1:145-47.

in community. Along with that, his words were equally important. When he blessed the Israelites, everyone knew it and paid attention to the prophecy he gave about a future messiah. Now the obvious question is, did the magi know about it. Well, if Balaam was so important, how could the magi not have known of him...or of Daniel?

04.04.07.Q2 Was Herod the Great guilty of treason?

Historians have always affirmed Herod's complete loyalty to Rome, Therefore, this question is almost never asked, but is incredibly significant.³⁰⁹ Its importance is revealed in a summery review of the two empires:

1. The Romans and Parthians were engaged in a series of conflicts between the years 66 B.C. and A.D. 217. The Romans desired to have the Euphrates River as their eastern boundary while the Parthians desired to have access to the Mediterranean Sea as their western boundary. Obviously the land of the Jews was the point of contention.
2. In 53 B.C. the two empires fought at the Battle of Carrhae in modern Turkey and in A.D. 113, Roman Emperor Hadrian overran the Parthian capital city of Ctesiphon, located about twenty miles south of Baghdad in modern Iraq. The dates of these two significant because they envelope the first century time of Jesus.
3. Even while Herod was given authority to bring the Jewish nation under complete Roman control, in 40/39 B.C. the Parthians had invaded Jerusalem and held it briefly.³¹⁰ The invasion and subsequent loss of Jerusalem completely humiliated the Romans. Under Herod's command, Roman soldiers defeated the Parthians in Jerusalem and slaughtered whatever Jewish freedom fighters they could find.

Now the highest officials of Rome's most powerful enemy – the Parthian Empire, returned to Jerusalem, and it appears that Herod failed to inform his superiors of the visit. On two points, he probably committed treason. Note the following:

1. Herod was informed that a king of the Jews was born within his domain, but he failed to notify Rome and more importantly,
2. The uninvited visit by the Parthian Court, who appeared without notice, should have been reported to Caesar Augustus. A serious question Herod should have considered was:

309. See Appendix 33 for suggested topics for further research.

310. See 03.05.25.

Was there a possibility that this visit was a trick for another possible invasion? It is amazing what he did, in light of his paranoid mental state.

Rather, he killed all the newborn boys in Bethlehem, but by then the Holy Family had escaped to Egypt. The fact that the magi had also escaped without informing him of the new king's identity or location would be worrisome for the rest of his life.

At this point it is important to mention a word about the chronology of Jewish writings. Note that the following passage in Luke omits the account of the Holy Family traveling to Egypt. This suggests to the modern reader that immediately after ceremonial observances were completed in the temple, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus returned to Nazareth, and the magi probably visited them there.

³⁹ When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth.

Luke 2:39

If the gospel of Luke was the only record, that interpretation would have been accepted. However, there are two other considerations.

1. In Jewish writings, it was not uncommon to skip events or periods of time. Even though Luke stated in the first few verses of his book that his work was a chronological account, that does not mean he recorded every detail.
2. The other gospels offer additional information to the childhood years of Jesus. Therefore, readers know that between the time “Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord,” and their arrival at Nazareth, they went to Egypt.

There was another horrific event that occurred about this time. Even though Herod the Great was rather ill and understood the sensitivities of the Jewish people, he decreed that a large golden eagle be placed above the great gate entrance of the temple (see 03.06.04, no. 15). This angered the Jews for two reasons:

1. It violated the commandment that prohibited graven images (Deut. 5:8; Ex. 20:4) and
2. The eagle was the icon that represented the oppressive Roman Empire.

In response, two rabbis, Judas and Matthias, had their students pull down the eagle — an act of defiance. They managed to cut down the icon but were captured by the soldiers who were in the

nearby Antonia Fortress. It was a deadly decision as an outraged paranoid dictator had the rabbis and forty of their students burned alive.³¹¹

This was a time when the slightest infraction law resulted in deadly consequences. Roman law was never intended to offer just punishment that fit the crime; it was to punish the accused so severely that the population would be fearful to do such an act again.

Finally, if the Bethlehem massacre is true, some critics have wondered why Josephus didn't mention it. There are two possible answers.

1. Herod had murdered so many of his own family, friends and staff, that the Bethlehem event was not even a minor point.
2. Furthermore, it is possible that Josephus did not know about it.

04.05.02.Q1 Where in Egypt did Mary, Joseph, and Jesus go?

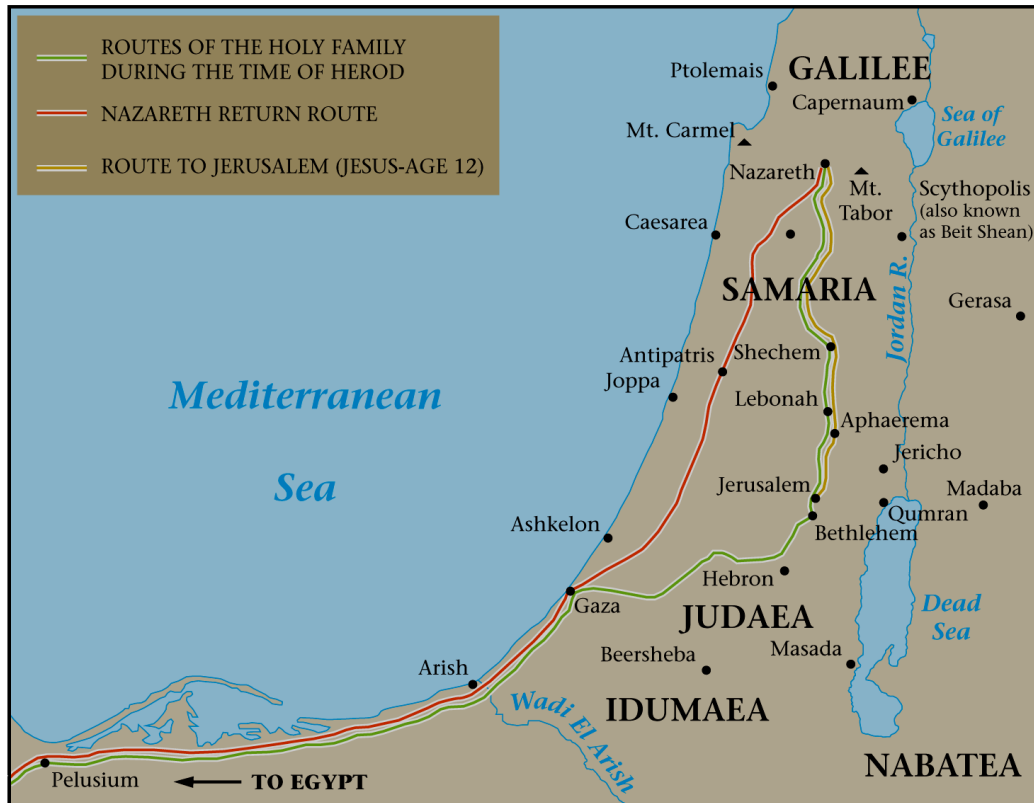
Their place of residency has been lost in history, but two possible cities have been suggested.

1. Alexandria, built by Alexander the Great, was a major Jewish center. It was larger than any city in Judea, with an estimated forty percent Jewish population. It had a synagogue so huge that a courier was needed to repeat the words of the rabbi so the people in the back of the auditorium could hear. It was in this city where the Hebrew Scriptures had been translated into Greek some two and a half centuries earlier. Joseph could have quickly found a home and employment there as a young carpenter, although the funds provided by the magi most certainly would have been sufficient. While Alexandria would have been an ideal city for them, it is also further west than many other Jewish communities. Therefore, it seems rather unlikely Mary and Joseph would have traveled so far to the western side of the Nile.³¹²
2. The second opinion is a popular tradition that the Holy Family lived in the Old Coptic Quarter of the city of Old Cairo. It is where legend says the Church of St. Sergiust marks the traditional site where Mary and Joseph lived for three months. Coptic Christians for centuries claimed that it was there, in a crypt that was originally a cave or grotto that the infant Jesus was laid to rest. However, there is a problem with this traditional site. Cairo was not founded until A.D. 641, and then it was simply a military outpost. Eventually a

311. Josephus, *Wars* 2.1.2 (5) and *Antiquities* 17.6.2-4 (149-167, esp. 151).

312. Maier, *In the Fullness of Time*. 73.

town known as al-Fustat grew around the outpost and was later renamed Cairo. Just as the Holy Land has its share of legends, so does Egypt. So this is hardly a serious contender for where Mary and Joseph could have stayed. Where the Holy Family resided in Egypt is known only to God.



04.05.02.Z A MAP OF THE HOLY FAMILY’S ROUTE TO/FROM EGYPT. Map of the routes likely taken by Joseph, Mary and Jesus from Nazareth to Bethlehem, to Egypt, and their return to Nazareth. When they crossed the “River of Egypt,” known today as the *Wadi of Egypt*, or *Wadi El Arish* (1 Kgs. 8:65) and entered Egypt, they were safe from Herod’s army. Courtesy of International Mapping and Dan Przywara.

04.06.02.Q1 How did Jesus attain the incredible knowledge that He displayed at the temple when He was merely twelve years old (Lk. 2:41-50)?

Scholars have long debated the “messianic consciousness” of Jesus.³¹³ In other words, when did He realize that He was the Messiah? Since Jesus had both the human nature and divine nature,

313. See “Christology” and “Messianic Consciousness” in Appendix 26.

He would have access to His Father in heaven that was unknown to mortals. Another question then is, “At the temple, did He ask questions to discover answers or did He ask questions to have the scholars reflect upon Isaiah? According to Isaiah, every morning God awakened Jesus and instructed Him (Isa. 50:4-5). That instruction included knowledge of the events that would eventually inflict horrific pain (Isa. 50:6-9). Furthermore, Philippians 2:5-11 and Acts 1:6-7 state that the incarnate God was willing to be separated from His full use of divine knowledge, thereby making human development and maturity a necessity.

⁴ The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of those who are instructed to know how to sustain the weary with a word. He awakens Me each morning; He awakens My ear to listen like those being instructed.

⁵ The Lord GOD has opened My ear, and I was not rebellious; I did not turn back.

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

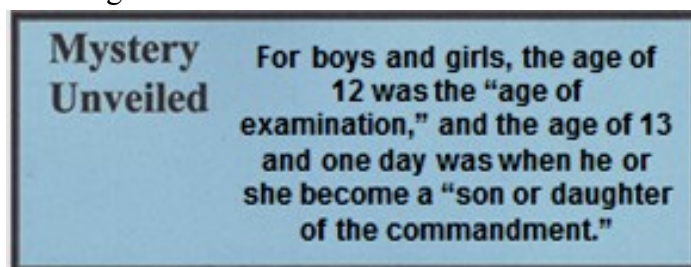
⁷ The Lord GOD will help Me; therefore I have not been humiliated; therefore I have set My face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame.

⁸ The One who vindicates Me is near; who will contend with Me? Let us confront each other. Who has a case against Me? Let him come near Me!

⁹ In truth, the Lord GOD will help Me; who will condemn Me? Indeed, all of them will wear out like a garment; a moth will devour them.

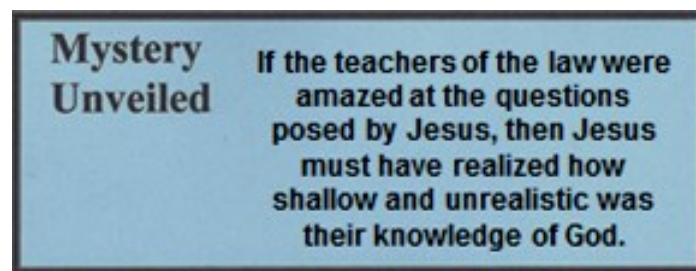
Isaiah 50:4-9

Therefore, when Jesus met the religious scholars in the temple, He not only offered thought-provoking answers, but questions that challenged the best scholars of the entire second temple period (515 B.C. – A.D. 70). Little did they know that the Boy who was before them was divinely taught every morning.



The dynamics of the temple dialog were heightened in light of the fact that the two greatest theological schools of the entire Second Temple Period existed at this time. These schools were the House of Hillel and the House of Shammai. Their founding rabbis are believed to have been still alive and were probably in the temple when Jesus came. It was in Solomon's Portico where the greatest of teachers taught, as if trying to capture some of the proverbial "Solomon's wisdom." Anyone who seriously desired to learn would have studied in one of these schools (a/k/a "houses").

It was considered a point of academic excellence to have graduated from one of these two schools, as exemplified by the Apostle Paul who had studied under Gamaliel, the grandson of Hillel.³¹⁴ There can be little question that the twelve-year-old Jesus challenged the most important and influential rabbis when other twelve-year old boys were challenged by their local rabbis.



04.07.01.Q1 Why do the Gospels not give details of the childhood or young adult years of Jesus?

The gospels do not give detailed information on the childhood of Jesus, or what He did during the eighteen years between His visit to the temple at age 12 and the time He began His ministry between the ages of 31 and 33. The gospel writers clearly had their own purposes, as each one wrote for a specific reason to a specific audience. Each one desired to convey the message that Jesus lived, died, and arose from the grave for the salvation of mankind. In other words, God stepped into human history to redeem mankind. That is the main point of every gospel!³¹⁵ Other details were not considered important to any of the New Testament writers. All the teachings and miracles that are written in the four gospels point to the main point – that Jesus is the Messiah of fulfilled prophecies! If the gospels were historical treatises, detailed information on his childhood and pre-ministry years would be given.

314. Hillel had a son Simeon who served in the temple when Jesus was dedicated. Simeon had a son named Gamaliel, who had a son also named Simeon. See Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 2:31.

315. Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context*. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 1, Session 2.

It must be remembered that the writers were essentially oriental Jews – and ancient people of the orient thought differently than do modern Western people. Even European church leaders a few centuries after Christ reasoned and thought differently than did first century oriental Jews. Consequently, there are two negative reactions to the gospel narratives – one ancient and another modern.

1. The absence of historical information on the early years of Jesus has given rise to numerous apocryphal myths, many of which were later immortalized by Italian artists during the Middle Ages. But the problem is that these so-called gospel writers lived centuries after Jesus and obviously did not know Him or His community personally, and at times, did not even reflect the Jewish culture. Often their “gospels” are little more than fanciful accounts or factious novels. Some include stories of dragons that bowed down to Him; of roses in Jericho that suddenly blossomed wherever Jesus walked by; how He formed a bird from clay and it came to life and flew away. Yet the creators of these legends failed to realize that any account that is not rooted in truth is an insult to His character and holiness. Jesus said that false teachers would come and satisfy itching ears. They may have meant to honor Him; but no fairy tale touted as truth can honor Jesus.³¹⁶

2. More recently, modern liberal scholarship says that the miracles are fictional events to build up the esteem of the Hero Jesus. Yet these opinions are without any ancient literary or archaeological foundation. The fact that most of the disciples died horrible deaths says volumes about the truth they wrote and preached.³¹⁷ The opinions of liberal scholars are frequently found in the media around Christmas and Easter when many give serious thought to the biblical message.

Therefore, the reader must understand the gospels from the mindset of the original author and the message he conveyed to his audience. If God decided to place Jesus in the social framework of first century Judaism, then maybe believers of Jesus should learn something about first century Judaism and the social and political environment in which Jesus lived and ministered.

316. Two examples are: 1) Ron Charles, who has gathered scores of fanciful legends and myths, mostly written between the sixth and sixteenth centuries, that pertain to the life of Christ in his book titled, *The Search: A Historian's Search for Historical Jesus*. (Self-Published, 2007); and 2) Nicholas Notovich, whose book, *The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ*. Trans. (Virchand R. Gandhi, Dover Pub.) is a so-called historical account of when Jesus went to Asia to study between the ages 13 and 29.

317. See Appendix 27: “The Faith Of The Disciples And Gospel Writers.”

When Biblical Passages Seem Not To Agree

04.02.02.Q1 Concerning Matthew 1:9, was Uzziah really the father of Jotham?

Matthew's genealogical record has been somewhat challenging because Jotham's father is known as Azariah,³¹⁸ as well as Uzziah.³¹⁹ The two names have been a favorite subject for critics. However, it is also known that people would occasionally change their name when there was a dramatic change in their life. There is no reason given for the name change or if the king maintained two names, but the fact that these refer to the same person has been well established. There are several other examples of name changes in both the Old and New Testaments, as well as in the surrounding cultures. Examples are as follows:

1. When Gideon destroyed the Canaanite altar to Baal at Ophrah (Jg. 6:32, 7:1), his name was changed to Jerubbaal.
2. Jehoahaz, who was the son of Josiah, had his name changed to Shallum.³²⁰
3. When the famous Saul became the Apostle Paul, he went from a Hebrew name to a Greek name.
4. Name changes were also common in other cultures, as exemplified by the Egyptian Pharaoh Necho, who changed the name of Eliakim to Jehoiakim (2 Kg. 23:34).³²¹
5. Evidently, a reason for the dual identity of Uzziah/Azariah was not considered significant by the biblical writers.

318. 2 Kg. 15:1-7, 1 Ch. 3:12.

319. 2 Kg. 15:32, 34; 2 Ch. 26:1-23, 27:2; Isa. 1:1, 6:1; 7:1.

320. 2 Kg. 23:21, 1 Ch. 3:15, Jer. 22:11.

321. Pharaoh Necho is among fifty biblical names whose existence has been verified by archaeological studies in a published article by Lawrence Mykytiuk titled, "Archaeology Confirms 50 Real People in the Bible." *Biblical Archaeology Review*. March/April, 2014 (40:2), pages 42-50, 68. This archaeological evidence confirms the historical accuracy of the biblical timeline. For further study, see the website for Associates for Biblical Research, as well as Grisanti, "Recent Archaeological Discoveries that Lend Credence to the Historicity of the Scriptures." 475-98.

04.04.06.Q1 How does the prophecy in Matthew 2:6 agree with Micah 5:2?

The apparent conflict arises because part of Matthew's quotation is found in Micah but another part is found in 2 Samuel 5:2. The answer lies in understanding how first century rabbis interpreted Scripture; a matter of first century hermeneutics.

Rabbis often took the liberty to cite quotations given by two prophets, but gave the credit to the better known prophet. Therefore, Matthew's prophecy does agree with the Old Testament because he used the common method of quoting Scripture. He presented a paraphrase of Micah 5:2 with emphasis on the small village of Bethlehem as the fulfillment of prophetic words.³²² Matthew said that the smallest village of Judea was from where God's greatest gift came in fulfillment of Micah's prophecy. NOTE: Concerning Matthew 2:6 and Micah 5:2, please see the video "Insights into Selected Biblical Difficulties" 04.04.06.V.

05.02.04.Q3 Whose account of the temptations is accurate, Luke's or Matthew's (Mt. 4:1-11 or Lk. 4:1-13)?

Matthew and Luke recorded the same three temptations, but in a different order. Only Luke said earlier that he wrote his gospel in an orderly (chronological) account (Lk. 1:3). Each writer wrote from his own perspective with an emphasis on whatever he thought was significant. Luke, a physician by trade, wrote in chronological order because that was important to him.³²³ On the other hand, Matthew, who was previously gaining personal wealth as a tax collector, emphasized the kingdoms of the world displayed before Jesus as a significant temptation. In first century Judaism, the chronology of events was not as significant as was the meaning of the events that the writer was attempting to convey.

05.03.02.Q2 How does John 1:29 reconcile with Luke 7:19?

John 1:29 is in reference to a completely different context than is Luke 7:19. The John 1:29 passage was written when Jesus began His ministry and Luke 7:19 has reference to a later time when John the Baptizer was in prison. In the latter situation, John remembered that the messiah would set the captives free, so he naturally questioned why he was sitting in the prison dungeon of the Machaerus Fortress. Under this stressful situation, he also questioned his ministry and the work he had been doing on behalf of his Cousin.

322. Hagner, "Matthew 1-13." 29; Archer, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Difficulties*. 318.

323. See 02.02.11 and "An orderly sequence" in 04.01.04.

Furthermore, John had his own opinions of what the messiah would be like. He spoke repeatedly and forcefully of the One coming after him as the One who would bring fire and judgment. But Jesus was not a “fire, hell, and brimstone preacher” calling for repentance. Rather, Jesus was mild mannered who taught thousands and performed many, many miracles. So it did not take very long for John to have some additional doubts and he asked the question recorded by Luke, especially when he (John) was sitting in prison. That is why the Baptizer sent a disciple to Jesus to ask this important question, **“Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?”** But what John did not know was that he was correct about his apocalyptic message – because when Jesus returns He will come as the divine judge precisely as he (John) preached.

05.05.05.Q3 Should Nicodemus have known or suspected anything about a “new birth” (Jn. 3:1-21)?

Absolutely, yes! He was aware of the baptismal rites within Judaism and, therefore, should have made a connection with what Jesus was telling him. He also should have been aware of King David’s two horrific sins for which there was no atonement: murder and adultery. As a result he cried out unto the Lord and said,

**¹⁰ Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.**

**¹¹ Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.**

**¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.**

Psalms 51:10-12 (NIV 1984)

What David requested from our Lord was a regeneration or new birth, for he realized that cleansing himself was a vain exercise (Ps. 73:13). The Essenes, even though they lived under the Old Covenant, realized that the Holy Spirit purifies the heart. They even spoke freely of God’s Spirit of holiness as a cleansing and purifying power as revealed in a number of Dead Sea

Scrolls.³²⁴ Notice the similarities between Dead Sea Scroll 1QS 4.21,³²⁵ written about a century before Jesus was born,³²⁶ and Matthew 3:11 and Luke 3:16 as illustrated below.

He shall cleanse him of all wicked deeds with the spirit of holiness; like purifying waters He will shed upon him the spirit of truth (to cleanse him) of all abomination and injustice.

Dead Sea Scroll 1QS 4.21³²⁷

¹¹ “I baptize you with water for repentance, but the One who is coming after me is more powerful than I. I am not worthy to remove His sandals. He Himself will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Matthew 3:11

¹⁶ John answered them all, “I baptize you with water, but One is coming who is more powerful than I. I am not worthy to untie the strap of His sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Luke 3:16

Nicodemus, as the head of a seminary, should have known that the Messiah would be Israel’s refiner and purifier as stated in passages such as Malachi 3:1-3. That purifying had already begun with the temple cleansing, but he did not recognize it. Yet the Spirit moved his heart to discuss this with Jesus.

The rabbis, of which Nicodemus was one, had long connected the ritual of baptism (complete immersion in water), with washing as instructed in Exodus 19:10. It was deemed to be the first step in holy living and preparation to be in communion with God.³²⁸ This opinion was summarized by Josephus concerning the ministry of John the Baptist. The background to this narrative is that Herod Antipas had executed John, and then entered into battle with the

324. See Dead Sea Scroll: 1QS 3.7-9; 4.21; 1QH 16.12 cf 7.6; 17.26, Fragment 2.9, 13.

325. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*. 9-10.

326. This scroll is known as *The Community Rule* or *The Manual of Discipline*. It is one of the earliest scrolls written by the Essenes; Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*. 97.

327. Translated and parenthesis by Geza Vermes; Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*. 103.

328. Tenney, *The Gospel of John*. 49.

Nabateans who soundly defeated him. The Jewish community believed the defeat was divine judgment for a horrible sin against a righteous man. Note the comment on Jewish baptism:

Now, some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John, that was called the Baptist for Herod slew him who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism. For that washing [with water] would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it not in order to the putting away [or the remission] of some sins [only], but for the purification of the body.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.5.2 (116-117b)³²⁹

As previously stated, baptism did not originate with Christianity, but with Judaism.³³⁰ When a Gentile converted to Judaism, he was baptized. When a disciple became a rabbi, he was baptized as part of his ordination service. Some sources indicate that when one became a member of the Sanhedrin, there was a baptism. Such rites were associated with the new responsibility and direction in life. The rite, along with “born again” terminology was common in Pharisaic writings. Therefore, Nicodemus should have known or at least made an educated guess at what Jesus was talking about. There were several times when a man could be “born again” according to Jewish theology and tradition.³³¹

1. When a Gentile man converted to Judaism, he had to perform three things:³³²

a. Be circumcised³³³

b. Make an offering at the temple

c. Be immersed in a mikvah; after this a man was considered a “new born child” and accepted in Jewish society.³³⁴ That immersion was not a ritualistic immersion

329. Bracketed inserts for clarification by Whiston, ed.

330. Fruchtenbaum, *The New Birth*. 20-23.

331. These baptisms would have been similar to those of John the Baptist who stressed true repentance. For more information on Jewish baptisms, see William S. LaSor, “Discovering What Jewish Mikva’ot Can Tell Us About Christian Baptism.” 52-59. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor's Manual*. Class 6, pages 7-9; See also Zondervan's *New International Version Archaeological Study Bible*. 2005. 1562.

332. Also see comments below “After Jesus was baptized” in 05.02.03.Q1.

333. Those men who decided to forgo the circumcision ritual, but observed the Noahide Commandments, were known as “God-fearing” men. They were not “Jewish converts,” but still respected among the Jewish people. For more information on the Noahide Commandments, see Appendix 17.

in a mikvah to cleanse defilement, but a baptism concerning the forgiveness of sins as John the Baptist did. Records show that some rabbis permitted baptism immediately after circumcision, while the School of Hillel said baptism should be seven days after the circumcision.³³⁵

2. When a Gentile slave, either man or woman, became the property of a Jew, he/she had to be baptized.³³⁶
3. When a Jewish man was crowned king
4. At the time of his bar mitzvah (age 13 years and 1 day). From that day on he qualified to be one of ten men and women to begin a new synagogue.³³⁷
5. When he married a wife (usually between ages 16 and 20).
6. When a man was ordained as a rabbi (age 30)
7. When a rabbi joined the Sanhedrin (age 50)³³⁸

However, some scholars believe that the “baptisms” of points 3 through 7 above were not baptisms, but purification rituals in a mikvah.³³⁹ But regardless, Nicodemus should certainly have known what Jesus meant when He used the terms such as “born of water,” “born of the water,” or “baptize.”³⁴⁰ No wonder that Jesus said, “Are you *the* teacher...”³⁴¹ Therefore, “*the* teacher,” who in all probability was the head of a seminary, had a small following of disciples,

334. Livingston, “Jesus on Purity, Baptism, and Jewish Ritual Baths.” 1-2.

335. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 307; Geikie, *The Life and Works of Christ*. 1:396.

336. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 348.

337. The rabbinic rule that a minimum of ten men could establish a new synagogue was not established until centuries after Christ, around the time the Babylonian Talmud was written. 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.

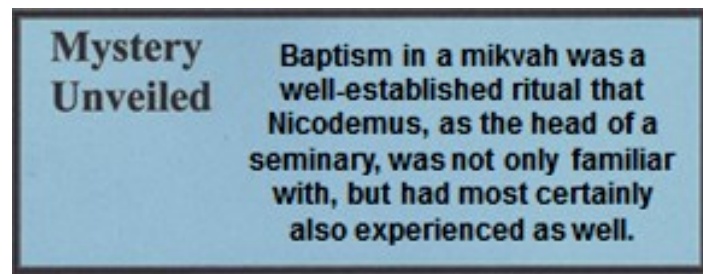
338. Fruchtenbaum, *Life of the Messiah*. Tape 4, Side A.

339. See “Baptism” and “Mikvah” in Appendix 26.

340. According to Scott, Jr. *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament*. 146, one of the earliest scholars to research Jewish baptisms was a French scholar, Joseph Thomas, who authored *Le Mouvement baptiste en Palestine et Syrie* (Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1935).

341. Emphasis by the author, but it is also in the Greek text.

and as a member of the Sanhedrin he should have understood what Jesus meant.³⁴² Furthermore, the Apostle Paul made an interesting comment on baptism in his first letter to the Corinthian church when he said “All under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (10:1b-2). Clearly, not only did the apostle know what baptism meant, but those in his audience understood that their forefathers understood the term as well.



Finally, the concept of *rebirth* or *born again* was well known to both Jews and Gentiles. For the Jewish people, the concept is discussed above. For the Gentiles, the Romans and Greeks were familiar with the phrase because it was in nearly all of the ancient mystery religions.

05.05.05.Q4 In light of Romans 10:9, was it possible for Nicodemus to become born again?

Yes, if the answer were limited to this passage in Romans, which states that eternal life is obtained if first, one confesses that Jesus is Lord, and second, one believes that God raised Him from the grave. The problem is obviously that Jesus was very much alive when He spoke to Nicodemus.

The New Testament was written years after the ministry of Jesus. While being “born again” is generally and accurately defined by Romans 10:9, a passage that is more applicable pertains to the new creation Jesus spoke of and is found in 2 Corinthians 5:17. It states that “if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation.” That was precisely the point Jesus made. Nicodemus needed to become a new creation in Christ, which today is known as becoming “born again.”³⁴³

07.02.02.Q2 Did Mark make a mistake in 2:26 when he made a historic reference to “the days of Abiathar the high priest?”

342. Fruchtenbaum, *The New Birth*. 20-23.

343. Fruchtenbaum, *The New Birth*. 40-43.

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.

07.03.03.Q1 Do the gospels agree on the names of the disciples?³⁴⁴

Yes and no. Critics have long argued that the gospel writers did not agree on the names of the disciples.³⁴⁵ 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.³⁴⁶

<u>Mt. 10:2 ff.</u>	<u>Mk. 3:16 ff.</u>	<u>Lk. 6:14 ff.</u>	<u>Acts 1:13 ff.</u>
<u>Simon Peter</u>	<u>Simon Peter</u>	<u>Simon Peter</u>	<u>Simon Peter</u>
Andrew	James, son of Zebedee	Andrew	James
James, son of Zebedee	John	James	John
John	Andrew	John	Andrew
Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
Thomas	Matthew	Matthew	Bartholomew
Matthew	Thomas	Thomas	Matthew
James, son of Alphaeus	James, son of Alphaeus	James, son of Alphaeus	James, son of Alphaeus
Thaddaeus	Thaddaeus	Simon the Zealot	Simon the Zealot
Simon the Zealot	Simon the Zealot	Judas, son of James	Judas, son of James
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	- - - -

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

344. For more information on the disciples/apostles, see Appendix 27: “The Ministry Of The Apostles, Gospel Writers, And Other Significant Leaders.”

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

346. Mishnah, *Aboth* 2:8-14; Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 43a.

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.”³⁴⁷

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 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.

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.³⁴⁸ 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

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

348. Carson, “Matthew.” 8:125.

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.³⁴⁹ 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

349. She was a nun from Galicia, in northwest Spain. Shanks, “After Hadrian’s Banishment: Jews in Christian Jerusalem.” 32.

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,³⁵⁰ 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 Egeria³⁵¹

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 Tiberius.³⁵² 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.

350. The Seven Springs today is known as Tabgha, which is a corruption of Heptapegon which means "seven springs." It is located one and a half miles west of Capernaum. Josephus called the largest of these "the well of Capernaum" (*Wars* 3.10.8).

351. The letter is in the possession of the Benedictine Library of Monte Cassino. The contents of original parts that were lost have been preserved by copies. Pixner, *With Jesus through Galilee*. 36.

352. Gilbrant, "Luke." 179.

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.³⁵³ 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.³⁵⁴ 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.³⁵⁵

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 archaeological 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 stele³⁵⁶ 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

353. Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds*. 64-65.

354. See comments by Dr. Bill Heinrich and Professor Gordon Franz in 05.05.03.V “The Strategic and Economic Significance of Capernaum.”

355. Mellowes and Cran, Producers. *From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians*. (DVD). Part 2.

356. See Appendix 26.

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 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.³⁵⁷ 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, ²⁴ eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵ 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

357. 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.”

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.³⁵⁸ 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.

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.³⁵⁹

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.³⁶⁰ 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)

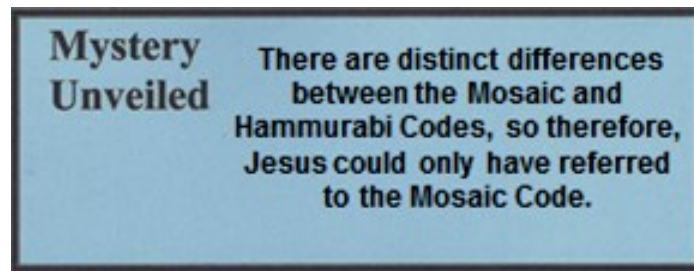
These three examples are a keynote of the Mosaic Law; that men should be holy in deed and action before God, and this is the message that was reinforced by Jesus. Furthermore, when Jesus

358. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 152.

359. Clay, *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 Jew “a slave” could subject him to excommunication from the synagogue. See Geikie, *The Life and Works of Christ*. 2:304.

360. Adams, *Ancient Records*. 65.

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.



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 vindictive 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.³⁶¹ 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.”³⁶² The word from Jesus is that it was time to lay aside the tribal laws and live with compassion and mercy.

361. Packer, Tenney, and White, eds., *The Bible Almanac*. 380-96.

362. Israel National News, July 26, 2010, reprinted in “Hammurabi-like Law Code Found at Hazor.” *Artifax* 25:4 (Autumn 2010). 8.

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.

08.03.04.Q1 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.³⁶³ Another interpretation is *do not permit us to go*.³⁶⁴ 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.³⁶⁵ The support for this interpretation is that the Greek word *peirazein* is better translated as *test*.³⁶⁶ 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). The ultimate choice is ours and the prayer is to ask God to intervene on our behalf when we make decisions.

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.”³⁶⁷ 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

363. Carson, “Matthew” 8:172-73; Young, *The Jewish Background*. 31-32; See also Mishnah, *Avot* 5:3.

364. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 131.

365. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:43-44.

366. Barclay, “Matthew.” 1:224.

367. Freeman, *The New Manners and Customs of the Bible*. 415.

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.

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.”³⁶⁸ 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.³⁶⁹ 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.

08.05.02.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

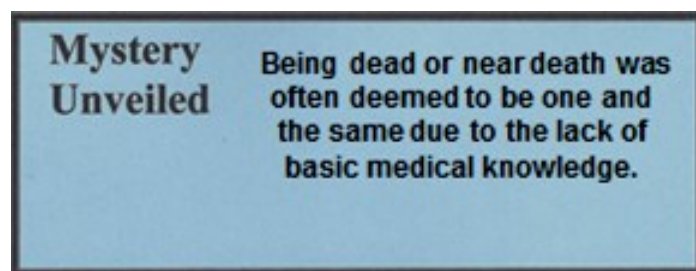
368. Young, *The Jewish Background*. 24.

369. 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.

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)

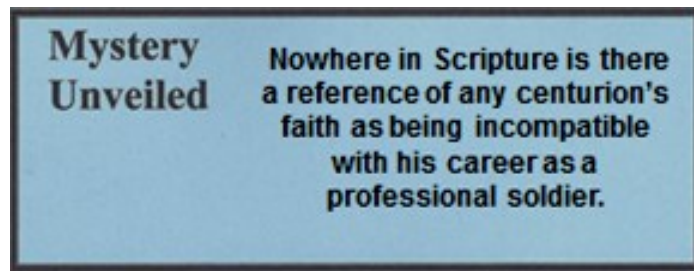
At this point, it is important to recall the recipients of each of the gospels. Matthew was written for a Jewish audience while Luke was written for Gentiles. The cultural and religious differences were tremendous. Matthew included the verses 11 and 12 above because these words of Jesus would be most 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.



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.³⁷⁰ 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 61:1-5.³⁷¹ 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.³⁷² 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.”³⁷³ This presents two significant questions for scholars today:

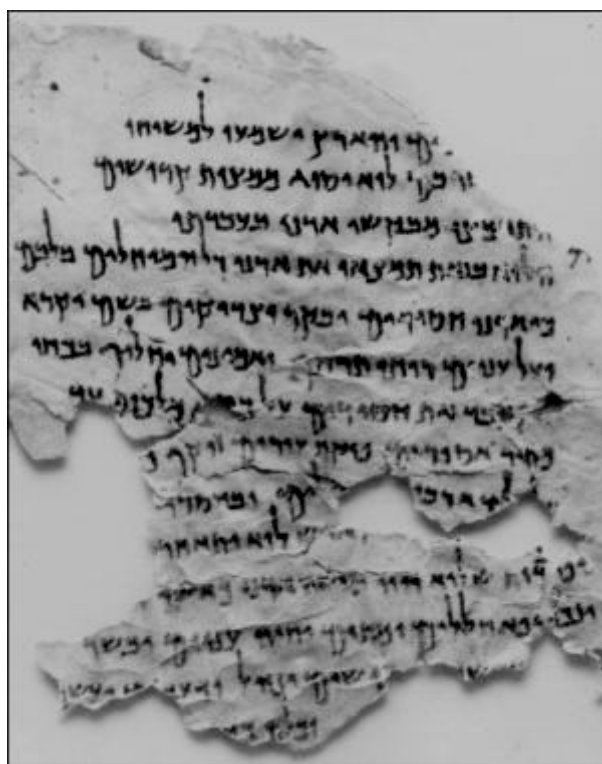
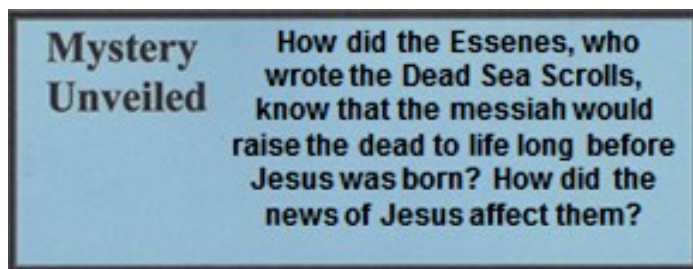
1. How did the Essenes, who wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls, know that the messiah would raise the dead to life long before Jesus was born?
2. And when Jesus did raise the dead to life, how did the news affect them?

370. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 161; Eisenmann and Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered*. 237.

371. Wilkins, “Peter’s Declaration concerning Jesus’ Identity in Caesarea Philippi.” 325.

372. Miller, “The War of the Scrolls.” 44; Wilkins, “Peter’s Declaration concerning Jesus’ Identity in Caesarea Philippi.” 324-326.

373. 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.³⁷⁴ It is a classic example of *ipsissima verba* and *ipsissima vox* that was previously described.³⁷⁵ This fragment was written about three decades

374. 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.

375. See 08.03.04.Q4.

before the birth of Jesus and, therefore, is worth citing. It begins by announcing the coming of “the anointed one,” meaning the Messiah.

¹ [for the heav]ens and the earth will listen to his Messiah, ² [and all] that is in them will not turn away from the holy precepts. ³ Be encouraged, you who are seeking the Lord in his service! (Blank space) ⁴ Will you not, perhaps, encounter the Lord in it, all those who hope in their heart? ⁵ For the Lord will observe the devout, and call the just by name, ⁶ and upon the poor he will place his spirit, and the faithful he will renew with his strength. ⁷ For he will honor the devout upon the throne of eternal royalty, ⁸ freeing prisoners, giving sight to the blind, straightening out the twisted. ⁹ Ever shall I cling to those who hope. In his mercy he will jud[ge,] ¹⁰ and from one shall the fruit [of] good [deeds] be delayed, ¹¹ and the Lord shall perform marvelous acts such as have not existed, just as he sa[id] ¹² for he will heal the badly wounded and will make the dead live, he will proclaim good news to the meek, ¹³ give lavishly [to the need]y, lead the exiled and enrich the hungry.

Dead Sea Scroll Fragment, 4Q521.1-13³⁷⁶

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.**

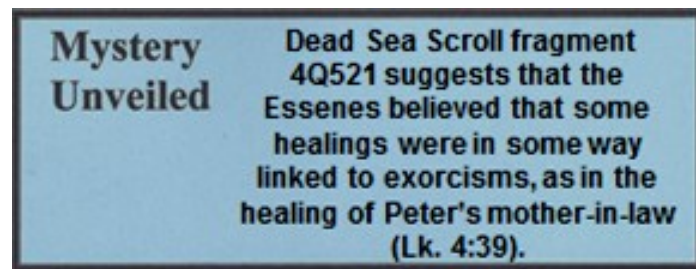
Isaiah 35:5-6

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

376. Martinez. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*. 394. Letters within the square brackets are either unreadable or missing in the original scroll.

those near Damascus most likely raised him after his parents passed on.³⁷⁷ When he preached in 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.



08.06.03.Q3 Why are there name variations for the Gadara region (Mk. 5:1-20; Mt. 8:28-34; Lk. 8:26-39)?

This region southeast of the Sea of Galilee has three communities: Gerasa, Gadara, and Gergesa.³⁷⁸ 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.³⁷⁹ The region was known by all three names.³⁸⁰ 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.³⁸¹ 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.³⁸²

377. See section on the Birth of John the Baptist.

378. See Map of Decapolis Cities and Region, 03.04.17.Z.

379. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*. 128.

380. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*. 90.

381. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 1:152.

382. See 08.06.03.V1.

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 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, Panias, 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.³⁸³

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.

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?

383. Geikie, *The Life and Words*, 2:628-30.

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.³⁸⁴
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

384. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Difficulties*. 325.

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.

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 here 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.³⁸⁵ 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

385. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 1:177.

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.³⁸⁶ 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.³⁸⁷ It has all the signs of death, and is either a coma or close to being a coma.³⁸⁸ 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 that the buried person probably 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, for which reason Jesus eventually cursed the village.

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

A case in point is this statement: **“Because of this, the wisdom of God said.”** These words from Luke 11:49 were spoken by Jesus, but there are no clear references to His quotation. Critics have

386. Barclay, “Matthew.” 1:345; Vine, “Asleep, Sleep.” *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:41.

387. <http://catalepsy.askdefine.com/>. Retrieved August 1, 2013.

388. <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/catalepsy>. Retrieved August 1, 2013.

highlighted such passages as proof of numerous errors in the Bible. But the appropriate response is found in the context of the Hebraic mindset.³⁸⁹ When Jesus spoke to the Jews, they understood the *context* of the conversation,³⁹⁰ meaning, they understood what Jesus was saying in the broad scope of Scripture. Obviously, if the context was not understood, those in His audience as well as the Pharisees would have been quick to identify the error that has been touted by modern critics. But they didn't! Jesus referred to the Scriptures of the Old Testament in three ways:

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

In Jewish thinking, there was no field of study more important than theology, which far outpaced the second most important field of study – a vocational trade.³⁹¹ Therefore, when men gathered for a festival, after a synagogue service, or other social event, the subject of discussion was often theology, or the impact of Hellenism upon the Jewish world. Therefore, the average Jewish person was well grounded in both the Old Testament and Oral Tradition. As a result, it was easy for Jesus to make broad over-generalizations, as in John 17:12 and His listeners understood Him. Today, some 2,000 years later, scholars must reconstruct the setting and context of the event. Yet while the historical connections at times are difficult to put together, the theological meaning remains secure.

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

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

In the three and a half year ministry of Jesus, there was sufficient time for several missionary trips. In fact, it is difficult to conclude that there was only one missionary journey. Therefore,

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

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

391. See 02.03.04 “Education.”

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

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

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

*Didache 11:4-6*³⁹²

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

Didache 11:8-10, 12

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

Theodotos, son of Vettenus, priest and *archisynagogos*, son of an *archisynagogos*, grandson of an *archisynagogos*, built this synagogue for the reading of the Law and

392. 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.

for the teaching of commandments, as well as the hostel, the rooms and the water fittings (?), as a lodging for those coming from a foreign country, which his father established as well as the presbyters and Simonides.

Jerusalem Synagogue Dedication Inscription³⁹³

Jesus sent His disciples out into the Jewish communities knowing that they would be cared for.³⁹⁴ Later, Luke mentioned that the Apostle Paul stayed in private homes and, thereby, followed the same principle.³⁹⁵

10.01.26.Q1 Does Mark 8:12 conflict with Matthew 12:39 and 16:4?

At the center of this conflict is this statement, **“No sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.”** When the critics wanted a sign, Matthew and Mark each stated that there would not be any more. Note that Matthew’s writing style is somewhat more detailed than Mark’s. In 12:39 and 16:4 Matthew said that there would be no sign with one exception - the sign of Jonah the prophet. Mark, on the other hand, did not include the exception (see 8:12). There is no error here, simply a difference in writing styles.³⁹⁶ Jesus did not want His followers to *look for signs*, but to *discern the signs* that were to come. Yet there would be three signs for them to consider:

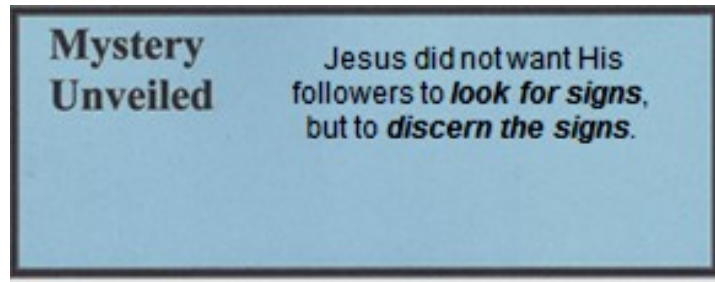
1. The resurrection of Lazarus
2. The resurrection of Jesus
3. The resurrection of the two witnesses (Rev. 11).

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

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

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

396. The gospel writers not only recorded various events and teachings of Jesus, but each writer applied his own style to emphasize the importance of his message. Mark not only wrote ideas in poetic style, but also themes – a writing technique that helped his audience memorize his message. See an example of the poetic themes of Mark 6:31 – 8:30 in Appendix 11.



The religious leaders, who most certainly remembered when 12-year old Jesus was asking them questions at the temple steps, had carefully observed His every move throughout His ministry. Their request for another miracle was not to see His divine nature, but to entrap Him. If they did not accept what was already obvious and readily known, including the messianic miracles, and they certainly would not accept any other signs. Therefore, the phrase “wicked and adulterous generation,” describes them perfectly. It did not mean every person of that generation. But the sign of Jonah, in this context, is clearly the sign of the resurrected Jesus.

As confrontations with the religious establishment increased, Jesus directed His journey in a manner that would eventually lead Him to Jerusalem at Passover. He lived the life of a fugitive; ministering in areas where people needed Him while giving His disciples additional instruction.

11.01.02.Q3 Did the Transfiguration occur in six days or eight?

Matthew and Mark recorded that this event occurred “after about six days,” while Luke said it occurred “after about eight days.” As stated previously, the apparent difference can be simply explained in that there were two methods of counting days: exclusively and inclusively. “Inclusively” would count the six days between the events while “exclusively” count the six days plus the eventful days of travel. Luke counted time inclusively while Mark and Matthew counted time exclusively.³⁹⁷

11.02.11.Q1 Concerning the wording of John 7:6, 8 and 10, did Jesus lie?

Critics have used this passage as evidential proof that Jesus either lied or was unsure of Himself and, consequently, had to change His mind – implying that He was susceptible to making errors. In this passage, there was a discussion between Jesus and His disciples about walking to Jerusalem for the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. Critics point out that in v.6 Jesus said, “My time is not yet here” and shortly thereafter in verse 8 the same thought was rephrased as, “you go to the festival. I am not going up to the festival because my time has not yet fully

397. Hiebert, “Transfiguration.” 16:2-61; Stein, R. *Jesus the Messiah*. 167.

come.” The apparent conflict lies in verse 10 where John recorded that, “after his brothers had left for the festival, he went also, not publicly, but in secret.”

The key to understanding this passage is that the religious leaders were determined to kill Him at any cost, and probably were waiting to capture Him in one of the many festival caravans that was coming to the Holy City. If they could not capture Him along a country road, they would try to do so at the festival (Jn. 7:11). So the disciples went to the temple as pilgrims, probably joined by others on their way to the temple. No doubt they were aware of some kind of danger that threatened Jesus, although they certainly did not understand the full extent. Jesus, on the other hand, was not about to let Himself be killed until the right time. Therefore, He did not go with them, but waited briefly and left in secret. The Greek phrase *right time* was not a matter of weeks or months, but of hours or, at the very most, days. It has a meaning that is related more to the *right season* or the *right opportunity*, rather than to a clock or calendar measurement.³⁹⁸ The word Greek *kairos* does not mean *hour* but at the *appropriate time*.³⁹⁹ Jesus may even have taken a different route. The point is Jesus had to enter into the city unnoticed and remained secluded until the right time came for Him to speak publicly. Jesus did not lie, but simply avoided an early capture so Bible prophecy would be fulfilled.

11.02.17.Q1 Why did Jesus present two witnesses (Jn. 8:12-20)?

Two witnesses was the legal standard to prove a matter in a court of law. And Jesus provided more than two witnesses, beginning with the prophets and John the Baptist. Hence the statement, **“the witness of two men is valid.”** The judicial system is based upon Deuteronomy 17:15 and 19:15, and was also a principle of law in neighboring cultures as well.⁴⁰⁰ Furthermore, the Oral Law stated that a man was not to be believed if he was speaking about himself. Even the Greeks said that a person could not present evidence that would support self-interest.⁴⁰¹

While this Mosaic Law pertained to civil matters, by the first century, the same principle was also applied to theological studies. John recorded that Jesus was first qualified to bear witness to God’s plan (Jn. 8:14) and second, that the Father was with Him. Furthermore, Jesus knew from where He came and of His eternal future.

398. Beasley-Murray, “John.” 36:107.

399. Pixner, *With Jesus through Galilee*. 63.

400. The Greeks and Romans and several ancient civilizations has similar laws as proven by the Code of Hammurabi and other ancient codes. See http://courses.vcc.vccs.edu/history_mcgee/courses/his101/Source%20Documents/wc1d01.htm Retrieved January 28, 2015.

401. Barclay, “John.” 1:195.

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

Jesus did not openly declare His divine authority in His early ministry. But in the course of time, it became evident. First, by implication, then by straightforward statements as follows:

1. In John 8:58 Jesus said that, “Before Abraham, I am.”
2. In John 10:33 the Jews attempted to stone Jesus. When He asked them why, they responded and said it was because He was a mere man and made himself equal with God.
3. In Luke 5:17-20 Jesus did not heal the paralytic, but said that “Your sins are forgiven you.” This was incredibly offensive to the Pharisees because, as they correctly said, only God could forgive sins.

Finally, it should be noted that the divine authority He claimed in the Great Commission, was told privately to His disciples, and not to the religious establishment.

11.02.25.Q1 Does John 9:39 conflict with 5:22 and 8:15?

In John 9:39 Jesus said that He came into this world to judge it, but in 5:22 and 8:15 He said that judgment is left to Him because the Father judges no one. The difference lays in the fact that in John 9:39 Jesus said that His “judgment” was a clarification of where people stood in their relationship with God. As previously stated, he came to fulfill the Mosaic Law, not abolish it. He taught the Kingdom of God and helped people discern what God desires. He did not come to condemn the world (5:22; 8:15) but to save it. However, in His future return He will judge all persons and nations. On an important side note, the Church has adopted a Roman view of *law*, that means *restriction* and is therefore considered to be *bad*, while the Hebrew Bible views *law* as *instruction* and *freedom*, and therefore, *good*. Therefore, there is no conflict.

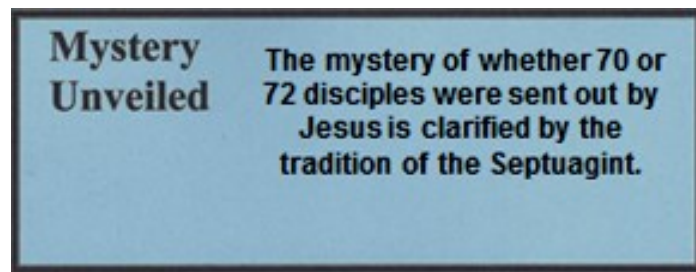
12.01.02.Q1 Did Jesus send out 70 or 72 disciples (Lk. 1:1-16 vs. Mt. 11:20-24)?

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

The answer is hidden in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible;⁴⁰² although not of any

402. See Septuagint in 02.02.25.

particular verse. During the third century B.C., Jewish people living in Egypt were confronted with the challenges of a youthful generation that was speaking Greek and losing the Hebrew language. So, according to tradition or legend, the elders had 72 scholars translate the Hebrew Bible into Greek. In the course of time, the translation was honored in their memory and became known as the “Septuagint,” meaning 70 and later represented by the Roman numeral symbol “LXX.” The number 72 had simply changed to 70 for conversational use. In fact, in good Jewish tradition, their names have been preserved as well.⁴⁰³ The phrase did not have a literal meaning, but became a figure of speech. The same change may have occurred in regard to the number of missionaries who were sent out by Jesus. It is noteworthy that while the Sanhedrin has 70 members, the Council at Jamnia had 72 members, also known as *elders*.⁴⁰⁴



12.04.02.Q1 In Matthew 19:16-26 and parallels, could the gospel writers have meant “rope,” instead of “camel”?

Some critics have said that the phrase, “**a camel**,” is a misinterpretation. They claim the Greek word actually means *rope*, because the two Greek words for *rope* and *camel* are similar. They argue that a scribal error was made when copying Scriptures since the Greek word for camel *kamelos*,⁴⁰⁵ is close to the word for a heavy rope *kamilos* that was used to pull ships.⁴⁰⁶ This interpretation was so popular among some scholars, that in 1938 English Bible translation titled the *Book of Books* used the word *rope* instead of *camel*.⁴⁰⁷ The purpose was obviously to soften the harshness of the saying. However, what these translators failed to recognize is that the same

403. B. S. J. Isserlin of the University of Leeds has an article titled *The Names of the 72 Translators of the Septuagint* based upon the Pseudepigraphic Letter by Aristeas (47-50) to his brother Philocrates written in the 2nd century B.C. It was later repeated by Philo of Alexandria as well as Josephus in *Antiquities* 12.2.7 (57). The article by Isserlin is available at <https://www.jtsa.edu/Documents/pagedocs/JANES/1973%205/Isserlin5.pdf> Retrieved June 29, 2015.

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

405. Barclay, “Matthew.” 2:217.

406. <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/hawsers>. Retrieved August 3, 2013.

407. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*. 55.

figure of speech is found in rabbinic writings, which indicates that the Scripture was transmitted accurately, without a scribal error.⁴⁰⁸

12.04.04.Q1 How can Matthew 20:20 be reconciled with Mark 10:35?

In Matthew's account, the mother of James and John approached Jesus to ask him for a position for her sons in the new kingdom. Mark, on the other hand, does not mention the mother; he only records that it was the two disciples who came to Jesus to make the same request. In this culture, there was no difference between a requester and his agent – the same issue with the centurion and his servant. All too often attention is paid to the origin of the question rather than the response given by Jesus.

12.04.05.Q1 How does one explain the two discrepancies (two cities of Jericho and two blind men) in Matthew 20:29-34, Mark 10:46-51, and Luke 18:42-43?

There are two issues to consider in these passages:

1. Matthew and Mark record that Jesus was leaving Jericho while Luke said He was entering it. Clearly, someone has to be wrong? Right?
2. How many beggars were there? Luke recorded that Jesus met the blind man as He approached Jericho, while Matthew said He met two blind men as they left the city. Mark, on the other hand, simply stated that the name of the blind man was Bartimaeus. Some critics have said there is an obvious conflict.

Concerning the number of cities: This issue is resolved by understanding that there were two cities by the name of Jericho.⁴⁰⁹ The first one was destroyed centuries before Jesus and cursed. The second one is located about two miles from the first. It was built in the second century B.C. by the Hasmoneans and later expanded and enhanced by Herod the Great.⁴¹⁰ He made it into a

408. Grant, R. *Early Christianity and Society*. 97.

409. In this desert oasis in centuries past the Chaldeans captured King Zedekiah (2 Kg. 25:5) and during the Maccabean Revolt the Syrians attempted to establish a military outpost there (1 Macc. 9:50). The military stronghold came under Hasmonean control at the end of the Revolt, but was destroyed by the Roman General Pompey in 63 B.C.

410. Byers, "On the Jericho Road." 43-44. See also Zondervan's *New International Version Archaeological Study Bible*. (2005 ed.). 1646.

city with surprising beauty, creating the ideal vacation destination and travel rest area.⁴¹¹ The answer to the question, in what some have called a biblical error, was explained by the Jewish historian Josephus. He made reference to “the old city” that was destroyed by Joshua, but was near the new town of the same name.

“... Notwithstanding which, there is a fountain by Jericho; that runs plentifully and is very fit for watering the ground. It rises near the old city which Joshua, the son of Nun, the general of the Hebrews, took the first of all the cities of the land of Canaan by right of war.”

Josephus, *Wars* 4.8.3 (459)

The gospel writers presented their accounts from two different perspectives: Matthew and Mark said Jesus left the old city while Luke said Jesus going to the new city by the same name. There is no conflict.

Concerning the number of beggars: Matthew, being the former accountant and tax collector, would have been more detail-oriented in this matter, whereas Mark and Luke would have presented the story of an individual named Bartimaeus. In essence, Matthew gave the legal accounting of two blind men Jesus encountered, while Luke and Mark simply referenced the encounter of the most prominent person.

In the modern legal system, such differences are not acceptable. However, in the biblical era, reporting an account in this manner was deemed normal and accurate. The ancients focused on the theme or purpose of the encounter, not as much on the details as is common today. An alternative view is that the blind man met Jesus as He approached the ancient city (as per Luke), the two walked together through the town, and as they left the city Jesus healed him (as per Matthew). Consequently, there is no need to believe that there is a contradiction.⁴¹²

Finally, on a cultural side point, blind persons were given special clothing to wear, which identified them as being blind. This permitted people passing by to offer aid when needed, and chariot drivers took extra precaution when approaching them. When Jesus healed him, **“he threw off his coat,”** a signal to the public of his healing, and he rejoiced in Jesus.

411. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 715; The new Jericho was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. For more information, see Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.3.3 and *Wars* 1.22.2.

412. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 364.

12.04.09.Q2 Is there a conflict between John 12:1-3 and Mark 14:1-3?

According to the gospel of John, Mary anointed Jesus in Bethany six days before Passover, but in Mark she anointed Him two days before the national festival. Why is there an obvious difference? This again is reflective of the significant differences in the thinking processes between Greeks and Jews.

Today, scholars examine all the details before coming to a conclusion. But the ancient Jews considered events and concepts of far superior importance to chronological order of an account. In fact, the latter point was considered relatively insignificant. The fact that Mark placed this event in the 14th chapter indicates that he was aware of the anointing, but he felt it was important not to write particular features modern scholars think are necessary. Note that modern scholarship is based upon Greek patterns of thinking, not Hebraic patterns of thinking.⁴¹³

Information omitted by Mark does not imply an event did not occur. Furthermore, the gospels were written several decades after these events. One would certainly become suspect, if every detail was in perfect agreement. This derails the argument of modern critics, who have proposed that this account was added later by church fathers to create a theological story. Such apparent difficulties occur in historical chronology, not in theological matters.

Both Jews and Christians think of Passover as a ritualistic meal on a specific day. However, Passover is essentially a week-long celebration with culmination at the Passover (Seder) meal. They chose the Passover lamb on the 10th day of Nissan and killed it on the 14th day. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was seven days (but fell under the “Passover” name).⁴¹⁴ Where the text has the term “Passover,” the term was applied to all three feasts that were celebrated at that time. Therefore, the phrase, “After two days was the feast of the Passover,” it could mean that it may have been the 8th day of the month, two days before the lamb was chosen, not two days before the lamb was killed.

The reason Mark may have placed this event in this portion of his text is that it is adjacent to the following episode in which Jesus washed the feet of His disciples during the Last Supper. He did not record the feet-washing event of Jesus, yet everyone in the early church was aware of it. This would provide a literary contrast for his readers between Mary, the humble servant, and Jesus, the humble servant to His disciples.⁴¹⁵

413. For more information on the differences of Greek and Hebraic ways of thinking, see Unit 02, Chapter 04 “Differences between First Century Roman-Greek and Jewish Worldviews.”

414. See “Levitical Feasts as Prophetic Reflections of Jesus” in Appendix 5.

415. Major, Manson, and Wright, *The Mission and Message of Jesus*. 855.

The act of anointing must have highly irritated the religious leaders who, no doubt, looked upon the episode in 2 Kings 9:6 and discounted the scene before them. In this Old Testament passage, one of Israel's greatest prophets, Elisha, told the son of another prophet (2 Kgs. 9:1) to take a flask of oil and anointed Jehu as King of Israel (2 Kgs. 9:6).⁴¹⁶ Now the religious leaders experienced a truth they could not escape: in the room with Jesus were the greatest leaders of Israel, who had almost unanimously rejected Him and in walked a woman who broke her flask of oil and anointed Jesus as her Lord. She did what the ordained men of God refused to do. Furthermore, she broke the Jewish custom and let her hair down to anoint the feet of Jesus.

This encounter not only demonstrated the heart of the Gentiles and Jewish leaders, but also the status of women in the culture. Normally, religious leaders would not have accepted anointing by women and, if they did, the authors would not have mentioned it. But the disciples were functioning within the framework of the Kingdom of God.

14.01.11.Q1 Is the account in Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:3-9 the same as in Luke 7:37-38?

In Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:3-9 Simon is a leper, but in Luke 7:37-38 he is the Pharisee. John (12:1-8) did not give him a name, but the account seems to have taken place in the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus.⁴¹⁷ It should be noted that the name Simon, like Jesus, was a common name and there are ten Simons in the New Testament. The real issue is whether the story recorded by Luke is the same as recorded by the other gospel writers. There is a good possibility that these are two different but similar events. After all, Jesus performed so many miracles that all the books could not have recorded every one of them.

According to one of the Dead Sea Scrolls,⁴¹⁸ Bethany and Bethpage were two villages east of Jerusalem, where lepers lived. Because of their diseases, known as "impurities," they were not permitted to enter the holy structure (Lev. 13:45-46). However, the location of Bethany is higher than the temple area, which gave them some consolation as they could look into the holy place and think of a future time with God. This may be why Jesus brought comfort to them, as

416. Jehu is among fifty biblical names whose existence has been verified by archaeological studies in a published article by Lawrence Mykytiuk titled, "Archaeology Confirms 50 Real People in the Bible." *Biblical Archaeology Review*. March/April, 2014 (40:2), pages 42-50, 68. This archaeological evidence confirms the historical accuracy of the biblical timeline. For further study, see the website for Associates for Biblical Research, as well as Grisanti, "Recent Archaeological Discoveries that Lend Credence to the Historicity of the Scriptures." 475-98.

417. Barclay, "Matthew." 2:329.

418. The Temple Scroll, 11Q Miqdash 46.16 - 47.5.

evidenced when He enjoyed a meal with Simon the leper.⁴¹⁹

14.02.22.Q1 Concerning the number of rooster crows, how does Matthew 26:34 reconcile with Mark 14:30?

Matthew recorded that before the rooster crowed Peter would deny Jesus three times and Mark said the denial would come before the rooster crowed twice. Again, this is a matter of interpretation. The disciples were not at all concerned how often the so-called rooster crowed, especially when several crows in succession were considered a single crow. At issue is the phrase, **“before the rooster crows.”** Some Bibles use the more accurate phrase, “cock crow,” or “rooster crow.” But as already been hinted, it probably was not a rooster that crowed! The phrase has two possible interpretations.

1. Jesus could have referred to a literal rooster crowing early in the morning. But Jewish writings clearly indicate that chickens were not permitted inside the Holy City. The Oral Law clearly states,

They may not rear fowls in Jerusalem because of the Hallowed Things, nor may priests rear them [anywhere] in the land of Israel because of [the laws concerning] clean foods.

Mishnah, *Baba Kamma* 7.7

A rooster crowing outside the city walls might have been heard inside the city. However, this is highly unlikely.

2. Jesus, most likely, referred to the “rooster crow” as the trumpet blast that signaled the end of the third watch (3:00 a.m.) and the changing of military guard throughout the city.⁴²⁰ That trumpet call was known in Latin *gallicinium* which means *cock crow*, and in Greek as *alektorophonia*.⁴²¹ The first “cock crow” was the midnight trumpet blast at the end of the second watch, and the second “cock crow” was at the end of the third watch (3:00 a.m.).⁴²²

419. Pixner, *With Jesus in Jerusalem*. 56.

420. Vine, “Cock, Cock-Crowing.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:107-08.

421. Barclay, “John.” 2:230 and “Matthew.” 2:347. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:436-37. See Appendix 16.

422. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 22, page 12.

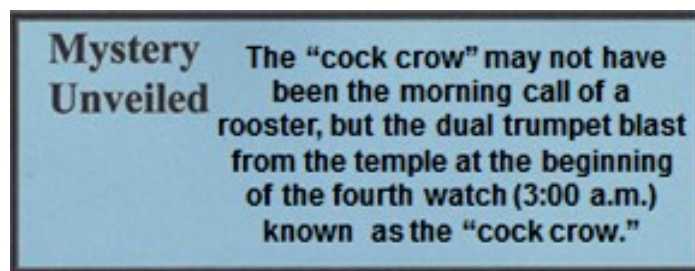
Most scholars believe that Jesus was referring to the third watch trumpet blast because

1. The 3:00 a.m. trumpet blast *alektorophinia* is earlier than a natural rooster's call
2. This call permitted time for the illegal judicial proceedings to occur.

Two priests stood at the upper gate ... with two trumpets in their hands. At the cock crow they blew a sustained, a quavering and another sustained blast. When they reached the tenth step they again blew a sustained, a quavering and another sustained blast. When they reached the Court [of the Women] they again blew a sustained, a quavering and another sustained blast.

Mishnah, *Sukkah* 5.4⁴²³

Concerning the differences between Matthew and Mark, Mark evidently referred to the two trumpets that blew while Mathew probably referred to the number of trumpet blasts. It is a logical matter of perspective. Later, three trumpet blasts marked the end of the fourth watch (6:00 a.m.) and the beginning of a new work day.



14.02.22.Q2 How do the Synoptic gospels reconcile with the gospel of John on the Passover Narrative?

The apparent difference between the gospel of John and the synoptic gospels has been the fuel for much discussion. Since Gentile church leaders did not know the symbolic relationship between the Passover sacrifice and the timing of the death of Jesus, they had difficulty reconciling the three day event, as well as compressing the six trials into a time frame of less than twelve hours.

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

There are several ancient documents from the third and fourth centuries that reflect this incorrect interpretation. Adding to the error is the fact that the church at this time counted days as beginning at midnight. It should be noted that the purpose of these documents was to support the existing Gentile church doctrines and interpretations, which distorted the biblical narrative. The third century teachings of the Apostles, titled *Didascalia Apostolorum*, from Syria, comment:

While he (Jesus) was still with us, before he suffered, when we were eating the Passover with him, he said to us: “Today in this night one of you will betray me.” And Judas came with the scribes and the priests of the people and betrayed the Lord Jesus.

When we had eaten the Passover on Tuesday evening, we went to the Mount of Olives. And during the night they arrested our Lord Jesus. And on the following day, on Wednesday, he remained imprisoned in the house of the High Priest Caiaphas. And on the following day again, on Thursday, they took him to the Procurator Pilate.⁴²⁴ But when Friday commenced they accused him vehemently before Pilate. And they were unable to produce anything truthful, but gave false witness against him. And they urged Pilate on to kill him. And they crucified him on the same day.

***Didascalia, Apostolorum*⁴²⁵**

Clearly, this is incorrect, but it demonstrates how lack of knowledge of Jewish culture attributed to inaccurate conclusions. Another Gentile church father was Bishop Epiphanius of Salamis (ca. 380) whose writings gave details on the month of April of the Gregorian calendar.

He (Jesus) suffered the thirteenth of the Kalends of April. Before that time they ate the Passover, as the Gospel testifies and we have declared many times. They celebrated the Passover meal two days before the official day, that is on Tuesday in the evening.... Further on that day, in the evening of Tuesday, he was taken prisoner. The Day of Preparation was on the 14th, the Sabbath the 15th; hereafter the Sunday lit up which illuminated the underworld, the world and the heaven with

424. The title of Pontius Pilate was always thought to be “procurator.” However, in 1961 an inscription was discovered in Caesarea that has his title as “Prefectus Judaea” (see 16.01.06.B). The explanation of so-called error is that beginning from the time of Emperor Claudius (reigned 41-54), the title of the ruler of Judaea was *procurator*. Josephus and Tacitus who decades later wrote of Pilate used that title rather than his real one – *prefectus*, in Latin. See also Billington, “Was the Palace of Herod where Jesus was Tried?” 9.

425. Quoted from Pixner, *With Jesus in Jerusalem*. 78.

its light.

Epiphanius, *Panarion* 51, 26⁴²⁶

To observe the Passover the Savior withdrew to the Mountain (Mt. Zion), where he ate the Passover, which he had, as he said, so much desired (Lk. 22:15). It was there that he ate the Jewish Passover meal; he himself did not do it in any other way, but in the same fashion as they did, so that the Law should not be abolished but accomplished (cf. Mt. 5:17).

Epiphanius, *Panarion* 51, 27⁴²⁷

The Ethiopian apocryphal *Book of Adam*, (ca. the fourth century) related the days Jesus was arrested and crucified, and has a reference to Mark 2:20 concerning fasting. The author wrote,

God speaks to Adam; “Adam, you have established beforehand the days on which suffering shall come over me, when I shall have taken up flesh, namely Wednesday and Friday.”

*Book of Adam*⁴²⁸

The author of *Adam* said the Passover was on Wednesday and that Jesus died on the following Friday. Again, there was a constant struggle to reconcile the biblical accounts.

The Judeo-Christians celebrated Passover-communion known as *Pascha*, which in the fourth century became known as *Easter*.⁴²⁹ According to the church historian Eusebius, the fourteenth day of the moon (Nissan) was still associated with the day Jesus was crucified, and He arose on the first day of the week (Lord’s Day). He discussed the fact that the church practiced fasting in observation of the Savior’s Passover in Asia.

The church of all Asia, guided by the remoter tradition supposed that they ought to keep the fourteenth day of the moon for the festival of the Savior’s Passover, in which day the Jews were commanded to kill the Paschal Lamb; and it was incumbent on them, at all times, to make an end of the fast on this day on whatever

426. Quoted from Pixner, *With Jesus in Jerusalem*. 79.

427. Quoted from Pixner, *With Jesus in Jerusalem*. 79.

428. <http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/TheBookOfAdam.htm>. Retrieved March 30, 2013; Quoted from Pixner, *With Jesus in Jerusalem*. 79.

429. Rosen and Rosen, *Christ in the Passover*. 59.

day of the week it should happen to fall.

Eusebius, *Church History* 5.23.1

The date that Jesus was crucified on Friday, the 14th day of Nissan, is well established. However, the events preceding the crucifixion remain somewhat problematic.

15.03.12.Q1 How does one explain the obvious disagreement concerning the suicide of Judas as recorded in Matthew 27:5 and Acts 1:18?

Matthew 27:5 records that Judas hanged himself, while in Acts 1:18 he fell forward (headlong) and his bowels spilled upon the ground. Some have attempted to explain that the traitor first hung himself from a tree and when the rope broke, he fell forward on the ground, causing his stomach to open. While this makes common sense to the modern reader, it is highly doubtful. Others have stated that Matthew emphasized the remorse of Judas while Luke, in the book of Acts, emphasized the judgment of God. This may be true, but it fails to satisfactorily answer the question.

The ancients used several methods of execution: stoning, crucifixion, burning, death by lions or gladiators, or impalement upon a sharpened stake which was commonly used by the Assyrians, who were the cruelest and most feared people of antiquity.⁴³⁰ The method almost never heard of was death by hanging with the use of a rope (a possible exception was Hanan in the book of Esther). Of all these, impaling oneself upon an impaling stick could have been the choice of death, resulting from an impulsive decision demanding immediate results, considering the emotional turmoil of Judas. By definition, a cross is an upright stake upon which one could be hung, bound, or impaled.⁴³¹ Papias supported this, an early Church father who said that Judas hung himself upon an impaling stick. If such a horrific death were completed, the Matthew 27:5 would not contradict Acts 1:18. The Code of Hammurabi, which predates the Assyrians by centuries, states that if an upper class woman causes the death of her husband, she shall be impaled upon a stake (see example 15.03.12.B below).⁴³² The stake of Hammurabi and the Assyrians evolved into the cross of the first century. In fact, the word for *stake* was also used for *cross*.⁴³³

430. Caba. "Crucifixion: History and Practice." 12-14.

431. Taylor, "Cross." 57.

432. The Code of Hammurabi No. 153.

http://courses.cvcc.vccs.edu/history_mcghee/courses/his101/Source%20Documents/wc1d01.htm Retrieved January 28, 2015.

433. Robinson. "Crucifixion in the Roman World: The Use of Nails at the Time of Christ." 34-35 n34.



15.03.12.A. RELIEF CARVING OF ASSYRIANS IMPALING ISRAELITES. In 701 B.C., the Assyrians impaled live Israelites on poles during an attack on Lachish, one of forty-six cities conquered by the Assyrian King Sennacherib. The impaling pole is believed to have been the predecessor to the cross. It is also possible that when Judas “hung” himself, he probably impaled himself and, thus, hung on the impaling pole. If so, this would reconcile the two different biblical accounts of his death. Photo courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

The phrase “hung on a tree” is more accurately translated as “impaled on a stick,” or “impaled on a pole.”⁴³⁴ If Judas impaled himself, then there is no disagreement between the accounts in Matthew and Acts.⁴³⁵

Judas had evil in his heart, but still shared the Passover and first communion with Jesus and fellow disciples. His suicide ought to bring incredible awareness to every believer of the importance of resolving conflicts, anger, or resentment before taking part in communion. Failure

434. *New International Version Study Bible* footnote on Deut. 21:22; Tzaferis, “Crucifixion – The Archaeological Evidence.” 48.

435. Another explanation states that Judas hung himself, but due to the late hour of his suicide, there was no time to bury his body prior to Passover. Therefore, it was simply tossed over the city wall and when it fell upon the rocks of the Hinnom Valley, his abdomen spilled out. It was buried after the Passover ended. The difficulty with this suggestion is that if great efforts were made to bury the body of Jesus who was crucified outside the city walls, why could a hasty burial not have been provided for Judas? This writer believes this argument is interesting but holds little merit. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 24, page 13.

to do so could bring judgment on one's self; it brought a curse according to the words of the Apostle Paul, because...

²⁷ Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy way will be guilty of sin against the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ So a man should examine himself; in this way he should eat the bread and drink from the cup. ²⁹ For whoever eats and drinks without recognizing the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself.

1 Corinthians 11:27-29

When Judas realized he was guilty of a horrific crime, he condemned himself in accordance with the Mosaic Law.

²² “If anyone is found guilty of an offense deserving the death penalty and is executed, and you hang his body on a tree, ²³ you are not to leave his corpse on the tree overnight but are to bury him that day, for anyone hung on a tree is under God's curse. You must not defile the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.

Deuteronomy 21:22-23

Three New Testament authors, Luke, Paul, and the unknown author of 1 Peter, all used the phrase of “hung on a tree” when describing the death of Jesus. Obviously, the word “hung” does not have reference to the use of a rope. In addition to Deuteronomy 21:22-23 above, note these passages:

- 1. Acts 5:30 “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had murdered by hanging Him on a tree.”**
- 2. Acts 10:39 “We ourselves are witnesses of everything He did in both the Judean country and in Jerusalem, yet they killed Him by hanging Him on a tree.”**
- 3. Acts 13:29 “When they had fulfilled all that had been written about Him, they took Him down from the tree and put Him in a tomb.”**
- 4. Gal. 3:13 “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, because it is written: Everyone who is hung on a tree is cursed.”**
- 5. 1 Peter 2:24 “He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that, having**

died to sins, we might live for righteousness.”

The word *tree* can mean a literal *tree*, a *pole*, or a *Roman cross*, but also had the double meaning of *to be cursed by God*.⁴³⁶ If the word “hanging” in Acts 5:30; 10:39; and 13:29 refers to crucifixion of Jesus on a cross and not a conventional rope hanging, why have some scholars insisted that Judas hung himself with the use of a rope? Maybe they envisioned him hanging from a tree in a manner similar to that of captured horse thieves and bank robbers in America’s wild, wild, west who were executed by hanging from tree. That is hardly the case. When the Romans had a shortage of nails, many rebels were hung on a cross with their elbows tied with a rope to the cross beam.⁴³⁷ If the definition of the word “hanging” had some latitude, then it should not be of restricted use relative to Judas. Interestingly, both Jesus and Judas died carrying the curse of death.

**15.03.12.Q4 How is the discrepancy between Matthew 27:6 and Acts 1:18 explained?
“It’s not lawful.”**

The apparent discrepancy is that in Matthew’s account, it was not legal for the priests to purchase anything for the temple using “blood money,” so they purchased the potter’s field. However, in Acts 1:18 Luke clearly said that Judas purchased the potter’s field with the reward of iniquity or sin.⁴³⁸ He wrote to a Gentile audience and indicated the original source of the funds. Matthew however, wrote to a Jewish audience and wanted to make sure his readers understood that the priest actually did something right this time.

15.03.12.Q5 Did Matthew make a mistake when he attributed the words of Zechariah to Jeremiah?

More specifically, the quotation is this, **“What was spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled.”** In Western thinking, the question answers itself. This phrase would appear to be without difficulties, until the words of Jeremiah (7:31) are researched and it is discovered that these were actually spoken by Zechariah (11:12-13). The closest allusion to any words of Jeremiah refer to a field purchased for seventeen shekels (Jer. 32:6-9, see also 18:2-12; 19:1-13) and not thirty shekels as in Zechariah 11:12 and Matthew 27:9. Did Matthew make a mistake in recording this portion of his gospel? Most certainly, this is problematic to modern Western

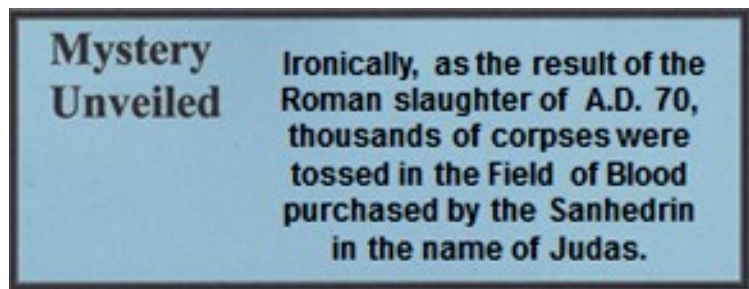
436. Elgvin, “The Messiah Who was Cursed on the Tree.” 34.

437. See illustration 16.01.11.B.

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

logic. To understand the statement, it is important to return to the first century to discover how the ancients processed information.⁴³⁹

As previously mentioned, there were two schools of biblical interpretation: the Schools of Shammai and Hillel. The latter had established seven rules of interpretation,⁴⁴⁰ of which the second one brought together various Old Testament passages based on common words. For example, in the study of messianic prophecies, it would have been normal to bring together words such as *shekel*, *silver*, and *potter*. Hence, there was a blend of two prophecies. Matthew referenced Jeremiah because he was the major prophet even though the bulk of the quotation came from Zechariah. Today, no Bible college student would pass a hermeneutics class with this kind of methodology, but it was common for the students in the School of Hillel, as it was with Matthew and Mark. Likewise, Mark (1:2-3) quoted Malachi (3:1) and Isaiah (40:3), but credited the entire quotation to Isaiah.⁴⁴¹ The gospel writers did not make an error. They followed the principles of scholarship that were in common use in their day.⁴⁴²



Finally, if the Sanhedrin had the legal authority to execute Jesus, then bringing Him before Pilate would have been unnecessary. The fact that the high court broke multiple rules of Jewish justice is indicative of the corruption of the Hellenistic leadership at this time. It is amazing that Jesus was even brought before Pilate, and not killed quietly by a Zealot or Roman assassin. But He had to die as the prophets foretold.

18.01.05.Q1 How many angels were at the tomb of Jesus: one or two (Lk. 24:4; Jn. 20:12 vs. Mt. 28:2; Mk. 16:4)?

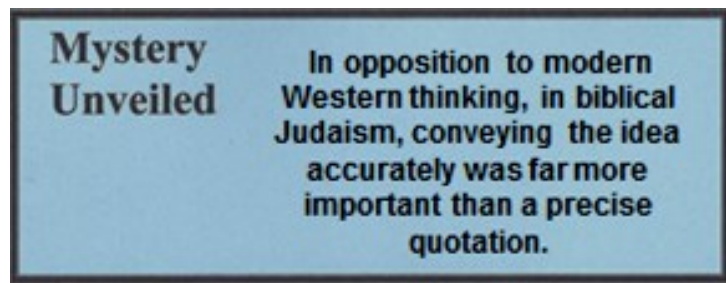
439. See also 05.01.02.X “The Major Prophet Speaks.”

440. Some ancient scholars debated on the number of rules. Rabbi Hillel said there were seven, but shortly after him Rabbi Ishmael said there were thirteen. See Appendix 30 “Hermeneutics 101.”

441. See 05.02.01.X.

442. Kaiser, Davids, Bruce, and Brauch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible*. 399-400.

Luke mentioned two angels, while the other writers made reference to only one. Furthermore, the words spoken by the angels differ in the narratives. Considering the gospels were written some thirty years after these events occurred, it should not be surprising that only the *idea* of what happened was recorded, rather than actual *quotations*. In Jewish thinking, conveying the idea was far more important than actual quotations. Even in modern courts today, an exact quotation from memory is not expected thirty years after the event. If precision is claimed, the witness becomes suspect. Likewise, all of the gospel writers present the same idea, even though the words are somewhat different.⁴⁴³ It is a classic example of *ipsissima verba* and *ipsissima vox* that was previously described.⁴⁴⁴ Another example 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.



Critics argue that this clearly indicates that Scripture has error, yet they fail to admit that the Holy Writ is far superior to all other historical documents.⁴⁴⁵ For example, the earliest sources that detail the burning of Rome have far greater discrepancies concerning the cause of the fire and how it spread. Some writers said the entire city was burned, while others claim only three districts were destroyed. No one questions the historicity of the fire and the related details, yet the same critics will question the entire gospel narrative on a minor issue.⁴⁴⁶ In a similar case, Apion, a Greek intellectual who wrote the *History of Egypt*, an anti-Semitic work that circulated in the first century (A.D.) Roman world. In response to this antagonist, Josephus defended his faith and the inspiration of Jewish Scripture, which included the following:

For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another [as the Greeks have], but only twenty-two books,⁴⁴⁷

443. Kaiser, Davids, Bruce, and Brauch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible*. 506.

444. See 08.03.04.Q4, “What is the significance of verbal statements, “*Ipsissima Verba*” and “*Ipsissima Vox*?” ”

445. Barclay, *Jesus*. 243.

446. Maier, *The First Easter*. 94.

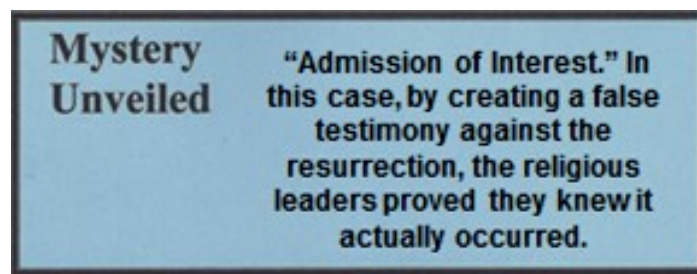
447. Some Books in the Hebrew Bible, such as First and Second Kings, are a single text. Josephus later mentioned the minor prophets.

which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them five belong to Moses which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death.

Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.8 (38-39a)

18.01.09.Q1 What is an “Admission of Interest?”

In a court of law, there is an interesting phrase called an, “Admission of interest” but it is better understood as an “Admission against interest.” It essentially states that false testimonies against a certain person or event indirectly proves the point or position of the accused and, in reality, is a testimony against the accuser. In other words, the accusations that Jesus did not rise from the grave is a good argument for, but not “proof” that, He did rise from the grave.⁴⁴⁸



The false accounts concerning the resurrection began with the chief priests and have continued to this day. Members of the Sanhedrin could hardly believe what they were hearing. They had enough problems with the earthquake and the darkness, both of which were understood to be symbolic of God’s wrath. Furthermore, people who had recently died walked around Jerusalem, symbolic of a coming divine resurrection and God’s love. If the disciples were astonished at these events, those who condemned Him must have been panic-stricken!

Yet the major problem continued to be how a messiah could have been cursed on a Roman cross. How could a man, who had healed the sick and raised the dead, die the worst kind of death? How could Roman soldiers kill God’s appointed messiah? This event made no sense whatsoever. The full meaning of the divinity of Jesus was not comprehended until after His resurrection. Generations later, the descendants of the Pharisees made several references to Jesus.⁴⁴⁹ But of

448. <http://dictionary.law.com/Default.aspx?selected=2341>. Retrieved October 2, 2013.

449. Jewish writers later made three references to Jesus in the two Talmuds: (1) He had immoral parents, namely his mother: Jerusalem Talmud, *Tebamot* 4:13, Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbath* 104b, and Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 106a; (2) He was a magician and idolater: Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 107b; and (3) Jesus was a heretic and blasphemer:

interest here is the observation made by the historian Josephus.

Now, there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works - a teacher of such as men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.3.3 (63-64)

Recent critics have claimed that this statement is not original with Josephus, but is a later addition by Christian editors. They present a good point in saying that such complimentary words would hardly have come from non-Christian Jews. Furthermore, if Josephus praised Jesus, why did he not do likewise for James, the brother of Jesus, when James was being stoned to death by Jewish rioters?⁴⁵⁰

While they present valid arguments, history however, appears to support the authenticity of the comment. The writings of Josephus were quickly translated into Arabic and Slavonic [Russian], before the original manuscript reached the Christian community, and his comments on Jesus appear in those translations as stated in English. At some point in history the *Antiquities of the Jews* was translated into Arabic with the same comment.⁴⁵¹ Another witness of this original work was Eusebius who mentioned it in his *Ecclesiastical History* (1.1.7-8) and in *Demonstration of the Gospel* (3.5.105-06), but then added the following:

When such testimony as this was transmitted to us by an historian who sprung from the Hebrews themselves, both respecting John the Baptist and our Savior, what subterfuge can be left to prevent those from being convicted destitute of all shame, who have forged the acts against them? This, however, may suffice on this subject.

Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.11.9

Babylonian Talmud, *Sanbedrin* 103a and Babylonian Talmud, *Taanit* 65a. Another reference written later and, therefore, not a part of the Talmuds known as the *Toidat Yesbu*, is considerably friendlier to Jesus.

450. Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.9.1

451. Santala, *The Messiah in the New Testament*. 28-29.

The obvious difficulty for critics is how to explain how an editor could have added these comments after the original manuscript had been translated and distributed widely throughout the Roman Empire. There are four notable reasons as to why this statement (*Antiquities* 18.3.3) is considered to be original with Josephus and not a later insert by a copyist or editor.

1. There are obvious Christian words missing. These are sometimes referred to as “Christian-eze;” those words commonly used by believers, even early believers, to express their thoughts and ideas, and these are missing.
2. There four obvious expressions that were *not* used by the early church fathers, not anyone else who was a follower of Jesus. These expressions were Jesus as a
 - a. “A wise man”
 - b. “Doer of wonderful works”
 - c. “Receive the truth with pleasure” and,
 - d. “The tribe of Christians”
3. Josephus also made a reference to James, the brother of Jesus, in *Antiquities* 20. This is important because Josephus made reference to James, based upon his previous description of Jesus in *Antiquities* 18. Therefore, the latter reference confirms the authenticity of the former.⁴⁵²
4. Not a single copy of Josephus has been uncovered that does *not* have this comment about Jesus. In other words, what *ancient* copy is there that supports the claims of the critics? None!

Of particular note is the fact that followers of Jesus spoke often of His “miracles,” not His “works.” In addition, the word “tribe” would have some derogatory connotations to it. No Christian would have used it. Josephus, who was a well-respected Pharisee (like the Apostle Paul), but not a believer, carefully used words that in his Jewish thinking best described Jesus, without showing any loyalty to Him. Since he enjoyed a lavish retirement, granted by the emperor, he had to choose his words wisely.

452. For further study on this, see Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism*, Chapter 4 “Jesus, the Nag Hammadi Codices, and Josephus.” (New York: Doubleday 1988). 77-102.

18.01.10.Q1 If the body of Jesus was stolen, who would have taken it?

There are two possible answers:

1. His enemies and critics might have stolen it. If they had the body, they would have produced it when confronting the apostles in the Book of Acts. There were numerous confrontations between the Jewish leaders and the apostles, but no one had the body.
2. His friends might have stolen it. If they, in fact, had the body they would not have suffered painful martyrdoms for a fairytale. Of the eleven disciples, ten were martyred. They often had the opportunity to recant their story, but they constantly refused. Why? They knew the body was neither in the tomb nor stolen. It was transformed and had ascended.

18.01.14.Q1 Does Luke 24:41 oppose John 20:19?

In Luke's narrative the disciples *would not* believe whereas in John's narrative they *could not* believe for the joy they had. Luke 24:36 and John 20:19 both agreed that the disciples were talking when Jesus suddenly stood among them. Furthermore, in Luke 24:37-39 and John 20:19-21 Jesus revealed Himself to his disciples. Luke 24:41 is not unbelief of faith or doctrine, but the disciples were awestruck at what had happened and they had difficulty perceiving the reality of the moment: the resurrection of Jesus. The gospel writer used the same terminology as would be common today, if an event would seem unbelievable. The two passages agree.

Questions Of History, Culture, And Religion

02.01.06.Q1 How did a one become a member of the Essene sect and how does this relate to the Pharisees?

The Essenes, like the Pharisees, were very legalistic. How a young man became a full pledged member of the Essene community would generally not have any interest to the study of the life of Jesus, until one scholar⁴⁵³ concluded that the Pharisees may have had similar requirements of membership. If so, that presents insights of their Pharisaic attitudes as revealed in the gospels. Therefore, if it is possible to review the Essene requirements, we can “look backwards” and obtain a better understand of the Pharisees.

There are some interesting common factors between the Essenes and the Pharisees. It is common knowledge that both groups originated in the early second century (B.C.) in response to the advances of the Hellenistic culture. Both groups were separatists and, in fact, the name Pharisee originated from the Hebrew phrase meaning *the Separated ones*. Both groups were also highly legalistic in their doctrines and lifestyle.

Fortunately, the Dead Sea Scrolls, written by those Essenes living in the Qumran community near the Dead Sea, contained two important documents that tell us much about their lifestyle and the requirements for entrance into their community of believers. According to the *Damascus Document* and the *Manual of Discipline*, the Essenes had the following beliefs and practices:

1. They categorized members as priests, Levites, Israelites, or proselytes.⁴⁵⁴
2. The minimum age of admission was twenty.⁴⁵⁵
3. New members had to learn and observe all admission requirements.⁴⁵⁶
4. Once a candidate felt he was ready for membership, he had to pass a preliminary examination. Evidently notes were carefully taken as the exam was administered by a

453. Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 86-88.

454. Dead Sea Scrolls, *Damascus Document* 13:12; 14:3.

455. Dead Sea Scrolls, 1 Qsa. 1, 8; This age limit may have been derived from Numbers 1:3.

456. Dead Sea Scrolls, *Damascus Document* 13:1, 2; 15:5, 6.

scribe.⁴⁵⁷

5. The candidate was required to give an oath of loyalty, after which he was informed of the secrets of the community.⁴⁵⁸

6. Upon the completion of the ceremonial oath, the candidate was on a two-year probationary status.⁴⁵⁹

7. Any transgressions during this time could result in either temporary or permanent expulsion from the community.⁴⁶⁰

8. All supervisory scribes had to be between the ages of thirty and fifty.⁴⁶¹

9. Since supervisory scribes were experts of the Hebrew laws, as well as the community rules, they could either “bind” or “loose” the judgment of a transgressor⁴⁶²

10. Supervisory scribes as well as judges collected charitable gifts from the community and distributed them to the needy.⁴⁶³ They also functioned as shepherds of the flock and, in that sense they were like a pastor or rabbi.⁴⁶⁴

While these legalistic requirements cannot be imposed upon the Pharisees *per se*, these do give some insight as to what a legalistic group might have required of a new candidate.⁴⁶⁵ Scholars are examining these requirements with the possibility that very similar procedures existed for new Pharisee candidates.

457. Dead Sea Scrolls, *Damascus Document* 13:11, 12; 15:11.

458. Dead Sea Scrolls, *Damascus Document* 15:6.

459. Dead Sea Scrolls, *Damascus Document* 20:1-13; MD 1QS 4:24 – 7:25.

460. Dead Sea Scrolls, *Damascus Document* 20:1-13; MD 1QS 4:24 – 7:25.

461. Dead Sea Scrolls, *Damascus Document* 14:8.

462. Dead Sea Scrolls, *Damascus Document* 13:10; 9:18, 22; 12:12.

463. Dead Sea Scrolls, *Damascus Document* 14:13.

464. Dead Sea Scrolls, *Damascus Document* 13:10.

465. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 260.

02.01.14.Q1 What were the four levels of Pharisees?

Like most people today, this writer had once believed that all Pharisees were the same, but this was hardly the case.⁴⁶⁶ Some constantly confronted Jesus while others gave Him aid. Some Pharisees were also scribes who read the Scriptures in the synagogue. Pharisees permitted a wide degree of divergent opinions as shown by the differences between the Schools of Hillel and Shammai. According to the third century (A.D.) respected Rabbi Pin Hasben Jair, there were four characteristics of separation (a core doctrine of the sect) that all four levels of Pharisees had to endorse.⁴⁶⁷ Those characteristics were:

1. Heedfulness leading to diligence,
2. Diligence to cleanliness,
3. Cleanliness to separation, and
4. Separation to holiness.

It is not until one gets deeper into the study of first century Judaism that one learns of the Schools of Hillel and Shammai, and how these theologians interacted with Jewish society and Jesus. By knowing the basic beliefs of these two theological schools, one can often determine which question or statement presented to Jesus came from which school.

However, unfortunately throughout history the condemning word “hypocrisy” used by Jesus against the *leading* Pharisees has been used by the church to condemn *all* the Pharisees and *all* the Jewish people. But in fact, most Pharisees like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, were godly people who simply wanted to live right before God and man.⁴⁶⁸ Most of the issues Jesus had with the Pharisees originated with the upper echelon, that is, the policy-makers and leaders of the sect. Therefore, the four levels of Pharisees are explained below:⁴⁶⁹

466. There are two reasons why many have equated the Pharisees with a group of Jewish leaders who were filled with hypocrisy and hatred: 1) The gospels clearly indicate this group often confronted Jesus and planned to kill Him, and 2) the doctrine of replacement theology and anti-Semitic attitudes promoted by the church. These two biased conditions led to a horrible conclusion – the inability to recognize the variations of other Pharisaic individuals, such as Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, and give them appropriate credit for their righteous attitudes and acts.

467. Cited from Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 88; Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 67-68, 215-18.

468. See Lk. 13:31; 7:36; 11:37; 14:1; Jn. 3:1; 19:38-39; Acts 5:34; 23:6-8. See also Gamaliel in Acts 5, the teacher of the Apostle Paul.

469. Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 88, 112-13.

1. The *ne'eman*, meaning *trustworthy*, was the entry level and required the endorsement of all membership obligations before three members in good standing.⁴⁷⁰ During this time, the candidate was not permitted to be the guest of a common Jew, known as an *am ha-aretz*, and would certainly not be found in the home of a Gentile, tax collector, or sinner. Some priests and high priests were so prideful that they wore silk gloves when among people or presiding over sacrifices, so they would not become defiled by “those repulsive and degrading common people.”⁴⁷¹ He had to tithe faithfully on everything he earned and ate.⁴⁷² This stage was also known as “heedfulness leading to diligence.” Slaves and women were permitted to join this association, but only at this level.

2. The second level of entry was called *for wings* and at this stage the candidate had to diligently practice the ritual of washing his hands before eating and before touching ritually clean food.⁴⁷³ This stage was also known as “diligence leading to cleanliness.” Incidentally, the Law of Moses did not require such extremism.

3. In the third level, a candidate was a probationary member for either thirty days or one year. This stage was also known as “cleanliness leading to separation.”

4. If a person wanted to reach the pinnacle of the hierarchy, he had to take two vows:

- a. To tithe faithfully
- b. Maintain and promote ritual purification.

This fourth level was the upper echelon of Pharisees, who firmly believed they had arrived at perfected holiness. They had moved from “separation leading to holiness.” These individuals generally had sufficient wealth so that they could live a separated life that would not get “polluted” by associating with common Jewish people who did not always observe ritual cleansing laws.

While the membership of the Pharisees was merely 6,000, there were literally thousands more who faithfully observed Pharisee doctrines. Josephus noted that,

On account of which (the Pharisee) doctrines, they are able greatly to persuade the

470. Babylonian Talmud *Bekakoth*, 30b (Soncino ed.).

471. Geikie, *The Life and Works of Christ*. 1:89.

472. See additional rules on tithing in the Mishnah, *Ma'aserot* 1.1.

473. Tosefta, Dem'ai. 2:11; *Encyclopedia Judaica* Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House 7:1489-90.

body of the people; and whatsoever they do about divine worship, prayers, and sacrifices, they perform according to their direction; insomuch that the cities gave great attestations to them on account of their entire virtuous conduct, both in the actions of their lives and their discourses also.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.1.3 (15)⁴⁷⁴

Again and again Josephus said that the Pharisees were by far the greatest influence with the common people.⁴⁷⁵ Other groups who followed basic Pharisee doctrines included the Essenes who lived in a number of communities including west Jerusalem, Damascus, Qumran, and elsewhere.⁴⁷⁶ Another group was the Therapeutae, a Jewish sect who lived throughout the Diaspora, including a large community in Alexandria. The final group that observed Pharisaic doctrines were the early Christians of both Jewish and Gentile backgrounds. One Jew, who identified himself with the Pharisees although he was never a member, was Josephus. He observed the basic doctrines of the sect.⁴⁷⁷ Non-members were not always as strict and legalistic as were the members.

As previously stated, the influx of Hellenism had disastrous consequences upon the Jewish people. While the Sadducees endorsed many Hellenistic elements, the Pharisees saw themselves as the restorers of the Law. Yet within the Pharisaic world there were many divisions and theological opinions. Amazingly, while they are justly criticized for their legalistic harshness, they should be noted for their kind and responsible landmark decisions. These include:⁴⁷⁸

1. Concerning the punishment for a crime, the Pharisees interpreted the phrase “an eye for an eye” (Ex. 21:24; Deut. 19:21)⁴⁷⁹ metaphorically, and permitted compensation or punishment in the form of a financial settlement.⁴⁸⁰ However, the Sadducees demanded exact compliance.
2. They ordered for husbands to pay support for their wives after a divorce. This lowered the divorce rate. This is noteworthy, because Joseph considered a divorce which would

474. Parenthesis mine.

475 Stemberger. *Jewish Contemporaries of Jesus: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes*. 19.

476. See 02.01.06.Q1 “How did a one become a member of the Essene sect and how does this relate to the Pharisees?”

477. Josephus, *Life* 8.

478. Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 134-35.

479. Lev. 24:20; Mt. 5:38-42; 08.02.07.

480. Financial settlements are found in passages such as Deut. 22:29.

have been expensive, as opposed to accusing Mary of adultery which would have cost him nothing and saved his family honor.

3. The promotion of education for both boys and girls, (see “Education” 02.03.04).
4. Required education for boys to the age of sixteen.
5. If the brother-in-law of a widow refused her the Levirate marriage rights (Deut. 25:5-9),⁴⁸¹ the Pharisees permitted her to spit on the ground in front of him while the Sadducees demanded she spit in his face.
6. If an animal died, the Pharisees said that the owner may use the carcass for any purpose except for food (Lev. 7:24), but the Sadducees said any use results in the strict penalties of uncleanness.
7. The final example of harshness is that the Sadducees demanded that false witnesses be put to death while the Pharisees permitted punishment by eighty scourgings.⁴⁸² The irony is that the Sadducees acquired false witnesses to testify against Jesus.

The Pharisees have been criticized and condemned for their actions against Jesus. However, it was the *leading Pharisees* who were against Jesus, because as other Pharisees came to faith in Him, they warned Him of impending danger. The Pharisees, like the Essenes, were a very legalistic religious sect. An example of legalism is found in 02.01.06.Q1 that describes the entrance procedure for new Essene members. Scholars are examining these requirements for the probability that very similar procedures existed for new Pharisee candidates.

When the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, only the Pharisees survived the slaughter. In the early days of the First Revolt (A.D. 66) the Messianic believers had escaped to Pella and avoided the conflict, but the Sadducees, Herodians, and Essenes were wiped out by the Romans. Consequently, all forms of Judaism today have their roots in the first century Pharisees.⁴⁸³ In fact, today’s Rabbinic Judaism is distinctly different from Inter-Testamental and biblical Judaism.⁴⁸⁴

481. See also Babylonian Talmud, *Yevamot* 16a.

482. Mishnah, *Makkoth* 1.3 and 1.5; See 15.03.07.

483. Finkelstein, *The Pharisees*. 142-45.

484. Scott, Jr. *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament*. 21.

It is important to stress that most synagogue leaders were righteous Pharisees who loved their people. Criticisms by Jesus were generally directed at the aristocratic leadership of the Pharisees. Most of the Jewish people obeyed codes of conduct and religion according to the Pharisees, even though they did not formally belong to them.⁴⁸⁵

Finally, among those who considered themselves Pharisees were Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist, Hillel and his son, Simeon, Simeon's son Gamaliel was also a Pharisee and the renowned teacher for the Apostle Paul.⁴⁸⁶

03.05.18.Q1 What happened to those who violated the second Jewish temple (see also 16.01.06.Q1)?

There were three powerful men who violated the second Jewish temple and consequently experienced death in a manner that was a clear testimony to observers who said that Divine judgment had fallen upon them.⁴⁸⁷

Antiochus IV Epiphanes

He persecuted the Jews in an attempt to either convert them to Hellenism or exterminate them. He also placed an idol to Zeus in the temple and sacrificed a pig to this pagan deity. Antiochus died a miserable and shameful death in Persia (2 Macc. 9).

Pompey

After he conquered the Jewish lands in 63 B.C., he entered the Holy of Holies, but later he was murdered in the shores of Egypt. His naked body was left on the beach to feed wild birds and animals.

Crassus

In 53 B.C., he plundered the temple treasury, but a short time later he and his Roman army perished in the hot thirsty desert sands fighting the Parthians.

485. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 115.

486. Geikie, *The Life and Works of Christ*. 1:73; Wyatt, "Pharisee." 3:822-29.

487. See also 16.01.06.Q1 "What happened to those who opposed Jesus?"

03.05.19.Q1 What messianic prophecies were the rabbis studying at this time and why were they expecting the Messiah?

There were many Jewish sects, just as today there are many Christian denominations. And just as various denominations have many viewpoints of the return of Jesus, in the first century various Jewish sects had many viewpoints on the coming of their messiah. Following are several examples of expectations held by many Jewish people.

1. They read Genesis 49:10 and Numbers 24:17 and believed that God promised a unique ruler to govern His people who would come soon. This was underscored by the fact that Herod the Great's domain was nearly the same size of King David's.
2. They had faith that God would fulfil His Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:12-17, Ps. 89, esp. 30-33). The Davidic Covenant meant that their expected "son of David" would destroy the Roman occupiers and re-establish Israel as an international superpower.
3. They had faith that the many "branch" prophecies would be fulfilled.⁴⁸⁸
4. They expected the messianic psalms to be fulfilled (esp. Ps. 2)
5. The prophecies of Daniel 2 and 4 outlined the succession of four world empires. They had experience the challenges of the third empire and knew that the messiah would they were in the 4th empire. Furthermore, they believed that Daniel 9:24-27 established a time table for the coming Messiah.

The pattern of reasoning that made so many Jews believed in the nearness of the Messiah is as follows:

1. They believed in the literal interpretation of the prophetic words of their Hebrew Bible.
2. They looked at their history and their social-political environment. The northern ten tribes were relocated with the Assyrians in 722/21 B.C., followed by Judah and Benjamin and the Babylonians about 135 years later. In the sixth century B.C., when the Jews were permitted to return, only a small portion chose to do so. There was however, after the Maccabean Revolt (160s B.C.) a free and politically independent nation, which led to a

⁴⁸⁸. 2 Sam. 23:1-7; Isa. 11:1-10; Jer. 23:5, 6; Zech. 3:8; 6:9-15. See also Mt. 2:23.

greater return of Jews. In fact, Galilee had been unpopulated by the Assyrians (Isa. 9:1; 8th Cent. B.C.), but regained a large Jewish population in the second century B.C. Hence, when Jesus ministered in Galilee it was primarily to the descendants of the Babylonian Jews. So to the rabbis it looked like all the prophecies had been fulfilled, although the prophecy of a nation being born in a single day (Isa. 66:8) was problematic because it obviously was not fulfilled. Therefore, the rabbis then assumed it to be a figure of speech.⁴⁸⁹

3. They connected the biblical prophecies with current events and concluded that their messiah was about to come.

4. Their expectations were heightened by the fact that many other people groups were also expecting a messiah.⁴⁹⁰

The difficulty the Jews had was attempting to reconcile the messiah as a king and as a suffering servant. This continued to plague them until Jesus was resurrected, and even then many refused to believe.

05.01.04.Q1 How did the religious leaders appraise someone they suspected to be a new self-appointed rabbi or an aspiring messiah?

Nearly everybody was expecting a messiah, most with great anticipation. Hundreds if not thousands heard John the Baptist. They repented of their sins, fasted, prayed, and expected the restoration of the ancient Davidic Kingdom.⁴⁹¹ But the temple leaders and Romans feared anyone who claimed the title of “messiah,” expecting that another rebellion would soon arise.⁴⁹² By this

489. In A.D. 135, the Jews were dispersed again and remained scattered throughout the world until the late 19th century when they began to return to their promised land. The return has not ceased to this day and the nation of Israel was born on May 14, 1948 -- in a single day. From the time of the Assyrians until this date, the Jews had independence for merely a century (c. 164 - 63 B.C.). Furthermore, during twenty-seven centuries the land was occupied by some fourteen different people /governments. The prophecies led the Jews to look for the messiah at His first coming, while in fact, these point to His second coming (return).

490. The term “messiah” is lower case because no one was expecting a messiah as God, but a divine figure “like a man” (Dan. 8:15-17) who would bring peace upon the earth.

491. Golub, *In the Days*. 277.

492. See a short list of false messiahs at Appendix 25: “False Prophets, Rebels, Significant Events, And Rebellions That Impacted The First Century Jewish World.”

time a number of individuals had come forth claiming to be the messiah (and were usually killed by the Romans). But to identify the *real messiah*, the temple leaders had devised a 2-step plan to evaluate anyone's messianic intentions.

1. An observation team was sent first, which listened carefully to what was said, but they did not engage in any discussions or debates. The team would have consisted of Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes, and any other prominent individuals who desired to engage in this field of discovery. The team would return to the temple and report what they had seen and heard. If the president of the Sanhedrin (Annas or Caiaphas) and their fellow leaders believed additional observation was needed, a second team was sent.
2. The second team confronted the individual with a wide variety of questions and the responses were reported to the high priest.

Jesus definitely had the two groups of evaluators before Him, and John probably did likewise. Both John and the Essenes used apocalyptic words concerning the future. John the Baptist proclaimed eminent judgment and destruction (Lk. 3:10), and stated that every Jew who did not produce good fruit in his life would be cast into an eternal fire (Jn. 3:10).⁴⁹³ Neither the Baptist nor anyone else expected Jesus to be as He was, yet the apocalyptic description is applicable when applied to His return and reign during the Millennial Reign.

05.03.02.Q1 Was the baptism by John (Jn. 1:26, 33) similar to the baptism ritual that the Jews performed when a proselyte joined them?

The public ritual to “**baptize with water**” and repent from sin is the major similarity of the two baptisms. The Jews required a Gentile convert to renounce all evil, to be completely immersed in water, accept circumcision (for men) and to wear new clothing that identified him as a member of the Jewish community. John required complete repentance and immersion, but not a change of clothing, as his ministry was only to the Jews.⁴⁹⁴

493. John the Baptist used figurative language that is reflective of agriculture and desert life. Therefore, he uses terms such as “brood of vipers,” “the axe at the root of the tree,” “baptism of fire,” “the threshing floor,” and “the burning of the chaff.” These phrases proclaimed that God was angry and judgment was about to fall.

494. Tenney, “John.” 9:36.

05.04.02.Q1 What were the Jewish expectations of the Messiah?⁴⁹⁵

There is no question that Jesus came during the time of great messianic expectations as evidenced by various writings in extra-biblical literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls. The historian Josephus provided a series of hostile yet tantalizing glimpses of various characters who claimed prophetic and/or nationalistic inspiration.⁴⁹⁶ The heightened expectations of the public must also be considered as part of the fulfillment of Galatians 4:4, that states that “in the fullness of time,” Jesus came.

The Jewish expectations are addressed numerous times throughout this e-Book, because understanding their opinions is so critically important. There is no question that they expected a political figure that would redeem them from Roman occupation. If the Jews were unified on anything, this was it. However, on other issues, such as how long he would rule and reign, there was a great diversity of opinions. For example, in the Talmud are statements from several rabbis concerning the length of the messiah’s reign.

1. Rabbi Eliezer said the “days of the messiah would be forty years.”
2. Rabbi Dorsa said it would be four hundred years while another rabbi said three hundred sixty-five years.⁴⁹⁷
3. On the other hand, Rabbi Abbahu said the messiah would reign seven thousand years.⁴⁹⁸

While these periods of rulership may seem rather ridiculous to the modern reader, they are significant because these rabbis believed the messiah would be “like the son of man” (Dan. 7:13), Daniel’s prophetic phrase was interpreted to mean that the messiah would not be an ordinary human, but in some manner be super-human. They examined the various terms expressed by Daniel, such as “weeks,” “70,” “times, time, and a half time,” and attempted to calculate when the messiah would arrive. They used all forms of Gematria⁴⁹⁹ and

495. 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” and Appendix 25: “False Prophets, Rebels, Significant Events, and Rebellions that Impacted the First Century Jewish World.”

496. Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.1.1; 20.5.1-2; 20.8.6; *Wars* 2.13.4-6. See also a partial listing in Appendix 25.

497. The opinion of a 400 year reign probably originated in 2 Esdras 7:27-31. For more information, see William Barclay, *Jesus*. Ch. 7.

498. Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 99a.

499. See “Gematria” in Appendix 26.

mathematics.⁵⁰⁰ Obviously they were confronted with a major paradigm shift because Jesus looked like an ordinary man and He was not the mystical deliverer they expected. Therefore, He had to carefully change their preconceived opinions.

05.05.02.Q1 Why did Mary ask Jesus to resolve the crisis at the wedding (Jn. 2:1-11)?

When Mary asked Jesus to do something about the crisis, He said that His commands come from His Father in heaven, not her. That sounds rather harsh in modern English. This was followed by His statement, **“My hour has not yet come,”** which can also be translated as “I must wait for the right opportunity.”⁵⁰¹ Nonetheless, He did as she requested, not out of obedience, but for her honor. He was in His thirties and the parent-son relationship still had to be cherished. Therefore, Jesus performed His first miracle, changing water into wine, which would later symbolize His life – bringing joy to life. But the fact that Mary asked Jesus to resolve a serious problem presents the question of why – why did she ask?

The only reason Mary could have asked Him to do anything was because she was an important figure in the wedding party – someone in her immediate family was getting married. Because weddings were times of great celebration, the entire extended families of Mary and Joseph were probably there. One tradition says that the reason she asked Jesus for help was because the bride was either her sister or daughter.⁵⁰² Another tradition says the bridegroom was Alphaeus and the bride was Mary, a sister of the Virgin Mary.⁵⁰³ Note that at times parents did name two or more children with the same first name.

However, some scholars have suggested that it is too much of an assumption to consider Mary as a member of the wedding party because such an opinion cannot be sustained by an exegetical study – and they are correct! However, from a cultural perspective, it is almost certain that she was a member of the wedding party. If Mary was a guest, it would have been most inconsiderate of her to make this request and cause further embarrassment to the host. There are several reasons why she asked Jesus to do “something,” meaning, to perform a miracle of some kind. Consider these –

500. Silver, *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel*. Boston: Beacon Hill. 124, 243-45.

501. Lockyer, *All the Miracles of the Bible*. 161.

502. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 114; Barclay, “John.” 1:96-97.

503. Geikie, *The Life and Words*. 1:582. Volumes could be written on the various legends that surround the life of Jesus. However, these two traditions are listed because one of them has a real possibility of being historically accurate. In addition, while it was not common, at times a family did have two children with the same name.

1. She certainly did not forget the angel that told her of her pregnancy. No one would forget that event – and she wondered about it for three decades. But now she knew that He was past the age of 30 and His ministry would soon begin.
2. It was Mary, when told she would conceive and bear a child (Lk. 1:46-56; 04.03.05), who once magnified her Lord when she proclaimed “My soul proclaims the greatness of our Lord.”
3. Who, but a mother would have known her son better than anyone else, especially if He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and she gave Him birth while still a virgin?
4. She knew of Zechariah and Elizabeth and their miracle son, John, who would by now have been preaching in the less populated areas north of the Dead Sea.
5. She remembered the words of Simeon who, when he held the infant Jesus, thanked God for the opportunity to see the salvation of God for all people (Lk. 2:25-35; 04.04.04).
6. She reflected upon the words of Anna, a prophetess in the temple.
7. She remembered the magi and the trip to Egypt so Herod would not kill her son, and possibly herself and Joseph too.
8. What was it like to raise a perfect sinless child? Mary and Joseph, as well as their relatives and neighbors, were most certainly aware of the unusual character of Jesus as He grew into manhood.
9. She knew her Son already had five disciples and was a great teacher. She probably questioned that if some Hebrew prophets performed miracles, would her son do likewise?
10. She knew that John, the son of her cousin, was already in ministry and had disciples.

Mystery Unveiled	The fact that Mary asked Jesus to resolve the wine issue strongly suggests, according to cultural norms, that she was a member of the wedding party. The bride was probably a daughter.
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With all these incredible experiences, she knew there was something profoundly different about her Jesus. She most certainly did not know of His divinity, but she knew her Hebrew Bible well

enough to understand that since the prophets of olden times performed miracles, maybe her Jesus, who was now past the age of 30, could do something the wine situation. Especially since this was a socially desperate situation.

This miracle must have had a special effect upon His siblings⁵⁰⁴ who most certainly were wondering what kind of brother they had. Yet in spite of His incredible teachings, the fact that He had five disciples at this point, and the incredible miracle He performed, yet they had no respect or honor for Him (Mk. 6:4).

05.05.02.Q2 What is the significance of the first miracle (Jn. 2:1-11)?

All too often study of the first miracle is focused on the turning of the water into wine, rather than the fact that Jesus was at a wedding and the wine, symbolic of joy, was at a wedding feast. The new wine portrays the coming of the messianic kingdom – Jesus is the Messiah of Israel who will bring the Messianic Kingdom into reality. His kingdom is often portrayed in terms of a banquet or wedding feast.⁵⁰⁵ How appropriate then, that His first miracle is to bring joy to a wedding feast – the focus of His entire ministry. As a whole, Judaism with its many sects and multiple regulations had essentially become a dead religion. It needed life and joy; it needed a “spiritual wine.” Jesus is that wine.

1. The miracle captured people’s attention in a greater manner than did the preaching and teaching He had done until this point. The fact that He had five disciples is indicative that He was a well-respected teacher.
2. The miracle emphasized the fact that He came to bring joy to life – joy that would be revealed within the Kingdom of God.
3. This miracle was the first of many, that coupled with His message, revealed the Father as Jesus preached the good news that the Kingdom of God was about to come to those who placed their faith in Him.

504. The word “siblings” is used here with the understanding that they were the natural children of Mary and Joseph and, in effect, not full siblings in the normal sense of the word.

505. Mt. 8:11; 22:1-4; Lk. 13:29; 14:15-24; Rev. 19:7-9.

05.05.02.Q3 Did the wine that Jesus created contain alcohol (Jn. 2:1-11)?

There is no biblical passage that commands total abstinence from alcohol, but there are abundant passages that declare drunkenness to be a sin.⁵⁰⁶ This writer has come to the conclusion that today this question is usually asked by those who wish to justify their abuse of alcohol, or desire to argue against this church doctrine. Both issues actually point to other problems. However, to respond to the straight forward question – both the Greek and Hebrew languages have a word that means grape juice and another word that means fermented drink made from grapes. In this passage, the Greek word *oinos* (3631) for wine originated from the Greek *oy-nos*, which clearly means *fermented wine*.⁵⁰⁷ There is no question that the miracle wine had alcohol. The Bible does not condemn drinking wine, but it highly condemns drunkenness and the lifestyle associated with it (see commentary below on “Choice wine ... cheaper wine”).⁵⁰⁸ Wine was a common beverage at this time in a manner similar to what a soft drink might be to North America today.

05.05.02.Q4 What is the difference between wine and strong drink (Jn. 2:1-11)?

Due to the hot climate, any kind of natural juice spoils quickly. For that reason, grape juice was fermented into wine, so it had a long shelf life and could be used as a medicine, beverage, and for religious rites. As previously stated, both Greek and Hebrew have distinct words for fermented wine and grape juice. A complete study of wine is beyond the scope of this study, but a brief overview is presented.⁵⁰⁹ The word *wine* is basically used in three ways as follows.

1. The word *new wine* is fresh grape juice. It is used 38 times in the Old Testament.⁵¹⁰ But it too can be fermented, as evidenced by Hosea 4:11 that says both “old wine” and “new wine” (Gk. *gleukos* 1098)⁵¹¹ take away understanding. Obviously virgin grape juice would not do that. Another example is that on the day of Pentecost, the crowds said that the people were filled with “new wine” (Acts 2:13), which obviously implies they were under the Holy Spirit influence. This suggests new wine has some alcohol content.

506. Hab. 2:15; Lk. 21:34; Rom. 13:13; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:18; etc.

507. Vine, “Wine.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:677.

508. Fruchtenbaum, *Life of the Messiah*. Tape 4, Side A; Pilch, *The Cultural Dictionary of the Bible*. 54-55.

509. For an excellent study on wine, see Norman L. Geisler. “A Christian Perspective on Wine-Drinking.” *Bibliotheca Sacra*. 139:553 (Jan-Mar. 1982) 46-56.

510. e.g., Gen. 27:28; Joel 2:24; Mic. 6:5.

511. Vine, “Wine.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:678.

2. The word *wine* is simply fermented grape juice that has a natural alcoholic content and is found 141 times in the Hebrew Bible.

3. The phrase *strong drink* is used 23 times and refers to an intoxicating beverage with a higher alcohol content than wine. It was made by adding dried fruit (i.e., raisins, dates, figs, barley, pomegranates, dates, or even honey) to fermenting grapes.⁵¹² The dried fruit, with its natural sugar content, spiked the alcohol level of the brew resulting in a “strong drink.” This *wine* is the “mocker” and “brawler” of Proverbs 20:11, but was to be given to those who are dying (Prov. 31:6). In modern times, this would be associated with liquor.

On a side note, in light of the ancient custom of drinking wine, today’s commercially produced wine has higher alcohol content when consumed than did its ancient counterpart. While it may not be as strong as the “strong drink” of the first century, it isn’t far from it. On occasion, a spice wine with honey and pepper or a palm wine was created. Beer came from Media and Babylon and barley wine was imported from Egypt.⁵¹³ However, most Jews observed the rabbinic rules and consumed only their local wines. Jesus made pure wine of the best quality; anything inferior would not have been a divine miracle.⁵¹⁴

05.05.02.Q5 Could Jesus have quietly have demonstrated His superiority over the Greek god Dionysos?

A question to ponder is whether Jesus silently demonstrated His divinity and power over the Greek god Dionysus. The miracle was obviously significant to the Jews, and their Greek neighbors certainly heard about it. In fact, some Gentile friends and neighbors most certainly attended the event and witnessed the miracle. Jesus demonstrated that He had greater power than Dionysius, the Greek god of joy and wine. In fact, this writer believes that most, if not all of John’s recorded miracles were demonstrations of power over Greek and Roman deities.

The first miracle has two symbolic significances.

1. As stated previously, the first miracle by Moses was to turn water into blood (Ex. 7:20). In that historic case, Moses was the administrator of death and wrath (2 Cor. 3:6-9), but in this case, Jesus was the administrator of joy in life because He is the true vine that brings gladness to the heart (Ps. 104:15). While Moses is shown here in contrast to

512. Pilch, *The Cultural Dictionary of the Bible*. 54-55.

513. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 309.

514. Dayagi-Mendels, *Drink and be Merry*. 55.

Jesus, in other places he is shown as a “type” of Christ,⁵¹⁵ as when he sweetened the bitter waters (Ex. 15:25), a feat duplicated by Elijah (2 Kg. 2:19-22).⁵¹⁶ The first miracle had a symbolic message that was quickly recognized by the rabbis. It placed Jesus as One who was more holy than Moses, and that was a dilemma they could not accept.

2. A second symbolic significance is that it also reflects upon the thin and watery elements of the Jewish faith (Heb. 7:18) that was about to be transformed into a richer and joyous higher faith. In essence, the Old Testament Israelite religion was symbolized by water; and only in the “type and shadow” could it point to Jesus who is the true vine (Jn. 15:1). The second symbolic significance was probably not observed until after His resurrection.

According to a Greek legend, on certain annual occasions, namely January 5 and 6, the god of Sepphoris, Dionysius, produced wine in a miraculous manner.⁵¹⁷ The proverbial “wine, women, and song” were considered among life’s greatest pleasures by the Greeks and Romans. No image portrays this better than the god Dionysos. Since Nazareth and Cana were both short distances from Sepphoris, there is no doubt that the news of the miracle soon reached the Gentile city.

In the Greek city of Sepphoris, located only three miles from Nazareth and a few more from Cana, the Greek god Dionysus was worshiped. According to ancient authors like Pliny, Dionysus was the god of wine and happiness.⁵¹⁸ However, the Greeks understood very well that their idol could not change water into wine. This is significant since the gospel of John was written for a Greek audience. The Cana miracle not only had profound theological implications for the Jews, but also led the Gentiles to take notice of the superior deity, just as Moses had done centuries earlier.⁵¹⁹

515. See Appendix 3.

516. According to some Messianic scholars, shortly after this event, although probably not related to this event, Rabbi Yokamen ben Zikai terminated the practice of bitter waters as a test for determining the guilt of an adulteress. Source: Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context*. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 9, Session 2.

517. Major, Manson, and Wright, *The Mission and Message of Jesus*. 726.

518. Pliny, *Natural History* 2.231; 31.16.

519. 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.

On a final note, the Apocryphal gospels, written in the second century and later, record miracles that Jesus supposedly performed in his childhood and early adulthood.⁵²⁰ These so-called miracles range from modified portions of authentic miracles found in the New Testament to outlandish fantasies. All of them are in serious conflict with the Bible, even though the authors claimed apostolic authorship. There are dozens of them, if not more. These writings can be categorized as the false teachers that Jesus warned would come.⁵²¹

05.05.02.Q6 Where was Joseph, the legal father of Jesus?

It is often presumed that by this time Joseph had died, since there is no mention of him after the temple episode when Jesus was twelve years old. This would naturally lead to the question as to why Jesus did not raise His own father from the grave. The only possible answer may be that Joseph died before the ministry of Jesus began, during which time He performed His miracles. As Jesus said previously, “My hour has not yet come.” Since the Father in heaven ordained the time of Jesus’ ministry, He could not perform any miracles prior to then. The siblings of Jesus naturally felt great sorrow at the passing of their father. But once they witnessed Jesus performing miracles, they probably could not understand why He did not raise their own father back to life.

However, some have argued against this opinion indicating that Joseph may have been alive as noted in John 6:42.

They were saying, “Isn’t this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can He now say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?”

John 6:42

In this conversation, the people refer to the parents of Jesus as if they are still alive and know them personally. But that is a modern interpretation. In biblical times, a son was referred to by his father’s name throughout the son’s lifetime, and many years after the father’s passing. For example, John ben David (John, son of David) would be known by that name until his dying day, even if David died fifty years earlier.

520. Similarly, the Egyptian Coptic Church has many traditions about Jesus performing miracles as a young child when He was in Egypt (cf. Mt. 3:13-15).

521. Two examples are: 1) Ron Charles, who has gathered scores of fanciful legends and myths, mostly written between the sixth and sixteenth centuries, in his book titled, *The Search: A Historian’s Search for Historical Jesus*. (Self-Published, 2007). 2) Nicholas Notovich, whose book, *The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ*. Trans. (Virchand R. Gandhi, Dover Pub.) is a so-called historical account of when Jesus went to Asia to study between the ages 13 and 29.

05.05.04.Q1 What is the evidence against the existence of a temple banking system Jn. 2:14)?

The question of a possible banking system centers on the money changers of the temple as well as the management of temple and business funding in general. Scripture does not address this matter directly, but repeatedly indicates the temple was to be a place of worship and the dwelling place of the Most High God. As previously stated, recent scholarship suggests that wealthy families in Jerusalem established private banking systems that centuries later, became commercial enterprises. The Mishnah and both Talmuds were written by rabbis who desired to see the temple rebuilt, services restored, and God honored. They preserved incredible details and, at times, harsh criticisms of their own priests, but they made no mention of a commercial lending institution. They vehemently opposed the activities of those who were like Annas and Caiaphas who gained incredible wealth by lending and exploiting of fellow Jews.

Nonetheless, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that some wealthy families affiliated with the temple functioned as private lending institutions.⁵²² It would have been one of those families whom Jesus referred to in His parable of the talents, when He told a servant that instead of burying the talent, he could have placed it in a bank and received a minimal interest.⁵²³

Video Insert >

05.05.04.V1 *The Temple Role in the Banking System*. Professor Gary Byers and Dr. Paul Wright discuss what scholars believe was a private banking system affiliated with the religious establishment in the temple. Introduction by Dr. Bill Heinrich. Click here if Internet connection is available.

05.05.05.Q1 Why does John 3:16 say that God loves the world and John 9:39 says that Jesus came to this world to judge it?

John 3:16 is the famous verse that says that God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son Jesus that anyone who believes in Him will never perish but have ever lasting life. Yet John

522. Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus?* 65; Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 34, 56-57, 134, 166.

523. For more information, read 02.01.16 Sadducees concerning the incredible greed of the Sadducean families. Clearly, they had little or no interest in representing the Jewish people before God.

9:39 says that Jesus came into this world to judge it. Obviously the second verse doesn't sound very loving.

Jesus did indeed come to bring salvation to the world. He does, in fact, love everyone and, as St. Augustine once said, "Jesus died for every one of us as if there was only one of us." However, not everyone accepts the free gift of salvation. For those who reject His calling the Day of Judgment will be most unpleasant. So both John 3:16 and 9:39 are true; 3:16 is offered first and, if rejected, 9:39 goes into effect. As someone else once said, "decisions determine destiny."

05.05.05.Q2 How could an evil symbol of a snake of Numbers 21:4-9, be associated with Jesus crucified upon a Cross?

The passage in John 3:14 reads "**Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness (desert)**" and with it Jesus reflected upon an Old Testament story in Numbers 21:4-9. In that account the people of Israel journeyed through the desert and complained bitterly and regretted that they had ever left Egypt. God punished them for complaining and murmuring, and, after receiving some nasty snake bites, they repented and cried for mercy. God told Moses to make a brass snake, place it on top of a pole, and when the people looked upon it they would be healed. Years later, the brazen serpent became an idol during the days of Hezekiah (2 Kgs. 18:4). The irony was that they were not to make a graven image of any living thing, yet when they looked upon a brass snake, they were healed.

The wilderness event is sometimes problematic for modern students, because the snake is associated with the demonic serpent of Genesis. How could such an evil symbol be associated with Jesus who would be lifted upon a cross? This association was made by the church fathers centuries after Jesus. However, in the days of Moses through to the first century many believed that, because a snake sheds its skin every year, it was a symbol of renewed life.⁵²⁴ Jesus is renewed life. It was certainly not the snake that healed, nor was it Moses, but God. Centuries later it was Jesus who healed. But, as will be shown later, among the Greeks and Romans the symbolic snake appeared on ancient gods and goddesses of healing as well as in accounts of virgin births.

There are two issues taking place in this passage that challenge the modern reader.

1. The symbolic issue of the snake, and

524. Negev, *The Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land*, 248. Notice that even some emperors like Alexander the Great, believed they were born of a virgin who became pregnant by the actions of a snake. See 04.03.08.Q7 "How does one explain other so-called virgin births in history?"

2. The phrase **“just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness,”** which must not be disconnected from the statement, **“the Son of Man must be lifted up.”** John 3:14 places Jesus as One who was more holy than Moses, and verse 15 states that all those who believe in Him (Jesus) have eternal life. By this Jesus clearly declared His equality with God, and that was a dilemma they could not accept.

“The Son of Man must be lifted up.” The early church recognized these interpretations to this comment:

1. The literal “lifted up” event when Jesus was hung on the cross.⁵²⁵
2. The literal “lifted up” when He arose from death and walked out of the grave.
3. The literal “lifted up” of the ascension
4. The early church understood this phrase as a literal fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy:

**See, My Servant will act wisely;
He will be raised and lifted up and greatly exalted.**

Isaiah 52:13

5. The early church recognized the divinity of Christ Jesus. He had thrown a new light on the Scriptures; He revealed God in a new aspect – as no mere national deity, but as the Father of all mankind. He also taught the most enlightening concepts of freedom of the individual conscience.

05.05.05.Q3 Should Nicodemus have known or suspected anything about a “new birth” (Jn. 3:1-21)?

Absolutely, yes! He was aware of the baptismal rites within Judaism and, therefore, should have made a connection with what Jesus was telling him. He also should have been aware of King David’s two horrific sins for which there was no atonement: murder and adultery. As a result he cried out unto the Lord and said,

**¹⁰ Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.**

525. See comments by Messianic scholar Timothy Hegg on the term “lifted up” in 01.02.01.V.

**¹¹ Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.**

**¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.**

Psalms 51:10-12 (NIV 1984)

What David requested from our Lord was a regeneration or new birth, for he realized that cleansing himself was a vain exercise (Ps. 73:13). The Essenes, even though they lived under the Old Covenant, realized that the Holy Spirit purifies the heart. They even spoke freely of God's Spirit of holiness as a cleansing and purifying power as revealed in a number of Dead Sea Scrolls.⁵²⁶ Notice the similarities between Dead Sea Scroll 1QS 4.21,⁵²⁷ written about a century before Jesus was born,⁵²⁸ and Matthew 3:11 and Luke 3:16 as illustrated below.

He shall cleanse him of all wicked deeds with the spirit of holiness; like purifying waters He will shed upon him the spirit of truth (to cleanse him) of all abomination and injustice.

Dead Sea Scroll 1QS 4.21⁵²⁹

¹¹ "I baptize you with water for repentance, but the One who is coming after me is more powerful than I. I am not worthy to remove His sandals. He Himself will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Matthew 3:11

¹⁶ John answered them all, "I baptize you with water, but One is coming who is more powerful than I. I am not worthy to untie the strap of His sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Luke 3:16

526. See Dead Sea Scroll: 1QS 3.7-9; 4.21; 1QH 16.12 cf 7.6; 17.26, Fragment 2.9, 13.

527. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*. 9-10.

528. This scroll is known as *The Community Rule* or *The Manual of Discipline*. It is one of the earliest scrolls written by the Essenes; Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*. 97.

529. Translated and parenthesis by Geza Vermes; Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*. 103.

Nicodemus, as the head of a seminary, should have known that the Messiah would be Israel's refiner and purifier as stated in passages such as Malachi 3:1-3. That purifying had already begun with the temple cleansing, but he did not recognize it. Yet the Spirit moved his heart to discuss this with Jesus.

The rabbis, of which Nicodemus was one, had long connected the ritual of baptism (complete immersion in water), with washing as instructed in Exodus 19:10. It was deemed to be the first step in holy living and preparation to be in communion with God.⁵³⁰ This opinion was summarized by Josephus concerning the ministry of John the Baptist. The background to this narrative is that Herod Antipas had executed John, and then entered into battle with the Nabateans who soundly defeated him. The Jewish community believed the defeat was divine judgment for a horrible sin against a righteous man. Note the comment on Jewish baptism:

Now, some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John, that was called the Baptist for Herod slew him who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism. For that washing [with water] would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it not in order to the putting away [or the remission] of some sins [only], but for the purification of the body.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.5.2 (116-117b)⁵³¹

As previously stated, baptism did not originate with Christianity, but with Judaism.⁵³² When a Gentile converted to Judaism, he was baptized. When a disciple became a rabbi, he was baptized as part of his ordination service. Some sources indicate that when one became a member of the Sanhedrin, there was a baptism. Such rites were associated with the new responsibility and direction in life. The rite, along with "born again" terminology was common in Pharisaic writings. Therefore, Nicodemus should have known or at least made an educated guess at what Jesus was talking about. There were several times when a man could be "born again" according to Jewish theology and tradition.⁵³³

530. Tenney, *The Gospel of John*. 49.

531. Bracketed inserts for clarification by Whiston, ed.

532. Fruchtenbaum, *The New Birth*. 20-23.

533. These baptisms would have been similar to those of John the Baptist who stressed true repentance. For more information on Jewish baptisms, see William S. LaSor, "Discovering What Jewish Mikva'ot Can Tell Us About Christian Baptism." 52-59. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor's Manual*. Class 6, pages 7-9; See also Zondervan's *New International Version Archaeological Study Bible*. 2005. 1562.

1. When a Gentile man converted to Judaism, he had to perform three things:⁵³⁴
 - a. Be circumcised⁵³⁵
 - b. Make an offering at the temple
 - c. Be immersed in a mikvah; after this a man was considered a “new born child” and accepted in Jewish society.⁵³⁶ That immersion was not a ritualistic immersion in a mikvah to cleanse defilement, but a baptism concerning the forgiveness of sins as John the Baptist did. Records show that some rabbis permitted baptism immediately after circumcision, while the School of Hillel said baptism should be seven days after the circumcision.⁵³⁷
2. When a Gentile slave, either man or woman, became the property of a Jew, he/she had to be baptized.⁵³⁸
3. When a Jewish man was crowned king
4. At the time of his bar mitzvah (age 13 years and 1 day). From that day on he qualified to be one of ten men and women to begin a new synagogue.⁵³⁹
5. When he married a wife (usually between ages 16 and 20).
6. When a man was ordained as a rabbi (age 30)
7. When a rabbi joined the Sanhedrin (age 50)⁵⁴⁰

534. Also see comments below “After Jesus was baptized” in 05.02.03.Q1.

535. Those men who decided to forgo the circumcision ritual, but observed the Noahide Commandments, were known as “God-fearing” men. They were not “Jewish converts,” but still respected among the Jewish people. For more information on the Noahide Commandments, see Appendix 17.

536. Livingston, “Jesus on Purity, Baptism, and Jewish Ritual Baths.” 1-2.

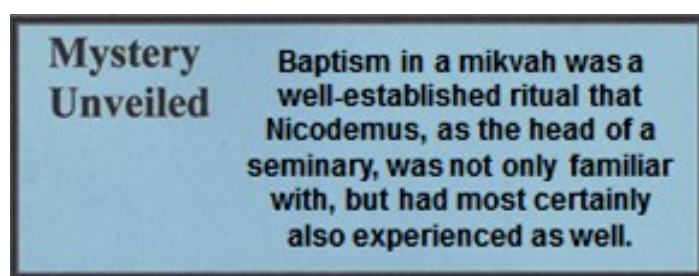
537. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 307; Geikie, *The Life and Works of Christ*. 1:396.

538. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 348.

539. The rabbinic rule that a minimum of ten men could establish a new synagogue was not established until centuries after Christ, around the time the Babylonian Talmud was written. 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.

540. Fruchtenbaum, *Life of the Messiah*. Tape 4, Side A.

However, some scholars believe that the “baptisms” of points 3 through 7 above were not baptisms, but purification rituals in a mikvah.⁵⁴¹ But regardless, Nicodemus should certainly have known what Jesus meant when He used the terms such as “born of water,” “born of the water,” or “baptize.”⁵⁴² No wonder that Jesus said, “Are you *the* teacher...”⁵⁴³ Therefore, “*the* teacher,” who in all probability was the head of a seminary, had a small following of disciples, and as a member of the Sanhedrin he should have understood what Jesus meant.⁵⁴⁴ Furthermore, the Apostle Paul made an interesting comment on baptism in his first letter to the Corinthian church when he said “All under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (10:1b-2). Clearly, not only did the apostle know what baptism meant, but those in his audience understood that their forefathers understood the term as well.



Finally, the concept of *rebirth* or *born again* was well known to both Jews and Gentiles. For the Jewish people, the concept is discussed above. For the Gentiles, the Romans and Greeks were familiar with the phrase because it was in nearly all of the ancient mystery religions.

05.05.05.Q4 In light of Romans 10:9, was it possible for Nicodemus to become born again?

Yes, if the answer were limited to this passage in Romans, which states that eternal life is obtained if first, one confesses that Jesus is Lord, and second, one believes that God raised Him from the grave. The problem is obviously that Jesus was very much alive when He spoke to Nicodemus.

541. See “Baptism” and “Mikvah” in Appendix 26.

542. According to Scott, Jr. *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament*. 146, one of the earliest scholars to research Jewish baptisms was a French scholar, Joseph Thomas, who authored *Le Mouvement baptiste en Palestine et Syrie* (Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1935).

543. Emphasis by the author, but it is also in the Greek text.

544. Fruchtenbaum, *The New Birth*. 20-23.

The New Testament was written years after the ministry of Jesus. While being “born again” is generally and accurately defined by Romans 10:9, a passage that is more applicable pertains to the new creation Jesus spoke of and is found in 2 Corinthians 5:17. It states that “if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation.” That was precisely the point Jesus made. Nicodemus needed to become a new creation in Christ, which today is known as becoming “born again.”⁵⁴⁵

05.05.06.Q1 What happened to the disciples of John the Baptist who did not follow Jesus (Jn. 3:26)?

The phrase “**everyone is flocking to Him**” is a figure of speech indicating that many, possibly the majority, of people began to follow Jesus. It is not an exclusive statement meaning every single person, just as the term “all” is not an exclusive statement⁵⁴⁶ in terms of human relationships.

Eventually many disciples and followers of John the Baptist followed Jesus, especially after John was executed. However, not all made that change. Those who didn’t may have recognized that God brought forth a mighty prophet, but for one reason or another, they chose *not* to follow Jesus and formed their own religious sect. That group and their descendants became known as the *Mendeans*, or *Christians of St. John*, although they were never true Christians. Centuries later the Muslims called them the *Sabaeans*. They moved east and settled in the cities of Wasit, Basra, and Chuzistan on the eastern side of the Tigris River in a nation known today as Iraq.⁵⁴⁷

05.05.06.Q2 Did Jesus baptize anyone (Jn. 3:22)?

According to John 3:22 and 26, Jesus and His disciples baptized people. However, John 4:2 is a clarification statement that says only the disciples were performing the baptisms. There is no conflict between these three passages, but rather, the disciples were baptizing under the authority of Jesus. Therefore, it would be the same as if Jesus personally performed the baptisms.

06.02.02.Q2 The Sabbath Day’s walk – How far did they take Jesus (Lk. 4:29)?

545. Fruchtenbaum, *The New Birth*. 40-43.

546. For an explanation, see 15.04.08.Q1 “Does the word “all” mean the entire Jewish community; every Jew in the land?”

547. Kessler, “Mendaeans.” 4:1467.

The synagogue leaders were so angry at Jesus, that they wanted to take Him **“to the edge of the hill”** and throw Him over it to His death. In recent years tourists have been shown a huge cliff south of Nazareth and are told this was where the Jews wanted to throw Jesus. But the southern cliff account is a myth.

In reality, the first century event would have been a retaining wall that wasn't much higher than possibly two to four meters – or just over a man's height. Being thrown over such a small cliff would not have been a fatal fall, but He would then have been stoned to death. That is the cultural context according to research conducted by the reconstructed Nazareth Village, and this miniature cliff or retaining wall was either in Nazareth or right along the edge of it.⁵⁴⁸ While its location has been lost in history, these men were observant Jews and would not have broken any Sabbath laws (including those that pertained to a Sabbath walk) to drag Jesus to the huge cliff on the southern side of Nazareth.

The Sabbath Day's walk traveling restrictions were established centuries earlier. Joshua 3 contains the account of the Israelites crossing the Jordan as they were about to enter the land God had promised them. At that time the priests carried the Ark of the Covenant, which represented the presence of God in their midst. The people were told by the famous leader, Joshua, *not* to get closer than two thousand cubits (about one thousand yards) from the ark (Josh 3:4a). Therefore, on the Sabbath Day one could not travel more than a thousand yards from the center of worship so as not to become distant from God. Especially since the term *Sabbath* means *rest*.⁵⁴⁹ Since the “center” was considered to be the home, synagogue, or other place in the village, the rabbis would place markers indicating the end of two thousand cubits along the roads leading in and out of every village. On the Sabbath Day, the villagers could walk to the marker that indicated the limit of the distance they could travel.⁵⁵⁰

However, apparently there was some variation concerning the length of a Sabbath's Day's journey. Acts 1:12 indicates the distance from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem as a Sabbath Day's walk. Josephus cited this distance as five furlongs or 3,031 feet⁵⁵¹ and again as six

548. Information was acquired by personal interviews with Nazareth Village staff on June 9, 2013. Nazareth Village is a recreated first century living museum in Nazareth, Israel.

549. Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.1.1.

550. 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).

551. Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.8.6.

furlongs (a/k/a six stadia/stadium) or 3,637 feet.⁵⁵² But it is doubtful that when Luke wrote Acts 1:12, he was interested in a precise measurement.

In addition, a great disparity of distance lies in the fact that by Hellenistic measure 2000 cubits is 3000 feet. The variation may be due to the fact that while a cubit was generally 17.49 inches,⁵⁵³ in some cases it was 21.5 inches. But the most common unit of measure was the shorter unit. For general purposes, two cubits equal 36 inches or one yard as referred to in Joshua 3:4b. For Romans, a journey of 2,000 cubits (Num. 35:5), was reckoned to be equal to six Roman stadia (606.5 feet). Jerome in his *Epistle to Algasian* (Book 10) recorded the Sabbath Day journey to be a distance of 2000 feet.⁵⁵⁴ Obviously, there were different opinions as to a precise distance, but there was a consensus of the approximate distance.

Today tourists in Israel see a quarry on the south side of the mountain upon which Nazareth rests and are told this is the cliff where Jesus was threatened. However, when examining the distance between Nazareth and the “traditional cliff” as determined by the Crusaders, there is no question this was far beyond any Sabbath’s Day journey, even by the most liberal interpretation. Hence, the so-called traditional cliff location needs to be removed from any consideration as a historical-religious site.

The people He grew up with; the neighbors He loved and cared for; the kids He once played with who now had children of their own; for the most part, rejected Him. He saw friendly faces and critical eyes. Jesus left His hometown with a heavy heart and moved to Capernaum. The humble home that was His for so many years would be no more. Yet of all the human emotions that filled His heart, He knew that eventually the Jewish leadership would do likewise – turn against Him. The passage in Isaiah expressed His own purpose and program – precisely what He was going to do with His life – the Kingdom of God as follows:

1. To preach the good news to the poor (v. 11)
2. To announce that captives to sin would be released (v. 18)
3. To bring sight to the blind – both to those who are physically blind and those who were spiritually blind to the truth (v. 18).

552. Josephus, *The Jewish Wars* 5.2.3. Some other sources indicate 3,639 feet instead of 3,637 feet.

553. See Appendix 20; Some sources indicate the Old Cubit, a/k/a Short Cubit, was 17.49, 17.6, or 17.71 inches, or 45 cm.; See also Vine, “Cubit.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 1:53.

554. Kepler, “Sabbath’s Day’s Journey” 4:141; Geikie, *The Life and Words*. 2:622.

4. To give liberty to those who are injured and oppressed (v. 18)
5. To announce that the Kingdom of God has arrived – the hour of salvation has come.

It is noteworthy that little is recorded in the Bible concerning the relationship Jesus had with His biological family. It appears, however, that His brothers and sisters still had some serious misgivings about Him at this point. In fact, His brother James was as much, if not more, of a doubter as was the famous doubting Thomas until after the resurrection. His mother and father, assuming Joseph was still alive, were the only family members who had any confidence in Him. Thus, the poetic words of David were fulfilled.

**I have become a stranger to my brothers
and a foreigner to my mother's sons.**

Psalm 69:8

There are times when one must move on to the next phase of life. So did Jesus, as now He proceeded to the northern edge of the Sea of Galilee where He spent considerable time teaching and performing miracles. So much so, that the region between the villages of Tabgha, Bethsaida, and Chorizim became known as the “evangelical triangle.” Capernaum was centered within this evangelical area.

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,⁵⁵⁵ neither he nor the other gospel writers had reference to the seventh day, but the holy “Sabbath” day of Passover.⁵⁵⁶

555. 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.

556. Saldarini, *Jesus and the Passover*. 56.

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, *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.⁵⁵⁷ 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 *Damascus Document* identifies 28 different types of Sabbath prohibitions.⁵⁵⁸ 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 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.

557. Young, “Jesus” *Yavo Digest* 1:3, 3.

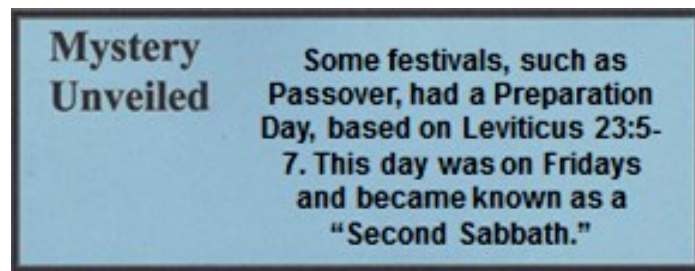
558. Dead Sea Scroll, *Damascus Document* 6QD 10:15-16.

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 Shammai. 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.⁵⁵⁹ Fire signals were also sent from the pinnacle of the temple, that when seen at distant hilltop stations,⁵⁶⁰ 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.



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.

559. Josephus, *Wars* 4.9.12.

560. 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.

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.⁵⁶¹ 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. 1240.⁵⁶² (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.⁵⁶³ But some scholars believe he had four wives in serial marriages,⁵⁶⁴ who gave him a total of five sons.⁵⁶⁵

Under Roman law bigamy and polygamy were strictly forbidden,⁵⁶⁶ 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

561. Trutza, "Marriage." 4:92.

562. "Bigamy and Polygamy" *Encyclopedia Judaica* CD-ROM 1977.

563. Wilkins, "Peter's Declaration concerning Jesus' Identity in Caesarea Philippi." 357; Farrar, *The Life of Christ*. 350.

564. Farrar, *The Life of Christ*. 348-49.

565. Grant, *The Ancient Historians*. 253.

566. http://www.ancient.eu/Cleopatra_VII/. Retrieved January 9, 2015.

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.⁵⁶⁷ Yet examples of polygamy are as follows:

1. Amazingly, the Mishnah records that a Jewish king could have a limit of 18 wives.⁵⁶⁸ 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.

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.⁵⁶⁹ 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.⁵⁷⁰ His second wife was also his niece. It is unclear if he was excommunicated for bigamy or being married to his niece.⁵⁷¹ However, his actions did not appear to conflict with the School of Shammai,⁵⁷² 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.⁵⁷³

3. A well-known Jerusalemite by the name of Tobiad Joseph had two wives.⁵⁷⁴

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

568. 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.

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

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

571. Babylonian Talmud, *Bava Mez’ia* 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.

572. Jerusalem Talmud, *Betsab* 1:4

573. Falk, *Jesus the Pharisee*. 53, 100-02.

574. Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.4.6 (186-90).

4. Alexander Jannaeus of the second century (B.C.) had several wives, one of whom was his “chief wife.”⁵⁷⁵ 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.⁵⁷⁶

Those who believe that polygamy disappeared need to reconsider their position.⁵⁷⁷ While the provisions of the typical *katuvah* are credited to the great reduction of polygamy, it did not eliminate it.⁵⁷⁸ 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*⁵⁷⁹

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*⁵⁸⁰

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

576. 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.

577. 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.

578. 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.

579. Thomas, *The Golden Treasury of Patristic Quotations: From 50 – 750 A.D.* 175.

580. Thomas, *The Golden Treasury of Patristic Quotations: From 50 – 750 A.D.* 175.

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 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.⁵⁸¹ 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.⁵⁸² 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.⁵⁸³ 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

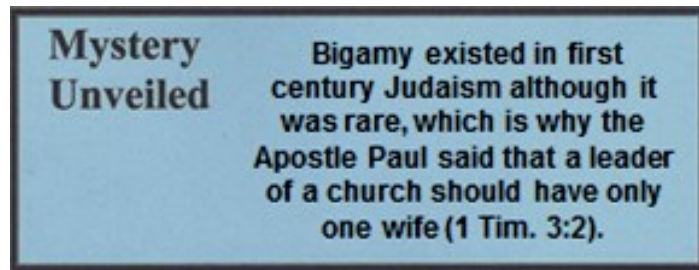
581. Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.2.3-4.

582. Ashes placed on the forehead were cultural signs of deep grief and mourning, and in this case, sincere appeal to God. Vine, "Ashes." *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:39.

583. Schalit, "Izates II." *Encyclopedia Judaica* CD ROM; Notley and Garcia. "Queen Helena's Jerusalem Palace," 28-30.

Monobasuz II died, their bones were buried in a tomb in the Hinnom Valley.⁵⁸⁴ Josephus and the Jewish writings praised them for their contributions in time of dire need.⁵⁸⁵

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.



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?

08.02.07.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
3. Followers of the School of Shammai⁵⁸⁶

584. 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.

585. Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.2.1-20.4.3; Mishnah, *Yoma* 3.10.

586. *New International Version* Study Bible note on Leviticus 24:20.

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.⁵⁸⁷ 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.

10.01.19.Q1 Why did Jesus chose Judas Iscariot (Jn. 6:71)?

This question has been pondered for centuries. Certainly there was a prophecy to be fulfilled. Jesus called Judas to be a leader in the early church and gave him the same opportunity to be a great disciple as He did for all the others. But Judas chose, under his own free will, to become a traitor. Jesus, on the other hand, had foreknowledge of what Judas would do. Jesus understood that He would be handed over to the temple authorities who would turn Him over to the Romans for crucifixion.

This foreknowledge did not limit Judas to his act. Jesus knows what every one of us will do today, tomorrow, and in the rest of our lives. On the other hand, Jesus also knew that every prophecy about Himself was to be fulfilled and that He was to be the ultimate sacrifice for the sins of humanity; He had to die a sacrificial death. To accomplish this objective, someone was needed who would, in his complete free will, decide to become a traitor.

10.01.28.Q1 What was the purpose of the two-step healing process in Mark 8:22-26?

The two-step method of healing a blind person has been problematic for students of the Bible. The unspoken issue is, of course, if Jesus is the all-powerful Healer, why wasn't the man healed the first time? Since it is the only two-step miracle in the gospels, there may be a prophetic element hidden in this event. While there is no clear answer, it has been suggested that this is parallel to the following:

1. The two-step healing is parallel to the understanding of the disciples. They had been with Jesus all this time by still had a *limited understanding* of His message and ministry – but their *full understanding* or “second healing of understanding” was to come after His resurrection.

⁵⁸⁷. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.2.4.

2. Another parallel pertains to national Israel. The religious leaders had a *limited understanding* at this time, but after their rejection of Jesus, they would be blinded for a while. Israel's vision for the plan of God will be "healed" after the fullness of the Gentiles is completed. At that time, all Israel will have *full understanding* and be saved as the Apostle Paul stated in Romans 11:25-27.

Therefore, the blind man was a "type and shadow" of both the disciples and national Israel.

Video Insert >

10.01.28.V Clarification of Yeshua's Unusual Healing Methods. Messianic Rabbi John Fischer, discusses two healing methods of blind men that have challenged Bible students. Why did Jesus (Yeshua) heal with spit and the laying on of hands in John 9:1-12, and what was the purpose of the 2-step healing process in Mark 8:22-26? Click here if Internet connection is available.

15.02.09.Q1 Concerning Mark 14:52, was a certain young man who ran away really naked?

This is a classic example where the definition of a word in one culture has a different meaning in another culture. In verse 52 are the phrases, "**a certain young man ... ran away naked.**" Nearly all commentators agree that this young man was none other than John Mark, who in later years wrote one of the gospels. The arrest of Jesus not only frightened the disciples, but did so especially for John Mark. Evidently someone tried to capture him, but he slipped out of his outer garment and escaped. To be without the outer garment was deemed naked.⁵⁸⁸ The English word *naked* is translated from the Greek root word *dyo*. It is closely linked with *gymnotes*. To have been naked was to have been *without an outer garment but wearing loin cloth, or poorly dressed*,⁵⁸⁹ a completely different definition from modern Western understanding of the word. On a side note, military definition of naked was to be without armor, not without clothing.⁵⁹⁰ The disciples knew all too well that the arrest of a leader usually meant imprisonment, slavery, or

588. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 57.

589. Weigelt, "Clothe, Naked, Dress, Garment, Cloth." 1:312, 315; Vine, "Naked, Nakedness." *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:425.

590. Josephus, *Antiquities* 8.14.2

possibly execution for everyone affiliated with him. John Mark was not about to take any chances. An explanation of the word “nude” is found in this rabbinic writing concerning the capital punishment of stoning:

When he (the condemned man)⁵⁹¹ was four cubits from the place of stoning, they stripped off his clothes. A man is kept covered in the front and a woman both in front and behind....The sages say: “A man is stoned naked but a woman is not stoned naked.”

Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 6.3-4

Clearly, both men and women wore minimal clothing when stoned to death, but were still considered to be “naked.” As previously stated, modesty in the ancient Jewish world was of great importance. When the Greeks and Romans controlled Judaea, the Jews were horrified with the immodesty of their Gentile overlords and neighbors. That is one reason they called Gentiles “dogs.”



15.02.09.A. AN OLD ILLUSTRATION OF TWO MEN FISHING “NAKED.” Fishing “naked” did not mean fishing without any clothing, but

591. Parenthesis mine.

fishing in what would today be known as “underwear” or a small “swim suit.” Since fishing was done at night in the middle of the Sea, it was not an issue. Furthermore, hauling fishing nets into a boat usually meant the fishermen got rather wet.

A person’s garments always consisted of an under layer and outer or upper layer. As previously stated, when the outer layer was removed, he/she was said to be “naked.”⁵⁹² In this narrative, Isaiah took off his outer layer that was known as a *cetoneth* and sandals and preached repentance to the people. He obviously caught their attention, and probably their criticisms, but he told them of pending divine judgment. On the other hand, if one were to say today that Isaiah preached in his underwear, that interpretation is both right and wrong. It is right from the ancient Jewish account, but again wrong in western thinking because “ancient under-garments” were far more modest than today’s fashions. Since Isaiah was dressed as one who had been robbed or a prisoner of war, he personally became an object lesson of his sermon.⁵⁹³

16.01.06.Q1 What happened to those who opposed Jesus (see also 03.05.18.Q1)?

All those who opposed Jesus met horrific deaths, just as did those three men who previously desecrated the holy temple.⁵⁹⁴ Divine judgment followed those who were involved in both the planning of the crucifixion and the final act. Note the following brief accounts:

1. Herod the Great rebuilt the temple but lived a violent and decadent lifestyle, abused the Jewish people and introduced as much Hellenism as he could into the culture. His body began to decay while he was still living. Furthermore, by the end of the first century, the entire Herodian dynasty was gone.
2. The entire family of Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, was destroyed during the First Revolt as the Romans attacked the Holy City. A vicious mob dragged one young man through the streets of Jerusalem until the skin on his back was shredded off, and he was beaten to an agonizing death.
3. The entire Sadducean religious party was destroyed with the temple.
4. As stated above, Pilate met his demise as the result of his horrific response to a

592. Vine, “Naked, Nakedness.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:425, and “Clothing, Cloths, Clothes, Cloke, Coat.” 2:105-06.

593. Keil and Delitzsch. *Commentary on the Old Testament*. 7:242.

594 See also 03.05.18.Q1 “What happened to those who violated the second Jewish temple?”

Samaritan “rebellion,” that was merely a religious movement. Consequently, in A.D. 36 he was exiled and then committed suicide.⁵⁹⁵

5. Herod Antipas was deposed and died in exile.

6. The Sanhedrin no longer met in the temple’s Chamber of Hewn Stone, but was relocated to the Hill of Evil Counsel nearby.⁵⁹⁶ It was disbanded around the year 360.⁵⁹⁷

God’s judgment was also on those who violated His holy temple. See 03.05.18.Q1 “What happened to those who violated the second temple?”

On an interesting side note, due to Roman persecutions against Christians, many early church leaders blamed *all* the Jews rather than the Sadducees and Romans for the crucifixion of Jesus. A few went as far as to speak highly of Pilate, even though church liturgy clearly stated that it was Pilate who sent Jesus to the cross. In fact, Tertullian who was one of the early church fathers around A.D. 200, referred to Pilate as being “Christian in his conscience.” The Greek Orthodox Church canonized Pilate’s wife Procula, and the Ethiopian Church recognizes June 25 as “St. Pilate and St. Procula’s Day.”⁵⁹⁸

17.02.02.Q6 What descriptive biblical parameters aided archaeologists in identifying the kind of tomb in which Jesus was laid?

The descriptive parameters are as follows:

1. It was the tomb of a wealthy individual named Joseph of Arimathea (Mt. 27:59-60)
2. It was a new tomb, never used previously (Mt. 27:60)
3. On Sunday morning, John came to the tomb and saw the burial clothes neatly folded, lying on a bench, and the body missing (Jn. 20:3-8). This suggests a single chamber tomb as the body would probably not have been visible in the dark second chamber of a double chamber tomb. However, the light from the rising sun or a lit oil lamp could have made a body or burial cloth visible from the outside.

595. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.7.

596. How interesting it is that today the United Nations is located on this hill.

597. Parry, *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to the Talmud*. 37.

598. Yamauchi, “Concord, Conflict and Community.” 170.

4. Mary came to the tomb and had to stoop down to look inside and saw the linen clothes lying on the bench (Jn. 20:5). She saw angels seated at both the head and foot of where Jesus had lain (Jn. 20:11-12). This affirms the single chamber tomb, possibly like the type Caiaphas was buried in.⁵⁹⁹

5. On Sunday morning, Mary spoke to a gardener (Jn. 20:15). This points to a large area on the northern side of the city where many people had vegetable gardens. This area was enclosed in the early 40s by King Agrippa.

6. The stone was “rolled” to the side. This often is interpreted that the stone was round, like a large disc. However, square stones were also rolled, although that is more difficult to do. The fact remains, however, that only four large disc stones have been found of the time of Jesus, while there have been more than a hundred square blocking type stones found that were commonly used to cover tomb entrances.⁶⁰⁰ It took several men to move such a heavy and clumsy stone, which is why entrances were small – the larger the opening; the larger the sealing stone would be needed.

17.02.02.Q7 What were the typical first century tombs like?

In the first century, the tombs in the Jerusalem area were of two distinct styles, uniquely different from each other and from prior centuries.

1. One style, known as the “shaft tomb,”⁶⁰¹ consisted of a large room with a number of finger-like shafts (or niches) carved into the cretaceous limestone hillside (see photo 17.02.02.B and illustration of plan 17.02.02.C).

Each shaft or niche, called a *kokhim* in Hebrew, was approximately six or seven feet long and one and one-half or two feet wide, large enough to lay a body (see photo 17.02.02.B). That matches the rabbinic directives that stated that a niche had to be four cubits long and

599. Kloner, “Did a Rolling Stone Close Jesus’ Tomb?” 29.

600. Kloner, “Did a Rolling Stone Close Jesus’ Tomb?” 28. Kloner also indicates that the Hebrew word for both round (or rolling) and square blocking stones is *golal* or *golel* (plural: *golalim*). See also Kloner and Zissu. *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period*. 54-56. Note: Amos Kloner is considered by scholars to have completed the most comprehensive study of tombs in the Jerusalem area.

601. For an exhaustive study on burial practices and tombs during the era of Jesus, see Rachel Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs, Practices and Rites in the Second Temple Period*. Boston: Brill, 2005.

seven handbreadths high and six handbreadths wide.⁶⁰² After a year, when the flesh had decayed, the bones were collected and placed in a small ossuary made of wood or soft limestone. This was the most common and typical first century tomb.



17.02.02.B. TWO SHAFT TOMBS IN THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE. In one of the small rooms within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre are these shaft tombs which were used by common Jewish peasants of the first century. The arcosolium tomb of Jesus was destroyed by Emperor Hadrian in A.D. 135. Photograph by the author.

The origin of the shaft tomb is unknown. Some scholars believe it originated in Egypt, others believe it came from Phoenicia and was popularized by Alexander the Great.⁶⁰³ The wealthy *arcosolium* tomb is believed to have originated in the late Inter-Testamental Period, replacing bench tombs such as the Garden Tomb of the Iron Age as was typical in the First Temple Era.⁶⁰⁴

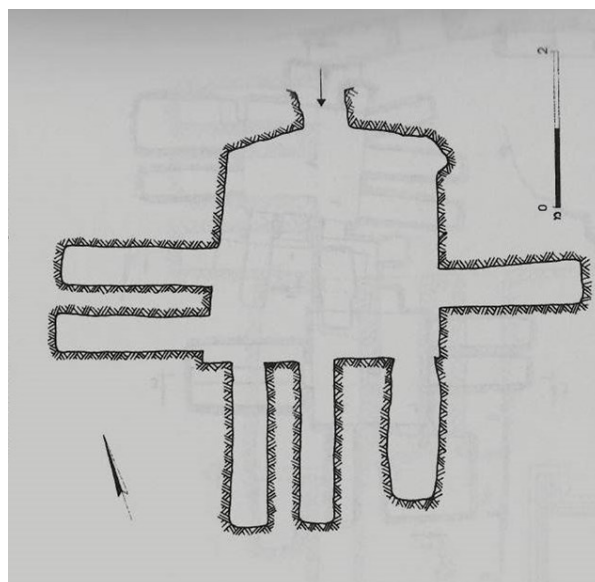
2. The second style was for the first century's rich and famous. This tomb had an indented shelf or bench, known as an *arcosolia*, cut into the chamber wall, large enough

602. Mishnah, *Baba Bathra* 6.8.

603. Kloner and Zissu. *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period*. 77.

604. Kloner and Zissu, *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period*. 85.

to lay a body.⁶⁰⁵ Again, after a year when the flesh had decayed, the bones were collected and placed in a small ossuary made of limestone. The *arcosolia* was the preferred tomb of the first century and was the only tomb style that would have permitted an angel to sit at either end of the body of Jesus (Jn. 20:12). It would have been impossible for an angel to sit at either end of the body of Christ in a shaft tomb or in a Late Iron Age tomb.



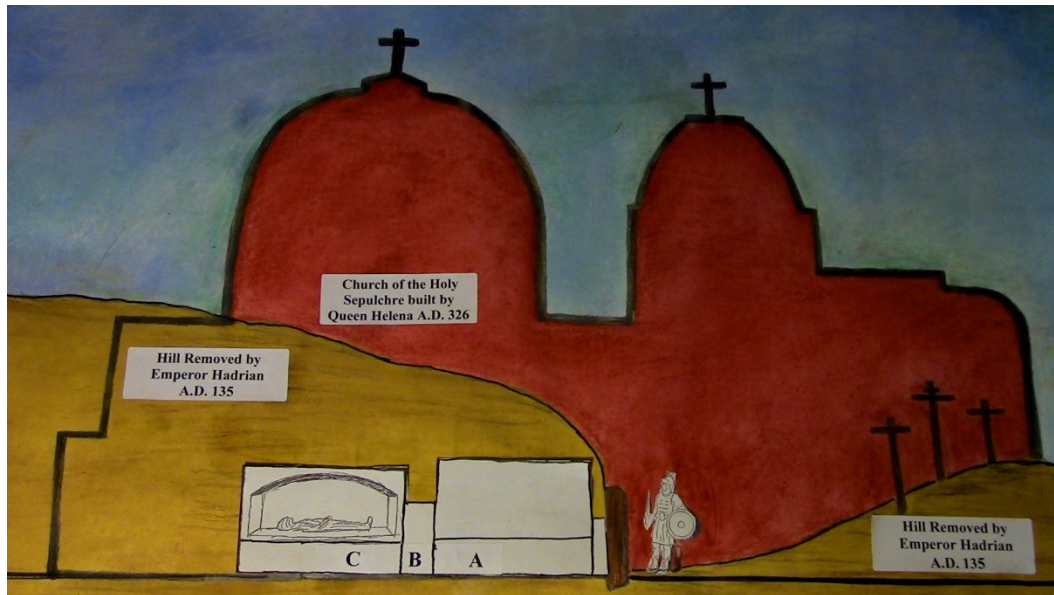
17.02.02.C A FLOOR PLAN ILLUSTRATING A COMMON SHAFT TOMB. This plan depicts six shafts or “niches,” where the bodies of common people were laid to decompose. The entrance on the right opens into the main chamber that is about three meters square. After the bones were collected and placed in ossuaries, the ossuaries were placed anywhere within the tomb. Illustration by Amos Kloner.⁶⁰⁶

Scholars believe it was an *arcosolium* tomb in which the body of Jesus was laid (see 17.02.02.D below) as this was an expensive style that only the wealthy could afford.⁶⁰⁷ The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is shown in 17.02.02.D because the hillside in which the tomb was located was destroyed by Hadrian who quarried the stone and built the shrine over the tomb to honor the Roman goddess Venus.

605. For an exhaustive study on burial practices and tombs during the era of Jesus, see Rachel Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs, Practices and Rites in the Second Temple Period*. Boston: Brill, 2005.

606. Kloner and Zissu, *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period*. 688.

607. Illustration modified from Bahat, *Illustrated Atlas of Jerusalem*. 57.



17.02.02.D AN ILLUSTRATION OF A DOUBLE CHAMBER ARCOSOLIUM TOMB WITH SHADOW OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPLUCHRE. This illustration depicts a possible reconstruction of the tomb of Aramathea. Mourners visiting this tomb would have sat on a bench in chamber “A,” then moved through a small opening “B” to the second chamber “C” where the body was laid on a bench under an arched ceiling. The hillside was eventually destroyed. Illustration by Diana Clegg.

3. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre

Determining the identity of Christ’s tomb was a great challenge since the Church of the Holy Sepulchre claimed to be both the authentic crucifixion and burial sites, the two being merely some fifty or sixty feet apart. The following is a brief overview of the historical events that reveal the identity of the authentic tomb of Jesus.

After the Romans destroyed the temple and Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the city was rebuilt. But six decades later, the Jews revolted again which resulted in yet another destruction in the year 135. In both wars, the Romans spent three years besieging the Holy City. Since there were thirteen rebellions between 63 B.C., when the Romans came, and A.D.70, by the time they defeated the Jews again in A.D. 135, Emperor Hadrian and the rest of Rome had enough of them and decided to permanently eliminate them. Like Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the Egyptian Pharaoh of previous centuries, he wanted to remove any trace of these aggravating people.



17.02.02.D. AN EXPOSED TOMB. An exposed tomb, the top removed, shows an arcosolium (plural: arcosolia) tomb on the left, three conventional tombs, and a bench in front of them. Bodies of the deceased were laid in these tombs until the flesh was decayed, then the bones were collected about a year later and placed in an ossuary. Photo by Jeff Herot.

Likewise, Hadrian had no great love for the new religious sect known as “Christians,” since, like the Jews, they also refused to participate in emperor worship.⁶⁰⁸ Therefore, if he was going to get rid of the Jews, why not the Christians also? He determined to destroy whatever people, symbols, shrines, and buildings that existed in the Jerusalem area, although he was more sympathetic to those living in the countryside villages.

He found the site where local Christians said Jesus was crucified and buried. To celebrate his victory over them, he built a shrine to the goddess Venus over the site of the tomb. He took Herodian ashlar (large rectangular stones cut by Herod the Great) from the ruined temple and reused them to build rectangular retaining walls for the shrine.⁶⁰⁹ Upon these walls, he built a platform for his shrine to (*Latin*) Venus (also known as Aphrodite to the Greeks), the goddess of love. His goal was to forever obliterate the tomb of Jesus, as well as the nearby rock of Golgotha. He never touched Skull Hill or Gordon’s Garden Tomb and, therefore, it remained

608. Bahat, “Does the Holy Sepulcher.” 32.

609. Price, *The Stones Cry Out*. 314.

undisturbed for centuries, until 1883.⁶¹⁰

Hadrian was determined to eradicate anything Jewish – and Jesus and His disciples at this time were still considered part of Judaism. However, with the construction of the shrine, he permanently identified the site, because, when Emperor Constantine sent his mother Queen Helena to the Holy Land in 325-326 to locate the sacred sites, she quickly found the remains of the sacred cave and ruins of the shrine. Some fifty feet nearby was another Roman shrine which had been built over the crucifixion site.⁶¹¹ Helena employed skilled workers to tear down the shrine and construct the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. When Eusebius, the bishop of Caesarea Maritima, heard of her plans, he voiced support for the adornment of the building as follows:

It is my wish, then, that you should be especially convinced of this, which I suppose is clear to everyone, that of all things it is my chief concern how we may splendidly adorn with buildings that sacred place which, under divine direction, I freed...Not only shall this basilica be the finest in the world, but that the details also shall be such that all the most beautiful structures in every city may be surpassed by it....As for the columns and marbles, have a care to tell us in writing, after you have inspected the plan, whatever you judge to be most precious and serviceable so that those materials, of whatever sort and in whatever quantity, may be procured from every quarter.

Eusebius, *The Life of Constantine* 3.29-32

Because of this unusual history, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is, without question, one of the most accurately identified biblical sites.⁶¹² It was so significant that it later appeared on the sixth century mosaic Madaba Map on the floor of a Byzantine church in Madaba, Jordan.⁶¹³ Extensive research conducted in the 1990s firmly identified the church as to where both the crucifixion and burial sites are located. Ironically, little did Hadrian know that by destroying the holy site, he was in fact, preserving it. Eusebius described the construction work of Hadrian's slaves and soldiers, they...

... Brought a quantity of earth from a distance with much labor, and covered the entire spot; then, having raised this to a moderate height, they paved it with stone

610. Maier, *The First Easter*. 84.

611. Crossan and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*. 248-49.

612. Biddle, *The Tomb of Christ*. 56-57; Mackowski, *Jerusalem City of Jesus*. 5; Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*. 146-47 quoting Egeria's Travels.

613. See "Madaba Map" in Appendix 26; See also 14.02.03.D and 05.02.03.Z.

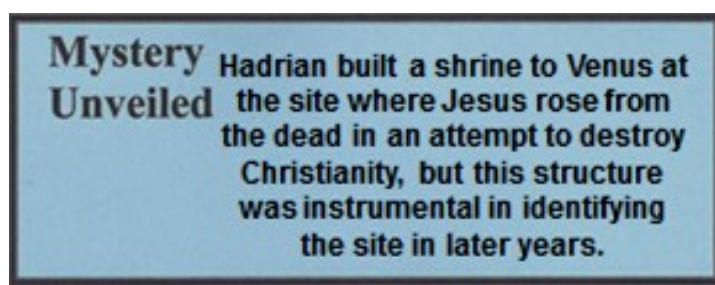
concealing the holy cave (tomb) beneath this massive mound. Then, as though their purpose had been effectually accomplished they prepared on this foundation a truly dreadful Sepulchre of souls, by building a gloomy shrine to the lifeless idols to the impure spirit whom they call Venus.

Eusebius, *The Life of Constantine* 3:26⁶¹⁴

From the time of Hadrian until Constantine, nothing changed. Then, in 326, Queen Helena identified the crucifixion and burial sites by finding the ruins of the shrine of Venus.⁶¹⁵ She immediately removed all traces of pagan worship and again Eusebius preserved the account.

He (Constantine) gave orders that the materials of what was destroyed, both stone and timber, should be removed and thrown as far from the spot as possible....he directed that the ground itself should be dug up to a considerable depth, and the soil which had been polluted by the foul impurities of demon worship transported to a far distance place.

Eusebius, *The Life of Constantine* 3:26



The site identification in the early fourth century was relatively easy. The destruction of Jerusalem and the work of Hadrian were still common knowledge. Queen Helena's accuracy cannot be disputed and when the clearing work was completed and a new church built, Constantine said this:

...I have disencumbered as it were of the heavy weight of foul idol worship; a spot which has been accounted holy from the beginning in God's judgment, but which now appears holier still, since it has brought to light a clear assurance of our Savior's passion.

614. Parenthesis mine.

615. Thiede and d'Ancona. *The Quest for the True Cross*. 62.

Eusebius, *The Life of Constantine* 3:30

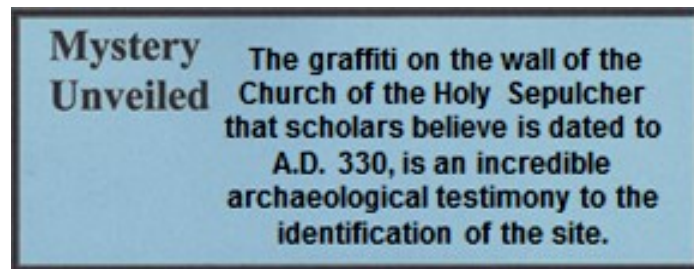
Eusebius wrote of Constantine's desire to build "a house of prayer" upon the site where Jesus was buried:

He judged it incumbent on him to render the blessed locality of our Savior's resurrection an object of attraction and veneration to all. He issued immediate injunctions, therefore, for the erection in that spot of a house of prayer.

Eusebius, *The Life of Constantine* 3:25

Were it not for Constantine and his mother Helena, many sacred sites would have been lost in history. The new church was called the Church of the Martyrion, a portion of which remains. The word "Martyrion" (Gk. *witness*) meant the site was the witness of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.⁶¹⁶ Years later the name was changed to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

In the second half of the last century, a number of repairs were made to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre which exposed a number of stones that scholars believe were part of the original Constantine structure.⁶¹⁷ Furthermore, in 1975 construction workers found, near St. Helena's chapel (part of the Holy Sepulchre) a red and black picture of a Roman sailing ship with the Latin phrase *Domine iuimus*, meaning *Lord, we went* (cf. Ps. 122:1). Historians believe this graffiti was placed on the wall in 330, only a few years after the completion of the church.⁶¹⁸



616. Pixner, "Church of the Apostles Found." 24, 60 n20.

617. Wiseman and Yamauchi, *Archaeology and the Bible*. 84-86.

618. McDowell, "The Historical Reliability of the New Testament." 48.



17.02.02.E. HADRIAN’S WALL AT THE HOLY SEPULCHRE. Some rooms of the church have an unusual mix of stones. Some scholars to believe the smooth stones are “second use stones” that were originally part of Hadrian’s shrine of Venus.⁶¹⁹ This opinion is based on the logical idea that when Queen Helena built the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, she used stones from the shrine that were already cut and smooth. Photo by the author.

Many ancient sites have been easy for archaeologists to identify since Queen Helena built churches over them with a foundation of a unique architectural style. Fellowship churches were constructed in the form of a cross, whereas memorial churches were built in the shape of an octagon.⁶²⁰ The Church of the Holy Sepulchre has been partially destroyed and rebuilt several times, but it has maintained a continuous history. The queen, just like General Gordon centuries later, was faced with “the wall dilemma,” because she, too, had to contemplate the tomb location in light of the city walls. The local residents told her of King Agrippa’s third city wall and, hence, she rendered a better decision. Christianity will always remember her work because it preserved the site of the tomb of Jesus.⁶²¹

17.02.03.Q1 What significant extra-biblical comments on the life and death of Jesus survived the centuries?

619. Bahat, “Does the Holy Sepulcher.” 33.

620. Bahat, “Does the Holy Sepulcher.” 34-35.

621. Shanks, “After Hadrian’s Banishment: Jews in Christian Jerusalem.” 33.

One of the most notable was Flavius Josephus. He gave this brief observation concerning Jesus:

Now, there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works - a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.3.3 (63-64)

Critics have said that this paragraph is not original, but claim it is a Christian interpolation of a later edition. They stated a loyal Jew would not have made such a statement. However, two significant church fathers, Jerome and Ambrosius⁶²² accepted it as original. Eusebius not only quoted Josephus, but then said the following,

When such testimony as this was transmitted to us by an historian who sprung from the Hebrews themselves, both respecting John the Baptist and our Savior, what subterfuge can be left to prevent those from being convicted destitute of all shame, who have forged the acts against them? This, however, may suffice on this subject.

Eusebius, *Church History* 1.11.9

Those scholars who considered it an original work point to an early Arabic translation, because it included the same comment.⁶²³ On the other hand, the Jewish account of the death of Jesus in the Babylonian Talmud is one of the travesties of historical records. Jewish historians are known for their accuracy and reliability, but in dealing with Jesus, their credibility fails miserably. This reflects how problematic Jesus was and continued to be for them. In the fourth century, the following account was prepared to give some resemblance of correct legal procedure in the trial and execution of Jesus. There is no mention of the house of Annas that is elsewhere described with contempt, nor is there any mention of the Romans, who performed the execution. Consequently, the Jews justified His death based on Deuteronomy 13.

622. St. Jerome (c. 347-420) was the son of church father and historian Eusebius and Ambrosius (c. 340-397), a/k/a St. Ambrose (Aurelianus Ambrosius) was the bishop of Milan.

623. Santala, *The Messiah in the New Testament*, 28-29.

On the eve of the Passover, they hanged Yeshu (Jesus). For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried: Yeshu of Nazareth is going forth to be stoned, in that he practiced sorcery and led Israel astray. Let anyone knowing anything in his defense come and plead for him. But they found nothing in his defense, and hanged him on the eve of the Passover.

Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 43a

In the same section of the Babylonian Talmud is this comment.

Rabbi Ulla said, “Would you believe that any defense would have been so zealously sought for him? He was a deceiver, and the All-merciful says: ‘You shall not spare him, neither shall you conceal him.’ It was different with Jesus for he was near to the kingship.”

Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 43a

Those who were against Jesus before the crucifixion were also against Him afterwards. As previously stated, they accused Him of being a magician, a deceiver, and an artist of magic art. In the second century, before the Babylonian Talmud was written, Justin Martyr made a statement that affirms the accusations of the later Talmud authors. Martyr said,

They said it was a display of magic art, for they even dared to say that he was a magician and a deceiver of the people.

Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 97:7⁶²⁴

Jesus was not the only one privileged to be accused of doing magical works of demons. The Roman satirist Juvenal, in the century after Jesus, said that everywhere throughout the Roman Empire, Jewish magicians, dream expounders, and fortune tellers were found.⁶²⁵ Evidently, His disciples were given the same honors by disgruntled Jews, as recorded by Origen in the second century. Their concern was not that the miracles were performed, but their debate was focused on His source of power:

Since these men do these wonders, ought we to think them sons of God? Or ought we to say that they are the practices of wicked men possessed by an evil demon?

624. See also *First Apology* 30 and *Dialogue with Trypho, the Jew* 108.

625. Juvenal, *Satire* 6:543-548. See http://archive.org/stream/juvenalpersiuswi00juveuoft/juvenalpersiuswi00juveuoft_djvu.txt. Retrieved June 11, 2014.

Origen, *Against Celsus* 1:68

Amazingly, while the Pharisees accused Jesus of performing exorcisms by using demonic powers, they also believed that the ability to perform exorcisms was a gift of God – a direct violation of their accusations against Jesus. The accusations that began during the life of Christ continued for centuries.

The phrase “**near to the kingship,**” in the Babylonian Talmud’s *Sanhedrin* 43a is a reference to the messianic prophecy that the Messiah would be a descendant of King David,⁶²⁶ which makes this a rather interesting comment. A third comment about Jesus in the same section of the Talmud is this:

The rabbis taught: “Jesus had five disciples: Matthias, Naquin, Never, Buna, and Torah.”

Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 43a

Obviously, this passage is of no historical value other than it adds insight to how negatively Jesus was seen by Jewish leaders centuries later. This rabbinic writing does, however, give evidence for the life of Jesus, which they so desperately tried to destroy. The commentary of *Sanhedrin* 43a reveals the following,

1. It recognizes Jesus as an extremely influential person, or there would have been no mention of Him five centuries after His life.
2. Since Jesus performed many miracles, this activity was attributed to Him as sorcery.
3. He is associated with the Passover at the time of His death, which was by hanging, a derogatory and condemning word with reference to the crucifixion.
4. Jesus was accused of apostasy since many Jews decided to leave the corrupt Jewish system and follow the teachings of Christ.

Possibly the most interesting aspect is that this paragraph makes no mention of Roman trials or execution. It does, however, explain that Jesus was put to death by the Jews themselves. This is clearly a confession that national Israel was responsible for the death of Jesus, an awesome statement from a non-biblical text.

626. House, *Chronological and Background Charts of the New Testament*. 77.

The life of Jesus was also confirmed by pagans, although in a negative manner. The fact that pagan authors were uncharacteristically strong in their comments suggests the influence Jesus had. As dynamic as Jesus was throughout His life, the concept that He permitted Himself to be crucified and the idea that He could be God was beyond comprehension for many. For many Jews it was a difficult challenge to accept, given their preconceived ideas of who the Messiah would be. Yet for the Greeks and Romans the idea was even more difficult to accept. Christians soon became persecuted targets throughout the Roman Empire. While many accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, others despised Him and said that Jews and Christians worshiped a god in the form of a donkey. The donkey, being rather docile and low in intelligence, became a symbol of Jews and Christians for those who hated them and were quick to spit out their vulgar blasphemies.

While the New Testament writers recorded antagonism between Jews and the apostles, the Jewish-inspired violence appears to have dissipated by the second century. Jewish writings, nevertheless, defended the accusatory positions of the leading rabbis, as is found in two accounts of the Babylonian Talmud.

One day he [Rabbi Joshua] was reciting the Shema when Jesus came before him. He intended to receive him and made a sign to him. He [Jesus] thinking it was to repel him, put up a brick and worshipped it.

“Repent,” said he [rabbi Joshua] to him. He replied, “I have thus learned from you: He who sins and causes others to sin is not afforded the means of repentance.” And a Master [another major rabbi] has said, Jesus the Nazarene practiced magic and led Israel astray.”

Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 107b⁶²⁷

It was taught: On the eve of the Passover, Yeshu [ms. M: the Nazarene] was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, “He is going forth to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy. Anyone who can say anything in his favor, let him come forward and plead on his behalf.”

Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 43a

627. See also Babylonian Talmud, *Sotah* 47a and Jerusalem Talmud, *Hagiga* 2.2.

Obviously, there are numerous conflicts with the passage above and the biblical account. But the question the rabbis and other critics cannot answer is, if Jesus did worship a brick, if he practiced sorcery, if he was a fraud, then why were all of his disciples willing to die a martyr's death? They must respond to the concept that Jesus was either a liar, a lunatic, or the Son of God. If a dozen men, living with Him every day for more than three years determined that He was neither a liar nor a lunatic, there is then only one other option. If Jesus was the Son of God, then did He fulfill the Old Testament requirements and prophecies? Did He perform miracles? Did hundreds of people speak to Him after His death and resurrection?⁶²⁸ If so, then, obviously, He was/is the Son of God.

Rabbinic literature says little of Jesus, and when it does, the commentary is negative. A notable exception is a comment in the Babylonian Talmud (Gittin 56b-57a) that is dated to the early second century. It implies a degree of harmony between the traditional Jewish people and Nazarene believers. While a number of false doctrines of prevalent heresies are mentioned, there is *no specific accusation* against Christianized Jewish people or a denial of the miracles performed by Jesus.

However, the Gittin comment is the exception rather than the rule. It is interesting that the Jews never denied that He performed miracles, but they attributed His power to demonic sources. Hence, rabbinic literature describes Jesus as One who led souls into apostasy and accused Him of being a sorcerer (cf. Mt. 12:24).⁶²⁹ While negative in nature, there was no doubt among Jews that Jesus performed miracles.

In the meantime, the disciples and thousands of followers of Jesus had their world shattered at the unexpected crucifixion. How could anyone who performed so many incredible miracles allow Himself to be crucified? And why? Their depression and sadness must have been as dark as the sky in the afternoon of Passover. But that was about to change.

John, the disciple, was a kinsman of the high priest Caiaphas (Acts 4:6). Many scholars have said that to enter a tomb that contained a body would have defiled him because he was an orthodox Jew. Some have argued that the John of Acts 4:6 may not have been this disciple, but the fact that he did not enter the tomb until he realized it was empty, strongly suggests that he was a member of the priesthood family, which was required to observe the laws of defilement. But the question remains as to whether entering any tomb would have defiled him, even if did not have a body.

628. For further study on the significance of the physical resurrection of Jesus, see Geisler, Norman L. "The Significance of Christ's Physical Resurrection." *Bibliotheca Sacra*. 146:582 (Apr-June, 1989) 148-70.

629. Fluesser, "The Jewish-Christian Schism" (Part II). 30-31.

Questions Concerning Difficult Ideas, Words, Phrases, and Actions

06.01.07.Q1 What was the purpose of the miracles performed by Jesus?

People believed that illnesses were the consequences of sin. How appropriate that Jesus was the Great Healer, since He came to save men from their sins. While the healing of the human body did not save anyone from sin, the act of healing provided striking evidence to the observers, that Jesus saves lost souls from the consequences of sin.⁶³⁰ Miracles were not the intended end, but gave overwhelming evidence concerning the identity of Jesus.

Considering the social and political tensions of the time, for a Jew to heal a Roman or his servant was unthinkable. This had a profound effect because most Jews believed God was interested only in them. In fact, many dismissed any thought of Gentile conversions and questioned how God could select one of their own to heal the son of a Roman official of the horrible Herodian dynasty. Yet even within the halls of government, the Spirit of God was convicting the lost. Manaen, a foster-brother and official to Herod, became a believer. His and other conversions were beyond Jewish comprehension.⁶³¹

The short dialog between the centurion and Jesus is most interesting. The Greek language of the centurion's request indicates he *repeatedly* asked Jesus to heal his servant, because he was desperate and the young man was near death. This underscores the faith he had in Jesus although the request was probably humiliating (Jews were despised by most Romans). The boy's father had assumed that Jesus needed to be beside his son physically in order to perform the miracle (cf. Jn. 11:1-37). Jesus, however, demonstrated His power over distance by simply speaking His Word of healing. Once Jesus pronounced his son healed, it would seem natural for the centurion to hurry home to confirm the miracle. But he didn't. In fact, he stayed in the area and did not begin his return trip until the following day. In this case, there was a double miracle – an absent child was healed of his sickness and the father was healed of his unbelief.

The passage reads that on the following day, as the centurion was walking home, he met his servants who came to tell him of the boy's healing. The time of the healing was confirmed to have occurred at the 7th hour (1:00 p.m.), but the centurion was not surprised at the news. Note the interesting progression in the narrative:

⁶³⁰. Flusser, *Jesus*. 65.

⁶³¹. Farrar, *Life of Christ*. 106.

1. He believed in the words of the promise spoken by Jesus and
2. He believed in Jesus as the Messiah.

Again, news of the miracles that Jesus performed traveled quickly. Many believed in Him as the result of Him cleansing of the temple (Jn. 2:23; 3:2), and they had returned to their homes in the Galilee area. Now Jesus was requested to perform another miracle in the same area where He once turned water into wine. Two statements were made by these miracles – without a single word spoken.

1. The first miracle in Cana was associated with creation of a new family and the joy of the wedding, at which Jesus added gladness to the feast.
2. In the second miracle, there was sorrow with the fear of death in the family but Jesus brought health and gladness to many hearts.

06.01.08.Q1 What is the “Kingdom of Heaven”?

The kingdoms of this world consist of matter and flesh, of power and deceit, of depraved human nature. The Kingdom of Heaven/God is the opposite. It is the kingdom of the Spirit and the soul, the kingdom of renunciation and of purity; the kingdom of all things valued by men who know the worthlessness of everything else in comparison. The phrase “**Kingdom of Heaven**” is an expression not found in the Hebrew Bible; the term was developed by sages to refer to God as king or to God reigning in the lives of His people forever (Ex. 15:18). Mark used this phrase in conjunction with “the time (Gk. *kairos*) is near,” meaning “the Day of the Lord” that the prophets foresaw is “approaching quickly.”⁶³²

But Jesus did not wish to be the restorer of earthly kingdoms or be the conqueror of people. God offered kingship to Jesus via the cross, which is in stark contrast to Satan who offers so-called “eternal life” without the cross. The kingship of Jesus is the Kingdom of Heaven within His believers. The day when a soul has repented, has turned to righteousness, and has placed Jesus in the center of his or her life, the eternal Kingdom of Heaven has been enlarged because it has acquired a new citizen.

The ideal Kingdom of God is to be realized in the absolute rule of Jesus Christ, the eternal Son, by whom all things are made and consist (Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:16-20). His earthly life was one of perfect obedience to God and whose sacrificial offering of love upon the cross reveal to men their true relation to God, and whose spirit works to bring them into this relationship. The

632. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 232.

Kingdom of Heaven is the Spirit of God functioning within a person, and that person, in turn, functions accordingly to his or her best abilities to serve God.

Finally, it should be noted that from the Book of Daniel, the phrase “Kingdom of Heaven,” was a familiar phrase in the first century. The term was found in the *Psalms of Solomon* 17:4 and other Jewish books that were in wide circulation of the time.

06.01.08.Q2 Is there a difference within the phrases “Kingdom of God/Heaven?”

No. Matthew, speaking to a Jewish audience would not have used the name of God, but rather, would have used a substitute word such as “Heaven, Power, Glory, the Highest,” or “the Name.” The reason is that most Jewish people had so much respect for God that they did not even mention His name, but addressed Him with a different title. But other gospel writers who addressed their works to a Gentile audience would have used the word “God” because they would not have been offended by the name.

Phrases such as “the Kingdom of Heaven is near” and “let the fear of heaven be upon you,” avoid the name of God but have the same meaning. Jewish people have such a high respect for God, that even today many orthodox Jewish people spell the name of God as “G-d.” Matthew, at times, used the plural form “heavens,” which is characteristically Hebraic and does not occur in any other language.⁶³³ The phrase “Kingdom of God” simply means that God has complete rulership of one’s life.

The Kingdom of God is also in the future in that there will come a time when Jesus will rule and reign upon the earth for a thousand years with Jerusalem as His capital. The Kingdom that is in the present is the one in which every believer permits Jesus to rule and reign his or her life. However, in the future there will be a completely different Kingdom – one where Jesus will rule and reign over the nations of the world as a political entity – King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

06.02.02.Q1 What was the unseen miracle in Nazareth (Lk. 4:16-17)?

The tradition was that men of the congregation would take turns reading Scripture in the worship service, unless there was a visiting guest, then he was given the honor to lead the service. The readings from the scrolls were continued from week to week and, in any three year cycle the entire Hebrew Bible was read. That, in itself, was a difficult task to accomplish since there were no chapter and verse divisions. Furthermore, there were no vowels and all the letters were run

633. Grintz, “Hebrew as the Spoken and Written Language in the Last Days of the Second Temple.” 37.

together.⁶³⁴ It is normally assumed that Jesus simply selected a text from Isaiah, read it, and applied it to Himself. Clearly, this was not the case. At the point where the reader of the previous Sabbath ended, that was the beginning point for the reader the following week. The miracle lies in the fact that Jesus did not select the text, but His reading was the continuation from the reading of the previous Sabbath. This was hardly a coincidence, but a miracle by a divine appointment. One would hardly notice a miracle had occurred unless the order of synagogue worship was known. The custom of the day was as follows:⁶³⁵

1. The congregation would recite the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4), which was a short prayer. At the end, there was a moment of thoughtful silence which was when the worshipers “folded up the Shema.”⁶³⁶
2. A prayer followed.
3. There was a reading from the Law (*Parashah*),
4. There was a reading from the Prophets (*Haphtarah*).
5. The reader would then give an explanation and life application to each reading.

Jesus was probably seated in the front of the congregation during the first two steps, then read a section from the Torah (step 3). It is unknown if He read that section or if He entered the synagogue in time to read from the Prophets (step 4). Regardless, He then stood upon a large flat stone in the front of the synagogue called the “bema” (Heb. *bima*) stone.⁶³⁷ This was the honorable position of a *maphtir* or reader (who at this moment was Jesus) of the sacred *megillah*, meaning the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Jesus then read the *haphtarah*, or the reading of the day, which was Isaiah 61:1-2a. As He read, the entire congregation stood to honor the Word of God. The length of the *haphtarah* was normally between three and twenty-one verses. However, Jesus only read one and a half verses, rolled up the *megillah*, and gave it to the *chazzan* or the attendant, who carefully placed the sacred writing in a painted ark.⁶³⁸

634. A system of “vowel points” was established in the 9th or 10th century (A.D.) to aid reading.

635. Farrar, *Life of Christ*. 103; Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*. 67-70.

636. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 1:152.

637. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*. 67-70.

638. Farrar, *Life of Christ*. 102; Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 276, 308-09; Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church* 9.

After the unusually short reading, Jesus stepped off the bema stone, walked to the Seat of Moses, and seated Himself.⁶³⁹ There He presented His sermon based on that Scripture (Isa. 61:1-2a). His lifelong friends and neighbors could hardly believe that the little boy Jesus, who grew up in their community, was applying the words of Isaiah to Himself. They knew of the miracles He had already performed, but when He reminded them that Elijah and Elisha performed miracles for their non-Jewish neighbors who believed God, that brought instant anger and fury. The unspoken message was that the pagans could become believers while they, the Jews of Nazareth, might not.

The first century Jewish philosopher, Philo, preserved a description of a synagogue service that was typical of the time of Jesus. He recorded the following:

Now these laws they are taught at other times, indeed, but most especially on the seventh day, for the seventh day is accounted sacred on which they abstain from all other employments, and frequent the sacred places which are called synagogues, and there they sit according to their age in classes. The younger sitting under the elder and listening with eager attention in becoming order.

Then one, indeed, takes up the holy volume and reads it, and another of the men of the greatest experience comes forward and explains what is not very intelligible, for a great many precepts are delivered in enigmatical modes of expression, and allegorically, as the old fashion was; and thus the people were taught piety, and holiness, and justice, and economy, and the science of regulating the state, and the knowledge of such things as are naturally good, or bad, or indifferent, and to choose what is right and to avoid what is wrong, using a threefold variety of definitions, and rules, and criteria, namely, the love of God, and the love of virtue, and the love of mankind.

Philo, *Every Good Man is Free* 12.81-83⁶⁴⁰

The attendant was in charge of the service. It was his responsibility to insure the appointed people read Scripture at the appropriate times, to see that the furniture and building were kept in good order, and to make sure the entire service was conducted properly and in order.⁶⁴¹ This form of a Jewish worship service became the pattern of worship in the early church, since the

639. The custom of being seated while teaching is also found in Mt. 5:1, 23:2, 26:55; Jn. 8:2; Acts 22:3.

640. Philo, *The Works of Philo*. 689-90. See also Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*. 24. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:67.

641. Freeman, *The New Manners and Customs of the Bible*. 503.

first converts were Jews. Jews wrote the first church hymns, some of which eventually were entered into Scripture (i.e. Phil. 2:6-11; 1 Tim. 3:16).⁶⁴²

06.03.04.Q1 Why is the healing of Peter's mother-in-law to be considered more than a healing miracle?

The significance lies in the term “**a fever.**” There were three *kinds* of fevers in the Galilee and surrounding areas, because Galilee was different than Perea and Judah. Those two areas were too dry to have mosquito-infested marshy areas. In Luke 4:38, the physician said the fever was *great*, suggesting its seriousness.⁶⁴³ Ancient physicians marked the difference between a light and great fever.⁶⁴⁴

1. The Malta fever⁶⁴⁵ in which a person was weak, anemic, and wasted away.
2. Typhoid fever
3. Malaria, a disease

A short distance north of the Sea of Galilee is the Hula Lake, which was surrounded by a large marshy area.⁶⁴⁶ It was always a mosquito-infested swamp and travelers always risked getting Malta fever, malaria, or typhoid. All three of these diseases generally resulted in death.⁶⁴⁷ According to Alfred Edersheim, the Talmud identifies this disease as the *eshatha tsemirta*, meaning, “a burning fever,”⁶⁴⁸ which suggests that she had one of these terminal diseases.

642. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*. 18-20.

643. Concerning medical procedures available in the first century Israel, a number of good resources have been published by the University of Haifa, Hebrew University, and the Israel Museum. For further study, see the articles published in *Michmanim*, (English and Hebrew), Haifa, Israel: University of Haifa (Vol. 13) May, 1999.

644. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:295.

645. This disease is known by several names, including the Mediterranean fever. It is caused by a bacteria from infected milk or undercooked meat.

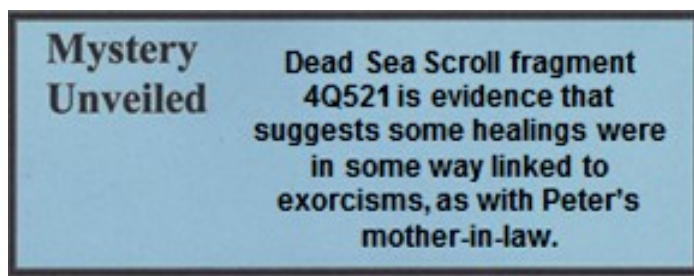
646. Also known as the plain of El Huleh, or the Sea of Merom,

647. Barclay, “Matthew.” 1:307-08.

648. Alfred Edersheim (18125-1889) was a Jewish scholar who converted to Christianity, and whose writings are considered by scholars as classic; Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 336-37. He is clearly a rich source for the understanding of first century Jewish traditions. However, he has his bias in that he is anti-Pharisaic and anti-Rabbinic. Therefore, he has a tendency to be less than historically accurate on some issues.

Jewish writings reveal the extent to which pagan superstitions had infiltrated Judaism. It appears that some rabbis imitated Greek healing practices because basic elements were similar.⁶⁴⁹ For example, the prescribed healing method for a fever recorded in the Talmud involved tying an iron knife to a thorn bush with the hair of the sick person attached. This was repeated several consecutive days, after which the bush was cut down while a magical formula was announced.⁶⁵⁰ Objects of iron, such as nails and knives, were in much demand and were said to hold magical powers to ward off evil.⁶⁵¹

Luke said that Jesus rebuked the fever. The healing was more than a miracle because Jesus not only healed Peter's mother-in-law, but demonstrated power over the superstitions and ridiculous methods of the rabbis. The narrative reflects the same manner in which He rebuked demons, which implies the source of the fever.⁶⁵² As mentioned previously, Jesus never touched anyone with demonic spirits, but He commanded them to leave as He did with the burning fever. This story is far more dynamic than the healing, which was a phenomenon in its own right.



The Jewish people had a number of incredible legends and superstitions they believed would either heal a person or cast out demons. One of them was recorded by Josephus.

In the Valley of Baaras there is a certain root called by the same name. Its color is like to that of flame, and towards evening it sends out a certain ray like lightning. It is not easily taken by such as would do so, but recedes from their hands, nor will it yield itself to be taken quietly until either the urine of a woman, or her menstrual blood, be poured upon it; no, even then it is certain death to those who touch it, unless anyone take and hang the root itself down from his hand, and so carry it away.

649. The Greeks likewise had their own superstitious methods of exorcisms that included wild and frenzied dancing with singing and chanting. These components were not in Jewish exorcisms. For more information, see Ustinova, "Treating Madness with Madness: The Greek Corybantes." 26.

650. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 336.

651. Stans, "Crucifixion Evidence." 6.

652. Read the discussion on healing and exorcisms written in Dead Sea Scroll fragment 4Q521 at the end of 08.05.04.

It may also be taken another way without danger, which is this: they dig a trench all around it, until the hidden part of the root be very small; they then tie a dog to it, and when the dog tries hard to follow him that tied him, the root is easily plucked up, but the dog dies immediately instead of the man who would take the plant away; nor after this need anyone be afraid of taking it into their hands. Yet after all these pains in getting it, it is only valuable on account of one virtue which it possesses, that if it be brought to sick persons, it drives away those called demons.

Josephus, *Wars* 7.6.3 (180-185)

This interesting point of superstitious folklore is that they reveal that the Jewish people had more faith for healing in a variety of places, but not in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jesus was about to change their perception of Who does the healing.

06.03.08.Q1 What is the difference between a leper being cleansed and being healed.

Leprosy was and still is a strange disease. It is the name of a broad range of abnormalities from skin afflictions to the rotting of the body while the victim is still alive. According to one Hebraic scholar, when a leper was purified, he was not healed of his disease, but the poison of the disease was removed and he was no longer contagious to other people.⁶⁵³ The leper was then restored to the congregation. An example is such a cleansed person was Gehazi, the servant of Elisha who was a life-long leper but still a servant to the king (2 Kgs. 8:5).



653. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 2:160.

06.03.08.A. EGERTON PAPYRUS 2 FRAGMENTS. Fragments of the Egerton Papyrus 2, dated to no later than A.D. 150, are probably from a non-canonical gospel and contain portions of Matthew 8:2-3, Mark 1:40-42 and Luke 5:12-13. It is evidence of the early recorded events of the life of Jesus. It is considered to be neither heretical nor Gnostic, and is probably the oldest non-canonical text yet discovered. Photograph courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

06.03.08.Q2 Why did Jesus heal the man, but *not* declare forgiveness of his sins?

This is a classic example where understanding rabbinic writings and the Jewish culture resolves misunderstandings. Long-term diseases such as leprosy, as well as childlessness, were considered to be divine punishment; and victims and childless couples lived their entire lives with hopelessness, believing God had condemned them.⁶⁵⁴ Consequently, they usually received little or no pity or comfort from the religious establishment. When a person with severe leprosy brought his offering to the synagogue or temple, he was not permitted to enter it, but someone had to present his gift for him, which, according to the Oral Law, was a sin offering.⁶⁵⁵ Therefore, when Jesus healed the man of his leprosy, everyone realized that his sins *must* have been forgiven. Jesus did not have to declare, “Your sins are forgiven.” It was understood.⁶⁵⁶ This understanding was part of the cultural context in which Jesus ministered. An example has been preserved in the Talmud.

Rabbi Alexandri said in the name of Rabbi Hiyya ben Abba: “A sick man does not recover from his sickness until all his sins are forgiven him, as it is written, ‘Who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases’” (Ps. 103:3).

Babylonian Talmud, *Nedarim* 41a

The relationship between illness and the forgiveness of sins was evidently a firm belief among pagan people as well. In the second century B.C., King Nabunai of Babylon found himself with an ulcer and he asked a Jew named Nabonidus to pray for his healing. These words of the king after the prayer of healing were found on an ancient papyrus, and are, in part, as follows:

654. Babylonian Talmud, *Berakoth* 5b.

655. Mishnah, *Tohoroth* 14:11.

656. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 341.

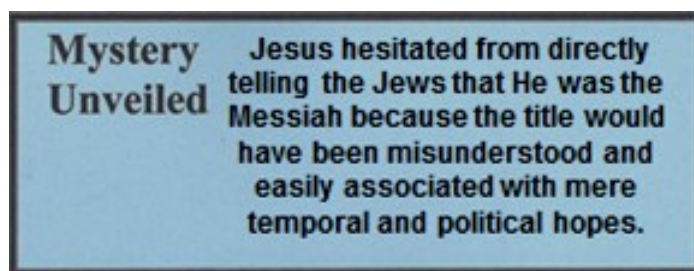
I was afflicted with an evil ulcer for seven years...and an exorcist pardoned my sins. He was a Jew from among the [children of the exile of Judah, and he said], “Recount this in writing to [glorify and exalt] the name of the Most High God.”

Dead Sea Scroll, *The Prayer of Nabonidus* 4QPrNab⁶⁵⁷

Healing was associated with the forgiveness of sins. The actions of Jesus were clearly understood by all observers, and by those who heard of these miraculous accounts. To those lepers known as the “living dead,” and to the witnesses who saw these lepers being healed, Jesus demonstrated that He had power over sickness and death. So when Jesus **“touched him,”** that was a phenomenal event because touching a leper was a violation of the Law. It made a person who touched the leper unclean and required him to undergo ceremonial cleansing. Jesus knew the Law, yet He touched and healed him and obviously ignored the ceremonial cleansing. This is more significant in the Greek language of Luke, who said the man was *full* of leprosy, meaning that he was near the end of his life. There was no question of his illness and, there was no question that if there ever was a time *not* to touch a leper, this was it! Hence, this act was also a profound illustration that the spirit of the law was better than sacrifice. In touching the untouchable, Jesus taught His disciples a lesson of boldness, faith, and humility; and that they were to despise no one, but show compassion and bring healing to everyone.

Jesus performed one of the greatest miracles in Jewish history, and when the disciples and everyone else was ready to advertise it to the world, He said, **“Say nothing to anyone.”** He did not want the sensation; His primary challenge was to convince the Jews that He was their Messiah, and that He was radically different from their pre-conceived ideas of a messiah (small “m”). Possible reasons for instructing the healed person to keep silent are as follows.

1. To make a public announcement would probably have resulted in a rejection by the Jews, and had political overtones that He avoided. He was not about to be anyone’s political-messiah.⁶⁵⁸



657. Boring, Berger, and Colpe, eds. *Hellenistic Commentary to the New Testament*. 63.

658. Wessel, “Mark.” 8:630.

2. Neither did Jesus want to be known as a mystic or miracle worker, as was Honi in the previous century. Jesus was far more interested in preaching the Kingdom of God than doing miracles, although His miracles, combined with His teachings, pointed to His Messiahship and the Kingdom message.

3. The Jewish leaders had their own mystical formulas for healing various kinds of ailments. Jesus was not interested in getting involved in a discussion of healing methodologies, but only on proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

4. Possibly the most important reason is that Jesus directed the former leper to follow biblical protocol. He did not want him to tell anyone until he first went to present himself to the priest (see below), that the priest might ascertain if indeed the leprosy was indeed cleansed⁶⁵⁹ according to the Law of Moses (Lev. 19:3). His testimony in the temple would then be visible proof to the religious leaders that a Messianic Miracle or Sign⁶⁶⁰ had been performed, and that the Messiah had arrived.

06.03.08.Q3 What were the three “messianic miracles” that first century Jews believed the messiah would perform?⁶⁶¹

The rabbis were convinced that the messiah would perform three kinds of miracles that would confirm His messiahship.⁶⁶² Those anticipated “messianic miracles” were:

1. Healing a Jewish leper. Moses dedicated two chapters in Leviticus (13, 14) to the healing of a leper, but since then, not a single Jewish person had ever been healed of this dreaded disease. As a result, the rabbis said that when the messiah comes, he will heal them. Moses said that when a Jewish person with leprosy was healed, he or she is required to go immediately to the temple priests to be declared “clean.” In this case, the Jewish high priest was Caiaphas but the name of the Samaritan high priest is unknown. Regardless, the ten miracles, a perfect number as related to the Ten Commandments, made a profound impact on the people and religious leaders.⁶⁶³

659. A leper who has been healed was often not called “healed,” but “cleansed” because the disease was symbolic of sin.

660. Richardson, “Heal, Healing, Health.” 103-04.

661. Kindly note, as previously stated, that the lower case “m” is sometimes used for “messiah” because the Jews did not believe the messiah would be diVine, See also Alan Richardson, “Heal, Healing, Health.” 103-04.

662. For further study, see Messianic scholar Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Messianic Miracles*. Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1983.

2. The casting out of demons from someone who could not speak. Some translations refer to a mute person (Gk. *alalos* 216 or *aphonos* 880) while the King James Version uses the old English word “dumb.”⁶⁶⁴ There was a 3-step protocol as follows:

- a. Ask the demon for his name, as it would speak through the possessed person.
- b. Wait for the demon to give its name. If no response, command an answer.
- c. Command the demon by name to leave by using the name of a more powerful authority (i.e. god).

Video Insert >

06.03.08.V *The Mystery of the Three Messianic Miracles*. Professor John Metzger discusses the three Messianic miracles that the Jews of the Inter-Testamental Period believed the Messiah would be able to perform. Click here if Internet connection is available.

However, if the possessed person could not speak or hear, there was no way anyone could cast out the evil spirit. Therefore, it was concluded that only the messiah would be able to cast demons out of a “deaf and dumb” person, meaning a person who could not speak or hear. This was significant because in various Inter-Testamental Jewish writings, the advent of the Messiah meant that evil would be defeated.⁶⁶⁵ See 08.06.08.

3. Healing a person who was born blind.⁶⁶⁶ It was for this reason that Mary said, after Lazarus died, “Couldn’t He who opened the blind man’s eyes also have kept this man from dying?” That was not just a passing statement, but a reflection on the messianic

664. Vine, “Dumb.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:187.

665. 1 *Enoch* 55:4; *Jubilees* 23:29; *Testament of Simeon* 6:6; *Testament of Judah* 25:3; *Testament of Moses* 10:1, and the *Testament of Solomon* 20:16-17. See also Matthew 9:32-34; 08.06.08.

666. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 7, page 13, and Class 10, pages 9-11; Research on the “Messianic Miracles” is credited to Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, a Messianic scholar and director of Ariel Ministries of San Antonio, Texas. 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 as well as the comparison of Dead Sea Scroll fragments 4Q278 and 4Q521 with Luke 4:16-30 at 06.02.02; Fruchtenbaum, *Messianic Miracles*. 4; Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context*. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 10, Session 2.

miracles that Jesus performed.⁶⁶⁷ See 11.02.21.

Amazingly, the Essenes believed in a fourth messianic miracle: to raise the dead to life. Of the thousands of Dead Sea Scroll fragments is the famous *Messianic Apocalypse* (4Q521) that states the messiah will raise the dead to life.⁶⁶⁸

Jesus healed many in order to reveal His power and authority over demons and illnesses. As was previously stated, while Jewish exorcisms involved magical formulas,⁶⁶⁹ Jesus cast out demons simply with His word. But as was repeatedly demonstrated, the performance of the messianic miracles also revealed the spiritual blindness of so many. Throughout Scripture sin is often described as moral blindness⁶⁷⁰ and the deliverance from sin is described as a removal of this blindness.⁶⁷¹ To say that Jesus is the proverbial “light of the world”⁶⁷² has more to do with spiritual blindness than it does with physical blindness, although He brings sight to the physical and spiritual realms.

Since many rabbis had taught for centuries that the messiah would perform these messianic miracles; Jesus did not have to say, “I am the Messiah.” He demonstrated His Messiahship! To make a messianic declaration would have invited a catastrophic Roman response. Rather, He permitted the people to reach that conclusion by themselves. Not only was Jesus One of gentle authority, but when He healed, the audience reflected upon one of the names of God – *Jehovah Rapha* – our Lord who is our Healer.⁶⁷³

06.03.08.Q4 How did the *Psalms of Solomon* influence people?

The *Psalms of Solomon*⁶⁷⁴ was one of the most influential books that persuaded popular opinion in the first century.⁶⁷⁵ This scroll was written by a Pharisee after the Roman invasion in 63

667. See John 9:1-12; 11.02.21 and John 11:1-37 at 12.03.10.

668. For more information, see 08.05.04.Q1 “What is the miracle or mystery of Dead Sea Scroll 4Q521?”

669. *Tobit* 5:7-8; Josephus, *Antiquities* 8.2.5 (45-49).

670. Deut. 28:29; Isa. 59:10; Job 12:25; Zeph. 1:17; See “Sin” in Appendix 26.

671. Isa. 16:18; 43:8; Eph. 1:8; Mt. 15:14.

672. See comments by Rabbi John Fischer in 10.01.28.V where he discusses two unique healing methods of blind men.

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

674. The book supposedly reflects the wisdom of Solomon, although the authorship is not identified. Therefore, it is in a category of Jewish writings known as the Pseudepigrapha. See 02.02.24 for more details.

675. See the video 02.02.01.V “The Significance of Inter-Testamental Writings: By Dr. Douglas Finkbeiner.

B.C.,⁶⁷⁶ most likely between the years 40 and 30 B.C.⁶⁷⁷ Its significance lies in the sections that are reflective of messianic anticipations. Yet the subject of a person coming with a messianic title or being identified as the Messiah/Christ or Anointed One/Son of David/Redeemer, was considerably complex because various religious sects had numerous, and sometimes, conflicting opinions. The Pharisees and many orthodox Jews believed that Divine punishment was upon them (as demonstrated by Roman occupation) because of their sins (their acceptance of Greek culture). The *Psalms* promised them victory and restoration over the occupying enemy. It is a literary style typical of some Old Testament books.

A copy of this book was most certainly in the hands of the Romans, as they paid Jewish spies handsomely for any information that might lead to a revolt. It was especially troublesome because it identified and cursed them as being the “Gentile foreigners” (2:2), the “lawless one” (17:11) and it encouraged Jews to pray to God to bring forth a “Son of David” (17:21) to rule over Israel. Therefore, the Romans associated anyone with any of these titles as being worthy of immediate death, especially since there were some thirteen rebellions against them between the years 63 B.C. and A.D. 70.⁶⁷⁸ In light of the political-social tensions, the following passages clarify why Jesus often told the people He healed to be quiet and not tell others of the miracle they received:

**Gentile foreigners went up to your place of sacrifice;
they arrogantly trampled (it) with their sandals.
Because the sons of Jerusalem defiled the sanctuary of the Lord,
they were profaning the offerings of God with lawless acts...
The daughters of Jerusalem were available to all, according to your judgments,
because they defiled themselves with improper intercourse.**

Psalms of Solomon 2:2-3, 11⁶⁷⁹

**The lawless one laid waste our land, so that no one inhabited it;
they massacred young and old and children at the same time...
See, Lord, and raise up for them their king,
the Son of David, to rule over your servant Israel in**

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

677. Cosby, *Interpreting Biblical Literature*. 285.

678. See Appendix 25 for a listing of 1) false prophets who had messianic expectations and 2) a partial listing of revolts and social disturbances from 63 B.C. to A.D. 70.

679. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 2:652.

a time known to you, O God.
 Undergird him with the strength to destroy the unrighteous rulers;
 to purge Jerusalem from Gentiles who trample her to destruction;
 In wisdom and in righteousness to drive out the sinners from the inheritance.
 To smash the arrogance of sinners like a potter's jar;
 To shatter all their substance with an iron rod;
 to destroy the unlawful nation with the word of his mouth
 At his warning the nations will flee from his presence;
 and he will condemn sinners by the thoughts of their hearts.

*Psalms of Solomon 17:11, 21-25*⁶⁸⁰

The writer continues...

And he will have Gentile nations serving him under his yoke,
 and he will glorify the Lord in (a place) prominent (above) the whole earth.
 And he will purge Jerusalem
 (and make it) holy as it was even from the beginning,
 (For) nations to come from the ends of the earth to see his glory (Isa. 55:5),
 to bring as gifts her children who had been driven out,
 And to see the glory of the Lord
 with which God has glorified her.
 And he will be a righteous king over them, taught by God.

 There will be no unrighteousness among them in his days,
 for all shall be holy (Jer. 23:5),
 and the king shall be the Lord Messiah.

*Psalms of Solomon 17:26-32*⁶⁸¹

Some historians believe the *Psalms* were used in liturgy since the messianic feelings are so intense,⁶⁸² especially since the book contains eighteen psalms that are reflective of the *Eighteen Benedictions*.⁶⁸³ It clearly elevated feelings of national independence. Due to its popularity it is

680. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 2:666-67.

681. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 2:667-68. Additions for clarification within parenthesis by Charlesworth. The phrase "Lord Messiah," is regarded by some scholars as a mistranslation from Lam. 4:20 (LXX). However, Charlesworth states that there is evidence in Greek and Syrian MSS for the rendering as shown.

682. Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 102-03.

683. See Appendix 18.

understandable that the common people and the Pharisees asked each other, “Have the [Jewish] authorities concluded that he is the Christ?” (Jn. 7:26). It is also understandable why Jesus rebuked them for shouting “You are the son of God” (Lk. 4:41). In the Passion Week, the Jewish leaders were in terror when Jesus rode into Jerusalem and they heard the crowds shouting “Hosanna to the Son of David” (Mt. 21:9)⁶⁸⁴ and “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord” (Lk. 19:38; Jn 12:13). John adds the phrase “Blessed is the King of Israel” (Jn. 12:13). These terms as well as the phrase “hosanna,” had clear messianic nationalistic overtones.

The Jewish people were not alone in their messianic anticipation. As previously stated, many people groups throughout the ancient Middle East were expecting a political-military leader. The Samaritans were expecting a messiah (Jn. 4) known as the *Taheb*,⁶⁸⁵ as were the Parthians (see the account of the magi; 04.04.06-07). The Essenes, descendants of the Zadokite priesthood, could not distinguish the differences between the Hebrew prophecies of the humble servant messiah and the one who would be a military leader (02.01.06). Hence, they concluded there were two messiahs coming – one who would be the son of David and would overthrow the Roman Empire and the other who would be the son of Aaron and would cleanse the temple of its corrupted religious aristocrats (see 02.01.06). The only people who did *not* want a messiah were the temple elite and Romans, who every few years were tormented by a Jewish fanatic who thought he was the messiah.⁶⁸⁶

But no one in their wildest imagination ever dreamed the messiah who would be like Jesus. Therefore, Jesus needed time to reveal His identity, teach the people about the Kingdom of God, and slowly instruct them so their preconceived ideas would change. They needed time to think through the miracles they witnessed. That is why He told them not to tell others what they saw, which suggested they needed to think about what they witnessed.

The Roman Empire at this time enjoyed *Pax Romana*,⁶⁸⁷ even though it was at the end of the Roman sword.⁶⁸⁸ However, in the little Jewish provinces,⁶⁸⁹ there was constant threat of

684. The messianic title “Son of David” appears in the following three groups of passages in the gospels where it is always reflective of the Davidic Covenant: 1) In various healings by Jesus – Mt. 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; Mk. 10:47-48; Lk. 18:38-39. 2) In connection of the harassment the religious leaders gave Jesus – Mt. 22:42-43, 45; Mk. 12:35, 37; Lk. 20:41, 44, and 3) The praise the crowds gave Jesus at His entry into Jerusalem – Mt. 21:9, 15; Mk. 11:10. See Rogers, “The Davidic Covenant in the Gospels,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*. Part 1 of 2. 158-78.

685. Blizzard, “Judaism - Part 1” *Yavo Digest* 1:5, 8; Guignebert, *The Jewish World in the Time of Jesus*. 196; See 06.01.03.

686. Possibly the most famous messianic fanatic was Simon bar Kochba who was responsible for the uprising of A.D.133-35, which lead to the second Roman destruction of Jerusalem and dispersion of all Jews from Jerusalem. However, there has always been a Jewish presence somewhere in the Holy Land from the time of Joshua until today.

687. Lee, *The Galilean Jewishness of Jesus*. 72-73; Mellowes and Cran, Executive Producers. *From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians*. (DVD). Part 1.

rebellion for freedom, especially in Jerusalem. Many had their hopes escalated when they saw Jesus performing miracles, believing that anyone who could do such wonderful acts of kindness could also bring freedom to their nation. However, the Hellenists, leading Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Herodians, some scribes and elders, felt threatened by the Miracle Worker and desired to maintain a friendship with the Romans as not to lose the wealth and power.

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.⁶⁹⁰ However, even these rules were broken.

09.01.05.Q1 What was the sign of Jonah?

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

1. Just as Jonah was entombed in the belly of the great fish for the proverbial “three days and three nights,” so likewise Jesus was entombed in the earth for the same time.⁶⁹¹
2. The ancients believed the bottom of both the Mediterranean Sea and the Sea of Galilee was the abyss or place for the dead. Some believed it was also the entrance to hell. In the logic of first century listeners, just as Jonah went down to the place of the dead, Jesus did likewise going to the entrance of hell.
3. Just as Jonah was resurrected to life when the mighty fish regurgitated him on the shore, so Jesus was resurrected to life from the tomb (see Acts 1:7).⁶⁹² In fact, the entire

688. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 423.

689. The provinces of Perea, Galilee, and Judah each had their own Roman appointee, who served as a puppet monarch under Rome.

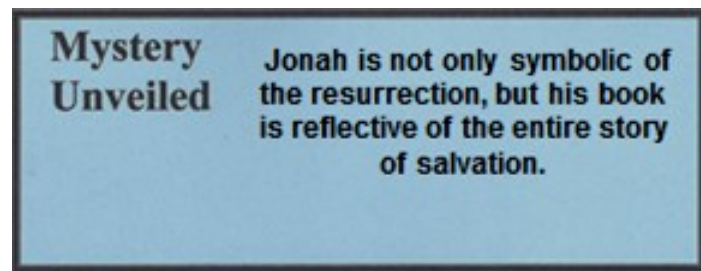
690. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 487-88.

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

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

book of Jonah is a story of salvation that prophetically foreshadows God's dealing with man – from the first coming of Jesus to His return.

4. Just as Jonah preached in Nineveh for forty days concerning the coming judgment, so likewise the gospel was preached to the Jews for forty years before judgment fell. The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple occurred exactly forty years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. Those forty years were a probationary period for the nation of Israel and its leadership, a “prophetic type of Jonah,” which Jesus said would be a sign to validate His Messiahship.



But the leading Pharisees demanded that **“we want to see a sign from You.”** According to the Jewish Bible, a sign is “an outward compelling proof of divine authority.”⁶⁹³ This was an incredible request since Jesus had already performed so many miracles, including the messianic miracles. However, by stating that they were a wicked and adulterous *generation* that was looking for a sign, He did not mean everyone. That statement was directed only to those who had seen Him perform signs and wonders and still refused to believe. Now they had the audacity to make this request. What would another miracle prove? It was a point of rejection.

The religious leaders represented “national Israel.” When they rejected Jesus, in effect, “national Israel” rejected Him, and in response Jesus was going to reject national Israel. As such, He began a new phase of His ministry focused solely on those who put their faith in Him.⁶⁹⁴

In addition to His instruction about the purpose of the Torah, as it is applied to life, Jesus performed three messianic miracles⁶⁹⁵ plus one.

1. The healing of a Jewish leper (Mk. 1:40-45; 06.03.08).

2. Casting a demon out of a mute person (Mt. 9:32-34; 08.06.08).

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

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

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

3. Healing a man who was born blind (Jn. 9:1-12; 11.02.21).

4. These profound messianic miracles were surpassed by the grand finale of all miracles – raising Lazarus to life after three days of death. A miraculous performance of the Divine!

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

1. They rejected the resurrection of Lazarus from the grave (Jn. 11).

2. They rejected the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 1:7).

3. They martyred Stephen

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

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

Yes, but only in Jewish thinking. The phrase “three days and three nights,” is not a literal phrase but a Hebraism for saying, “in three days...” The modern method of reckoning the time from Friday evening to Sunday is certainly not three days. The ancient Hebrews counted a part of a day as a whole. Therefore, any time before sunset was considered a day. A new day began at sunset, generally at 6:00 p.m., or when the first three stars were visible in the sky. Friday afternoon when Jesus died is counted as the first day, Saturday is the second until sunset, and Saturday night is the beginning of the third day. Time was reckoned likewise for Sunday morning, and hence, with Saturday, they counted three days.⁶⁹⁶

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

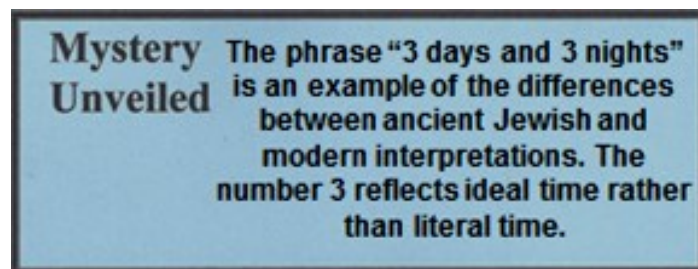
696. Bivin, “How Long was Jesus in the Tomb?” *Yavo Digest*. 2:4, 1, 3.

17), but on his resurrection that followed. Below are three examples of the phrase “three days and three nights,” used as a figure of speech and not to be literally interpreted.⁶⁹⁷

1. Rehoboam told the people to see him *after* three days (2 Ch. 10:5, KJV), but in fact, he met with them *on* the third day (2 Ch. 10:12, KJV). The difference between the words “after” and “on” is significant. Unfortunately, at times the fine details of meaning are lost in translations. Matthew himself used “after three days” (27:63-64) demonstrating that he considered the equivalent to “on the third day.”⁶⁹⁸

2. Esther fasted three days and nights (Esther 4:16), but on the third day she went to meet her king (5:1). She did not see him after fasting three complete days and nights. The phrase, “three days and three nights” is a figure of speech signifying ideal time rather than a literal time.⁶⁹⁹ The number three means “ideal” when used in Hebraisms, as is evidenced by the frequency a concept is mentioned. Likewise when a word is reported three times, such as “holy, holy, holy,” it is given the highest Hebraic significance possible. Rarely is anything repeated three times in the Bible.⁷⁰⁰

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



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

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

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

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

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

The emphasis should not be on the number three, but on the resurrection since that is the main point of the comparison. The problem arises when modern students read that Matthew also said that Jesus was raised to life “on the third day” (Mt. 16:21, 17:23, 20:19) and “after three days” (27:63). Furthermore, Matthew 12:39-40 states that Jesus will rise after three days *and* three nights. It is difficult to believe that Matthew, who was at one time employed as a tax collector and skilled tax accountant, would make such an error. Therefore, it is the challenge of the modern reader to comprehend the text from the ancient author's point of view. Just as Esther did not fast for three literal days and nights, neither was Jesus in the tomb for three literal days and nights. However, both Jonah and Jesus were resurrected on ‘the third day’ according to Jewish reckoning. As previously stated, the term “three days and three nights,” regardless of the “on,” “after,” or “and,” the term was an idiom for any time touching three days.⁷⁰¹ Scholars today almost universally agree that the three day formula is a figure of speech that never intended to have any literal interpretation.⁷⁰²

There is also another point to be considered: In the Jewish tradition, a day and a night was known as an *Onah*, and a full 24-hour *Onah* or part of an *Onah* was considered a whole unit.⁷⁰³ Likewise, parts of three days and three nights are treated as a whole, even if it was only 36 hours (the time from death to resurrection). In modern Western thinking, readers separate the day from the night and count them separately. But this was not so in biblical times.⁷⁰⁴

Since the life and death of Jesus was reflected in Hebrew typology,⁷⁰⁵ His death occurred when lambs were slain on Friday in the temple and His resurrection when the high priest stood in the temple and waived the grain offering (of barley) before our Lord on Sunday morning declaring “Blessed are you O Lord, who brings forth the bread of life from the earth.”⁷⁰⁶ The time of the events strongly suggests that it was then that Jesus walked out of the tomb. The period of “three days and three nights” was understood to fit within these two sacrificial events in the temple.

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

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

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

704. See also 17.02.02.Q8.

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

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

A Lesson in First Century Hermeneutics:

09.01.05.X2 Clarification Of Old Testament Passages

At times a New Testament passage brings clarification to a passage in the Old Testament. An example is this: **“The men of Nineveh ... the queen of the South.”** When Jonah went to the Assyrian city to preach the message of repentance, the Gentile men of Nineveh recognized him as a prophet of God, accepted his message, and repented. Likewise, the Queen of Sheba, also a Gentile, recognized that the divine wisdom possessed by Solomon was of God.⁷⁰⁷

Jesus was now before the Jewish leaders and the proud descendants of Abraham were assured of their religious knowledge, but failed to recognize Who was standing before them. Jesus, in essence, said that the Queen of the South traveled a great distance to hear Solomon but the Pharisees were not at all interested in hearing anything of the Kingdom of God. In the first century the Kingdom of Sheba no longer existed and, therefore, Jesus used the Hebrew word for “south” (*teman*). This word is the origin of the name of modern country of *Yemen* located in the southern corner of the Arabian Peninsula. Jesus continually interpreted and clarified Scripture. All sages and rabbis did this, and the student of biblical history must be aware of this hermeneutic. This method of first century clarification explains some of the so-called errors that critics identify in Scripture.⁷⁰⁸

12.01.02.Q2 What are the differences among the terms “Hell, Hades,” and “Gehenna?”⁷⁰⁹

Jesus spoke more of hell than He did of heaven which is why the words “hell, Hades,” and “Gehenna” are found numerous times within the gospels.⁷¹⁰ The New Testament provides a clear definition of hell as an eternal lake of fire (literally, the *hell of fire*),⁷¹¹ but the terms “Hades” and “Gehenna” are somewhat ambiguous. Jesus said that the village of Capernaum would be sent down to Hades (Mt. 11:23; Lk. 10:15), an imagery that is synonymous with the Old Testament rendering of “Sheol” (e.g., Amos 9:2; Ps. 139:8).⁷¹² The judgment that comes after time spent in Hades apparently will not be in Hades, but in another place called hell. In the parable of the rich

707. 1 Kg. 10:1-13 = 2 Chron. 9:1-12; Josephus, *Antiquities* 8.6.5-6 (165-175); Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 260-61.

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

709. See also 08.01.05.

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

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

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

man and Lazarus, the rich man is in torment in Hades, which implies that Hades is hell (Lk. 16:19-31). However, the section of Hades that is a place of torment in the earth⁷¹³ is certainly miserable and may seem like hell, but the lake of fire of hell is far worse.⁷¹⁴

Hades has two distinct areas:

1. One area is a place of torment, where the wicked are temporarily held until their final judgment and ultimate damnation in the more painful eternity of hell.
2. The other area was a holding area for the saints who died before Jesus ascended to heaven. The souls of the Old Testament saints, held captive in Hades, were freed by Jesus and taken to heaven during the time that His body was dead in the tomb. Previously, their sins were merely *covered* by Old Testament sacrifices and so, they could not enter heaven until Jesus *removed* their sins on the cross. Only by the atoning blood of Jesus could Old Testament saints enter eternal glory. This area was also referred to by Jesus as “Paradise” when the thief on the cross believed in Him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Psalm 16:8-11

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

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

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

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

1. The residents of the city would never have placed a smoldering dump on the western side of the city, since the prevailing westerly winds would have blown the stench over them. Herod the Great had his palace along the western wall of the old city, right by the Jaffa Gate, and would have been the first to be smoked-out of his home. Furthermore, it is because of the prevailing westerly winds that a vast majority of cemeteries were located on the eastern side of cities and villages, to blow the stench of decaying bodies away from the communities. Visitors today are amazed at the thousands of graves located on the side of the Mount of Olives – just east of Jerusalem.

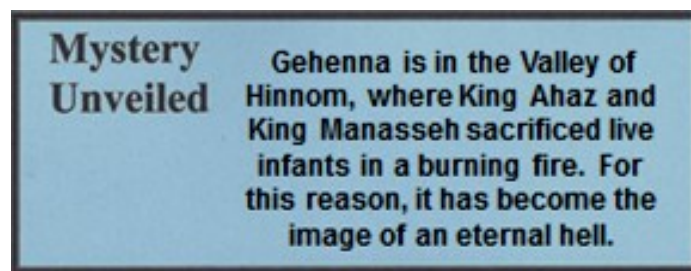
2. The most significant argument against this theory is that ancient cities did not produce sufficient waste to have a burning dump. Almost everything was recycled, with the exception of pottery shards. Even manure was dried and used for cooking fuel or fertilizer.

3. The burning rubbish dump theory is believed to have originated with Rabbi David Kimhi's commentary on Psalm 27:13 around the year A.D. 1200. No Jewish or Christian literary works prior to Kimhi mentions it.

4. While a rubbish dump has been found, there is no archaeological evidence to support the *burning* rubbish dump theory.

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

Finally, the primary reason the Hebrew name *Ge-Hinnom* is derived from the Valley of Hinnom,⁷¹⁵ that is where King Ahaz (2 Ch. 28:3; cf 2 Kg. 16:3) and King Manasseh (2 Ch. 33:6; cf 2 Kg. 21:6) sacrificed living babies to the pagan god, Molech (Jer. 32:35). This was the ultimate imagery – a picture of hell – of pain, agony, and death by ancient writers. Neither the Jewish nor the gospel writers could have conceived of anything worse than this era of incredible shame in Jewish history. Little wonder it is associated with those damned to hell by apocalyptic and New Testament writers.



Hell is a real place that is given several descriptions such as being a fiery furnace (Mt. 13:42), a lake of fire (Rev. 19:20), a place of everlasting torment (2 Pet. 2:4), and a place of eternal fire (Jude 7). Jesus and the New Testament writers were dynamic on this issue and added that it is reserved for Satan and his angels as well as for those who reject Christ. It is that vast lake of fire where death will consume the wicked forever. These appear to be contradictory terms. The modern mind thinks of death as a distinctive ending point where life ceases to function. But in Hebraic thinking the continuous agony is so immense that it is called “death,” while the final breath never comes.⁷¹⁶

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

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

The rejection imagery⁷¹⁷ and its association with eternal punishment with clearly expressed on both the Old⁷¹⁸ and New Testament, as well as in Jewish literature.⁷¹⁹ Eternal punishment is evident in Matthew 5:22 and 18:9 and Mark 9:43-44 say hell as a place of unquenchable fire, as does Matthew 25:41. The phrase “weeping and gnashing of teeth” occurs seven times in the gospels.⁷²⁰ The phrase “outer darkness” occurs three times (Mt. 8:12; 22:13, and 25:30) and is also referred to in *1 Enoch* 102:8. Inter-Testament literature frequently mentions hell and fire together. The “casting out” judgment imagery of Matthew 22:13 is also found in *1 Enoch* 10:4. Likewise the term “furnace of fire” is found in the Parables of the Wheat and Tares (Mt. 13:42) and the Parable of the Dragnet (Mt. 13:50). This imagery is not only for those who reject Christ, but is also reserved for those who claim to be followers of Jesus, but have never truly committed themselves to His lordship.

The Greek word *abyssos* has been translated to mean “bottomless” and is found in the LXX translation of Genesis 1:2. It also occurs six times in John’s *Revelation* (9:1-2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3) where it is described as the place of endless torment and punishment. But this term was also used to refer to the bottom of the Sea of Galilee where the Gentiles believed the demons lived. That was a cultural interpretation⁷²¹ and not a theological one.⁷²²

The term *sheol* has on occasion been incorrectly translated as *hell*. The Old Testament concept of *sheol* is not a place of torment, but a land of shades, a shadowy and joyless, ghostly place. The New Testament understanding of heaven and hell is not related to *sheol*, and there is hardly any concept of eternal life in the Hebrew Bible.⁷²³

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

723. Barclay, “John.” 2:91-92.

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

Finally, during the Inter-Testamental period, a number of extra-biblical books were written that not only spoke of divine judgment for the wicked, but that the judgment was everlasting. The Greek word for *everlasting* is *aionios* and literally means *forever*. It is found repeatedly in books such as the *Book of Enoch*, the *Book of Jubilee*, the *Book of Baruch*, and even the historian Josephus used the term *aionios* a few times.⁷²⁴ However, the word *aionios* also means *belonging to the ages*, which can only be applied to God. In that context, it can be easily recognized that judgment to the lake of fire is reserved only by God, and should not be spoken by mortal men.

14.02.12.Q1 Was the new commandment of John 13:34 really new if it was written in Leviticus 19:18?

At issue is the statement by Jesus, who said, **“I give you a new command.”** There are two words in the Greek language that mean *new*, and they have slightly different meanings. The Greek word *kainos* (2537) means *new* in terms of a revival of something that is already in existence. Something *which is new in its own way*.⁷²⁵ The other Greek word is *neos* (3501) and it means new in terms of it having never existed previously; *brand new*.⁷²⁶

In this case, Jesus used the word *kainos*, meaning that He placed a new awareness on Leviticus 19:18. It reads, “Do not take revenge or bear a grudge against members of your community, but love your neighbor as yourself, I am Yahweh (God).”⁷²⁷ In essence, people should be able to identify Christians by the love they have for others. This type of “God-love” is not necessarily emotional, but seeks the highest and best good for others. It is encouragement. It will give a caring rebuke when needed. It is an honest concern for the welfare of a brother or sister, while it

724. Barclay, “Matthew.” 2:182.

725. Haarbeck, Link, and Brown, “New.” 2:670; Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 52.

726. Haarbeck, Link, and Brown, “New.” 2:674.

727. See also Galatians 5:14.

maintains discernment. This concept was not a “new” idea, but was a common teaching in Jewish history and appeared in some pre-Christian writings.⁷²⁸

Throughout the Second Temple Period, Jewish men wore “signs” that identified them – not for identity reasons, but as reminders of God. The phylactery worn on the forehead and left arm were two of those signs.⁷²⁹ Observance of the Sabbath and kosher foods also identified any person as being an observant Jew.⁷³⁰ Jesus now said there was to be a sign of love in the fellowship and the love of God flowing in and through His faithful followers that would identify them as Christians.

The eleven disciples now confronted Him with several questions. They wanted to know where He was going and why they couldn’t go with Him. These questions would have been quite normal, if the future would have been totally within the physical realm. However, Jesus was about to transcend into the spiritual world; He would conquer death and return for a brief time. No matter how well this would have been explained, such a discussion would lead only to more questions and possibly, confusion. Nevertheless, Jesus answered them, knowing that understanding would elude them. But after the resurrection they would fully comprehend His dynamic work.

Questions You May Not Have Considered

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,⁷³¹ to bring forth an idea in the minds of His disciples.⁷³² 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

728. 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.

729. Thompson, “Phylactery.” 4:586-87.

730. Hellenized Jews did not always observe kosher dietary laws.

731. See Appendix 26.

732. Horne, *Jesus: The Master Teacher*. 47.

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.⁷³³ 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.⁷³⁴ 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 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. ⁴ 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.

⁵ David was infuriated with the man and said to Nathan: "As the Lord lives, the man who did this deserves to die! ⁶ Because he has done this thing and shown no pity, he must pay four lambs for that lamb."

⁷ Nathan replied to David, "You are the man!"

2 Samuel 12:1-7a

733. Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages*. 9.

734. Reed and Prevost, *A History of Christian Education*. 29-30; Butts, *The Education of the West*. 88.

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.

- ⁴ **Where were you when I established the earth?
Tell Me, if you have understanding.**
- ⁵ **Who fixed its dimensions? Certainly you know!
Who stretched a measuring line across it**
- ⁶ **What supports its foundations?
Or who laid its cornerstone**
- ⁷ **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.

⁵And 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?” ⁶To this they could find no answer.

Luke 14:5-6⁷³⁵

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.

⁷³⁵. 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...”

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 most frequently challenged Jesus were followers of the School of Shammai.⁷³⁶ 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’:

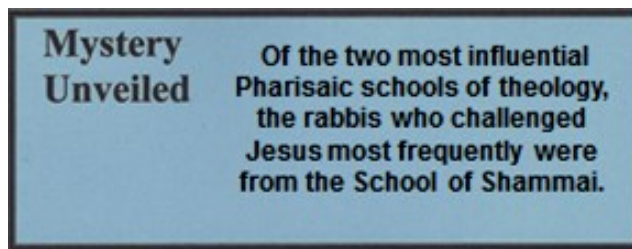
⁴⁴ The Lord declared to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand until I put Your enemies under Your feet’?”

736. *New International Version* Study Bible footnote on Leviticus 24:20.

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.



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.

07.03.03.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*,⁷³⁷ 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!

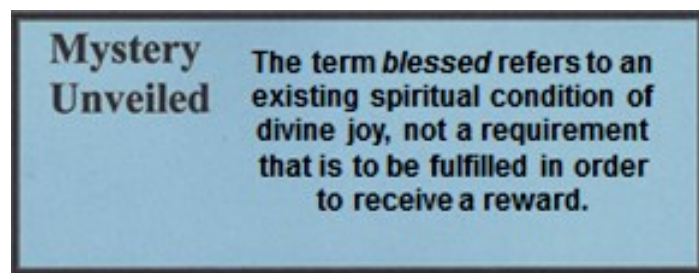
07.03.05.Q1 What are the differences between Old and New Testament blessings?

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

⁷³⁷ Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:58.

1. The term “beatitudes” is commonly ascribed to this passage and is derived from the Latin word “*beatus*,” meaning “blessed.”⁷³⁸ In Hebrew the word is *baruk* (Gk. *makarios* 3107),⁷³⁹ 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*.⁷⁴⁰ 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.⁷⁴¹ However, the word *makarious* affirms the *quality of spirituality that is already present*.⁷⁴² 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.⁷⁴³



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,⁷⁴⁴ He gave the characteristics of a new life in the kingdom, including its devotion, duties, and dangers.

738. Freeman, *The New Manners and Customs of the Bible*. 407.

739. Vine, “Blessed.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:70.

740. Vine, “Blessed.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:69.

741. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 67.

742. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 66-67; Vine, “Blessed.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:70.

743. Richards, *The Bible Reader’s Companion*. 538.

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

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 pig owners who lived in Gerasa, not the pigs. Therefore, the biblical narrative stands.

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).⁷⁴⁵ 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 Epidauros 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)⁷⁴⁶ cut out the bad eye and immersed it in a medicine. She awoke at dawn, cured.

745. Pixner, *With Jesus through Galilee*. 43; Hendin, *Guide to Biblical Coins*. 118-19.

746. Parenthesis for clarification are mine.

Inscription of Epidauros⁷⁴⁷

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 cavalymen, and support troops.⁷⁴⁸ 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 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.⁷⁴⁹ 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.

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

747. Boring, Berger, and Colpe, eds. *Hellenistic Commentary to the New Testament*. 65; Giannelli, *The World of Classical Athens*. 211.

748. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 60. Historians differ in the size of various military groups.

749. Jude 6; Rev. 20:10; cf. 1 *Enoch* 16:1; *Jubilees* 10:8-9; *Testament of Levi* 18:12; 1QS 3:24-25; 4:18-20.

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.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 a pig to the god Mars. While this relief is believed to have originated from the era of Emperor Domitian (reigned A.D. 81-96), the cultic practice was already well established for centuries.

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.

08.06.03.Q5 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)⁷⁵⁰

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).⁷⁵¹ 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.

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

750. See also Josephus, *Wars* 4.7.3.

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

¹¹ 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. Later, when Jesus returned to the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee, He fed thousands by a miracle of bread and fish and had seven large baskets filled with leftovers. Clearly the attitude of some of the locals had changed. 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 never can overestimate the power of God to transform a life and make it significant for future generations.⁷⁵² Christianity spread quickly and by 325, the church of Gadara sent a bishop to the highly esteemed Council of Nicea.⁷⁵³ 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.⁷⁵⁴

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.⁷⁵⁵ Those who claim it is not necessary do so, in part, citing lack of a

752. Kraeling, *Gerasa: City of the Decapolis*. 256, 311-13.

753. Cox, "Gadara, Gadarenes." 2:375-76.

754. Pixner, *With Jesus through Galilee*. 46.

755. St. Cyprian (200-258) was the bishop of Carthage and wrote (*De Unitate Ecclesias* 23) the need to tithe because it was an unchanging divine principle that predates Moses (Gen. 14:20).

direct command by Jesus or the apostles to continue it. So why doesn't support exist in the New Testament?

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.⁷⁵⁶ 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* 2.7⁷⁵⁷

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.⁷⁵⁸ 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).⁷⁵⁹ Known as the *maaser sheni*,⁷⁶⁰ this tithe was only on produce, crops, and livestock.⁷⁶¹ It was to be given or spent *only* in Jerusalem⁷⁶² when the family was there for a festival or other occasion.⁷⁶³ This second tithe could be spent on personal items or given to the poor, to a synagogue, or to the

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

757. 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.

758. Mishnah, *Maaseroth*; For tithing reasons, see Mishnah, *Maaseroth* 1.5.

759. *Jubilees* 32:8-14.

760. Mishnah, *Maaser Sheni*. 4.3-4.

761. 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.

762. Mishnah, *Maaser Shemi* 4.4-5.

763. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 58, 102-03, 131, 134-35.

temple.⁷⁶⁴ When given to the poor, it was placed in a *quppah*, or *poor basket*.⁷⁶⁵ The *quppah* was 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 1:6-8⁷⁶⁶

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.⁷⁶⁷ 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.⁷⁶⁸ 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?

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.⁷⁶⁹ But why were ten

764. Deut. 14:26; Mishnah, *Maaser Sheni* 2.1; Josephus, *Antiquities*, 4.8.8 (205); Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 102.

765. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 131.

766. See also the book of *Jubilees* 32:8-14, which is dated to the early second century B.C.

767. Mishnah, *Maaser Shemi* 4.3-4; Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 134.

768. Josephus, *Antiquities* 4.8.22; Feinberg, “Tithe.” 5:757.

769. 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.

men needed? It has been suggested that it was because when ten men gathered their tithes, they could afford to employ a scribe who was qualified to teach the Scriptures.⁷⁷⁰ 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,⁷⁷¹ 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.⁷⁷²

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;⁷⁷³ these ungodly violent acts were recorded later in the Babylonian Talmud.⁷⁷⁴ 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.⁷⁷⁵ This was especially true in the year A.D. 45 when Claudius reigned, and a severe famine caused the price of grain to skyrocket.⁷⁷⁶ The Pharisaic leaders and teachers in local synagogues suffered as much from their aristocratic leaders as did everyone else.⁷⁷⁷ 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.⁷⁷⁸

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

770. Bookman, *When God Wore Sandals*. CD Trac 6 & 7.

771. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor's Manual*. Class 6, page 8.

772. 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.

773. Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.8.8 (181); 20.9.2 (206).

774. Babylonian Talmud, *Pesachim* 57a.

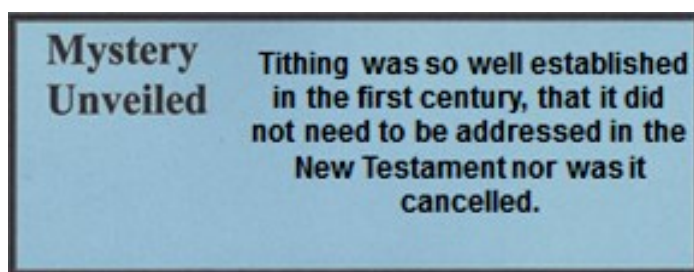
775. Another name for these priests was “men of violence.” See Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.8.8 (181); 20.9.2 (206); Babylonian Talmud, *Pesachim* 57a; Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 98, 106-07.

776. Josephus, *Antiquities* 3.15.3. Some scholars believe the price of grain increased thirteen times.

777. Golub, *In the Days*. 272-73.

778. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 179-81, 190-97.

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.



The phrase, **“Don’t sound a trumpet,”** is an interesting double play on words. According to the Mishnah,⁷⁷⁹ 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.⁷⁸⁰ 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.⁷⁸¹

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.⁷⁸²

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.

779. Mishnah, *Shekalim* 5:6.

780. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 137.

781. Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 28.

782. Lightfoot, *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.⁷⁸³

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 *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.

08.04.07.Q1 What verbal formulas did exorcists use when casting out demons?

It is not the intent to teach demonic formulas or ancient witchcraft,⁷⁸⁴ but rather, to present evidence to show that exorcists who worshiped other gods (demons) also called upon the name of God and/or Jesus.⁷⁸⁵ 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,

⁷⁸³ Freeman, *The New Manners and Customs of the Bible*. 412-13.

⁷⁸⁴ 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.

⁷⁸⁵ 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*.

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.⁷⁸⁶

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).⁷⁸⁷ 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 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 tr[uth, when Ra]phael heals them. ⁴ Of David. Con[cerning the words of the spe]ll in the name of YHWH. [Call on] ⁵ the heavens [at a]ny time. [When] Beli[al 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 ⁷ of futility, and your horns are horns of a wre[tch]. You are darkness and not light, ⁸ [s]in and not justice. [Against you,] the chief of the army, YHWH will [shut] you ⁹ [in the] deepest She[ol], he will shut] the two bronze gates through which no ¹⁰ 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] Sa[tan] mistreats him?” [And he will be freed] from dark[ness by] ¹³ [the spirit of tru]th, [because jus]tice is with him [to uphold him at the judgment. ¹⁴ [text missing] not [text missing].

786. Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*. 78.

787. For further study, see Clyde E. Billington. “Ancient Exorcists, Demons, and the Name of Jesus. Part 1. *Artifax*. Summer 2010. 15-21.

Dead Sea Scroll, *Apocryphal Psalm of Exorcism* (11Q11[11QPsApa]), 4:1-14⁷⁸⁸

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*.⁷⁸⁹ 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.⁷⁹⁰ Clearly, since these 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,”⁷⁹¹ and scholars continue to debate these terms today.⁷⁹²

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.⁷⁹³

788. 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.

789. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. 1:721.

790. *Apocalypse of Elijah* 3:6-10; esp. 3:12.

791. See additional comments on 10.01.29 “Bind on earth ... loose on earth” and 11.02.09 on “Binding and Losing.”

792. Barclay, “Matthew.” 2:229.

793. 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.”

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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.

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.

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* 29⁷⁹⁴

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,

794. Kydd, *Healing*, 21; Tertullian, *Apology*, 295, 297.

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* 2.19⁷⁹⁵

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.⁷⁹⁶ In his letters to the Ephesian and Colossian churches, the Apostle Paul referred to the power of Jesus being victorious over demonic powers.⁷⁹⁷ It was normal to expect results from prayers and exorcisms.

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 e-Book 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

⁷⁹⁵. Arnold, *Power and Magic*. 15.

⁷⁹⁶. See Origen, *Contra Celsum*. 6.41; 7.4; Arnold, *Power and Magic*. 9.

⁷⁹⁷. cf. Eph. 1:21; Cor. 2:12-15; Phil. 2:9.

forth.⁷⁹⁸ There are a number of reasons why Jesus chose to communicate with parables as follows:⁷⁹⁹

1. Parables connect abstract ideas with real life events; short narratives that make a spiritual point.⁸⁰⁰ 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.⁸⁰¹ 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.⁸⁰²
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.⁸⁰³ This definition of a parable was formulated primarily during the

798. Metzger, Goldstein, and Ferguson. *Great Events of Bible Times*. 148.

799. See the “Parables of Jesus” Appendix 10.

800. See Appendix 10, The Parables of Jesus.

801. Lockyer, *All the Parables of the Bible*. 11-12.

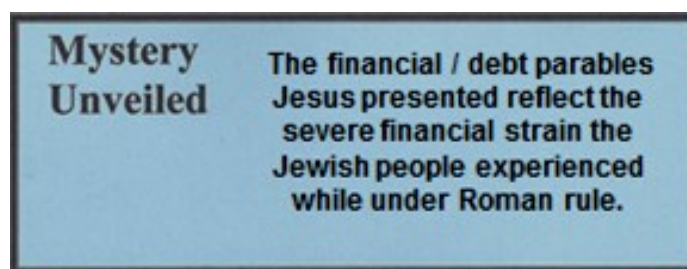
802. The cultural meaning of *righteousness* has always been to hold the biblical code of ethics, such as giving to the poor or expressing kindness, especially in situations when it would not be expected. But Jesus introduced a new definition of *righteousness* – that is to have an *ongoing relationship* with God.

803. Lockyer, *All the Parables of the Bible*. 10-11.

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.⁸⁰⁴

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.⁸⁰⁵ In His later ministry, He used sixteen parables, all drawn from the daily lives of ordinary people.⁸⁰⁶

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.⁸⁰⁷ 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).⁸⁰⁸ In Luke 14:29 the 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.



804. Blomberg, "Parable." 3:656; Lowry, "Parable." 3:650-52.

805. 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.

806. 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.

807. 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.

808. For further study of loans, debts, and how first century Jewish courts ruled, see the Mishnah and the chapter titled *Baba Bathra*.

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.⁸⁰⁹

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).

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

809. Packer and Tenney, eds., *Illustrated Manners and Customs*. 378; See also Packer, Tenney, and White, eds., *Nelson's Illustrated Encyclopedia of Bible Facts*.

Greek word *Lailapa* (2978), defined as a *hurricane*⁸¹⁰ with heavy clouds, rains, darkness, and whirlwind.⁸¹¹ However, Matthew (8:24) used a distinctly different word, *seismos*, meaning *earthquake*,⁸¹² 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 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,⁸¹³ from the eastern plateau of Trachonitis,⁸¹⁴ or from the northern Arabian Desert,⁸¹⁵ 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.⁸¹⁶ A unique feature of these storms, known as the “eastern sirocco winds,”⁸¹⁷ 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.⁸¹⁸ These western wind storms in the winter can bring rain, but never in the summer dry season. How interesting it is

810. Vine, “Storm.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:601.

811. Geikie, *The Life and Words*. 2:629. Green, *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*, Mt. 8:24; 24:7; Berry, *Interlinear Literal Translation of the Greek New Testament*. Mt. 8:24; 24:7.

812. Barclay, “Matthew.” 1:316-17; Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:53.

813. Located in modern southwestern Syria and northwestern Jordan. Mentioned in Ezekiel 47:15-18.

814. Located adjacent to heights of Hauran and was under the domination of Herod Phillip during the life of Jesus.

815. Ancient maps identified the greater part of modern Jordan as being part of the northern tip of the Arabian Desert. For a study of historical maps of this region, see Nebenzahl, Kenneth. *Maps of the Holy Land*. New York: Abbeville Press. 1986.

816. Geikie, *The Life and Words*. 2:633.

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

818. Mount Arbel is located a short distance northwest of Tiberias.

that immediately after an earthquake and severe storm, Jesus encountered the demoniac on the eastern side of Galilee.

And what Jesus said was probably, **“Silence! Be still!”** But 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.”

10.01.11.Q1 What is the mystery of John the Baptist?

The mystery of John the Baptist is, “What happened to his body?” Where was he buried” The traditions are interesting and, admittedly, of no theological value. But these are interesting as the Middle East is full of traditions.

1. One tradition says that he was buried in Samaria. However, moving his body from the Machaerus to Samaria would have taken three days, when the custom was that a body be buried the same day of death. The transport of the body was possible, but highly unlikely. Furthermore, why in Samaria? No orthodox Jew ever wanted to be buried in Samaria, and no Jew would have permitted a friend or relative to be buried there as well.
2. Another tradition says that only John’s body was buried in Samaria, but his head was taken further northeast to Damascus where it was placed in the Church of St. John the Baptist – later known as the Mosque of John the Baptist.
3. But another tradition claims that the Russian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem has his head.

Finally, some scholars have suggested that this act of beheading John was too violent for the times. History, however, suggests that it was typical of ancient monarchs. Three examples are as follows:

1. The fifth century B.C. Greek historian Herodotus recorded the demand made by Amestris, the wife of King Xerxes, at his birthday festival. She demanded that the wife of Masistes die, as she was incredibly jealous of her. Xerxes put her to death.⁸¹⁹
2. In another case, in 53 B.C. the Parthian King Orodes enjoyed both a victorious battle of Karrha and the marriage of his son Pacorus. In the festive celebration, an actor brought on stage the half-wasted head of King Crassus, who lost the battle.⁸²⁰

819. Herodotus, *Histories* 9.108-112. *Histories* was written about 460 to 420 B.C.

3. Finally, Rome was no less violent and savage. Emperors Nero and Caligula both had men tortured for the entertainment of guests at various feasts. Caligula had swordsmen demonstrate their skills of beheading prisoners and Nero burned Christians at night to illuminate his court.

The great work of John the Baptizer was over. Just as Samuel had centuries earlier presented and consecrated King David, so the last prophet presented and consecrated the Greater King. John was a beloved son and so was Jesus. Just as John was rejected and died a martyr, so would Jesus. No one knows what happened to the prophet who came as Elijah. The proverbial “bottom line” is that the true location of his grave is known only to God.

11.01.02.Q1 Did the Transfiguration occur on Mount Tabor or Mount Hermon (Mt. 17:1-8; Mk. 9:2-8; Lk. 9:28-36)?

This issue is seldom a question of students unless they are trying to retrace the steps of Jesus in the land of the Bible or are studying historical geography. But they are not the only ones, as scholars and historians in recent years have debated the same issue. Matthew said they went up on “**on a high mountain by themselves.**” Mount Tabor was first identified as such by the Byzantines as early as the 4th century, for easy travel by the European pilgrims. North of the Sea of Galilee was the Hula Lake,⁸²¹ a massive swampy area that made travel to Mount Hermon most unpleasant. Several centuries later the Crusaders affirmed the Byzantine tradition.⁸²² But were they right? A discussion of each site is as follows:

1. **Mount Tabor.** This mountain is only 1,800 feet above sea level and has an incredibly small crest. It has been described as being dome-shaped when viewed from the north or south, but from the east or west its appearance is incredibly narrow like the sharp edge of a knife. Therefore, the crest area is amazingly small – smaller than a football or soccer field.

Possibly the greatest argument *against* Mount Tabor is that the village of Atabyrion occupied the entire crest area. It had been continuously occupied for more than two centuries. The very narrow summit was a strategic lookout from which distant travelers and marching armies could be seen. Note the strategic importance over the previous three centuries.

820. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 1:431.

821. Also known as the plain of El Huleh, or the Sea of Merom,

822. Payne, “Tabor, Mount.” 3:1513; Barclay, “Mark.” 209-11.

- a. Josephus mentions its military importance three times.⁸²³
- b. In 313 B.C., the Syrian Greek General, Antiochus the Great captured Mount Tabor and fortified the village of Atabyrion that was on its tiny crest.⁸²⁴
- c. Later, it was conquered and fortified again by Antiochus III in 218 B.C.
- d. In 102 B.C. Alexander Jannaeus, captured a city on the mount⁸²⁵ and
- e. In 53 B.C., the Romans had another battle at this small mountain ridge.
- f. During the lifetime of Jesus, the village of Atabyrion was fully occupied. It was also captured in the early days of the First Revolt in A.D. 66, by none other than the historian Josephus. He was then commander of a Jewish brigade in that area. He would not have “captured” it, if it was not occupied.

Local tour guides are quick to point out the stone wall fortification uncovered by archaeologists that was built by Josephus and the military unit he commanded – fortification the historian mentions in his writings.⁸²⁶ Therefore, since the village of Atabyrion and a Roman garrison covered the entire top of this small narrow mountain ridge, Jesus could not possibly have been there to be alone in the presence of God.

2. Mount Hermon. Mount Hermon is not a single mountain peak but a mountain range that is about 10,000 feet above sea level, and snow-capped for half of the year. For that reason it has never been inhabited. It would appear to be a rather unlikely place because it would have been a strenuous hike, in possibly cold weather. It takes about six hours for an ascent and four to return, hence, an entire day. Generally, one must carry his own food, water, and extra clothing.⁸²⁷ However, since Caesarea Philippi and its temple of Pan were located on its southern base, Jesus and His three disciples were close by to make the ascent. Since Jesus made His journey in the springtime, the mountain streams supplied plenty of refreshing water.

823. Josephus, *Wars* 2.20.6; 4.1.8 and *Antiquities* 13.15.4.

824. Jung, “Mount Tabor.” 4:714.

825. Jung, “Mount Tabor.” 4:714; Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.15.4.

826. Josephus, *Wars* 2.20.6; 4.1.8 and *Antiquities* 13.15.4.

827. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 539.

The argument *for* this mountain as being the site of the Transfiguration is that Matthew said that Jesus went up “*a high mountain*,” as opposed to have gone up “*the mountain*.” The high altitude of nearly 10,000 feet fully meets the demands of the Greek adjective *hupselon*.⁸²⁸ Literally, the Greek text reads *a high mountain apart*.⁸²⁹ In essence, the internal biblical evidence – the phrase “a high mountain by themselves” – is the clue that strongly argues for this mountain. Furthermore, the literal Greek reads simply “privately,”⁸³⁰ which could not have occurred upon Mount Tabor.

The multiple peaks of the Mount Hermon range, at the southern edge of the Lebanon Mountain range, are the perfect description because on one in the ancient world would ever have referred to it as “*the mountain*.”

Finally, in ancient times, high mountains were used by various cultures to worship their deities. For example, in Babylon, the Tower of Babel was an artificial mountain constructed for the worship of a pagan deity. In the Bible, Abraham offered Isaac on Mount Moriah,⁸³¹ later known as the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Moses met God on Mount Sinai. Jesus ascended to, and will return from heaven, upon the Mount of Olives. The concept of meeting God at a high place carries with it that His subjects ought to be always looking up toward Him. Hence, there is little question that the quiet, remote area to where Jesus retreated was upon mountain of grandeur, Mount Hermon. It should be noted, that a few scholars have suggested Mount Meron in upper Galilee as the possible site, only because the ruins of an ancient village and synagogue have been found there.⁸³² However, the same argument against Mount Tabor applies for Mount Meron.

11.01.02.Q2 What is the significance of Moses and Elijah coming to the mountain with Jesus (Mt. 17:3)?

This is a theological question, but is addressed here in a limited sense. Moses was the first of the great prophets. He received the Law personally from God on Mount Sinai, and his ministry included dramatic miracles as part of the exodus story. He has always represented “the Law” (although “Law” better translated as *the Instruction*) of the Old Covenant and promise of salvation. Elijah was an unusual miracle worker who represented “the prophets,” and his

828. Johnson Jr., “The Transfiguration of Christ.” 135 n3.

829. Bookman, *When God Wore Sandals*. CD Trac 10. See also Green, *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*; Berry, *Interlinear Literal Translation of the Greek New Testament*.

830. Green, *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*. 56.

831. The Hebrew word for Mount Moriah is *har ha-bayit* meaning *mount of the house*. See Mills and Michael, *Messiah and His Hebrew Alphabet*. 7.

832. Gilbrant, “Matthew.” 363.

significance is that he was the restorer of all things (Mal. 4:5-6; Mk. 9:11-13). Neither Moses nor Elijah died a normal death. The former was buried by God and Elijah was personally taken away by God.

In Exodus 24:15-18, Moses went up the mountain and a cloud covered it. Now Jesus had taken his three closest disciples with Him up the mountain and again a cloud covered it. The cloud was the glory of God that appeared to His people in various times in their history. The cloud, a/k/a the Shekinah Glory, went before them to guide and protect them (Ex. 13:21). In Numbers 12:5, a cloud descended with the Lord, and the cloud appeared again above the tabernacle (Deut. 31:15). The Lord made His presence known in a cloud in Exodus 19:9, and again some four centuries later when King Solomon dedicated the temple and the cloud filled the temple. Most certainly, these historic events were in the minds of the disciples when they saw the cloud that enveloped Jesus, and the voice of God commanded them to obey Jesus.

The reason Peter may have suggested three shelters (one each for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah) was that they would observe the Feast of Tabernacles that commemorated Israel's deliverance out of Egypt and also their desert experience. This was the tradition of a coming prophet that the Essenes held in Qumran. Furthermore, they felt that they were living in the last days when the messiah would come, judge the world and destroy their enemies. Then they would then live with him forever. The second tradition of a coming messenger is in Malachi 3:1: "See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me." In 4:5 we read, "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes."⁸³³

Another significant point to the appearance of Moses and Elijah is that this entire event points to life beyond the grave. In this context, Moses who died and was buried by God Himself, is a "type and shadow" of the saints who have died and will one day be resurrected. On the other hand, Elijah never died, but was translated (or raptured) and is a "type and shadow" of future saints who will be raptured prior to the Tribulation Period.⁸³⁴

11.02.16.Q1 Did Jesus forgive the woman caught in adultery (Jn. 8:2-11)?

It has been said that Jesus forgave her. But did He? Scripture reads, **"Neither do I condemn you," said Jesus. "Go, and from now on do not sin anymore."** But the text does not say that He forgave her, nor did she come to ask for forgiveness. That is why He just told her to change her lifestyle and not sin any more. The implication obviously is that if she continues in her adulterous lifestyle, she will be held accountable for her past activities. It has been said that in

833. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 259.

834. See Appendix 2 as well as "Type and shadow" in Appendix 26.

Jesus there is the gospel of the second chance. Throughout the Bible, forgiveness is conditional upon repentance which involves a change of mind and lifestyle. This is proof.

11.02.16.Q2 Why isn't John 8:2-11 in some ancient manuscripts?

That is a good question and, while the exact reason is unknown, there is a good answer. Scholars believe the oldest manuscripts are considered to be the most valuable and date them between the fourth and sixth centuries. They are known as *Uncial Manuscripts* because they were written with Greek capital letters. It is believed that this passage was removed from the biblical text because some church fathers believed it might excuse or even encourage some individuals to commit adultery. Augustine said that it was removed to “avoid scandal” and because some people in his church were of “slight faith.”⁸³⁵

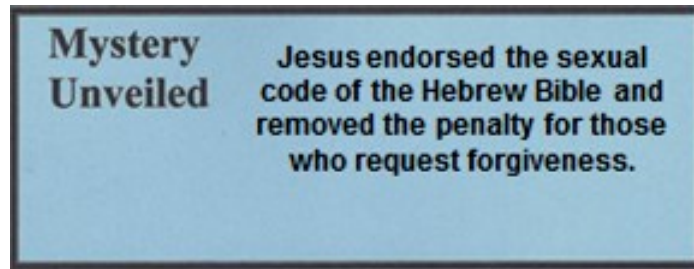
Among the early church fathers, it appears that the Greek fathers did not know of the removed passage, but the Latin fathers did. Among those who did not comment on it are Origen, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Cyril of Alexandria. The John 8:2-11 narrative is not found in the *Syriac* or Egyptian *Coptic Bibles*. However, Jerome did include it in his Latin *Vulgate Bible* in the fourth century. Furthermore, Augustine and Ambrose both wrote of it and possibly the oldest tradition is found in a book known as *The Apostolic Constitution*. In this third century literary work, Eusebius referred to Papias who spoke of a woman who was accused of many sins before our Lord.⁸³⁶ Papias lived near the end of the first century. Therefore, many scholars today believe the passage is an authentic segment of the gospel of John.

As with a number of other stories in the gospels, the ending to this event is missing. The reader is not told of her name or the situation of the trickery that entrapped her. A thousand years later, in one of Europe's monasteries, a so-called historical account appeared in which she is said to have been related to a priestly family. Such fanciful and factious accounts draw the reader away from the basic truth revealed by Jesus who cautioned believers of deceptions in Mathew 24.⁸³⁷

835. Barclay, “John.” 2:290-91.

836. Barclay, “John.” 2:291.

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



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

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

If a man assigned his goods to his sons he must write, “From today and after my death.” So R. Judah and R. Jose say: He need not do so. If a man assigned his goods to his son to be his after his death, the father cannot sell them since they are assigned to his son, and the son cannot sell them since they are in the father’s possession. If the father sold them, they are sold [only] until he dies; if the son sold them, the buyer had no claim on them until the father dies.

Mishnah, *Baba Bathra* 8.7

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

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

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

The common laws of the time dictated that if a son left his home with his inheritance, he was in

effect rejecting his home and forever leaving his family. The Sumerian Code from Mesopotamia was two thousand years old at the time of Christ and reflects the cultural norm that was still honored in the first century. It reads,

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

Sumerian Code⁸³⁸

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

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

Apocalypse of Sedrach 6:4-6

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

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

838. Cited by Clay, “The Prodigal Son.” 10-12.

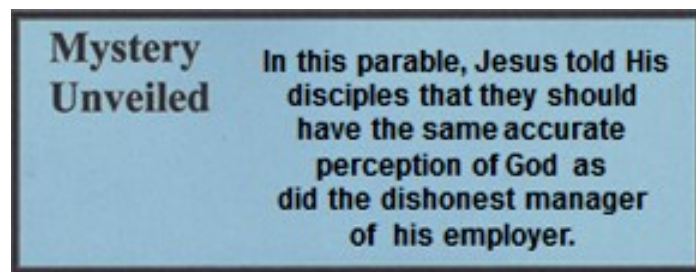
A possible answer may be that the manager learned how wealth could be wisely given away to do some good. The giving of alms was always considered an act of righteousness in the Old Testament and rabbinic writings. Furthermore, depending on how the bill was written, the transactions could very well have been legal.⁸³⁹ This would have been especially true, if the invoice were written in terms of commodity, rather than cash and interest. The difference in the value of the products could easily benefit the debtor, while not affecting the master.

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

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

The key point in this story is that Jesus did not applaud the dishonest manager for being a thief, but for his ability to correctly evaluate his options with potential consequences including his employer's generosity. The ungodly are more shrewd than are God's children who should be more intentional and dedicated about how they pursue life.⁸⁴⁰

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



839. Liefeld, "Luke." 8:986-88.

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

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

It could be said that the answer is a “God thing.” As previously stated, Jesus, as the Master Teacher, often took a well-known story and changed it to suit His teaching. This helped the listeners remember what He taught. The Apostle Paul did a similar feat. In Acts 17:28 Paul made a quotation from two Greek poets whose writings were well known to the people to whom he preached. He quoted Cleanthes (*Hymn to Zeus*) and Aratus of Soli (*Phaenomena*, a poem on astronomy) in his Areopagus address. Of the two ancient Greek writers, scholars are divided as to who was the original author of the words that were copied twice. However, it is also possible that both of them quoted the Cretan philosopher-poet Epimenides, who lived about 7th or 6th century B.C.⁸⁴¹

This is an interesting parable since it has always been sinful to speak to the dead (i.e. King Saul with the witch at Endor), but the Jews believed that the dead could speak to each other. The Talmud recorded several such instances⁸⁴² and this parable, which is somewhat mystical was, in fact, on par with prevailing beliefs of the Jewish culture.⁸⁴³ The problem most evangelicals have with this biblical account and obvious multiple versions in Jewish and pagan writings, is that we have assumed the biblical narrative was either an actual event or a parable or story completely original by Jesus. It should not be difficult for modern students to accept the fact that Jesus used stories that were in common use so that His listeners could easily remember His lessons. This parable simply underscores the great lengths God is willing to go to bring an understanding of the Kingdom of God to a lost generation.⁸⁴⁴

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

1. Eternally separated from God,
2. Their state of lostness and hopelessness,
3. The suffering of continuous torment,

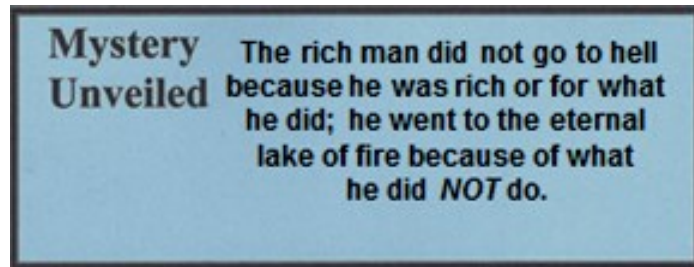
841. Blaiklock, “Poets, Pagan, Quotations from.” 13:1646-47.

842. Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot* 18b.

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

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

4. The condition is unchangeable and eternal, and
5. The lost will forever remember missed all opportunities that were available to find salvation.



Finally, there are a few observations to be considered.

1. It was the common belief that those in heaven could see and mock those in hell. But by silence, Jesus refutes that concept. Lazarus did not torment the rich man.
2. The rich man never addressed Lazarus, but called upon Father Abraham to help him. Even in his place of torment, he was too proud to call upon his former impoverished neighbor.
3. The rich man was not a Gentile, but a Jew who had all the imagery of a successful life. There is no mention as to whether he was observant of all the Jewish laws, so it can be assumed that his sin was that he was indifferent to the needs of others.
4. The situation of the rich man is the same as what occurred in the church of Laodicea. It was a church that was extremely wealthy and in need of nothing, but Jesus called those believers poor, wretched, blind and naked and said they needed to repent (Rev. 3:14-19).
5. In this parable, the food from the rich man's table was thrown away, but not toward poor Lazarus. Rather, the food was thrown to the dogs. The same theme appears in the narrative of the Syro-Phoenician woman who pleads for the bread thrown to dogs. It was common practice for unwanted food to be thrown to dogs that guarded the home.⁸⁴⁵
6. While alive on earth, Lazarus was in pain but was ignored by the rich man. Now the situation was reversed: the rich man was in pain and desperately wanted help – the kind of relief he refused to give to Lazarus. Once Lazarus was a beggar but is now rich while the rich man becomes the beggar, and remains condemned as such for all eternity.

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

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

12.03.10.Q1 Why did Jesus wait for four days to raise Lazarus up from the dead (Jn. 11:1-37)?

In this historical account, the immediate question pertains to the reason why Jesus delayed his return to the home of His very good friends in light of the emergency they faced. Had He no compassion upon them? The issue here is not one of compassion or friendship. Jesus delayed His return to provide Himself the opportunity to show that He was the Creator of life and the Son of God. There are four reasons.

1. It was the custom of all Middle Eastern cultures, as it is today, to bury a body on the same day as death occurred.⁸⁴⁶ The semi-arid climate conditions will cause decomposition to occur immediately.

2. The Pharisees believed the soul hovered over the body for three days after death, because, in the event of a “resurrection,” the person would have a soul when life returned. This tradition may have originated when someone became unconscious due to an injury and awoke two or three days later (a “resurrection”). Nonetheless, in that sense it was believed there was no hope of a resurrection after three days. Jesus proved, beyond any shadow of doubt, that Lazarus was dead before bringing a dead smelly Lazarus back to life. As a result, even the Pharisees and Sadducees could not challenge this issue.⁸⁴⁷

After three days of decomposition, the eyes of the deceased had decayed, the face was hardly recognizable, maggots have infested the corpse and, therefore, it was believed that there was no hope of a resurrection.⁸⁴⁸ The Mishnah reflects the common opinion held from the days of Jesus

For it has been taught, “They adduce evidence as to a corpse’s identity only from the features of the face, including the nose, and they give testimony only

846. Babylonian Talmud, *Mo’ed Katan* 28a (Mid-Festival Days); Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 46b.

847. Gilbrant, “John.” 315; Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 123; Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 2:206.

848. Pickup, “‘On the Third Day’: The Time Frame of Jesus’ Death and Resurrection.” 522-23; Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 330.

within three days [of the deceased's death]."

Mishnah, *Yebamoth* 16:3

Later, from an eighth century post-Talmudic tractate, additional clarification on this subject is insightful, even though it well outside the acceptable time period for this study. It reads,

"We go out to the cemetery and examine the dead [to see if they are still alive and have been buried by mistake] for a period of three days and do not fear being suspected of engaging in the ways of the Amorites [i.e., superstitious practices]. Once a man who had been buried was examined and found to be alive; he lived for twenty-five years more and then died. Another such person lived and had five children before he died."

S'machot 8:1⁸⁴⁹

4. It was the custom that after the passing of someone, there were thirty days of mourning.

a. The first three days were for weeping.⁸⁵⁰ Some scholars believe that during these three days, phylacteries were not worn, fasting was common (not a complete fast, as eating an egg or lentils was permitted the first seven days),⁸⁵¹ and the mourners did not greet other people. However, it is unknown if this was a first century practice in the Holy Land or if this was a later cultural practice.⁸⁵²

b. The following seven days were for lamentation. But this time frame included the fourth day which was known as the high day of mourning. It was believed that on that day his soul departed and went to sheol (Hades) never to return.⁸⁵³ In

849. Quoted by Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*. 190-91.

850. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:363-64.

851. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 2:330.

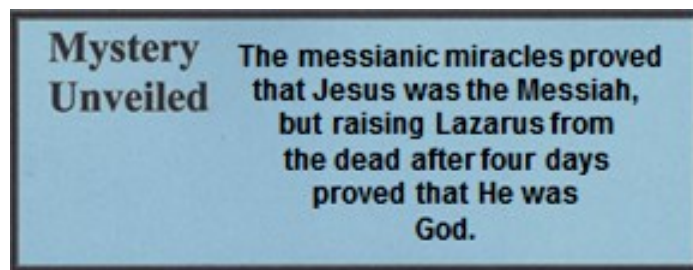
852. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:366. It is a constant challenge to isolate the first century Jewish cultural norms from later practices.

853. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor's Manual*. Class 18, page 15; Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:367.

essence, to rephrase his condition in a modern term, “he was good and dead.”⁸⁵⁴ Therefore, a fourth day event was truly a resurrection from death to life – that, in the Jewish mind, only God could perform. It was also a silent attack against those who claimed Jesus performed miracles with demonic powers, for it was believed that demons could kill, but not restore or create life.

c. The balance of the thirty days for intermission from washing their clothes and shaving.⁸⁵⁵

5. Jesus always brings understanding of Himself to the level of comprehension of those who He desires to show His love and compassion. It was believed that only God could raise a person back to life immediately after death, but it was also believed that not even God could raise anyone once the body began to decay. Therefore, Jesus demonstrated that His power of life was far beyond their concept of God. The primary reason Jesus delayed His arrival by four days was because He was about to perform a miracle *greater* than His messianic miracles – miracles the Jews believed that only the true messiah could perform.⁸⁵⁶ This miracle was more than just raising a dead person back to life — an astounding feat by itself—but Jesus also proclaimed His deity without a single spoken word! Because only God can give life!



6. In the gospels, especially in the book of John, it appears that Jesus moved on His own initiative. He was never pressured to do anything and never in a hurry – but always functioned in His timing. When Mary came to Jesus, He essentially told her that He would come in His time and in His way.

854. The belief that the soul remained in the corpse for three days was known in other cultures as well. See Pickup. “‘On the Third Day’: The Time Frame of Jesus’ Death and resurrection.” 522 n51.

855. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:363-64.

856. For a description of the three messianic miracles, see 06.03.08.Q1, 06.03.08.Q2, 06.01.03, John 4:25 as well as the related video link 08.03.08.V. See also the comparison of Dead Sea Scroll fragments 4Q278 and 4Q521 with Luke 4:16-30 at 06.02.02; Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context*. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 10, Session 2.

12.03.12.Q1 Did the high priest have a rope tied around his ankle when he entered the Holy of Holies?

A traditional myth says that whenever the high priest went into the Holy of Holies, he had a rope tied around his ankle. This was because if there was any sin found in him, God would strike him dead. The end of the rope was available for others to pull his body out without entering the sacred area. According to scholars at the Temple Institute this writer has interviewed, this teaching is false.⁸⁵⁷ Furthermore, there is no evidence of this practice in any rabbinic writings that carefully describe the activities in the temple. Were that myth to have been true, then one must question why God did not kill several high priests, especially Caiaphas who one of the most evil of all high priests?

12.03.15.Q1 Why did Jesus tell His followers to remember Lot's wife (Lk. 17:32)?

“Remember Lot's wife!” To protect their lives from destruction, Lot and his family were personally led out of Sodom by two angels (Gen. 19). As they fled, Lot's wife looked back and instantly became a pillar of salt. Her name is not recorded in Scripture, but according to the ancient *Book of Jasher* (19:52), her name was Abo (Edith).⁸⁵⁸

When God told them to flee, it was to remove them from the wickedness of Sodom, its pending destruction, and to look forward to a better future. However, a moment of disobedient hesitation cost her, her life. The lesson is that one cannot have a passion for both the world and for God. The comment “remember Lot's wife” was a serious warning to *not* be part of a degenerate world, but to keep one's focus on Christ Jesus. Similar warnings are found in the parable of the ten virgins, two women at the grinding stone, etc. The warning to be prepared to meet God and give an account of one's life has not changed.⁸⁵⁹ Clearly, it was never intended to be a point of humor.

12.04.06.Q1 On what biblical principle did Zacchaeus offer to pay back four times anything he may have taken unjustly (Lk. 19:8)?

Most Bible readers would consider his offer to be quite generous; going far above and beyond what was required. However, Zacchaeus was doing precisely what the Old Testament law required. There were three levels of restitution for wrongs committed:

857. Interviews in October, 1998. See <https://www.templeinstitute.org/> for more information on the Institute that has re-created the vessels and garments for the new temple.

858. Jordan. *Who's Who in the Bible*. 237. That narrative has generally been perceived with less respect than is deserved – almost with a point of humor.

859. There are numerous Old Testament warnings as well, such as Ezekiel 3:17-21.

1. When a person confessed to having committed fraud, he was to make full restitution plus add twenty percent to his victim (Lev. 6:1-5; Num. 5:5-7).
2. If a thief was apprehended, he had to pay double of what he stole (Ex. 22:4, 7).
3. However, if a man stole *what was essential* and *demonstrated no pity* to his victim, he was required to pay back fourfold (Ex. 22:1; 2 Sam. 12:6). His decision reflects his passion to obey God's Word literally, and he lived up to the meaning of his name.

Whether Zacchaeus demonstrated pity to his victims may not be the point here as much as the fact that the general public perceived tax collectors as having no pity and dedicated to greed. He not only desired to be right with God, but also right with his neighbors. Jesus affirmed his decision that was based on an Old Testament law. The greater question might be, what does that mean for us today?

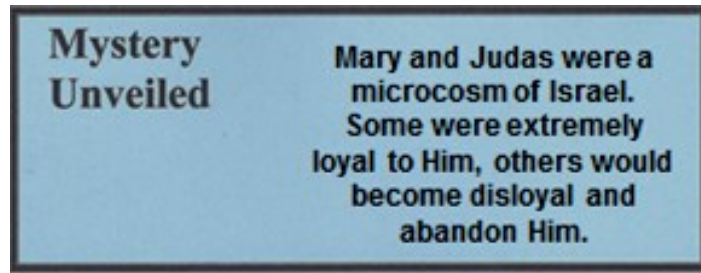
12.04.09.Q1 How could Mary have afforded expensive perfume such as Indian Spikenard (Mt. 26:7)?

Women of wealth were rare in ancient times. Those privileged with high incomes generally were the wives of government officials, merchants or high priestly families, unless of course, they were expensive "call girls" for the rich and famous clients. Unfortunately, many scholars have implicated Mary to have been a prostitute, who may have been personally known to the religious leaders. However, she could have simply have been a wealthy woman who realized her need for salvation.

Mary brought "**an alabaster jar of very expensive fragrant oil**" for Jesus that was known by the full plant name of Indian Spikenard.⁸⁶⁰ Some translations read this phrase as, "pure, an expensive perfume." Pliny the Elder said, "Perfumes are best kept in alabaster flasks" (13.4).⁸⁶¹ While Jesus ministered to the poor and destitute, He was also clearly interested in the rich and famous and, at times, without comment about their wealth. This was to be her last feast of fellowship with her good Friend and Savior.

⁸⁶⁰. Farrarm, 326; Alexander, 14.

⁸⁶¹. Ben-Dor, "Alabaster." 1:75-76.



Questions And Explanations Related To Hermeneutics – The Art And Science Of Interpretation.

02.02.06.Q1 Why is the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls so significant?

The Dead Sea Scrolls were written by the Essenes in the desert village of Qumran, located northwest of the Dead Sea. The Scrolls contain hundreds of complete books and fragments of many others – biblical and extra-biblical books. Every book of the Hebrew Bible is represented with the exception of the book of Esther. In some cases, entire books have been discovered on a single Scroll (i.e., two copies of Isaiah). These Scrolls are critical in the field of apologetics, because they negate the argument by critics who say that copyists had changed the Bible over the centuries. Until these Scrolls were discovered, the oldest biblical texts were from the ninth century A.D., but these are a thousand years older and provide overwhelming evidence that the Old Testament was copied and transmitted throughout the centuries with a high degree of accuracy.⁸⁶²

Video Insert >

02.02.06.V *The Significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls.* Dr. Bryant Wood discusses the significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls in terms of understanding the life and times of Jesus, AND that these scrolls are overwhelming evidence that the Scriptures have been faithfully translated and transmitted for the past 2,000 years. Click here if Internet connection is available.

862. See also <http://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/featured-scrolls>. Retrieved December 19, 2012.

Another contribution is that they help scholars understand the Hebrew and Aramaic languages of the first century. Religious books were written in Hebrew only – what was considered a sacred language. One out of every six extra-biblical scrolls was written in Aramaic, the common language in the time of Jesus. Of the scrolls discovered at Masada, Hebrew writings were more common than Aramaic by a ratio of nine to one.⁸⁶³

Jesus spoke Aramaic, but His words and deeds written in the gospels eventually were translated into Greek (i.e. Book of Matthew), or written in Greek (i.e. Books of Mark, Luke, John). Because of the scrolls, scholars now have better understanding of the translation of words and phrases which previously were questionable. The Essene commentaries reveal how this group of ultra-orthodox Jews interpreted their Hebrew Bible. While certainly not all Jewish people interpreted Scripture in the same manner, the scrolls present topics that were under serious consideration and debate at the time of Jesus.⁸⁶⁴

There is no question that their discovery was the greatest archaeological find since biblical times. They provide understanding of Scripture and matters of daily Jewish life. The following are several interesting examples:

1. Critics have long said that certain words and phrases were inserted in the New Testament by church fathers in the second to fourth centuries, and therefore, these could not have been original with Jesus. Phrases such as “sons of light,” “sons of darkness,” “the elect,” “lake (river) of fire,” and “light and darkness,” were among those supposedly written centuries after Jesus. However, the Scrolls put that argument to rest, especially the scroll known as *The Manual of Discipline* in which many of these terms appear.
2. The Scrolls and New Testament indicate that the rite of induction into the church or Essene community by immersion (baptism) had no saving benefits; repentance and faith were essential. Yes, the Essenes baptized new members.
3. The communal fellowship that was encouraged for believers by Luke (Acts 4:32-37) was also required by the Essenes.
4. The Scrolls confirm the criticism written in the Talmud and Mishnah concerning the corruption of the temple priesthood. Jesus also criticized the same leading Pharisees and Sadducees.

863. Bivin and Blizzard, *Understanding the Difficult Words*. 37.

864. Bruce, “Dead Sea Scrolls.” 1:372.

5. The Scrolls provide information and details that the Hebrew Bible does not have. As a result, some vague passages such as Psalm 145:13 and 1 Samuel 10-11 are now clarified.

6. The Scrolls also preserved a picture of first century daily life without the influence of Christian thought or beliefs. Yet there is some evidence to suggest that, prior to the Roman destruction, accounts of the gospel of Jesus had arrived at the Essene community. Two or three small papyri fragments were found which some scholars believe are from the gospels. The discovery suggests that Jesus was very popular and His reputation penetrated every segment of Jewish society as indicated in the gospels, including the isolationistic Essenes.

7. The Scrolls repeatedly state that the Essenes believed in a coming messiah who would deliver them from Roman oppression and the corrupt temple aristocrats. Two examples of their messianic hope are:

a. The term “prepare the way” is found in 1QS 8:12b-14 (cf. Mt. 3)

b. The messianic work described in 4Q521 frag. 2, col 2:1-13 (cf. Mt. 11)

02.02.16.Q1 Why are some Jewish writings incredibly similar to New Testament teachings?

The answer is simple – both are rooted in the Hebrew Bible. Are all rabbinic writings reflective of the time of Jesus? Absolutely not! And that makes discernment of those writings all the more challenging. Some scholars have often stated that the *Mishnah* and *Talmud* were written centuries after Jesus and, therefore, are not trustworthy sources for two reasons:

1. These writings *idealize* what first century Judaism should have been like.

2. Some beliefs of the Jews changed over time toward a Christian perspective.

However, what these scholars have failed to realize is that many of the Jewish principles of faith and life in the *Mishnah* and repeated in the *Talmud* were taught centuries before they were recorded. In fact, most of these principles originated long before the time of Jesus. Mary and Joseph were righteous not only when Jesus was born, but throughout their entire lives and they were faithful to Old Testament teachings. So were many other Jews and rabbis. Therefore, it should not be surprising that both the New Testament and a number of Jewish writings are similar.

Video Insert >

02.02.16.V *The Significance of Understanding Jewish Literature.* Messianic Rabbi John Fischer, discusses the contributions of the *Mishnah* and *Gemarah* that aid understanding of the *Gospels* and the words of Jesus (Heb. *Yeshua*). Click [here](#) if Internet connection is available.

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.⁸⁶⁵ Critics have often stated that the *Mishnah* and *Talmud* were written centuries after Jesus and, therefore, are not trustworthy sources for two reasons:⁸⁶⁶

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.⁸⁶⁷ 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

865. See the video 02.02.01.V “The Significance of Inter-Testamental Writings: By Dr. Douglas Finkbeiner.

866. While there is an element of truth to this statement, for the most part, both views are inaccurate perceptions.

867. 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.

Pharisees, as illustrated by the differences between the two major rabbinic schools of theology: those of Rabbi Hillel and those of Rabbi Shammai.

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.”⁸⁶⁸

1. The Latin phrase *ipsissima verba* (ip·sis·si·ma ver·ba) means the *exact words verbatim*, that were spoken.⁸⁶⁹ The modern equivalent is an exact quotation.

2. On the other hand, the Latin term *ipsissima vox* means the *exact voice*.⁸⁷⁰ 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.⁸⁷¹

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*.⁸⁷² 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

868. Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*. Appendix; Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages*. vii.

869. Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism*. 166; Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages*. vii.

870. Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism*. 166; Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages*. vii.

871. 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.

872. Barclay, *Jesus*. 243; Hagner, “Jesus and the Synoptic Sabbath Controversies.” 268.

situation, but I have kept as close as possible to the total opinion expressed by the actual words.

Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1.22.1⁸⁷³

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.⁸⁷⁴ 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 7:18-23.⁸⁷⁵ 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**

873. Cited in Bock and Herrick, *Jesus in Context*. 73-99. See expanded comments by Thucydides in sections 1.21-22.

874. These scholars hold to the Reformed Doctrine of Biblical Inspiration on the concept of *Ipsissima Vox*: Stonehouse, *Origins of the Synoptic Gospels*. 109-10; Murray, *Calvin on Scripture and Divine Sovereignty*. 30; Hodge and Warfield, "Inspiration." 238.

875. See 08.05.04.

**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.**

Babylonian Talmud, *Berakoth* 60b

Another example of the *exact voice* (vox) and the *exact words* (verba) is the Roman *titulus*,⁸⁷⁶ 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.

18.01.07.Q1 Is Mark 16:9-20 authentic?

Some modern translations have a notation stating, “These verses do not appear in the most trusted manuscripts of the New Testament.” The implication is that these were added by scribes and were not part of the original gospel. This notice is based upon the fact that these verses do not appear in the *Codex Vaticanus* or the *Codex Sinaiticus*. However, what these scholars do not reveal is that these manuscripts agree with each other slightly more than 3,000 times.⁸⁷⁷ No other ancient records have such a high consistency of accuracy in transmission. Therefore, the notice is unwarranted as it can be assured the passage in question was in the original text.

Only later manuscripts have Mark 16:9-20 and these are considered inferior to the older ones. Textual critics say that the style of Greek is so dramatically different that the latter portion could not have been written by the author of the first portion. However, that does not mean that that the gospel was intended to end at Mark 16:8. Furthermore, Mark could have had a different scribe write that portion of Scripture. The reason for the change is unknown and the answer lies only with God.

876. 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.

877. Burgon, *The Causes of Corruption in the Traditional Text*. 251-52, 259.

The Teaching And Ministry Of Jesus

02.02.03.Q1 Did Jesus Quote the Apocrypha (Mt. 5:34-35; 7:12)?

Some critics say that Jesus quoted or referred to the Apocrypha or Pseudepigrapha.⁸⁷⁸ They imply that He borrowed ideas from those writers, and therefore, His teaching was not of divine inspiration. The question is to explain how some of these books, written years before His birth, have similarities to what He taught.

What Jesus taught was based solidly upon the Old Testament and many themes were also taught by rabbis in the Inter-Testamental Period, especially with the advent of Hellenism. Therefore, some topics naturally are found in the works of many orthodox Jewish rabbis, including Jesus.

Furthermore, it must be realized that even in pagan communities there were some social principles that were godly. For example, the Chinese sage Confucius presented the Golden Rule⁸⁷⁹ in the negative form, as did the Jewish sage Tobit long before Jesus arrived in Bethlehem. This most certainly does not mean that Jesus derived His opinions from either source, but it does indicate that these men were aware, to some degree, of divine principles. The fact that there is a similarity does not mean Jesus endorsed them or relied on them. He was, and is, God. His Words have existed throughout all eternity past.

Two examples below supposedly “prove” that Jesus depended upon the Apocrypha in His teaching:⁸⁸⁰

Mt. 5:34-35 But I tell you, don't take an oath at all: either by heaven, because it is God's throne;³⁵ or by the earth, because it is His footstool; or by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great King.

This is parallel to:

Ben Sirach 23:9 Do not accustom your mouth to oaths, nor habitually utter the name of the Holy One.

⁸⁷⁸ Jesus is not the only One who quoted or made reference to non-biblical sources. For further study in apologetics, see http://www.ask.com/wiki/Assumption_of_Moses?o=2800&qsrc=999&ad=doubleDown&an=apn&ap=ask.com. See also <http://www.apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=13&article=1179> Retrieved April 5, 2015.

⁸⁷⁹ Horne, *Jesus: The Master Teacher*. 102.

⁸⁸⁰ Quotations from the Apocrypha found in the Bible: The New Revised Standard Version with Apocrypha.

Mt. 7:12 Therefore, whatever you want others to do for you, do also the same for them—this is the Law and the Prophets.

This is parallel to, but in reverse of:

Tobit 4:15 And what you hate, do not do to anyone.

These examples in *Ben Sirach* and *Tobit* are similar to the words of Jesus because He and other rabbis had a similar sense of righteousness based upon the Hebrew Bible. It should not surprise the modern student that righteous Jews thought very much like Jesus.

Finally, as a word of warning, it should be noted that many myths and legends throughout the centuries are attributed to extra-biblical books. Creative writers and painters have attempted to enhance the holiness and miracles of Jesus. Several examples are as follows:

1. Italian artists show that dragons bowed down to Jesus
2. Lions and leopards adored Him
3. Roses of Jericho blossomed wherever He walked.
4. Some writers have said that when the Holy Family entered Egypt, all the idols fell off their pedestals and that many lepers were healed when the family went by.

Biblical myths were created throughout history, but increased significantly in Europe during the Middle Ages. There is hardly a museum or library in Europe that does not have one or two so-called “true stories” of the Bible hidden somewhere in its archives that have recently been promoted as a recently discovered insight.⁸⁸¹ They all point to the fulfillment of the prophetic words of Jesus in His Olivet Discourse (Mt. 24), when He warned that false teachers would arise.

The redeeming quality of these writings is that, by contrast, they are astonishing proof that the biblical gospels were produced by authors who were guided by the Holy Spirit. It is obvious that no creative mind can enhance the Sacred Script without degrading or distorting it. While creative writers and painters attempted to honor Jesus, their fanciful stories tend to dishonor and misinterpret Him.

881. Two examples 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). 2) Nicholas Notovich, whose book, *The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ*. Trans. (Virchand R. Gandhi, Dover Pub.) is a so-called historical account of when Jesus went to Asia to study between the ages 13 and 29.

02.03.04.Q1 How did one become a rabbi or a disciple of a rabbi?

The title *rabbi* at the time of Christ was a complimentary title, not an official office within Judaism.⁸⁸² The use of the word *rabbi* as an officially recognized title came after the destruction of the temple when the rabbinical schools were relocated to Jamnia and to the Galilee area.⁸⁸³ It is an endearing term meaning “my master” or “my teacher.”⁸⁸⁴ The purposes of a *rabbi* were two-fold:

1. To be a role model of how to apply God’s written word to life; namely, to “be holy because I the Lord your God, am holy” (Lev. 19:2b). Thereby they led others in the biblical way of life.
2. To teach others to become rabbis. To be a rabbi, all that one had to do was to have disciples.⁸⁸⁵ But for that to happen, most men first went to a yeshiva (seminary). Jesus, of course, did not attend a yeshiva, but gathered disciples once people heard Him teach. The Oral Torah was the “teachings” of the rabbis. Disciples were not permitted to write down the teachings of their rabbi.⁸⁸⁶ When the disciples followed their rabbis around the countryside, listening to him, they did not carry an arm-load of scrolls on which to write notations. Memorization was common practice, not only of the Scriptures, but other Jewish books also.

It would appear that the explanation of how to become a rabbi or a disciple of a rabbi should be answered in the “religious Institutions” section. However, it is addressed here because throughout most of Jewish history, religion and education were one and the same. The word “rabbi” identified a man as being a teacher, but also carried the responsibilities of being a spiritual leader, such as a pastor. The Jews used the title as an equivalent to the modern word “doctor.” The Hebrew word comes from a root word meaning “to increase.” Sometimes Jesus was addressed as “Rabban” or “rabboni” which are higher titles than “rabbi.”⁸⁸⁷

When a boy decided he wanted to pursue biblical studies and become a rabbi, he did so by becoming a disciple of a rabbi. The boy and his family decided upon a rabbi and then asked the

882. Bivin, *New Light on the Difficult Words of Jesus*, 9-12.

883. Horsley, *Archaeology, History, and Society in Galilee*. 40.

884. Spangler and Tverberg, *Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus*. 23, 27.

885. Bookman, *When God Wore Sandals*. CD Trac 7.

886. Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context*. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 2, Session 1.

887. Geikie, *The Life and Words*. 1:549.

rabbi-teacher to accept the boy under his discipleship. For example, a well-known first century rabbi, Akiva, traveled from Babylon to Jerusalem to sit under the instruction of the rabbis of the School of Hillel. Other sages with disciples were Rabbi Ezra (not related to the biblical figure) who had five disciples,⁸⁸⁸ Rabban Johanan ben Zakki⁸⁸⁹ who was a contemporary of Jesus,⁸⁹⁰ had either five⁸⁹¹ or possibly seven disciples.⁸⁹² Jesus had twelve.⁸⁹³ These disciples lived with their sage and emulated the one they called “lord” or “master.” One was not permitted to teach the Torah for money, so rabbis would teach children how to read and write, for which they received payment. Many rabbis and sages were common workers, such as fishermen, day laborers, and carpenters and, in such cases, the disciples worked along with them in their secular employment. A few were independently wealthy, such as Nicodemus. Many sages originated in the Galilee area but eventually ended up in Jerusalem, where they started schools for advanced theological studies known as *yeshivas*, or seminaries.⁸⁹⁴ Finally, Jesus functioned as a prophet and a typical sage of His day.

To become a disciple (or student) of a popular rabbi was difficult. Therefore, it was not uncommon for an aspiring student-disciple to depend upon a third individual to provide an outstanding recommendation for the prospective student. Being accepted was a sign of prestige for the student as well as his family. Therefore, when Jesus called upon selected individuals to follow him, he was definitely breaking from the cultural norm. Furthermore, Jesus selected individuals such as tax collectors and common fishermen, people who were not at all considered to be likely candidates.

Often rabbis would ask a would-be disciple a series of questions and then determine if the young man was acceptable. Jesus however, was different. What He did not ask of His disciples is as significant as what He eventually required of them. As His disciples eventually became proficient, Jesus sent them out on their own to test their knowledge and skills, but also to

888. 2 *Esdras* 14:42.

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

890. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*. 303.

891. Mishnah, *Berakoth* 5:5.

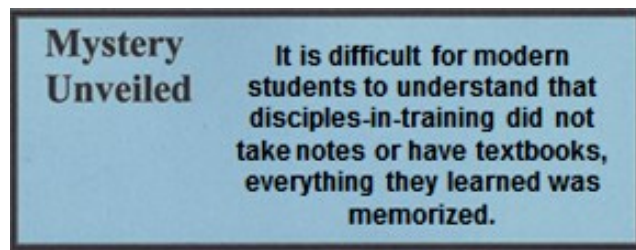
892. Midrash, *Tanhuma Hayyei Sarah* 6.

893. An example of a aspiring disciple who came to Jesus is found in John 1:25-51. See 05.04.02.

894. For the Jews, the best education was theology and the best place to learn theology was in Jerusalem. For the Greeks and Romans, the best education was philosophy and rhetoric, and the best places to learn philosophy and rhetoric were in universities located in Athens, Rome, Marseilles, Antioch, and several other cities. Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages*. 34-35.

experience the power of God working through them. As a disciple (Gk. *mathetes*),⁸⁹⁵ the student-disciple imitated his master; as an apostle (Gk. *apostello*) he was *sent out*, like an ambassador in that he represented his master.⁸⁹⁶ The unique feature of this question, “Where are you staying?” is further explained in 05.04.02.

Student-disciples studied under, and imitated the life of their master-teacher. When their rabbi went on a journey, they went with him and carried his personal belongings, prepared his food, and gave him a comfortable place to sleep in the evenings. Rabbinic writings indicate that whatever comforts any rabbi had were provided for him by his servant-disciples, as they observed his lifestyle and patterned their lives after his.⁸⁹⁷ Furthermore, among some sages and rabbis, all property was held in a common fund from which food and other necessities were purchased.⁸⁹⁸ The classroom was not in a formal setting, but in an open marketplace within the public temple area. It could be along a path, or under an olive or fig tree, where travelers could stop and participate in the discussions between the rabbi and his disciples.⁸⁹⁹ When men decided to sit and listen, the women would then have to take the children aside, but they could not be part of the conversation. So when Jesus called children to himself, he was also inviting their mothers, implying that they were eligible to hear His word. It was another break from the cultural norm. What the rabbis taught was memorized by his disciples; they had no note pads or scrolls; they did not take notes or carry text books. All their learning was immediately put to memory and then discussed the many subjects as a group.



895. Bauder, “Disciple, Follow, Imitate, After.” 1:480-81.

896. Muller, “Apostle.” 1:126-27, 135-36.

897. Keller, “Jesus the teacher.” 21, with reference to Mishnah, *Negaim* 8:2; Babylon Talmud, *Pasabim* 36a.

898. Keller, “Jesus the teacher.” 22, with reference to Babylonian Talmud, *Erubin* 73a.

899. Keller, “Jesus the teacher.” 22, with reference to Babylonian Talmud, *Berakoth* 4:16; Jerusalem Talmud, *Berakoth* II. 5c.

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

The Lord of the Harvest is none other than God the Father. It is Jesus who sows the good seed⁹⁰⁰ and an angel that will be the harvester. Jesus has been given the authority by God the Father to give blessings to His children and to execute judgment upon those who have rejected Him.

10.01.11.Q1 What is the mystery of John the Baptist?

The mystery of John the Baptist is, “What happened to his body?” Where was he buried? The traditions are interesting and, admittedly, of no theological value. But these are interesting as the Middle East is full of traditions.

1. One tradition says that he was buried in Samaria. However, moving his body from the Machaerus to Samaria would have taken three days, when the custom was that a body be buried the same day of death. The transport of the body was possible, but highly unlikely. Furthermore, why in Samaria? No orthodox Jew ever wanted to be buried in Samaria, and no Jew would have permitted a friend or relative to be buried there as well.
2. Another tradition says that only John’s body was buried in Samaria, but his head was taken further northeast to Damascus where it was placed in the Church of St. John the Baptist – later known as the Mosque of John the Baptist.
3. But another tradition claims that the Russian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem has his head.

Finally, some scholars have suggested that this act of beheading John was too violent for the times. History, however, suggests that it was typical of ancient monarchs. Three examples are as follows:

1. The fifth century B.C. Greek historian Herodotus recorded the demand made by Amestris, the wife of King Xerxes, at his birthday festival. She demanded that the wife of Masistes die, as she was incredibly jealous of her. Xerxes put her to death.⁹⁰¹

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

901. Herodotus, *Histories* 9.108-112. *Histories* was written about 460 to 420 B.C.

2. In another case, in 53 B.C. the Parthian King Orodes enjoyed both a victorious battle of Karrha and the marriage of his son Pacorus. In the festive celebration, an actor brought on stage the half-wasted head of King Crassus, who lost the battle.⁹⁰²

3. Finally, Rome was no less violent and savage. Emperors Nero and Caligula both had men tortured for the entertainment of guests at various feasts. Caligula had swordsmen demonstrate their skills of beheading prisoners and Nero burned Christians at night to illuminate his court.

The great work of John the Baptizer was over. Just as Samuel had centuries earlier presented and consecrated King David, so the last prophet presented and consecrated the Greater King. John was a beloved son and so was Jesus. Just as John was rejected and died a martyr, so would Jesus. No one knows what happened to the prophet who came as Elijah. The proverbial “bottom line” is that the true location of his grave is known only to God.

10.01.11.Q2 What political and military ramifications resulted from the divorce actions of Herod Antipas?

Not only did God send an incredible punishment upon Herod Antipas, but everyone recognized it. Josephus recorded a summary of the marriage of Antipas to the daughter of the Nabataean king Aretas, and the divorce that followed several years later (after he fell in love with Herodias). Since there were already some conflicting issues between Herod Antipas and Aretas, the divorce was the deciding factor for Aretas to go to war. Josephus wrote the following:

About this time Aretas (the Nabataean king of Arabia, Petra) and Herod (Antipas) had a quarrel on the account following: Herod the tetrarch had married the daughter of Aretas (a Nabataean king), and had lived with her a great while. But once he was in Rome he lodged with Herod (Philip), who was his brother indeed, but not by the same mother, for this Herod was the son of the high priest Simon's daughter. However, he fell in love with Herodias, the last Herod's wife, who was the daughter of Aristobulus their brother, and the sister of Agrippa the Great. This man ventured to talk to her about marriage between them, which she accepted, an agreement was made for her to change her habitation and come to him as soon as he should return from Rome. One article of this marriage also was this, that he should divorce Aretas's daughter . . .

Accordingly Herod sent his wife away, as thinking she had not perceived anything. Now she had sent a good while before to Machaerus (Fortress), which was subject to

902. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 1:431.

her father, and so all things necessary for her journey were made ready for her by the general of Aretas's army. And by that means she soon came to Arabia under the conduct of the several generals who carried her from one to another successively. And soon she came to her father and told him of Herod's intentions. So Aretas made this the first occasion of his enmity between him and Herod who had also some quarrel about the limits (of their land) at the country of Gamalitis. So they raised armies on both sides and prepared for war, and sent their generals to fight instead of themselves. And when they had joined battle, all Herod's army was destroyed by the treachery of some fugitives, though they were of the tetrarchy of Philip (who) joined with Aretas's army.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.5.1 (109-114)⁹⁰³

The Machaerus Fortress was located east of the Dead Sea, mid-way between Jerusalem and the nomadic Bedouins and Nabataeans of the Upper Arabian Desert that is commonly known today as the Kingdom of Jordan. Pliny suggests that the fortress offered Herod a first line of defense of any possible invasion from the east.⁹⁰⁴

Some critics have stated that since the account by Josephus is somewhat different than the gospels, there is an obvious conflict. However, Josephus, as he often does, presents details that would have been otherwise lost in history. His comments do not oppose the gospel narratives, but compliment them. The gospel writers wrote from a religious perspective while Josephus wrote from a social and political perspective.⁹⁰⁵

When the Nabataean King Aretas prepared for war against Herod Antipas, Aretas was surprised to find that some disgruntled fugitives from Philip the Tetrarch (Herod's half-brother) wanted to help him fight Antipas. This reflects the deep hostility that existed between the half-brothers of the Herodian family.⁹⁰⁶ When the battle was over, King Aretas soundly defeated the army of Herod Antipas. Josephus recorded the event as a divine indictment:

Now, some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God and that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John that was called the Baptist; for Herod slew him, who was a good man.

903. See Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.05.02 below for additional information on this narrative. Parenthesis mine.

904. Pliny, *Natural History* 5.16; Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 1:347.

905. Webb, "Jesus' Baptism by John." 107.

906. Each son had a different mother.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.5.2 (116)

The defeat caused a great stir in Rome, as the Romans had no tolerance for military losses. Consequently, Herod Antipas eventually lost his throne and was exiled to Lugdunum in Gaul, not far from the Spanish frontier. He and Herodias died in obscurity and dishonor.⁹⁰⁷

10.01.12.Q1 Is there a “wilderness” near Bethsaida (Mk. 6:31)?

Some English translations associate the word “wilderness” or “desert” with this small town of Bethsaida. The difficulty is that Bethsaida was located along the northern edge of the Sea of Galilee, far from any wilderness or desert. The Greek word in Mark 6:31 that describes it is *eremos* (2048), an adjective signifying a *remote, lonely, and unpopulated*.⁹⁰⁸ At times the word “wilderness” is translated as “desert,” but this term was not always a reference to climate, but lack of population. A wilderness can also be a very solitary area as were some regions near Bethsaida. Bethsaida was definitely not a desert area, but a village in an unpopulated area.

The town was referred to as the “house of fishing” by Josephus⁹⁰⁹ although it could also imply hunting with the use of a snare.⁹¹⁰ The town was known for its beauty and became known as Bethsaida Julias, in honor of Caesar’s daughter. Scholars believe it was located within the territory controlled by Herod Philip on the eastern side of the Jordan River, upstream from where the river flows into the Sea of Galilee.⁹¹¹

10.01.23.Q1 Why did Jesus go to the regions of Tyre and Sidon and later to the Decapolis cities (Mt. 15:22-28; Mk. 7:24-26)?

By this time, Jesus made His second withdrawal into Gentile areas, and He did this for these reasons:

1. By this time His popularity was exploding while confrontations were also intensifying. There was no longer a place in Judaea or Galilee where He and the disciples could enjoy some privacy.

907. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 230.

908. Vine, “Wilderness.” *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:676.

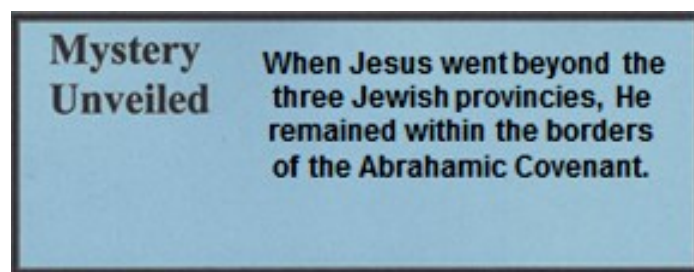
909. Josephus, *Wars* 3.3.5.

910. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 464 n1.

911. Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.2.1.

2. Another reason is that these regions lay within original covenant promised to Abraham.
3. While Tyre and Sidon were considered Gentile cities, they had a significant Jewish population as well.
4. However, the main reason Jesus went to Tyre and Sidon was probably because of an event that occurred more than seven centuries earlier.⁹¹² One noted Israeli scholar who studied ancient highways and military campaigns, identified the route used by Tiglath-Pileser III in his conquest of the Upper Galilee region (730s B.C.).⁹¹³ This Assyrian king brought unimaginable suffering, death, and destruction to Phoenicia and Israel – especially to the tribal areas of Zebulun and Naphtali. His lived up to the horrible reputation among the ancients, that no people group was crueller to their enemies than were the Assyrians. When Jesus went to the regions of Tyre and Sidon, He brought fulfillment to Isaiah’s prophecy as He retraced the route of Tiglath-Pileser III and, by contrast, brought life and healing to both Jews and Gentiles.⁹¹⁴

While Jesus was interested in bringing salvation to the Gentiles, He was first going to fulfill the promise that Abraham would be a blessing to all the people of the world (Gen. 12:3). This blessing would begin with all the Gentiles and Jews who lived within the Promised Land (Gen. 17:8). Therefore, Jesus traveled beyond the borders of the three Jewish provinces of Galilee, Perea, and Judea and into the lands promised to Abraham. He did not, however, travel beyond the borders of the Abrahamic Covenant.



“The region of Tyre and Sidon.” There is no record that Jesus went into the cities, but to the regions. Specifically where He traveled in these areas is unknown, although the roads He walked on retrace the military march of Tiglath-Pileser III of ages past.⁹¹⁵ But what is known, is that

912. See 03.02.03 and 03.02.04.

913. This writer is grateful to his professor, the late Dr. Anson Rainey, who passionately translated various ancient texts in various languages in order to better understand the Bible in its context.

914 Franz. “Jesus at Hazor.” <http://www.lifeandland.org/2010/10/jesus-at-hazor/> Retrieved October 5, 2015.

Jewish people lived throughout the Roman Empire, including Tyre, Sidon, and the Decapolis cities.

Josephus provided a lengthy description of this region indicating that it covered a vast expanse between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River north of the Sea of Galilee.⁹¹⁶ It was there that Jesus again demonstrated His healing power and taught the principles of the Kingdom of God – the concept that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob desires to rule in the hearts of all men. These Gentile people were of Canaanite descent and worshiped a number of deities, including Ashtaroth, Baal, Beelzebub, the chief god of Tyre, and Eshmun (or Eshmoun), the Phoenician god of healing who was considered to be the “holy prince” of Sidon. Their forefathers practiced child sacrifice and often led the Israelites into sin. Now the God of the Israelites was among them, teaching them the principles of the Kingdom of God with power and glory.

11.02.21.Q1 Why did Jesus use spit and mud to heal the blind man in John 9:1-12?⁹¹⁷

Scholars have pondered this question for centuries.⁹¹⁸ In ancient times, eyes were sometimes healed with the application of a cream or salve; other times with spit and mud. Could it be possible that Jesus purposefully mimicked existing methods? Admittedly, nearly all evangelical scholars would demand a negative answer to this question. Furthermore, why would He have done so? He already demonstrated so many healing miracles where other so-called healers failed. To make the possible answers more challenging to uncover, the healing of a blind man in Mark 8:22-26 (10.01.28) is the only recorded miracle that was performed in two stages. In that case, Jesus placed spittle on his eyes, but not mud.

After considerable research, a possible answer remains to be a little more than an educated guess. The use of spit and mud was clearly out of the ordinary routine of miracles that Jesus performed, and there may have been more to it than to simply demonstrate His Messianic calling and divine authority. The religious leaders were nearly petrified at this miracle and, as if to add insult to injury upon Pharisaic legalism, this healing was not performed in a private home or environment, but in a public forum where it received maximum attention. As stated previously, Jesus did not

915 Franz. “Jesus at Hazor.” <http://www.lifeandland.org/2010/10/jesus-at-hazor/> Retrieved October 5, 2015. See also the video 05.05.03.V “The Strategic and Economic Significance of Capernaum.”

916. Josephus, *Wars* 3.3.1.

917. See comments by Rabbi John Fischer in 10.01.28.V where he discusses two unique healing methods of blind men including the event of John 9:1-12.

918. This writer does not have a firm answer, but has found other ancient writings in which the mud and water were said to have healed blindness. For whatever reason is given, it was Jesus who performed the true healing.

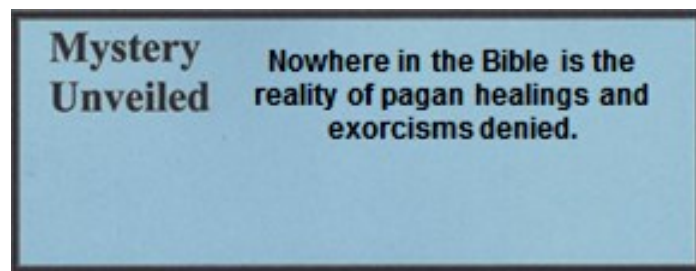
come to be a Healer of human bodies, but to be a Healer of souls. Miracles, with Jesus, were only a means to a higher end; credentials to enforce the reception of spiritual truth.

The Greeks, Romans, and other people groups used spit and mud because there was a widespread applied faith in its healing potency. Yet no records have been uncovered that verify a miraculous healing by this common ritual (except by those who claimed to be healers). Some scholars believe that the ancients thought of it as a cure for eye diseases, but not blindness.⁹¹⁹ However, the Roman writer Suetonius [below], in a discussion of Vespasian, said that the emperor used spittle to restore the sight to a blind man.

Vespasian as yet lacked prestige and a certain divinity, so to speak, since he was an unexpected and still new-made emperor; but these were also given to him. A man of the people who was blind and another who was lame came to him together as he sat on the tribunal, begging for the help for their disorders, which Serapis had promised in a dream; for the god declared that Vespasian would restore the eyes, if he would spit upon them, and give strength to the leg, if he would condescend to touch it with his heel. Though he had hardly any faith that this could possibly succeed and, therefore, shrank even before making the attempt, he was at last prevailed upon by his friends and tried both things in public before a large crowd; and with success.

Suetonius, *The Deified Vespasian* 7:69-121

It is noteworthy that Suetonius stated that the miracle was before a large crowd. Clearly Vespasian was seen as a god; especially since he claimed to be one and those who argued against it put their lives in danger. However, common sense argues against this miraculous claim. If the emperor was so successful in healing others, why didn't thousands come to him for a healing as they did to Jesus?



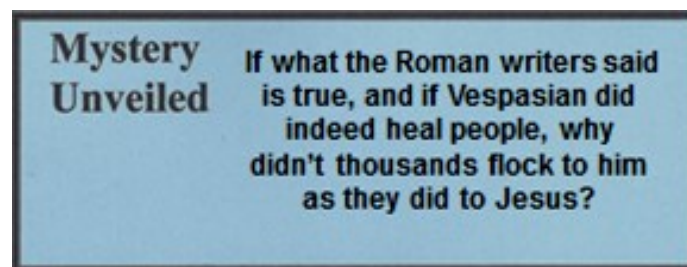
Tacitus also has an account of Vespasian performing a healing, but it could be the same as reported by Suetonius. It was not uncommon that one historian's book was based, in part, on the

919. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 599.

work of another writer.⁹²⁰ Tacitus said that a blind person in Alexandria asked Vespasian for a healing remedy, prayer, and to sprinkle his cheeks and the balls of his eyes with saliva.⁹²¹ He wrote of an event when Vespasian visited Alexandria and two men approached him. One was blind and the other had a diseased hand, but both claimed that their god sent them to the monarch. Vespasian initially refused. But the blind man persisted to ask that his eyes be “moistened with spittle,” and the crippled man asked him to step on his diseased hand. Vespasian finally gave in and did as was requested of him, and

“The hand immediately recovered its power; the blind man saw once more. Both facts are attested to this day, when falsehood can bring no reward, by those who were present on the occasion.”

Tacitus, *Histories* 4:81



Both were supposedly healed immediately. Yet how interesting it is that Tacitus made a comment about possible individuals who might think the report at being false. (Jesus never said anything like that.) His comment clearly suggests that it is really false. Nonetheless, it is it was about this time that Jesus apparently used a method and custom common of His day.⁹²²

Concerning another account from the first century, Aulus Persius Flaccus (34-62) was a Roman author of satires and poetry. He wrote of a woman and said,

She takes the babe from the cradle, and with her middle finger moistens its forehead and lips with spittle to keep away the evil eye.

Persius, *Satire* 2:32-33

920. An example is Josephus who said that some of his information on Herod the Great came from the writings of John of Damascus, who was Herod's historian.

921. Tacitus, *History* 4:81.

922. Barclay, "John." 2:42.

Pliny the Elder (23-79) was a scholar, lawyer, soldier, and authored an encyclopedia of natural history that filled 37 books. His work remained unchallenged for nearly fourteen centuries but is now obviously rejected by modern science. His work gives insight into first century Roman life.⁹²³ Among his countless comments, he said,

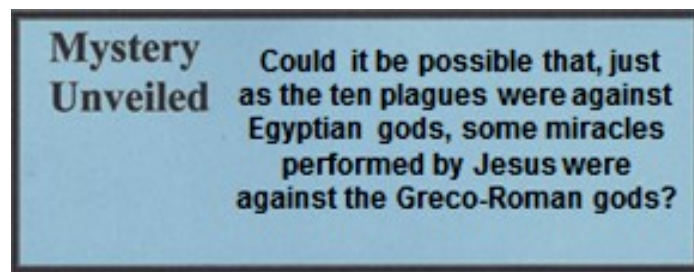
We are to believe that by continually anointing each morning with fasting saliva, inflammations of the eyes are prevented.

Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 18:7

While these pagan accounts are obviously mythical, whether there was a healing is hardly the point, because many believed it had actually occurred. Nowhere in the Bible is the reality of pagan healings and exorcisms denied. When Jesus came to heal, He did so by His divine power that was in sharp contrast to pagan formulas and rituals. Furthermore, Jesus healed some who were blind from birth, indicating that their illness was not a temporary medical condition from which they could have naturally recovered.

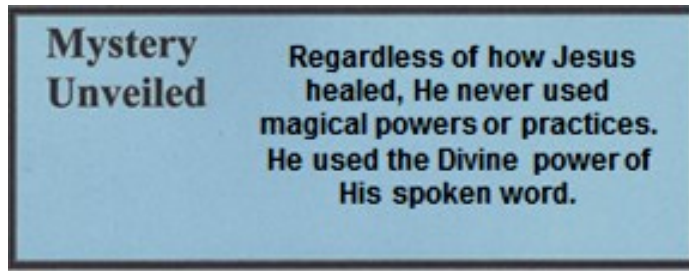
1. An opinion of this writer is that Jesus *might have* healed the man with spit and mud because others claimed to have done the same with a similar method, but Jesus actually healed where others failed. A thought worthy of consideration is this: just as the ten plagues by Moses were against the gods of Egypt, could it be possible that some of the miracles performed by Jesus were against the Greco-Roman gods?

Jesus lived in a Jewish community with pagan Greek influences. He not only needed to prove to orthodox Jews who He was, but also to the Hellenized Jews who accepted many Greek ideologies.



2. Another opinion is that the use of mud reflects upon the creation of Adam in the Garden of Eden, and Jesus symbolically recreated the man's vision so he could see his Creator. But that fails to sufficiently answer "why"?

923. http://www.pbs.org/empires/romans/empire/pliny_elder.html. Retrieved December 7, 2013.



3. However, a popular book, *Tobit* may give a clue to this method of healing. The apocryphal book may best be described as a novel within the culture of the second century B.C. It reflects folklore, sound moral teaching, and is a romantic story in which, at one point, the angel Raphael tells Tobias to apply the gall of the fish to the blind eyes of his father Tobit. The segment of the story is as follows:

Raphael said, “I know, Tobias, that your father will open his eyes. You therefore must anoint his eyes with gall; and when they smart he will rub them, and will cause the white films to fall away, and he will see you.”

Then Anna ran to meet them and embraced her son, and said to him, “I have seen you, my child; now I am ready to die.” And they both wept. Tobit started toward the door and stumbled. But his son ran to him and took hold of his father and he sprinkled the gall upon his father’s eyes, saying, “Be of good cheer father.” And when his eyes began to smart he rubbed them, and the white films scaled off from the corners of his eyes. Then he saw his son and embraced him, and he wept and said, “Blessed art thou, O God, and blessed are all your holy angels ...”

Tobit 11:7-14⁹²⁴

All ancient people groups believed in healing by divine intervention.⁹²⁵ It is well known that healers applied some type of ointment to the eyes of the blind. While Jesus at times simply touched the eyes of the blind, quite possibly here He mimicked the narrative in *Tobit*, simply to demonstrate that He truly was the Healer as opposed to others who attempted similar feats. But with this divine revelation the disciples, too, had their eyes of understanding opened. The healing power of Jesus was superior to the healing attempts of the best medicine man or magician of the day.

924. The book of Tobit is part of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Bible, but is not in the Protestant Bible. Generally, it is classified as an apocryphal book by Protestant and Messianic Jewish scholars.

925. Atheists were all but unknown, and frequently mocked for their stupidity.

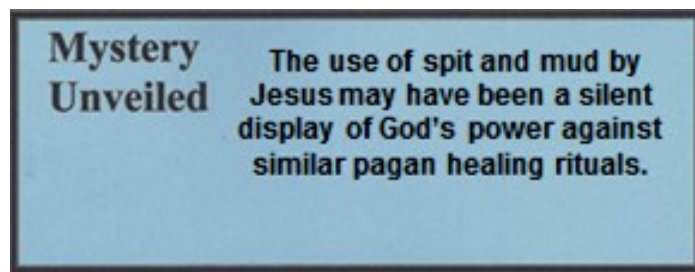
In another case, an inscription was found at the ruins of the temple of Asclepius on the island in the Tiber River in Rome. It is believed to have originated in A.D. 138 and has a reference to the healing of a blind soldier attributed, in part, to “eye salve.”

To the blind soldier Valerius (to whom)⁹²⁶ Aprus the god commanded by an oracle to come and take the blood of a white rooster, to mix it with honey and eye salve, and to spread it on his eyes for three days. And he recovered his sight and came and presented an offering of thanksgiving to the god.

MEB / from *SIG* no. 1173⁹²⁷

Did the ancient eye salve really heal the blind soldier? The fact that he was a soldier, obviously, indicates that at one point he had excellent vision, yet no reason for his temporary blindness is given. If, in fact, there really was a soldier by the name of Valerius, in all probability his sight was restored in spite of the medical brew.

Historians have long said that many emperors and other monarchs claimed to be gods in order to tighten their fearful control on the general population. Stories were created in which they were said to have been born of a virgin or performed various miracles. As previously stated, if Vespasian indeed had the power to perform miracles, it is questionable as to why he did not perform more of them and why thousands of people did not follow and worship him as they did Jesus.



There are some distinct differences between ancient rulers, priests, and the ministry of Jesus. They are as follows:

1. Ruling monarchs were proud, arrogant, and usually cared little for the common people. Jesus, on the other hand, loved everyone, was humble and demonstrated genuine care with compassion.

926. Clarification mine.

927. Cited by Boring, Berger, and Colpe, eds. *Hellenistic Commentary to the New Testament*. 284.

2. While the pagans claimed to have healed only a few people, Jesus literally healed hundreds if not thousands. The pagans had no witnesses, whereas Jesus had multitudes of witnesses.
3. As previously stated, claims of divinity and healings were used by rulers to solidify their power and control, while the demonstrations of healings by Jesus, along with His message, pointed people to the kingdom of God. Rulers demanded everyone recognize them as divine, whereas Jesus, by His actions, permitted observers to conclude whether He was divine.
4. Possibly more important, the use of mud and spittle to make some eye salve was probably a silent attack against the pagans who used a similar method. Jesus quietly confronted the gods of the Greeks, Romans, and Hellenized Jews. He had untold numbers of witnesses who received healings or saw someone who received a healing. The pagans had only myths and a few testimonials of healings, that even they did not believe were true. In essence, He demonstrated His power over the demonic powers in a manner similar to that which God used when He sent the plagues upon Egypt fifteen centuries earlier. At that time, the plagues represented various Egyptian gods; this time Jesus demonstrated who He was.
5. Pagan healers wanted as much public exposure as possible, while Jesus often told people not to tell others and avoided maximum public exposure.

The healing of eyes with saliva was a known remedy, even among the Jews. The Jerusalem Talmud *Sorah* 16,4) records the story of a Rabbi Meir and a woman famous for her ability to heal sick eyes with her saliva.⁹²⁸ Ironically, those who carefully listened and observed Jesus recognized His attributes, while the leading Pharisees and Sadducees remained spiritually blind.⁹²⁹ In agreement with the Pharisees, a Jewish writer a few centuries later gave instructions in the Talmud on how *not* to heal a blind person with spit and mud.⁹³⁰ Obviously his directives were a subtle attack against Jesus.

Many theologians have suggested that since God created man from dirt in the Garden of Eden, Jesus used spit and mud to recreate the blind man's eyes.⁹³¹ When the first Adam opened his

928. Cited by Tsvi Sadan, "He Spat on the Ground and made Clay with the Saliva" (Part 3) *Israel Today*, Oct. 2013. No. 171. 14.

929. Major, Manson, and Wright, *The Mission and Message of Jesus*. 813.

930. Jerusalem Talmud, *Shabbat* 108-120.

931. Zondervan's *New International Version Archaeological Study Bible*. (2005 ed.). 1706.

eyes, he saw his Creator Jesus; when the blind man opened his eyes he saw his Healer Jesus. Regardless of the reason or method of healing Jesus used, it was obvious to the observing audience that His power and authority could have only come from God. Finally, the reason for the two-step healing of a blind man is discussed in 10.01.28.Q1.

12.03.01.Q1 What “Messianic problems” did the Jewish leaders have with Jesus?⁹³²

The Jews had some serious difficulties with Jesus, primarily because He broke nearly every one of their sacred preconceived ideas of who the Messiah would be. But even among the Jews themselves, rabbis had different and conflicting opinions about Him, because, in their minds, there were obvious conflicts in Scripture concerning the coming of the messiah. Most of their paradoxical problems centered on the words of the highly esteemed prophet Isaiah. Had Isaiah’s life not been so profound and so many of his prophecies fulfilled, his words would easily have been dismissed.⁹³³ However, both Jesus and Isaiah provided the fuel for endless debates. Note the following difficulties, and some would say “oxymorons,” with which they were grappling.

Students today who are challenged by biblical difficulties (see Table 5) are not alone. For centuries Jews scholars and rabbis could not reconcile various messianic prophecies that clearly opposed each other. These prophetic controversies became known as “Messianic Problems.” It was not until the death and resurrection of Jesus, that these issues were clarified. Below are some of the major issues that were discussed, even during the ministry days of Jesus.

Video Insert >

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

932. See also 02.03.09 “Messianic Expectations”; 05.04.02.Q1 “What were the Jewish expectations of the Messiah?” and Appendix 25: “False Prophets, Rebels, Significant Events, and Rebellions that Impacted the First Century Jewish World”; 15.03.11.Q1 “What did Jesus say that caused the Sanhedrin to condemn Him?”

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

Messianic Problems

1. The Messiah will be humble and of honor

Humble: Isaiah 11:1-2

- ¹ **Then a shoot will grow from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots will bear fruit.**⁹³⁴
- ² **The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him —
a Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
a Spirit of counsel and strength,
a Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.**

Honored: Isaiah 53:12

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

and was counted among the rebels;
yet He bore the sin of many
and interceded for the rebels.**⁹³⁵

2. The Messiah is both man and God.

Man: Genesis 3:15

- ¹⁵ **I will put hostility between you and the woman,
and between your seed and her seed.
He will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel.**

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

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

God: Isaiah 9:6

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

and the government will be on His shoulders.

He will be named

Wonderful Counselor,

Mighty God,

Eternal Father,

Prince of Peace.

(Note: Wonderful Counselor = Holy Spirit; Mighty God = God the Father;
Prince of Peace = Jesus)⁹³⁶

3. The Messiah is both king and priest.⁹³⁷

King: 2 Sam. 7:12,16

**¹² When your time comes and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up after you
your descendant, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom ...**

**¹⁶ Your house and kingdom will endure before Me forever, and your throne will be
established forever.”**⁹³⁸

Priest: Ps. 110:4⁹³⁹

**⁴ The Lord has sworn an oath and will not take it back: “Forever, You are a priest
like Melchizedek.”**⁹⁴⁰

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

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

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

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

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

4. The Messiah is both the Sacrificer and the Sacrifice

Sacrificer: Isa. 50:6

**⁶ I gave My back to those who beat Me,
and My cheeks to those who tore out My beard.
I did not hide My face from scorn and spitting.⁹⁴¹**

Sacrifice: Isa. 53:7

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

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

Stumbling stone: Isaiah 8:14

**¹⁴ He will be a sanctuary; but for the two houses of Israel, He will be a stone to
stumble over and a rock to trip over, and a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of
Jerusalem.⁹⁴²**

Cornerstone: Isaiah 28:16

**¹⁶ Therefore the Lord God said: “Look, I have laid a stone in Zion, a tested stone,
a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; the one who believes will be
unshakable.”⁹⁴³**

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

941. See Heb. 7:27b.

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

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

understood them, as well as their preconceived ideas of the messiah.

13.03.07.Q1 Was Jesus familiar with non-biblical literary sources?

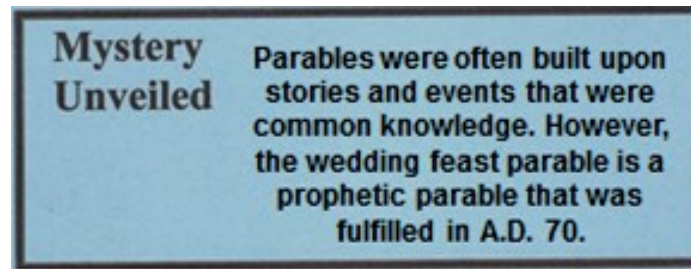
To the modern reader, the answer might be an affirmative – yes. However, Jesus lived in an oral tradition culture where stories were handed down from generation to generation. Within such a culture, great care is taken to insure that the historical accounts are transmitted accurately – a skill and tradition that has been lost in today’s modern Western culture. Therefore, when Jesus referred to an account that may have been written in the book of *Tobit*, He probably was familiar with it by way of oral tradition. At this time, writing materials were extremely expensive and difficult to acquire. So rabbis had to memorize great volumes of Scriptures and extra-biblical books.⁹⁴⁴

Jesus was typical of orthodox rabbis of His period. They all taught the same basic truth and only in a few instances did Jesus introduce new elements into His sermons. Of course, the most dramatic of these elements was the eventual proclamation of Messiahship. Modern students at times conclude, since Jesus did not lie, that every story or parable Jesus told was an actual historical event. But as a Master Teacher, He would four sources to illustrate a point:

1. Historical events
2. Word plays on a legend known to everyone
3. Stories to teach a lesson
4. Reflections on an Old Testament story

All orthodox rabbis used these elements in their instructional lessons. An example is found in 2 Samuel 12:1-4 where Nathan told King David the famous parable of a rich man who had many sheep but took the lamb of the poor man. The account was so real to life that David was ready to kill the rich man, only to learn that the prophet spoke of David himself. Likewise, rabbis as well as Jesus also used story parables to touch the hearts of men. To create a story that presented a truth never meant that the story was a historical event.

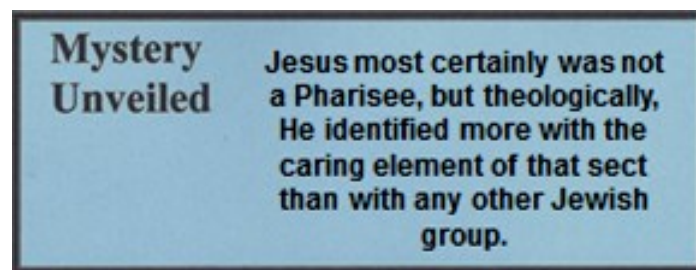
944. This dedication to study and memorize might explain why today, the Jewish people who comprise only one-half of one percent, have attained an outstanding twenty-two percent of the Nobel Peace Prizes.



13.04.06.Q1 How close was Jesus to being a Pharisee, or, how close were the Pharisees to being followers of Jesus (Mt. 23:2-3)?

In light of the context of this chapter, this seems to be an inappropriate question. Throughout church history the Pharisees have all been painted with the wide brush of corruption and hypocrisy. As was mentioned previously, there were many good and righteous Pharisees who loved their people as much as they loved God. The leading Pharisees who held the reins of power and wealth in Jerusalem were the ones who constantly confronted Jesus and plotted His death (although were hidden at the time of His crucifixion).

Most people identified themselves with the Pharisees. If they were not a member of the sect, they attempted to follow their instructions of life. There were four levels of Pharisees.⁹⁴⁵ On the lowest entry level, slaves and women were permitted to enter.⁹⁴⁶ The highest and fourth level was the elite aristocratic Pharisaic leaders, whom Jesus humiliated before the lower class Pharisees as well as the common people. The Pharisees influenced the common people more than any other since they controlled the instruction in the local synagogue. Most were truly interested in the spiritual welfare of their people. Jesus was not a member, but theologically He identified far more with the caring element of this sect than with any other.



Finally, for those readers who believe that Jesus and the Pharisees were always polar opposites, notice the following examples of “togetherness” of Jesus, early Christians, and the common

945. See 02.01.14.Q1.

946. Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 112.

Pharisees:

1. In Luke 13:31 the Pharisees warned Jesus that Herod Antipas wanted to kill Him
2. In Matthew 23:2-3 Jesus said that whatever the Pharisees teach, they should do.
3. Gamaliel argued in defense of Peter and the apostles in the book of Acts.
4. Furthermore, it was the Pharisees who protested to the high priest when James was martyred
5. In Acts 21, many who were devout to the Torah (meaning Pharisees) became His followers.

13.04.06.Q2 In Matthew 23:9-10, why did Jesus say, “Do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ or be called ‘teacher?’”

In various discussions the comment was made that Jesus was either a prophet or like one. To be called a prophet was the highest honor one could give to any Jew. But Jesus was also referred to as “rabbi” meaning “teacher” or “my master,” and did not rebuke those who called him by this unofficial title. Obviously, He did not have a problem with anyone using titles in reference to Him. In fact, failure to give respect or proper courtesies was a supreme insult more than it is today. A cultural element that must be considered is that honor and respect were considered as virtues synonymous with servanthood. But the comment about fathers and teachers was made because these religious leaders loved to be addressed by impressive titles that stroked their egos. Would Jesus have broken all cultural and biblical rules concerning respect of others? Hardly!

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13.04.06.V1 *The Southern Steps of the Temple*. Dr. Paul Wright discusses the importance of the southern steps of the temple and its popularity as a teaching site for rabbis in Matthew 23. Click here if Internet connection is available.

Questions On The Passion Week And Resurrection

12.04.08.Q1 What were the 12 reasons the Jewish leadership planned the death of Jesus?

There were many reasons why the Sadducees and leading Pharisees wanted Jesus removed from the national spotlight. And there would be three more after Jesus entered Jerusalem.⁹⁴⁷

1. He claimed to be the Son of God and have divine authority such as the right to forgive sin.
2. He failed to be the messiah they were expecting. The nationalistic Galilean Jews who did not accept Him were expecting a political-messiah who would overthrow the Romans. The Judean Jews who did not accept Him, including the leading Pharisees and Sadducees of Jerusalem, desired to keep the status quo with Roman occupation. They would not have accepted the political-messiah if they felt that he would be a threat to their lucrative religious businesses and positions.
3. Jesus “was human.” The Messiah, according to Daniel 7:13, would be *like* a man, and to the Jews this meant someone who would *not* be human, but in some mystical way, be superhuman. This individual would be expected to restore Israel to its glory days when it was an international superpower under King David. While Jesus did not fit this picture, thousands of common Jews did accept Him as their Messiah while the religious leaders rejected Him.
4. He held the Written Law in superior position to the Oral Law, which was directly opposite to the position held by the leading Pharisees.
5. The Jewish leaders had created laws to circumvent biblical commands, and thereby justify their own selfishness and greed. Jesus challenged their commands as well as their cold hearts when they should have demonstrated mercy and justice for everyone, especially for the poor.
6. When they challenged Jesus in public, He made them look foolish by exposing the weakness of their argument or lack of knowledge.
7. Neither Jesus nor His disciples attended one of the recognized theological schools of Jerusalem. In fact, Jesus came from Nazareth, a disgusting town in the eyes of the aristocrats. The religious elite were far too proud to consider that mere fishermen

⁹⁴⁷. See 13.01.04.

disciples of Jesus could possibly be ordained of God to do anything worthwhile, much less be participants in miracles of healing and teach them anything about God.

8. Jesus was born of a virgin. Religious leaders said that was an impossibility and that He was born out of wedlock and, therefore, a sinner.

9. He ignored some of their purity laws when He associated with sinners, including some of the most despised people in the community.

10. Jesus healed on the Sabbath. There were numerous prohibitions for the Sabbath and healing violated one or more of these oral laws. The term *Sabbath* means *rest*⁹⁴⁸ but healing was redefined to mean *work*.

11. Jesus was said to cast out demons with the power of Beelzebub, the prince of demons, meaning Satan.⁹⁴⁹

12. Jesus was accused of blasphemy for no less than seven reasons.⁹⁵⁰

As stated previously, the upper echelon of the scribes, aristocratic Pharisees, and all of the Sadducees now functioned well together to protect their wealth and religious status. All were involved in an event of political-religious corruption during the days of Herod the Great according to Josephus, especially the Pharisees. For example, the daughter of Herod Antipas, Salome,⁹⁵¹ made accusations against another woman in the royal court and accused her of “subsidizing the Pharisees” to oppose the king.⁹⁵² The most corrupt of political figures in Rome would hardly be a match for various members of the Herodian dynasty, as John the Baptist had previously experienced. Now these religious leaders were cooperating with the Romans to rid themselves of Jesus.

The Jews carefully used the political environment to their advantage. They had rebelled against the Romans numerous times since 63 B.C. Yet they were good friends with their Roman overlords and they did not want to risk the loss of their status or comfortable lifestyles. They knew the political relationship between Pilate and Rome was strained to a breaking point. They knew Pilate attempted to please Caesar in every possible manner and believed that another Jewish revolt could possibly result in his loss of office. So they took advantage of Pilate’s

948. Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.1.1.

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

950. For a listing, see 15.03.08.Q1 “What were the reasons the Jewish leaders accused Jesus of blasphemy?”

951. This is the Salome who requested the head of John the Baptist.

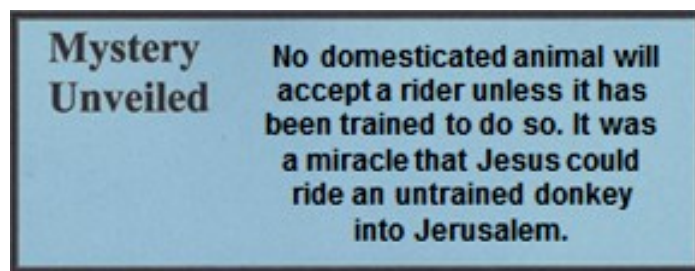
952. Josephus, *Wars* 1.29.2; Neusner, “Josephus and Pharisees.” 279.

predicament and used it to remove their “problem.” Therefore, Pilate was forced to appease them even though he strongly felt that Jesus was innocent of all charges. While this political issue was more of a Roman issue than a Jewish one, obviously the Sadducees used it to manipulate Pilate.

13.01.02.Q1 Why did Jesus need to ride a donkey that was *not* trained to accept a rider (Mt. 21:4-7; Mk. 11:4-7; Lk. 19:29-31; Jn. 12:14-16)?

To have ridden a trained beast of burden would have meant that Jesus was on a “used” or “second hand” animal. It is a fundamental rule of worship that all that is ever given or used to honor God is to be pure and holy, *never* having been used for anything else previously. Animals used for religious service, likewise, had to be pure, holy, and never used previously.⁹⁵³ Therefore, Jesus *had* to ride a colt that was never ridden. Another example of this purity law is the brand new tomb in which Jesus was laid – it had not even become anyone’s family tomb.

The phrase, “**on which no one has ever sat**” is significant for another reason: To sit on a donkey is to ride it, and this was another miracle as Jesus demonstrated He had power and dominion over nature. Anyone who mounts a donkey, horse, or any other animal for the first time will be thrown off because all domesticated animals need to be trained to accept a rider. For an untrained donkey to accept a rider, especially when she had her young foal, was definitely miraculous. What Jesus did was clearly against all laws of nature.



13.01.02.Q2 How is the apparent conflict of the number of donkeys explained (Mt. 21:4-7; Mk. 11:4-7; Lk. 19:29-31; Jn. 12:14-16)?

Matthew, who wrote to a Jewish audience, made it a point to report that when Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem He was fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9. He also said that Jesus told His disciples to bring *them* (Mt. 21:2) and restated the plurality in the following verse when He said our Lord needs *them*, obviously meaning both the donkey and her colt.⁹⁵⁴ Matthew

⁹⁵³. Num. 19:2; Deut. 21:3; Isa. 6:7.

⁹⁵⁴. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commmentary*. 62.

perhaps recorded the presence of the colt, as it was too young to be taken from the mother. This would emphasize the uniqueness of Jesus riding upon it. Mark and Luke reported only one donkey, which was the focus of each writer.

In this scene, the issue of “Was it one or two?” reappears. In another passage is the issue of whether there were one or two blind men by Jericho, one or two Jerichos (12.04.05.Q1), or one or two demoniacs on the eastern shore by Gadara (08.06.03.Q4). If there were two, then obviously there had to be one. But if the focus of discussion is on one, then the second person, place, or thing is out of the discussion – mentioned only that it existed.

The imagery of a donkey continued to be a challenge for the Jewish people. A passage in the Talmud recorded similar imagery with an interesting prophetic twist of the messiah riding a white horse. Note the phrase “**if they are meritorious**” (below) reflects the common thinking of the day that the messiah will come only after the Jews cleanse themselves and live pure and holy lives. Jesus came because it is impossible for humanity to present itself pure and holy before God; hence, He paid the price of sin with His life.

It is written, “Behold your king comes to you, lowly and riding on a donkey” (Zech. 9:9). If they are meritorious, he will come with the clouds of heaven; if not, lowly and riding upon a donkey. King Shapur⁹⁵⁵ said to Samuel, “You maintain that the Messiah will come upon a donkey: I will rather send him a white horse of mine.”

Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 98a

The Talmud reflects the common thinking that the Jewish people wanted a Messiah who would give them political freedom as reflected by the comment of the white horse – a victorious military animal. This opinion continued centuries later when the Talmud was written. In contrast, notice the powerful symbolism of His entry:

1. Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey,
2. Huge crowds greeted Him.
3. They placed hundreds, if not thousands, of palm and tree branches (Jn. 12:13; Mk. 11:8) as well as their garments (Mt. 21:6; Mk. 11:7; Lk. 19:36) on the road before Him.
4. They shouted praises of Him (Mt. 21:9; Mk. 11:9-10; Lk. 19:38).

955. A Jewish king outside of Judea who struggled against the Romans.

It is understandable that the religious leaders were nearly paranoid. No wonder they came to Jesus and asked Him to calm the crowd (Lk. 19:39-40; Jn. 12:19). It was a most unusual request in light of the many times they criticized Him.

While Matthew's focus was to report the fulfillment of biblical prophecy to a Jewish audience who knew the Old Testament prophecies, Mark and Luke wrote to Gentile audiences who had little or no knowledge of Hebrew prophecies. Therefore, the second and third evangelists would not have reported this information. They did, however, report that the donkey had never been ridden and the animal was completely submissive to Jesus. Everyone understood this was against all laws of nature; clearly a miracle!

13.02.03.Q1 If the Pharisees planned His death, why did they not pursue their plan?

The missing Pharisees were not there! Contrary to popular opinions today, although the leading Pharisees frequently plotted to kill Jesus, others attempted to save Him. Significant to the biblical narrative is a point that is frequently overlooked. Notice, that from this time forward, the Pharisees are no longer mentioned as having any role in the prosecution and execution of Jesus. It is important to underscore the point that not all Pharisees were the extreme legalists who attempted to kill Jesus. If so, why would some have warned Jesus that Herod Antipas wanted to kill Him (Lk. 13:31)? Why would Rabbi Gamaliel have taken a personal risk to save the lives of Peter and the apostles (Acts 5:34ff.)? In fact, many writings outside of Scripture, quoted in this text, were written by devoted Pharisees who pursued God within the framework of the knowledge they had. It has wrongly been assumed that since the leading Pharisee plotted to kill Him, *all of them* were active in His execution. Josephus clearly indicates the Pharisees avoided severe punishments and executions (see below).

A case in point was recorded by Josephus concerning a man by the name of Eleazar, who was "of ill temper and delighting in seditious practices."⁹⁵⁶ In the discussion of Eleazar's punishment for his transgressions, which were considered extremely serious, the Pharisees leaned on the side of mercy.

So the Pharisees made answer that he deserved stripes and bonds; but that it did not seem right to punish reproaches with death; and indeed the Pharisees, even upon other occasions are not apt to be severe in punishments.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.10.6 (294b)

⁹⁵⁶. Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.10.5.

The Pharisees, for the most part, were strongly opposed to being *personally* involved in any death sentence. Therefore, in light of the words of Josephus, it must be concluded that the Pharisee elite must have been extremely corrupt and out of their Pharisaic norm that they would repeatedly plot the murder of Jesus. As previously stated, when the Sadducees seized Jesus, the Pharisees are no longer mentioned in Scripture. They still hated Him and wanted to see Him dead, but in their religious legalism they felt that if they did not have an active part in the crucifixion, they remained innocent. So they handed their dirty work over to the Sadducees, who were more than willing to present a mock trial and hand Him over to the Romans.

Conflicts within the Pharisaic judicial system: While the term “Pharisees” covers a multitude of religious sects, the two leading schools of theology were the House of Hillel and the House of Shammai. Those of Hillel focused on compassion, kindness, and forgiveness while those of Shammai focused on harshness and legalism. This is highlighted in the following passage of the Babylonian Talmud.

If someone stole a beam and built it into a house—

The School of Shammai say, “Let him tear down the whole house and return the beam to its owner.”

And the School of Hillel say, “The owner has a claim only for the value of the beam alone, on account of the good order of those who repent.”

Babylonian Talmud, *Gittin* 18b⁹⁵⁷

The entire conflict between the two schools became so intense that it caused division and conflict in the Jewish judicial system. Notice the following warning.

Abbaye said, “The caution against splintering into deviant groups applies only in the case of two courts of law, such as one deciding according to the views of Beit (meaning *House of*) Shammai and one according to the views of Beit Hillel, but two courts of law in separate cities would not be subject to this limitation.” Rava challenged this, “But were not the Shammaites and the Hillelites like two courts of law [and they differed freely from each other in the same locale]?” Said Rava, “The caution applies in the case of one court in the same city, with half the judges deciding according to the Beit Shammai and the other half according to the Beit Hillel.”

Babylonian Talmud, *Yebamoth* 14a⁹⁵⁸

957 Cited by Neusner. *The Talmud of Babylonia: An American Translation*. Vol XVIIIIB: Gittin. 93.

958. Cited by Boker. *The Talmud: Selected Writings*. 134-35; Bracketed insert by Boker; Definition in parenthesis mine.

Furthermore, the Mishnah has numerous situations where the application of the Mosaic Law or Oral Law by these opposing schools led to intense arguments. There can be no question that some, if not all, of the legalistic questions presented to Jesus were from the Shammaite branch of the Pharisees. If there were any Pharisees before Pilate demanding the crucifixion of Jesus, it would have been those of this school.

13.05.02.Q1 Did the Jews believe in winning the Gentiles to God?

Yes. There is evidence that they did and some scholars believe Jewish evangelism to the Gentiles began after the Maccabean Revolt. Jewish leaders were criticized by Jesus for making their new converts agents of Satan (Mt. 23:15). Had evangelism disappeared from Judaism, then Jesus would not have criticized them on this issue. On the other hand, while some sought to win Gentiles to the faith, John sought to bring Jews to righteousness (see commentary on Mt. 23:15).

The statement, **“You travel over land and sea to make one proselyte,”** illustrates the point that not only did the Pharisees attempt to win Gentiles to their faith, but also *God-fearers*,⁹⁵⁹ Gentiles who worshiped the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. A *proselyte* (Greek: *proselutos*) was someone who made the conversion to Judaism and accepted all of the ceremonial laws, rules and regulations of the faith.⁹⁶⁰ By definition, a *proselyte* is *someone who has approached or is drawn near*.⁹⁶¹ It is a term applied to anyone who makes a religious conversion to any faith.

As has been previously stated, within Judaism there were many religious sects. Some went to great efforts to win Gentiles to Judaism, while others believed that was a wasted effort. Yet the evangelistic efforts did produce some interesting results. But clearly, Jesus was born in a day of Jewish evangelism.⁹⁶² Note the following:

1. Some scholars believe the Jews in Rome had such an evangelistic fever that the authorities expelled them from the city in 139 B.C.
2. Josephus indicated that the men of Damascus in the first century B.C. became gravely concerned because their wives became “addicted to the Jewish religion.”⁹⁶³

959. Another reference to *God-fearers* is found in Acts 17:4 that refers to the devout Greeks of Thessalonica.

960. The Noahide Commandments were and continue to be, in the opinion of orthodox Jews, divine laws that Gentiles need to obey to obtain favor with God if they did not want to convert to Judaism. See Appendix 17 for more information.

961. Barclay, “Matthew.” 2:290.

962. See also Dugas, “The Reaction of the Hellenistic World to Judaism.” 67-73.

963. Josephus, *Wars* 2.20.2.

3. A Roman nobleman by the name of Aquilla not only converted to Judaism, but became a student in the rabbinical academies of Shemaiah and Abtalion.⁹⁶⁴

4. Jewish writings attest to the fact that Pharisaic leaders prior to Herod the Great were descendants of proselytes.⁹⁶⁵ This was a problem for some as they believed only those with “proper” a genealogical history could become teachers.

5. The Babylonian Talmud mentions many converts in the city of Mahoza in Babylon.⁹⁶⁶

6. Another example of this evangelistic effort recorded by Josephus is of two Jewish men who lived outside Israel and convinced some rather important individuals to accept the Jewish faith. The account occurs several years after Jesus, when Jerusalem suffered greatly from a severe famine, possibly the same famine mentioned in Acts 11:28-30. At that time, Queen Helena of Abiabene responded to the need by providing grain to the city to feed the poor, all because two Jewish evangelists reached into the royal courts, where “Helena, queen of Abiabene, and her son Izates, changed their course of life and embraced the Jewish custom.”⁹⁶⁷ Josephus wrote the following account on this matter:

Now, during the time Izates abode at Charax-Spasini, a certain Jewish merchant, whose name was Ananias, got among women that belonged to the king, and taught them to worship God according to the Jewish religion. He, moreover, by their means, became known to Izates: and persuaded him, in like manner, to embrace that religion.....it also happened that Helena, about that same time, was instructed by a certain other Jew.

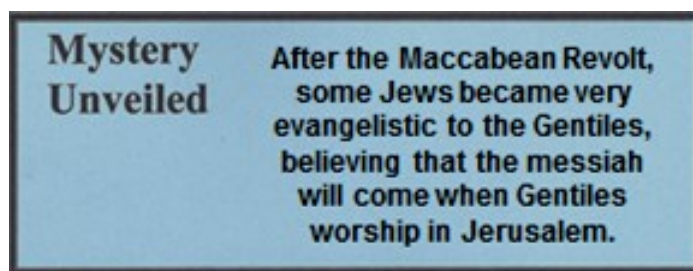
Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.2.3 (34, 35b)

964. Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 127.

965. Babylonian Talmud, *Gittin* 57b and *Yoma* 71b(Soncino, ed.).

966. Babylonian Talmud, *Kiddushin* 73a (Soncino, ed.).

967. Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.2.1, see also 20.2.1-4 for other conversions. Abiabene is in the area of modern Iraq and Iran where, according to tradition, the Assyrians relocated a number of the so-called ten lost tribes centuries earlier. Evidently some of the Jews of Kurdistan converted to the Christian faith, including the King, Monobaz, whose mother was Queen Helena. http://www.jcjr.org/kyn_article_view.php?aid=20 Retrieved December 13, 2012.



The descendants of some proselytes became very influential in the Jewish world. For example, Shemaiah and Abtalion, two highly respected teachers of the mid-first century B.C. were sons of proselytes.⁹⁶⁸ Another teacher was Rabbi Johanan who lived in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus, was the son of the Hauranite.⁹⁶⁹ Clearly the evangelistic efforts were effective, but Jesus said that the Pharisees made them just as bad as they themselves were.

It should be noted that even though some Pharisees were very evangelistic, Jesus apparently did not give any credit for this. In fact, He condemned it saying that the converts were as bad as they were (Mt. 23:15). One Jewish scholar said this zeal for evangelism was based upon Isaiah 2:20 and Jeremiah 16:18 and peaked in the Hasmonean period (c 165 BC – 37 BC).⁹⁷⁰ Therefore, by the time Jesus spoke on the issue, the Pharisees had a long history of evangelism that in this case, was considered to be “bad fruit.”

At the end of the Maccabean Revolt the Jews realized they had a new era of freedom and many became evangelistic because they believed this would hasten the coming of the messiah. They read prophecies such as Jeremiah 16:19 and concluded that the nations would soon come to Jerusalem to worship God. These early evangelists evidently were highly effective, as the Babylonian Talmud states that because of the growing number of converts to Judaism, many of the leaders in Jerusalem prior to Herod the Great were proselytes.⁹⁷¹ There were many conversions in Babylon as well.⁹⁷²

14.01.04.Q1 What is the Jerusalem Syndrome?

The Jerusalem syndrome is the distorted state of mind acquired by a few individuals, who, when

968. Babylonian Talmud, *Yoma* 71b; *Gittin* 57b.

969. Mishnah, *Sukkah* 2.7.

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

971. Babylonian Talmud, *Gittin* 57b; Babylonian Talmud, *Yoma* 71b.

972. Babylonian Talmud, *Kidduboth* 73a.

in Israel, believe they are a reincarnation of a biblical figure such as Jesus Christ, John the Baptist, or the Virgin Mary. Several of them came to Jerusalem, especially in the late 1990s, thinking they would usher in the new millennium. Psychologists have labeled their mental illness as the “Jerusalem Syndrome.”⁹⁷³ These super-spiritual and deceived people are generally harmless, although a few have attempted to destroy the Dome of the Rock so the new temple can be constructed. However, the label applies only to individuals when they are in Israel, and not elsewhere.

14.01.04.Q2 What was the difference between Jewish and Roman scourges?

The Jewish scourging consisted of thirty-nine stripes such as those that Paul received.⁹⁷⁴ The scourging whip the Jews used consisted of three long, thin, leather strips that had knots and the victim received thirteen lashes with it. When Jesus said, **“they will hand you over to sanhedrins, and you will be flogged,”** He probably had this in mind, which correlates with Revelation 6:9-11. However, it was not the same flogging instrument used by the Romans who cared little for Jewish laws and did not consider any limitations. The leather strips of Roman scourges had wooden splinters, lead balls, and metal hooks that tore the flesh of prisoners who would be crucified.⁹⁷⁵ Jewish law forbade such torture. Many early Gentile Christians and Messianic Jews endured various forms of Roman persecution, including the scourge and crucifixion.

The Romans had two levels of scourging.⁹⁷⁶

1. The *fustigation* was the lightest scourging and was usually ordered by a local magistrate as a warning against potential future crimes.⁹⁷⁷
2. The *flagella* was the severest form of scourging and was generally associated with another form of punishment such as crucifixion.⁹⁷⁸

973. Gorenberg, “Warning! Millennium Ahead!” 14.

974. For the scourging Paul received, see 2 Cor. 11:23-24. For the Jewish tradition, see Josephus, *Antiquities* 4.8.21.

975. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 2:277.

976. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*. 27-28, 40.

977. It should be noted that Peter and Paul were punished by beatings by the Sanhedrin in Acts 41-21 and 5:17-40, and then released. As stated previously, while the Jews had beatings and scourgings, these were not as severe as what was practiced by the Romans. However, there is a case where the daughter of a priest was accused of adultery and therefore, burned to death after a trial before a Jewish tribunal. It is believed this occurred shortly before A.D. 70. See Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*. 40-41.

978. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 387.

14.01.07.Q1 Who or what do the five foolish virgins of Matthew 25:1-13 represent?⁹⁷⁹

One of the best known symbols of the Bible is a woman who represents a religious entity. Two righteous “woman” symbols are

1. Israel who is the “wife of Jehovah.”
2. Church who is the “bride of Christ.”

Two demonic “woman” symbols are

1. The great harlot (Rev. 17)
2. Jezebel (Rev. 2:20)

Throughout church history, the imagery of the wise and foolish virgins has been problematic since virgins are considered synonymous with the pure unspotted bride of Christ. Consequently, there are multiple interpretations of this parable. At issue, the foolish virgins have a most unhappy ending; a stark contrast to the bright eternal future the bride of Christ is to enjoy.

The primary problem is that five virgins lacked sufficient oil. But the focus is not the lamp, torch, or even the bride since she is not mentioned. In first century, oil was such a frequently used commodity that no one would ever forget it, much less five young bridesmaids. This was a matter of willful neglect.⁹⁸⁰ The primary message is, as with the parable of the talents preceding it, that the believer should always be ready for the return of Christ (v. 44). People are held responsible for their actions. The foolish virgins (bridesmaids) allowed their lamps to run out of oil, but believers ought not to be lacking in their responsibilities to the faith. Those who had sufficient oil symbolize believers with a pure heart and righteous standing with our Lord. They will be admitted into Christ’s millennial kingdom. Those who had insufficient oil symbolize the unprepared or unsaved individuals who desired to enter, but were excluded. The essential point is that Jesus will return for a bride who is faithful, obedient, and watching for His return.

The parable of the virgins has a parallel in rabbinic literature. From the Talmud is this story of those who are wise and others who are foolish.

Rabbi Yochanan, the son of Zakkai, told a parable: “It is like a king who invited his

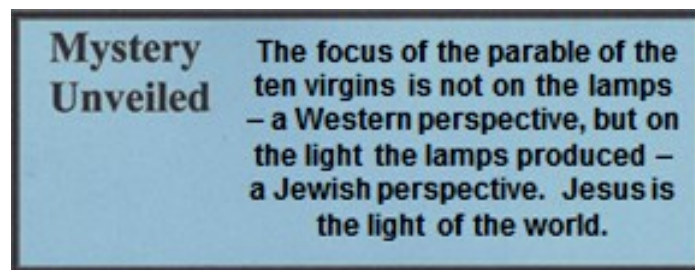
979. See video 09.03.04.V1 by Messianic Rabbi John Fischer who discusses first century wedding imagery, and video 14.02.05.V2 by Professor John Metzger who discusses the Passover, the Last Supper and its implications to the Messianic Banquet.

980. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 789; Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 2:450-51.

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

Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbath* 153a

In this Talmudic parable, as with the parable told by Jesus, the servants, or attendants, had to be prepared to meet their king. Jesus again used a story motif that everyone knew. In the phrase, **“Virgins who took their lamps,”** the word “lamp” is *not* the small clay vessel that fits snugly in the palm of the hand. Rather, it was probably a wooden stem with a cloth at one end, soaked in olive oil, and was essentially a torch.⁹⁸¹ The typical household clay lamp would blow out at the slightest breeze and, therefore, would not have been used outside. However, the focus is not on the lamp, which is a Western perspective, but on the light it produced, which is a Jewish perspective. Jesus is the light of the world – and that is the key point.



However, an explanation of the first century Jewish wedding is necessary, especially since the imagery of a wedding was used several times in the teachings of Jesus. Weddings and the feasts that followed were major social events. It was at a wedding where Jesus performed His first miracle, turning water into wine. It is through wedding imagery that He spoke of the future. Therefore, to understand the messianic prophecies, it is important to understand the cultural setting of a first century Jewish wedding. In this case, there can be little question that the wedding banquet narrative gives a hint of the coming messianic banquet in which Jesus will be the central figure and His saints will be the guests.

In the first century, marriages were frequently, but not always, arranged by the fathers. It was common for a girl to be betrothed as early as twelve and a boy at age thirteen. However, a

981. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*. 1:131; Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 349-50.

young man had the option of selecting any bride of his own choosing. The formality began when he came to her home and presented a formal, legally binding contract known as a *katuvah*.⁹⁸² This covenant stated the marriage proposal and the sum of money the groom would pay to the bride's parents to have her as his wife. The purpose was to insure the understanding that she was not free but was precious and costly to him. If the terms of the contract were accepted by both families, it was signed at the synagogue and the couple celebrated by sharing a cup of wine together. Only then was the covenant sealed and they were considered betrothed.

The couple was considered husband and wife, although the marriage was not consummated until after the wedding. If either one died prior to the wedding, the surviving partner while still a virgin, would be known as a widow or widower. If the betrothal was broken other than by death, the bride would receive a divorce decree. If she were found to be unfaithful, technically, she could be put to death, but the practice was seldom instituted. During this time she would wear a veil whenever in public to affirm to any other possible suitors that she had made a commitment. When Joseph learned of Mary's pregnancy, his consideration of a quiet divorce reflected his sense of mercy and kindness, when, in fact, he could have legally demanded her death, as well as a refund of his money paid at the signing of the marriage contract.

The wedding was generally held in the following year. During this time, the bride prepared herself for her new home, whereas the bridegroom would build the house itself. Frequently, this structure was simply another room added onto the existing home of the father of the bridegroom. The young bridegroom constructed it, no doubt with the help of family and friends. His father then declared its completion. It was during the one-year period of Mary's betrothal that Jesus was born.

As the house was being finished, the preparation of the wedding feast was in process. The feast would last between three and seven days, depending on the financial resources of the families. Weddings always required a large quantity of food and wine. Middle Eastern hospitality in ancient times, as today, demanded that only the best be presented to guests. When everything was completed in detail, the father gave permission to his son to "capture" or "kidnap" his bride. It was a game and, to add to the suspense of the event, the "capture" usually occurred at night.

"All became drowsy and fell asleep." The word *sleep* often suggests death, but not in this case. In this parable the terms *drowsy* and *sleep* simply emphasize that the delay would be for a long period of time.⁹⁸³

"The door was shut." At this point Jesus takes the cultural norm and adds a profound twist.

982. The marital contract is further described in 04.03.03.A and 08.02.01.

983. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 349-50.

When there was a wedding, the door was never shut. The late comer was always invited to join the festivities. But when Jesus said **“the door was shut,”** He captured everyone’s attention. For those in the church who are “left behind,” repentance is not possible after His coming.⁹⁸⁴

This is clearly a statement of rejection imagery,⁹⁸⁵ and the foolish virgins will have no part of the Messianic Banquet.⁹⁸⁶ The wedding feast of this parable depicts the future messianic wedding banquet in heaven⁹⁸⁷ that, some say, will occur during the same period while the earth is experiencing the Great Tribulation. The point of the parable is that every believer has to be fully prepared; fully obedient and committed to Jesus; fully at work for the Kingdom of God. This is not a statement of legalism, but of a lifestyle of dedication to His honor and glory.

As stated previously, there is a constant danger for modern Bible students to read a meaning *into* a parable that was not intended by the gospel writer. In this case, there is no indication whether the foolish virgins were able to obtain oil and, if they did, whether they returned. In this culture, the world rested at sundown and it was impossible to purchase anything at night. In the context of telling a story, however, there is nothing wrong in saying that the foolish virgins went out to buy more oil even if the stores were closed. That is not the theme, but only a minor point that adds color to the narrative. Simply stated, these women had not prepared themselves diligently for the feast.⁹⁸⁸ The message of the parable is that one is to be watchful and prepared for the return of Jesus. The concept of the Messiah as being the bridegroom also appears in 2 Corinthians 11:2. This is a new concept that is not found in any rabbinic literature and, most certainly originated with Jesus. The focus of the narrative is not their marital status, but rather that there were ten of them and their use of oil. The number ten was often used as a convenient round number in illustrations.⁹⁸⁹

There are several similarities between first century weddings and the imagery Jesus used to describe His relationship with those who believed in Him; those whom He called His “bride.” Just as in ancient times, a young man left his home and went to the home of a young woman where he offered her and her father a contract of marriage (*katurvah*), Jesus left His home in heaven, came to earth, the home of humanity, and offered humanity a contract of marriage – the New Testament.

984. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*. 350.

985. See the discussion of rejection imagery at the end of 12.01.02.

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

987. See Isa. 25:6-8; Mt. 8:11; 22:1-14; Lk. 12:37; 14:15-24; 15:23-24; 22:36; Acts 10:41.

988. Cf. Hosea 13:3; Amos 3:2; Nahum 1:7; Jn. 10:14; 2 Tim. 2:19.

989. Ruth 4:2; Lk. 19:13; Josephus, *Wars* 6.9.3; Carson, “Matthew.” 8:512-13.

14.01.12.Q1 Why was Judas *needed* to betray Jesus when everyone so easily recognized Him?⁹⁹⁰

The Sanhedrin had been observing Jesus intently for more than three years. Members of the high court had debated Him and were frequently humiliated before their constituents. They knew all too well what He looked like and certainly did not need anyone to identify Him, even in the dark night. What made the offer of Judas so enticing was that he was willing to fulfill one of the legal demands – they needed an accuser. The irony is that they abandoned so many laws, yet this one they honored. They could bypass some of their own procedural laws, but to sidestep Roman law was a different matter. However, possibly the most important reason Judas was needed was because, under Roman law, Pilate could not send out a Roman cohort to arrest anyone unless...

1. Someone first appeared before a Roman governor to state that a crime was committed that was punishable under Roman law. That someone was Judas.
2. That same person would then serve as the prosecutor's key witness of the crime. By that time Judas had committed suicide, however, the Sadducees had the wheels of injustice in motion to have Jesus crucified.

Judas was very much aware that the Jews had no legal authority to impose capital punishment, so if Jesus was going to die, it would be at the hands of the Romans. His betrayal confirmed by the arresting Roman soldiers would have met the requirements of the law. Caiaphas and the supreme counsel knew the trials would begin in the Jewish court and would end in the Roman court. They had only one opportunity to rid themselves of Jesus and they could not afford any mistakes. To Caiaphas it was most important that the trial and execution be completed as quickly as possible and in secret, before His followers, who previously greeted Him with palm branches, became aware of what was happening.

During festivals the Romans maintained a cohort⁹⁹¹ in the Antonia Fortress to quell any possible civil unrest or capture any Zealot who claimed to be the messiah. But for someone as significant as Jesus, Caiaphas and other Sadducees called upon their own temple guards, in addition to the Roman soldiers. This Roman cohort in the Antonio Fortress was not led by a centurion, but by Chiliarch (Jn. 18:12), who was one of the six tribunes attached to the Tenth Legion.⁹⁹² Hence, his high official position gave the Sanhedrin more clout for an arrest, a speedy trial, conviction,

990. Be sure to see 15.02.06.Q1 "Why would Judas have *wanted* to betray Jesus?"

991. 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. Some scholars believe there was more than a single cohort stationed in Jerusalem on high holy days such as Passover. See Harrison, *A Short Life of Christ*. 199. Historians seem to disagree on the size of cohorts and legions. See comments on the size of cohorts and legions in 08.05.02.

992. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 848.

and execution. It is interesting that no charge was ever spoken against Him at the time of His arrest.

It should be noted that the high priests and Romans were so closely aligned in their control of the Jews that priestly garments for temple worship were secured in the adjacent Antonia Fortress, not in the temple. Josephus commented the following concerning the vestment storage,

... At the command of the Emperor ... they should lay up the long garment and the sacred vestment, which it is customary for nobody but the high priests to wear, in the tower of Antonia, that it might be under the power of the Romans, as it had been formerly.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.1.1 (6)

The significance of the garment storage is that this is clear evidence of the close relationship the Sadducees had with the Romans. So when Judas put his plan into action, it took only moments for the Sadducees to gather some Roman soldiers, and along with the temple security, they went to capture Jesus.

14.01.12.Q2 Why was a conspiracy needed to kill Jesus?

The conspiracy and night trials were needed because Jesus remained extremely popular and both were needed to prevent a riot from breaking out. This is the strongest argument against the common belief that *all* the Jewish people wanted to see Jesus crucified. Only the Jewish leadership wanted Him dead. The crowds wanted Jesus to declare Himself as the political-messiah who would overthrow the Roman Empire and rebuild the historic Davidic Empire.

14.02.03.Q1 On what day did Jesus celebrate the Passover (Lk. 22:7-13)?

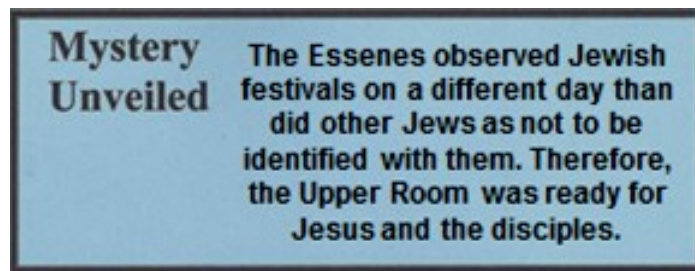
There has been considerable debate among scholars concerning the day that Jesus celebrated the Passover meal with His disciples. As a Jew who was faithful to the law, to have it a day early would be unthinkable. Yet He could not have celebrated on the 14th day of Nissan as prescribed by religious law, because on that day He was to be crucified.

In the western part of Jerusalem was an Essene community and, as not to be identified with the Pharisees and Sadducees, they observed all Jewish feasts on their own calendar, which in this case would have been a day early. Therefore, the upper room was already prepared for Jesus and His disciples and all that was needed was the ritual cleaning before the gathering for the Passover

Seder (Heb. *order*).⁹⁹³ The practices of the Essenes were not revealed until the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered between the years 1947 and 1952.⁹⁹⁴ Scholars have always wondered how Jesus could have observed the Passover a day earlier than other Jews, and the mystery has been resolved.⁹⁹⁵ Jesus did not endorse Essene theology, but this time He did use their calendar.

However, some interesting questions arise, the answers of which may never be unveiled. They are:

1. Since Jesus was an observant Jew who followed the Mosaic Law faithfully, did the disciples ever ask why they were observing Passover a day early?
2. Since the Passover lamb was killed at the temple, did the priests question why they were observing the Passover early? The priests knew the disciples were not Essenes. Or did they accept the Essene practice?
3. Jesus was without question the most observed Person in the land. The religious leaders and Herodians observed His every move. If His lamb was sacrificed a day early in the temple (assuming the Essenes did so), was He seen by those who planned to kill Him?



4. Yet another interesting question remains: Where did the Essene community in West Jerusalem kill their Passover lambs if not in the temple? To complicate the potential answer, the Essenes believed the Sadducean establishment would corrupt their sacrificial lambs. Some scholars believe they may have sacrificed their lambs somewhere off the temple grounds, but that raises even more questions.

Any attempt at clarification is complicated by the fact that there was a variation between Galilean and Judean Passover observances. John's gospel implies that the Last Supper was held the evening prior to the Passover feast while the synoptic gospels indicate that it was celebrated

993. Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor's Manual*. Class 22, page 5.

994. See 02.02.06.

995. Nelesen, *Yeshua; the Promise, the Land, the Messiah*. (Video Tape 2).

at the same time as the traditional Passover.⁹⁹⁶ Furthermore, John states (19:14) that Jesus was condemned by Pilate on the “Day of Preparation of Passover.” If Jesus had celebrated Passover earlier, there clearly would not have been a conflict here, as the “Day of Preparation” would have been the time most other Jews were getting ready to sacrifice their lambs, and Jesus was going to be the sacrificed Lamb of God.⁹⁹⁷

According to Jewish tradition, some weeks had two Sabbaths, with the first of the two being known as the “Day of Preparation.” Some scholars believe this would have made it impossible for Jesus to be crucified on Good Friday, which was the day of Passover, therefore, there had to be some variation of calendar dates.⁹⁹⁸ Other scholars have stated that Jews living in Dispersion observed Passover on Friday while those in Jerusalem observed it on Saturday.⁹⁹⁹ What is known is that the Last Supper was a monumental event, and while some of its historical details are confusing or unknown, the plan of God is most certainly known. All gospels agree that Jesus died on Friday, the fourteenth day of Nissan.

14.02.03.Q2 How authentic is the site of the Upper Room?

This is an interesting topic because scholars are rather certain that the location of the Upper Room has been authenticated although the structure was destroyed centuries ago. A listing of significant events, as recorded by ancient witnesses, is placed in chronological order below. Sub-titles are given for clarity. But even among reliable sources there are at times conflicts: some reports indicate that all of Jerusalem was destroyed in the First Revolt of A.D. 70, while other writings claim to be witnesses of the building that once was the site of the Last Passover.

Post-Ascension of Jesus

It has been suggested that the historical events that transpired where the Upper Room once stood are reflective of the relationship between the Christians of Jewish and Gentile background. Not only did Jesus meet His disciples there for their Passover/Last Supper, but they returned to this room after His ascension to pray until the promised Holy Spirit fell upon them on the Day of Pentecost and where Peter preached his famous sermon of Acts 2.

996. Mt. 26:17; Mk. 14:12; Lk. 22:7; For an excellent study on the various interpretations of this subject, see Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*. London: SCM, 1966, 15-88.

997. See Appendix 6 concerning Old Testament sacrifices and Jesus; Appendix 9 outlines the New Testament plan of salvation as presented in the Old Testament.

998. Tenney, *New Testament Times*. 174.

999. Shepherd, “Are Both the Synoptics and John Correct About the Date of Jesus’ Death?” 123-132.

Scholars consider two possible sites as to where the building once stood.

1. The home of John Mark (minority view)
2. A home on Mount Zion in the western part of Jerusalem (majority view)

This writer agrees with the overwhelming majority view, although some good friends believe otherwise. Visitors to Mount Zion today are informed that it was also the tomb of King David.¹⁰⁰⁰ Some scholars believe that due to the loss of temple records (A.D. 70) and the deaths of key sages (A.D. 135), the precise location of the tomb is unknown.¹⁰⁰¹ Yet shortly after the crucifixion Peter said this concerning the tomb of David:

29 “Brothers, I can confidently speak to you about the patriarch David: He is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

Acts 2:29

However, Peter said “His tomb is with us to this day,” that statement does not necessarily identify location. Obviously, the apostle knew precisely where the tomb was, because it was adjacent to the site of the Last Supper and the Pentecost event.¹⁰⁰² After Pentecost, the Upper Room became the center of the Judeo-Christian synagogue in Jerusalem.¹⁰⁰³ Scholars frequently refer to the first century congregation as a “church,” when, in fact, everyone who attended was Jewish and their worship service was a slightly modified version of the traditional synagogue service. They did not lose their Jewish culture or traditions because they became followers of Yeshua (Jesus).¹⁰⁰⁴ This can be seen in Acts 1:12-13 when the Jewish believers honored the tradition of a “Sabbath’s Day walk” and went to the Upper Room.

Peter’s comment reflects the facts of biblical history, as well as the evil works of Herod the Great. At one time Herod attempted to rob the treasures from the tomb of King David.

1000. Since the Romans destroyed the temple in A.D. 70, the Jews wanted to honor their ancient King David who was born in Bethlehem. So they honored him in Bethlehem because they referred to the village as the “City of David.” Consequently, for centuries it was believed that David and Solomon were buried in the little hamlet town south of Jerusalem. Several ancient writers made reference to this historical error as fact. However, the truth is that King David was buried within the city of Jerusalem according to 1 Kings 2:10.

1001. Schmalz, 20-21.

1002. Schmalz, 21-22.

1003. For more information on a typical upper room, see video 04.07.01.V2.

1004. Mills and Michael, *Messiah and His Hebrew Alphabet*. 7.

According to Josephus, he sent several grave robbers who successfully removed some of its wealth. Upon their return to the tomb, two of the men met sudden death by a flame of fire. The horrific news quickly spread throughout the city and frightened Herod so much that he immediately constructed a monument to honor the deceased King.¹⁰⁰⁵ When Peter referred to King David, he most certainly was thinking of this event and the monument built by Herod.

The first churches, or messianic synagogues, were gatherings in homes and assembly halls. They carried the same Greek name *synagogue* meaning *assembly*, that in Hebrew is *kneset*.¹⁰⁰⁶ In later years, Gentile Christians used the word *ekklesia*, or *ecclesia*, which also means *assembly*, for their place of gathering. Every home was called a *domus ekklesia*, or *church house*.¹⁰⁰⁷ However, some scholars argue that the English word *church* was not accurately derived from *ekklesia*, but from the Greek *kyriake* meaning *belonging to the Lord*.¹⁰⁰⁸ Early Jewish believers did not see themselves as a separate religious movement, but as a part of Judaism. Since the Jewish religion was a legal religion recognized by Rome, the Jewish believers were seen as being within Judaism and they did not always receive the persecution that Gentile believers received.

However, there is today a growing opinion that some synagogues did become messianic congregations – fellowships that followed a worship format similar to traditional synagogues but with the focus of Yeshua (Jesus). Just because Acts 2:46 says the believers “broke bread from house to house,” that does not mean they didn’t meet also as congregations. With such an explosion of believers it is most difficult to think that some synagogues did not change. While there is no existing written evidence of a first century messianic synagogue, scholars debate the archaeological evidence uncovered in Magdala to support the possibility of a first century messianic synagogue at that site (see 08.05.07.D).¹⁰⁰⁹

In the meantime, the Romans always had considerable difficulty understanding Judaism, so Christianity was beyond their comprehension. They could understand a god becoming human because they had similar stories of such in their mythologies. But to have a God become a man, suffer, be crucified, and rise from the dead was beyond their imagination! They could not understand why anyone would want to worship that kind of God.

1005. Josephus, *Antiquities* 16.7.1; 7.15.3. (Don’t you just love an attitude adjustment from God?)

1006. The same word as modern Israel’s legislative body.

1007. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*. 103, 112.

1008. Pixner, “Church of the Apostles Found.” 24.

1009. Pixner, “Church of the Apostles Found.” 24-26; See also “First Century Synagogue Found.” *Israel Today E-Newsletter*. January 15, 2013.

A.D. 66-70 First Revolt

There is no question that the destruction of Jerusalem at Passover during A.D. 70, precisely forty years after the crucifixion of Jesus, was a judgment from the Divine. For more than fifteen centuries, from the time of Moses until Titus, no enemy ever attacked the Jewish people during the celebration of their festivals. The defeat and destruction was understood by Gentile Christians as punishment of the Jewish leaders. The city and temple had been built like a super-fortress by Herod the Great, a paranoid monarch, because he constantly feared Queen Cleopatra and the Egyptians to the south as well as the growing Parthian Empire to the East. The huge stones and massive walls were a profound challenge for the ancient Roman war machines. Amazingly, Titus recognized this and actually gave credit to God for his victory for the ability to destroy the fortified city.¹⁰¹⁰ His profound statement was preserved.

“We have certainly had God for our assistant in this war, and it was none other than God who ejected the Jews out of these fortifications; for what could the hands of men, or any machines do towards overthrowing these towers!”

Titus, quoted by Josephus, *Wars* 6.9.1 (411)

After the Romans left the city in ruins, the Jews rebuilt it. But they still had a passion for a messianic deliverer which, unfortunately, led to another destruction.

Video Insert >

14.02.03.V *The Upper Room as an Early Church*. Dr. Petra Heldt discusses the location of the Upper Room and its possible use as an early church. Click here if Internet connection is available.

A.D. 132-135 Second Revolt¹⁰¹¹

The celebrated Rabbi Akiva (Akiba)¹⁰¹² gave a messianic pretender, Simon bar Kokhba, the name “Son of the Star” and announced to the Jewish world that he was the long awaited messiah. Bar

1010. Titus was not about to miss any gods for his victory. He also traveled north to Caesarea Philippi and offered sacrifices to the god Pan in thankful celebration.

1011. A/k/a Simon bar Kokhba Revolt.

1012. After the destruction of the temple, Rabbi Akiva (A.D. 50-135) was the founder of a great learning center in Jaffa and today is considered to be the father of rabbinic Judaism. He was killed by the Romans for supporting the messianic figure Simon bak Kokhba.

Kokhba then led a rebellion against the Romans in A.D. 132, but the Romans defeated him and his army, destroyed Jerusalem, and renamed the land *Palestina* – a curse word from where the modern name “Palestine” is derived.¹⁰¹³

By this time, the Romans were so exasperated with the Jews that Hadrian evicted all of them, traditional Jews and “Nazarenes” by imperial decree. Bar Kokhba was killed and the Rabbi Akiva’s body was literally butchered and his flesh sold in the Jerusalem market. Hadrian also attempted to eradicate all signs and significant sites (i.e. the crucifixion site) that pertained to the new Jewish sect known as Christianity. Today scholars debate whether the Church of the Apostles survived Hadrian’s destruction. What is known is that so many the Jewish church leaders were killed that the leadership went into the hands of Gentile believers. With new Gentile leadership in the church, Jewish roots, idioms, and customs were soon forgotten. Furthermore, the Gentile leaders believed God permanently destroyed the Jewish state in His eschatological plan and all promises given to Abraham were transferred to the church. This idea became known as “replacement theology,”¹⁰¹⁴ and by the year 324, Church-sponsored anti-Semitism was firmly established. This horrific doctrine formulated how the church would treat Jews for centuries to come – and the treatment was utterly shameful.¹⁰¹⁵

110-180 Hegesippus (A.D. 110-180)

Evidently the Upper Room had a lasting legacy. The historian Hegesippus¹⁰¹⁶ said that prior to the eviction of all Jews from Jerusalem by Emperor Hadrian there had been 15 Hebrew Christian bishops in the Holy City.¹⁰¹⁷ The fellowship that met previously in the Upper Room synagogue became known as the Church of the Apostles,¹⁰¹⁸ although others believe the Upper Room became known as the Holy Zion Church (Latin: *Coenaculum*).

155-235 Cassius Dio Cocceianus (A.D. 155-235)

According to the Roman historian Cassius Dio Cocceianus, the monument built by Herod the Great that honored the tomb of King David survived the destruction of Titus, but collapsed during to the Second Jewish Revolt (A.D. 132-135).¹⁰¹⁹

1013. For further study, see Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*. 4:6; Dio Cassius, *Roman History*. 69:12-14.

1014. See “Replacement Theology” in Appendix 26.

1015. See William Heinrich, *In the Shame of Jesus: The History of Church-Sponsored Anti-Semitism*.

1016. Saint Hegesippus was an early church theologian and historian who wrote against the heresies of the Gnostics and Marcion.

1017. Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 7.

1018. Pixner, “Church of the Apostles Found.” 24-26.

1019. Dio Caccius, *Roman History* 69:14. <http://orion.it.luc.edu/~avandel/jerusalem/sources/cassiusDio-69.htm>
Retrieved November 25, 2012. Cassius Dio Cocceianus (Dio Caccius), in A.D. 222, described how destructive Emperor

Late 3rd Century Eusebius of Caesarea (A.D. 265-340)

The famous early church father Eusebius of Caesarea wrote in his *Demonstratio Evangelica* that the western hill was known as Mount Zion from which the gospel went throughout the world. Undoubtedly, the Upper Room was where the Jerusalem Council met two decades later (Acts 15:1-29; Gal. 2:10). Today the Dominion Abbey of the Greek Orthodox Seminary is upon the Mount Zion as well as the alleged Tomb of David. Eusebius said,

This is the word of the gospel, which through our Lord Jesus Christ and through the apostles went out from Mount Zion and was spread to every nation. It is a fact that it poured forth from Jerusalem and Mount Zion adjacent to it, on which our Savior and Lord had stayed many times and where he taught much doctrine.

Eusebius, *Demonstrations of the Gospel* 265-340¹⁰²⁰

330 Epiphanius (310-403)

Around the year 330, Sanctus Epiphanius Constantiensis, commonly known as Epiphanius,¹⁰²¹ traveled to Jerusalem. He wrote of a small church building in western Jerusalem that survived Hadrian's destruction of Jerusalem as follows,

Hadrian found the city completely leveled to the ground and God's temple treaded down, except for a few houses and the church of God, which was quite small. To it the disciples returned after the Savior's ascension from the Mount of Olives. They went up to the Upper Room, for it had been built there - that is, in the part of the city called Zion, which part was exempted from destruction, as also were some of the dwellings around Zion and seven synagogues, the only ones which existed in Zion, like monks' cells. One of these survived until the time of Bishop Maximus and King Constantine. It was like a tent in a vineyard, to quote the Scripture.

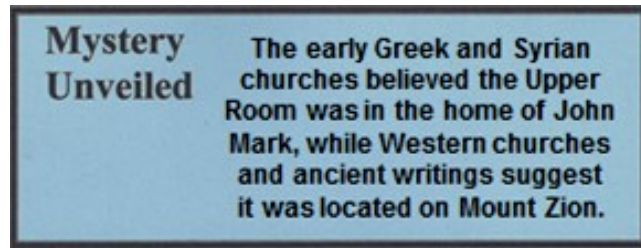
Epiphanius, *De Mensurie et Ponderibus* 14¹⁰²²

Hadrian was toward the Jewish people. The historian said 580,000 men were killed, 985 villages destroyed, and the number who died from famine and disease could not be counted.

1020. Eusebius quoted by Schmalz 22; Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica* 1.4 ; Baldi, *Enchiridion Locorum Sanctorum*. 728, 474.

1021. Epiphanius was a monk in Egypt and Palestine and eventually became the Bishop of Salamis, Cyprus. He was known for being a strong defender of orthodoxy.

1022. Mackowski, *Jerusalem City of Jesus*. 143; Baldi, *Enchiridion Locorum Sanctorum*. 733, 478.



348 Saint Cyril (ca. 313-386)

The status and location of the Upper Room Church continues to be a matter of discussion for scholars. For example, Saint Cyril who, in the year 348, wrote that on the Feast of Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended from heaven “in the Upper Church of the Apostles” in Jerusalem.¹⁰²³ Yet the question lingers as to whether the building survived the destructions of the city. Note the words of the first century historian,

And now the Romans set fire to the extreme parts of the city and burnt them down and entirely demolished the walls.

Josephus, *Wars* 6.9.4 (434b)

However, this phrase may have been literary license to illustrate how massive the destruction was. Scholars know, for example, that not all the perimeter walls of the city were destroyed. The three towers that were built by Herod the Great and a portion of the western city wall were also excluded from the destruction.

Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and temple but should leave as many of the towers standing as were of the greatest eminency; that is Phasaelus, and Hippicus, and Mariamne, and so much of the wall as enclosed the city on the west side This was the end which Jerusalem came to by the madness of those that were for innovations; a city otherwise of great magnificence and of mighty fame among all mankind.

Josephus, *Wars* 7.1.1 (1)

6th Century Madaba Map

However, a major argument for the Mount Zion location is the 6th century Madaba Map that features the Upper Room.¹⁰²⁴ This room was supposedly destroyed in the First Revolt and rebuilt

1023. Baldi, *Enchiridion Locorum Sanctorum*. 730, 475.

1024. The mosaic Madaba Map is in the village of Madaba, located about 20 miles south of Amman, the capital of Jordan. It measures approximately 51 feet (north to south) by 19 feet (east to west) totally about 969 square feet that contained about 1.1 million *tesserae*, which are the small colored mosaic tiles.

facing the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which suggests that the builders were Christian.¹⁰²⁵ However, scholars debate this orientation and who the builders may have been after the First Revolt.¹⁰²⁶ Clearly, the consensus of ancient writers is that the site of the Upper Room was in the western section of Jerusalem – an area also known from other sources to have been occupied by many Essene Jews.

14.02.05.Q1 How was the Passover Seder observed (Lk. 22:17-20)?¹⁰²⁷

The Passover Seder in Jerusalem had to be observed with ten men, although in some other areas, such as Galilee, it was observed with ten people of both genders. The order of the service varied from area to area, but the Seder itself was held in the late evening¹⁰²⁸ or night.¹⁰²⁹ It was the custom of the time for people to eat two meals a day. The first was mid-morning, reckoned to modern time of 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. and the second was late afternoon. The Passover meal had to be observed in the evening, which some sources state was about 4:00 P.M. but most say after sundown.¹⁰³⁰ It was a full meal with a religious ritual, rather than a regular mealtime event.¹⁰³¹ This particular celebration, truly a Passover meal,¹⁰³² observed remembrance of the miracle that God provided for the Israelites when He delivered them from the bondage of Egyptian slavery. As part of the observance a lamb was killed in the temple. When it was offered upon the altar, its blood flowed and some was collected to be taken home and sprinkled on the lintel and doorpost of the Jewish home. A part of the lamb would be offered for sacrifice while the rest of it was wrapped in its skin and taken home where it became a part of the Passover meal.¹⁰³³ When the death angel passed over the homes of the Hebrew children (later called “Jews”) and saw the blood, the life of the eldest child was spared.

1025. See “Madaba Map” in Appendix 26; See also 14.02.03.D and 05.02.03.Z. There is a common opinion that synagogues were built facing the temple. However, archaeological surveys on many of the 200 synagogue ruins reveal that pre-destruction synagogues did not face the temple. Only after the temple was destroyed, were synagogues built facing the Holy City. For further study, see Hachlili, Rachel. “Synagogues: Before and After the Roman Destruction of the Temple.” *Biblical Archaeology Review*. 41:3 (May/June 2015) 30-38, 65.

1026. Zondervan *New International Version Archaeological Study Bible*. (2005 ed.) 1654.

1027. See video comments by messianic scholar Timothy Hegg in 01.01.02.V.

1028. See discussion on “evening” in Appendix 16.

1029. 1 Cor. 11:23; Jn. 13:30; Mk. 14:17; Mt. 26:20.

1030. Ex. 12:8; Mk. 14:17; 1 Cor. 11:23.

1031. Stein, R. *Jesus the Messiah*. 203.

1032. Mt. 26:2, 17-19; Mk. 14:1, 12, 14, 16; Lk. 22:1, 7-8, 13, 15.

1033. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 423-23.

The Passover meal included unleavened bread – bread without yeast. It has three symbolic meanings:

1. It is “unleavened” because when the Israelites left Egypt, they were in such a hurry that there was not time for the bread to rise.
2. The unleavened bread is symbolized as “the bread of affliction” in Psalm 80:5 that they suffered in the days of their slavery.
3. This bread is in sharp contrast to the better food that will be enjoyed at the Messianic banquet.

Jesus was about to be killed and His blood was to be shed for the sins of humanity. Those who would accept His forgiveness and follow His ways would have their lives spared from the bondage of sin and death. In memorial to Him the Passover meal, a/k/a the Last Supper, was probably according to this order of service.¹⁰³⁴

1. A benediction
2. A cup of red wine
3. Hands of all present were ceremonially washed as the host passed the water basin and recited a prayer. It was a time to remember tears and sorrows as well as the crossing of the Red Sea. Passover was a personal event – as if God did that incredible sacrifice for every one present.
4. Bitter herbs dipped in a hot sauce and eaten.
5. A benediction (a blessing, not an ending of a service)
6. A second eating of bitter herbs was a reminder of Egyptian bondage.
7. A second cup of red wine followed by questions and answers that pertained to the original Passover meal.

1034. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 427; Stein, R. *Jesus the Messiah*. 204-05. It is not surprising that scholars may have differences of opinion on how the Passover was celebrated. Even in the first century, there were variations throughout the Mediterranean area. A slightly different *Seder* order of service is presented by Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor's Manual*. Class 22, pages 5-13.

8. Singing the first part of the Hallel (Ps. 113 - 114)¹⁰³⁵

9. A benediction

10. The hands of the host are washed. A sop is made by wrapping a bit of lamb with unleavened bread in bitter herbs and dipping it in sauce. Thereafter, everyone followed in turn. The unleavened bread was a reminder of the haste that was made to leave Egypt, so there was no time for bread to rise.

11. Each person can eat as much as is desired, finishing the meal with a piece of lamb. However, since lamb is not mentioned and this event occurred *before* the regularly scheduled Passover meal, some scholars have suggested that there was no lamb served during the Last Supper.

12. Again the washing of hands

13. The third cup of red wine.

14. Singing the second part of the Hallel (Ps. 115-118) which was the conclusion.

15. The fourth cup of red wine.

During the Passover, four cups of wine were part of the celebration.¹⁰³⁶ The “fruit of the vine” is a Jewish technical term meaning Passover wine that was naturally fermented, not fermented artificially with added sugar or dried fruit. These four cups reflect upon the “I wills” of Exodus 6 and 7, and are as follows:

1. The first cup of wine was known as the Cup of Sanctification, a/k/a the Cup of Separation with Thanksgiving, and is based on Exodus 6:6-7. Jesus, as the host, picked up the first cup and gave the ceremonial blessing over the wine by praying, “Blessed are You, Lord, our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.” After this the disciples partook of their cup of wine and Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me” (Jn. 13:21).

Most likely it was at this time that the four traditional questions were asked by the youngest as to the reason for the celebration. A brief account should be given of the bondage that the Israelites had suffered in Egypt centuries past. This must have had a

1035. For identifying the connections of Jesus with the Hallel (Ps. 114-118), see 04.06.01.

1036. Stahler, “The Four Cups.” 14-16; Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 1:216-18.

powerful impact, as the disciples would realize that Jesus was applying the Passover motif to deliverance from the bondage of sin. Then Judas realized his sin was discovered.¹⁰³⁷

2. The second cup of wine was known as the Cup of Deliverance and Praise, based on Exodus 6:6 (cf Rom. 6:15-18). At the first Passover the Israelites praised God for their deliverance from Egypt. Since then, they were delivered from the Babylonians, Medo-Persians, Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the Greeks, and from numerous other foreign powers. While many suffered, amazingly, there has always been a remnant that survived. No other people group has a parallel history.¹⁰³⁸

3. The third cup of wine is known as the Cup of Redemption, based on Exodus 6:6.¹⁰³⁹ First, the host of the Passover Seder holds up the unleavened bread, known as the *afikomen* and prays, “Blessed are You, Lord, our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.” Jesus then took the unleavened bread, broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying, “This is my body given to you” (Mk. 14:22; Lk. 22:19), and “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you” (Lk. 22:20).¹⁰⁴⁰

The group continued through their Passover meal. He then said, “Do this in remembrance of me.” Believers know this Cup of Redemption as The Communion Cup, because Jesus is their Redemption. The Apostle Paul referred to this cup as “The Cup of Blessings” (1 Cor. 10:10), because of the special blessing that was spoken over it at the end of the Passover meal.¹⁰⁴¹ By the practice of this ordinance, believers are to remember His suffering death and promised return.¹⁰⁴²

In a similar manner when a young girl accepted the marriage proposal and the *katuvah* was signed.¹⁰⁴³ The next cup of wine would be on their wedding day. When a young man proposed marriage to his future bride, he said,

1037. Pixner, *With Jesus in Jerusalem*. 93.

1038. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 1:218-222.

1039. See also Lk. 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; Gal. 4:4-7.

1040. See interesting comments by Messianic scholar Timothy Hegg concerning the third cup in 01.02.01.V.

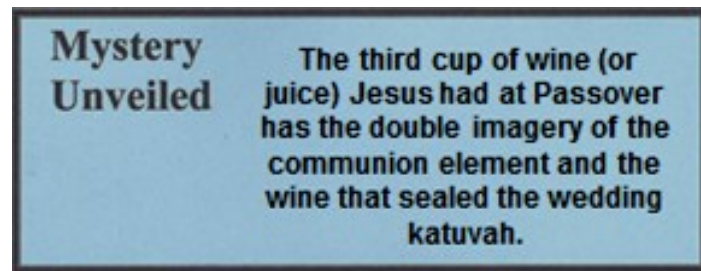
1041. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 827.

1042. Other references that pertain to Holy Communion are Lk. 22:19-20; Mt. 26:26-28; Mk. 14:22-25; Jn. 6:48-58; 1 Cor. 11:23-39.

1043. The marital contract is further described in 04.03.03.A and 08.02.01.

Be thou betrothed to me with this cup of wine.

Mishnah, *Kiddushin* 2.2



4. Finally, the fourth cup of wine is known as the Cup of Acceptance or Cup of Anticipation, a/k/a the Cup of Ultimate Salvation. It is celebrated at the close of the Passover and is close to the Cup of Praise, based on Exodus 6:7. Jesus said specifically that He would not partake of this cup until He and all of His believers are together at the heavenly Messianic Banquet.¹⁰⁴⁴ He told everyone to partake as this was the blood of the covenant which was poured out for many (Mt. 26:27-29; Mk. 14:24).¹⁰⁴⁵ The phrase “poured out” or “shed” is a clear reference to the blood covenant of Exodus 24:4-8 that made God (Yahewh) the God of Israel.¹⁰⁴⁶ This moment must have been stunning for the disciples.

However, the fourth cup of wine has the double meaning of being the cup that will be served at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, when Jesus and His bride celebrate their wedding. In essence, it is an integral part of the katuvah celebration.

The imagery of Passover – the sanctification, the praise, the redemption, and the acceptance or anticipation – is all within communion when properly understood. All four elements are critical to every believer’s life, but are seldom acknowledged at communion because the Jewish roots of the Christian faith is seldom known, even to experienced pastors.

Concerning wine – the ancients had no method for removing the alcohol content of the wine, but they did dilute it with water. According to the Oral Tradition even the poorest man was to have no less than four cups of “mixed” wine.¹⁰⁴⁷ The wine represented the blood of the Passover lamb

1044. See 1 Cor. 15:50-55; 2 Cor. 5:17-21.

1045. Mendenhall, “Covenant.” 1:722.

1046. Guhrt, “Covenant, Guarantee, Mediator.” 1:365-66.

1047. Mishnah, *Pesachim* 10:1-2, 4, 7.

and was the ancient symbol for joy.¹⁰⁴⁸ It should be noted that both “spiked” wine and drunkenness were not tolerated and were highly condemned.¹⁰⁴⁹

The Passover lamb was purchased four days prior to the sacrifice during which time it was tenderly cared for in the home. There it was loved and nurtured, winning the affection of everyone, especially the children. On the fourteenth day of Nisan, a massive slaughter of the Passover Lambs took place inside the temple. It was always painful to see the cute and affectionate lambs get slaughtered, but the object lesson was obvious: The price of sin is always painful and costly.

At the blast of the silver trumpets, the sacrificial lamb was killed by the head of every Jewish family. At all other times the priests slaughtered the sacrifices. A Levitical priest then removed the fat, and burned it. If a bone was broken in this process, the Oral Law demanded that the Levite receive one less than forty stripes, indicating that great care was taken in the punishment/ritual process.¹⁰⁵⁰ During the sacrificial killing, the Levitical choir chanted the Hallel as the congregation repeated the first line of each Psalm after the choir sang it. On the final Psalm (118), verses 25 and 26 were repeated by the congregation.

Its blood was poured out at the foot of the altar. After chanting praises to God, the lamb was taken home to be roasted and consumed as the Passover observation continued in the privacy of a family setting.¹⁰⁵¹ Technically, according to the Jewish calendar, the lamb was killed one day (before sundown) and eaten the next (after sundown).¹⁰⁵² There were so many men coming to the temple to sacrifice their lambs, that Josephus recorded that the temple gates were opened until after midnight to accommodate the crowds.¹⁰⁵³

It is from the observance of this Passover that the church celebrates Christ in a rite known as “Communion” or “Eucharist” (Gk. *give thanks*).¹⁰⁵⁴ There are noticeable parallels between the ancient Passover ritual and the introduction of Communion by Jesus.

1048. Rosen and Rosen, *Christ in the Passover*. 50-51.

1049. “Spiked wine” was wine with added sugar or dried fruit that increased the alcohol content, and was known as “strong drink.” See Appendix 26.

1050. Mishnah, *Pesahim* 7:11.

1051. Rosen and Rosen, *Christ in the Passover*. 46-48.

1052. Bloch, *The Biblical and Historical*. 101. Sunset was deemed to be the end of one day and the beginning of the next day.

1053. Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.2.2.

1054. Stein, R. *Jesus the Messiah*. 205.

The Passover

God remembered His covenant.
 Slavery in Egypt remembered
 Deliverance from Egypt
 Blood of the Passover Lamb
 atoned for sins
 Interpretation of the Passover
 elements
 Call for continued celebration

The Lord's Supper

A new covenant is introduced.
 Freedom of slavery to sin
 Forgiveness of sins (Mt. 26:28)
 The Passover Lamb was symbolic for the
 blood of Jesus that removed sins.¹⁰⁵⁵
 Interpretation of the Lord's Supper elements
 Call for continued celebration

Scholars also debate the influence of a community of Essenes in western Jerusalem near the Essene Gate. Josephus identified its location, which assisted archaeologists in uncovering it, but the historian said little else of it.¹⁰⁵⁶ Most scholars believe that Jesus and the disciples celebrated their Passover in an Essene home. There are several considerations for this opinion:

1. Some believe that, since the Essenes had separated themselves from mainline Judaism by celebrating Passover a day early, Jesus and His disciples made use of such a facility.¹⁰⁵⁷ They had their own community in the western edge of Jerusalem on Mount Zion.
2. There were numerous theological differences and Jesus most certainly would not have been in agreement with the Essenes on many issues.
3. Since the Passover meal was only between Jesus and His disciples, the observance could have been held anywhere.
4. It was most important for Jesus to die on the cross at the same time that Passover lambs were sacrificed in the temple. Therefore, Jesus and His disciples had to have had their Passover lamb early, since it was impossible to observe Passover without a lamb in the Second Temple Period.

There is another debate among scholars as to whether the name of this Essene gate was derived from Essenes residents or from the road leading from the gate to Qumran where a number of

1055. See 1 Cor. 5:7; Jn. 1:29, 36.

1056. Josephus, *Wars* 5.4.2 (145).

1057. Hoffman, "The Bread of Sacrifice." Vol. 2 Part 4.

Essenes lived. Frequently, a gate was named for the distant city to which the road from the gate led. For example: the road from the Damascus Gate led to Damascus and the road from the Jaffa Gate led to the seaport town of Jaffa.¹⁰⁵⁸ However, not all gates have such honors, such as the Dung Gate or the Sheep Gate. In all probability, this gate was named because there were Essenes living in the adjacent area as well as the road that led to the Qumran community by the Dead Sea.

Video Insert >

14.02.05.V *The Last Passover and Possible Connection to the Essene Calendar.* Dr. Paul Wright discusses the “biblical difficulty” of Jesus celebrating the Passover the day *before* most other Jews celebrated it. Did Jesus observe the Passover according to the Essene Calendar? Click here if Internet connection is available.

As previously stated, there were regional variations of the Passover observances. The Mishnah, for example, states that on the 14th day of Nisan the people of Judea worked until noon, while in Galilee there was no work to be done at all.¹⁰⁵⁹ Finally, the early church celebrated Passover (without the lamb) and communion for three centuries, until the practice was decreed to be illegal by Constantine the Great, who was also largely responsible for removing the last traces of Jewishness from Christianity. Until the year 325 the church fathers understood the words of Paul to be taken literally when he said,

Therefore, let us observe the feast, not with old yeast or with the yeast of malice and evil but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

1 Corinthians 5:8

These Passover-observing Christians were called the *Quartodecimians* or *Fourteeners*, by Hellenistic Christians who had no understanding of the significant meaning of Passover in Jews' or Christians' lives.¹⁰⁶⁰ In so doing Paul implied the apostles should maintain the liturgical

1058. Those who oppose the position that Jesus celebrated Passover in the Essene community of western Jerusalem cite that there is no archaeological evidence that the Essenes lived there. However, the Essene lifestyle was such that there would not have been any identifiable differences of a material nature or archaeological evidence. As to the date or location of the Passover, they are resolved that it remains a mystery.

1059. Mishnah, *Pesahim* 4:5.

1060. Garr, *Restoring Our Lost Legacy*. 143-45.

Jewish calendar.¹⁰⁶¹

There are two final thoughts to be discussed. Throughout history whenever the Jews observed the Feast of Passover and recalled their flight from Egypt, they did not use terms such as “our forefathers,” “our ancestors,” or “them.” They used the personal pronoun “us,” and, thereby, identified themselves as the recipients of God’s deliverance. In fact, they personalized the Bible as if it was written specifically for each family. Likewise, Jesus affirmed and continued the personalized element of the Passover/Last Supper Communion celebration.

Not everyone who claimed to be a believer was permitted to participate in the Lord’s Supper, that is, the Communion / Eucharist. It must be noted that Matthew 7:6 (08.04.04) quickly became a significant guidepost for admitting some and prohibiting others from attending the sacred ritual. Church growth was exploding and many false teachers entered various congregations causing 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 the 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* 9:5¹⁰⁶²**

The early church did not observe “Open Communion,” whereby anyone who said they were a believer could participate. Being a Christian was too dangerous to permit any stranger be part of the believer’s circle. 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. While the *Didache* states that all those who participate in Communion should be baptized, the cultural context of the entire passage restricts Communion

1061. Garr, *Restoring Our Lost Legacy*. 155-56.

1062. 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.

to only those who were baptized *and* live an obedient lifestyle.¹⁰⁶³ It has been said that the challenges that the first century church faced immediately after Jesus returned to heaven will be the same immediately before He returns. If so, then church leaders today may need to re-evaluate their open communion policies.

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14.02.05.V2 *Imagery of the Passover and Last Supper in the Messianic Wedding Banquet.* Professor John Metzger discusses the purity of the (L)amb during the Passion Week and the related imagery of the bride and groom to the Messianic Wedding Banquet. Click here if Internet connection is available.

While the theme and basic structure of the Passover Seder (Passover Service) was standardized, there were regional variations. There is no consensus on the format of a first century Passover and, quite possibly, this is because of variations that existed within Judaism. Jewish scholars have cataloged more than 1,600 forms, three basic elements have remained consistent:

1. The bread is unleavened,
2. The bread is striped, and
3. The bread is pierced.

Jesus was symbolized in the bread in that He was sinless (unleavened), He was scourged with a Roman whip (striped), and He was pierced with a Roman sword and nails. Two writers of antiquity preserved valuable details – first Josephus followed by one of the writers of the Mishnah:

In the month of Xanthicus, which is by us called Nissan, and is the beginning of our year on the fourteenth day of the lunar month, when the sun is in Aries (for in this month it was that we were delivered from bondage under the Egyptians), the law ordained that we should every year slay that sacrifice which I before told you we slew when we came out of Egypt, and which was called the Passover; and so do we celebrate this Passover in companies, leaving nothing of what we sacrifice until the following day. The feast of unleavened bread succeeds that of Passover and falls on

1063. Pilch, *The Cultural Dictionary of the Bible*. 94.

the fifteenth day of the month and continues for seven days, wherein they feed on unleavened bread. On every one of which days two bulls are killed and one ram and seven lambs. Now these lambs are entirely burnt beside the kid of the goats, which is added to all the rest, for sins. For it is intended as a feast for the priest on every one of those days. But on the second day of unleavened bread, which is the sixteenth day of the month, they first partake of the fruits of the earth for before that day they do not touch them. And when they supposed it proper to honor God, from whom they obtain this plentiful provision in the first place, they offer the first fruits of their barley, and that in the following manner: They take a handful of the ears and dry them, then beat them small and purge the barley from the bran. They then bring one-tenth deal to the altar to God, they leave the rest for the use of the priest and after this, it is that they may publicly or privately reap their harvest. They also at the participation of the first fruits of the earth, sacrifice a lamb as a burnt offering to God.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 3.10.5 (248-251)

On the eve of Passover, from about the time of the Evening Offering a man must eat nothing until nightfall. Even the poorest in Israel must not eat unless he sits down to table, and they must not give more than four cups of wine to drink, even if it is from the (Pauper's) Dish.

After they have mixed him his first cup, the School of Shammai says: he says the benediction first over the day and then the Benediction over the wine. And the School of Hillel says: he says the Benediction first over the wine and then the Benediction over the day.

When (food) is brought before him he eats it seasoned with lettuce, until he is come to the breaking of bread; they bring before him unleavened bread and lettuce and the haroseth (the mixture of nuts, fruit, and vinegar), although haroseth is not a religious obligation. Rabbi Eliezer ben Rabbi Zadok says: It is a religious obligation. And in the holy city, they used to bring before him the body of the Passover-offering.

They then mix him the second cup. And here the son asks his father (and if the son has not enough understanding his father instructs him how to ask), "Why is the night different from other nights? For on other nights we eat seasoned food once, but this night twice; on other nights, we eat leavened or unleavened bread, but on this night all is unleavened; on other nights we eat flesh roast, stewed, or cooked, but this night all is roast." And according to the understanding of the son his father

instructs him. He begins with the disgrace and ends with the glory; and he expounds from a wandering Aramean was my father ... until he finishes the whole section (Deut. 26:5-11).

Rabban Gamaliel used to say; “Whoever had not said (the verses concerning) these three things at Passover has not fulfilled his obligation. And these are they: Passover, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs: ‘Passover’ - because God passed over the houses of our fathers in Egypt; ‘Unleavened bread’ - because our father was redeemed from Egypt; ‘Bitter herbs’ - because the Egyptians embittered the lives of our fathers in Egypt. In every generation a man must so regard himself; as if he came forth himself out of Egypt, for it is written: “And you shall tell your son in that day saying, ‘It is because of that which the Lord did for me when I came forth out of Egypt. Therefore are we bound to give thanks, to praise, to glorify, to honor, to exalt, to extol, and to bless him who did all these wonders for our fathers and for us. He brought us out of bondage to freedom from sorrow to gladness, and from mourning to a festival-day, and from darkness to great light, and from servitude to redemption, so let us say before him the Hallelujah.

How far do they recite (the Hallel, i.e. Ps. 113-118) the School Shammai say: “To a joyful mother of children” (end of Ps. 113). And the School of Hillel says: “To a flintstone into a spring well” (end of Ps. 114).¹⁰⁶⁴ And this concluded with the Ge’ullah (a benediction). Rabbi Tarfon says: “He that redeemed us and our fathers from Egypt and brought us to this night to eat therein unleavened bread and bitter herbs.” But there is no concluding Benediction. Rabbi Akiba adds: “Therefore, O Lord our God and the God of our fathers, bring us in peace to the other set of feasts and festivals which are coming to meet us, while we rejoice in the building - up of your city and are joyful in your worship; and may we eat there of the sacrifices and of the Passover-offerings the wall of your altar and let us praise you for our redemption and for the ransoming of our soul. Blessed are you, O Lord who redeemed Israel.”

After they have mixed for him the third cup he says the Benediction over his meal. (Over) a fourth (cup) he completes the Hallel and says after it the Benediction over song. If he is minded to drink (more) between these cups, he may drink; only between the third and the fourth cups he may not drink.

1064. Today Bibles have the convenience of chapter and verse divisions. Most historical sources credit Stephen Langton (1150-1228) for placing chapter divisions in the Vulgate Bible in the year 1228. Therefore, the ending of these readings was indicated by the quotation.

After the Passover meal they should not disperse to join in revelry.

Mishnah, *Pesahim* 10.1-8¹⁰⁶⁵

It should be noted that both the circumcision and Passover symbolized the covenant God had with the Israelites. The Passover is the memorial of when God saved the lives of Jews as He led them out of Egyptian bondage and, eventually, into the Promised Land. Circumcision was symbolic of the covenant relationship between God and man, which was to be passed on from generation to generation, because the promises of God were to Abraham and to all of his descendants. Therefore, no uncircumcised Jew or non-Jew was permitted to participate in the Passover event (Ex. 12:48). It appears that both rites were suspended during the forty year desert wandering, but resumed when the Israelites entered the land of Canaan (Num. 9:2). No explanation was given for its forty year discontinuance. It should also be noted that there was no sacrificial lamb during the previous exilic times. But by the first century so many Jews were living hundreds of miles from Jerusalem that the rabbis decreed every Jew needed to visit Jerusalem only once in a lifetime.¹⁰⁶⁶

14.02.06.Q1 Why did Jesus wash the disciple's feet (Lk. 22:21-32)?

As in any ancient Middle Eastern city in or near a desert, the streets of Jerusalem were covered with manure and raw sewage. The dry Sirocco winds blow in dust from the northern edge of the Arabian Desert located east of the Jordan River.¹⁰⁶⁷ In this environment, people frequently walked barefoot or wore simple leather thongs on their feet. Obviously, one did not have to travel far before his or her feet became filthy, sore, and tired. As a result, it was the custom for slaves to wash the feet of a guest upon entering a home or prior to eating with a host family. It was cleansing and refreshing.

Likewise, it was the custom of disciples to care for the needs of their mentors and rabbis. They provided his food, all his worldly cares, and made his life as comfortable as possible. That included washing his feet – a relaxing pleasure at the end of a day's journey. In return, the rabbis taught them the Scriptures, in particular, the application of the Torah to the daily issues of life. At this Passover, everyone already had their feet washed when they entered the house. So why did Jesus wash the disciples' feet? There are two possible answers:

¹⁰⁶⁵. Insertions by Danby, ed., *Mishnah*.

¹⁰⁶⁶. Bloch, *The Biblical and Historical*. 104, 106, 109.

¹⁰⁶⁷. Levy, *The Ruin and Restoration of Israel*. 89. For a study of historical maps of this region, see Nebenzahl, Kenneth. *Maps of the Holy Land*. New York: Abbeville Press. 1986.

1. The traditional interpretation which is taught elsewhere in Scripture is that service to others should be done with humility and in the name of Jesus.
2. But a few scholars have suggested that when the rabbi felt that one or more of his disciples were ready to “graduate,” he would wash their feet. Little did they know that soon they would no longer be disciples, but rabbinic apostles. The feet washing was both a ritual to teach humility and a commissioning service to man and God.¹⁰⁶⁸ The difficulty with this viewpoint is that there is no written hint of a commissioning service – yet Jesus often said that He would soon die in Jerusalem. Had they considered what they might do after that? Apparently not.

They had just completed their last Passover together in which Jesus connected the significance of the ancient exodus from Egypt and the wedding imagery of the cups of wine to the future marriage of the Lamb. The significant point is that their service to others would be with the humility of a slave. While they were to teach and demonstrate the Kingdom of God, their lives were to be ones of humility and service. As Jesus was sent by the Father,¹⁰⁶⁹ so likewise He sent out the seventy disciples (Lk. 10:1) and then the twelve.¹⁰⁷⁰

14.02.20.Q1 Did Jesus approve of His disciples carrying weapons?

This question is difficult to answer, especially in light of the fact that it is impossible to think of Him as needing a weapon. Does this mean, however, that He forbade His disciples to carry them? No one would ever have thought of traveling anywhere completely defenseless; traveling was always dangerous.¹⁰⁷¹ If thieves did not threaten travelers, then the Sicarii (as the Romans called them) or the Zealots (as the Jews called them), or a host of wild animals such as the Syrian brown bear (05.02.03.D) and the caracal lynx (05.02.03.E) would threaten and possibly kill them.

As previously stated, the disciples had traveled with Jesus for more than three years. It was the custom that a master would closely mentor his disciples similar to a parent-child relationship. This is an important point, because most certainly, the disciples understood how Jesus felt about such things as weapons. If these were not to be a part of their lives, He would certainly have told

1068. While some scholars believe that a foot washing service was a graduating or commissioning event among some rabbis, it is important not to “read that into this text.” The genuine commissioning into ministry occurred on the Day of Pentecost. Yet the foot washing event must have made the disciples think in a broader context of their own ministry.

1069. Mt. 15:24; Mk 9:37; Lk.9:48; Jn. 3:17; 5:36; 6:29.

1070. Mt. 10:5; Mk. 3:14; 6:7; Lk. 9:2; Jn. 4:38.

1071. Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.6.1(118); *Wars* 2.15.6 (232).

them long before now.

The *gladius* was as common in ancient times as the Boy Scout pocket knife once was in America. For a man to carry a short sword was nearly as common as walking with sandals. A *gladius* was a convenient tool that could clean a fish, sever firewood, create a spark with a flint for a cooking fire, or be used in self-defense against bandits or animals. Note that Jesus did not forbid the use of swords, nor forbid His disciples to carry them. This does certainly not mean He taught any type of military or armed conflict. Later He would tell them that those who live by the sword shall die by the sword (Mt. 26:52), which is hardly a command that would be spoken by a political revolutionary.

Finally, in verse 38 Jesus said, **“Enough of that!”** The difficulty with this passage is that the ancient writings had no quotation marks, exclamation marks, or other indicators to identify emotions, quotations, or questions. Therefore, readers were left with the task of creating an educated guess as to how the phrase was originally stated. It is the opinion of this writer that this was not a calm sentence, as if to imply that no additional swords were needed. Jesus knew all too well what the next few days were going to be like and another missionary journey was not on the agenda. At the thought of having more swords, Jesus emphatically said, **“THAT IS ENOUGH!”**¹⁰⁷² Ironically, Jesus embodies the paradox of uniting Jews with Christians and separating Jews from Christians.

15.02.06.Q1 Why would Judas have *wanted* to betray Jesus (Mk. 14:43-45)?¹⁰⁷³

The possible reasons are as follows:¹⁰⁷⁴

1. Judas may have become disillusioned with Jesus as the messiah, since He was obviously not the expected military-messiah who would overthrow the Romans. Ironically, if the Jews would have accepted Jesus as their Messiah, then the one-world government of the Romans would have been overthrown.
2. Judas had witnessed Jesus perform many miracles and never considered the possibility that the real Messiah would die on a Roman cross. This would be especially true, since it was well known that anyone who died on a tree was cursed.

1072. Kaiser, Davids, Bruce, and Brauch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible*. 486-88.

1073. Be sure to see 14.01.12.Q1 “Why was Judas *needed* to betray Jesus when everyone easily recognized Him?”

1074. See also 15.03.12.Q3 “Why did Jesus choose Judas for a disciple?”

3. Some have argued that Judas betrayed Jesus out of greed. Suppose Jesus did not rise from the grave. Judas would then have clout and status with the religious leaders beyond anything he had experienced in his life. Thirty pieces of silver would not have been worth the effort, but status among the religious leaders would have been priceless to him.

The phrase **“the One I kiss”** has lost its meaning in Western culture. To give a kiss on the cheek was, and continues to be, a common greeting in many Middle Eastern countries. It is called a “holy kiss” or “kiss of love” in Paul’s epistles as well as in 1 Peter. But on this night it was Stan’s kiss of betrayal.

“Are you going to betray the Son of Man with a kiss?” The betrayal becomes more significant when the Greek word for *kiss* is examined. The normal Greek word is *philein*, but Matthew used the word *kataphilein*, which means to kiss repeatedly and fervently as with deep affection.¹⁰⁷⁵ It is the same word used of the tender caress of our Lord’s feet by the woman in the Pharisee’s house (Lk. 7:38), of the father who kissed his prodigal son (Lk. 15:20), and the farewell kiss the elders of Ephesus gave to the Apostle Paul when he left them (Acts 20:37). When Jesus called Judas “friend,” He did not use the usual term *philos*, meaning *friend*, but Jesus referred to him as a *comrade* or *companion*, with the Greek word *hetairos*.¹⁰⁷⁶

A kiss on the cheek was a sign of the discipleship a man had with his mentor and rabbi. It was the symbol of the highest degree of devotion and trust. As such, when Judas approached Jesus, he placed both hands on the shoulders of Jesus. Therefore, the kiss of Judas was not an ordinary greeting between friends who have not seen each other for a time, but a kiss of betrayal of the highest order that, in today’s Western culture, has no equal.¹⁰⁷⁷ When Jesus asked the question, He extended love to him that he might repent.¹⁰⁷⁸

15.02.08.Q1 Was it Peter’s intention to cut off the servant’s head (Jn. 18:10)?

The passage reads, **“then Simon Peter ... cut off his right ear.”** Was this a sign of the rebellion that the Sanhedrin, Pilate, and the soldiers so greatly feared? Absolutely not! Had that been the case, the disciples would have been slaughtered immediately, along with Jesus.¹⁰⁷⁹ The Romans

1075. Barclay, “Matthew.” 2:290; Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 367.

1076. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 367.

1077. Barclay, “Luke.” 273.

1078. The proverbial “kiss of betrayal” was known among all people groups in the ancient Middle East. See Gen. 27:26ff; 2 Sam. 15:5; Prov. 7:13; 27:6.

1079. See Appendix 25 for a partial listing of false prophets, rebels and rebellions that impacted the world of Jesus.

and Sadducees had absolutely no compassion for anyone who might stir a rebellion. The healing saved the life of Peter, who, at that moment, was obviously not a highly favored Jew in the eyes of the arresting soldiers.

Had Jesus ridden into Jerusalem on a horse, or if they sang nationalistic songs such as *A Psalm of Solomon, with Song, the King*, which had phrases like “destroy the unrighteous rulers” and “drive out the sinners,” then Jesus and all of His disciples would probably have been immediately killed. But for more than three years the Romans, Hellenistic Jews, Herodians, and the Jewish leaders had been carefully watching Him and the huge crowds that followed. He never hinted at a nationalistic word.

However, if it was not Peter’s intention to kill Malchus, what was his intention? Malchus was not an ordinary temple servant, but chief assistant of Caiaphas, the official position known as the *segran hacohaneem*.¹⁰⁸⁰ Since John was an acquaintance of the family of Caiaphas, he would have known the name of the servant. Malchus, most likely, did not lose his entire ear, but only a small portion, such as his ear lobe, because any injury would have had two results:

1. It would have caused great shame for the temple administrator.
2. More importantly, the injury would have disqualified him from any temple service (Lev. 21:18-21). No one with a physical handicap or imperfection was permitted to enter the most sacred area of the temple.

Peter was not the first to have vented his anger in this manner; he merely acted out a cultural custom. Josephus preserved a similar account that occurred during the early reign of Herod the Great, when Hyrcanus II desired to become the high priest against the wishes of one called Antigonus. So Antigonus “disqualified” his rival from service in the office of priesthood.

Antigonus himself also bit off Hyrcanus’s ears with his own teeth, as he fell down upon his knees to him so that he might never be able, upon any mutation of affairs, to take the high priesthood again; for the high priests that officiated were to be complete and without blemish.

Josephus, *Wars* 1.13.9 (270)

“Malchus.” Malchus was a personal servant of the high priest, Caiaphas. His name was derived from the Hebrew word *melech*, meaning *king*. The event is quite interesting, as the “servant

1080. Moseley, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*. 25; Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 368.

king” was pierced and healed by the Servant King who died and then was pierced.

Ironically, just as Israel had rejected Jesus, they no longer desired to hear Him, they had their hearing, or “ears” cut off. As such Malchus, a “king” of the high priest who was responsible for leading the charge to have Jesus crucified, was symbolic of national Israel. At times, even the smallest events in the life of Jesus, have incredible depth of meaning.

15.03.01.Q1 What 25 rules of justice were broken by the Sanhedrin when the high court condemned Jesus to death?

The religious aristocrats had no shortage of reasons to execute Jesus.¹⁰⁸¹ In their desperate process to have Jesus executed, they violated a host of oral laws of jurisprudence, as recorded in the tractate “Sanhedrin” of the *Mishnah*.¹⁰⁸² Note the following violations:¹⁰⁸³

1. There was to be no arrest by ecclesiastical authorities that was influenced by a bribe (Ex. 23:8).¹⁰⁸⁴
2. There was to be no trial after sunset (after three stars appear in the sky).
3. No judges were permitted in the arrest of the accused, so as to keep judges unbiased.
4. No trials were to be held before the morning sacrifice.
5. No trials were to be held on the Sabbath or on the eve of the Sabbath.
6. All trials were to be public. Secrecy of any form was forbidden.
7. Trials were to be held only in the Hall of Judgment (Chamber of Hewn Stone).
8. Judges were not to argue for a conviction of the accused.
9. Every accused person was to have at least one defender.
10. Capital cases had to be tried over a minimum of two days.

1081. See 12.04.08.Q1 What were the 12 reasons the Jewish leadership planned the death of Jesus?

1082. The complete judicial procedure for the high court is found in the Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 4.1 through 5.5.

1083. Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 4:1.

1084. Judas was paid a bribe of thirty pieces of silver.

11. The high priest (Caiaphas) was not permitted to tear his clothing.
12. Charges against the accused could not originate with the judges.
13. Once a trial began, no additional charges could be added to the original charge.
14. The charge of blasphemy was applicable if the accused applied the Name of God (YHWH) to himself or if the defendant pronounced the name of God.
15. The accused could not be condemned by his testimony alone, but had to be in perfect agreement with two or three witnesses (Deut. 17:6).
16. Judges were not permitted to question the accused, only the witnesses.
17. If a guilty verdict was to be pronounced, it had to be given on the day following the trial.
18. The condemned was not permitted to be executed on the same day as his sentence was pronounced. (Since Herod the Great decreed that the authority of capital punishment be removed from the Sanhedrin – except for Gentiles who entered the holy areas of the temple – this exception was in force prior to Herod’s decree.)
19. Any judge who had a personal interest or conflict with the accused had to remove himself from the judicial process.
20. Among the judges, the youngest had to vote first as not to be influenced or persuaded by the older and more experienced judges.
21. No *Baal-Rib*, or legal counsel, was appointed to defend Jesus.¹⁰⁸⁵
22. No witnesses were called to defend Jesus.
23. The proper procedure for a trial was,
 - a. First the accusation
 - b. Then the defense

1085. Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*, 2:517-18.

24. A defendant could not be beaten, tortured, or scourged prior to the trial.

25. Judges were to be kind and humane to the defendant.

Concerning any final decision of the Sanhedrin:

1. If a trial was concluded with a favorable verdict, it could be concluded on the same day as it began.

2. If an unfavorable verdict was given then it must be concluded on the following day.

3. No announcement was to be given at night.

These rules were intended to protect the accused and prevent any possible error of an inaccurate verdict. Therefore, no such trial could legally have been held on the day prior to a Sabbath or festival. The three Jewish trials of Jesus would fail on every count, and be uniquely different from any other.¹⁰⁸⁶

15.03.05.Q1 What is the significance of the Jewish leadership condemning Jesus?

The significance lies in the *covenant* God had with His people. (Technically, the Romans crucified Jesus, but did so at the insistence of the Jews.) In the Old Testament days, God established His covenant with the *nation* of Israel, whereas the new covenant is not with a nation, but with individuals in many nations. The life of Jesus was entirely within the Old Testament setting. The New Testament era did not begin until after the resurrection (some believe it was on the Day of Pentecost). Before the New Covenant/New Testament could be enacted, God permitted the religious leaders, representing *national Israel*, to reject Him as their Messiah. God, knowing the wicked hearts of the Sadducean and Pharisaic leadership, closed the Old Covenant, permitted the destruction of His temple to end the sacrificial system, and spread the good news that the New Covenant was available to anyone who desired it.

The Romans permitted the Jews to maintain their own temple military unit and religious judicial system. Hence, the Sadducees had the authority to arrest and detain anyone in the restricted areas of the temple and areas around it. However, capital punishment was reserved for the Roman courts, except in the event a Gentile entered the restricted area of the temple.¹⁰⁸⁷

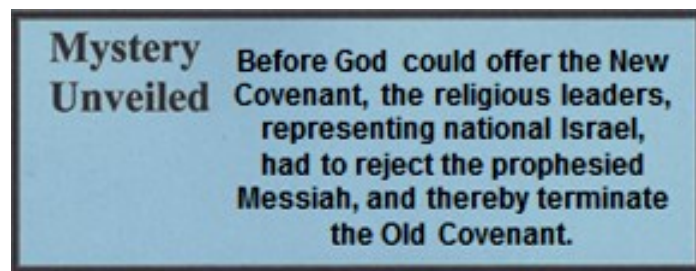
1086. See Appendix 21 for the seven proclamations of the innocence of Jesus.

1087. Farrar, *Life of Christ*. 415.

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15.03.08.Q1 What were the reasons the Jewish leaders accused Jesus of blasphemy?

There were a number of reasons, some more serious than others. But when combined, these provided a strong argument for their rejection of Him. The reasons are:

1. Jesus forgave sin, and as such, He claimed to be God because only God can forgive sin.
2. He spoke with His own authority. Rabbis often spoke on the authority of one or more other rabbis, but Jesus spoke as if He was the final authority.

¹⁰⁸⁸. Farrar, *Life of Christ*. 415.

3. Jesus said that His miracles were signs of Divine power. While the Jewish leaders believed that the messianic miracles that Jesus performed were certain identifiers of the messiah, they rejected them and Him.

4. Jesus referred to God as *Abba*, or *Abba Father*,¹⁰⁸⁹ just as He probably used the endearment term *imma* for *mamma*.¹⁰⁹⁰ They could not accept any person refer to God in such an affectionate manner.

5. Whereas previous prophets warned the people of God's judgment, Jesus said they would be judged on how they responded to His words. This in effect, was a statement that He was God.

6. At times Jesus referred to Himself as the Son of God. Since a son was seen equal to his father, the words of Jesus were understood that He was equal to God.

7. Jesus supposedly said that He would destroy the temple (He didn't say this, but His accusers claimed that He did). Twice before Jesus had cleansed the temple and the merchants quickly went back to business as usual. They could hardly tolerate the cleansings, but the words of destruction were too much for them.

There can be no question that those who rejected Him did so for very profound reasons – reasons that believers understood, especially after the resurrection, and reasons they died for.

15.03.08.Q2 Where was Annas during the trial?

Annas, the godfather of religious crime and corruption, was not always present during the trials of Jesus. Why? Scholars believe that he was probably performing the Passover duties in the temple that normally would have been performed by Caiaphas. But due to the urgent nature of the moment, Caiaphas had to run the Sanhedrin and get rid of Jesus before the people discovered what happened and before the Passover officially began. Otherwise, a riot was destined to occur.

1089. 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*.

527; Vine, "Abba." *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary*. 2:1.

1090. Smith, *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew*. 110.

15.03.11.Q1 What did Jesus say that caused the Sanhedrin to condemn Him?

This interesting question has stirred much discussion over the years. The first conclusion might be that He was found guilty of claiming to be the Christ, the “Anointed One,” the Son of God (Mt. 26:63). That seems to be an iron clad answer, except that a century later Simon bar Kokhba also declared himself to be the messiah (a political-messiah), with no charge of blasphemy. In fact, many followed him to their deaths by Roman swords in A.D. 135, which raises a number of questions.

1. Did their attitude regarding the messiah change in the interim?
2. Did Simon bar Kokhba claim messiahship without deity? That would have made him popular with the Jews who had difficulty with the words and deeds of Jesus.
3. Did the words of Jesus about sitting at the right hand of God offend the Sadducees, in addition to His claim to be the Christ?
4. Did the “I am” statement of Mark 14:62 offend them since it was reflective of the voice of God in Exodus 3:14?
5. Was it because of the right He claimed to forgive sins? This was paramount to blasphemy.

By definition, the word “blasphemy” in the Oral Law technically was *only* the speaking of the sacred name “YHWH.”¹⁰⁹¹ When the Sadducees pronounced Jesus guilty of blasphemy, they used a broader definition that was in common use at the time. Consequently, they broke their own laws in order to execute Him, but that did not matter. Clearly, while Matthew 26:63 is an integral part of the condemnation, it is not the complete story. The condemnation was the result of Jesus revealing His deity.

15.03.11.Q2 Were *all* members of the Sanhedrin in favor of Jesus’ death?

Absolutely not! The high court consisted of 70 members plus Caiaphas,¹⁰⁹² but only twenty-three were needed for a capital case and the high priest/president. Caiaphas carefully selected the

¹⁰⁹¹. Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 7:5.

¹⁰⁹². The Sanhedrin consisted of 24 chief priests who were Sadducees, 24 elders who were Pharisees, 22 scribes who were Pharisees, and Caiaphas, who was a Sadducee and president of the court; Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor’s Manual*. Class 24, page 6.

voting members and many Sadducees probably owed him political favors. He may have known that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus appeared interested in Jesus, which would have been a good reason *not* to have them present. Furthermore, Gamaliel, who in Acts 5:38b-39 was concerned that the actions of Peter and John might be of God, would not have approved of the illegal trial of Jesus. Clearly, any members of the high court who showed any signs of accepting Jesus as the Messiah would not have been invited to the trials. In fact, some of them eventually became followers of Jesus. Finally, at this point a brief but important summary is in order. There is an irony of two points to be considered:

1. Jesus provided the testimonial information that led to His conviction, and ultimately, His death. He even supplied information that false witnesses could not provide.
2. The Sanhedrin attempted to hold a trial that would convict Jesus and negate His claim of Divine authority. The court's intent was so passionate, that no one realized in reality it was the court and the Jewish nation that was on trial and it was Jesus who would be their judge. In fact, Jesus publically declared this: that He is the Christ, that He is the Son of God and that He possesses the judgment authority of the Son of Man.

Caiaphas and his evil band within the Sanhedrin carefully plotted and executed Jesus in the best and most efficient way possible. Yet God knew this would happen from the foundations of the earth and allowed the sacrifice of His Son to open the door of salvation for all humanity.

15.03.12.Q2 Could Judas have asked for forgiveness?

Most theologians say "no." One can only come to our Lord by responding to the call of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, once his evil deed was done, Judas forgot all the teachings of Jesus concerning love and forgiveness, and focused his attention on his actions and the damned eternity waiting for him. There is a huge difference between his sin and that of Peter's. Peter denied Jesus; Judas betrayed Him. Saint Augustine had the following comments about the differences between the denier and betrayer:

It is this difference in their sins which separate Judas the betrayer from Peter the denier: not that a penitent is not to be pardoned, for we must not come into collision with that declaration of our Lord ... but that therein connected with that sin is so great, that he cannot endure the humiliation of asking for it, even if he should be compelled by a bad conscience both to acknowledge and divulge his sin. For when Judas had said, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood," yet it was easier for him in despair to run and hang himself, than in humility to ask for pardon.

Augustine, *Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount*¹⁰⁹³

In the first century, rabbis taught that there were three kinds of eternity.

1. There was heaven for observant Jews.
2. There were those who went to a hell that was not eternal, but terminated in a form of death.
3. There was an eternal never-ending death that was reserved for the severest sins, such as betrayal of a friend to the enemy.

Judas betrayed a fellow Jew and thereby caused one of his own to be crucified. For this, he believed that he was about to receive the worst eternal damnation. The thought of his deed and its consequences were so painful, that he could not endure living any longer and thereby, he hastened his arrival into the eternal flames. The seriousness of betrayal was preserved in one of the Dead Sea Scrolls known as the Temple Scroll. A portion of it reads as follows,

If ⁷ a man informs against his people, and delivers his people up to a foreign nation, and does harm to his people, ⁸ you shall hang him on the tree [Deut. 21:22-23], and he shall die. On the evidence of two witnesses and on the evidence of three witnesses ⁹ he shall be put to death, and they shall hang him on the tree. (Blank) And if a man has committed a crim[e] punishable by death, and has defected ¹⁰ into the midst of nations, and has cursed his people [and] the children of Israel, you shall hang him also on the tree ¹¹ and he shall die. And their body shall not remain upon the tree all night, but you shall bury them the same day, ¹² for those hanged on the tree are accursed to God and men; you shall not defile the land which I ¹³ give you for an inheritance.

Dead Sea Scroll, *Temple* 11Q 64:6-13¹⁰⁹⁴

The realization of this horrific sin must have had an incredible illuminating power to Judas. But the question is, why did he not pray for forgiveness? No doubt, in the passion of the moment, he thought that such an option was no longer available for him, considering the severity of his deed. He was filled with remorse (Mt. 27:3), he confessed his sin (Mt. 27:4), but he failed to ask for

1093. Thomas, *The Golden Treasury of Patristic Quotations: From 50 – 750 A.D.* 259.

1094. 64:6-13 = Column 64, lines 6-13.

forgiveness. No doubt, this is probably due to the cultural context of the day, where it was believed that there was no forgiveness for any Jew who was responsible for the death of another Jew.

The theological question of any possible forgiveness for Judas is beyond the scope of this study, but a brief response is this: Some will say that, by this time he had committed the unpardonable sin and the Spirit of God no longer called him to repent. Others have suggested that, just as other demonically possessed men were delivered from demonic powers, Judas could have been likewise delivered. Still others say he could have waited until Jesus arose and then asked Him for forgiveness; but at that time who would have thought that Jesus was going to return to life? However, in his mind, forgiveness was impossible considering the travesty of his betrayal. Therefore, no options were possible; there was no possible forgiveness. For thirty pieces of silver he not only sold Jesus, but in reality, he sold himself into hell. The prophets predicted his action centuries earlier, yet he freely *chose* this action. This clearly illustrates that,

1. God has complete foreknowledge,
2. He is always in control of personal situations and of this world, but
3. He does not control individuals. He permits people to be independent free moral agents.

The transforming power of Jesus enabled Simon, a revolutionary Zealot, and Matthew, a Roman tax agent, to live and minister peacefully together. During the years Judas was a disciple he acted and played the part of a true disciple. No doubt, there may have been times when he was very sincere about following Jesus. But somewhere in time, he made a willful decision to become a defector, yet he still acted and spoke like a true disciple. He was the proverbial tare in a wheat field.¹⁰⁹⁵ Jesus experienced firsthand the pain of a trusted friend, who became an apostate, hardened his heart, and stood against God. Judas made his decision, but it is God who determined the consequences. It was his was eternal damnation (Acts 1:25).

15.03.12.Q3 Why did Jesus choose Judas for a disciple?

This question has fueled many debates. Critics have said this is evidence that Jesus made mistakes which were not written in Scripture. Others claim Jesus was unable to build trust and loyalty among His disciples. Still others say Jesus did not have the divine foresight that was

¹⁰⁹⁵. It is a point of interest that the Jews considered a tare to be a degenerated wheat plant — precisely the description of Judas.

normally attributed to Him.

Only Jesus knows the answer, but consider this possibility: It is inconceivable that Jesus would have made Judas a disciple if there had not been some honest and noble enthusiasm in him, and some attachment to Himself. He was probably a man of superior energy and administrative ability which is why he was chosen to be responsible for the funds of the group, rather than Matthew who was a former tax collector and also acquainted with accounting and financial responsibilities. Jesus was very much aware of the future actions of Judas, but elected to choose him regardless, because Jesus knew that His ultimate purpose was to die on the cross for the sins of mankind (Jn. 6:64). To read why Judas was “needed” to betray Jesus, go to 14.01.12.Q1.

15.04.01.Q1 What were the Roman charges against Jesus?

In violation of Jewish law, the Sanhedrin conjured up sufficient false charges in an attempt to have Jesus convicted and executed. In their haste, however, they realized that the charge of blasphemy was not sufficient grounds to execute anyone under Roman law. So they restructured their charges to charge Him with treason – that is, tax evasion. Furthermore, to be called “king of the Jews,” was a direct challenge to Roman authority.¹⁰⁹⁶ Pilate could not avoid these charges. So Jesus was then taken from the religious court to the civil court.

When they arrived, Pilate was sitting in the judge’s seat; for Rome had given him supreme authority in the judicial system and enforcement of Roman law. Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin came before him and charged Jesus with four counts of treason:

1. They charged Him with sedition
2. They said Jesus forbade the payment of taxes to Rome
3. They said Jesus claimed to be king.
4. Finally, there was an overarching rule known as *lex de maiestate*, meaning *law of majesty*, which forbade offending the emperor or empire.¹⁰⁹⁷ Because it was interpreted in a broad manner, emperors such as Tiberius used it to remove or execute suspected enemies.

While the charge of treason could not be ignored, Pilate correctly realized that Jesus was the

1096. Webb, “The Roman Examination and Crucifixion of Jesus.” 754.

1097. Lang, *Know the Words of Jesus*. 390.

victim of a religious charade. Pilate questioned Him carefully and realized that while claiming to be a king, He certainly was not a threat to Rome. He could have released Jesus because not a single statute of Roman law was violated; however, eventually he yielded to the pressures of the Sanhedrin.¹⁰⁹⁸ The essential Roman laws that governed the trial were as follows:

1. All proceedings had to be public and held during daylight hours.
2. The trial started with the prosecuting witness presenting the charge that Jesus was guilty of treason. However, the problem the Sanhedrin had was that Judas was dead.

Shortly after sunrise on the morning of Passover, Jesus was taken before Pilate, possibly between 6:00 and 6:30 a.m. Trials at this time did not have the formalities of modern Western judicial systems and, hence, decisions were rendered quickly. Pilate was irritated that these pesty Jews were bothering him so early in the morning. Furthermore, he had to come out to meet them, because they refused to enter his royal court lest they would become defiled. Therefore, the Jews had the following two strikes against them.

1. Pilate was unhappy because they demanded his attention before the normal business day began and...
2. The Jews asked him to step outside of his palace to address them.

Pilate and the Herodians knew all too well that Jesus did not have any political motivations. Both had a vast network of spies who scouted for any possible messianic revolutionaries. Military commanders also made reports to their superiors which would have reached Pilate. All knew Jesus was innocent of the charges brought forth by the Sadducees.

15.04.01.Q2 Why might Pilate have been remotely concerned about the possibilities of Jesus being a revolutionary?

It is noteworthy to consider that the gospels provide only a small window of the events of the life of Jesus. For example, notice how often Jesus went to pray, and did so for lengthy periods of time, yet all the prayers recorded in Scripture are relatively short. Likewise in this matter. This question is hardly ever considered because Jesus had a well established reputation by this time. When the Sadducees drummed up all the charges they could, they probably included the following reasons as secondary evidence:

¹⁰⁹⁸. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 473.

1. One of His disciples was Simon, a former member of the Zealots.
2. Jesus and all but one of His disciples were from the district of Galilee, an established center of Zealot activity.
3. While Jesus taught peace, He also said there would be wars and rumors of wars. But He did not say when these would occur or His involvement in them.¹⁰⁹⁹

However, Jesus had been an incredibly popular figure for the previous three and a half years. The actions of a would-be revolutionary certainly did not fit His teaching or miracles. So while there were some concerns, they were muted by the well-established teachings and actions of Jesus and His disciples. Furthermore, the fact that at least one of the disciples (Peter) carried a small weapon may not have been a concern for Pilate. Most men carried a small weapon for the same reasons men and boys carried pocket knives years ago in America.

15.04.02.Q1. If capital punishment was illegal, how could the Jews have killed Stephen and James?

It has been argued that the Jews did, in fact, have the right to execute (Latin: *ius gladii*),¹¹⁰⁰ since they killed both Stephen and James. First was the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:54-60) and later, the stoning of James, the half-brother of Jesus in A.D. 62. That account was recorded by Josephus.¹¹⁰¹ However, these two deaths were caused by Sanhedrin-inspired riotous mobs and not by proper judicial procedure. The priest who initiated the death of James was removed from office because he violated the law prohibiting capital punishment (Latin: *ius gladii*).¹¹⁰² Amazingly, in later years, the documents of the Jerusalem Talmud recorded the following:

Forty years before the destruction of the temple they took from Israel the right to inflict capital punishment.

Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 1 18a

This Talmudic report is amazingly incorrect because Israel's right to inflict capital punishment

1099. See Appendix 25 for a listing of rebels and false prophets who had messianic expectations and for a partial listing of revolts and social disturbances from 63 B.C. to A.D. 70.

1100. Barclay, "John." 2:233.

1101. Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.9.1.

1102. Barclay, "John." 2:233.

was removed decades earlier by Herod the Great, who also restricted the Sanhedrin to the area of Judah. Furthermore, there is no evidence that the restriction against capital punishment by the Sanhedrin was revoked by the Romans. These riots also underscore the tensions that existed and gave cause for the Romans to be ready at a moment's notice to subdue an uprising.

It is unfortunate that historians are rather harsh on the Romans. In spite of all their faults, the Romans did attempt to accommodate their Jewish subjects. For example, while the authority to execute criminals was removed from the Sanhedrin, Rome did permit Jewish guards to execute any Gentile who entered the most holy sanctuary of the temple, even if he was a Roman soldier. This was confirmed by Josephus when he recorded a statement made by General Titus to the Jews during the siege of Jerusalem. Titus said:

Did we not permit you to put to death any who passed it, even if he be a Roman?

Josephus, *Wars* 6.2.4 (126a)

15.04.08.Q1 Does the word “all” mean the entire Jewish community; every Jew in the land?

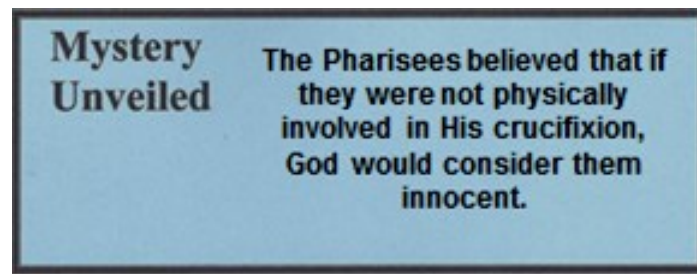
Those who believe that the word “all” refers to every Jew in the land may have difficulty explaining why, in John 8:30, so many put “their faith in Him” but only twenty-nine verses later the same group wanted to stone Him. If this were the case, then a major event that caused the change in public opinion was never recorded in biblical, Jewish, or secular history – and that is highly unlikely.

Yet, later, in Matthew 27:22, the gospel writer said, “They all answered.” Throughout church history, this phrase has often been used to condemn all the Jews because of a single word: *all*. Even today, many well-meaning Christians believe *all* the Jews of Israel condemned Jesus to die. One must ask what had occurred between the time Jesus rode into Jerusalem when everyone praised Him and anticipated He would deliver them from the brutal Romans, and now, when He was standing before Pilate. What could possibly have caused the radical transformation of public opinion, which escaped not only the gospels but also all of the extra-biblical Jewish writings? The answer is – absolutely nothing! If anything had occurred that would have changed public opinion, the gospel writers would certainly have written about it. Clearly not *all* the Jews were against Jesus, but only *all* those Jews who stood before Pilate.

Consider this train of thought: Did His mother Mary condemn her Son? She was Jewish. How about the disciples? They were also Jewish. What about the hundreds of people He healed and the thousands He fed? And why would all of them have condemned Him to the cross? The common opinion that *all* the Jews of Israel condemned Jesus is obviously not well thought out.

The thousands who loved Him were busy with their Passover observances and were probably wondering if He would make an announcement at the temple about being the messiah. They certainly would never have believed He would be tried illegally at night. Yet the very purpose of the night trials was to keep the public ignorant until Jesus was convicted. Therefore, those who responded to Pilate were *not* the same people who praised Jesus when He entered Jerusalem.

That raises the obvious question: Who were *all* the people who demanded the death of Jesus? It was Caiaphas and his small group of temple power brokers who were willing to go to any length to insure that Jesus would not overthrow their positions as the religious establishment.



Because this is an important point, extra detail is hereby given. The word *all* does not always mean exclusively every person, but the definition can include a majority of people who are at a specific place at a specific time. Even though most of the New Testament was written in Greek, the writers were Jews who thought and expressed their ideas like other Jewish people. In Hebrew, the word *kol*, meaning *all* does not always mean every single entity or person, but rather, the majority.¹¹⁰³

A biblical example of the use of *all* in this sense is found in the account of Saul when he fought the Amalekites. In a battle recorded in 1 Samuel 15:7-8, 20, Saul “totally destroyed with a sword” *all* the Amalekites, yet later they appeared again in 1 Samuel 27:8, 30:1,18, in 2 Samuel 8:12, and in 1 Chronicles 4:43. Did the Scripture writers make a mistake when they said Saul totally destroyed all the Amalekites? No. Saul killed all the Amalekites who were on the battlefield, but not the entire people group. Ironically, eventually one of them killed Saul (2 Sam. 1:8-10). Incidentally, Scripture centuries later recorded that the evil Haman was an Agagite (Esther 3:1) but Josephus said he was part of a clan within the larger tribe of Amalekites.¹¹⁰⁴

To modern readers, the gospel writers seem to have been a bit loose with the word *all*. Matthew (26:56) and Mark (14:50), both said that *all* the disciples fled when Jesus was crucified. Yet among the last words of Jesus were His instruction to Mary, His mother, who would live out the

1103. Stern, *Restoring the Jewishness*. 26-27.

1104. Josephus, *Antiquities* 11:6.2-3.

rest of her life under the care of John. Both stood before Jesus as He died upon the cross. So clearly, the word *all* means a *vast majority*, and not *every single person*.¹¹⁰⁵ The gospel writers were not loose with their vocabulary; they just had a broader definition to it.

Another thought to consider is this: the high priestly prayer of Jesus in John 17 speaks of those who are “in” Jesus as He is “in” God the Father. But that prayer would not make any sense if *all* the Jews were shouting for His crucifixion. Without question, that prayer would be considerably different.

Those who were before Pilate were, at most, a few hundred accusers from the temple leadership. This is supported in the New Testament (Acts 2:23, 36; 1 Thess. 2:14-15) and the Babylonian Talmud.¹¹⁰⁶ However, the clearest support for this is from Josephus, who stated that,

Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.3.3 (64)

The term “**principal men**” clearly refers to the Jewish leaders of the temple elite – namely the Sadducees and the family of Caiaphas. Josephus made a point of saying that only a few selected leaders were responsible for the crucifixion, not *all* the Jews. In addition, Luke made a point to record that Joseph of Arimathea was a believer and, although he was member of the Sanhedrin, he did not agree to the plan and action to execute Jesus (Lk. 23:50-51). So clearly, not all members of the high court wanted Jesus dead. Furthermore, if anyone would have understood the times and the environment of this major religious event, it would have been Josephus. Concerning Jesus, he added that,

Those who had in the first place come to love him did not give up their affection for him.

Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.3.3 (64)

Finally, in His high priestly prayer of John 17, Jesus prayed for Himself (vv. 1-5), then for His disciples (vv. 6-19), and finally for all believers (vv. 20-26). Noteworthy, is the fact that He does not forgive them because they did not commit the sin of demanding that He be crucified – they are “in Him.” They were unaware that the religious leaders tried Jesus in an illegal system of

1105. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:417-18.

1106. Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 43a; see 18.03.03.

trials until the sun rose and He was on His way to the cross. Then it was too late.

15.04.09.Q1 Would God punish all people because of the decision of their leaders?

The leader of a nation directs its prosperity, peace, and even its cultural changes. The position of a king or national leadership is extremely important in the eyes of God. When the Sadducees had Jesus crucified, they cast the direction the Jewish people would take for centuries to come. Their own Hebrew Bible is full of historical accounts that preserved the results of poor leadership decisions. Note these examples:

1. When the Pharaoh of Egypt took Sarah into his court, his household got sick (Gen. 12:17).
2. When Abimelech planned to take Sarah, all the women in his household became infertile (Gen. 20:18).
3. Centuries later the Pharaoh's sinful decision not to permit the Israelites to leave Egypt resulted in numerous plagues upon his people, the deaths of all "first borns," his own death, and the loss of thousands of Egyptian soldiers (Ex. 9 - 12).
4. When Moses sent out spies into Canaan only two returned with a favorable report, yet everyone had to endure forty years of wandering aimlessly through the desert. Why? It was because they had made a decision against the desires of the Lord.
5. When the Philistine soldiers took the Ark of the Covenant, their families and neighbors developed cancer tumors (I Sam. 5:6; 6:1-12).
6. When King David disobeyed the Lord and took a census, he had the unusual choice of three punishments: famine, conquest, or a plague. He chose a plague and seventy thousand of his citizens died (2 Sam. 24:10-15; 1 Ch. 21:7-14).
7. When Joshua and the Israelites captured the city of Ai, a certain man by the name of Achan stole silver and other valuables in disobedience to the Lord's command. As a result, he and 36 other individuals of his family perished (Josh. 6:16-26).

The consequences of the decisions of a king upon his people are proverbial. The writer of Proverbs 29:4 said, "By justice a king gives a country stability." The Sanhedrin, which served as Israel's legislative body as well as its supreme court, failed to mete out godly decisions and justice which eventually led to increased instability that resulted in destruction.

It should be stated that the converse is also true. When the careless Jews failed to examine and purify themselves prior to Passover (2 Ch. 30:18-19), the righteous king Hezekiah prayed that God would pardon those who failed to purify themselves. The result of one godly king was that, “and God heard Hezekiah and healed the people” (2 Ch. 30:20). Passover, like communion, is a highly important soul-searching event. The Apostle Paul said death would come upon some who took communion lightly (1 Cor. 11:27-30). The decisions of a national leader can be either a blessing or a curse upon the people. It is a principle of life.

16.01.02.Q1 Should the false Jewish witnesses have been scourged?

According to Oral Law of the Pharisees, if the testimony of a false witness led to an innocent person being scourged 39 times, that false witness was subject to 80 scourgings. But Jesus was before the Sanhedrin and the Sadducees who had their own penal code that was considerably harsher than that of the Pharisees.¹¹⁰⁷ The Sadducees demanded that false witnesses be put to death while the Pharisees permitted punishment by eighty scourgings.¹¹⁰⁸ There apparently was no law concerning a false witness whose testimony resulted in a Roman scourging. The false witnesses who testified against Jesus appear not to have been punished at all. According to the Oral Law, which the Pharisees defended so dearly, if several witnesses said:

We testify that such-a-one is liable to suffer the forty stripes, and they are found (to be) false witnesses, they must suffer eighty stripes by virtue of the law, “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor” (Ex. 20:16) and also by virtue of the law, “Then do to him as he intended to do to his brother” (Deut. 10:10).

Mishnah, *Makkoth* 1.3

The Oral Law further condemned false witnesses to death, if the result of their testimony caused the death of an innocent victim. Clearly, the false witnesses who stood before Caiaphas should have received death sentences, and at least, they should have been punished with 80 stripes.

If yet others came and proved false the evidence of these others, and yet others came and proved their evidence false, even if (there came) a hundred (pairs of witnesses to prove false the evidence to them that went before), they must all be put to death. Rabbi Judah says: This would be a conspiracy: but the first pair alone are put to death.

1107. Megillah, *Taanith* 10; Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. 127. This may explain why the Sadducees were before Pilate demanding a crucifixion before Pilate, and the Pharisees are not mentioned.

1108. Mishnah, *Makkoth* 1.3 and 1.5; See 15.03.07.

Mishnah, *Makkoth* 1.5¹¹⁰⁹

Yet a mere four decades later, those who condemned Jesus were condemned by their own law. When the Romans destroyed the temple, they massacred the leading Pharisees and every Sadducee.

16.01.02.Q2 What was the game *King of a Day*?

Soldiers had a cruel way of tormenting their prisoners before crucifying them. They dressed each of them like a king and mockingly worshiped and obeyed him. It was so popular throughout the empire that their game was known as *King of a Day* or the *Game of the King*. The latter game generally connected with the Feast of Saturn, or whenever a prisoner was to be executed. The feast lasted four or five days, during which time a prisoner was chosen to be the king of the feast. During the feast, he could do whatever he desired, although with some limitations. He was given a crown, a red vest, and a staff. He pretended to be a king and enjoyed the proverbial wine, women, and song. However, at the end of the feast, he had to kill himself on the altar of Saturn and his possessions were distributed. Scholars believe the dice game inscribed in the floor and the actions of mockery by the soldiers were associated with that game.¹¹¹⁰ A similar game was found to have been inscribed in a pavement stone in Sepphoris. The shorter version was known as *King for a Day*. It too was a game of mockery, but at the end of the day the prisoner was crucified.

16.01.05.Q1 What other issue may have been a challenge for Pilate?

Often Bible students have become so engrossed in the “Jesus” events of the Passion Week, that the possibility that anything else was going on that could have affected Pilate is simply never considered. Jesus was little more than one more case he had to struggle with. He wanted to crucify Barabbas and his two rebel friends, but the Sadducees demanded he be freed, leaving his co-conspirators to die a horrible death.

Along with all the matters of state that any governor had to deal with, throughout the years Jesus ministered there was increased interest in astrology and magic. According to the *Chronicle of the Year A.D. 354*, Tiberius executed forty-five sorcerers and eighty-five sorceresses, in the years

1109. Parenthesis by Danby, ed., *Mishnah*.

1110. Information is from a placard in the Convent of the Sisters of Zion.

A.D. 16 and 17.¹¹¹¹ These would have been barely more than a decade prior to the ministry of Jesus. In the year A.D. 32, shortly after the crucifixion of Jesus, twenty-five were executed with a third of those guilty for conspiracy with Sejanus in the previous years. It is believed that the law that was applied was the *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneticis*, capital punishment by burning alive for those who murdered by poisoning.¹¹¹² The number of people charged increased annually, until the year 32 when Tiberius had the most cases of any year during his reign.¹¹¹³ One of those is mentioned by Tacitus who wrote of a woman by the name of Numantina. She was accused of casting incantations and spells on her husband causing him to become insane. For this she is believed to have been charged with *Lex Cornelia*.¹¹¹⁴ There can be no question that the religious leaders must have accused Jesus of being a sorcerer before Pilate. If they made that announcement to the people,¹¹¹⁵ then they probably did so at this time. As previously stated, in light of the other charges against various individuals, it is utterly amazing that Pilate was so incredibly compassionate with Jesus. It also highlights the false accusations the Sadducees had against Him as a sorcerer.

16.01.10.Q1 Where were the nails placed in the body of Jesus?

If the biblical account is to be literally understood, then the nails that held Jesus to the cross were *not* placed where traditional opinion says they were. Jesus was/is the sacrificial “Lamb of God” and sacrificial lambs were not to have a single broken bone. So likewise Jesus was to die without a single broken bone. So the obvious question is then, how were the nails placed in His hands and feet without breaking a single bone? If a nail was placed in the palm of His hand, it would have been impossible *not* to break any bones.

In Roman times the forearm and wrist were considered a part of the hand; the entire area from the fingernails to the elbow. If the nails were placed in the wrist, as most scholars believe, the iron spike would have been placed between the Ulnar and Median nerves, causing a pulsating pain like electrical shocks through the arms and shoulders. The Shroud of Turin and other bone discoveries indicate the nails were most frequently placed through the wrists.¹¹¹⁶

1111. Welch, “Miracles, Maleficium, and Maiestas in the Trial of Jesus.” 373.

1112. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians*. 147.

1113. Welch, “Miracles, Maleficium, and Maiestas in the Trial of Jesus.” 373.

1114. Tacitus, *Annals of History*. 4.22.

1115. See 09.01.03.Q1 “What was the significance of the Beelzebub discussion?”

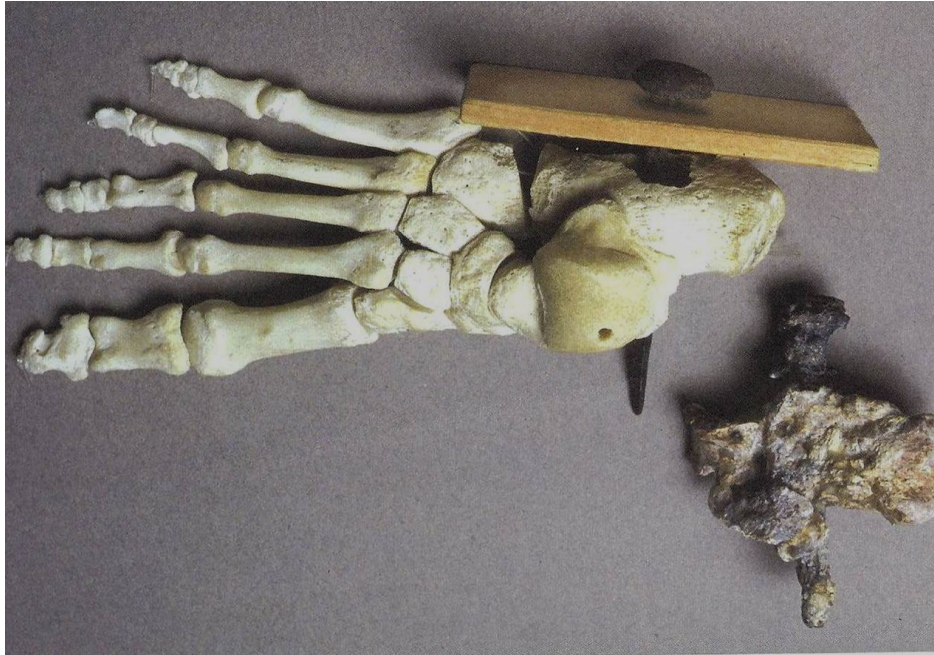
1116. Edwards, Gabel, and Hosmer, “On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ.” 1459.

Concerning the placement of nails to secure the feet to the post of the cross, many artistic renderings show one foot on top of the other and both are held in place with a long Roman nail. However, a view of the bone structure (16.01.10.B) reveals that it is nearly impossible to nail through a foot in this manner without breaking a bone, and definitely impossible if that same nail were to penetrate both feet. Therefore, the only possible conclusion is that Jesus had each foot nailed into a side of the post. The nail would have gone through the flesh and tendons been behind the ankle bone. To support this view, a few graffiti sketches of crucifixion have survived the centuries and all of them show a foot nailed into each side of the post (see 16.01.10.C).

Of the thousands of men, and of a few women who were crucified in ancient Israel, the remains of only one skeleton have been found that suggests death by this method.¹¹¹⁷ In 1968 an ossuary was discovered in a tomb in Giv'at Ha-Mivtar, a suburb of Jerusalem. It contained the remains of a crucified prisoner, by the name of Yohanan Ben Ha'galgol. It also had a nail along the side of an ankle, indicating that each ankle was nailed into opposite sides of the post. In this case, four nails were used in the crucifixion (see 16.01.10.B below).¹¹¹⁸ In addition, a small piece of olive wood was found in the tomb that originally was between the ankle and the head of the nail. Since olive trees are not very tall, this suggests that Ha'galgol was not crucified on a cross, but on a living olive tree. Researchers estimate that the nails used were approximately 5 to 7 inches long (13 to 18 cm) with a square shaft (3/8 inch or 1 cm.). To the left is a reconstructed model of a foot and crucifixion nail.

1117. Caba. "Crucifixion: History and Practice." 12-14; Thiede and d'Ancona. *The Quest for the True Cross*. 66-67.

1118. For an excellent study on the subject, see Robinson. "Crucifixion in the Roman World: The Use of Nails at the Time of Christ." 25-59.



16.01.10.B. CRUCIFIED ANKLE BONE ATTACHED TO OLIVE WOOD.

Shown in the lower right corner are the nail, anklebone, and a piece of olive wood that evidently was secured to the nail. Above it is a reconstructed foot with nail. It is believed that a piece of wood was under the head of the nail to secure the foot to the live tree or to a *crux* (post).

It is amazing that some critics claim that the early church fathers created the crucifixion story along with the accusation that Jesus was against the Roman government. For the early church fathers to do so would have been suicidal – why would they deliberately say that Jesus was anti-Roman, when that was the charge that caused anti-Christian hatred and sent thousands to the cross, gladiator fights, and lion pits? Obviously some critical arguments are not well thought out. Furthermore, it is well known that early Christians identified themselves with a Staurogram – a combination of the Greek letters *tau* and *rho* that look like a human figure hanging on a cross. The Bodmer Papyrus P⁶⁶, is a nearly complete edition of the gospel of John¹¹¹⁹ dated to the early 3rd century, and it contains ten staurograms.¹¹²⁰

1119. For other papyri containing portions of the Epistles and Gospel of John, see <http://catholic-resources.org/John/Papyri.html>. Retrieved March 3, 2015. <http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-topics/crucifixion/the-staurogram/> Retrieved March 4, 2015.

1120. Hurtado, Larry W. "The Staurogram: Earliest Depiction of Jesus's Crucifixion." 50. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papyrus_66 and <https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1842/1204/staurogram+chapter->

As previously stated, when a prisoner was crucified on a low cross beam, four soldiers could easily lift the *patibulum* (cross beam) to its proper position on the top of the post and held in place by a mortise and tenon joint or with pins. Therefore, no nails were needed to hold the two pieces of timber together. If the prisoner was to be hung from a high cross, then ladders or forks were used to lift and secure him in place, but this was rare. Once hung in place, the prisoner had his feet nailed to the post, but with his knees slightly bent. Either way – low cross or high cross – the dying man would push himself up with excruciating pain to gain a breath of air. The open wounds on the back rubbing against the splintery post simply enhanced his agony. It was the ultimate punishment.

Crucifixion victims often spent three or four days in dying agony until death gave them sweet relief. In the case of Jesus, three hours on the cross was a relatively brief time when compared to the dying time of other prisoners. This indicates that the scourging was unusually hard on Him physically, plus He carried the heavy load of the sins of humanity.

A traditional act of mercy on the part of the soldiers was to break the legs or spear the right side to hasten death. This procedure was so common it was even given a name: *crurifragium*.¹¹²¹ In the case of Jesus, the legs were not broken, but His side was speared and, according to the Shroud of Turin, it was the right side. An infantry spear or lance (length: 5-6 ft.; 1.5-1.8 m.) in the right side was the custom of the Roman military.¹¹²² If the legs were broken, death transpired within minutes, because the victim would not have been able to elevate himself to inhale. The fact that the pierced sword caused blood and water to gush out of the body clearly confirms that Jesus was dead. This would be a difficult point to explain in future years by those who claimed that Jesus simply fainted and was later revived.

According to Roman military law, if the soldiers had permitted a condemned man to live, they would have been executed as well. They were not about to take that chance and, therefore, one of them thrust a spear into the side of Jesus.¹¹²³ In addition, at times guards remained with the crucified man even after death to prevent family or friends from taking the body for a dignified burial before it was absolutely too late.¹¹²⁴ Their presence was to insure uttermost humiliation and shame for the criminal and his family. To have a family member crucified was bad enough,

[+Manuscripts+volumea.pdf;jsessionid=04E12A1BCDA79BE1A197C31EDD2A4FB3?sequence=1](#) Retrieved March 3, 2015.

1121. Stein, R. *Jesus the Messiah*. 254; Farrar, *Life of Christ*. 2, 423.

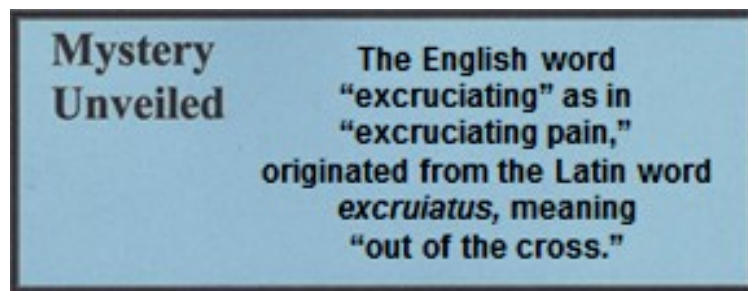
1122. Edwards, Gabel, and Hosmer, "On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ." 1460.

1123. Edwards, Gabel, and Hosmer, "On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ." 1463.

1124. Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus?* 161.

but to have his or her body devoured by wild animals was beyond shame (Jer. 7:33; 19:7; Deut. 28:26). A proper burial was so highly valued in ancient times that it can be hardly understood or appreciated today.

The weight of the body upon the stretched arms and joints caused immense pain. In order to breathe, one had to push up with his feet to inhale. While this relieved the pain for a moment in the arms, it accelerated the pain in his feet and ankles. For this reason, each of the seven last statements spoken by Jesus was relatively short, barely long enough to be said with a single breath of air, as pain and muscle cramps increased. Every movement caused searing pain throughout the entire body, as the open muscle tissues scraped against the rough surface of the wooden post. The nails rubbing against raw nerves sent painful surges – like lightning bolts – through arms and legs that quiver.¹¹²⁵ The symphony of agony from so many points, and even insects, had become acute. Slowly, death came as breathing became increasingly difficult, the muscles relaxed and bodily functions ceased. The stomach stopped functioning, the dry tongue swelled making speech nearly impossible, and blood pressure drops. There was not a great deal of blood loss from the crucifixion, but there was from the previous scourging. This was so painful that the Romans created a new word to describe it; “excruciating,” which comes from the Latin *excruiatus*, meaning “out of the cross.”¹¹²⁶



Finally, the One who gave the breath of life to His most favored creation in the Garden of Eden, died of asphyxia – the loss of breath. Secondary causes of death probably were shock, dehydration, and congestive heart failure.¹¹²⁷ Jesus was hung to die; not only for our sins, but also that we may be recreated in the image of the One who created us in the Garden.

1125. Dauer, *How Jesus Died: The Final 18 Hours*. (Video).

1126. Edwards, Gabel, and Hosmer, “On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ.” 1461.

1127. Edwards, Gabel, and Hosmer, “On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ.” 1461; Stein, R. *Jesus the Messiah*. 245.

16.01.11.Q1 What were the words on the *titulus*?

There are five ancient documents that preserved the words on the *titulus* – the wooden sign that was placed on the cross above Jesus. Note carefully the *literal* translation of each:¹¹²⁸

Mt. 27:37 “This is Jesus, the king of the Jews.”

Mk. 15:26 “The king of the Jews.”

Lk. 22:38 “The king of the Jews [is] this [man].”

Jn. 19:19 “Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews”

Gospel of Peter 4:11 “This is the king of Israel.”



16.01.11.A. AN ILLUSTRATION AND REPRODUCTION OF A ROMAN TITULUS. An illustration (top) of a *titulus* with reproduction below. The *titulus* was a wooden placard carried by the condemned or by the lead soldier, on which was written the reason for his execution. Jesus most certainly carried a *titulus* with the phrase “Jesus, the Natzarene, the King of the Jews” written in three languages:

¹¹²⁸. Literal translations and bracketed inserts by Robert Webb. See Webb, “The Roman Examination and Crucifixion of Jesus.” 747-49.

Hebrew, Latin and Greek.¹¹²⁹ It implied that Jesus was a threat to *Pax Romana*.¹¹³⁰ Reproduction by Marlin King. Photograph by the author.

Again there is a question of what appears to be an apparent conflict.¹¹³¹ Matthew, the former meticulous tax collector and bookkeeper, gave the most detailed account of the sign by recording the name of Jesus, while the other two synoptic writers simply presented the main idea of the sign, that this lifeless body was the “King of the Jews.” Since the people, by the demonstration of placing palm branches before Jesus at His triumphal entry, recognized Him as their king, His name became synonymous with “King of the Jews.”¹¹³² Again, the three languages on the *titulus* simply reflect what each writer considered significant – but the theme remains the same throughout.

These variations of quotations are a classic example of *ipsissima verba* and *ipsissima vox* that was previously described (see 08.03.04.Q4). 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).¹¹³³ Scholars agree that the accuracy of the gospel message does not demand verbal precision.¹¹³⁴ 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 (see 08.05.04).

It was the Roman practice to place a *titulus* over selected crucified criminals for the following three reasons:¹¹³⁵

1. The *titulus* announced the power and authority of the Roman Emperor to crush anyone

1129. See 11.02.18.A, that depicts a titulus on the Arch of Titus.

1130. Mellowes and Cran, Producers. *From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians*. (DVD). Part 1; See “Pax Romana” in Appendix 26.

1131. For further insight of the four variations of the gospel accounts, see 08.03.04.Q4 “What is the significance of verbal statements, “ipsissima verba” and “ipsissima vox?” Similar variations are found in 08.06.06.Q1 “Was the daughter of Jairus dead or asleep?”

1132. Avi-Yonah and Kraeling, *Our Living Bible*. 295.

1133. Wilkins, “Peter’s Declaration concerning Jesus’ Identity in Caesarea Philippi.” 345; Hagner, “Jesus and the Synoptic Sabbath Controversies.” 270; Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages*. vii.

1134. These scholars hold to the Reformed Doctrine of Biblical Inspiration on the concept of *Ipsissima Vox*: Stonehouse, *Origins of the Synoptic Gospels*. 109-10; Murray, *Calvin on Scripture and Divine Sovereignty*. 30; Hodge and Warfield, “Inspiration.” 238.

1135. Stein, R., *Jesus the Messiah*. 247; See also Suetonius, *Caligula* 32.2 and *Domitian* 10:1; Dio Cassius, 54.3.7.

who he thought might present a challenge. It was written in three languages: Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, so that everyone passing by would know the reason for the execution.¹¹³⁶

2. To insult the Jewish leaders and the one whom they considered to be a false messiah.
3. To humiliate the person being executed.

16.01.15.Q1 Concerning the care for Mary, why did Jesus break from the cultural norm?

It may surprise the reader that, evidently, Jesus was not always on the best of terms with His family. Or possibly better said, they were not always on the best of terms with Him. This is evident in several passages and is the most likely reason why Jesus passed the care of His mother to John.

The cultural norm was that the eldest son cared for both parents until they pass on and were buried. Should something have happened to the eldest son so that he cannot perform this responsibility, then that responsibility is passed on to the second eldest son. Clearly, this was not done in this case. As Mary's eldest Son was dying on the cross, but He passed the responsibility to care for His mother on to John. Jesus bypassed His other four half-brothers and two-half sisters, because they were *not* there. John was well loved and Mary, we can assume, would have been more comfortable with him than with her own children. Furthermore, Jesus, with His prophetic foreknowledge, probably knew that His brother James would be martyred, so His mother Mary would be safer with John.

As for John, it was an unspeakable honor to care for her. As soon as the crucifixion was over, John took her home and cared for her. Mary and John, truly a loving "sister" and "brother" in Christ, yielded to the will of Jesus without question. There is no record of how long she lived, but it can safely be assumed that she was well provided for.¹¹³⁷

The resurrection had a dynamic effect on His family. It was then, like with so many others, that the family realized Jesus really was the Messiah. Therefore, when they had heard that the Holy Spirit of God was to come, all came to Jerusalem to receive this special gift. For Acts 1:14 reads that "Mary, the mother of Jesus and with His brothers" was at a prayer meeting that would usher in Pentecost. When Peter stood up to preach, Mary and her sons were among the 120 attendees.

1136. Harrison, *A Short Life of Christ*. 215.

1137. See commentaries on Lk. 2:41-50; Jn. 2:1-11; Lk. 4:16-20; Mk. 6:4; Mt. 12:48-50; Jn. 19:25-27; Acts 1:14.

16.01.18.Q1 Why did Jesus die?

Jesus died for two reasons:

1. He died because He did not conform to the ordinances which the religious leaders had profanely added to the Word of God.
2. Most importantly, He died so that humanity can have eternal life with Him. His death had been symbolized *as* the Lamb of God for nearly fifteen centuries. He died that mankind can be reconciled unto Himself. Reconciliation (Gk. *apokathistemi*) is to restore to an original state,¹¹³⁸ which is, in effect, the Kingdom of God living within those who chose to follow Him. Jesus died because He *was* the Lamb of God, who was crucified for the sins of humanity, and He died because He was the King of Israel.

The day shall come when He will return and hold His rightful position of not only King of Israel, but king of the world. However, the theological answer to this question is found most frequently in confessional statements in the Pauline epistles, where the apostles stated “Christ died for our sins” or “Christ died for us.”¹¹³⁹ Paul understood that the “message of the cross” (1 Cor. 1:18) is a “message of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:19) to unite humanity with God. Second Corinthians 5:21 pointedly states that “God made him (Jesus) sin, who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Video Insert >

16.01.18.V *Man in the Image of God: A Divine Plan from Eternity Past*. Dr. John Soden discusses man’s problem of sin that began in Genesis, and God’s wonderful plan to resolve the issue. Click here if Internet connection is available.

The death of Jesus is known as the “shedding of blood,” meaning His blood. Since the life is in the blood, the shedding of blood is synonymous with death.¹¹⁴⁰ Modern scholarship is challenged by the fact that Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:3 that “Christ died for our sins in

1138. Vorlander and Brown, “Reconciliation, Restoration, Propitiation, Atonement.” 3:144-74..

1139. cf. Rom. 5:6, 8; 14:9-10; 1 Cor. 8:11; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Gal. 2:21; 1 Thess. 5:10.

1140. Mendenhall, “Covenant.” 1:722.

accordance with the Scriptures,” but he never referred to those Scriptures. Evidently, these were not significant to him, or he assumed that his readers were familiar with them. Jesus died to restore man into His image, the image of God – the *imago dei* (Latin phrase).

16.01.18.Q2 What is the Significance of “Shed Blood?”

Without the shedding of blood (death) there is no remission of sin (Heb. 9:22). As stated previously, the blood of bulls and goats sacrificed on the Day of Atonement only **covered** the sins of the people, but the blood of Jesus completely **removed** the sin. Furthermore, the Old Testament sacrificial system did not provide for the covering of the sins of murder and adultery, but the sacrifice of Jesus did. David realized the fallacy of the sacrificial system after he confessed to these two sins, which is why he wrote “create in me a new heart” (Ps. 51:10). His writing would become a foundational prayer in the heart of every new believer seeking the Kingdom of God.

This question has always been, and continues to be, one of the most important questions of life. The essence of His life and death is to restore humanity to a right relationship with Himself. The message has not changed during the centuries. Note the following comments written hundreds of years ago.

To whom was the blood paid out that was shed for us, and why was it shed?...We were in bondage to the evil one, sold under sin, and receiving pleasure in exchange for wickedness. If a ransom belongs not to someone else but to him who holds in bondage, I ask you, to whom was this paid, and for what reason? If to the evil one, O what an outrage!

If to the Father, first I ask, how can that be? For we were not being detained by Him; and second, why would He be delighted by His only begotten Son...surely it is evident, however, that the Father did receive (the sacrifice of His Son), though neither asking nor demanding it, but because of His plan of redemption and so that might we be sanctified by the Humanity of God.

Gregory of Nazianzus, *Second Oration on Easter*¹¹⁴¹

Jesus Christ our Lord, who, on account of His great love, became what we are so that He might bring us to what He Himself is.

1141. Thomas, *The Golden Treasury of Patristic Quotations: From 50 – 750 A.D.* 35.

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*¹¹⁴²

The Sacrificial Victim was offered for all mankind, and was sufficient to save all, but it is believers alone who enjoy the bounty thereof.

John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistle to the Galatians*¹¹⁴³

Not one reason, but many. First, that he might have dominion over the living and the dead. Second, so that, by being sacrificed for us and by becoming a cursed thing on our behalf, He might wipe away our sins. Third, so that He might be offered to the God of all on behalf of the whole world. Fourth, so that He might Himself, with secret words, bring about the destruction of the demoniacal workings which lead so many astray. The fifth is this: so that holding out to His acquaintances and disciples the hope of life with God after death...He might bring on to completion those already more willing and those of greater courage; and so that with His rejection He might proclaim a religious polity to all, to Greeks and barbarians alike.

Eusebius, *Demonstrations of the Gospel*¹¹⁴⁴

Jesus, the perfect human specimen who never sinned, took upon Himself the punishment we deserve for our sins. Phrases such as “His shed blood,” “His death on the cross,” “His sacrifice,” all refer to His cruel death through which we can obtain forgiveness. However, as with any gift, it must be accepted. The phrase “received Jesus,” simply means one has accepted the gift of salvation (saved from the penalty of sin, which is eternal death), made a decision to become disciplined in a life of faith in Jesus, and will develop an attitude of living a holy lifestyle. When He hung dying on the cross, He looked into the future and saw every one of us; He saw you reading this and for Him the old rugged cross was a joy that you might live (Heb. 12:2).

The Jews understood very well the doctrine of sin in terms of willful disobedience and rebellion. What is amazing is that they either had no knowledge of the doctrine of original sin or failed to recognize it. This doctrine states that the nature of all sin originated in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. It further states that because of the original sin, all people have a sin nature and are guilty before a pure and holy God. Mankind’s only hope is found in Christ Jesus. This was a totally new concept for first century Jews and Gentiles. There is no reference to this concept in

1142. Thomas, *The Golden Treasury of Patristic Quotations: From 50 – 750 A.D.* 146.

1143. Thomas, *The Golden Treasury of Patristic Quotations: From 50 – 750 A.D.* 24.

1144. Thomas, *The Golden Treasury of Patristic Quotations: From 50 – 750 A.D.* 76.

any rabbinical writings, nor in any other religion.

A blood sacrifice of some kind as a sin payment was well established in all ancient cultures, as handed down from the dawn of creation. The spilling or shedding of blood in biblical terms is always associated with the death of an innocent person or has reference to death through sacrifice for payment of sin. When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, God clothed them in skins, meaning that God sacrificed an innocent animal for the sins of the first two people. They instructed their sons to present a sacrificial animal to God (Gen. 3:21; 4:4; Heb. 11:4). When the Israelites arrived at Mount Sinai, the Levitical covenant was sealed with a blood sacrifice. It stated, “For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life” (Lev. 17:11). In that sacrifice, the sins of the people were covered or “atoned.” The death of Jesus, however, was a substitute death for our sins, because now no longer do animals have to be killed nor are our sins covered, but they are completely removed. Therefore, we have a better covenant, a victory in this life and eternal life, all because of the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross.¹¹⁴⁵

16.01.18.Q3 How old was Jesus when He died?

Luke recorded that Jesus was about 30 years of age when He began His ministry. This follows the Jewish tradition regarding the proper age when a man was to begin priestly duties in the temple. John records at least three Passovers which Jesus attended (2:13; 6:4; 11:55) during His public ministry, but that does not rule out the possibility that other Passovers were not recorded. Jesus died when Tiberius was Caesar, Pontius Pilate was the prefectus,¹¹⁴⁶ Antipas was the tetrarch, and Joseph Caiaphas was the high priest in the temple. Records indicate that Tiberius died on March 16, A.D. 37, and Pilate ceased to be in power shortly before the Passover in A.D. 36. Caiaphas became High Priest shortly after the Passover in A.D. 18 and served until the year 36. Therefore, if Jesus was born between 6 - 4 B.C., and died in A.D. 30, His age would have been between 33 to 35 years.

1145. Heb. 7:22; 8:9-10; 9:20; 10:16, 19.

1146. The title of Pontius Pilate was always thought to be “procurator.” However, in 1961 an inscription was discovered in Caesarea that has his title as “Prefectus Judaea” (see 16.01.06.B). The explanation of so-called error is that beginning from the time of Emperor Claudius (reigned 41-54), the title of the ruler of Judaea was *procurator*. Josephus and Tacitus who decades later wrote of Pilate used that title rather than his real one – *prefectus*, in Latin. See also Billington, “Was Palace of Herod where Jesus was Tried?” 9.

16.01.18.Q4 What was the year of His death and resurrection?

There were five major considerations to be evaluated when calculating the date of His death and resurrection of Jesus, The result is that most scholars have concluded on two possible dates, A.D. 30 and 33.¹¹⁴⁷

1. How is the 15th year of Tiberius reckoned?
2. How is the Passover in John 2 dated and how many Passovers are recorded in the gospels?
3. How long was the ministry of Jesus, and
4. The evidence in the Mishnah which indicates that the “mysteries” four decades before the destruction of the temple were the result of the crucifixion of Jesus (See below).
5. Evidence from secular sources.¹¹⁴⁸

Part of the difficulty in any time calculation, and the apparent differences between John and the Synoptic gospels, is that the Jews had two calendars (civil and religious). Josephus recorded that Moses introduced a year of holy days and religious festivals that began with the month of Nisan. This was the month of the Exodus and Passover.¹¹⁴⁹ The celebration of Resurrection Day, a/k/a Easter, is the fulfillment of Passover and is reckoned on the solar-lunar cycles, coming on or after the spring vernal equinox (March 21). Moses, however, also kept the civil calendar year that was for buying, selling, and secular affairs. The civil year begins with *Rosh Hashanah* in the month of Tishri (1 Kg. 8:2).¹¹⁵⁰ Obviously historic investigations can be rather challenging. However, in light of the mysteries that occurred some forty years before the destruction of the

1147. While this writer agrees with F.F. Bruce (*New Testament History*, 192 n2) and Arnold Fruchtenbaum, (*The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor's Manual*. Class 20, page 19.) that the year A.D. 30 is the crucifixion date, a majority view appears to lean toward the A.D. 33 date. One of the earliest studies of the crucifixion date was by Sir Robert Anderson (1841-1918) and is titled *The Coming Prince*. It was first published in Great Britain in 1894 and quickly became a classic but it has some problems. In 1978 Dr. Harold Hoehner, in his book *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, resolved four difficulties of Anderson's work. Hoehner presents strong arguments defending an A.D. 33 crucifixion date. See also Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 572. See also Appendix 19.

1148. The writings of the historian Phlegon state that there was an eclipse as well as an earthquake on Passover of A.D. 30. Could he have referred to the strange events that occurred when Jesus died? See Appendix 31 for comments by Phlegon as reported by other historians.

1149. Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.3.3.

1150. Funderburk, “Calendar.” 3:320-22.

temple (see below), there is a majority opinion of scholars that Jesus died in the year A.D. 30. Regardless of the accounts, it is known that,

1. Jesus existed, and
2. He was somewhat older than the 33 years of age that is commonly thought of today.

A strong argument that supports an A.D. 30 date is the statement shouted by the Sadducees, “You are no friend of Caesar.” These words are steeped in the political quagmire in Rome that was caused by personal confidant turned traitor, Sejanus. As stated previously, Sejanus feared for his life and position and did not want to lose his *amici Caesaris*, or “friendship with Caesar” and face execution (which happened in October, A.D. 30).¹¹⁵¹ In that year he was at the height of his power and the emperor’s life was in chaos. If the crucifixion of Jesus had occurred in the year A.D. 33, there would have been no reason for the Sadducees to try to intimidate Pilate with this statement.¹¹⁵² This important point has been overlooked in nearly every study of dating the crucifixion.

Finally, critics have argued that if Jesus was so important, how could His date of birth¹¹⁵³ and crucifixion be forgotten? Their implication is, of course, that in the first century Jesus was not an important figure. The answer lies in the fact that at this time and in this culture, birthdates and death dates were not as significant as what a person did in life. In Western thinking a greater emphasis is placed on these dates, but not in biblical times. Many people of this era did not know when they were born. Very few biblical figures have the date of birth recorded, so the biblical writers cannot be faulted. As some have said, “Uncertainty and debate regarding the precise date of an occurrence is not necessarily an indication of unhistoricity.”¹¹⁵⁴ While there are various viewpoints, the following outline is one to which many scholars agree.¹¹⁵⁵

Saturday, Nisan 8, A.D. 30 (six days before the final Passover - Jn. 11:55)

Jesus arrived at Bethany.

Jesus was anointed at the house of Simon the leper (Mt. 26:6-13; Mk. 14:3-9; Jn.

1151. Maier, *The First Easter*. 3-13.

1152. See 16.01.05 as well as 03.06.25, “A.D. 22-31 Sejanus, the Arch Enemy of Tiberius Caesar” in Historical Backgrounds.

1153. However, the date of birth for Jesus has been calculated by examining when John the Baptist was born and counting forward. He was born at the Feast of Tabernacles as described in 04.03.10.Q2 “When was Jesus born?” .

1154. Marshall, “The Last Supper.” 541.

1155. Adapted from Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*. 90-93. See also Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 3:374-76.

12:1-8).

Sunday, Nisan 9

A large crowd came to see Jesus at Bethany (Jn. 12:9-11).

Monday, Nisan 10 (the next day - Jn. 12:12)

Jews selected their lambs, which would live with them, be examined for purity between the 10th and the 14th day of Nisan, and be sacrificed on Passover (Ex.12:3-6).

Triumphal entry into Jerusalem as the Paschal lamb (Mt. 21:1-9; Mk. 11:1-10; Lk. 19:28-40; Jn. 12:12-19).

The Kingdom of God is no longer offered to the Jewish nation, but Jesus speaks of national judgment.

Jesus visited the temple (Mt. 21:10-11; Mk. 11:11).

Jesus returned to Bethany.

Tuesday, Nisan 11

Return to Jerusalem, fig tree cursed (Mt. 21:18-19; Mk. 11:12-14).

Temple cleansed (Mt. 21:12-13; Mk. 11:15-17; Lk. 19:45-46).

Religious leaders plot to kill Jesus.

Jesus left Jerusalem, probably to Bethany (Mk. 11:18-19; Lk. 19:47-48).

Wednesday, Nisan 12

Return to Jerusalem, disciples saw the dead fig tree (Mt. 21:20-22; Mk. 11:20-26).

Debate with religious leaders at the temple (Mt. 21:23 - 23:39; Mk. 11:27 - 12:44; Lk. 20:1 - 21:4).

Left the temple to give the Olivet Discourse on the Mount of Olives (Mt. 24:1 - 25:46; Mk. 13:1-37; Lk. 21:5-36).

Jesus predicted His crucifixion in two days (Mt. 26:1-5; Mk. 14:1-2; Lk. 22:1-2).

Judas planned to betray Jesus (Mt. 26:14-16; Mk. 14:10-11; Lk. 22:3-6).

Thursday, Nisan 13

Jesus and disciples prepare the Passover lamb (Mt. 26:17-19; Mk. 12-16; Lk. 22:7-13).

Passover celebrated in the Upper Room (Mt. 26:20-30; Mk. 14:17-26; Lk. 22:14-30; Jn. 13:1 - 14:31).

They left the Upper Room.

Jesus prays for His disciples (Mt. 26:30-35; Mk. 14:26-31; Lk. 22:31-39; Jn. 15:1 - 18:1).

They arrive in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Jesus in agony in the Garden (Mt. 26:36-46; Mk. 14:32-42; Lk. 22:39-46; Jn. 18:1).

Jesus betrayed late night (Mt. 26:47-56; Mk. 14:43-52; Lk. 22:47-53; Jn. 18:2-12).

First night trial by Annas, second night trial by Caiaphas (Mt. 26:57-75; Mk. 14:53-72; Lk. 22:54-65; Jn. 18:13-27).

Friday, Nisan 14 (reckoned to the Julian calendar: April 3, A.D. 30)¹¹⁵⁶

Third trial by the Sanhedrin in early morning.

Fourth trial by Pilate.

Fifth trial by Herod Antipas.

Sixth trial by Pilate. (Mt. 27:1-30; Mk. 15:1-19; Lk. 22:66 - 23:25; Jn. 18:28 - 19:16).

9:00 a.m. Jesus crucified.

3:00 p.m. Jesus died (buried before sundown).
(Mt. 27:31-60; Mk. 15:20-46; Lk. 23:26-54; Jn. 19:16-42)

3:00 p.m. Jews sacrificed their Passover lambs (Ex. 12:6; 1 Cor. 5:7).

Saturday, Nisan 15

The body of Jesus lies in the tomb.

Jews secured Roman guards at the tomb (Mt. 27:61-66; Mk. 15:47; Lk. 23:55-56).

Sunday, Nisan 16

Jesus resurrected from the dead (Mt. 28:1-15; Mk. 16:1-13; Lk. 24:1-35).

Jesus is a type of offering of First Fruits which was offered the day after the Sabbath (Lev. 23:9-14; 1 Cor. 15:23).

Finally, it should be noted that several studies have been done concerning the year the 14th day of Nisan was on a Friday.¹¹⁵⁷ Those years were A.D. 27, 30, 33, and 36. Since the years 27 and 36 are highly unlikely, the only two possible years for His death and resurrection, as previously stated, are 30 and 33.

16.01.18.Q5 Are there other ancient writings of tortures and crucifixions?

The Assyrians may have developed the precursor to crucifixions when they impaled a victim on a pole. Some scholars believe that the practice originated in Persia as part of a religious worship

1156. Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*. 375.

1157. For a listing of the studies, see Hoehner, "Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ." *Bibliotheca Sacra*. 336 n34.

of Ormuzd (also known as Ahura Mazda), the chief deity of creation, light and goodness in Zoroastrianism.¹¹⁵⁸ Because a criminal was considered evil, he was crucified “above the earth” as not to defile the earth.¹¹⁵⁹ From the Persian kingdom the practice was passed on to Carthage in North Africa. When the Romans conquered the region they accepted the execution method, but used it for rebels, runaway slaves and for criminals who committed the most horrific crimes. Roman citizens were exempt from it.

What is known, however, is that this horrible method of execution was practiced by the Scythians, some Europeans (Celts, Germans, and Britons), Greeks, Parthians, and Indians. While some historic sources are questionable, it is clear that the Romans were not the instigators of this method.

While the Roman Empire officially ended the practice of crucifixion in the year 315, it unfortunately, continued. There are both ancient and modern records of such horrific executions. This form of execution reveals the depravity of human nature. Below are a few examples.¹¹⁶⁰

522 B.C. The Greek historian Herodotus, writing about 450 B.C., mentions crucifixion three times in his work, *The Histories* (3.125.2-3). In one of his narratives, he described torture that preceded the crucifixion. He mentioned Polycrates who was a tyrant on the island of Samos. He was eventually captured by Oroestes, the Persian governor of Sardis, who tortured and crucified him. It should be noted that not all ancient historians agreed with Herodotus, as some called him “the father of lies.”

519 B.C. Herodotus reported (*The Histories*) that the Persian King Darius I the Great, had 3,000 rebellious citizens crucified.

332 B.C. After Alexander the Great conquered Tyre, he had 2,000 Tyrians crucified along the beach. The account was recorded by Roman senator Quintus Curtius Rufus in his book, *History of Alexander the Great*.

167 B.C Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Syrian-Greek ruler put to death anyone who attempted to observe the Jewish rites of religion. See 03.04.19 for more details concerning this madman. Some scholars consider Antiochus to have been a “type and shadow” of the future Antichrist.¹¹⁶¹

1158. A religion founded by Zoraster where life is explained as a constant conflict between good and evil.

1159. <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Ahriman+and+Ormuzd> Retrieved August 10, 2013.

1160. <http://thes.blogspot.com/2007/02/jews-in-alexandria.html>. Retrieved October 2, 2012.

1161. See “type and shadow” in Appendix 26.

90 – 88 B.C. Eighty women and 800 Pharisees were crucified who were suspected of being witches. See 03.05.10.

A.D. 64 Some scholars have established the date of October 13, as the day that Peter was crucified by Nero. His death is mentioned in a letter written by Clement, Bishop of Rome (A.D. 88-97) to the Corinthians. A second century book, *The Acts of Peter*, says he was crucified upside down because he was not worthy to die in the same manner as was his Lord. Eusebius recorded the same account.¹¹⁶²

A.D. 66-70 Josephus wrote of the actions of the Roman procurator Gessius Florus, whom William Whiston considered to be the most wicked of all procurators.¹¹⁶³ Florus was made ruler of Judea shortly before the First Revolt (A.D. 66-70). When he exercised his demonic power over the Jewish people, he sent soldiers into the Upper Market Place to plunder it, but the soldiers did far more than plunder goods.

So the soldiers, taking this exhortation of their commander in a sense agreeable to their desire of gain, did not only plunder the place they were sent to, but forcing themselves into every house, they slew the inhabitants; so the citizens fled along the narrow lanes (streets) and the soldiers slew those that they caught, and no method of plunder was omitted; they also caught many of the quiet people and brought them before Florus, whom he first chastised with stripes (flogging) and then crucified.

Josephus, Wars 2.14.9 (306)

A.D. 66-70 Josephus continues this account to record that five hundred or more Jews were captured daily during the First Revolt. The killing machine of the Romans continued to the point that they exhausted their supply of trees and crosses. With a demented sense of humor, the Roman General Titus ordered two people to be crucified on every cross, one on either side.

So the soldiers, out of the wrath and hatred they bore against the Jews, nailed those they caught, one after one way, and another after another way, to crosses by way of jest. When their multitude was so great, that room was wanting for the crosses and crosses wanting for the bodies.

1162. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3:1.

1163. William Whiston was the translator of *The Works of Josephus: New Updated Edition*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987.

Josephus, *Wars* 5.11.1 (451)

Philo, who was a Roman senator and contemporary of Josephus, preserved two other accounts of scourging and crucifixion. He described the mocking delight the executioners had in their work.

And those who did these things, mimicked the sufferers, like people employed in the representation of theatrical farces; but the family and friends of those who were the real victims, merely because they sympathized with the misery of their relations, were led away to prison (and) were scourged, were tortured, and after all ill treatment, which their living bodies could endure, found the cross the end of all, and the punishment from which they could not escape.

Philo, *Against Flaccus* 72¹¹⁶⁴

Philo's second description of a crucifixion also reveals how the depraved Romans thought of it as a comedy to persecute and execute in a theater with musicians and dancers. The depravity of humanity is, at times, beyond comprehension.

I have known instances before now of men who had been crucified when this festival and holiday (birthday of the emperor) was at hand, being taken down and given up to their relations in order to receive honors of sepulture, and enjoy such observances as are due the dead; for it used to be considered that even the dead ought to derive some enjoyment from the natal festival of a good emperor, and also that the sacred character of the festival ought to be regarded. But this man did not order men who had already perished on crosses to be taken down, but he commanded living men to be crucified, men to whom the very time itself gave, if not entire forgiveness, still, at all events, a brief and temporary respite from punishment; and he did this after they had been beaten by scourging in the middle of the theater and after he had tortured them with fire and sword; and the spectacle of their sufferings was divided, for the first part of the exhibition lasted from morning to the third or fourth hour, in which the Jews were scourged, were hung up, were tortured on the wheel, were condemned, and were dragged to execution through the middle of the orchestra; and after this beautiful exhibition came the dancers, and the buffoons, and the flute players, and all the other diversions of the theatrical contests.

1164. Yonge, ed. and trans. *The Works of Philo*. 731; Parenthesis mine.

Philo, *Against Flaccus* 83-84

To illustrate the horrors of this act, the Apostle Andrew was crucified in a manner to maximize pain and agony. He was crucified on a low cross to permit wild animals and dogs to feast on his flesh while he was still alive. The account, recorded in an extra-biblical book, reflects a common method of crucifixion.

He (the Proconsul Aegeates) commanded that Andrew be flogged with seven whips. Then he sent him off to be crucified and commanded the executioners not to impale him with nails but stretch him out tied up with ropes, (and) to leave his knees uncut, supposing that by so doing he would punish Andrew even more severely...The executioners ... tied up only the feet and armpits, without nailing up his hands or feet nor severing his knees because of what the proconsul had commanded them, for Aegeates intended to torment him by his being hung and his being eaten by dogs if still alive at night.

***The Acts of Andrew: The Passion of Andrew* 51.1; 54.4¹¹⁶⁵**

480 On September 18 the 150,000 man army (huge for ancient times) Persian army led by King Xerxes, wiped out King Leonidas and his small army that had less than 10,000 soldiers. When the battle was over, Xerxes ordered that the head of Leonidas be cut off and his body crucified.

1920 Archbishop Joachim of Sebastopol, a city in the Ukraine (Soviet Union), was crucified upside down on the royal doors of the Sebastopol Cathedral. It is believed that local Bolsheviks committed the crime.

2006 The Assyrian International News Agency reported that a 14-year old Christian boy was crucified in Basra, Iraq in early October. Another news agency also reported the incident, but neither had confirmed details. Although rarely reported in the Western news media, crucifixions are increasing dramatically today in Muslim countries where radical Muslims hold government power.¹¹⁶⁶

Critics who have stated that the narrative of the crucifixion of Jesus is exaggerated need only to read the accounts of others who died in this manner. Humiliation of the victim, terror upon the population, and demonstration of evil power were critical parts of every execution process.

1165. MacDonald, *The Acts of Andrew*. 395, 407.

1166. For more information see Raymond Ibrahim, *Crucified Again: Exposing Islam's New War on Christians*. Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing. 2013.

Seneca the Younger said in A.D. 65, that suicide is preferred before death on the cross.

Can any man be found willing to be fastened to the accursed tree, long sickly, already deformed, swelling with ugly tumors on chest and shoulders, and draw the breath of life amid long-drawn-out agony? I think he would have many excuses for dying even before mounting the cross.

Seneca the Younger, *Epistles* 101.14

Even in the Old Testament Period, criminals and enemies of the Hebrews were executed and then hung on a cross for public display and humiliation.¹¹⁶⁷ But the idea of placing a live person on a cross to die in agony became popular in the Inter-Testamental Period. Seven centuries earlier the prophet Isaiah said that the Messiah would be disfigured beyond recognition (Isa. 52:14).

So intense was this horrible death, that the modern English word “excruciating” as in “excruciating pain” comes from a Latin word meaning “out of the cross.” Yet after this beating and humbled position, His body tormented with physical abuse, Jesus prayed, “Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Lk 23:34). Such is the incredible love of Jesus.

Finally, for the benefit of the reader as well as the serious Bible scholar, there are several extra-biblical writings that refer to the crucifixion of Jesus that appear attractive. However, caution is advised. The more distant in time and distance a book is from the event it describes, the greater the probability of historical errors and creative writing. For example, two writings were found in Egypt in the late 1800s. One is the *Gospel of Peter* 2:3-5 that has a brief description of the crucifixion, and the other is the Oxyrhynchus Papyrus # 2949. Both differ significantly from the biblical narrative by claiming that Pilate was declared innocent of his judgment in which he condemned Jesus to the cross. The early church condemned the *Gospel* as heretical by the year 200, and Eusebius claimed it to be a false book in his *History of the Church* 6.12.2-6 and 6.13.1a in writing to Serapion, the bishop of Antioch.¹¹⁶⁸

1167. Deut. 21:22-23; Jos. 8:23, 29; 10:5, 26-27; Josephus, *Antiquities* 4.8.6.

1168. An excellent resource for further study is Webb, “The Roman Examination and Crucifixion of Jesus.” 680-95.

16.01.18.Q6 What significant extra-biblical writings refer to Jesus and early Christians?

A number of secular writers made a reference to Jesus in some manner. A brief description of the authors, if known and their literary works are presented in Appendix 31, “Significant Extra-Biblical Writings That Refer To Jesus And Early Christians.”

17.01.01.Q1 What were the strange and miraculous events that occurred when Jesus died that are not recorded in the Bible?

Just as the ministry life of Jesus was full of wonder, so was His death – an event that everyone quickly discovered – was orchestrated by God. The Jewish leaders refused to acknowledge that these events could have been related to Jesus, but an explanation had to be given. Therefore, Jewish legends say that these occurred after Simeon the Just died.¹¹⁶⁹

Phenomena 1: The Temple Doors Open

When Jesus died, the temple doors opened on their own accord and sacrifices ended exactly forty years later. These doors were huge – seventy cubits high and twenty wide – and obviously quite heavy.¹¹⁷⁰ According to Josephus, no less than twenty men (Levites) were needed to open and close each one.¹¹⁷¹ No wonder that Jewish writers noted the unusual event in the Talmud:

Forty years before the destruction of the temple, its doors opened of their own accord. Jochanan, son of Saccai, rebuked them, saying, O temple, why did you open of your own accord? Ah! I perceive that your end is at hand; for it is written: “Open your doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour your cedars.”

Babylonian Talmud, *Zechariah 11:1*

The mystery of the doors opening by themselves and the fire that followed was also recorded elsewhere in the Babylonian Talmud. Furthermore, the account was related to two prophetic passages, Isaiah 10:34 and Zechariah 11:1, by a first century rabbi. These two verses do not mention the word “temple,” but the name “Lebanon” which was synonymous with the word “temple” for more than a thousand years. The reason for the connection was that the interior of Solomon’s temple was paneled with Lebanon cedars. But there’s more: The phrase “O Lebanon” is actually a Hebrew word play. The phrase had become a cryptic name for the temple, since its

1169. For further study, see Plummer, “Something Awry in the Temple?” 301-16.

1170. Seventy by 20 cubits is about 105 feet high by 30 feet wide. The doors were heavy due to their size and gold covering.

1171. Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.11 (119).

root letters formed the Hebrew word “whiten” and it was at the “white temple” where the sins of the people were “whitened.” The interior of the temple was paneled with cedar wood from Lebanon and the exterior was a bright white limestone.

This mysterious event of the temple doors opening did not escape the pen of Josephus. He said that the doors were so massive that normally twenty men had to struggle to close them, but now they opened on its own accord, giving the ominous warning that enemies would soon enter. Note the incredible account,

Moreover, the eastern gate of the inner [court of the] temple which was of brass and vastly heavy, and had been, with difficulty, shut by twenty men, and rested upon a basis armed with iron, and had bolts fastened very deep into the firm floor which was made of one entire stone, was seen to be opened of its own accord about the sixth hour of the night. Now those that kept watch in the temple came to the captain of the temple and told him of it; who then came up [to see] and, without great difficulty was able to shut the gate again.... But the men of learning understood it, that the security of their holy place was dissolved of its own accord, and that the gate was opened for the advantage of their enemies.

Josephus, *Wars* 6.5.3 (293-295)¹¹⁷²

With the fearful thought of a coming destruction, another rabbi made this amazing comment,

“Because of the sins of Israel, the Torah (God’s Word) would be taken from Israel and given to the Gentiles.”

Babylonian Talmud, *Hagigah* 5b¹¹⁷³

His observation was obviously correct – God’s Word (Torah) was taken to the Gentiles. The prediction by the rabbi is amazing. Yet at no time did Jesus ever imply that the Old Testament covenant was broken or discarded because the Jewish leadership rejected Him.

The term *legend* is often defined as a mythical event that is based upon a historical event.¹¹⁷⁴ As the actual details are transmitted from one person to another, these become enhanced and a

1172. Bracketed insert by Whiston, ed.

1173. Santala, *The Messiah in the New Testament*. 43.

1174. Cited by Gurtner, Daniel M. “The Veil of the Temple in History and Legend.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. 49:1 (March, 2006). 107-08.

legend is born. This historical account, as reported by the Roman historian Tacitus is a classic example.

These doors, opening by themselves must have had a profound effect upon the observers as even Tacitus attempted to describe it. He was not an observer in Jerusalem so therefore, his words reflect the proverbial rumor mill gossips as well as his Greco-Roman religious faith. Nonetheless, he clearly described the opening of the doors and the fear that came with the event. He must have reflected the opinion of many others as well.

Contending hosts were seen meeting in the skies, arms flashed, and suddenly the temple was illumined with fire from the clouds. Of a sudden the doors of the shrine opened and a superhuman voice cried: “The gods are departing”: at the same moment the mighty stir of their going was heard. Few interpreted these omens as fearful; the majority firmly believed that their ancient priestly writings contained the prophecy that this was the very time when the East should grow strong and that men starting from Judea should possess the world.”

Tacitus, *Histories* 5:13

The final comment is not only profound for what it says, but by whom it was said. A friend of Nicodemus (the same who met Jesus at night) by the name of Johanan Ben Zakkai¹¹⁷⁵ said:

“Oh temple, temple... I know that you shall be destroyed.”¹¹⁷⁶

Ben Zakkai was one of the leading rabbis who opposed the corruption of the leading Pharisees and Sadducees. His prediction is amazing...the temple was about to be destroyed and he was right!

Phenomena 2: The Missing Sacrificial Scape-goat

As part of the sacrificial system, every year two identical goats, preferably twins, were chosen. One was sacrificed in the temple and its blood soaked linen was hung on the temple door. In Leviticus 16:20-22, Moses commanded Aaron to place the sins of the people on the head of a goat. That goat became known as the “scapegoat” and was then led into the desert wilderness. There it was taken to the Cliff of Azazel,¹¹⁷⁷ pushed over the edge, and presumably devoured by

1175. Rabbi Zakkai was the last disciple of the famous Rabbi Hillel. See Parry, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Talmud*. 38-39.

1176. Rabbi Zakkai was the last disciple of the famous Rabbi Hillel. See Parry, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Talmud*. 39.

1177. The meaning of *Azazel* is uncertain, but it was probably a desert demon. See Mishnah, *Yoma* 1.5; 6.4; Lev. 16:6-10 and Barclay, *Jesus*. 314.

wild predators after dying on the rocks below. The words of Moses in Leviticus are presented, followed by the events in the temple, as recorded in the Mishnah.

²⁰ “When he has finished purifying the most holy place, the tent of meeting, and the altar, he is to present the live male goat. ²¹ Aaron will lay both his hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the Israelites’ wrongdoings and rebellious acts — all their sins. He is to put them on the goat’s head and send it away into the wilderness by the man appointed for the task. ²² The goat will carry on it all their wrongdoings into a desolate land, and he will release it there.

Leviticus 16:20-22

However, after the crucifixion when the scapegoat was pushed over the edge of the cliff, it ran off into the desert where it was eventually captured and killed by the Saracens.¹¹⁷⁸ Another tradition says that one time the scapegoat returned to Jerusalem. Clearly things did not go very well for the priests as planned. Whatever the situation of the scapegoat, this sacrifice was connected with the next phenomena – the scarlet wool that failed to turn white.

Phenomena 3: The Mystery of the Scarlet Wool

When the goats were presented in the temple, the blood-soaked woolen thread of the sacrificed goat was tied to the temple door. This tradition was based on a passage in the book of Isaiah.

Come, let us discuss this,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are as red as crimson, they will be like wool.

Isaiah 1:18

In the meantime the scapegoat was led out of the temple, over the Mount of Olives, and into the Judean Desert where it was pushed over the Cliff of Azazel as previously mentioned. As the scapegoat was being led away, all eyes in the temple were focused on the wool thread that was tied to the temple door. When the scapegoat – the one which carried the sins of the all the people – died, the strap of crimson wool miraculously became white, obviously indicating that the sins of the people were forgiven. Jewish writings preserved two accounts of this unusual event.

Rabbi Ishmael says: “Didn’t they have another sign also? A thread of crimson wool was tied to the door of the sanctuary and when the he-goat reached the wilderness the thread turned white; for it is written, ‘Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow’” (Isa. 1:18).

1178. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 2:77.

Mishnah, Yoma 6.8

However, after the national rejection of Jesus, (“about” 40 years prior to the destruction of the temple) the crimson thread on the temple door never turned white again.

Our rabbis taught that throughout the forty years that Shim’on the Tzaddik served, ... the scarlet cloth would become white. From then on it would sometimes become white and sometimes not.... Throughout the last forty years before the temple was destroyed... the scarlet cloth never turned white.

Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 39a-39b

Great caution was taken to avoid any association of these phenomena and the death of Jesus in Jewish writings. Prior to the death of Jesus, all the sins of the people were atoned by the Old Covenant’s sacrificial system. Upon His death and resurrection, however, their sins were no longer removed by sacrifices, even though the sacrificial system continued.

While some scholars apply this passage to the temple destruction of 586 B.C., Jewish commentaries also apply it to the destruction of A.D. 70. This interpretation originated with Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai,¹¹⁷⁹ the last survivor of the Great Sanhedrin and who boldly escaped the Roman siege as the temple burned and thousands were massacred.¹¹⁸⁰ A friend of the Sanhedrin teacher Nicodemus (the same who met Jesus) by the name of Johanan Ben Zakkai said:

Our rabbis taught: during the last forty years before the destruction of the temple the lot [for the Lord] did not come up in the right hand; nor did the crimson-colored strap become white; nor did the westernmost light shine; and the doors of the *Hekal* would open by themselves, until Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai rebuked them, saying *Hekal, Hekal*, why wilt thou be the alarmer thyself? I know about thee that thou wilt be destroyed, for Zechariah ben Ido has already prophesied concerning thee: *Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars.*

1179. Rabbi Zakkai was the last disciple of the famous Rabbi Hillel. See Parry, *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to the Talmud*. 38-39.

1180.
http://books.google.com/books?id=57E3AAAAIAAJ&pg=PA238&lpg=PA238&dq=Jerusalem+Talmud,+Yoma+43:3&source=bl&ots=vOyuShzS_k&sig=tgDCi3Z-1bZE6sU_dfdI_C5umg&hl=en&sa=X&ei=jAqyUPzgAayM0QH3hoCwCA&sqi=2&ved=0CD4Q6AEwAw.
 Retrieved November 25, 2012.

Babylonian Talmud, *Yoma* 39b¹¹⁸¹

This brief narrative in the Talmud is not the only one with in such observations. Similar omens of judgment (that God had forsaken His temple) are found also in *2 Baruch* 6:7 and in the *Testament of Levi* 10:3. This miracle occurred annually at *Yom Kippur* in the temple until the year Jesus died. The death and resurrection of Jesus rendered the temple obsolete. Its destruction was a sure event on a divine timetable.

Phenomena 4: Difficulties with the Servant Lamp

Once, when Jesus was in the temple area at the Feast of Lights, He said that He was the light of the world. Scholars believe this conversation occurred by the menorah called the “Servant Lamp.” Amazingly, after His death there was great difficulty in lighting the Servant Lamp, and once it was lit, it did not always remain lit.¹¹⁸² Fresh olive oil and new wicks did not help. Rabbis began to write that God was demonstrating His anger with Israel while foreshadowing the destruction of the temple, but they were careful not to mention the name “Jesus.”

Forty years before the destruction of the temple, the Servant Lamp refused to light.

Jerusalem Talmud, *Yoma* 43:3

The Jewish leaders had difficulty explaining why the Servant Lamp no longer shone in the temple area. No one dared to connect it with the crucifixion of Jesus, so the reason was placed upon the death of Simeon the Just/Righteous.¹¹⁸³ In the Talmud is the following statement:

All the time that Simeon the Righteous was alive, the western lamp would burn well. When Simeon the Righteous died, sometimes it would flicker out, and sometimes it would burn.

Babylonian Talmud, *Yoma* 6.3¹¹⁸⁴

But there is a serious problem with Jewish reckoning: Simeon the Righteous, a/k/a Simon the Just, is said to be the high priest Simon II who lived around the year 200 B.C., and was

1181. Emphasis by Talmudic editors.

1182. According to tradition, when the Roman General Titus plundered the temple, he took the Servant’s lamp and other treasures and moved them to Rome where he paraded them through the streets. A stone relief of that parade, along with the menorah, was carved into the Arch of Titus that stands along the Apian Way. Today these relics are believed to be in a vault four stories below under the Vatican.

1183. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 2:77.

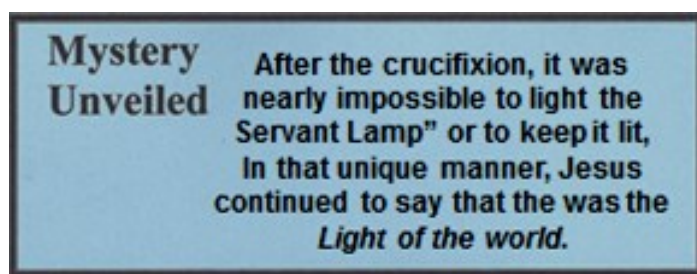
1184. Cited by Plummer, “Something Awry in the Temple?” 308.

succeeded by Onias III.¹¹⁸⁵ However, there are another half dozen religious leaders who could have had the honorary title of “the Righteous” or “the Just,” and knowing who the Talmudic writers meant is unclear – and maybe it was intended to be that way.

Later, when the Romans came in A.D. 70, the first century historian described how they removed the menorah. It was eventually taken to Rome where, it is believed, it remains today in the Vatican.

But for those that were taken in the temple of Jerusalem, they made the greatest figure of them all; that is, the golden table, of the weight of many talents; the candlestick also, that was made of gold, though its construction were now changed from that which we made use of; for its middle shaft was fixed upon a basis, and the small branches were produced out of it to a great length, having the likeness of a trident in their position, and had every one a socket made of brass for a lamp at the tops of them. These lamps were in number seven, and represented the dignity of the number seven among the Jews.

Josephus, *Wars* 7.5.5 (149)¹¹⁸⁶



Amazingly, two ancient Jewish scholars concluded the temple would be destroyed. Likewise was the comment by the rabbi, who said that God’s plan is to bring salvation (he said “Torah”) to the Gentiles. Shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem, the Jewish writer of the Fourth Book of Ezra commented,

For you see how our sanctuary has been laid waste, our altar thrown down, our temple destroyed; our harp has been laid low, our song has been silenced, and our rejoicing has ended; the light of our lampstand has been put out, the ark of our

1185. Plummer, “Something Awry in the Temple?” 308 n28. The name Simon, like Jesus, was a popular name. There was a significant “Simon the Just” who lived around 300 B.C., another in the second century B.C. (*1 Macc.* 14:41), and a third during the time of Jesus; Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.2.5; Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ*. 1:101, 360; Multiple persons with the same name can present challenges in biblical and extra-biblical research.

1186. <http://www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/JOSEPHUS.HTM>. Retrieved November 25, 2012.

covenant has been plundered, our holy things have been polluted, and the name by which we are called has been almost profaned; our children [or: free men] have suffered abuse, our priests have been burned to death, our Levites have gone into [captivity], our virgins have been defiled, and our wives have been ravished; our righteous men [or our seers] have been carried off, our little ones have been cast out, our young men have been enslaved and our strong men made powerless. And, worst of all, the seal of Zion has been depraved of its glory and given over into the hands of those that hate us.

4 Ezra 10:21-24¹¹⁸⁷

Why did the Servant Lamp not retain its flame? It was because Jesus functioned both as the Servant and the Light of the world, which national Israel rejected.

Phenomena 5: The fire wood that would not burn

For more than five centuries, ever since the second temple was built, when the fire upon the altar was lit in the morning, two logs were sufficient to keep it burning all day long. However, after the crucifixion of Jesus, the fire would at times go out, even with additional firewood.¹¹⁸⁸

Phenomena 6: The Shewbread that “failed.”

The rituals of the second temple were well established. Just as the altar fires were kept burning for centuries, so likewise every morning a blessing was placed over the temple showbread that was divided among the priests and eaten until they were all filled. However, after the crucifixion of Jesus, the priests remained hungry.¹¹⁸⁹

These six strange events were not connected with the death and resurrection of Jesus, but with the death of Simeon the Just. The religious leaders refused to acknowledge what they knew beyond any shadow of doubt – that Jesus was their Messiah.

Summary statement: Finally, a summary statement of four of these events is found in the Babylonian Talmud. It says,

1187. Scholars debate on the classification of *3rd Ezra* (a/k/a *1 Esdras*) and *4th Ezra* (a/k/a *2nd Esdras*). Sometimes these are listed in the Apocrypha (see 02.02.03) and other times they are listed in the Pseudepigrapha (see 02.02.24). 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.

1188. Cited by Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 2:77.

1189. Cited by Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 2:77.

It has been taught: Forty years before the destruction of the temple the western light went out, the crimson thread remained crimson, and the lot for the Lord always came up in the left hand. They would close the gates of the temple by night and get up in the morning and find them wide open. Said [to the temple] Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, “O temple, why do you frighten us? We know that you will end up destroyed. For it has been said, “Open your doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour your cedars!” (Zech. 11:1).

Babylonian Talmud, *Yoma* 6.3¹¹⁹⁰

17.01.02.Q1 What became of the Sanhedrin after the crucifixion of Jesus?

After the death of Jesus, the Sanhedrin was exiled from its regular meeting place in the Chamber of Hewn Stone within the temple. The reason why it was relocated is shrouded in mystery, but interestingly, the Babylonian Talmud states that it was relocated to a hilltop known as *Hanuth* (see 17.01.02.A).

Forty years before the temple was destroyed did the Sanhedrin abandon (the Temple) and held its sittings in Hanuth.

Babylonian Talmud, *Zarah* 8b

The location of the “Hanuth” appears to be a subject of debate. While some believe it was another location on the Temple Mount, the majority opinion is that the High Court met on a hill south of the temple. Ironically, that hill became known as the Hill of Evil Counsel and today is the home of the United Nations headquarters in Israel.

After the crucifixion of Jesus, the Sanhedrin continued to function until the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70. Caiaphas and the Sadducees were all mercilessly slaughtered. Unfortunately, their corruption and arrogance continued to be a hallmark of this body. New members were brought into the Sanhedrin to replace those killed in the revolt. The high court was then relocated to Tiberias and eventually disbanded.¹¹⁹¹

1190. Cited by Plummer, “Something Awry in the Temple?” 306.

1191. See “Sanhedrin” in Appendix 26.

17.01.02.Q2 Are there other examples of merciless actions by this Court prior to A.D. 70?

Yes. It can be assumed that if the Sadducee-controlled high court was so powerfully wicked as to stage the execution of Jesus, then may have been other cases where this same abuse of power was demonstrated. As previously mentioned,¹¹⁹² Josephus recorded the account of Honi, the “Circle Drawer.”¹¹⁹³ Jewish writers also preserved two accounts, but first, the summary account of Honi:

In the year 63 B.C., the religious leaders were challenged by Honi, who had become a popular folk hero. People said that when he prayed, God answered. He is best remembered for the time when there was a severe drought. He drew a circle in the dust, sat inside the circle, and prayed until it rained. Soon it did. The leading Pharisees and Sadducees were greatly angered that he could perform such a miracle, especially since he had not graduated from one of their established seminaries in Jerusalem. Since they could not excommunicate him because the people loved him, they secretly had him killed.¹¹⁹⁴

There are also several examples recorded in Jewish writings of which the following two are of interest and a third that is obviously a legend. At one time a priest who was assumed impure was clubbed to death without a trial, as recorded in the Mishnah.

A priest served [at the altar] in a state of uncleanness [and] his brethren the priests did not bring him to the court, but the young men among the priests took him outside the temple Court and split open his brain with clubs.

Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 9:6

In another case, the daughter of a priest was burned for being suspected of adultery and, again, there was no evidence of a trial. The Roman law against capital punishment was ignored.

It happened once that a priest's daughter committed adultery and they encompassed her with bundles of branches and burnt her.

Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 7:2

However, the most common account that survived the centuries is the legend of Rabbi Eliezer.

1192. See 03.05.14 63 B.C. “Honi, the Jewish Miracle Worker killed.”

1193. Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.2.1 (22-24)

1194. Neusner and Green, eds., *Dictionary of Judaism*. 300.

The court of Caiaphas was so famously wicked that a mythical story about it was recorded in the third or fourth century. This and other accounts illustrate that Jesus was not the only one who had conflicts with the Sanhedrin. With the Sadducees annihilated in A.D. 70, the court was in the hands of the Pharisee elitists. Unfortunately, they too were corrupt and ignored jurisprudence,¹¹⁹⁵ when convenient.

According to the legend, a certain Rabbi Eliezer was a righteous man who criticized the Sanhedrin for its evil ways. To prove that he was truly a man of God, he performed three miracles.

1. He mystically relocated a carob tree,
2. He made water in a stream flow backwards, and finally,
3. He made a wall lean to a side without falling over – an inclining wall (original writing is unclear of the purpose of this wall).

These three miracles were performed to prove to the Sanhedrin that God's divine authority and power was with him. However, even when the voice of the Lord came forth, the response of the high court was negative.

On that day, Rabbi Eliezer brought forward every imaginable argument, but they would not accept them. Said he to them: “If the Halachah (Scripture)¹¹⁹⁶ agrees with me, let this carob tree prove it!” Thereupon the carob tree was torn a hundred cubits out of its place - others affirmed four hundred cubits.¹¹⁹⁷ No proof can be brought from the carob tree, they retorted.

Again, he said to them: “If the Halachah agrees with me, let the stream of water prove it!” Whereupon the stream of water flowed backwards.¹¹⁹⁸ No proof can be brought from a stream of water, they rejoined.

Again, he urged: “If the Halachah agrees with me, let the walls of the

1195. “Jurisprudence” is the study and philosophy of law, and in this case, the course of legal procedure according to law.

1196. Clarification mine.

1197. Sources disagree on the distance. http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/352329/jewish/The-Walls-of-the-Study-Hall.htm. Retrieved September 28, 2015.

1198. In an aqueduct http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/352329/jewish/The-Walls-of-the-Study-Hall.htm. Retrieved September 28, 2015.

schoolhouse¹¹⁹⁹ prove it.” Whereupon the walls inclined to fall. But Rabbi Joshua rebuked them saying: “When scholars are engaged in a Halachic dispute, what have you to interfere?” Hence, they did not fall in honor of Rabbi Joshua, nor did they resume the upright in honor of Rabbi Eliezer, and they are still standing thus inclined. Again, he said to them: “If the Halachah agrees with me, let it be proven from heaven!” Whereupon a Heavenly Voice cried out: “Why do you dispute with Rabbi Eliezer, seeing that in all matters the Halachah agrees with him!” But Rabbi Joshua arose and exclaimed: “This is not heaven” (Deut. 30:12). “What did he mean by this?” Said Rabbi Jeremiah: “That the Torah had already been given at Mount Sinai; we pay no attention to a Heavenly Voice; ‘After the majority must one incline’” (Ex. 23:2).

Babylonian Talmud, *Baba Mezia* 59a-b¹²⁰⁰

While this is an old passage, obviously it has been translated for the benefit of modern readers. Hence, problems with it include the term “schoolhouse,” as synagogues in ancient times also served as local schools. Another problematic phrase is “inclined,” which, in this context, means the Sanhedrin was favorably disposed to its own decision.

Video Insert >

17.01.02.V *The Legend of Rabbi Eliezer and the Sanhedrin*. Mr. Avinoam Boyer discusses the Legend of Rabbi Eliezer and his confrontation with the Sanhedrin. Introduction by Dr. Bill Heinrich. Click here if Internet connection is available.

This account clearly indicates that first century Sanhedrin used its power for its own purposes. It is a remarkable record of dependence upon human reasoning that is supposedly said to be based upon biblical regulation (i.e. Deut. 30:12; Ex. 23:2), while ironically, rejecting the voice of God Who gave the biblical regulations. It is not surprising to see that these Scriptures were taken out of context to support the argument against Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus.

The Sanhedrin had degraded to the point that it no longer followed its own code of conduct. It

1199. A “House of Study” http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/352329/jewish/The-Walls-of-the-Study-Hall.htm. Retrieved September 28, 2015.

1200. http://www.come-and-hear.com/babamezia/babamezia_59.html#59b_5 Retrieved December 10, 2011.

not only failed miserably concerning the three so-called trials of Jesus, but also with His half-brother James. Evidently the number of followers of Jesus was growing exponentially, to the point that the Sadducees were desperate to do anything to stop the movement. According to Josephus, they eventually,

Assembled the Sanhedrin of judges and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others [or, some of his companions].

Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.9.1 (200b)

James and those “others,” mentioned by Josephus, against whom accusations were made by the Sadducees, were stoned to death. The historian said that Ananus was the high priest responsible for the death of James. When King Agrippa heard of the gross injustice, he removed Ananus from the high priesthood position where he had served in that capacity for only three months.¹²⁰¹

17.02.01.Q1 Does Luke 23:1 conflict with 23:51?

The first verse of Chapter 23 indicates that the entire court voted against Jesus whereas verse 51 states that Joseph of Arimathea¹²⁰² did not consent to their decision. This is not a matter of conflict, but indicates that he was not present during the trial. The Sanhedrin was composed of seventy members, plus the high priest who was also the president. For a capital crime, only twenty-three members plus the president had to serve as judges. In this case the court judges were hand selected by Caiaphas to agree with his decision. Joseph of Arimathea was among those absent.

17.02.02.Q1 How was the burial of Jesus similar to the Exodus?

The burial of Jesus was similar to the hasty exodus by the children of Israel as they left Egypt, when they barely had time to gather their belongings and leave. Jesus was crucified at 9:00 a.m. and was dead by 3:00 p.m. in the afternoon. There was very little time left before the Sabbath would begin about three hours later. So the body had to be taken down in haste, properly prepared for burial, and buried before three stars appeared in the sky (the sign of the end of the day and the beginning of the day of Passover). Jews did not practice any type of embalming, but

1201. Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.9.1.

1202. Arimathea was a small village about twenty miles west of Jerusalem in the hill country of Ephraim.

washed the body and wrapped it in spices and linens.¹²⁰³ The burial process included pronouncing a blessing over the spices.¹²⁰⁴ The burial rituals for Jesus were hastily performed as the sun was setting. Just as the Israelites had walked through the Red Sea into a new life and new freedom, Jesus walked through the gates of hell and arose to give humanity a new life and new freedom.

There are two significant issues here.

1. The importance of a proper burial and

2. The law of unrelated identities.¹²⁰⁵

At this time, a tomb was a cave-like chamber carved out of the rock with a shelf or bench to one side, where the body would be placed. After the flesh was completely decayed, the bones would be collected and placed in a clay, wooden, or stone box known as an ossuary. Wealthy families acquired stone ossuaries, while common peasants acquired ones made from wood or clay. The name of the deceased was placed on the box and, at times, his occupation was mentioned as well.¹²⁰⁶ Tombs were used repeatedly by the same family. It was said that the deceased was “gathered to his kin” (Gen 25:8) or was “sleeping with his fathers” (1 Kg. 11:23).

17.02.02.Q2 Why was Jesus buried in a new tomb?

Jesus was buried in a new tomb, because failure to do so would have broken the law of unrelated identities. This law originated with Moses and was, therefore, deemed highly important. The Jews believed, for example, that mules and donkeys could not be yoked together for any type of agricultural activity, nor could Jews marry non-Jews. Likewise, New Testament teaches that believers and unbelievers were not to be married. Rules of such unrelated identities were extended to include burial tombs and stated that only family members could be buried in family tombs.

Since Jesus was the Son of God and not the son of two earthly parents, He was buried in a new

1203. Mishnah, *Shabbath* 23.5.

1204. Babylonian Talmud, *Seder Zera'im Berakoth* 53a.

1205. The law of unrelated identities includes principles of kosher foods, not being unequally yoked, not mixing different materials to make fabrics, etc. See Fruchtenbaum, *The Jewish Foundation of the Life of Messiah: Instructor's Manual*. Class 26, page 14.

1206. Crossan and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*. 237-39.

tomb that never had been used by anyone's family. Even after His death, Jesus honored the Mosaic Law of unrelated identities. To have buried Him in a family tomb would have identified Him with that particular family. Jesus was both Son of Man and Son of God and, hence, He was in need of a new tomb.

The Babylonian Talmud, on the other hand, indicates that executed criminals were not buried in the family tomb, but in one of two cemeteries as determined by the mode of death. The Talmud reads:

And they did not bury him (the executed person) in his ancestral tomb, but two burial places were prepared by the beth din, one for those who were decapitated or strangled, and the other for those who were stoned or burned.

Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 46 a-b

Although this regulation was not always observed, it was a way to disconnect the shame of the criminal from his family. Nonetheless, innocent victims who were crucified were buried in family tombs. The possible separation of burial apart from former family members served to discourage those who entertained thoughts of committing a crime.

17.02.02.Q3 Where was Jesus buried?

For centuries the burial tomb of Jesus was accepted as being in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. However, for more than a century, Protestants have followed the opinion of a General Gordon who said Jesus was buried in the Garden Tomb. A third site has emerged and, all three are listed below, followed by a brief discussion of each.

1. The Mount of Olives
2. The Garden tomb
3. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre

1. The Mount of Olives

In the spring of 1988, a book titled *Secrets of Golgotha*¹²⁰⁷ challenged the prevailing opinions of scholars with the argument that Jesus was crucified on the Mount of Olives. While the fact that

¹²⁰⁷ Martin, Ernest L. *Secrets of Golgotha: The Forgotten History of Christ's Crucifixion*. Associates for Scriptural Knowledge: Alhambra, CA. 1988. See also Ritmeyer, "A Response to Dr. Ernest Martin." 117-121.

Jesus died when the Passover lamb was sacrificed is undeniable, the author also connects the burning of the red heifer¹²⁰⁸ symbolically to Jesus.¹²⁰⁹

The Jewish records state that the altar for the red heifer sacrifice was located *east* of the temple.¹²¹⁰ To accommodate the priests, Herod the Great had built a double-tiered arched bridge that connected the Eastern Gate to the Mount of Olives. That bridge was known as the Bridge of the Red Heifer and, in fact, appears to have been constructed solely for that purpose and to lead the scapegoat out of the temple and into the desert.¹²¹¹ The bridge did not connect to any highways and there were no major communities east of the Mount of Olives; only a village known for its lepers, a huge olive grove, and an altar that has been lost in history. It would have been most unusual to build a huge bridge for merely a small village and olive grove. Therefore, its purpose had to be connected to sacrificial observances. While the sacrifice of the Passover lamb is well established in Christendom, the meaning of the sacrifice of the red heifer and how it relates specifically to Jesus is seldom discussed. In fact, it appears to have been forgotten in history. The author of *Secrets* essentially states that Jesus was crucified on the Mount of Olives as a sin offering just as the red heifer was previously burned as a sin offering. An interesting statement in the Mishnah says that the eastern wall of the temple was lower than the other walls so the high priest, when burning the red heifer, could look directly into the temple.

All the walls there were high, save only the eastern wall, because the [high] priest that burns the [red] heifer and stands on the top of the Mount of Olives should be able to look directly into the entrance of the Sanctuary when the blood is sprinkled.

Mishnah, *Middoth* 2.4¹²¹²

An essential question he proposes is this: Why have so few theologians, archaeologists, and historians been interested in finding the site of the red heifer altar on the Mount of Olives?¹²¹³ Maybe in the future this question will be answered, but until then, Martin's thesis is set aside and

1208. The red heifer was a necessary component for the purification of a person who came in contact with a dead body. There was a special ritual entailing the sprinkling of its ashes. See Parry, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Talmud*. 115.

1209. See a book review by W. H. C. Frend (1989) of Ernest L. Martin's "Secrets of Golgotha. The Forgotten History of Christ's Crucifixion." *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*. 40, 449-449.

1210. Mishnah, *Middoth* 1:3; 2:4; Mishnah, *Yoma* 7:2; Babylonian Talmud, *Yoma* 68a; Babylonian Talmud, *Zebhim* 105b.

1211. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 1:83-84.

1212. Inserts by Danby, ed., *Mishnah*.

1213. The whole matter involving the red heifer sacrifice is one this writer believes is in need of further study. See Appendices 6, 26, and 33.

additional attention is given the two other sites.¹²¹⁴

Concerning the two most popular sites, there are two views as to determine which site is authentic. Many Protestants believe it is the Garden Tomb, while Roman Catholics, Armenians, and Greek Orthodox Christians believe it is the tomb within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. These differences may be anchored more by theological biases than by scientific research, especially since the 1990s have revealed the identity with overwhelming evidence. There are those, however, who continue to insist that the Garden Tomb is authentic, in spite of its shaky history.

2. The Garden Tomb

When evangelical Christians think of the burial place of their Lord, they generally think affectionately of the Garden Tomb. It is certainly a beautiful garden with its winding walkways, shrubbery, and trees — a peaceful and quiet setting in a modern city that never sleeps except on high holy days. But is it really the place where Jesus was buried?

17.02.02.Q4 What are the arguments *for* Gordon's Garden Tomb?

The Garden Tomb as being the tomb of Christ was the site suggested by Otto Thenius in 1842. It was investigated again in 1883 by British General Charles George Gordon, and his name has been associated with the tomb ever since. The decisions by Thenius and Gordon were based upon three observations, but apparently without any review of the first century history of Jerusalem.

1. Their location was along the road leading to Damascus. It was one of seven main roads that went to and from the city.¹²¹⁵
2. They observed two holes in the side of a small rounded cliff and imagined it to be the “place of the skull,” because it also contained an old tomb.
3. They realized the small cliff was outside the Old City wall, and were convinced they discovered the authentic site where Jesus was buried.¹²¹⁶ The fact that the wall they saw did not exist at the time of Christ was obviously unknown to them. The northern city wall

1214. A summary of *Secrets of Golgotha* can be found at, Ernest L. Martin, “The Crucifixion Site of Jesus.” *Archaeology and Biblical Research* 5:4 (Autumn, 1992). 113-121.

1215. Kloner and Zissu. *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period*. 22-23.

1216. See also Zondervan's *New International Version Archaeological Study Bible*. (2005, ed.). 1615.

that they observed and based their decision on was reconstructed by Suleiman the Magnificent in the 1530s (17.02.02.Z2). It did not exist in the first century.



17.02.02.A. THE TOMB AT GORDON'S CALVARY. Also known as the Garden Tomb, Gordon's Calvary has unquestionably been identified as a late Iron Age (8-7th Cent. B.C.) tomb, and hence, not the tomb of Jesus. However, while it is not the authentic tomb, it has become the symbol of the resurrected Christ. Photograph by the author.

In 1885 the Gordon popularized the site in an article published in the Palestine Exploration Fund's *Quarterly Statement*.¹²¹⁷ His theory was quickly accepted as fact by Protestants, who at that time were forbidden entry into the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. To aid their argument, an inscription on a stone found nearby was incorrectly translated and published on November 7, 1889 in the *Northern Christian Advocate* (Syracuse, New York).¹²¹⁸ The science of archaeology was still in its infancy and whatever "archaeological proof" that would have been uncovered at that time would have been challenged and probably revised within a century. This was one of many articles that attempted to prove the identification of the tomb of Christ, although there was no archaeological evidence to support the theory. Furthermore, this tomb is significantly different from first century tombs.¹²¹⁹ As a result, many Christians visiting the Holy Land today

1217. Alden, "Golgotha." 2:772; Wilkinson, *Jerusalem as Jesus Knew It*. 146.

1218. Murphy-O'Connor, "The Garden Tomb." 12.

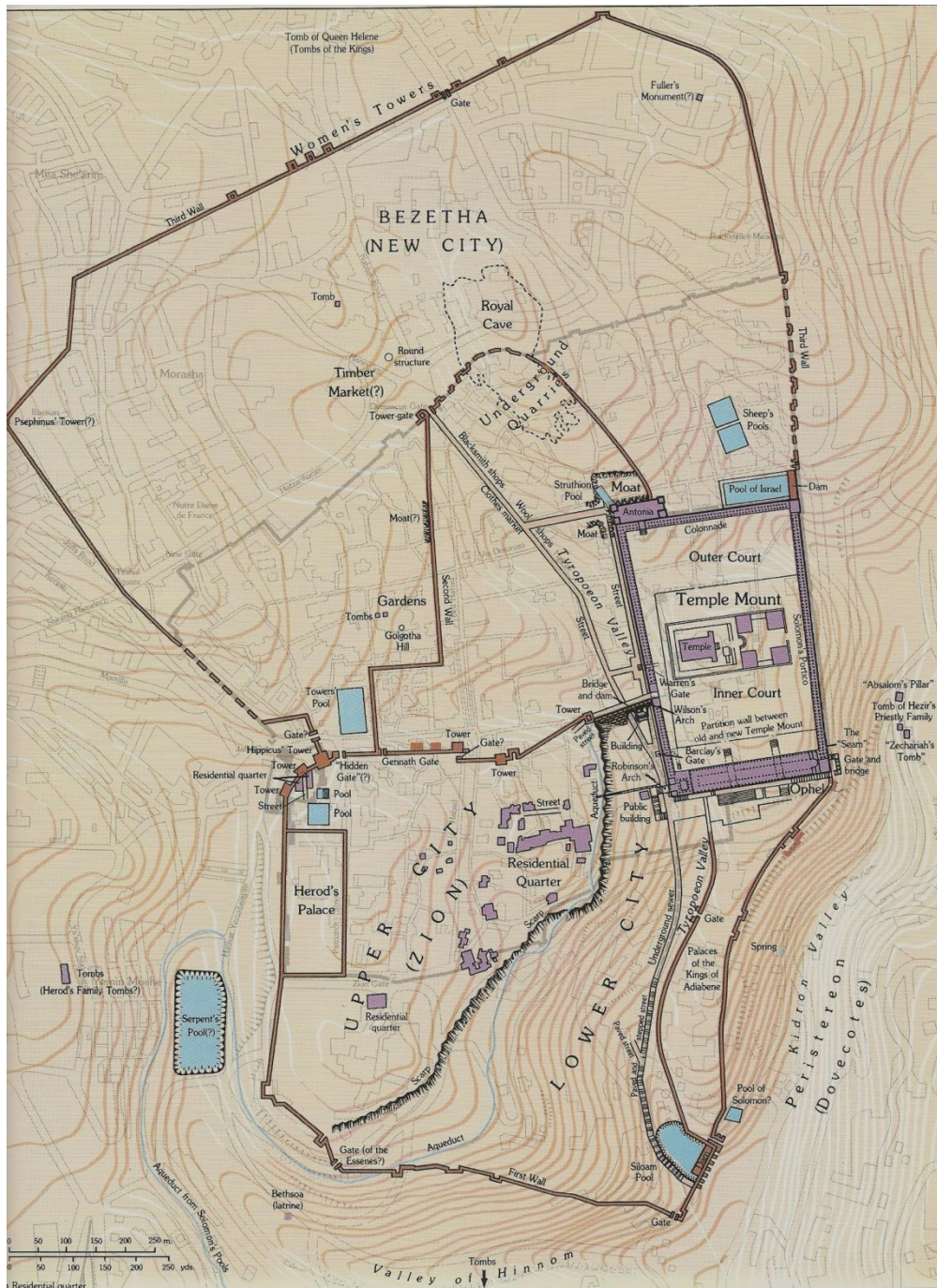
1219. Biddle, *The Tomb of Christ*. 56-58.

are incorrectly convinced of the authenticity of the site.

In the first century, residents of Jerusalem had their gardens and orchards around the entire city, and the level area on the north side of the city was especially ideal for gardening. In order to protect this valuable area, in the years A.D. 41 to 44 Herod Agrippa, the grandson of Herod the Great, built the Third Wall that enclosed the gardens as well as the tomb of Christ (see 17.02.02.Z1).¹²²⁰ However, since the Holy City was the scene of many wars and suffered many destructions, this wall was eventually destroyed and its exact location is unknown today. The northern city wall seen today was constructed by Suleiman the Magnificent in the 1536-1538 (see 17.02.02.Z2).¹²²¹ This led to an incorrect identification of the Garden Tomb in the 1800s by General Gordon because he believed that the Old City wall standing today was the same as at the time of Christ.

1220. Map courtesy of Dan Bahat. *Illustrated Atlas of Jerusalem*. 35.

1221. Map courtesy of Dan Bahat. *Illustrated Atlas of Jerusalem*. 59.



17.02.02.Z1. MAP OF JERUSALEM WITH VEGETABLE GARDENS AND HEROD AGRIPPA'S THIRD WALL. In the years A.D. 41 to 44 Herod Agrippa, the grandson of Herod the Great, built the Third Wall with Women's Towers that enclosed the gardens on the northern side of Jerusalem as well as the tomb of Christ. This wall was later destroyed and its precise location is unknown today. Map courtesy of Dan Bahat.¹²²²

1222. Bahat, *Illustrated Atlas of Jerusalem*. 35.

17.02.02.Q5 What are the arguments *against* Gordon's Garden Tomb?

What Gordon did not realize was that within fifteen years after Jesus, Herod Agrippa (reigned 41-44), constructed a new city wall that Josephus referred to as "The Third Wall."¹²²³ In the centuries that followed there were many conflicts and destructions of the Holy City. As a result, the Third Wall was destroyed and its precise location is still unknown today. However, in the years 1538 to 1541, the great Muslim ruler Suleiman the Magnificent employed two architects to determine where the ancient wall once stood. Based upon their findings, the Old City Walls seen today were constructed.¹²²⁴ However, after the reconstructed wall was finished, Suleiman discovered the architects made an error and had them decapitated.

As to General Gordon, there are five significant points that he never considered.¹²²⁵

1. He failed to consider the historical background of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.
2. The Middle East is subject to frequent earthquakes. While the hill he identified does look like a skull, he never considered the fact that it probably did not look like a skull in the first century.
3. A century after Jesus Emperor Hadrian declared victory over Christianity by building a pagan shrine over the burial site of Jesus.¹²²⁶ He never touched Gordon's Garden Tomb.
4. The site Gordon identified is known in the Bible as "the place of the skull." In Western thinking, this is generally interpreted as being an area that has the appearance of a human skull. However, in Eastern thinking – as in first century Jewish thinking – it was the place of death, not the physical appearance of a hill. The place was probably where the Romans had crucified many other Jews and hence the name, "the place of the skull."¹²²⁷

1223. Bahat, "Does the Holy Sepulcher." 37.

1224. Shanks, *Jerusalem, An Archaeological Biography*. 241.

1225. See Kloner and Zissu. *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period*. Note: Amos Kloner is considered by scholars to have completed the most comprehensive study of hundreds of tombs (First and Second Temple Periods) in the Jerusalem area.

1226. In a similar manner, centuries later the Muslims build the Dome of the Rock over the temple site and converted St. Mary's Church, located on the Temple Mount, into a mosque. They never touched Gordon's Garden Tomb.

1227. Fischer, *The Gospels in Their Jewish Context*. (Lecture on CD/MP3). Week 4, Session 1.

5. Finally, the tomb of Jesus has always been a challenge for some people. Like visitors of today, Gordon realized that it does not look like a tomb – and that is because in the 11th century a demented caliph entered the church and destroyed as much of the tomb as he could that was not previously destroyed by Hadrian.¹²²⁸

If General Gordon were alive today, he would be discouraged to learn that archaeologists clearly identified his Garden Tomb to be a Late Iron Age tomb (8th or 7th century B.C.).¹²²⁹

Video Insert >

17.02.02.V1 *The Garden Tomb*. Archaeologist Dr. Bryant Wood discusses the date of the Garden Tomb as an Iron Age II tomb, meaning it was used in the 8th to 7th century B.C. Click here if Internet connection is available.

17.02.02.Q6 What descriptive biblical parameters aided archaeologists in identifying the kind of tomb in which Jesus was laid?

The descriptive parameters are as follows:

1. It was the tomb of a wealthy individual named Joseph of Arimathea (Mt. 27:59-60)
2. It was a new tomb, never used previously (Mt. 27:60)
3. On Sunday morning, John came to the tomb and saw the burial clothes neatly folded, lying on a bench, and the body missing (Jn. 20:3-8). This suggests a single chamber tomb as the body would probably not have been visible in the dark second chamber of a double chamber tomb. However, the light from the rising sun or a lit oil lamp could have made a body or burial cloth visible from the outside.
4. Mary came to the tomb and had to stoop down to look inside and saw the linen clothes lying on the bench (Jn. 20:5). She saw angels seated at both the head and foot of where Jesus had lain (Jn. 20:11-12). This affirms the single chamber tomb, possibly like the type Caiaphas was buried in.¹²³⁰

1228. Nelesen, *Yeshua; the Promise, the Land, the Messiah*. (Video Tape 2).

1229. Price, *The Stones Cry Out*. 313.

1230. Kloner, "Did a Rolling Stone Close Jesus' Tomb?" 29.

5. On Sunday morning, Mary spoke to a gardener (Jn. 20:15). This points to a large area on the northern side of the city where many people had vegetable gardens. This area was enclosed in the early 40s by King Agrippa.

6. The stone was “rolled” to the side. This often is interpreted that the stone was round, like a large disc. However, square stones were also rolled, although that is more difficult to do. The fact remains, however, that only four large disc stones have been found of the time of Jesus, while there have been more than a hundred square blocking type stones found that were commonly used to cover tomb entrances.¹²³¹ It took several men to move such a heavy and clumsy stone, which is why entrances were small – the larger the opening; the larger the sealing stone would be needed.

17.02.02.Q7 What were the typical first century tombs like?

In the first century, the tombs in the Jerusalem area were of two distinct styles, uniquely different from each other and from prior centuries.

1. One style, known as the “shaft tomb,”¹²³² consisted of a large room with a number of finger-like shafts (or niches) carved into the cretaceous limestone hillside (see photo 17.02.02.B and illustration of plan 17.02.02.C).

Each shaft or niche, called a *kokhim* in Hebrew, was approximately six or seven feet long and one and one-half or two feet wide, large enough to lay a body (see photo 17.02.02.B). That matches the rabbinic directives that stated that a niche had to be four cubits long and seven handbreadths high and six handbreadths wide.¹²³³ After a year, when the flesh had decayed, the bones were collected and placed in a small ossuary made of wood or soft limestone. This was the most common and typical first century tomb.

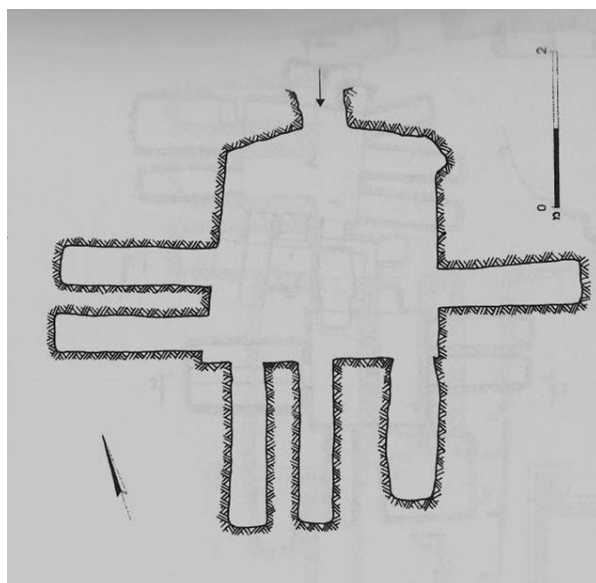
1231. Kloner, “Did a Rolling Stone Close Jesus’ Tomb?” 28. Kloner also indicates that the Hebrew word for both round (or rolling) and square blocking stones is *golal* or *golel* (plural: *golalim*). See also Kloner and Zissu. *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period*. 54-56. Note: Amos Kloner is considered by scholars to have completed the most comprehensive study of tombs in the Jerusalem area.

1232. For an exhaustive study on burial practices and tombs during the era of Jesus, see Rachel Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs, Practices and Rites in the Second Temple Period*. Boston: Brill, 2005.

1233. Mishnah, *Baba Bathra* 6.8.

The origin of the shaft tomb is unknown. Some scholars believe it originated in Egypt, others believe it came from Phoenicia and was popularized by Alexander the Great.¹²³⁴ The wealthy *arcosolium* tomb is believed to have originated in the late Inter-Testamental Period, replacing bench tombs such as the Garden Tomb of the Iron Age as was typical in the First Temple Era.¹²³⁵

2. The second style was for the first century's rich and famous. This tomb had an indented shelf or bench, known as an *arcosolia*, cut into the chamber wall, large enough to lay a body.¹²³⁶ Again, after a year when the flesh had decayed, the bones were collected and placed in a small ossuary made of limestone. The *arcosolia* was the preferred tomb of the first century and was the only tomb style that would have permitted an angel to sit at either end of the body of Jesus (Jn. 20:12). It would have been impossible for an angel to sit at either end of the body of Christ in a shaft tomb or in a Late Iron Age tomb.



17.02.02.C A FLOOR PLAN ILLUSTRATING A COMMON SHAFT TOMB. This plan depicts six shafts or “niches,” where the bodies of common people were laid to decompose. The entrance on the right opens into the main chamber that is about three meters square. After the bones were collected and placed in ossuaries, the ossuaries were placed anywhere within the tomb.

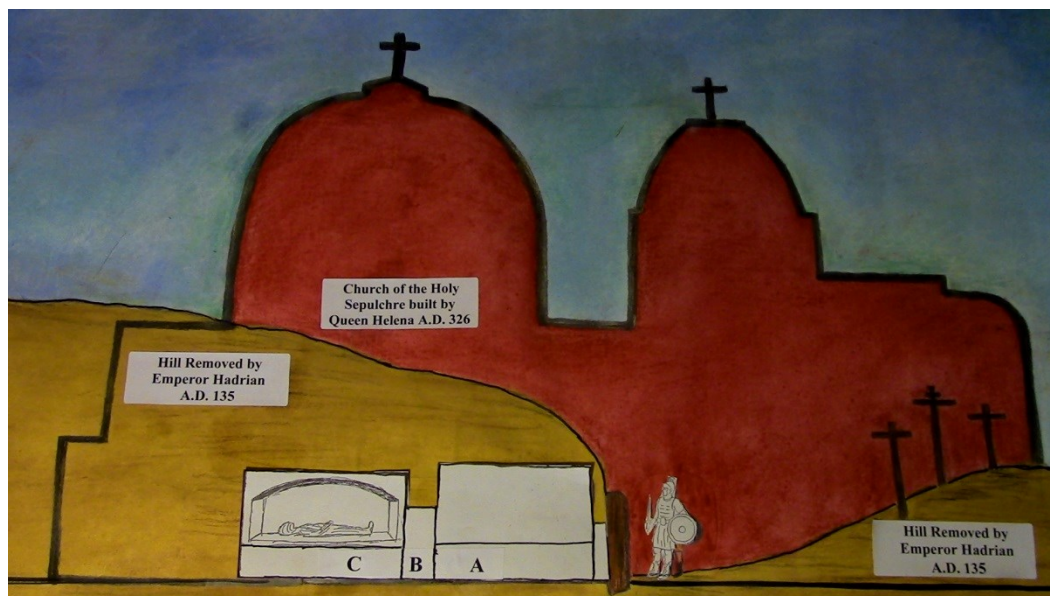
1234. Kloner and Zissu. *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period*. 77.

1235. Kloner and Zissu, *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period*. 85.

1236. For an exhaustive study on burial practices and tombs during the era of Jesus, see Rachel Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs, Practices and Rites in the Second Temple Period*. Boston: Brill, 2005.

Illustration by Amos Kloner.¹²³⁷

Scholars believe it was an *arcosolium* tomb in which the body of Jesus was laid (see 17.02.02.D below) as this was an expensive style that only the wealthy could afford.¹²³⁸ The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is shown in 17.02.02.D because the hillside in which the tomb was located was destroyed by Hadrian who quarried the stone and built the shrine over the tomb to honor the Roman goddess Venus.



17.02.02.D AN ILLUSTRATION OF A DOUBLE CHAMBER ARCOSOLIUM TOMB WITH SHADOW OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPLUCHRE. This illustration depicts a possible reconstruction of the tomb of Aramathea. Mourners visiting this tomb would have sat on a bench in chamber “A,” then moved through a small opening “B” to the second chamber “C” where the body was laid on a bench under an arched ceiling. The hillside was eventually destroyed. Illustration by Diana Clegg.

3. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre

Determining the identity of Christ’s tomb was a great challenge since the Church of the Holy Sepulchre claimed to be both the authentic crucifixion and burial sites, the two being merely some fifty or sixty feet apart. The following is a brief overview of the historical events that reveal the identity of the authentic tomb of Jesus.

1237. Kloner and Zissu, *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period*. 688.

1238. Illustration modified from Bahat, *Illustrated Atlas of Jerusalem*. 57.



17.02.02.D. AN EXPOSED TOMB. An exposed tomb, the top removed, shows an arcosolium (plural: arcosolia) tomb on the left, three conventional tombs, and a bench in front of them. Bodies of the deceased were laid in these tombs until the flesh was decayed, then the bones were collected about a year later and placed in an ossuary. Photo by Jeff Herot.

After the Romans destroyed the temple and Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the city was rebuilt. But six decades later, the Jews revolted again which resulted in yet another destruction in the year 135. In both wars, the Romans spent three years besieging the Holy City. Since there were thirteen rebellions between 63 B.C., when the Romans came, and A.D.70, by the time they defeated the Jews again in A.D. 135, Emperor Hadrian and the rest of Rome had enough of them and decided to permanently eliminate them. Like Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the Egyptian Pharaoh of previous centuries, he wanted to remove any trace of these aggravating people.

Likewise, Hadrian had no great love for the new religious sect known as “Christians,” since, like the Jews, they also refused to participate in emperor worship.¹²³⁹ Therefore, if he was going to get rid of the Jews, why not the Christians also? He determined to destroy whatever people, symbols, shrines, and buildings that existed in the Jerusalem area, although he was more sympathetic to those living in the countryside villages.

He found the site where local Christians said Jesus was crucified and buried. To celebrate his

2041. Bahat, “Does the Holy Sepulcher.” 32.

victory over them, he built a shrine to the goddess Venus over the site of the tomb. He took Herodian ashlar (large rectangular stones cut by Herod the Great) from the ruined temple and reused them to build rectangular retaining walls for the shrine.¹²⁴⁰ Upon these walls, he built a platform for his shrine to (*Latin*) Venus (also known as Aphrodite to the Greeks), the goddess of love. His goal was to forever obliterate the tomb of Jesus, as well as the nearby rock of Golgotha. He never touched Skull Hill or Gordon's Garden Tomb and, therefore, it remained undisturbed for centuries, until 1883.¹²⁴¹

Video Insert >

17.02.02.V2 *The Two Types of First Century Tombs*. Professor Gordon Franz discusses the differences between the two types of first century tombs. His emphasis is on the distinctive features of the Garden Tomb and those of the Tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Click here if Internet connection is available.



1240. Price, *The Stones Cry Out*. 314.

1241. Maier, *The First Easter*. 84.

Hadrian was determined to eradicate anything Jewish – and Jesus and His disciples at this time were still considered part of Judaism. However, with the construction of the shrine, he permanently identified the site, because, when Emperor Constantine sent his mother Queen Helena to the Holy Land in 325-326 to locate the sacred sites, she quickly found the remains of the sacred cave and ruins of the shrine. Some fifty feet nearby was another Roman shrine which had been built over the crucifixion site.¹²⁴² Helena employed skilled workers to tear down the shrine and construct the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. When Eusebius, the bishop of Caesarea Maritima, heard of her plans, he voiced support for the adornment of the building as follows:

It is my wish, then, that you should be especially convinced of this, which I suppose is clear to everyone, that of all things it is my chief concern how we may splendidly adorn with buildings that sacred place which, under divine direction, I freed...Not only shall this basilica be the finest in the world, but that the details also shall be such that all the most beautiful structures in every city may be surpassed by it....As for the columns and marbles, have a care to tell us in writing, after you have inspected the plan, whatever you judge to be most precious and serviceable so that those materials, of whatever sort and in whatever quantity, may be procured from every quarter.

Eusebius, *The Life of Constantine* 3.29-32

Because of this unusual history, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is, without question, one of the most accurately identified biblical sites.¹²⁴³ It was so significant that it later appeared on the sixth century mosaic Madaba Map on the floor of a Byzantine church in Madaba, Jordan.¹²⁴⁴ Extensive research conducted in the 1990s firmly identified the church as to where both the crucifixion and burial sites are located. Ironically, little did Hadrian know that by destroying the holy site, he was in fact, preserving it. Eusebius described the construction work of Hadrian's slaves and soldiers, they...

... Brought a quantity of earth from a distance with much labor, and covered the entire spot; then, having raised this to a moderate height, they paved it with stone concealing the holy cave (tomb) beneath this massive mound. Then, as though their purpose had been effectually accomplished they prepared on this foundation a truly dreadful Sepulchre of souls, by building a gloomy shrine to the lifeless idols to the

1242. Crossan and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*. 248-49.

1243. Biddle, *The Tomb of Christ*. 56-57; Mackowski, *Jerusalem City of Jesus*. 5; Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*. 146-47 quoting Egeria's Travels.

1244. See "Madaba Map" in Appendix 26; See also 14.02.03.D and 05.02.03.Z.

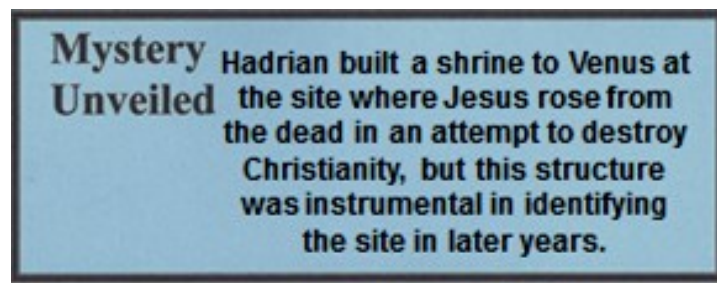
impure spirit whom they call Venus.

Eusebius, *The Life of Constantine* 3:26¹²⁴⁵

From the time of Hadrian until Constantine, nothing changed. Then, in 326, Queen Helena identified the crucifixion and burial sites by finding the ruins of the shrine of Venus.¹²⁴⁶ She immediately removed all traces of pagan worship and again Eusebius preserved the account.

He (Constantine) gave orders that the materials of what was destroyed, both stone and timber, should be removed and thrown as far from the spot as possible....he directed that the ground itself should be dug up to a considerable depth, and the soil which had been polluted by the foul impurities of demon worship transported to a far distance place.

Eusebius, *The Life of Constantine* 3:26



The site identification in the early fourth century was relatively easy. The destruction of Jerusalem and the work of Hadrian were still common knowledge. Queen Helena's accuracy cannot be disputed and when the clearing work was completed and a new church built, Constantine said this:

...I have disencumbered as it were of the heavy weight of foul idol worship; a spot which has been accounted holy from the beginning in God's judgment, but which now appears holier still, since it has brought to light a clear assurance of our Savior's passion.

Eusebius, *The Life of Constantine* 3:30

Eusebius wrote of Constantine's desire to build "a house of prayer" upon the site where Jesus

1245. Parenthesis mine.

1246. Thiede and d'Ancona. *The Quest for the True Cross*. 62.

was buried:

He judged it incumbent on him to render the blessed locality of our Savior's resurrection an object of attraction and veneration to all. He issued immediate injunctions, therefore, for the erection in that spot of a house of prayer.

Eusebius, *The Life of Constantine* 3:25

Were it not for Constantine and his mother Helena, many sacred sites would have been lost in history. The new church was called the Church of the Martyrion, a portion of which remains. The word "Martyrion" (Gk. *witness*) meant the site was the witness of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.¹²⁴⁷ Years later the name was changed to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

In the second half of the last century, a number of repairs were made to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre which exposed a number of stones that scholars believe were part of the original Constantine structure.¹²⁴⁸ Furthermore, in 1975 construction workers found, near St. Helena's chapel (part of the Holy Sepulchre) a red and black picture of a Roman sailing ship with the Latin phrase *Domine iuimus*, meaning *Lord, we went* (cf. Ps. 122:1). Historians believe this graffiti was placed on the wall in 330, only a few years after the completion of the church.¹²⁴⁹

Video Insert >

17.02.02.V3 *The Church of the Holy Sepulchre as the former Shrine of Venus*. Dr. Petra Heldt discusses the reconstruction of Jerusalem by Emperor Hadrian in A.D. 135, and how his work is believed to have preserved the identity of the tomb of Jesus. Dr. Paul Wright discusses some stones in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre that may have been used previously in Hadrian's shrine to the Roman goddess Venus. Introduction and comments by Dr. Bill Heinrich. Click here if Internet connection is available.

1247. Pixner, "Church of the Apostles Found." 24, 60 n20.

1248. Wiseman and Yamauchi, *Archaeology and the Bible*. 84-86.

1249. McDowell, "The Historical Reliability of the New Testament." 48.



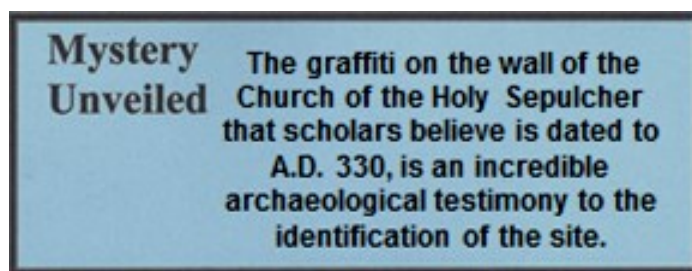
17.02.02.E. HADRIAN'S WALL AT THE HOLY SEPULCHRE. Some rooms of the church have an unusual mix of stones. Some scholars to believe the smooth stones are “second use stones” that were originally part of Hadrian’s shrine of Venus.¹²⁵⁰ This opinion is based on the logical idea that when Queen Helena built the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, she used stones from the shrine that were already cut and smooth. Photo by the author.

Many ancient sites have been easy for archaeologists to identify since Queen Helena built churches over them with a foundation of a unique architectural style. Fellowship churches were constructed in the form of a cross, whereas memorial churches were built in the shape of an octagon.¹²⁵¹ The Church of the Holy Sepulchre has been partially destroyed and rebuilt several times, but it has maintained a continuous history. The queen, just like General Gordon centuries later, was faced with “the wall dilemma,” because she, too, had to contemplate the tomb location in light of the city walls. The local residents told her of King Agrippa’s third city wall and, hence, she rendered a better decision. Christianity will always remember her work because it preserved the site of the tomb of Jesus.¹²⁵²

1250. Bahat, “Does the Holy Sepulcher.” 33.

1251. Bahat, “Does the Holy Sepulcher.” 34-35.

1252. Shanks, “After Hadrian’s Banishment: Jews in Christian Jerusalem.” 33.



17.02.02.Q8 Is the burial cloth of Jesus, known as the Shroud of Turin, authentic (Mt. 27:59)?

There has been a great controversy concerning a burial cloth that was hidden in a small northern town of Turin, Italy for many centuries. Known as the Shroud of Turin, the ancient burial cloth is said to have been the shroud that was wrapped around the body of Jesus as He lay in the tomb.¹²⁵³

The Mishnah and Code of Jewish Law,¹²⁵⁴ both provide some interesting insight into this question. John 11:44 states that Lazarus came out of the tomb with his face wrapped in a cloth. In other words, his chin was bound up **“that it may not sink,”** as described in the Mishnah below. Later, John said in 20:7, in reference to where the body of Jesus was laid, that the wrapping that had been on His head was not lying with the linen cloths, but was folded and placed elsewhere. Twice John mentioned the head wrapping, a cultural custom mentioned in the Mishnah, and is also noticeable on the Shroud of Turin.

They may make ready [on the Sabbath] all that is needful for the dead, and anoint it and wash it, provided that they do not remove any member of it. They may draw the mattress away from beneath it and let it lie on sand that it may by the longer preserved; they may bind up the chin, not in order to raise it, but that it may not sink lower. So, too, if a rafter is broken they may support it with a bench or with the side-pieces of a bed that the break may grow no greater, but not in order to prop

1253. For further study, see two articles by John Long: “The Shroud’s Earlier History. Part 1: To Edessa.” *Bible and Spade*. 20:2 (Spring, 2007). 46-52 and “The Shroud’s Earlier History. Part 2: To the Great City.” *Bible and Spade*. 20:4 (Fall, 2007). 120-128.

1254. The Code of Jewish Law, a/k/a the Shulchan Aruch, is the Jewish code of law written by Rabbi Yosef Kara about 500 years ago. It summarizes and lists the halachic decisions of the Talmud as well as the author's own view based on halachic opinions and discussions of the commentaries after the Talmud. Topics discussed are divided into chapters. It is mentioned here because it refers to second temple period traditions, but it is not quoted as it is not an ancient source. See *Code of Jewish Law*, “Laws of Mourning.” Chapters 351-354, 362-64; <http://www.shulchanarach.com>

it up.¹²⁵⁵ They may not close a corpse's eyes on the Sabbath; nor may they do soon a weekday at the moment when the soul is departing; and if he closes the eyes [of a dying man] at the moment when the soul is departing, such a one is a shedder of blood.

Mishnah, *Shabbath* 23:5¹²⁵⁶

The most unusual feature of the shroud is that it contains an X-ray type image of a man with all of the wounds and bruises that are normally associated with a crucifixion execution,¹²⁵⁷ that also match all related biblical passages.¹²⁵⁸ The image is on the surface of the fabric and not through the fibers of the fabric. In 1978 a team of 32 scientists examined it for five days with the most sophisticated scientific testing equipment and, as of this writing, there has not been a definitive decision rendered as to its authenticity.¹²⁵⁹

Note the following signs of human injury on the shroud compared to the injuries suffered by Jesus:¹²⁶⁰

1. The burial cloth shows marks throughout the scalp from sharp objects.
2. A swollen face, evidently from repeated blows.
3. Large bruises to the forehead and cheeks.
4. A twisted nose
5. An eye swollen shut
6. An upper lip cut

1255. This sentence that pertains to a broken roof rafter is a comparative statement. It suggests that just as a bench or the side piece of a bed is used to prevent a rafter from bending or breaking any further, so too, the chin of a corpse is tied to keep the jaw from "sinking," or opening, any further.

1256. Bracketed inserts by Danby, ed.

1257. Wild, "The Shroud of Turin: Probably the Work of a 14th Century Artist or Forger." 31-32.

1258. Hands and feet were nailed to the cross: Lk. 24:40; Jn. 20:20,25,27; Col. 2:14; Scouring wounds: Mt. 27:26; Mk. 15:15; Lk. 23:16, 22; Jn. 19:1; Thorn impressions on the head Mt. 27:29; Mk. 15:17; Jn. 19:2; Bruise marks to the shoulders (from carrying the cross?) Jn. 19:17; Bruise and blow marks to the face Mt. 26:28; 27:30; Mk. 14:65; 15:19; Lk. 22:63-64; Jn. 18:22; 19:3.

1259. Nelesen, *Yeshua; the Promise, the Land, the Messiah*. (Video Tape 2).

1260. Habermas, "The Shroud of Turin and its Significance for Biblical Studies." 51.

7. An estimated 120 scourging wounds on nearly every part of the body with the exception of the face, feet, and forearms.

8. Large rub marks on the part of the shroud that once covered the shoulders.

In addition, there are five major wounds associated with death by crucifixion.

1. Puncture wounds through both wrists (the wrist was considered as part of the hand in ancient times).

2. Puncture wounds in both feet

3. Puncture wound in the right side of chest.

In light of these details, it is also noteworthy that it was common practice for the Romans to break the legs of crucified criminals to hasten death and, thereby, reduce their suffering. There is no sign of leg fracture in the shroud. While this is an argument from silence, in light of the fact that the shroud shows such vivid details, if the person who was crucified had his legs broken, there surely would be signs revealing these.

While several other so-called antiquities have been identified as fakes that certainly does not prove the shroud is also a forgery. Yet, there is no longer any blood on the shroud.¹²⁶¹ Furthermore, could such a medieval artist have the skills to outwit today's sophisticated scientists and technology? It appears impossible since today's scientists cannot even reproduce it.¹²⁶² The blood stains, indicating the flow of blood from the wounds and other injuries, are too incredibly accurate to have been the work of a medieval artist. Furthermore, there has never existed an art form of painting burial shrouds, so how could such a highly skilled artisan have originated a masterpiece and not have any other similar works of art?¹²⁶³

In addition, the discovery of 28 different pollens in the fabric that existed only in Jerusalem in the first century intensifies the scholarly arguments.¹²⁶⁴ A review of published scientific

1261. McCrone, "The Shroud Painting Explained." 29.

1262. McCrone, "The Shroud Painting Explained." 29-30.

1263. Vikan, "Debunking the Shroud." 28.

1264. For more information, see Vaughn M. Bryant Jr. "Does Pollen Prove the Shroud Authentic?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 26:6 (Nov/Dec, 2009). 36-44. See also Alan D. Whanger, Uri Baruch, and Mary Whanger. *Flora of the Shroud of Turin*. St. Louis, MO: Missouri Botanical Garden Press, 1999.

literature seems to indicate the scientific conclusion on the authenticity appears to reflect the theological position of the individual scientist performing the research.¹²⁶⁵

Video Insert >

17.02.02.V4 *The Shroud of Turin*. Michael Keating, a research and development engineer discusses the amazing discoveries concerning the Shroud of Turin that some say was the burial cloth of Jesus. Introduction by Dr. Bill Heinrich. Click here if Internet connection is available.

18.01.01.Q1 What is the significance of His resurrection?

The significance is so dynamic, that the brief description below clearly does not provide justice. However, this theological question is briefly answered in outline form to focus on the main points.

1. It means the forgiveness of the believer's sins and eternal life for him (1 Cor 15:7).
2. It guarantees the judgment of all unbelievers (Acts 10:40-42; 17:30-31).
3. It assures the resurrection of all men, both believers and unbelievers (1 Cor. 15:20-23)¹²⁶⁶
4. It proves our justification (Rom. 4:24-25)
5. It guarantees power for believer's service (Ephesians 1:17-20)
6. It designates Jesus as the Head of the Church (Eph. 1:20-22)
7. It means that Jesus has the keys of death as far as believers are concerned (Heb. 2:9-18; 1 Thess. 4:13-15).
8. The sin-nature of the believer is rendered inoperative. It is not removed when one believes, but it is judged and condemned (Rom. 6:1-10).

1265. See also Long, "Closing in on the Shroud's Early History. 20-22.

1266. For believers, it guarantees individual resurrection (Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14).

9. It means that there is now a sympathetic High Priest in Heaven (Heb. 4:14-16)

These nine points, and there could be more, point to the fact that the Kingdom of God is within the believer. These underscore the close relationship Jesus desires with every believer and the incredible price He paid for that to occur.

18.01.11.Q1 Where is the biblical Emmaus?

Modern tourists, like those of the Crusader days, visit the so-called Emmaus, located in the Shoreck Valley near the Arab village of Kiriath-Yearim (modern Abu Ghosh). Since traveling during the Crusader era was extremely difficult, they created “historical sites” such as Emmaus and Mount Tabor, the so-called Mount of Transfiguration. These created sites were placed along main travel routes for the convenience of pilgrims. Therefore, the pursuit of truth requires a fresh look at Scripture and the facts.

The most important clue of the location of Emmaus is the definition of the name. It was originally named *Amwas* (pronounced *A-mouse*), meaning *warm waters* or *warm wells*.¹²⁶⁷ In Hebrew, the word *hamat* or *chammat* means *hot springs* or *warm water springs*.¹²⁶⁸ However, the Greeks and Romans could not pronounce it so they changed the name to *Emmaus*. They added the typical *aus* on the end of the name as was done with many place names.¹²⁶⁹

Of the four villages that today claim that biblical heritage, the only one that ever had hot springs is located about eighteen miles west of Jerusalem. It is the site of the Maccabean battleground as recorded in *1 Maccabees* 3:40, 57 and 4:3. Early pilgrims such as Bordeaux Pilgrim (ca. 333) and the Holy Paula (ca. 386), accepted this site as authentic. Possibly most important, however, is that a Byzantine Church was built there to commemorate the narrative of Luke 24:13.¹²⁷⁰

Critics claimed that this Emmaus (shown below) could not possibly be the biblical site because its distance of 160 Roman stadia, or 18.4 miles, which supposedly is more than a day’s walk. In response, some scholars claim that the ancients were accustomed to walking at a much faster pace than their modern counterparts. Evidently, Josephus would agree with the latter group, for he recorded the journey from Galilee to Jerusalem could be walked in three days, definitely a strenuous walk for anyone today. Whether he made reference from the province of Galilee,

1267. Clark, “Emmaus,” 2:98.

1268. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*. 1:94.

1269. Interview with Arie bar David, tour guide and lecturer. August 1999.

1270. Clark, “Emmaus,” 2:97-98.

approximately sixty miles away, or the Sea of Galilee, some eighty miles away, is unclear. But, clearly, Josephus provided enough data to conclude that the Emmaus of the hot springs is the authentic site. When he was speaking to the five hundred men under his command as the captain of the Galilee army (about A.D. 65), he said,

I wrote to my friends in Samaria to take care that they might safely pass through their country, for Samaria was already under the Romans and it was absolutely necessary for those that go quickly (to Jerusalem)¹²⁷¹ to pass through that country; for on that road you may, in three days' time go from Galilee to Jerusalem.

Josephus, *Life* 52 (269)

Obviously, the eighteen or twenty-mile walk from Jerusalem to Emmaus was not considered impossible by the historian. People in ancient times walked briskly, as did the disciples, who hastily walked the road from Emmaus in their excitement of the news of Jesus.¹²⁷²



18.01.11.B. ROMAN BATH HOUSE RUINS IN EMMAUS. This bathhouse ruins is the only evidence visible of the hot water that once came forth at this spring. This was a vibrant community and after the Muslims conquered Jerusalem in 638, they wanted to make Emmaus their capital because of the warm waters.

1271. Parenthesis by Whiston, ed.

1272. Zondervan's *New International Version Archaeological Study Bible*. (2005 ed.). 1716.

However, as a result of a devastating plague in the year 669, thousands died and the community was abandoned. Photograph by the author.



**Please note that all references to footnotes are in the “Works Cited”
section located in the last volume.**