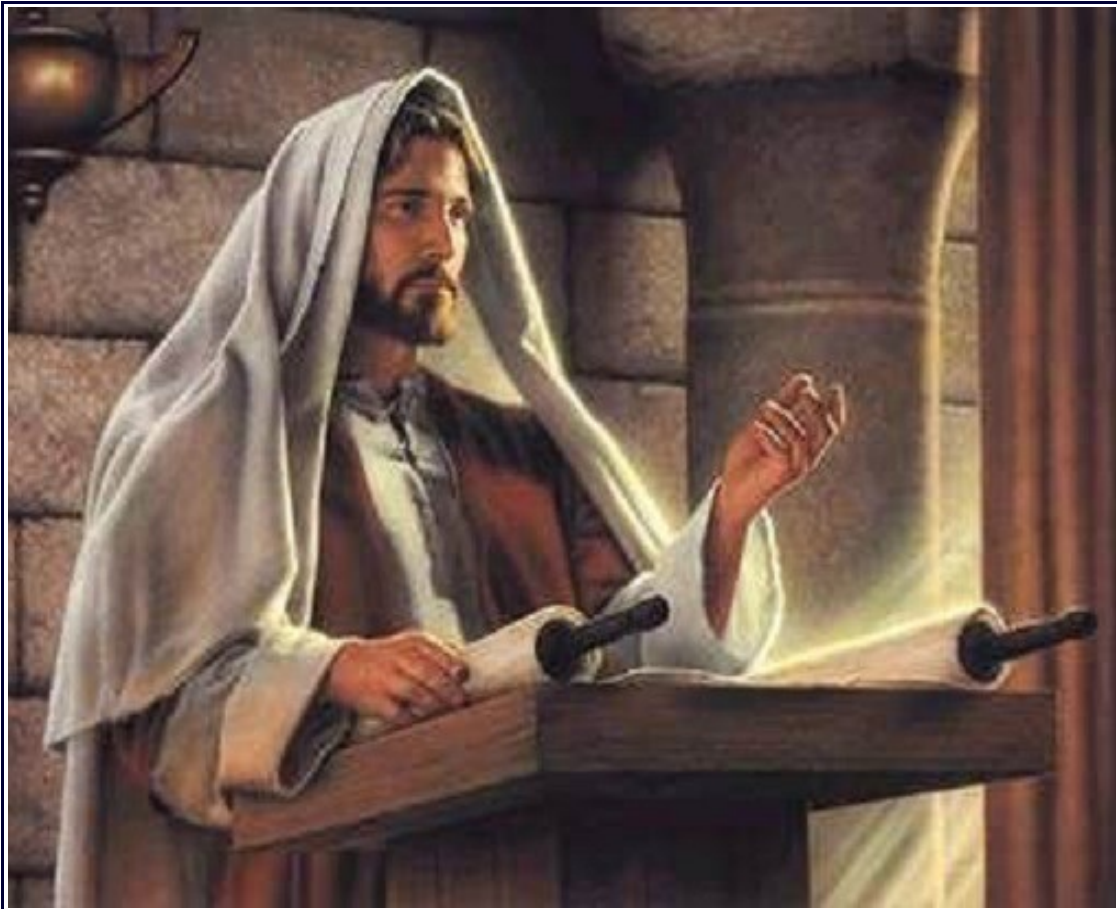


Jesus Christ:

... a more than holy heretic

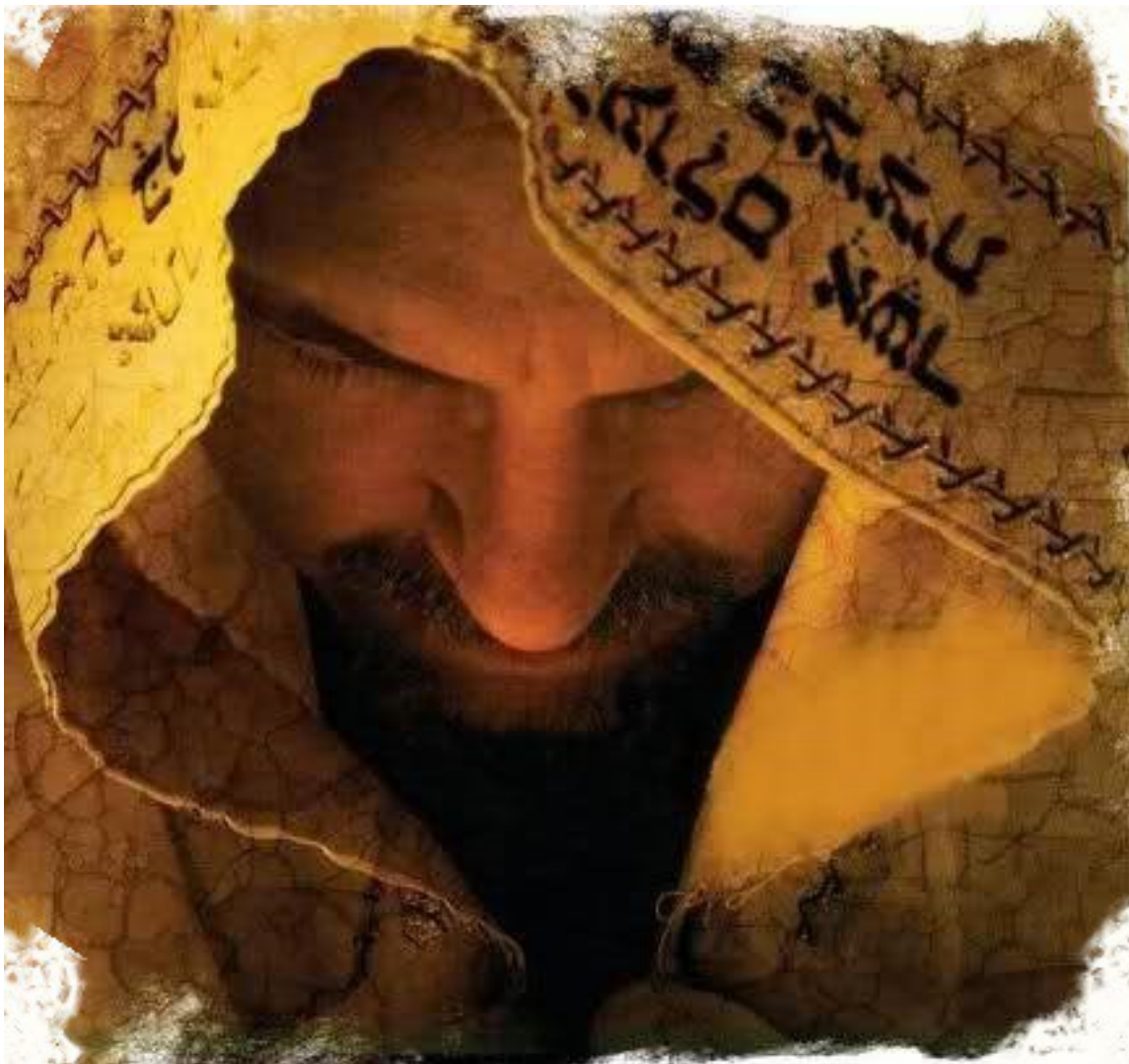


... illuminating & examining the fact that Jesus Christ was not so much a supporter of the Old Testament laws of his day as he was a radically thorough reformer & indeed a noble amender thereof

via Scaughdt
Ian (i)am publication



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“Now if Jesus were still on earth he would not be a priest at all, since there are already priests who present gifts according to the Law; offering worship in a sanctuary that is but a shadowy sketch of the true heavenly abode. For Moses, when he was about to erect the Tabernacle, was warned to make everything according to the pattern he was shown on the mountain. And yet Jesus obtained a more excellent ministry thereafter, and thus is the mediator of a far better covenant. For if that first covenant had been faultless there would have been no need to look for and establish a second one. And so it is that the Father finds fault with those of old when he says: ‘The days are surely coming when I will establish a new covenant with the houses of Israel and Judah; not at all like the one that I made with their ancestors on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt ... And this is the covenant that I will make with them: I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach one another the Law, nor say to each other, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. And I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.’ Indeed, in speaking of a new covenant God has made His first one obsolete. And what is obsolete has grown old, and will soon be replaced and disappear.”

~ via Hebrews 8:4-13

“What I am attempting herein is to prevent others from repeating the inanely foolish falsehood that so many so often utter about Jesus Christ – namely, that he was somehow more than he himself said he was; that he was somehow more than a great & noble teacher of ethics; that he was instead the one & only Son of God. For these are the raving zealots who claim that any man who was 'merely a man' and said the things Jesus said in the Gospels would not be a great moral teacher at all, but rather must be considered to be either a diabolical liar or a raving lunatic. And yet – quite ironically – what these same modern-day Pharisees fail to hear or heed are the very words of Jesus himself; words that provide a bold alternative to the common faux-conundrum of 'Lord, liar, or lunatic.' And that alternative is quite the obvious one: namely, the alternative of *leader* ... Yes, while it is true that Jesus' message was and remains exceptionally bold – and thus that every hearer thereof must indeed ultimately choose how he or she perceives &/or adopts the same, the choice to do so is a fourfold one, not a mere trinity. Yes, we can very well choose to worship Jesus as the one & only progeny of a celestial tyrant, and we can just as readily choose to chastise him as an insidious liar or condemn him as a delusional lunatic. And yet the fourth alternative – the alternative of *leader* – is the one Jesus himself offers in the ancient texts; the alternative of seeing Jesus as a pure representation of moral guidance – a holy illuminator of the selfless Way that is to be walked; a brilliant beacon of the loving Truth that is to be followed; an amorous ambassador of the caring Life that is to be lived. For while Jesus does indeed at times intimate that he is a manifestation of the Divine – a glowing ember of the essence that he called '[the Son of God](#)', he also reminds his listeners over & over & over again that all sentient beings harbor that same caring perfection within, just as he ever summons us all to boldly embody the same. Indeed, to say anything else is to rebuke his own teachings, and thus to say anything else is to reject our own summons to serve him by enlivening the same.” ~ inspired by C. S. Lewis

Forward ... the WHY of it all

As a humble yet passionate “biblical scholar” in my own right¹, it can come as no surprise to learn that I have intentionally entertained thousands of in-depth conversations with all sorts of Christians during my devout immersion into biblical theology and its various religious manifestations. Also unsurprisingly, a great many of these conversations involved speaking with Christian “conservatives” (i.e. Christians of a more traditional religious bent – not only regarding the spiritual themes or worship and salvation, but also the social issues of crime and punishment and equality and justice; Christians who often label themselves as being “fundamentalist”, “evangelical”, “literalist” or “born again”) and then confronting those same believers as to the patent immorality of many of their less humble ideals &/or many of their more judgmental (if not outright bigoted) beliefs – logically referencing the teachings of the flagrantly liberal (at least when it comes to those same aforementioned social issues) Jesus of Nazareth while doing so. And almost invariably while doing so, I was met with a most curious defense of the same; a justification for said callousness often causally provided by two verses cited from the Gospel of [Matthew](#) – verses which do indeed seem to justify the aforementioned believers' adoption of and reverence for many of the less than amicable tenets of the Hebrew Bible (what many today call “the Old Testament”) – verses which quite clearly have Jesus himself stating: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the prophets, for I have come not to abolish but to fulfill them. Truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not even a single stroke of a single letter will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.” ([Matthew 5:17-18](#)) ... And admittedly, if these verses are accepted as valid at face value, then they can indeed be used to excuse or even to justify any conservative Christian's support for any number of Old Testament-founded immoralities – including but not limited to human slavery ([Exodus 2:7](#)), animal cruelty ([Genesis 9:2](#) & [Leviticus 11:1-47](#)), discrimination against women ([Numbers 30:1-8](#)), genocidal murder ([Deuteronomy 7:1-2](#)), unprovoked acts of war ([Numbers 31:2](#)), blatant racism ([Numbers 25:1-13](#)), religious persecution ([Exodus 22:20](#) & [Deuteronomy 13:6-10](#)), homophobic bigotry ([Leviticus 18:22](#)), rape ([Deuteronomy 22:28-29](#)), sexual bondage ([Genesis 19:8](#)), and the mass murder of children ([Exodus 12:29-30](#) & [Numbers 31:17-18](#)) ...

Of course, for even the casual reader of the Bible, it becomes obviously apparent that the underlying theological principles found in the Old Testament dramatically differ from many of those offered up by Jesus in the Gospels.²

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- 1 This statement is not meant to arrogantly reflect an undue claim to any exclusive status or knowledge regarding the Bible. In truth, I have no degree in either theology or divinity from any accredited university, I cannot read either Hebrew or Koine Greek, and I have never directly accessed or even been exposed to the ancient biblical manuscripts written in those languages. That having been said, there is much more to being a true “scholar” than is traditionally understood. Indeed, the best definition of “scholar” is nothing more than “one having special knowledge in a particular branch of study.” And what better way to attain “special knowledge” of the Bible's texts than to *do* what the Scriptures themselves admonish and radically put them to the test (see [Matthew 7:15-20](#)) by enlivening them one's self in all sorts of (often uncomfortable &/or frightening – some would say dangerous) interactions with others – to see which of the various interpretations of their particular passages bear the “good fruit” of peace and joy and harmony, and which of them do not. And this is precisely what I have done for the past 15+ years of my life – not only reading and studying the many translations of the Bible's texts, but also putting those same passages to the test by enlivening them in my everyday interactions – with friends and with strangers and with enemies alike.
 - 2 It is important for the reader to NOTE that, in the interest of both theological accuracy and psychological practicality, this work will only consider &/or mention the words and actions of Jesus Christ found in the four canonical Gospels of [Matthew](#), [Mark](#), [Luke](#), and [John](#). For reasons laid out exhaustively in my book *The Cult of Paul*, any mention of or supposed quotations from Jesus found in Paul's biblical epistles will for the most part not be considered, nor will the supposed words of the faux “Jesus” found in the book of [Revelation](#) be in any way acknowledged (for reasons almost as fully illuminated in my book *Re-Vealing Revelation*).

For example, whereas the Old Testament often portrays God as a supporter of war (see Exodus 15:3, Exodus 23:27, & Psalm 137:7-9), **Jesus** says that “Blessed are the Peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9) and that we are to Love our enemies, “for [God] makes his sun rise on both the evil and the good, and sends rain both to the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matthew 5:44-47 – see also Luke 6:35-36 & Luke 10:29-37). Whereas in the Old Testament God advocates retributory justice (see the “eye for an eye” standard of Exodus 21:23-25), encourages the application of the death penalty for a number of offenses (a la Exodus 21:12-20 & Exodus 24:16 et al), allows for the robbing (Exodus 12:35-36) and the violent pillaging (Numbers 31:9-15) of those defeated in battle, and even appears to have effectuated a brutal pogrom against innocent children during the original Passover (see Exodus 11:4-6 – also Exodus 12:1-28), **Jesus** states very clearly that his heavenly Father “judges no one” (John 5:22, along with John 8:15 & John 12:47 – as well as all of Jesus' Peace-filled Passover statements found in Matthew 26:26-28 et al), that God is a heavenly Father whose Love is perfect (Matthew 5:44-48) whose mercy is limitless (Luke 6:29-36) and whose forgiveness knows no limits (Matthew 18:21-22) – and that as such we are all called to therefore similarly forgive all those who trespass against us (see Matthew 6:14, Luke 17:3-4, John 8:7, & John 20:23). In addition, whereas God in the Old Testament seems to support the adulteries of Abraham (in Genesis 20:1-18) & Isaac (in Genesis 26:6-11), as well as Moses' blatant lies to the Pharaoh (see Exodus 5:1 & Exodus 9:27), **Jesus** succinctly and openly champions both monogamy (Matthew 19:6 – &/or celibacy, see Matthew 19:12) & always speaking to others with flagrant honesty (see Matthew 5:37 – as well as his many denouncements of hypocrisy throughout the Gospels).

So what are we to make of this seemingly inescapable (and dare I say quite damning) contradiction? How are we to give credence to a supposed prophet (or savior, if you are a practicing Christian who abides in the preachings of Paul³) who openly champions the laws of the Old Testament (even down to “the very last stroke of the their very last letter”) while simultaneously altering and sometimes even outright rejecting a large number of those same regulations throughout the course of his ministry?

Well, as it turns out, there is a biblical reconciliation for this conundrum, and quite the simple reconciliation it is – namely, that Jesus Christ was neither a rabid supporter nor a violent denouncer of the Old Testament rules & regulations of his day. Rather, he was a most courageous (some would thus say outright heretical) **reformer** of the same ...



3 It is worth noting that Jesus himself made it repeatedly and vehemently clear throughout his three year Gospel ministry that, while he definitively was *an* exemplary embodiment of “the Son of God” that resides within all conscious beings (see John 14 & John 15), he was definitely not the *only* such embodiment (see John 14:12 & John 14:20 et al) much less the sole Davidian Messiah (prophesied in Isaiah 9:6-7 & Jeremiah 23:5) who his followers (including and especially Paul) longed for him to be (see Matthew 4:1-10 juxtaposed with Daniel 7:13-14 – as well as Matthew 19:17, Matthew 22:41-46, Mark 10:18, Mark 12:35-37, Luke 18:19, Luke 20:41-43, John 5:41, John 7:16, John 8:50-54, John 12:44 et al)

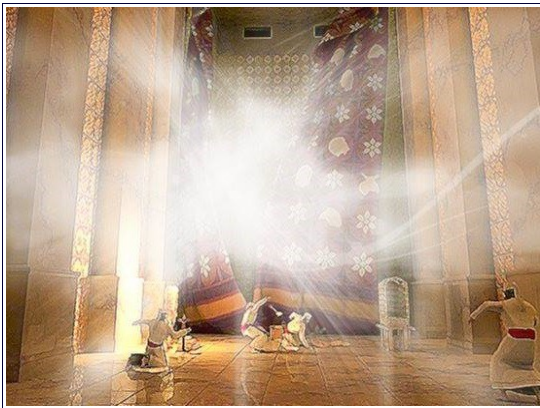
Jesus Christ: from birth to resurrection, ever a Jew at heart

First and foremost, it is critical to remember that Jesus was a Jew – born of Jewish parents, brought up in a Jewish home, raised in a Jewish community, and immersed in Jewish traditions. He lived among Jews, he developed relationships primarily with Jews, and his followers were mostly Jews. Per Jewish custom he was circumcised on the 8th day after his birth (Luke 2:21), his mother observed Jewish post-childbirth purification rituals (proscribed in Leviticus 12 – see Luke 2:22-24), and his family traveled to Jerusalem with him every year to celebrate the Passover (Luke 2:41). Jesus openly participated in the Jewish cleansing ritual (the Mikvah) at the commencement of his ministry (see Matthew 3:13-16, Mark 1:9-11, & Luke 3:21-23), he encouraged a form of prayer resembling standard Jewish cadences (a la Matthew 6:8-13 & Luke 11:2-4), and he wore fringes on his mantle as required by Jewish law (proscribed by Numbers 15:37 & Deuteronomy 22:12 – see Matthew 9:20, Matthew 14:36, Mark 5:25, & Luke 8:44 et al). Jesus taught in synagogues (see Matthew 4:23, Mark 1:21, Luke 4:14-20, & John 18:20), engaged rabbis in religious discourse (see Matthew 12:1-14 & Luke 2:41-52 et al), and openly respected the Jewish holy days and religious festivals (including Sukkot in John 7, Hanukkah in John 10, and Passover in Matthew 26 et al). Indeed, Jesus boldly believed that the Torah was divinely inspired and to be wholeheartedly revered – using its words to refute Satan's temptations in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11), claiming that its contents “cannot be annulled” (John 10:35), referring to its Scriptures as containing both “the commandment(s) of God” (Matthew 15:3) and “the word of God” (Mark 7:13), and – as has been mentioned earlier – brazenly stating that “not even a single stroke of a single letter will pass from the Law until all has been fulfilled” (Matthew 5:18) ... Finally, contrary to popular misconception, even at the very end of his ministry Jesus was not killed for denying his Jewishness or for repudiating Jewish regulations or for committing blasphemy⁴. No, Jesus was crucified – a form of execution reserved for disobedient slaves or political rebels – between two fellow seditionists (between two fellow rebels, or *lestas* in Mark 15:27 – Strong's #3027; a Greek term often poorly translated as “bandits” or “thieves”) as an enemy of the Roman state. Yes, the Jewish Sanhedrin were a primary emotional force behind his public downfall, and yet not because Jesus was denouncing their religion, but rather because he was loudly calling for its cleansing. He believed that his mission was first & foremost designed to awaken and save “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24), he commissioned seventy of his disciples to go forth first & foremost and attempt to awaken and save the same (Matthew 10:5-6), and he even entered the Temple itself on at least two occasions to cleanse it of the religious greed & dogmatic immorality that were festering therein (see the first of those symbolic purifications in John 2:13-16, and the second thereof in Matthew 21:12-17, Mark 11:15-19, & Luke 19:45-48). Indeed, Jesus was so well-versed in the Scriptures and so sound in his understanding of Love that he stunned priests and layman alike by teaching “as one who had authority, not as the scribes” (see Matthew 7:29, Mark 1:22, & Luke 4:32 – as well as John 7:46). In short, Jesus was reviled by the Jewish priesthood not because he denounced Judaism, but rather because he was a true & pure *champion* of the Jewish Law – and thus a very real threat to those Jewish religious elite who were profiting from the corruption of the same.

4 It is important to realize that Jesus was in no way the first Jew to ever even indirectly claim to be the Messiah (even though he never intended to claim the same). Just as important to understand is the fact that openly making such a claim was not an offense for which Jesus could have been executed. The Gospels seem to intimate that Jesus was condemned to die for blasphemy (see Matthew 9:3 & Matthew 26:65 et al), and yet the sin of blasphemy only occurred when a person either openly cursed God's sacred name or claimed to have authorities or powers that were God's alone. And at no point did Jesus ever come close to doing either – repeatedly giving all honor to God and repeatedly deflecting all praise away from himself throughout his ministry. Indeed, when Jesus was asked to summarize the Torah (see Matthew 22:37-40), he did so in the most Jewish of ways – first citing the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:5-6) as the first & most important Commandment and then quoting from Leviticus 19:18 to provide the 2nd, the latter elegantly reflecting the similarly inclined summation of the Law long since provided by the great & well-respected Rabbi Hillel himself.

Jesus Christ: reformer of Judaism; full-filler of the Law

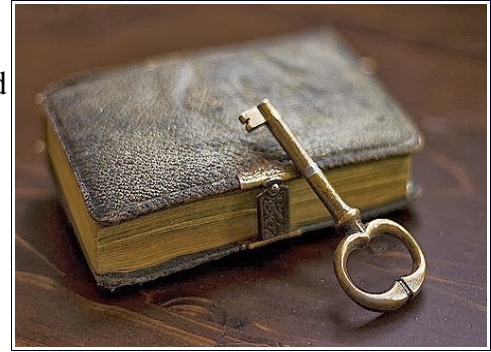
So as the reader can now surmise, it was not the Law itself with which Jesus took issue (despite Paul's many subsequent & highly errant claims to the contrary – see “Jesus is the end of the Law” ~ Romans 10:4 et al), but rather the way in which the Law was being interpreted, taught, and applied. Those in power in the Jewish community (primarily “the Pharisees” in the texts, and yet also occasionally “the Sadducees” or “the scribes”) had manufactured a series of legal interpretations that gave themselves great prominence (“They do their deeds to be seen by others; making their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues; to be greeted with honor in the marketplaces, and to have people call them Rabbi. And yet no one is to be called Rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. And call no one your father on earth, for you have but one Father – your Father in Heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one teacher – the Christ within . . . All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.” ~ Matthew 23:5-12) while simultaneously making any heartfelt spiritual connection with God quite difficult for the common man (“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, for you tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but you yourselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them . . . And woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, for you lock people out of the Kingdom of Heaven. You do not go in yourselves, and yet when others are attempting to enter, you stop them. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, for you cross sea and land to make a single convert, and yet make that new convert twice as much a child of Gehenna as yourselves.” ~ Matthew 23:4+13-15). These religious leaders would cite an interpretation of the Law that was either hypocritically lax for their own benefit or overly strict to another's detriment and justify the same by essentially announcing “thus says the Torah” after every pronouncement. Jesus, on the other hand, wanted none of such capricious nonsense – claiming from the beginning of his ministry that he had come to “set the captives free” (Luke 4:18), and doing so by boldly speaking about (and radically exemplifying) a new Way in which the Law should be enlivened; a Way that constrained dysfunctional Old Testament rules by making them more lenient (e.g. Matthew 5:38-41 vs Exodus 21:23-24, Matthew 8:22 vs Deuteronomy 21:23, Matthew 12:8-12 vs Exodus 23:12, Matthew 15:11 vs Leviticus 11 et al) and a Way that expanded impotently lax Old Testament regulations by making them more consistent &/or more demanding (e.g. Matthew 5:21-22 vs Exodus 20:13, Matthew 5:27-28 vs Exodus 20:14, Matthew 5:43-44 vs Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 19:12 vs Genesis 1:28 & Deuteronomy 23:18, Matthew 20:24-28 vs Exodus 20:14 et al). And he did so calmly “with authority” (a la Matthew 7:29 & Mark 1:22 et al), essentially replacing the Pharisees' harshly pious “Thus says the Torah according to us” with his own gently loving “So say I to you according to God” (see Matthew 5:21-48 – also Matthew 28:18).



Jesus had the courage to call out the arrogant hypocrisies of the Jewish religious elite⁵ (“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees. You hypocrites! For you clean the outside of your cup and plate, while inside they are full of both greed and self-indulgence . . . Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees. You hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs; on the outside looking beautiful, while inside full of filth and the bones of the dead. So you also on the outside appear righteous to others, and yet inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.” ~ Matthew 23:25-28) and thereby “rend the Temple's curtain” (see Matthew 27:51), giving the common people a renewed access to the Divine.

5 In addition, it is interesting to NOTE that while Jesus' teachings often made mention of the intellectual hypocrisies of the religious leaders of his day, their treatment of him was in and of itself *equally hypocritical* . . . Where their Law demanded that they show Love for their fellow Jews (Leviticus 19:17-18), the priests and Pharisees showed open hatred for Jesus. Where the Law demanded that Jewish courts be the ones to levy death sentences on those accused (Deuteronomy 21:22), the High Priests ultimately had the Pontius Pilate do that dirty work for them. Where the Law banned the infliction of punishment on the Sabbath (Exodus 35:3), Jesus' condemners clearly intended for his crucifixion to occur upon (and probably extend at least through) that very day.

Indeed where the religious elite demanded priestly mediation to communicate with God, Jesus proclaimed that “for all who knock, the door will be opened” (Matthew 7:7-11). Where the priesthood felt that religious laws were to be inflexibly obeyed according to their own pre-established edicts & traditions, Jesus stated that “new wine is not to be put into old wineskins” (Matthew 9:16-17) and that “every scribe prepared for the Kingdom of Heaven must bring from his treasure both what is old and what is new” (Matthew 13:52). Where the religious leaders of the day honored the Pharisees as spiritual role-models, Jesus explained that true worship has nothing to do with such arrogant piousness – that we are instead to “humble ourselves as young children” (Matthew 18:3-4) and thus “do what they teach [i.e. uphold the essence of the Law], but not do as they do [i.e. enliven their own hyper-conservative and brazenly self-serving interpretations thereof]” (Matthew 23:2-3); that we like they should “clean first the inside of our cup [by loving the downtrodden in our communities and the enemies in our lives] so that the outside might thereby become clean thereafter” (Matthew 23:25-28 via Matthew 25:35-40 & Matthew 5:44-48). In essence, Jesus believed that we should spend our time & energy on enlivening the selfless Love that resides at the heart of the Law, and not waste our days selfishly striving to fulfill the ritual “jots & tittles” of the same.



And interestingly enough, there was an accepted religious precedent in Jesus' day for this type of reformation within the Jewish community, with Old Testament prophets such as Isaiah, Amos, & Micah all having long since openly denounced any religious ritual or legal interpretation that was lacking in righteousness, humility, &/or advocating an open love for one's neighbor (see Isaiah 1:10-17, Amos 5:21-24, & Micah 6:8 respectively et al). And in truth, this is essentially why “the prophets” arose in the first place – namely, to openly challenge the way Jews in the 8th & 7th centuries (BCE) were focusing on worshiping “properly” – thoughtlessly regurgitating mumbled litanies and blindly fulfilling ritual tenets instead of establishing & nurturing the richly ethical lifestyle that the Ten Commandments were designed to foster.

Returning to Repentance: what Jesus truly meant on the Mount

And so it is that we return to what Jesus must have meant in Matthew 5:17-18; what he must have meant when he climbed that Galilean hillside in the very beginning of his ministry and told his listeners in no uncertain terms: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the prophets, for I have come not to abolish but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not a single stroke of a single letter will pass from the Law until every part of it is accomplished” ... And yet how could this be true? After all, the rest of that very sermon (indeed, the rest of Jesus' entire ministerial career) was riddled with statements that said otherwise – statements that directly challenged, boldly altered, and even abjectly rejected the very same Law that Jesus claimed to support and affirm. Well, the answer (or at least *an* answer) to this apparent conflict rests in the deeper meaning of the word translated as “fulfilled” in this passage; the Greek word *plerosai* (Strong's #4137) – a word that did not mean “to support”, “to affirm”, “to uphold”, or “to blindly follow”, but rather meant “to hone”, “to perfect”, “to bring to completion”, or “to make fully whole.” And this interpretation not only harmonizes with the deeper meaning of “accomplished” in Matthew 5:18 (the Greek word *genetai* – Strong's #1096; a word that meant “to bring into being”), but it also reconciles the apparent contradiction between Jesus affirming the Jewish Law while simultaneously criticizing the same. For he clearly wasn't trying to disable or denounce the Law; he was trying to *cleanse it* – to make it more meaningful and more potent by making it more consistent and more accessible. In essence, he wasn't trying to destroy or replace the Law – he was trying to honor it by *full-filling* it.

*“I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for You have hidden these things from the wise & the clever and have revealed them instead to the youngest of children ... Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but rather only those who **do** the will of my Father in Heaven ... Everyone then who hears these words of mine and **acts** on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. For the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house. And yet it did not fall, because it had been founded on stone ... Enter [such a house] through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, while the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life ... He who has ears to listen, let him hear.” ~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:25, Matthew 7:21-25, Matthew 7:13-14 & Matthew 11:15)*

Just like any great reformer, Jesus openly criticized what was less than ideal about the Judaism of his day, and yet he always did so against a backdrop of what he appreciated about the same. Much like Deutero-Isaiah (the author of Isaiah chapters 40-55, one of Jesus' most beloved Old Testament prophets⁶), Jesus sought to uphold and strengthen the Jewish culture by reminding his religious compatriots that God (or YHWH, who Jesus affectionately referred to as *Abba* – see [Mark 14:36](#)) was not a harsh external tyrant as much as He was a warm internal guide; that religion was not about going through ritual motions in order to please the priests and Pharisees, but was rather about enlivening the selfless Love of the heavenly Father in order to honor the same. For Jesus, Judaism had devolved into a dry & hollow practice that worshiped a god of the past, instead of being what it should be – an open appreciation for the overarching spiritual essence (God – or YHWH – or Adonai – or Abba) that was very much alive (although often only latently so) within the heart of every human being and within the shared core of every human interaction. As Deutero-Isaiah himself wrote: “Remember not the former things or consider the things of old. For I am about to enliven a new thing, and even now it is springing forth. Can you not perceive it? See, I am making *a new way* through the wilderness. I am forming rivers in the desert.” (Isaiah 43:18-19) And this is precisely what Jesus did over & over & over again in the Gospels with regards to the Old Testament – making *a new way* through the wilderness of stagnant laws and unsound regulations; forming a river of “living water” ([John 7:37-39](#)) through the arid teachings of the pious priests and proud Pharisees.

And that is precisely what this tome promises to prove – namely, that Jesus was neither a spineless follower of Judaic tradition nor an arrogant denouncer of the same. Yes, he was indeed bold in his criticisms of the Law wherever it was capricious &/or unjust, and yet his intentions were ever to amend and reform Judaism thereby; to *full-fill* the Law – and thereby Judaism with it.

Jesus Christ: holiest of heretics – amender of the Mitzvot

While there have been many attempts to officially codify the divine commandments contained in the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament, also known as the Torah) and while the debate continues to smolder as to how many laws actually existed in Jesus' day (as well as how many of them are still viable today), the majority of those in the Jewish community accept Maimonides' list of 613 legal edicts as the correct enumeration thereof – with 365 “negative commands” calling for the abstention of certain deeds and 248 “positive commands” calling for the fulfillment of others⁷.

6 Even a casual glance at the writings of Deutero-Isaiah (or “Isaiah II”, the author of [Isaiah](#) chapters 40-55) show that Jesus was not only familiar with their contents, but that he also avidly supported many of their espousals. Indeed, solely within these 16 chapters of [Isaiah](#) we find many of the themes upon which Jesus built his ministry and around which he constructed his unique Gospel of active, selfless Love (see [Matthew 24:12-14](#)) – including reestablishing “the Way of the Lord” ([Isaiah 42:16, 43:16, 43:19, 48:17 & 51:10](#)), casting aside fear & timidity ([Isaiah 40:9, 41:10, 41:14, 43:1, 43:5, 44:2, 44:8, 50:10](#) et al), caring for his flock like a shepherd ([Isaiah 40:10-11](#)), embracing “the right hand of God” ([Isaiah 41:10 & 48:13](#)), replacing the old with the new ([Isaiah 42:9 & 48:3-6](#)), offering sight to the blind ([Isaiah 42:18-20 & 43:8](#)), bringing liberation to the oppressed ([Isaiah 42:3-4, 49:9, 49:24-25, & 51:14](#)), passing through the cleansing “fire” ([Isaiah 42:25, 43:2, 47:14, 48:10, & 50:11](#)), honoring the essence of the divine “*I am*” ([Isaiah 43:11, 43:25, & 51:12](#)), knowing God's perfect Love & limitless grace ([Isaiah 43:25, 44:22, 54:8-10, & 55:7](#)), calling out the foolishness of the wise ([Isaiah 44:25](#)), citing Truth as a hidden treasure ([Isaiah 45:3](#)), having a mouth like a sharpened sword ([Isaiah 49:2](#)), shining “a light to the nations” ([Isaiah 49:6 & 51:4](#)), turning the other cheek ([Isaiah 50:6](#)), awakening sleepers from slumber ([Isaiah 51:9 & 51:17](#)), blessing the feet of the Peacemakers ([Isaiah 52:7](#)), true sustenance being spiritual ([Isaiah 55:2](#)), and accepting the ways of God over the ways of humankind ([Isaiah 55:8-9](#)).

7 Established 3rd century Jewish scholarship claims that the number 613 represents the Hebrew numerical value of the word “Torah” (611) combined with the first two of the original Ten Commandments – the only two commandments believed to have been given directly by God. That same Talmudic tract also posits that the 365 “negative laws” coincide with the number of days in the standard solar year, while the 248 “positive laws” reflect the number of bones and major organs contained within the human body (see [Makkot 23b-24a](#) in the Babylonian Talmud).

That having been said, as with any other fundamental issue of religious dogma, discord remains as to the actual content of these 613 laws. After all, the Bible does not specify how its texts are to be judged or weighted, and scholars are therefore still left to wonder: Are orders given by God to one particular individual in the texts to be cross-applied to the rest of humanity? Are divine requests permanently binding if it appears that they can only be fulfilled in one particular place &/or time? Are we to count commandments by the verses in which they fall or by the particular prohibitions they announce (prohibitions which are at times enunciated over several verses)? And what about the Mitzvot that still have religious significance and yet have not been observable since the fall of the 2nd Temple, or the commands that only seem viable within the land of Israel, or those that only apply to Jewish priests (the Kohanim) – or only to men – or only to women? As Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra once astutely stated: “Sages number the 613 Mitzvot in many diverse ways ... and yet in truth there is no end to their number.”

Of course, for the purpose of this treatise it really doesn't matter how many Mitzvot there were in Jesus' time (much less how many of those rules are still applicable today). No, it is only important for us to see how Jesus treated those laws and how he felt about them; only important to show without any shadow of any doubt that Jesus openly confronted & intentionally amended them all. And to prove this point, I will be examining the Gospels in light of everything Jesus did against or said about the Law throughout his ministry⁸ – first looking at the general statements he made about Old Testament regulations, and then breaking the Mitzvot into their primary categories to show how Jesus more specifically critiqued & thereby altered the same.



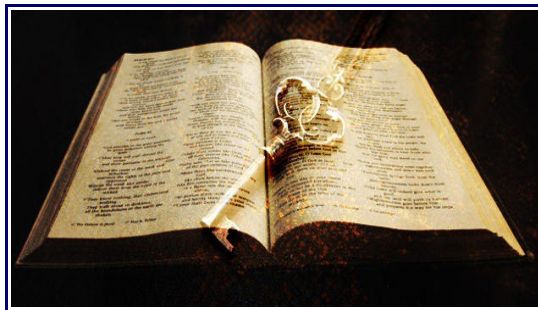
8 Let the reader NOTE that I do so primarily using the NRSV translation of the texts – of the dozens of translations I have studied, the one I find to contain by far the most “neutral” scholarship, and thus the one by far most useful for scholarly discourse. NOTE as well that this tome makes no additional claims – neither that its postulation is the only acceptable one, nor that Jesus Christ actually intended to be the great reformer of Judaism that the texts show him to have been, nor that he even existed at all in the flesh. No, this work has one aim and one aim only – namely, to show that the texts of the biblical Gospels show Jesus to have been a thorough critic of all major facets of Judaic Law & Jewish tradition, that he attempted to be an avid reformer of the same thereby, and thus that he would never support even a “jot or tittle” of the many contemporary, hyper-conservative, Old Testament based views championed by many Christian evangelicals today.

Chapter 01: Jesus & the Law

... his overarching critiques & general commentaries on the Torah

It was a well establish fact in Jesus' day that the Law (and by “the Law” I mean the 613 edicts set forth in the Pentateuch – the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, what is today known by many as “the Old Testament”) was to be absolutely revered and devoutly upheld, with a handful of the laws within “the Law” mandating the very same – namely, that the proclamations of the Law must be kept in their entirety (see [Deuteronomy 13:18](#), [Deuteronomy 28:9](#), & [Leviticus 19:37](#) et al), that “the Law” must be learned and recited to one's children and discussed with others (via [Deuteronomy 6:6-7](#)), and that the contents of “the Law” were not to be in any way deleted or expanded (a la [Deuteronomy 4:2](#) & [Deuteronomy 12:32](#)). Indeed, to believe or say otherwise was to renounce Judaism itself and thereby in effect banish oneself from his or her Judean community. The Law resided at – and even comprised – the very hub of Jewish life, which explains why Jesus did indeed go out of his way to proclaim his respect for and adherence to the same, right down its very last “jot & tittle” (again, see [Matthew 5:18](#) – also [Luke 16:16-17](#)). That having been said, Jesus also made it quite clear from the very beginning of his ministry that he was announcing a new take on what it meant to uphold “the Law” – that there was a different and more potent way to *fulfill* the Law (again, see [Matthew 5:17](#)) – that there was a fresh “Gospel” to be followed, and a new “Good News” to be enlivened thereby (see [Matthew 4:23](#) & [Luke 4:43](#)). And he made it quite clear as well that the Truth of his new Way of Life, while indeed only attainable “through him” (that is to say, by adopting his values and then emulating his way of living – see [John 14:6-12](#)), did not come not from him at all (but rather emanated from God the Father, see [John 7:28-29](#)'s “I have not come on my own. But the one who sent me is true” & [John 8:42](#)'s “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now I am here. I did not come on my own, but he sent me” et al) and thus could not be known by worshiping Jesus himself – but could only be realized by actively and selflessly *keeping the Commandments* (see [Leviticus 22:31](#) & [Matthew 19:17](#) – also [Matthew 5:19-20](#) & [Luke 11:28](#)). This is why Jesus sent his disciples first & foremost to the Israelites to spread this new Gospel ([Matthew 10:5-6](#)) – a very Jewish Gospel (at least in its origins) – a Gospel that proclaimed that Heaven was “already at hand” ([Matthew 10:7](#)) and was attainable for all who chose to enliven the essence of the Law by persisting in loving others selflessly ([Matthew 24:12-14](#)); especially the downtrodden in their communities (see [Matthew 25:35-40](#)) &/or the enemies in their midst (see [Matthew 5:44-48](#)).

While just as traditional in its inception and just as devout in its focus, this new message was admittedly quite the radical one – a truth which had Jesus frequently defending his ministry by explaining to his critics that the foundation of his message rested completely upon the contents of the Law, and that it fostered a wholehearted respect for the same (see “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the Kingdom of Heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure both what is new and what is old” ~ [Matthew 13:52](#) & “How can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God? Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; your accuser is Moses, on whom you have set your hope. If you believed Moses, you would believe me ... But if you do not believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?” ~ [John 5:44-47](#) – also [John 8:37-41](#)).



And yet what probably disturbed the priests and Pharisees of Jesus' day most of all (and what continues to disturb Christian priests & contemporary “Pharisees” greatly to this very day) is the fact that Jesus' message was as fundamentally simple as it was disturbingly radical; as ethically absolute as it was psychologically challenging; as morally unassailable as it was theologically heretical ...

*Initially, we can see how Jesus closes his Sermon on the Mount (probably his most profound moral treatise, found in *Matthew* chapters 5-7) with what many have since called “The Golden Rule” (“*In everything do for others as you would have them do to you; for this is the Law and the prophets*” ~ *Matthew 7:12* – see also *Luke 6:31*); a summation of the Law that was bold in its own right, and yet additionally so in that it made public Jesus' allegiance with the teachings of Hillel⁹ – a well-respected rabbi (still alive when Jesus was born) who was notorious for adopting and purveying a far more liberal interpretation of the Law than his theological opponents, especially the conservative Pharisees (who followed the teachings of Shammai).

*Even more significantly, when asked by a Pharisee which of the Law's commandments was the greatest (and in *Luke* how one can “inherit eternal life”), Jesus decided to boldly answer: “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your mind.*” This is the first and greatest commandment. And a second is just as important: “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*” Indeed, on these two commandments hang all the Law and all the prophets” (see *Matthew 22:37-40* – also *Mark 12:28-34* & *Luke 10:25-28*, which ends with “*Do this, and you will live*”) – a claim that, in the guise of answering an intentionally provocative question, ended up dramatically distilling (and ultimately amending) the traditional Ten Commandments¹⁰; transforming them in the process into two complimentary moral precepts; (honoring God via selflessly caring for others) – moral precepts, incidentally, that were found at the very core of the Law itself in Jesus' day.¹¹

9 Hillel was instrumental in the development of the Oral Torah, the authoritative opinions of Jewish scholars that helped to refine and clarify the written Law as found in the *Pentateuch*. One of Hillel's more famous expositions was what Jesus later adapted to form The Golden Rule, namely the statement “That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow man. This is the entirety of the Torah; the rest is mere explanation.” Unlike his famously stern opponent, Shammai, Hillel was known for his love of peace and his gentle demeanor, with one Talmudic tale describing how two men even made a wager on the question as to whether Hillel could in any way be made angry – with their attempts at inspiring his wrath ultimately meeting with failure. Unsurprisingly, much like Jesus (his now obvious admirer) Hillel is also famous for championing the causes of humility & selflessness, making many statements in advocacy of the same – among them “*Do not judge your fellow until you sit in his place*” and “*If I am only for myself, then what am I?*”

10 It is a little-known truth that there are actually three distinctive sets of “Ten Commandments” in the Old Testament. The first and most infamous is found in *Exodus 20:3-17* (the set that mandates the worship of YHWH, prohibits the making of idols, excludes the profaning of the Lord's holy name, demands honoring both the Sabbath and one's parents, and damns all acts of murder, adultery, theft, bearing false witness, &/or coveting the property of others), though these initial tablets and their inscribed covenant were subsequently shattered by Moses (quite literally, in *Exodus 32:19*) and a second set was thereafter offered in their place (see *Exodus 34:11-26*); a set quite different from the first (a set that disregarded all of the tenets of the Original Ten except for the prohibition of idol-making and the honoring of the Sabbath, and then added the commandments to not make covenants with the inhabitants of foreign lands, to faithfully observe the Passover, to offer God all firstborn fruits of the womb, to always appear before God with an offering, to observe the holy festivals, to never mix sacrificial blood with yeast, to offer God all first-reaped fruits of the land, and to never boil a kid in its mother's milk). The 3rd set of Ten Commandments is found in *Deuteronomy 5:7-21*, and faithfully reflects the original set found in *Exodus 20* – thereby seemingly reestablishing the viability of the same.

11 Jesus' 1st Commandment is nothing short of a recitation of the *Shema*, the prayer (found in *Deuteronomy 6:6-7*) that resided at the core of Jewish religious practice in Jesus' time, and his 2nd Commandment – the one that was “*much like*” the first (or that, when translated more in harmony with the essential undercurrent of Jesus' ministry, was “*equally important*” to it) – was nothing more than a direct quotation from *Leviticus 19:18*; a direct quotation that in & of itself contextually amended the Law of the Old Testament – seeing as how *Leviticus 19:18* was originally cited by religious authorities to encourage harmony amongst fellow Jews, whereas Jesus clearly uttered it to encourage harmony amongst all human kind, friends and enemies alike (see *Matthew 5:39-48* & *Luke 6:27-36* et al).

*And finally, as if that wasn't more than enough, Jesus later additionally amended (and further simplified) the Law by revealing the essence of the entire Torah in one all-powerful concept: **willing acts of self-sacrificial LOVE** – transforming the edicts of the Hebrew Bible from a listing of often obscure legal concepts to a codex of highly practical moral guidelines ...

“For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done towards you ... For if you understand these things I have shared, you shall be blessed while you do them ... I give you a new commandment: that you **Love one another**. I truth, just as I have loved you, so should you also **Love one another**. Indeed, by this everyone will know that you are my disciples: if you **show Love towards one another** ... For my Father is glorified by this: that you bear much fruit and thereby become my disciples ... You are to abide in my Love. And if you keep my commandments, you will abide in my Love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in His Love ... And this is my commandment: that you **Love one another** just as I have Loved you. Truly, no one has greater Love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” ~ Jesus Christ (John 13:15-17, John 13:34-35, & John 15:8-13)

And so with these overt simplifications of the Torah in mind (or actually, his overt amendments to the way the Torah was being followed), it is easy to acknowledge and accept Jesus' blatant challenges to the Temple itself¹² (“I tell you, something greater than the Temple is here”~ Matthew 12:6, “You see all these [buildings of the Temple], do you not? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here upon another; all of them will be thrown down” ~ Matthew 24:1-2 – see also Mark 13:1-2 & Luke 21:5-6), his open challenges to the priests who ran the Temple and announced the Law (“Neither will I tell you [the chief priests and elders] by what authority I am doing these things” ~ Matthew 21:23-27 – see also Mark 11:27-33 & Luke 20:1-8, as well as John 16:1-3), and his flagrant challenges towards “the Pharisees” who acted as representatives of the Temple and adjudicators of the Law ...

“Therefore, whoever violates even one of the least of the commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whoever does them and shares them with others will be called great in the Kingdom. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven ... Let [the Pharisees] alone, for they are blind guides leading the blind., and when one blind person guides another both will fall into a pit ... If you [Pharisees] were blind, you would not have sin. And yet now that you claim to see, your sin remains ... The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; therefore do whatever they teach you and follow it, but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. Instead they tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others, while they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to remove them ... As such, beware yeast of the Pharisees; that is, their teachings and their hypocrisy ... Indeed, woe to you, scribes and Pharisees. You hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the true prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous.”

~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:19-20, Matthew 15:14, John 9:41, Matthew 23:2-4, Matthew 16:6-12+Luke 12:1, & Matthew 23:29)

12 As further evidence that Jesus was neither blindly affirming the Law nor fully discarding it, we have his statement in Matthew 9:16-17 that “No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak, for the patch pulls away from the cloak, and a worse tear is made. Neither is new wine put into old wineskins; otherwise, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved”, a statement that seems to clearly call for an abandonment of the stifling religious ritual & judgmental dogma of the Temple (the “old wineskin” that was imprisoning the “wine” of the Law) and a replacement thereof with a more direct access to the Divine – namely, an imbibing of the Law's “wine” after placing it into the “new wineskin” that was The Way of selfless Love – the Way that resided at the heart of Jesus' ministry. (see also Mark 2:18-22 & Luke 5:33-39)

Another sign that Jesus was knowingly furthering a radical reform of Judaism (specifically its hyper-conservative approach to the Law & hyper-hierarchical approach to accessing the Divine thereby) can be seen in the fact that he was well aware that his message was not going to be received well by the religious authorities of the day; warning his disciples on more than one occasion to “Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues ... and you will be hated by all” (Matthew 10:17+22a – see also Mark 13:9+13a & Luke 21:12+17) while simultaneously encouraging them to persevere through those pending persecutions and use the same as powerful opportunities to testify against the old way while championing the new ...

“When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say in your defense. What you are to say will be given to you at that time, for it is not you who will speak, but the spirit of your heavenly Father that will speak through you. Brother might well betray brother to the death ... and yet those who endure to the end will be saved.”

~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 10:19-22 – also Mark 13:8-13, Luke 12:11-12, & Luke 21:12-19)

And it wasn't only the religious authorities who Jesus knew would be upset by his call to religious reform. He was also aware that his message was going to cause great cultural upheaval in Jewish households & Jewish communities as well ...

“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.¹³ For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and ... one's foes will be members of one's own household ... Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, I have not come to bring peace, but division. From now on five in one household will be divided ... father against son and son against father; mother against daughter and daughter against mother ... Indeed, from the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of Heaven has suffered violence, and the violent attempt to take it by force ... Jerusalem, oh Jerusalem – the city that kills prophets and stones those who are sent to it. How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and yet you were not willing ... If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace, and yet they remain hidden from your eyes” ~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 10:34-36, Luke 12:51-53, Matthew 11:12, Matthew 23:37-38, & Luke 19:42)



13 While more than a few Christians cite this particular verse to claim that Jesus is somehow a supporter of “necessary violence” &/or an advocate of “just warfare”, it doesn't take much effort to realize that this is definitely NOT the case. First of all, as even the most casual of glances at [Matthew 10:35-36](#) clearly shows, the *immediate context* of this particular passage has Jesus speaking not about physical violence or international conflicts at all, but rather about the lack of harmony that comes to any Jewish household when one member thereof chooses to break free from religious tradition and start living the Way of selfless Love he advocated instead. In addition, when we juxtapose & compare [Matthew 10:34](#) with the *similar synoptic statement* Jesus makes in [Luke 12:51](#), we can see that the end result of the lack of peace mentioned is not bloodshed, but *division*. Thirdly, when we examine the rest of *the New Testament* to see how the word “sword” is utilized, it becomes crystal clear that Jesus – the ultimate champion of non-violence – is NOT speaking of an actual weapon or advocating the use thereof (see “to live by the sword is to die by the sword” – a paraphrase of [Matthew 26:52-55](#), [Luke 22:49-52](#), & [John 18:10-11](#)). Finally, looking to *the rest of the Bible* for similar contexts where the word in question is utilized, we find [Isaiah 49:2](#) (one of Jesus' favorite Old Testament authors), which states “He made my MOUTH like a sharp sword” – once again evidencing that [Matthew 10:34](#) is NOT a case of Jesus hypocritically advocating acts of violence, but rather shows him warning his followers that the radical legal reforms he is advocating will bring division and discord to the Jewish community.

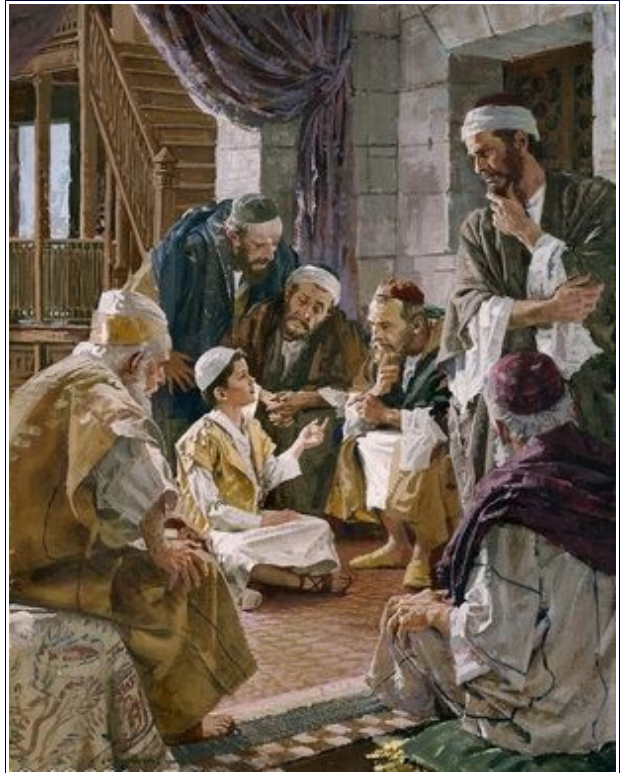
Chapter 02: Jesus & the Law

... what many of his biblical episodes had to say

Aside from the aforementioned direct & overarching commentaries on the Law (and how it was in need of dramatic amendment), Jesus more subtly expressed the same message in many of his more well-known (and some of his less well-known) interactions with others in the Gospels. Consider ...

Talking with the Temple priests at age 12

In the second chapter of [Luke](#) we see a twelve-year old Jesus who had decided to remain behind in Jerusalem on his own after fulfilling the Passover obligations with his family. While it might not be especially unusual for a young man of that age¹⁴ to “rebel” by setting off on his own adventures, it most certainly was intriguing to see a young man of that age doing so by heading back into the Temple to discuss the Scriptures with the priests therein – not to mention doing so with no small measure of insight & authority (see [Luke 2:42-47](#)). As such we see right from the start that Jesus not only had a highly advanced understanding of the Scriptures (especially for the son of a menial artisan – a la [Matthew 13:55](#) – a son who as such almost certainly had not received anything even faintly resembling a formal education regarding the texts of the Hebrew Bible) but also a keen awareness of his reformatory mission related to “his Father’s house” (i.e. Judaism itself, especially the way it was being practiced at the time – see [Luke 2:49](#)’s “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”¹⁵).



*“The Law indeed was shared through Moses; while
Grace & Truth came through Jesus Christ.”*

~ unknown ([John 1:17](#))

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- 14 While contemporary Western cultures tend to view 12 year old males as mere “boys”, twelve was actually the year when boys “came of age” and started to be seen as young men in Jesus’ day (NOTE that the modern day practice of giving Jewish boys their coming of age “bar mitzvah” at age 13 was not yet in effect in Jesus’ day).
- 15 The literal Greek wording of this phrase is actually “Did you not know that I must be in the ___ of my Father?” Many translations quite reasonably assume that the missing reference is best illuminated by the word “house”, and yet in the context of Jesus entire ministry “Did you not know that I must be *with* my Father?” is in all probability more accurate.

Tempted in the wilderness

While the original telling of Jesus' 40-day retreat¹⁶ to the wilderness¹⁷ in the Gospel of Mark is relatively unspectacular (“And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was there for forty days, and he was tempted by Satan; and he resided among the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him” ~ Mark 1:12-13), the retelling of the same in the first eleven verses of Matthew 4 (see also Luke 4:1-13) is overflowing with intrigue. First and foremost, the dramatic effect of the tale is intensified by noting that Jesus fasted for the entirety of the event (“He ate nothing at all during those days” ~ Luke 4:2). Secondly, Satan didn't merely tempt Jesus at the end of his fast, he tempted him greatly – and not only with bread to quench his hunger, but with unlimited political power and corporeal immortality¹⁸ as well. Thirdly (and for all Christian fundamentalists most importantly), the tempting rewards that Jesus rejects in the wilderness are essentially the very same rewards that the Messiah willingly accepts in the prophecy of Daniel 7:13-14 – subtly yet powerfully stating what Jesus himself openly stated throughout his ministry, namely, that he was a prophet of The Way of selfless Love, *not* the Davidian Messiah his followers longed for him to be (see Matthew 19:17, Mark 10:18, Luke 18:19, John 5:41, John 7:16, John 8:50-54, John 12:44 et al).



Finally, in dismissing Satan the way that he does – namely, by repeatedly citing Scripture while repeatedly revering God and “every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4), the author has Jesus making it more than clear enough that he intends to be a radical reformer of the Law, *not* a blind follower or a rabid abdicator thereof.

“And Jesus said: 'Away with you, Satan! for it is written: *Worship the Lord your God and serve only him.*' And so the devil left him, and immediately thereafter angels came and waited upon him.” ~ Matthew 4:10-11

- 16 Initially, it is important to note that the number 40, when referring to a particular length of time, symbolized (in this case quite appropriately) a period of probation, trial, and cleansing. Second, this particular episode (Jesus in the wilderness, tested by Satan) lucidly hearkens the reader back to the forty days and forty nights Moses spent on Mt. Sinai before receiving the Ten Commandments from God (see Exodus 24:18). Of course, in both cases it is intriguing to note that the term “forty” in Jesus' day was most often not used to identify a specific number, but was rather used to designate a generally large quantity. Thus, “forty days and forty nights” in all likelihood simply meant “an exceptionally long time.”
- 17 More than a handful of respected biblical scholars believe that Jesus was a member of the Essenes, a sect of Judaism that – while notably less popular than their religious rivals, the Pharisees and the Sadducees – existed in large numbers throughout Roman Judea in Jesus' day & age. The historian Josephus gave a detailed account of their lifestyle and cultural norms, such as the absence of personal property, the disavowal of monetary wealth, the refusal to own slaves or tolerate slavery, the refusal to murder animals for food or ritual sacrifice, a regular ritual of aquatic cleansing, and a devotion to the principles of charity, benevolence, and peaceful coexistence with others – all norms which resonated quite harmoniously with the teachings of Jesus found in the Gospels. The Essenes also happened to live in desert communities – or “in the wilderness” – which would mean that Jesus possibly chose to engage his cleansing fast much close to the friendly confines of “home” than the passage would otherwise imply.
- 18 Interestingly, Satan quotes from the Scriptures to tempt Jesus with immortality (reciting Psalm 91:11-12 in Matthew 4:6 & Luke 4:10-11); interesting not only as evidence that merely quoting Scripture is obviously not enough to make one truly holy or saved (see Matthew 7:21-22), but also interesting because archaeological evidence (found at Qumran and elsewhere) suggests that Psalm 91 was considered to be one of the more potent texts read during ancient Judean exorcisms – one of the best tools to use for those deemed to be demon-possessed.

Teaching in the Temple

It is interesting (and quite telling as well) that Jesus is only seen reading Scripture in a synagogue once in the entire Bible (see [Luke 4:16-21](#)¹⁹) and that the passage he therein chooses to read is a most meaningful one – first & foremost for its content; which openly claims that he himself had been “anointed” with the spiritual authority required to bring “the good news” (namely, his own unique, anti-establishment construction thereof) not to the priests or the scribes or the Pharisees or the Jewish well-to-do in his community, but rather “to the poor” ([Luke 4:18a](#) – juxtapose with the Beatitudes of [Matthew 5:3-11](#) at the very beginning of his infamous Sermon on the Mount). The passage goes on to strongly imply that he had been “sent to proclaim release for those held captive and the recovery of sight for those blinded; to let the oppressed go free and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor” ([Luke 4:18b-19](#)). It is critical for the reader to realize that Jesus was not speaking in a political context here – that he was not speaking of dismantling the Roman persecution of the Jews or of freeing any Jewish prisoners from their Roman prisons. No, he made these claims in a synagogue – not on a street corner, and as such his reading must be seen for what it truly was: namely, a radical call to *religious reform*; a denouncement of the spiritual enslavement of the Jewish community by the priesthood and a rejection of the liturgical oppression of the Jewish common man by the scribes & the Pharisees. Indeed, this is why he ended his sermon with “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” ([Luke 4:21](#)), and this is why many Jews in attendance – Jews obviously aligned with the status quo teachings of the religious elite – took aggressive exception to his boldness; driving him out of town thereafter and taking him to summit of a hill that overlooked their synagogue “so that they might hurl him off the cliff” ([Luke 4:29](#)).

Just as intriguing is the fact that Jesus did not read from the scroll of [Isaiah](#) directly during this brief discourse, but instead intentionally inserted a portion of [Isaiah 58:6](#) (“to let the oppressed go free”) right into the middle of his recitation of [Isaiah 61:1-2a](#) – showing thereby in a not-so-subtle (if not purposefully heretical) way that he was the master of the Scriptures; that they were there for *his* use, not the other way around. Just as intriguing is the fact that he stopped reading [Isaiah 61:2](#) right in the middle of that verse, intentionally cutting its citation short and thereby intentionally leaving out the phrase “the day of vengeance of our God” – a phrase that directly contradicted the all-loving & all-merciful “Father” at the center of his new Gospel (see [Matthew 5:44-48](#) & [John 5:22](#) – along with [Luke 6:36](#) & [1 John 4:18](#) et al); a phrase that reflected the same fear-based (and even tyrannical) celestial sternness that his ministry was designed to cleanse and replace (see [Luke 12:32](#)'s “It is my Father's great pleasure to offer you the Kingdom” and even [Matthew 11:30](#)'s “For my yoke is easy and my burden is light”).



19 As an intriguing addendum, this entire episode takes place in “*Nazareth*, where he had been raised” ([Luke 4:16](#)); intriguing because (as the 4th century historian Jerome pointed out) the “Nazarenes” were a sect of Judaism ever devoutly connected with the honoring of Law, and also intriguing in light of the implications of [Matthew 2:23](#)'s pseudo-prophetic “He will be called a Nazorean.” Oddly enough, there is no such prophecy to be found anywhere in the Old Testament, though some Christian apologists claim it refers to [Isaiah 11:1-4](#) (which states “A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him; the spirit of wisdom and understanding ... With righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth”, with the “branch” mentioned therein somehow relating to the messianic “branch” mentioned in the supposed prophecies of [Jeremiah 23:5-6](#), [Jeremiah 33:15-16](#), [Zechariah 3:8](#), & [Zechariah 6:12](#)). Indeed, the term “Nazorean” is found nowhere at all in the Bible until its mention in [Matthew 2](#), and the Gospel of [Mark](#) (the Gospel scholars almost unanimously agree was written before its compatriots, and the Gospel from which the majority of scholars believe the authors of [Matthew](#) & [Luke](#) copied) contains not a single reference thereto (preferring the usage of “Nazarene” instead, a term with very different implications – see [Mark 1:24](#), [Mark 10:47](#), [Mark 14:67](#), & [Mark 16:6](#)).

Wine at the Canaan wedding

One of the more notable biblical stories related to Jesus is his first “miracle”²⁰ – turning water to wine at a wedding in Cana. According to the story (related in [John 2:1-11](#)), Jesus, his disciples, and his mother Mary were attending a wedding to which they had been invited when the wine ran out. Mary then essentially asks Jesus for help in the matter, whereupon he instructs the household's servants to fill six stone jars with water, and then ostensibly turns that water into wine. As innocuous as it seems on its face, this tale contains many facets of intrigue & importance.

First & foremost, it bears noting that this event occurred “on the third day” ([Luke 2:1](#)), which would have meant three days since the calling of Philip & Nathanael in [John 1:43-47](#) and seven calendar days from Jesus' ministry being foretold by John the Baptist (see [John 1:26-27](#) – with seven being the number of completion &/or fulfillment in Judaism, and John the Baptist having already been announced as the one who would “prepare the way of the Lord and make his paths straight” – see [Matthew 3:3](#)).

It is also worth mentioning that Judaic Law was clear at the time that if anything unclean were to fall into any vessel made of clay, then “all that is in that vessel shall become unclean” and the vessel itself must be destroyed (see [Leviticus 11:33-35](#)); making it significant indeed that Jesus instructs the servants at the wedding to place the water into urns made of *stone* – urns that could therefore not be similarly contaminated; urns that were also specifically designated to be used during “Jewish rites of purification” ([John 2:6](#)). Indeed, by performing his “miracle” in those same stone jars, Jesus was in effect saying that his ministry would be replacing older religious traditions with newer & better ones ([John 2:10](#)) – that he would be replacing the mere water of religious ritual with the “good wine” of selfless Love.

Thirdly, in marked contrast to the notorious moment when Moses helped turn water into blood as a sign of God's wrath (see [Exodus 7:14-24](#)), Jesus makes yet another subtle call to Judaic legal reform by turning water into wine²¹ – recalling that the Old Testament prophets tended to refer to the messianic age as a time of joy when wine would flow freely (see [Judges 9:13](#), [Jeremiah 31:12](#), [Hosea 14:7](#), [Amos 9:13-14](#), [2 Baruch 29:5](#), & [1 Enoch 10:19](#) et al).

Finally, it is important to note that Jesus refers to his mother in this passage using the seemingly dismissive title of “woman” (see [John 2:4](#) – also [John 19:26](#), where he employs the same term to address her from the cross), evidencing once more that his ministry is not focused on respecting traditional familial bonds²² or fulfilling expressions of respect demanded by the Law (a la “Honor your mother & father” ~ [Exodus 20:12](#)), but rather is built around a way of living that fully transcends the same (see [John 2:4's](#) “for my time has not yet come”, as well as the more infamous “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and enliven it” of [Luke 8:21](#) & [Matthew 12:48-50](#) – see also [Luke 12:52-53](#) et al).

20 As an aside, it might well be important to NOTE that Jesus repeatedly told his followers that they were *not* actually witnessing him doing any miracles at all (see [Matthew 12:38-39](#), [Matthew 16:4](#), [Luke 8:52](#), [Luke 11:29](#), & [John 11:4+11](#) et al), that all of his supposed “healings” were actually examples of people healing themselves by using their own faith to access the power of the Divine (see [John 14:20](#) via [Matthew 8:13](#), [Matthew 9:29](#), [Mark 5:34](#), [Mark 9:23](#), [Mark 10:52](#), [Luke 7:50](#), [Luke 8:48](#), [Luke 17:19](#), [Luke 18:42](#), & [John 9:39](#) – especially contrasted with [Matthew 13:57-58](#), [Mark 6:3-6](#), & [John 4:50](#)), and that – even if they did choose to believe that he was in fact doing performing such “signs & wonders” – they were under no circumstances to spread such falsehoods to others (see [Matthew 8:4](#), [Matthew 9:30](#), [Matthew 12:16](#), [Mark 1:44](#), [Mark 5:43](#), [Mark 7:36](#), [Mark 8:26](#), [Luke 5:14](#), & [Luke 8:56](#) et al).

21 Incidentally, the fundamental symbolism of this act is important to Jesus as well – with water representing the Spirit within (see [John 4:10-15](#) & [John 7:37-39](#)) and wine perfectly selfless Divine Love (see [Matthew 26:27-28](#) & [Luke 22:20](#)).

22 [John 2:4's](#) phrase “what concern is that to you and me” (NRSV) is more literally translatable from the Greek as “what to me and you?”, which is a Semitic idiom frequently used to establish a definite distance between two parties (see [Judges 11:12](#) & [2 Samuel 16:10](#) – also [Matthew 8:29](#), [Mark 1:24](#), [Mark 5:7](#), [Luke 4:34](#), & [Luke 8:28](#)).



“While life is the most rare of gifts, and one should always be drunk while celebrating the living of it, that stupor need not find its source in alcohol. Rather, choose to intoxify yourself with the fullness of every interaction – drinking deeply of every chance meeting and becoming unabashedly inebriated on the far sweeter succors of noble humility, selfless service, and Love most unconditional.”

~ inspired by Charles Baudelaire, Paulo Coelho, & Jesus Christ

Cleansing the Temple

Contrary to popular belief, Jesus actually “cleansed the Temple” on two different occasions during his three year biblical ministry – once near the beginning thereof (cited in [John 2:13-17](#)) and once near the end (described in [Matthew 21:12-13](#), [Mark 11:15-17](#), & [Luke 19:45-46](#)). And despite the obvious similarities in the way these two events are described in the Gospels (with both tellings having Jesus aggressively overturning the tables of the money changers and driving those tending them out of the complex – all while loudly protesting their profaning presence in that holy place²³), it is just as clear to the careful reader of the texts that Jesus had two very different objectives for attacking those same merchants in the manner he did. In the first case – the cleansing mentioned in [John 2](#) near the beginning of Jesus' ministry, it is clear that Jesus is making a statement against the raw brutality and unjust wickedness of animal slaughter. In [John 2:14](#), the text notes that Jesus became upset after he entered the Temple and “found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves” there. In the very next verse he made his own “whip of grass cords” and used it to drive the soon-to-be-slaughtered animals from the Temple grounds, thereby freeing them from their imminently grisly fate. Also unlike the later cleansing described in the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus then explicitly reprimanded the sellers of doves, telling them to remove their charges as well and to “cease making my Father's house a marketplace!” ([John 2:16](#)) This was all done in direct violation of the Old Testament laws that demanded the sacrifice of animals (and indirectly the selling thereof) in the Temple (see [Leviticus 5:7](#), [Leviticus 6:24-30](#), [Leviticus 7:1-18](#), & [Deuteronomy 12:26](#)) **and** simultaneously in full harmony with the underlying values of his reform-inspired message of Compassion and Love (see “Learn what this means: I desire mercy, *not sacrifice*” ~ [Matthew 9:13](#), [Mark 2:17](#), and [Luke 5:32](#)) ... In stark contrast we have the second cleansing, the one mentioned near the end of the Gospels of [Matthew](#), [Mark](#), and [Luke](#). Here the animals of [John 2](#) are barely mentioned, and the focus is clearly set instead upon the obvious greed of those changing money and selling doves, with Jesus



emphasizing the same by directly quoting from [Jeremiah 7:11](#) (“My house shall be called a house of prayer, and yet you are making it a den of robbers”) – all while throwing said charlatans out of the Temple. After all, Jesus was deeply unfond of materialism and greed, and had openly stated on a number of occasions that the same would ever preclude those acting similarly from entering his heavenly Kingdom (see “You cannot serve God and wealth” ~ [Matthew 6:24b](#) & [Luke 16:13](#), “Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in Heaven; where no thief comes near and no moth destroys” ~ [Luke 12:33](#), “So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions” ~ [Luke 14:33](#), and “You lack one thing. Go and sell all that you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven. Thereafter come and *follow me*” ~ [Mark 10:21](#) – also [Matthew 19:21](#) & [Luke 18:22](#)).

23 While Jesus does cite a passage from the Hebrew Bible ([Jeremiah 7:11](#) – directly in [Matthew](#), [Mark](#) & [Luke](#); indirectly in [John](#)) to justify his actions, the somewhat violent nature of his methods do seem to quite clearly demand yet another reform of the Law – namely, a dramatically enhanced leniency towards [Leviticus 19:30](#) (the Old Testament regulation demanding that all Jews devoutly revere the Temple and its contents).

Meeting with Nicodemus

The next episode of importance for our foray into the Bible's portrayal of Jesus as a radical reformer of the Law comes in the first ten verses of **John 3**, where Jesus receives a visit from Nicodemus – a leader of the Pharisees. In this meeting, Jesus attempts to explain that “no one can see the Kingdom of God without being born from above²⁴” (John 3:3); that “no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of both water and spirit.” (John 3:5) Of course, true to form, Nicodemus – like most other members of the traditional Jewish establishment – had no idea what Jesus was talking about (“And Nicodemus said: 'How can these things be?' And Jesus answered him: 'How can you be a teacher of Israel and not understand these things?'" ~ John 3:9-10). And yet, even though little else is overtly explained in this particular passage, it is still possible to examine its exact wording (especially juxtaposed with the overarching context of Jesus' entire Gospel ministry) and thereby in all probability decipher what was meant thereby ...

First & foremost, it is important to note that Nicodemus came to Jesus “by night” – that is, in secret and under cover of darkness (John 3:2a). And the reader is thus left to wonder: Why would that be? Why would a highly respected leader of the Pharisees choose to meet with anyone covertly, much less a noted “heretic” who was preaching a “gospel” other than the one traditionally accepted by the Jewish scribes and high priests? Well, he would do so precisely for that reason, of course; precisely because Jesus was indeed a notable opponent of Judaic tradition (and a desired reformer thereof), and Nicodemus would thus be scolded (if not openly ridiculed) by his peers for seeking such counsel – much less for granting Jesus the homage of being “a teacher who has come from God” (John 3:2b). **Secondly**, the nature of salvation for Jesus Christ is quite obviously an ever-ongoing affair (see “What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ For the wind²⁵ blows where it chooses, and you ever hear the sound of it, yet you never know from where it comes or to where it goes. So it is with everyone who is truly born of the Spirit” ~ John 3:6-8) – a state of being that, like the wind, is ever unpredictable and that thus must be continually renewed; concepts of perpetual impermanence and submission to the moment that actually underlie a number of Jesus' more important teachings (see Mark 13:2's “Do you see these great buildings [of the Temple]? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down” and Matthew 6:34's “So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's challenges are enough for today”).



24 While literally accurate as is, this verse (and the one like it – John 3:7) is more often translated as “without being born anew” or “without being born again”, implying for fundamentalist Christians (a.k.a. “evangelical Christians” or “born again Christians”) that one is spiritually saved for eternity the instant one verbally professes a heartfelt allegiance to Jesus Christ – the one & only Son of God – as one's “personal savior.” The problem with this interpretation, of course, is threefold – **first**, it is patently immoral to worship a God (who is supposedly composed of a Love that is perfect, that is, completely unconditional – see Matthew 5:48 + 1 John 4:18 et al) who only allows a handful of avid worshipers to enjoy an infinite reward merely for cowering before him (and this, regardless of their potential lack of any true moral fiber); **second**, it violates the overarching precept of Jesus' entire ministry – where he says over & over & over again that he does NOT want to be worshiped at all (see Matthew 19:17, Mark 10:18, Luke 18:19, John 5:41, John 7:16, John 8:50-54, John 12:44 et al) but rather simply wants us all to care actively (John 13:15-17) & humbly (Matthew 18:3-4) & self-sacrificially for others (Luke 9:23) – especially the downtrodden in our communities (Matthew 25:35-40) &/or the enemies in our midst (Matthew 5:44-48); and **third**, it contradicts the fundamental meaning of the very passage that encapsulates it – a passage that quite plainly says that the person who qualifies for salvation – namely, the one “who is born of the Spirit” – is the one who, like the “wind”, chooses to continually re-adhere to the teachings of Christ; the one who chooses to Love in each moment anew, just like the wind that knows neither from whence it comes nor to whence it goes.

25 The terms translated as “wind” and “Spirit” in this passage are represented by the same Hebrew word in the ancient manuscripts (*pneuma/pneumatōs* Strong's #4151) – a fact which further supports the above-mentioned contentions.

The woman at the well

Next, [John 4](#) regales us with the story of Jesus and “the woman at the well” – a tale intriguing for a number of reasons, first and foremost of which being its setting: at Jacob's Well, which happened to have been located in the land of Samaria. And this location is significant for three reasons – **first**, because the well had once belonged to Jacob – the grandson of Abraham and the quite literal father of Israel (seeing as how his name was changed to “Israel” in [Genesis 32:28](#), and he was the third man in the Bible with whom God himself made a holy covenant); **second**, because many scholars have noted that the scene in [John 4](#) appears to be modeled on the standard betrothal scenes²⁶ portrayed in Hebrew scriptures (particularly the one involving Rachel & Jacob himself in [Genesis 29:27](#)); and **third**, because the well was located in Samaria and the woman was therefore a Samaritan²⁸. As such, the setting itself establishes an intimate union with the Old Testament scriptures and their established Law – the Law that Jacob himself at least indirectly violated by having sexual relations with his uncle's daughter ([Genesis 29:10](#) – implicitly violating the edicts of [Leviticus 18:12-14](#); which precludes sexual relations between a man and his aunt, and therefore logically also between a man and his uncle's daughter), the written Law that forbade being kind towards (indeed, that actually forbade not killing) Samaritans (see [Number 31:1-7](#) & [Deuteronomy 20:16-17](#) – as well as the same implications mentioned at the end of [John 4:9](#)), and the traditions (or “Oral Law”) of the Pharisees – traditions that forbade men from socializing with women in public (hence his disciples' surprise at witnessing the same upon their return in [John 4:27](#)), traditions that forbade all drinking from ritually unclean vessels (which her non-Jewish bucket most certainly was when he asked for its cooling contents in [John 4:7](#)), and traditions that most certainly forbade all rabbi from openly discussing theology with women at all.

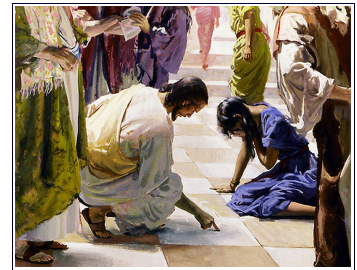


And yet Jesus was not a rabbinical representative of the Law. Rather, he was a self-professed reformer thereof, and as such it can come as little surprise that even in this instance he is using both word and deed to preach the same – not only being kind to a Samaritan woman in need of comfort (in direct violation of Laws written as well as traditions oral), but even going out of his way to boldly (even heretically) state that “the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain **nor in Jerusalem** ... For the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth ... For God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” ([John 4:21-24](#))

- 26 NOTE the obvious commentary Jesus makes on the brittleness of marriage, coupled with the tempting bonds of sexual desire, in [John 4:16-18](#) – words uttered in marked contrast with the Old Testament; a testament that encouraged the social union of marriage (via [Genesis 2:24](#) et al) and that demanded humans “be fruitful and multiply” (via the Elohim's very first commandment in [Genesis 1:28](#)); both in dramatic contrast with Jesus' rare but pointed protestations against the same (against betrothal via [Matthew 22:30](#) and against sexual interaction in general via [Matthew 19:12](#)).
- 27 It is highly intriguing as well to compare the language of [Genesis 29:2-3](#) (“The stone on the well's mouth was large, and when all the flocks were gathered there the shepherds would roll the stone from the mouth of the well, water the sheep, and then put the stone back in its place”), the scene at the well in [John 4](#) involving Jesus and the Samaritan woman, and the resurrective language of [Matthew 27:57-60](#), [John 19:38-42](#), [Mark 16:4](#) (“When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back”), & [John 20:1](#) – especially in light of the fact that water was used as a symbolic representation of “the Spirit within” throughout the texts of the Bible.
- 28 While it is true that the Gospel of [Matthew](#) quotes Jesus as telling his followers to avoid socializing with or preaching to the Samaritans (see [Matthew 10:5](#)), this restriction had clearly been reversed by the time his ministry came to a close (see [Matthew 28:19](#)). Indeed, even in Luke's accounting of [Acts 1:8](#) we see Jesus quite clearly promising his disciples that they will indeed be witnesses to the Samaritans.

The wrongly-accused adulteress

The beginning verses of [John 8](#) relay our next episode of import; the infamous moment when Jesus firmly (and quite cleverly) rebukes a group of ill-intended Pharisees for wrongfully condemning an accused adulteress.²⁹ In this tale, while Jesus was teaching in the Temple³⁰, several members of “[the scribes and the Pharisees](#)” bring a woman before him who had supposedly been caught in the act of adultery; brazenly stating: “[In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. What do you say to this?](#)” Now, as the text openly admits, “[they said this to test him, so that they might have a charge to bring against him](#)” ([John 8:6a](#)), and this was indeed the case – seeing as how Jesus was trapped; on the one hand the Jewish Law clearly mandated the death penalty for such a transgression (via [Deuteronomy 22:22 & Leviticus 20:10](#)), while on the other hand the Roman law was clear that Jews did not have the authority to execute criminal law-breakers (see [John 18:31](#)). In essence, the Pharisees had set it up where Jesus could either openly repudiate the woman's punishment and thereby publicly denounce the Law of Moses, or affirm her death sentence and thereby publicly subvert (and incur the wrath of) the Roman authorities (not to mention openly violate the principles of humble compassion and unconditional forgiveness at the very heart of his own ministry). Of course, it was obvious to everyone in attendance that those who had brought the woman to Jesus had no interest in seeing true justice upheld. After all, if that form of “justice” had been truly desired, they would have brought the woman before the Sanhedrin inside the Temple walls to be judged therein, not before a half-accepted prophet (and oft-denounced “heretic”) teaching just outside the same. As such, Jesus' response was as appropriate as it was brilliant – exposing the immoral hypocrisy at the core of their claim (“[Let the one among you who is without sin throw the first stone](#)” ~ [John 8:7](#))³¹ while simultaneously proving that his understanding of the Law was far greater than their own; doing so by calmly writing on the ground in silence³² until they all departed and left the woman in peace, ostensibly “[to violate the Law no more.](#)” ([John 8:11](#))



- 29 A significant portion of modern scholars consider this passage ([John 8:1-11](#)) to be fully legitimate, despite the fact that none of the earliest manuscripts of [John's Gospel](#) contain its wording in any form. This is possibly due to its mention and acceptance by many early biblical historians and Christian theologians (including Jerome, St. Augustine, and Leo the Great), as well as the fact that its meter and underlying principles resonate harmoniously with the rest of Jesus' ministry as recorded in the Gospels.
- 30 Due to the holiness of the Temple (and the strict regulations concerning those who were allowed to enter it) and the apparently large crowd of people who had come to hear him, it is actually more likely that Jesus was teaching just outside the Temple or directly in front of it – neither of which in any way diminishes the potency of this particular commentary.
- 31 Doing so both generally via [Matthew 7:1-2's](#) “[Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you receive](#)”, as well as specifically via the text of [Deuteronomy 22:22 & Leviticus 20:10](#) – both of which mandated quite clearly that not only the woman caught in said act be stoned to death, but her male counterpart as well. Indeed, the Pharisees in this story had admitted straight away in [John 8:4](#) that they had personally witnessed the crime – that the woman had been caught “[in the very act](#)”, and yet as Jesus then pointed out in [John 8:7](#) (referencing the law set out in [Deuteronomy 17:7](#) which required the witness of any capital offense to throw the first stone), if this was indeed the case then they must also know the identity of the male violator as well – the man who they had refused to bring forth. How can they condemn the one without the other?
- 32 The possible content of Jesus' writings in the dust here remain open for debate. Maybe he was listing the specific sins of each accuser present, leading them to depart one by one in self-reflective shame (“[Why do you notice the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not recognize the log in your own?](#)” ~ [Matthew 7:3](#)), and maybe he was simply writing general legal platitudes from the scriptures. Either way, what is missed here is the far deeper statement being made – the statement that Jesus did indeed understand the intricacies of the Law far more profoundly than his opponents; that he was even aware of the Oral Law – just as binding – that prohibited the writing of even two letters on the Sabbath ([Mishnah Sabbat 7:2](#)) while exempting any Sabbath script written “[with fruit juice, or in the dust of the road](#)” ([Mishnah Sabbat 12:5](#)) ... In this way he simultaneously upheld the Law and his dramatically Mercy-ladled reform thereof.

Kindness to the centurion

For our next example proving that Jesus ministry was founded upon his desire to replace the cold & inflexible priestly interpretations of the Law with the warm & humble Love that he believed resided at the core thereof, we turn to [Matthew 8](#) and its portrayal of Jesus' encounter with “the faithful centurion” (via [Matthew 8:5-13](#) – see also [Luke 7:1-10](#) & [John 4:46-53](#)) ... In this tale, we essentially see a Roman centurion begging Jesus to come to the aid of one of his servants who is “lying at home, paralyzed and in terrible distress.” ([Matthew 8:6](#)) Jesus responds to him by saying that he will gladly travel to the centurion's home and cure the servant, whereupon the centurion humbly states that such a journey is not necessary – that Jesus must only “speak the word and my servant will be healed.” ([Matthew 8:8](#)) Jesus, amazed by the man's devoutness of belief, tells him “let it be done for you according to your faith” ([Matthew 8:13](#)), and the servant was supposedly healed in that same hour ...

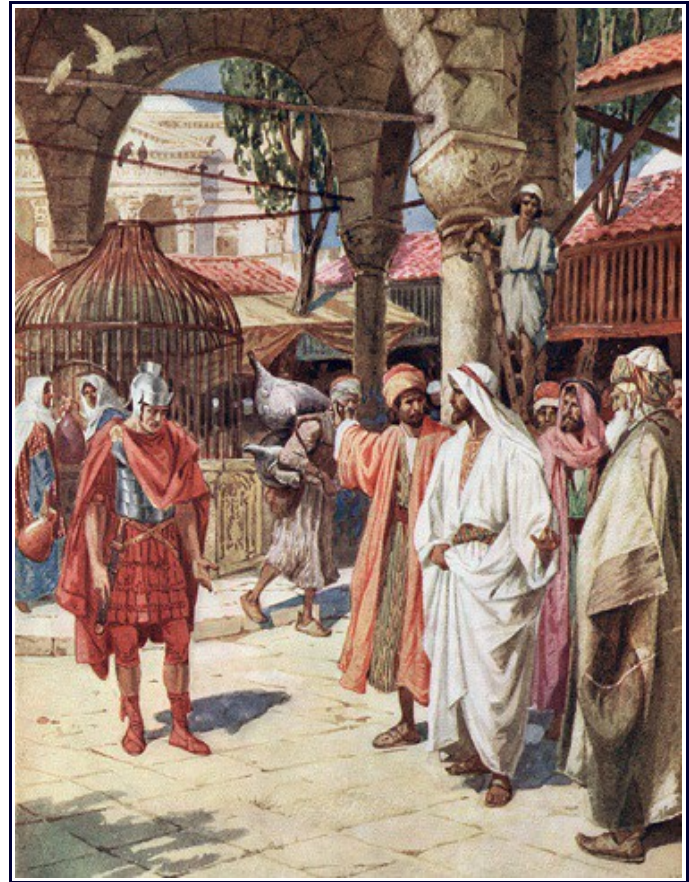
Aside from the fact that Jesus – as he was so often wont to do – clearly places the responsibility for this particular healing not on himself, but rather on the faith of those asking for the same (see [Matthew 14:31](#), [Matthew 15:28](#), [Mark 5:34](#), [Mark 9:23](#), [Mark 10:52](#), [Mark 11:22-24](#), [Luke 17:6](#) et al), there are two facets of this story that are as oft-overlooked as they are important. The *first* of which has to do with the fact that this healing is performed for a Gentile – one who was clearly not living under the rubric of the Jewish Law. And this fact is made even more pivotal when one realizes that the encounter supposedly stimulating this particular healing occurred in Capernaum – essentially Jesus' hometown at the time (“Then Jesus said to them, 'Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house.' And he could do no deed of power there ... and he was amazed at their unbelief” ~ [Mark 6:4-6](#) – see also [Matthew 13:54-57](#), [Mark 3:21](#), [Luke 4:24](#), & [John 4:44](#)); a fact that symbolically announces Jesus' message to be about reforming the Law in order to allow for a transcendence of the same – to be about freeing the Divine Love that was being held captive by the priests and the Pharisees; setting it free to heal & charm & move the whole world; Jew & Gentile alike.³³



33 Verses 11-12 actually have Jesus making this very claim in no uncertain terms, stating that “many will come from the east and the west [i.e. from beyond the borders of Judea] and find a seat in the Kingdom of Heaven, even while the heirs thereto [i.e. pious Jews who uphold the fringe requirements of the Law while being simultaneously devoid of the compassion and the Kindness that reside at the heart thereof] will be thrown into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” ... As an aside, NOTE as well that the phrase “weeping and gnashing of teeth” found here (and elsewhere) does not imply any physical suffering that comes from the painful tortures normally associated with residing in Hell, but rather is a descriptive reference to all who emotionally suffer from acute frustration whenever selfish needs are not acquired or selfish hopes are not satisfied or selfish expectations are not met.

The *second* subtle-yet-important portion of this story is the probable truth that the centurion's "servant" was actually his male companion & lover, and that Jesus publicly agreeing to be merciful towards a gay couple was a direct affront to the seemingly anti-homosexual (and admittedly immoral) edicts outlined in [Leviticus 18:22](#) ("You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination") and [Leviticus 20:13](#) ("If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death").³⁴ And while the casual reader of the texts in question may very well wonder as to the supposed lack of evidence that supports such a little-known claim, a great deal of evidence for it there is indeed ...

Initially, we look to the ancient manuscripts themselves, where the term "servant" in [Matthew 8:6](#), [Matthew 8:8](#), & [Matthew 8:13](#) is actually a quite callow translation of the curious Greek word *pais* (Strong's #3816) – a word in ancient Greek language & literature which often referred to the younger partner in a homosexual relationship.³⁵ This evidence gains even more weight when we look to [verse 9](#) of the same passage, where the far more common term for servant – *doulos* (Strong's #1401) – is used by the centurion to describe his other slaves³⁶ ... A final telling clue showing that the centurion's "servant" was actually a beloved homosexual partner is the fact that nowhere in rest of the entire New Testament do we find anyone asking for a healing of their slave – and as such it is highly unlikely that we would see a respected Roman warrior asking a humble Jewish rabbi for the same. Instead, said warrior in all likelihood turned to Jesus as a last resort; the last chance he had of saving his beloved partner from a life of suffering.



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- 34 While these two Old Testament laws (and *only* these two Old Testament laws) merely denounced homosexual intercourse and not homosexual relationships or homosexuality itself – and while the centurion, as a non-Jew, would probably have thought little of making such a pronouncement via his request (seeing as how it was quite common in those days for Roman soldiers to establish homosexual relationships &/or maintain homosexual lovers – as an offshoot of the prohibition of heterosexual marriage for Roman soldiers decreed by Emperor Augustus well before the birth of Jesus), all Jews within earshot of the exchange would definitely have been astounded by the same.
- 35 Indeed, for 600 years before the Gospel of [Matthew](#) was written, the Greek word *pais* was used by numerous authors – among them Thucydides, Eupolis, Aeschines, Plato, Callimachus, and Plutarch – to refer to a beloved partner in a same-sex relationship. Kenneth Dover, a preeminent scholar and noted authority on ancient Greece (who happens to be heterosexual) affirms this fact as well, and even Robert Gagnon – arguably the foremost anti-gay biblical scholar of the day – admits that *pais* often carries this connotation.
- 36 Admittedly, the more banal *doulos* is used by the centurion to describe the ill servant in [Luke 7](#)'s similar telling of the same encounter, and yet it is critical to note that he attaches the adjective *entimos* thereto – a term meaning extremely highly valued, deeply cherished, &/or having a most honorable rank (Strong's #1784) – when he does so (see [Luke 7:2](#)) ... [Luke 7:7](#) then concludes this alternative passage by once again describing said servant using the term *pais*.

The pigs of Gedarenes

This story (relayed in [Matthew 8:28-34](#), [Mark 5:1-20](#), & [Luke 8:26-39](#))³⁷, set supposedly in “the country of the Gedarenes”³⁸ ([Matthew 8:28a](#)), shows Jesus confronting a demon-possessed man (in [Matthew's](#) case, two possessed men) and then casting said demons into the bodies of a nearby herd of pigs, who then rushed down into the sea and perished. In all three tellings the neighboring townspeople, upon seeing that the demons had been cast out and that the man had returned to mental health, were deathly afraid and – oddly enough – begged Jesus to leave their township. Indeed, just as this is the only time in the Gospels where we see Jesus encouraging a benefactor of his healing ways to share the good news thereof with others³⁹, so too this is the only time in the entire New Testament where we see the benefactors of those wonders be openly ungrateful for the same. After all, [Matthew](#) makes it clear enough that the demoniac was “so fierce that no one could pass that way” ([Matthew 8:28b](#)), so why would the locals be so unkind to Jesus after he exorcised the same? Well, as it turns out there is a historical explanation available for this conundrum; an explanation that once again shows Jesus to be a bold reformer of the Law as it was being practiced in his day. For as it turns out, Gerasenes – the hub of social influence for that entire region – happened to be populated by Jews who refused to eat the flesh of pigs; Jews who were simultaneously raising swine to sell to pig-eating Gentiles in the neighboring Decapolis (where the freshly cleansed man was sent in [Mark 5:20](#)). In truth, as the rest of the Gospels clearly show, Jesus loathed hypocrisy regardless of who was doing the committing thereof – especially hypocrisy being committed by the supposedly pious in order to obtain material wealth (see [Matthew 6:24's](#) “You cannot serve God and wealth”, [Matthew 15:8's](#) “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me”, and the majority of [Matthew 23](#)), and as such it makes perfect sense that he would dramatically expose the same here.

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- 37 While it is often the case that the synoptic Gospels of [Matthew](#) and [Luke](#) alter &/or add minor details to their retellings of the events portrayed in the Gospel of [Mark](#), it is rare indeed that – as is here the case – the former actually abbreviates the tale told in the latter. For example, we are left to wonder why the author of [Matthew](#) leaves out [Mark's](#) mention that the possessing demon's name is *Legion* (see [Mark 5:9](#) – also [Luke 8:30](#)), not to mention that said demon(s) begged to “not be sent out of the country” (see [Mark 5:10](#) – or, “back into the abyss” via [Luke 8:31](#)). It is also odd that [Matthew](#) portrays Jesus driving the demon(s) from two men, while [Mark](#) and [Luke](#) speak only of one man who was so possessed. Finally, it is more than intriguing that [Matthew](#) completely fails to mention [Mark's](#) telling of Jesus' final interaction with the cleansed man – telling him to go and “tell your friends how much *the LORD* has done for you” (see [Mark 5:18-19](#) – also [Luke 8:38-39](#)).
- 38 It is clear that this story is set quite near to the Sea of Galilee, and yet oddly enough neither the town of Gadara ([Matthew's](#) stated setting) nor the town of Gerasa (the setting professed by [Luke](#)) are at all nearby said body of water – with both being some distance to the southeast; the former being 10km distant and the latter over twice that far away. The great historian Origen espoused a reconciliation thereto that placed the event near the town of *Gergesa*, the location of which was indeed near the Galilean Sea and the name of which he incorrectly presumed to etymologically mean “the lodging of those who have been cast out” ... Much more likely is the simple supposition that the tale is symbolically political (with the name of the demons – *Legion* – also being the moniker used to identify a Roman military force consisting of roughly 5000 soldiers; probably the occupying force of the region at the time). Thus, it would make sense to give the tale more weight by placing it either at Gadara – a local center of political power, or Gerasa – the hub of authority for the entire region. Further credence for this latter theory is found in noting that the boar was one of the symbols of the 10th Legion Fretensis; the occupying force that was stationed in Judea in the years following the death of Herod the Great. As such, Jesus casting *Legion* into a large herd of swine and having the same crash “back into the abyss” that they most feared was a powerful way of criticizing the Roman occupation of Judea while also foretelling a hopeful end to the same.
- 39 It bears noting that in [Mark](#), Jesus tells the healed man to inform others “how much *the Lord* has done for you” ([Mark 5:19](#)), while in [Luke](#), Jesus commands him to go forth and “declare how much *God* has done for you” ([Luke 8:39](#)). Of course, in both tellings, the man does no such thing – instead doing the one thing that Jesus never wanted anyone to do: namely, tell others that *he* was the one who had done the supposed miracle (see [Mark 5:20](#) & [Luke 8:40](#) – juxtaposed with [Matthew 19:17](#), [Mark 10:18](#), [Luke 18:19](#), [John 5:41](#), [John 7:16](#), [John 8:50-54](#) et al) ... NOTE as well here that it is the demons who once again falsely claim that Jesus is the one and only messianic “Son of God” (see [Matthew 8:29](#), [Mark 5:7](#), & [Luke 8:28](#)) and that it is Jesus who boldly silences them thereafter (see also [Mark 1:23-25](#)).



“There is one overruling defect in the tradition Christian's moral character, and that is that he or she believes in – and indeed directly affirms – the existence of Hell. For no human being who is truly just and decent and humane can in any way support the infinite punishment of a finite offense. And yet there are other tales of concern as well, at least as far as the Bible is concerned. There is the instance of the Gadarene swine, for example, where it was anything but kind of Jesus to insert demons into their minds and thus cause them to commit a most violent suicide by drowning themselves in the sea. After all, if Christ was in any way even close to omnipotent (much less in any way omni-amorous) he could have easily simply caused the demons to flee entirely. There really was no need to have said pigs suffer in the slightest.” ~ inspired by Bertrand Russell

Healing the paralytic

Originally shared via the first twelve verses of **Mark 2**, this story tells the tale of a most peculiar healing – one in which a paralyzed man could not be brought directly to Jesus (due to the presence of a large crowd of people who were already present – a large crowd who had come to hear him “*speak the Word*” or, in other words, teach his own interpretations of the Law – see **Mark 2:2**) and was therefore lowered to him through the roof of his own home.⁴⁰ Thereafter – in all three Synoptic accounts – Jesus verbally forgives the man his sins⁴¹; an act that is deemed blasphemous by the scribes & Pharisees sitting nearby, who incredulously ask “**Who can forgive sins but God alone?**”⁴² (see **Mark 2:5-7 & Luke 5:20-21** – also **Matthew 9:2-3**) In response to this most harsh of accusations, Jesus exposes the hypocrisy of his critics' religious piousness; boldly stating “**Which is easier – to merely say to a paralytic 'Your sins are forgiven' [what the religious leaders of that day often insincerely did] or to tell him directly to stand up and walk?**” (see **Mark 2:9 & Luke 5:23**) Finally, and in truth most importantly, Jesus then inspires the actual healing of the man's paralysis, prefacing the same with the highly confrontational “**so that you may know that the Son of Man**⁴³ [i.e. *not* the priesthood] **has the authority on earth to forgive sins**” (see **Mark 2:10 & Luke 5:24**). In doing so, Jesus – in no uncertain terms – claimed that the power to access the Divine (the same redemptive power that had been withheld from the layman by the strict interpretations of the Law imposed by the scribes & the Pharisees) had in that moment been taken back from the Temple and returned to the people; a Gospel message that happened to reside at the very heart of his ministry from its very beginning (see **Matthew 4:17 & Luke 4:18**) to its very end (see **Matthew 24:12-14**).

40 **Luke 5:17-26** tells essentially the same tale – with the only major differences being the noted presence of “**Pharisees and teachers of the law**” in the very beginning of its telling, and the replacement of **Mark's** “**We have never seen anything like this**” with the similar “**We have seen strange things today**” at its close ... **Matthew 9:1-7** tells essentially the same story, though an abbreviated version thereof (omitting the lowering of the paralytic through the roof and the utterance of amazement by the onlookers at the story's end), and the event is reflective as well of a similar Jesus-inspired healing of another paralytic – this time by the pool near Sheep's Gate (called Bethesda; a word which appropriately meant both “house of mercy” and “house of shame” in Hebrew) – in Jerusalem in **John 5:2-14** (“**Stand up, take your mat, and walk**” ~ **John 5:8**). This latter Johannine healing was also performed on the Sabbath, making it just as “blasphemous” in the eyes of the contemporary religious authorities as the paralytic healing shared by its Synoptic cousins ... Also important to NOTE is that **Mark** has this healing taking place in **Capernaum** – essentially Jesus' home during his three year ministry, and a place renowned for the lack of faith of its inhabitants (see **Matthew 13:54-57, Mark 3:21, Mark 6:4-6, Luke 4:24, & John 4:44**); a fact which greatly enhances the potency of the events here relayed.

41 Any relatively devout Jew in Jesus' day who was familiar with the Hebrew Bible would have known that health was considered to be a reward for obedience to God, and that sickness was often a punishment for a lack of the same (see **Deuteronomy 28:60-61** et al). Indeed, it was a maxim among the Jews that no afflicted person could be healed until his or her sins had been absolved. This knowledge is hinted at in **John 9:2** (when Jesus' disciples asked him “**Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?**”) and was even espoused by Jesus himself in **John 5:14b** (“**Sin no more, so that nothing worse happens to you**”).

42 According to the Pharisees and other Judaic leaders, there were three primary ways via which a person could commit the sin of blasphemy – attributing the unworthy to God, denying the worthy of God, or personally claiming to possess an attribute or a power or an authority that was exclusively God's. It was of this latter form that Jesus' was here accused, an accusation that he had to have known his actions would provoke. After all, it was well-accepted at the time that a current illness was often indicative of a previous sin, it was well-established in Scripture that “**one who justifies the wicked [is] an abomination to the Lord**” (**Proverbs 17:15** – also **Proverbs 24:24**), it was demanded by the Law that all sins be cleansed (and thereby all forgiveness be effectuated) by sacrifices made to God via the priesthood (see **Leviticus 27:2-8** et al), and it was even a part of the Oral Law that only God could forgive sins (see **Mishnah Yom 8:9**).

43 The term “**Son of Man**” was almost exclusively used by Jesus in the Gospels to refer to humanity in general – *not* himself. This is subtly-yet-powerfully the case in **Matthew 8:20** (especially when juxtaposed with **Matthew 19:29**), **Matthew 12:8**, **Matthew 18:11**, & **Matthew 26:64** – and it is quite flagrantly the case in **Matthew 16:28** (where Jesus in no uncertain terms states that “**there are even some standing here who will not taste death before they see [their] Son of Man coming [from their inner] Kingdom**”). Indeed, the one time in the Bible where “**the Son of Man**” unequivocally refers to the lone Messiah is found in **Daniel 7:13-14**, where said “**savior**” is pointedly seen receiving the very same rewards that Jesus himself *rejects* when offered the same *by Satan* in **Matthew 4:1-10 & Luke 4:1-11** (see also **John 6:15**).



“Where dogma imprisons, Love liberates. Where judgment paralyzes, Love empowers. Where fear disheartens, Love encourages. Where selfishness sickens, Love makes whole. Where pride makes useless, Love makes serviceable.” ~ inspired by Harald Fosdick & Jesus Christ

The triumphant entry into Jerusalem

We find our next episode of importance – Jesus' “triumphant entry” into Jerusalem – near the end of the Gospel of [Matthew's](#) recounting of his ministry (see [Matthew 21:1-11](#) – also [Mark 11:1-11](#), [Luke 19:28-44](#), & [John 12:12-19](#))⁴⁴. In this story, Jesus and his disciples – having left Jericho behind⁴⁵ – were nearing the great city of Jerusalem when Jesus had them pause outside of Bethphage, a small town located at the eastern base of the Mount of Olives. Shortly thereafter Jesus sent two of his disciples into the town to procure a donkey and its young colt⁴⁶ and bring them back to him. The two disciples



did as they were told and brought back the two animals, whereupon Jesus sat upon them both and rode them to Jerusalem. As he and his disciples (along with those who had followed them from Bethany – see [John 12:17](#)) went along, a “large crowd” of people spread their cloaks and “branches from the trees” (probably palm fronds, see [John 12:13](#)) on the ground before him while others announced his arrival, shouting “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!” ([Matthew 21:9](#) – see also [Mark 11:9-10](#), [Luke 19:37-38](#), & [John 12:12-13](#)). Such was the spectacle that the city was “in turmoil” as he entered, with many asking “Who is this man?” and with many in the crowd answering, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth.” (see [Matthew 21:10-11](#))

44 While this is indeed one of the rare facets of Jesus' ministry that is relayed by all four canonical Gospels, there are some significant differences among the four accountings. [Mark](#) (in all likelihood the first Gospel written and thus in all likelihood the Gospel most in alignment with what many call “the Word of God”) mentions “leafy branches from the fields” – *not* the palm fronds mentioned indirectly by [Matthew](#), directly by [John](#), and not at all by [Luke](#). In addition, unlike the other three tellings, [Mark](#) makes no mention of [Zechariah 9:9's](#) “prophecy” related to the Messiah riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. Also, unlike [Matthew](#), the other three Gospels mention only a donkey being ridden, not a donkey *and* a colt, and the Synoptic Gospels all have said donkey being retrieved by Jesus' disciples, not found and “borrowed” by Jesus himself (as told in [John](#)). Finally, whereas [Matthew](#) has Jesus immediately heading into the Temple after his “triumphal entry” (to raise a ruckus with the money-changers there), [Mark](#) has him retreating back to Bethany (and spending the night there before returning to enter the Temple the next morning), [Luke](#) has him first pausing to lament the imminent suffering that will come to Jerusalem's inhabitants, and [John](#) has Jesus first telling his disciples about his imminent crucifixion and then hiding out from his would be attackers until the Last Supper.

45 Interestingly, this tale has Jesus and his cohorts traveling along the same road mentioned in his *Parable of The Good Samaritan* (as shared in [Luke 10:29-37](#)).

46 While true to [Matthew's](#) telling of the tale, in all probability only one animal was retrieved (as is indeed the case in all three of the other Gospel accounts). After all, it will forever remain unclear how anyone – even a divinely inspired Messiah – could ever manage to ride both a donkey and a much smaller colt simultaneously. Of course, this conundrum is explained easily enough as a probable mis-relaying of the Old Testament passage it intentionally recalls – that being [Zechariah 9:9](#), which prophetically tells of a king who would arrive “humbly, riding on a donkey; *even* on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” This explanation gains even more credence when the reader realizes that the author of [Matthew](#) took other liberties with [Zechariah 9:9](#) as well – attaching a portion of [Isaiah 62:11](#) as its new introduction (“Tell the daughter of Zion”) and completely omitting the phrase “triumphant and victorious is he.”

And yet residing underneath the superficial facts of this incident rests a meaning far more profound than its traditionally supposed messianic implications. And this meaning is born in and sustained by the probability that Jesus intentionally staged the entire event⁴⁷ ... Consider the following evidence in support of this claim:

*First, consider this parade's *timing* – just a few days before Passover, the most celebrated Jewish holy-day of the year; a time when all would be primed for revelry and far more acutely aware of the tensions mounting between the Roman authorities and the representatives of the Jewish Law – the very Law that Jesus' ministry was intending to transcend.⁴⁸ This fact is further substantiated by what takes place immediately after “the triumphal entry”, where Jesus goes into the Temple itself and directly overthrows the money-changers' tables; tables necessary for fluid continuance of the Law-mandated animal sacrifices that the Old Testament still demanded – and that Jesus so loathed.

*Second, consider the entry's *setting* – with Jesus traveling directly to “the Sheep's Gate” (the northeasterly portal into Jerusalem, mentioned in [Nehemiah 3](#), through which the Passover lambs were even then being brought into the city before their imminent sacrifice in the Temple⁴⁹) by coming over the Mount of Olives; a hill with well-known messianic implications – having been written about by Ezekiel (“Then he brought me to the gate, the gate facing east. And there, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east” ~ [Ezekiel 43:1-2](#)) and prophesied about by Zechariah (“And on that day His feet will stand upon the Mount of Olives” ~ [Zechariah 14:4](#)).

*Third, consider the *manner* in which his followers conducted themselves – waving palm branches and singing hymns (in this case [Psalm 118:25-26](#)); a manner highly reminiscent of the celebration of the Jewish liberation recounted in [1 Maccabees 13:51](#) (“And they entered [Jerusalem] with praise and palm branches ... and with hymns and songs, because a great enemy had been crushed and removed from Israel”), though it is well worth noting that even though the crowds add the title “King of Israel” to their rendition of [Psalm 118](#), those nearest to Jesus continually reminded them during the procession that he was a “prophet” ([Matthew 21:11](#)) – a great teacher of a new Way ([John 14:6](#)); *not* the longed-for Davidian Messiah who would forcefully liberate the Jews from their Roman oppressors. This fact was not only reinforced by the humble words Jesus spoke throughout his ministry, but also by the way he chose to enter Jerusalem in this his final visit – namely, on the back of a donkey; quite clearly reminding all that he had come not as a warlord who would bring justice with force & violence, but rather as a ruler of peace (like Solomon – see [1 Chronicles 22:9-10](#) & [1 Kings 1:32-38](#)) who would bring harmony via Forgiveness & Love (thereby transcending all man-made laws – those religious as well as those political – and effectively replacing them with a Law of God that was finally *full-filled* – see [Matthew 5:17-18](#))

47 There are those who would state that Jesus was not familiar enough with Jerusalem to have pre-arranged such an elaborate showing. And yet, even though it is true enough that the Synoptic Gospels only mention this one final visit to Jerusalem during his ministry, the Gospel of [John](#) notes that Jesus actually made a number of similar treks during his three years of teaching (see [John 2:13](#), [John 5:1](#), [John 10:22](#), & [John 12:12](#)). In addition, the Gospel of [Luke](#) makes it quite clear that Jesus had sent out at least seventy disciples to reconnoiter – and probably prepare – “every town and place where he himself intended to go.” (see [Luke 10:1](#)) After all, how else could his disciples “*immediately*” find the requisite donkey after entering Bethphage, and how else could the owner thereof release the same “*immediately*” as soon as the proper words were uttered in response to that owner's quite reasonable complaints? (see [Matthew 21:2-3](#))

48 See Jesus' bold proclamation made during his final Passover meal – a meal, by the way, which consisted solely of wine & bread – “While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the *a new covenant*, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.' ” ~ [Matthew 26:26-28](#) (also [Mark 14:22-24](#) & [Luke 22:17-20](#))

49 NOTE that lamb was not served at the Last Supper – in harmonic resonance with Jesus' revolutionary claim that his new Gospel of willingly self-sacrificial Kindness ([Matthew 24:12-14](#)) was in effect the new “gate for the sheep” ([John 10:7](#)).

Cursing the barren fig tree

At least as far as the Gospels of **Matthew & Mark** are concerned⁵⁰, we next arrive at that curious moment when Jesus seemingly curses⁵¹ a fig tree. In this tale, Jesus – having spent the night in Bethany – is returning to Jerusalem once more (the morning after his “triumphal entry”) when he spots a fig tree off the road. Seeing the tree already had leaves⁵² he looked for fruit (even though the author of **Mark** admits that it was “not the season for figs” ~ **Mark 11:13**). Finding none, Jesus spoke to the tree, saying, “**May no fruit ever come from you again**” (see **Matthew 21:19**)⁵³, whereupon the tree withered and died.⁵⁴ When asked by his astounded disciples about the encounter, Jesus tells them “**Whatever you ask for with faith in prayer, you will receive.**” (see **Matthew 21:20-22**)⁵⁵

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- 50 While it is not at all unusual for the Gospel of **John** to avoid mentioning the contents of its Synoptic relatives (as is the case at hand), it is odd indeed whenever the Gospel of **Mark** mentions a particular event and the Gospels of **Matthew &/or Luke** (the authors of which both quite obviously used **Mark** as a foundation for their own Jesusian portrayals) fail to do so. That having been said, **Luke** does show Jesus relaying a parable about a fig tree that contains & underpins many of the major themes of the fig-tree-cursing event portrayed in **Matthew & Mark** – a parable that simultaneously encourages diligence & patience with acts &/or others when it states: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. And so he said to the gardener 'For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil? Whereupon the gardener replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I can tend it and fertilize it. Then, if it bears fruit next year, all will be well and good. And if it doesn't, then you can cut it down.'” (**Luke 13:6-9**)
- 51 For those concerned about Jesus (or any supposedly peace-oriented prophet) “cursing” an innocent fig tree, let it be realized **A**) that there is no evidence in either version of the story that shows Jesus extending any malice (or even any annoyance) towards the tree for not bearing fruit out of season, **B**) that it is Peter who claims the tree was “cursed”, not Jesus (see **Mark 11:21**), and **C**) that the Greek word translated as “cursed” in **Mark's** Gospel (*kateraso* – Strong's #2672) was not a term of damnation or profanity, but rather one of mere verbal denigration (see **Matt 5:44 & Luke 6:28**).
- 52 NOTE that this tale is told in the late Spring (just before Passover) and as such the fig trees were only just beginning to bud. And yet here Jesus has spotted a fig tree already fully “in leaf” – that being, an early blooming plant whose fuller foliage signaled that it should have been bearing early figs as well. The manuscripts do not explicitly state that Jesus was angry (or even at all disappointed) that there was no such prize ready for consumption, and yet it would be reasonable to assume as much – at the very least because the encounter would have reminded him all too well of his nemesis, the scribes & the Pharisees; those whose dogmatic-yet-condemnatory following of the Law too was “all leaf and no fruit” ... Also worth noting is Jesus' “Lesson of the Budding Fig” mentioned in all three of the Synoptic Gospels – a mini-parable that metaphorically encourages all to remain aware of the signs in each moment, and that directly told Jesus' followers to heed the eternal wisdom at the heart of his teachings – especially the purposeful transcendence of (and thereby the effective *fulfillment* of) the current fruitlessness of the Law (see **Matthew 24:32-35, Mark 13:28-31, & Luke 21:29-33**)
- 53 This statement could just as readily be translated as “No fruit will ever come from you again” – a factual declaration of the possibility that a fully-leafed fig tree bearing no fruit might very well be permanently barren. Interestingly enough, **Mark** has Jesus far more harshly declaring “**May no one ever eat fruit from you again**” (**Mark 11:14**), though this statement could also be similarly re-translated to a neutrally non-judgmental “No one will ever eat fruit from you again.”
- 54 Intriguingly, it is worth noting that the Roman Empire was militarily occupying Judea at the time of this encounter – meaning that this incident occurred in a time of war; a time when it was explicitly forbidden for Jews to kill fruit trees of any kind (though admittedly primarily the fruit trees of a conquered enemy – see **Deuteronomy 20:19**).
- 55 While **Matthew 21:22** (“Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive”) and **Mark 11:24** (“whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours”) both directly reflect Jesus' similar claims made in **Matthew 7:7 & Luke 11:10** (“Ask, and it will be given you; Search, and you will find; Knock, and the door will be opened”), the true nature of these seemingly selfish (and thereby seemingly contradictory – at least as far as the essence of Jesus' selfless Gospel is concerned) claims cannot be truly comprehended (nor can the deeper meaning of the incident involving the fig tree be truly gleaned) until we look to the similar statements Jesus made in **John 14:13, John 15:16, & John 16:23** (“I will do whatever you ask *in my name*”). For the name of Jesus (which was **Emmanuel** – see **Matthew 1:23**) meant “God is with(in) us”, and thus the only way anyone can truly ask “in his name” is to ask the only way the all-Loving Father can ask (**Matthew 5:48**) – namely, to ask for the opportunity to give fully and serve selflessly, regardless of task or trouble, and regardless of time or season.

Quite fittingly (i.e. in full harmony with the principle contention of this treatise: that Jesus was a devout supporter of the Law via acting as a most radical reformer of the ways it was to be practiced), Israel is symbolically equated with plants & gardens & plantings throughout the Old Testament – as various trees (including the fig) in [Judges 9:8–15](#), as a vineyard in [Isaiah 3:14](#) & [Jeremiah 12:10](#), and even as the fruit from a fig tree itself in [Hosea 9:10](#) & [Jeremiah 24:5](#). Indeed, several times in the Hebrew Bible the prophets write of God long ago inspecting Israel for “early figs” – namely, those who were devoutly obedient to the Law (see [Micah 7:1](#), [Jeremiah 8:13](#), & [Hosea 9:10-17](#)). Finding none at the time, God then poured out a curse of barrenness upon the land (see [Hosea 9:16](#)) and the people of Israel became “like rotten figs” ([Jeremiah 29:17](#)). Despite this, God remained merciful and promised to replant Israel one day and bring forth healthy figs there once more (see [Joel 2:22](#), [Amos 9:14](#), [Micah 4:4](#), [Zechariah 8:12](#), & [Ezekiel 36:8](#)). Like every other devout Jew, Jesus was well aware of this promised legacy of abundance. In truth, his encounter with the barren fig tree hearkens back to the earlier days of his ministry; days when he called upon his followers to produce spiritual fruit (see [Matthew 3:8-10](#), [Matthew 7:16-20](#), [Matthew 13:8](#), & [Luke 3:7-9](#) et al) – demanding much more than a mere adherence to the legal traditions established by the priests & the scribes & the Pharisees; demanding a *fulfillment* of the Law instead ([Matthew 5:17-18](#)) – a radical enlivenment of perfect Love via selfless service for others (especially caring for the downtrodden & being kind to one's enemies; deeds that he felt were the very essence of the Law – see [Matthew 5:44-48](#), [Matthew 18:21-22](#), [Matthew 24:12-14](#), [Matthew 25:35-40](#), [Luke 6:27-36](#), [Luke 10:29-37](#), [Luke & John 13:15-17](#) et al). Jesus had been preaching these principles and announcing this new Way for almost three years, and yet people were still falsely proclaiming him to be their king – their military savior – when he rode into Jerusalem on the back of donkey just the day before. How fitting then, that the very next morning he encountered an early blooming fig tree – a tree that symbolically bore the promise of a renewed Israel (just like his ministry bore the promise of a renewed Judaism) – and a tree that, like so many of his followers, was bearing no fruit. Was this why he responded so aggressively thereafter when he entered the Temple and overturned the tables of the money-changers? Probably not (after all, annoying the authorities was part of his pre-arranged & self-organized crucifixion, and he had already turned over those same tables on another occasion near the beginning of his ministry – see [John 2](#)), and yet it very well explains why he would openly “curse” that tree and then shortly thereafter tell the elders and chief priests of the Temple that “the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given instead to those who *produce* the fruits thereof.” ([Matthew 21:43](#))

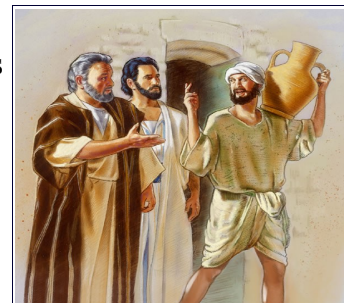


Sharing a Last Supper

One of the more well-known episodes of Jesus' ministry (and possibly the second-most important symbolic teaching of Jesus' quite unique gospel in the Bible) is the final meal he shared with his disciples; known by many as “The Last Supper” (see [Matthew 26:17-30](#), [Mark 14:12-26](#), [Luke 22:7-20](#), & [John 13:2-30](#)). Though the four Gospel tellings do differ somewhat from one another⁵⁶, the majority of scholars tend to agree with the Synoptic Gospels of [Matthew](#), [Mark](#), & [Luke](#) that the following events took place “on the first Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb [was traditionally] sacrificed” (that is, the 1st day of the traditional Passover celebration⁵⁷ – see [Matthew 26:17a](#), [Mark 14:12a](#), & [Luke 22:7](#)):

*that Jesus' disciples asked him where they were to make preparations for the Passover meal (see [Matthew 26:17b](#), [Mark 14:12b](#) & [Luke 22:9](#)),

*that Jesus responded by sending two of his disciples (Peter & John, according to [Luke 22:8a](#)) to Jerusalem – telling them that they would be approached there by “a man carrying a water jar”⁵⁸ (see [Mark 14:13](#) & [Luke 22:10](#)); a man they were to follow,



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- 56 The Gospels of [Matthew](#) & [Mark](#) have the disciples asking Jesus where they should prepare the Passover meal (whereupon Jesus answers cryptically – see [Matthew 26:17](#) & [Mark 14:12](#)), while [Luke](#) has Jesus directly telling his disciples to do so ([Luke 22:8](#)) ... [Matthew](#) & [Mark](#) have Jesus offering the bread before the wine ([Matthew 26:26-27](#) & [Mark 14:22-23](#)), while [Luke](#) has Jesus offering the bread bracketed by two separate wine offerings ([Luke 22:17-20](#)) ... [Matthew](#) & [Mark](#) both have Jesus announcing his imminent betrayal by one of the 12 disciples before the blessing of the wine and the bread ([Matthew 26:21](#) & [Mark 14:18](#) – see also [John 13:21](#)), while [Luke](#) has this pronouncement coming after the same ([Luke 22:21](#)) ... [Matthew](#) & [Mark](#) both have the disciples questioning Jesus about the identity of the betrayer ([Matthew 26:22](#) & [Mark 14:19](#)), while [Luke](#) has the disciples asking each other about the same ([Luke 22:23](#) – see also [John 13:22](#)) ... [Matthew](#) & [Mark](#) then have Jesus answering “it is the one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me” ([Matthew 26:23](#) & [Mark 14:20](#)), while [Luke](#) does not ... Finally, [John](#) identifies Jesus' betrayer as being Judas ([John 13:26-30](#)) while [Matthew](#), [Mark](#), & [Luke](#) do not (NOTE that [Matthew 26:25](#) actually *refutes* Judas as being the supposed traitor, seeing as how Jesus responds “You say so” when asked by Judas whether he was the one responsible; an answer that for Jesus actually meant “No” or “You are mistaken.” For proof of the same, simply juxtapose [Mark 15:2](#), [Luke 23:3](#), & [John 18:37](#) with [John 6:15](#) & [John 18:36](#)).
- 57 For practicing Jews the Passover was and still remains a celebration commemorating the Exodus from Egypt and concurrent Jewish liberation from the bondage of slavery. The roots of the festival itself are found in [Exodus 12:6-25](#), a passage which demands that the Exodus be celebrated every year in perpetuity ([Exodus 12:14+24-25](#)) on the 14th day of the month of Nissan via the eating of a sacrificial lamb with wine, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs. Originally to be eaten “with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, your staff in your hand, and ... hurriedly” ([Exodus 12:11](#)), the rites of the Passover celebration evolved once the Jews settled in Israel and built their Temple in Jerusalem. At that point the Passover steadily became a yearly Jewish pilgrimage for the devout, a pilgrimage which Jesus' family regularly made when he was a child (see [Luke 2:41](#)). Over time – especially after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD – the rites of the Passover celebration continued to shift and change, with many of them eventually being recorded in ancient rabbinic literature. Rabban Gamaliel (grandson of the elder Gamaliel at whose feet Paul is said to have studied – see [Acts 22:3](#)) noted that the mandates to eat of the sacrificial lamb, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs remained intact throughout its history, and other scholars note as well that the practices of traveling to Jerusalem, of communal foot-washing, of ceremonial wine-sharing, and of celebratory hymn-singing were in all probability also parts of the traditional Seder meal in Jesus' day..
- 58 Even though the Gospel of [Matthew](#) does not mention a male water-bearer, mention thereof in [Mark](#) & [Luke](#) remains a viable portion of the massive bundle of evidence in the Gospels showing that Jesus intentionally orchestrated the final days of his ministry (probably via “the seventy” disciples he had sent out some days/weeks beforehand – see [Luke 10:1](#)), including his own crucifixion (seeing as how men did not normally carry water jars in Jesus' day). Indeed, much of this evidence is contained within the telling of the Last Supper itself – including the already furnished “upper room”, Judas' blatantly obvious collaboration with said plan (see [John 13:26-31](#)), and Jesus' own frequent admissions made to the same effect (see [Matthew 26:24](#), [Mark 14:21](#), [Luke 22:22](#), [Luke 22:37](#), [John 13:1](#), & [John 13:18-19](#)).

*that they were thereafter to approach the owner of the house entered by the water-bearer and say to him, “The teacher asks you: 'Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’”⁵⁹ (see Mark 14:14 & Luke 22:11),

*that the man in question would then show the two disciples “ a large room upstairs, furnished and ready” in which to they were to make the Passover preparations (see Mark 14:15 & Luke 22:12),

*that the two disciples then did as Jesus asked – that they went to Jerusalem, met the water-bearer, followed him to the home with the “upper room,” and made the relevant Passover preparations there (see Matthew 26:19, Mark 14:16, & Luke 22:13),

*that Jesus ate the Passover meal with his disciples in that room that evening (see Matthew 26:20-30a, Mark 14:17-26a, & Luke 22:14-38),

*and that Jesus & his disciples all departed thereafter to the Garden of Gethsemane (located at the foot of the Mount of Olives, “across the Kidron Valley” – see Matthew 26:30b, Mark 14:26b, Luke 22:39, & John 18:1).



Despite this mild consensus, a significant number of scholars admit that the Gospel of John quite strongly intimates a valid contrarian view⁶⁰ – namely, that this “Last Supper” was not *the* Passover meal (which was actually celebrated several days later, on the eve of Jesus' crucifixion), but rather an earlier meal purposefully designed to *resemble* the Passover Seder; a final gathering of Jesus with his disciples both to prepare them emotionally for what was soon to come (namely, his pre-arranged crucifixion; a most dramatic exemplification of selfless Love – one of which they were still mostly in denial, and one for which they were still quite poorly prepared – see Matthew 16:21-23, Matthew 17:22-23, Matthew 26:1-12, Mark 8:31-33, Mark 9:31-35, Luke 9:43-45, & Luke 18:31-34) and to symbolically remind them once more of the primary purpose of his ministry: that being, to enliven the *fulfillment* of the Law⁶¹ – by enabling common Jews to transcend the priests' (and all other “scribes & Pharisees”) shallow & soulless interpretations of the same. And what evidence is there to support such a contention? Consider the following facts (biblical as well as historical) ...

*The Gospel of John itself plainly states that Jesus' crucifixion took place on “the Day of Preparation for Passover” (John 19:14) – having him therefore supposedly **dying** on the cross at essentially the same time the Passover sacrifices were being offered and several hours *before* the Seder meal was then celebrated in Jewish homes later that evening.

59 In mild contrast, the Gospel of Matthew has Jesus giving the disciples the code-phrase of “The Teacher says: 'My time is near. I will keep the Passover at your home with my disciples.’” (Matthew 26:18) ... NOTE as well that all of the phrases given in all three Synoptic accounts open with reference to Jesus as “the Teacher asks/says”, in all possibility revealing that the mysterious water-bearer was one of “the seventy” Jesus had sent ahead in Luke 10:1.

60 It would be unfair not to NOTE that the Gospel of John, while indeed lacking any mention of sharing wine & bread in its “Last Supper” description, does contain Eucharistic words similar to those found in the Synoptic Gospels (see John 6:58's “This is the bread that came from Heaven; not like that which your ancestors ate and died. Instead, the one who eats this bread will live forever”) ... Also worth noting is that the “Last Supper” words of John 13:16 (“Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them”), which directly reflect similar passages found in Matthew 20:25-27, Mark 10:41-45, & Luke 22:24-27 (“whoever wishes to be great among you must be a servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must become a slave”), are uttered immediately after Jesus has finished washing his disciples' feet – a task typically performed by the *lowest* members of Judean society.

61 Again, please refer to Strong's #4137, the ancient Greek word *plerosai* – often translated as “to fulfill” in the Scriptures (see Matthew 5:17-18), but more accurately translated as “to hone” or “to perfect” or “to make whole or complete.”

*The only portions of the probable Seder tradition present in the Gospel of **John's** rendition thereof is the washing of one another's feet⁶² (an act that is interestingly fully absent from the tellings of **Matthew, Mark, & Luke**) and possibly the eating of bread after it has been dipped in bitter herbs (see **John 13:26-27**).



*If Jesus and his disciples did indeed celebrate their “Last Supper” on the first night of Passover (as is seemingly described in the Synoptic Gospels), then both Jesus' trial(s) and his crucifixion would have taken place during the seven-day Passover holiday that followed – activities which no Jewish authority figure could have legally performed at that time (a la **Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:1**); a fact that the Gospels, especially the Gospel of **Matthew**, would almost certainly have both noted and harshly critiqued.

*The only foods mentioned in the Synoptic portrayals of the “Last Supper” are bread and wine. If it had been a properly traditional Passover meal, then the telling of the Exodus story, the eating of a murdered **lamb**, and the sharing of **bitter herbs** would also have played prominent roles in the ceremony (see **Exodus 12:6-8+14**).

*According to **Luke 22:19b-20** Jesus tells his disciples to partake of the wine and the bread “in remembrance of me,”⁶³ instead of in the Seder's actual remembrance – namely, the Jewish Exodus from Egypt and concurrent liberation from bondage⁶⁴ (neither of which are mentioned in the Gospel accounts).

*While one of the most important rites of the Seder meal involved eating only unleavened bread (see **Exodus 12:15**, which also mandated that no leaven even be present inside the home at all during the Passover), Jesus and his disciples ate **leavened bread** (the Greek term *arton* Strong's #740 used in **Matthew 26:26, Mark 14:22, & Luke 22:19**)⁶⁵ during their meal instead of the unleavened bread (the Greek word *azumos* – Strong's #106) that is mentioned in **Matthew 26:17, Mark 14:12, & Luke 22:7**.

62 NOTE two intriguing things about this humble deed – **First**, Jesus symbolically violated the Law of **Leviticus 18** (as well as the shame implied with all post-Fall nudity – see **Genesis 3:7-11, Exodus 20:26, Deuteronomy 28:48, Isaiah 47:3, Nahum 3:5, Lamentations 1:8** et al) when he disrobed and was briefly naked before his disciples both before he began washing their feet (“Jesus got up from the table, *took off his outer robe*, and [then] tied a towel around himself” ~ **John 13:4**) as well as immediately thereafter (“After he had washed their feet, *had put his robe back on*, and had returned to the table, he said to them” ~ **John 13:12**) ... and **second**, that the act is **not** done to cleanse one's self ritually for the Seder meal (after all, nowhere do we see anyone washing Jesus' feet or anyone washing their hands prior to eating), but rather as an example of the “New Covenant” of active, humble, selfless Love that Jesus had come to relay – a New Covenant that did not denounce the Law, but that did indeed enable those practicing it to transcend the same (see **John 13:15-17** “For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you ... If you understand these things, blessed are you while you do them” followed shortly thereafter by **John 13:34-35** “I give you *a new Commandment*: that you Love one another. Just as I have Loved you, so should you also Love one another. Indeed, by this everyone will know that you are my disciples: if you show Love for one another”).

63 Interestingly, **Luke 22:19b-20** (“do this do in remembrance of me.” And he did likewise with the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you”) is a highly disputed text, with the words of which failing to appear in the majority of the earliest manuscripts of Luke's Gospel.

64 As an important aside, it bears noting that the Last Supper (and its intimate ties to the Passover celebration) reflects the same primary message as one of initial major moments of the same; namely, Jesus standing up in the synagogue and reading from **Isaiah** in the Gospel of **Luke 4** (“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to let the oppressed go free” ~ **Luke 4:18**) ... As such, one of the penultimate moments of real importance in Jesus' ministry joins one of the first of such moments in reflecting the essential message of his entire three-year teaching: that being, the liberation of the oppressed – in this case, the liberation of the lay Jew from the shackles of the scribes & the Pharisees and the conservative way they were interpreting the Law.

65 It is worth noting that even though **John 13:25** does use the Greek term for “morsel” (*psomion* Strong's #5596) instead of the one for “leavened bread”, an examination of **Ruth 2:14** (where the Hebrew equivalent of that term is also used) shows that even **John** claimed thereby that Jesus dipped *leavened bread* into the supposedly Paschal Cup.

*Another critical rite of the Seder meal was & remains the drinking of the sacred wine⁶⁶, traditionally recalling God's primary Covenant with the Jews; essentially a promise of freedom and abundance⁶⁷ ... In the case of the Passover celebration, participants traditionally shared wine via a single cup⁶⁸ – in all probability representing both the “cup of desolation” (in the Seder's case symbolizing the Israelites' famed enslavement to the Egyptians – see Exodus 6:5, along with Psalm 11:6, Psalm 75:8, Isaiah 51:17-22, Jeremiah 25:15, & Zechariah 12:2) and the “cup of salvation” (symbolizing the Israelites' subsequent liberation from the same – see Exodus 6:6-7⁶⁹, along with Psalm 16:5, Psalm 23:5, & Psalm 116:13). While the consumption of wine was not biblically mandated at the earliest Seder ceremonies (it is not specifically mentioned in Exodus 12), wine did serve many sacred purposes in ancient Jewish culture⁷⁰ and the Gospels clearly show that it was indeed an intimate part of the Seder tradition in Jesus' day. That having been said, by avoiding any mention of the Exodus event and instead announcing that the cup represented “the new covenant in my blood” (Luke 22:20⁷¹), Jesus made a clear & bold reference to the well-known promise of Jeremiah 31 – the promise that duly reflected the primary intention underlying his orchestration of the Last Supper (as well as the underlying purpose of his entire ministry⁷²); a promise having God unequivocally stating that “The days are surely coming when I will make *a new covenant* with the house of Israel ... It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I brought them out of Egypt ... But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days: I will put my Law *within them*, and I will write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me – from the least of them to the greatest ... For I will forgive them their iniquities, and remember their sins no more.” (Jeremiah 31:31-35 – quoted as well in Hebrews 8:8-13)

66 The scarcity of water in the ancient Near East made wine a necessity of survival more than a mere luxury (see Genesis 27:28 “May God give you of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth; and plenty of grain and wine” & Sirach 31:27a “Wine is very life to human beings”). As such it came to generally symbolize sustenance and life itself for residents thereof, and this truth is reflected clearly & regularly in the texts of the Old Testament – with Judges 21:20-21, Jeremiah 48:33, & Isaiah 16:10 all noting that the grape harvest was an especially festive occasion, with Psalms 104:14-15 noting that it was God himself who “brought forth food from the earth and wine to gladden the heart”, and with Sirach 31:27b stating that “What is life to one who is without wine? It has been created to make people happy.”

67 Due to its intimate connection with the everyday ongoing life of the ancient Jewish culture, wine – along with grain and oil – is directly representative of the covenant blessings that God promised the people of Israel for their obedience to his religious Law (see Deuteronomy 7:13, Isaiah 25:6, Isaiah 36:17, Isaiah 55:1-3a, Isaiah 62:8, Jeremiah 13:12, Jeremiah 31:12, Joel 2:19-24, Joel 3:18, Amos 9:13-14, & Proverbs 3:10); the same blessings He would withhold from them for their lack thereof (see Deuteronomy 32:28-33, Isaiah 16:10, Jeremiah 48:33, Hosea 2:8-9, Joel 1:10, Amos 5:11, Amos 9:13-14, Micah 6:15, Zephaniah 1:13, & Haggai 1:11).

68 Ancient rabbinic literature actually mandates drinking from the Seder cup four times, possibly from four different cups (tied to the four phrases found in Exodus 6:6-7 – see Mishnah Pesachim 10:1), a rite that remains viable amongst devout Jews to this day. The first of these cups was the “cup of sanctification” with which the Seder meal officially began (this is possibly the cup mentioned in Luke 22:17). The second cup – tied to the ceremonial retelling of the Jewish Exodus from Egypt (see Exodus 13:8 & Mishnah Pesachim 10:4-5) – was the “cup of plagues” or the “cup of desolation” (mention of this cup is missing from the Gospel accounts; possibly because the Last Supper was not a sanctified Seder meal). The third cup was the “cup of blessing”, a drought shared after the meal was completed (this would have been the cup mentioned in the Gospels if the Last Supper was indeed a Seder celebration – see Matthew 26:27-28, Mark 14:23-24, & Luke 22:20; though Matthew 26:26 & Mark 14:22 both note that this toast actually took place “while they were eating”). The fourth and final cup was the “cup of praise” (a cup seemingly absent from the Gospel accounts as well),

69 Though it remains unclear as to when the Seder tradition of drinking from four cups (or four times from the same cup) began, the four primary phrases found in Exodus 6:6-7 (“I will bring you out”, “I will deliver you”, “I will redeem you”, & “I will take you as my people”) are the very four phrases participants utter (one per cup) before imbibing therefrom.

70 The Law demanded that wine be offered with each daily sacrifice (see Exodus 29:40-41), with every offering of first-fruits (see Leviticus 23:13), and with a number of other mandated sacrifices as well (see Numbers 15:5-10).

71 NOTE that parallel statements portrayed in Matthew 26:28 & Mark 14:24 have Jesus stating “this is the blood of my covenant” instead (though their ancient Greek texts could also be translated “this is the covenant of my blood”).

72 NOTE as well the “cup” Jesus mentions later in the Garden of Gethsemane (see Matthew 26:39, Mark 14:36, & Luke 22:42); namely, the “cup” of willing self-sacrifice that he was about to wholeheartedly embody during his pre-arranged crucifixion.

*In addition, it is important to note that Jesus verbally offered his disciples not wine at the meal, but rather *his own blood* (see [Matthew 26:28](#), [Mark 14:24](#), & [Luke 22:20](#) – also [John 6:53-56](#)) – what was in effect a direct (albeit metaphoric⁷³) call to the transcendence of the Law – not only via his bold alteration of the traditional wine-drinking rites of this supposed Seder meal, but also by directly encouraging a blatant breaking of [Leviticus 3:17](#)'s clear prohibition against the eating or drinking of blood.⁷⁴



73 While there is a minority view among practicing Christians (called transubstantiation) that claims to literally abide by Christ's words here (thereby believing that the wine at every Eucharist offering literally becomes the blood of Jesus Christ before it is imbibed), this is understandably a view very rarely expressed (seeing as how Jesus in the Gospels would never ask anyone to do such a patently immoral thing, and seeing as how he was also extremely fond of using such shocking speech to *metaphorically* illuminate his message therein – see [Matthew 5:13](#), [Matthew 13:18-23](#), [John 6:35-51](#), [John 8:12](#), [John 10:7-14](#), [John 11:25](#), [John 14:6](#), [John 15:1-5](#) et al, & ultimately [John 16:25](#)'s “I have said all these things to you in figures of speech, though the hour is one day coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures, but will tell you plainly about the Father”). As such, the “memorial view” (see [Luke 22:19b](#)'s “Do this in remembrance of me”) is by far the more appropriate one – namely, the view suggesting that Jesus was simply using *symbolic analogy* to more powerfully express his primary point: that the “bread/body” of selfless sacrifice and the “wine/blood” of unconditional Love must both be fully embodied in order for one to enter into the state of salvational bliss known to him as “the Kingdom of Heaven” ... Thus it is well worth realizing at this juncture that “*blood*” did indeed have a potent symbolic value in the Scriptures, with [Genesis 9:4](#) going so far as to say “you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood”, [Exodus 24:8](#) (see also [Hebrews 9:19-22](#)) having Moses exclaim (after the giving of the Law, no less) “See the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with these words”, and [Zechariah 9:9-11](#)'s “Shout aloud, daughter Jerusalem! For lo, your King comes to you ... He shall command peace to all the nations ... And because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free” ... Indeed, for this reason sacrificial blood was called “the blood of the covenant” in ancient times, and was required to be sprinkled upon the altar before every offering was burned (see [Exodus 24:6-8](#), [Leviticus 1:5](#), [Leviticus 3:13](#), [Leviticus 5:9](#), [Leviticus 7:2](#), [Leviticus 8:11](#), [Leviticus 16:18](#), [Numbers 18:17](#), & [Deuteronomy 12:27](#) et al) ... Penultimately, looking at the gestalt of Jesus three-year ministry – everything he did and everything he said therein, it becomes quite clear that for Jesus “blood” represented selfless LOVE, especially Love expressed via deeds (i.e. “the body”) of humble charity for the downtrodden (see [Matthew 25:35-40](#)) &/or of unconditional kindness towards one's neighbors (especially one's enemies – see [Matthew 5:44-48](#) & [Luke 10:29-37](#)). Indeed, to those who did the same – to those who truly walked his Way by “taking up their cross” and *following* his teachings (see [Luke 9:23](#)) – such acts became the most potent worship of the heavenly Father (see [Matthew 22:37-40](#), where Jesus' 2 Commandments are accurately summarized as “honoring God by gently and courageously caring for one's enemies”) ... Finally, and perhaps most definitively, Jesus never once told his disciples to drink his blood at the Last Supper, but rather told them to imbibe “my blood of the covenant” ([Matthew 26:28](#) & [Mark 14:24](#) – see also [Luke 22:20](#)'s call to drink “the new covenant in my blood”).

74 See also [Genesis 9:4](#), [Leviticus 7:26](#), [Leviticus 17:10-14](#), & [Deuteronomy 12:23](#) – as well as [Acts 15:29](#), where this particular prohibition is expressly refreshed as still-binding Law even after Jesus' death.

*In a similar vein, Jesus also sharply veered from the accepted Jewish theology of his day when he told his disciples to eat of the bread that was actually *his body* (see “this is my body” in Matthew 26:26, Mark 14:22, & Luke 22:19) – this, which was an obvious symbolic⁷⁵ violation of the Hebrew Bible's many proclamations against the eating of human flesh.⁷⁶



*“Come, eat of my bread and
drink of the wine that I have mixed.”*
(Proverbs 9:5)



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- 75 As stated previously, while it is true that there is a minority view among practicing Christians (called transubstantiation) that claims to literally abide by Christ's words in this sense (thereby believing that the bread at every Eucharist offering literally becomes the flesh of Jesus Christ before it is imbibed), this is understandably a view very rarely expressed (seeing as how Jesus in the Gospels would never ask anyone to perform such a patently unethical deed, and seeing as how he was also extremely fond of using similarly shocking speech to *metaphorically* illuminate his message – see Matthew 5:13, Matthew 13:18-23, John 6:35-51, John 8:12, John 10:7-14, John 11:25, John 14:6, John 15:1-5 et al, & ultimately John 16:25's “I have said all these things to you in figures of speech, though the hour is one day coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures, but will tell you plainly about the Father ”). As such, the “memorial view” (see Luke 22:19b's “Do this in remembrance of me”) is by far the more appropriate one here – namely, the view suggesting that Jesus was simply using symbolic analogy to more powerfully express his primary point: that the “bread/body” of selfless sacrifice and the “wine/blood” of his unconditional Love must both be fully embodied in order for anyone to enter into the state of salvational bliss known to him as “the Kingdom of Heaven.”
- 76 Though the Hebrew Bible never directly condemns cannibalism per se, there are dozens of verses therein that clearly show the practice to be regarded by the Jews as being an unethical violation & even a curse-worthy act (see Leviticus 26:29, Deuteronomy 28:53-57, Jeremiah 19:9, Lamentations 4:10, Isaiah 9:19-20, & Ezekiel 5:10 et al). This is supported by the extreme incredulity felt by his listeners when Jesus relayed a similar message in John 6 (“Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, saying 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?'" ~ John 6:52).

In conclusion, while several additional minor Seder discrepancies⁷⁷ that Jesus possibly orchestrated purposefully during the “Last Supper” could be discussed, there has been more than enough evidence presented herein to reasonably conclude one of the following two postulations about the Last Supper – that either **A)** Jesus did celebrate a traditional Seder meal⁷⁸ – the rites of which he intentionally altered⁷⁹, or **B)** Jesus staged a symbolic-Seder ceremony several days before the actual Passover meal in order to metaphorically communicate the same message to his disciples. Either way, it is plain to see that “the Last Supper” was *not* a celebration of the Jewish Law as much as it was a call to drastically alter the way the Law was honored – and thereby ultimately transcend the Law itself.

77 Luke 22:17-18 seems to abrogate Deuteronomy 8:10's demand to give thanks *after* a meal's completion (though Matthew & Mark admittedly seem to have Jesus doing so at the appropriate time). In addition, the Seder meal was typically eaten with one's family members, not one's friends or disciples. Finally, the traditional Seder rites seemed to call for those partaking thereof to remain in Jerusalem overnight, something Jesus & his disciples did not do when they departed immediately thereafter for the Mount of Olives, located well outside Jerusalem's wall.

78 After all, Jesus' “Last Supper” – just like its traditional counterpart – took place in Jerusalem, at night on the Eve of Passover (at least according to the Synoptic tellings thereof), and in a communal room with his true family members (“And pointing to his disciples, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers’” ~ Matthew 12:49). In addition, there is evidence that Jesus offered his disciples at least two of the four traditional cups of Seder wine (see Luke 22:17-20 – along with Note 68 on page 39 herein) – the latter having been imbibed after the meal, alongside a statement of thanksgiving, and just before the singing of a closing “hymn”* (see Matthew 26:27-30 & Mark 14:23-26). Also true to standard Seder decorum, preparations for the meal were made “last minute”, the disciples reclined as they ate (Matthew 26:20, Mark 14:17, Luke 22:14, & John 13:23), were ritually cleansed before the meal (see John 13), and ceremonially broke bread *during* the meal instead of merely at its beginning ...

*As far as the intimated “hymn” is concerned, all the texts currently known represent it using the Greek word *hymnesantes* (Strong's #5214), which simply means “a song of praise.” That having been said, many Jewish translations of these passages replace the word “hymn” with “the Hallel”, the Hebrew name for the recitation of Psalm 113-118 during the Passover meal. And why is this significant? Well, a number of biblical historians & theological scholars openly noted that “Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect” (Irenaeus' *Against Heresies* 3:1:1, written around 180 AD – see also Papias' 130AD work *Explanation of the Sayings of the Lord*; cited by Eusebius in *History of the Church* 3:39, and Origen's 240+AD Commentaries on Matthew; also cited by Eusebius in the same work at 6:25). In addition, the Gospels make it very clear both that Jesus had a deep understanding of the Hebrew Bible of his day and that he was a devout Jew. As such, it is highly likely that the “hymn” sung at the close of his orchestrated “Last Supper” (whether an actual Seder celebration or simply a symbolic staged version thereof) was indeed the Hallel – in Jesus' case the text of Psalms 115-118 (with Psalm 113 & Psalm 114 having already been recited earlier in the meal, per Hillel's instructions in Mishnah Pesachim 10:6). And when we look to the contents of these particular Psalms, several intriguing mentions stand out as relating directly to Jesus' mission and his ministry – among them noting that “[the nations] have mouths but cannot speak, eyes but cannot see, [and] ears but cannot hear” (Psalm 115:5-6 – recalling “For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes” ~ Matthew 13:15), that “it is not the dead who praise the Lord; those who go down to the place of silence” (Psalm 115:17 – recalling “He is not God of the dead but of the living” ~ Matthew 12:27), that “the Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion” (Psalm 116:5 – recalling “Be perfect [in your Love], just as [the Love of] your heavenly Father is perfect” ~ Matthew 5:48), that “I will lift up *the cup of salvation* [a Hebrew word that sounds almost identical to Jesus' Hebraic name] and call on the name of the Lord” (Psalm 116:13 – recalling “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only those who do the will of my heavenly Father” ~ Matthew 7:21), that “I will fulfill my vows to the Lord” (Psalm 116:14 – recalling “not even one stroke of a single letter will pass from the Law until all is fulfilled” ~ Matthew 5:18), that “it is better to take refuge in the Lord than t trust humankind” (Psalm 118:8 – recalling “You [Pharisees] abandon the Commandment of God and hold instead to human traditions” ~ Mark 7:8), that “the Lord has become my salvation” (Psalm 118:14 – recalling “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.” ~ Mark 10:18), that “The Lord's right hand ha done mighty things” (Psalm 118:16 – recalling “From now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power” ~ Matthew 26:64), that “the stone the builders rejected has become the capstone” (Psalm 118:22 – also Matthew 21:42), and that “the Lord ... has made His light shine upon us” (Psalm 118:27 – recalling “let your light shine upon others, so that they might know your good works” ~ Matthew 5:16).

79 Again, to more fully communicate to his disciples his call for them to effectuate a final *fulfillment* (i.e. transcendence) of the Law (see Matthew 5:17-20, Matthew 7:12, Matthew 7:21, Matthew 9:16-17, & Matthew 15:7-9 et al).

Arrested, tried, and convicted

In our continuing examination of Jesus' often caustic relationship with the Law (at least as it was being enforced in his day), it is telling to see that his arrest, his trial, and his conviction were all flagrantly illegal. Even more revealing is the intriguing fact that Jesus was fully aware of the same – and that he responded accordingly. But before we look into the specific proofs of this truth, it might be helpful to review the Gospels' portrayals of the relevant events ... The tale begins a few days before the Passover, when “the chief priests and the elders” had run out of patience with Jesus' calls for legal reform (which was usurping their status and their power, and thereby their wealth and their comfort) and thus “conspired to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him.” (see Matthew 26:3-4, Mark 14:1, & Luke 22:1-2) Conveniently, Judas⁸⁰ approached the priests shortly thereafter and agreed to betray him for thirty pieces of silver.⁸¹ (see Matthew 26:14-16, Mark 14:10-11, & Luke 22:4-6) A bit later, after their Passover meal had been completed, Jesus and his disciples departed for the Garden of Gethsemane, where Judas and a “large crowd with swords and clubs, [sent] from the chief priests” ultimately arrived, arrested Jesus, and took him away (see Matthew 26:47-50, Mark 14:43-47, Luke 22:47-54, & John 18:1-11) – first to the ex-high priest Annas for a brief interrogation⁸² (see John 18:12-24), and then to the reigning high priest Caiaphas for a longer one.

80 Though the Gospel of Matthew (and only that Gospel) shows Judas repenting for his “betrayal” and committing suicide as a result (see Matthew 27:3-10 & Acts 1:16-19), it is much more likely that Judas wasn't a traitor at all, but was rather a known & needed facilitator of Jesus' plan to have himself crucified. Indeed, there is a massive amount of evidence to support this contention – Consider: **01**) The timing of Judas' betrayal-offer to the high priests is simply too perfect to be mere coincidence. Matthew 26:2 & Mark 14:1 both note that it was a mere two days before Passover when the priests met to conspire over Jesus' death – just two days prior to Jesus' ultimate crucifixion (which would need to be carried out before the Passover began – and which did indeed take place on that very day – “or there might be a riot among the people” ~ Matthew 26:5 & Mark 14:2). This means that Judas would have had to approach the priests, organize the logistics of Jesus' arrest (including him being brought before Annas, Caiaphas, Pilate, and Herod), and then carry out the same all in well under 48 hours – a highly improbable scenario, to say the least ... **02**) Jesus made it symbolically clear that he had himself asked Judas to “betray” him by breaking bread with him at the same table where Jesus announced his foreknowledge of said “betrayal” (see Matthew 26:21, Mark 14:18, Luke 22:21, & John 13:21) ... **03**) Just as telling, there is strong evidence showing that Judas was sitting next to Jesus (or at the very least quite close by – in a place of symbolic honor) at the Last Supper, with Jesus noting that the one who would “betray” him was “the one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me” (Matthew 26:23; also Mark 14:20) ... **04**) When Judas directly (and probably coyly) asked Jesus if he was the “betrayer”, Jesus responded with “You have said so” (Matthew 26:25), an answer which for Jesus – probably just as coyly – meant “No” (see the juxtaposition of John 6:15 with Mark 15:2, Luke 23:3, & John 18:37) ... **05**) In the Gospel of John, Jesus comes right out and says the same, admitting outright that “I know whom I have chosen” to intentionally “fulfill the scripture [that says]: ‘The one who has eaten my bread has lifted his heel against me’” (John 13:18)... **06**) Just thereafter, Jesus is again asked as to the identity of his supposed traitor. In response, he says “It is the one to whom I give the piece of bread I dip into the dish.” He then takes a morsel of bread, dips it into the dish, gives it directly to Judas, telling him to “Now go and do quickly what you are going to do” (John 13:25-27) ... **07**) Jesus reveals the Judas-assisted setup once more in the Garden of Gethsemane, telling Judas to “do what you are here to do” (Matthew 26:50), proclaiming to the angry mob “let the Scriptures be fulfilled” (Mark 14:49), and finally rebuking Peter's concern by asking “Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?” (John 18:11b) ... [For a more exhaustive proof of the highly viable theory suggesting that Jesus orchestrated his own crucifixion, see Part 2 (starting on page 35) of my book *Exhuming Easter*.]

81 Matthew is the only Gospel that records the exact amount of the payoff; a probably intentional reference to the supposed “prophecy” of Zechariah 11:12-13.

82 This account, mentioned only in the Gospel of John, has Jesus being taken by “the soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police” (John 18:12) first to Annas (the father-in-law to the then current high priest) – who had been high priest himself before Caiaphas took the job. Evidence suggests that Annas was still a highly respected member of the Jewish religious community, and is probably still called “high priest” in the Gospels (see Luke 3:2 & John 18:19) because Jewish high priests tended to hold their position for life (see Numbers 35:25-28) and Annas had been deposed of his reign by the Roman procurator Gratus ... This fact is particularly intriguing because this particular encounter shows Jesus seemingly being almost rude to Annas (leading him to be slapped by a policeman – see John 18:20-22); an act which would have been a direct violation of Exodus 22:27b's mandate to show respect for all judges.

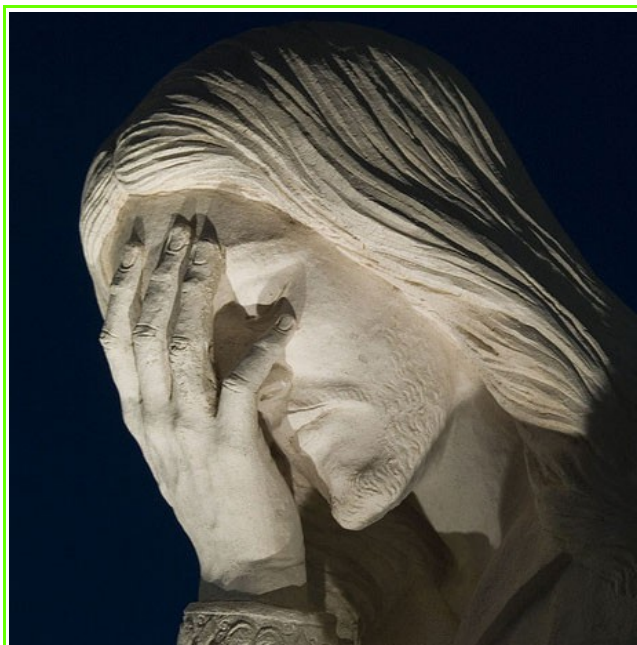
At this second “preliminary hearing” (held that same evening in the home of Caiaphas, the high priest – see [Matthew 26:57](#) & [Luke 22:54](#)) Jesus faced Caiaphas and at least a portion of the Sanhedrin⁸³ – the ruling legal council for the Jewish community. It was here that the priests looked for evidence that would allow them to execute Jesus for blasphemy, and yet the witnesses they brought forth proved to be highly unreliable and Jesus did not even need answer their charges. (see [Matthew 26:59-63](#) & [Mark 14:55-61](#)) As such, the priests resorted to demanding that Jesus himself testify as to whether or not he claimed to be the Messiah, whereupon he answered, “You have said so” (see [Matthew 26:63-64](#) & [Luke 22:70](#)) – essentially responding “No” thereby, and thus proclaiming to them his innocence⁸⁴. Jesus then went on to add a meaningfully cryptic reference to [Daniel 7:13](#) (“From now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the Right Hand of Power and coming on the clouds of Heaven” – see [Matthew 26:64](#), [Mark 14:62](#), & [Luke 22:69](#)), which inspired the priests to cry aloud, tear their own robes (a direct violation of the Law as set forth in [Leviticus 21:10](#)), and falsely pronounce him to be a blasphemer worthy of death. (see [Matthew 26:65-66](#), [Mark 14:63-64](#), & [Luke 22:69-71](#))



83 The Greater Sanhedrin, or Grand Council, was the primary legal tribunal in ancient Jewish society. As a court of law (and as the ultimate adjudicator of *the Law*) it consisted of 71 Jewish priests, nobles, elders, scribes, & scholars and was always convened in Jerusalem. It remains uncertain as to when the Sanhedrin first held court (the *Mishnah Sanhedrin* dates back to the early 200's CE and Josephus also mentioned the Sanhedrin in his writings in the early 90's CE) and yet it is reasonable to assume that the tribunal (or at least some form thereof) dates back to near the time of Moses (as vaguely evidenced by the 70 appointed elders mentioned in [Numbers 11:16](#)).

84 Admittedly, [Mark 14:61-62](#) (unlike the Gospels of [Matthew](#) & [Luke](#)) does have Jesus apparently saying “I am” when asked whether or not he was “the Christ; the Son of the Blessed One.” That having been said, there are number of things to consider when thinking about the same – **01**) Jesus does not say “I am” (the Greek *eimi* – Strong's #1510) in this verse, but rather “**I, I am**” (the Greek *ego eimi*, adding Strong's #1473) – a reference he thereby makes *not* to himself but to the divine Christ essence he has chosen to embody; the same essence that latently resides within all human beings (see [John 14:12-26](#)) ... **02**) In the same vein, while the priests were indeed probably referencing the sole Davidian Messiah when asking Jesus if he was “the *Christos*” in [Mark 14:61](#), the Greek term *christos* did not in & of itself mean “the anointed one”, but rather “*an* anointed one” – a term which, for Jesus at least, meant anyone who had chosen to “pick up their cross” and follow his Way ([Luke 9:23](#)) ... **03**) Just like the parallel tellings of [Matthew](#) & [Luke](#), Jesus concludes his answer by citing [Daniel 7:13](#) – a fascinatingly important passage; seeing as how it is one of the only times in the Bible where the term “Son of Man” is indeed used to refer to the lone Davidian Messiah, and seeing as how Jesus went out of his way at the very beginning of his ministry to *reject* the same gifts accepted by that Messiah in the book of [Daniel](#) when they were offered to him in the wilderness by Satan (see [Matthew 4:4-10](#)) ... **04**) At least as far as biblical literalists are concerned, Jesus' response of “You have said so” in both [Matthew](#) & [Luke](#) (which would have to be cross-applied to [Mark](#) to keep the three Gospels synoptic) is clearly his way of cryptically saying “No, I am not” (or at the very least, “Not in the way you imply”), with the juxtaposition of [John 6:15](#) with [Mark 15:2](#), [Luke 23:3](#), & [John 18:37](#) proving the same.

The next morning, Jesus was bound and handed over to be tried by Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of the region. (see [Matthew 27:1-2](#), [Mark 15:1](#), [Luke 23:1](#), & [John 18:28](#)) Pilate was told of Jesus' supposed crime and asked him if he indeed considered himself to be “King of the Jews,” whereupon Jesus responded with the same negation he had used the night before – “You say so.”⁸⁵ (see [Matthew 27:11](#), [Mark 15:2](#), [Luke 23:3](#), & [John 18:37](#)) It was then that the Jewish priests & elders stepped in and began to openly accuse Jesus; not only of blasphemy (“saying that he is the Messiah” – the only charge brought at their own hearing) but also of sedition against the Roman government (accusing Jesus of “perverting our nation” and “forbidding us to pay taxes to the Emperor” – two extra charges not mentioned in the Gospels of [Matthew](#), [Mark](#), or [John](#); only in [Luke 23:2](#)). In obvious recognition of the fact that the priests & elders had no moral authority at the time and no legal authority in that venue⁸⁶, Jesus refused to answer their accusations; remaining stoically silent throughout their scathing cross examination. (see [Matthew 27:12-14](#) & [Mark 15:3-5](#)) According to the Gospel of [John](#), Pilate then asks Jesus again if he is “King of the Jews” and Jesus again effectively tells him “No,” saying “My kingdom is not from this world. For if my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my Kingdom is not from here ... For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the Truth. Everyone who belongs to the Truth hears my voice.” ([John 18:33-37](#)) Fully befuddled at this point (see [Matthew 27:14](#), [Mark 15:5](#), & [John 18:38](#)), Pilate then decided to send the matter to his superior, Herod (only mentioned in the Gospel of [Luke](#) – see [Luke 23:6-11](#)), and yet Jesus refused to speak to Herod at all, and was thus returned to Pilate for sentencing.



85 Again, at the very least for all Christian conservatives who claim to read the Bible “literally,” Jesus' response of “You have said so” in this instance is clearly his way of cryptically saying “No, I am not” (or at the very least, “Not in the way you think”), with the juxtaposition of [John 6:15](#) with [Mark 15:2](#), [Luke 23:3](#), & [John 18:37](#) making this blatantly clear.

86 In [John 18:29-31](#), after asking them what Jesus was accused of doing, the priests & elders avoid answering directly by passive-aggressively trying to coerce Pilate into accepting their sentence outright without further inquiry. Pilate was unswayed by this backhanded tactic, and was possibly even a bit annoyed by it – as evidenced by him then attempting to send the case back to the Sanhedrin from whence it came, saying “Take him yourselves and judge him according to your own Law.” The priests & elders then reminded Pilate that blasphemy was a capital offense (sedition was as well) , and that Roman law forbade them from executing anyone without his approval. It was at this point that the Sanhedrin officially accepted Roman jurisdiction as far as Jesus' punishment was concerned – it was at this point that the priests & elders abrogated their own Law in order to ensure Jesus' death by eventual crucifixion; a form of capital punishment not allowed under Jewish Law.



Finally, after attempting to directly proclaim Jesus' innocence and being rebuked (see [Luke 23:13-17](#) & [John 18:38](#) – also [John 19:4](#)'s “I find no case against him.”), Pilate used the “Paschal Pardon”⁸⁷ as a last resort (see [Matthew 27:15](#), [Mark 15:6](#), [Luke 23:18](#), & [John 19:39](#)), offering to let the crowd that had been steadily gathering choose who would be freed that day: Jesus or Barabbas.⁸⁸ (see [Matthew 27:16-17](#) & [Mark 15:7-10](#)) Pilate then had Jesus flogged ([John 20:1](#)) and brought him out before the crowd, who then chose to loudly demand both the release of Barabbas and the crucifixion of Jesus; demands to which Pilate ultimately relented. (see [Matthew 27:20-26](#), [Mark 15:11-15](#), [Luke 23:18-25](#), & [John 20:5-16](#))

87 Three of the four canonical Gospels mention a supposed custom whereby the presiding Roman governor would release a prisoner of the people's choosing (see [Matthew 27:15](#), [Mark 15:6](#), & [John 18:39](#) – noting as well that later copies of the Gospel of [Luke](#) also contain a similar mention – see [Luke 23:17](#)). While there is no historical evidence whatsoever for such a custom other than these biblical accounts – and while it is admittedly highly unlikely that any Roman governor would ever make such a concession (especially when the custom so honored was a Jewish one – see [John 18:39](#)), there have been a few recorded instances of similar Roman leniencies. It was also fully within the proscribed authority of Pilate to make such a concession, seeing as how neither Jesus nor Barabbas had been officially convicted of their crimes and were both merely being held prior to final judgment & sentencing (otherwise they both would have already been well on their way to their respective crucifixions; the standard method of swift execution for all convicted enemies of the state) ... Of course, from the Roman perspective – especially in light of the highly volatile sociopolitical climate of that time – this story is highly unusual, in that Pilate was a notoriously cruel governor, and that he was at that time supported by overwhelming military power. As such, we are left with two possible explanations for the source of this story – **01**) it is fully fictional, created by the author of the Gospel of [Mark](#) to shift the blame for Jesus' death from the Roman government to the Jewish religious leaders (with the Gospel of [Matthew](#) taking the tale a step further and shifting the blame onto the Jewish people altogether – see [Matthew 27:25](#)), or **02**) Pilate was indeed in league with Jesus and his co-conspirators (including his friend, Joseph of Arimathea – see [John 19:38-40](#), along with the Gospel of [Peter](#)) and willingly helped them carry out Jesus' plan to have himself be crucified as a most symbolically potent ending to his ministry (see my book *Exhuming Easter* for a comprehensive biblical proof of the same).

88 While [Matthew 27:16-17](#) does state that Barabbas' name was actually “Jesus Barabbas”, and while the name Barabbas literally means “son of the (heavenly) Father” in Aramaic, the majority of scholars agree that the story does indeed speak of two different men (after all, Jesus Christ was a radical advocate for peace & Love, and would never have been cited as having committed any acts of violence) ... It is generally agreed among scholars that [Mark](#) was the first Gospel written and that [Matthew](#) & [Luke](#) copied, edited, and added to its texts shortly thereafter. As such, it is significant to note that – even though [John 18:40](#) calls Barabbas a mere “bandit” (a term Josephus used to describe revolutionaries, by the way) and [Matthew 27:16](#) merely describes him as being a “notorious prisoner” – [Mark](#) describes Barabbas as being accused of committing murder during a recent insurrection (see [Mark 15:7](#)), with [Luke 23:19](#) echoing this claim by stating that Barabbas was being held in connection with a “riot.” And this makes sense for the following reasons – **01**) A Jewish crowd at that time would never have cried out in support of a supposed thief &/or robber, whereas they certainly would have loudly demanded the release one of their freedom fighters. **02**) The Jewish people of that day were longing for a Davidian Messiah to come and rescue them from Roman occupation (a desire that came to head just a few decades later; a desire that led to the Jewish revolution of 66 AD and the complete destruction of the Temple by the Romans four years thereafter) – a hero who, much like Barabbas, would advocate subversive military actions against their oppressors and conquer them by force; a hero quite unlike Jesus Christ, a man who vehemently denied being such a sociopolitical savior (see [Matthew 5:9](#), [Matthew 22:41-45](#), [Mark 10:18](#), & [John 5:41](#) et al) and a man who just as openly advocated radically *non-violent* resistance thereto instead (see [Matthew 5:39-48](#), [Mark 12:17](#), & [Luke 27-36](#) et al). **03**) Pilate's vehement reluctance to release Barabbas and obvious desire to acquit Jesus (both of whom having been charged with the same crime) shows that he was concerned about the violence of the former (and in seeming admiration of the peacefulness of the latter). **04**) The Sanhedrin were especially concerned with any religious movements that even seemed messianic (“If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our [Temple] and our nation. It is better that one man die ... than that the whole nation perish” ~ [John 11:48-50](#)), explaining the lengths to which they went to ignore their own Law and persuade Pilate to have Jesus permanently removed from the scene.

Taking the entirety of the story into account, and juxtaposing it with the still viable Jewish Law of the day, it is easy to see how Jesus' arrest, his trial, and his conviction were all patently illegal (and in all likelihood part of an elaborate setup). Consider the following evidence proving the same ...

*The *Sanhedrin were unequivocally biased* against Jesus from the start ... It was a founding tenet of Jewish Law that judges had to treat all those accused with impartiality and render wholly just decisions (see Exodus 23:6, Leviticus 19:15, & Deuteronomy 1:17) – a founding tenet that the Sanhedrin clearly violated in Jesus' case. Not only did he not receive a fair trial after he was arrested (see below), the Sanhedrin themselves were instrumental in effectuating his illegal arrest. Jesus was a loud & disconcerting opponent of their religious authority⁸⁹, and as such they feared him (see John 7:37-53 & John 11:41-53 et al) and went out of their way to set him up for confinement, prosecution, and elimination⁹⁰ – thereby essentially manifesting the exact *opposite* of judicial due process in his case.

*Jesus' arrest and preliminary hearing were *conducted at night* ... Even though Jewish oral Law demanded that all capital criminal cases be tried during the daytime (see Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:1), both Jesus' arrest (which occurred before he was formally charged – see Matthew 26:47-56, Mark 14:43-49, Luke 22:47-54, & John 18:1-11) and his hearing were effectuated at night (see Matthew 26:57-66 & Mark 14:53-64).⁹¹ The illegality of the former, while only indirectly mentioned in the Mishnah, was additionally evidenced by Jesus' utterance of seeming incredulity during the same (“Here you have come out with swords and clubs as if I were some sort of bandit. And yet when I was with you day after day in the Temple you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and with it the power of darkness.” ~ Luke 22:52-53 – see also Matthew 26:55 & Mark 14:48-49).

*The Sanhedrin *independently instigated* the charges ... Seeing as how judges under the Jewish oral Law were not allowed to bring charges against anyone without first engaging in due “examination [of the witnesses] & inquiry [into the facts]” (see Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:1 et al) – and seeing as how it was the Sanhedrin themselves who originated the charges against Jesus (see Matthew 26:3-4, Mark 14:1-2, & Luke 22:1-2), even his indictment was illegal under the Law. Jesus' subsequent arrest was also illegal because it was effectuated via the hands of an accomplice to the crimes being charged (namely, Judas – see Matthew 26:14-16, Mark 14:10-11, & Luke 22:3-6), which was also forbidden by the Law (see Leviticus 19:16-18).

*In Jesus' case the Sanhedrin tribunal was *illegally convened* ... Seemingly to prevent backlash from Jesus' supporters (and possibly to preclude the presence of pro-Jesus witnesses), the Sanhedrin convened the same evening of his arrest (actually, they had already convened *during* his arrest – see Matthew 26:57 & Mark 14:53). As such, they had done so before the morning sacrifice had been offered, and as such, they had done so in violation of the Law (see Mishnah Tamid 3 & Talmud Sanhedrin 1:19).

*Jesus' trial was held in an *unsanctioned location* ... Not only was the High Priest required by Law to remain in the Temple (see Leviticus 21:12), the Sanhedrin were required by oral Law to conduct all trials in the Hall of Hewn Stone (see Mishnah Middot 5:4) – something they neglected to do during Jesus' trial (holding court in the High Priest's private home instead – see Matthew 26:57; also Mark 14:54 & John 18:24).

89 Not only did Jesus frequently speak about the hypocrisy & moral iniquity of “the scribes and Pharisees” in general (see Matthew 12:34, Matthew 15:14, all of Matthew 23, & Luke 11:52 et al), he even seemed to specifically target the High Priest himself when uttering his parable of *Lazarus and the Rich Man* – a tale that caustically referenced either the “five sons” of Annas (one of whom was Caiaphas the then current High Priest) or the “five sons” of Caiaphas or both (see Luke 16:19-31 – intriguingly juxtaposed with John 12:10). Even more aggravating to them was his recent destruction of one of their greatest sources of power: the money-changing tables in the Temple (tables that enabled the highly profitable execution of sacrificial animals to yield them great wealth – see Matthew 21:12-17, Mark 11:15-19, & Luke 19:45-48).

90 See Matthew 26:3-4, Mark 14:1-2, & Luke 22:1-2 (where the priests vowed to “conspired to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him”) – along with Matthew 26:14-16, Mark 14:10-11, & Luke 22:3-6 (where they enlist Judas to do the same – see also Matthew 27:3-4, where Judas' repentance of his part in this sin is callously rejected by the members of Sanhedrin).

91 Admittedly, Luke 22:66 states that his hearing took place “when day came” after having been taken “to their council.”

Jesus trial was held at an *unsanctioned time* ... Despite the fact that the oral Law demanded that no capital trials be held on the Sabbath (which began each Friday evening), that no capital trials be held in the evening, and that no capital trials be held on the eve of any holy festival (see Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:1), Jesus' trial was held on the eve of the Passover Sabbath (see Matthew 26:17-20, Mark 14:12-17, Luke 22:7+54+66⁹², & John 18:19-23⁹³).

*Jesus' trial was overseen by *unsanctioned adjudicators* ... The oral Law of the day also disqualified the priests who oversaw the case against Jesus, and this for several reasons – among them the following: **01**) The initial questioning was presumably presided over by Caiaphas alone (see Luke 22:54 & John 18:24) which was not allowed under the Law (see Mishnah Pirkei Avot 4:8's “Do not judge alone, for there is no sole judge other than the One [that being, God]”) ... **02**) All hearings were presided over by Jesus' enemies, which was also not allowed by Law (see Mishnah Sanhedrin 3:5, which precluded “anyone who has, out of hatred [see, enmity], not spoken to the litigant for three days” from presiding over a proceeding) ... **03**) While it is possible that at least 23 members of the Sanhedrin (the minimum required for a quorum in all capital cases per Mishnah Sanhedrin 1:4) were on call for the official hearing that ultimately took place, it is extremely unlikely that all 71 of them were present (which was required by Law for all cases involving false prophecy &/or blasphemy (see Mishnah Sanhedrin 1:5), making their adjudication of Jesus illegal ... **04**) If all 71 of the Sanhedrin were present (an admitted possibility, seeing as how it was the Sanhedrin who had helped set Jesus up a number of days beforehand – see Matthew 26:3, Mark 14:1, & Luke 22:2) then their adjudication was still illegal, seeing as how at least one of their number – Joseph of Arimathea – would have been a direct relative of the accused (see Mishnah Sanhedrin 3:4⁹⁴).

*Jesus' trial was *illegally abbreviated* ... Even though the oral Law was clear that capital cases were not allowed to be fully tried in a single day (in order to assure time for due inquiry &/or the presentation of potentially acquitting witnesses – see Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:1's “When a sentence of death is to be pronounced, [a criminal proceeding] cannot be concluded until the following day”), Jesus' trial was both initiated & concluded on the same Sabbath (see Matthew 26:57-66, Mark 14:53-64, & John 18:19-24).⁹⁵



92 While Luke 22 does show Jesus' trial taking place the day after his arrest, that trial still took place on the Passover Sabbath – in direct violation of Jewish oral Law.

93 Though this passage from John 18 describes Jesus being questioned by Annas, who was not High Priest at the time and who thus had no legal authority in the Jewish community, the Gospel does seem to indicate that Jesus did undergo an illegal official hearing before Caiaphas on the Passover Sabbath shortly thereafter (see John 18:24).

94 While more than a few scholars believe that Joseph of Arimathea (“a respected member of the Council” – see Mark 15:43) was the uncle of Jesus' moth Mary – and thus the Great Uncle of Jesus himself (a relation that was *not* precluded under Mishnah Sanhedrin 3:4), there is substantial evidence to suggest that his kindred to Jesus was far more intimate than that. And most of this evidence hinges upon the biblical fact that Joseph was the one who claimed Jesus' body after his crucifixion (see Matthew 27:58, Mark 15:43, Luke 23:52-53, & John 19:38), and that he would have had to have done so as legal next-of-kin – and this for the simple reason that he could not have successfully done so as a mere friend (as both Roman & Jewish Law demanded that all bodies of executed criminals be disposed of in mass graves unless claimed by an intimate relative beforehand) or disciple (John 19:38-39 notes that Joseph was hiding his discipleship at the time, and Matthew 27:62-66 makes it clear that the authorities in no way wanted Jesus' disciples to have access to his body) ... As an intriguing sideNOTE, Luke 23:50-56 clearly indicates that Joseph of Arimathea “had not consented [to either the] decision or the action” of the Sanhedrin in Jesus' case; meaning that their verdict for the conviction of Jesus was not a unanimous one – and thus *was* a valid one in that regard (see Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:1, where any unanimous verdict for conviction in a capital case illegitimized the same and was cause for immediate acquittal).

95 While it is true that Matthew 27:1, Mark 15:1, & Luke 22:66-71 all show Jesus' trial officially concluding the morning after his arrest the previous evening, all the legal proceedings still took place on the same day according to Jewish Law (where each day runs from sundown to sundown).

*The Sanhedrin *honored false testimony* ... The Law was clear in Jesus' day that at least two harmonious witnesses were required in order to convict in capital cases (see Numbers 35:30 & Deuteronomy 19:15). And while the Gospel of Matthew does seem to indicate that two agreeing witnesses came forward to accuse Jesus of claiming to have the power to “destroy the Temple of God and build it back in three days” (see Matthew 26:60b-61), that same Gospel also admits that there were other witnesses who offered contradictory testimony beforehand (see Matthew 26:60a – along with Mark 14:56, which clearly stated that “many gave false testimony against him, and their testimony did not agree”).⁹⁶ Despite this fact – and the fact that the oral Law was clear in invalidating all testimony that proved contradictory (see Mishnah Sanhedrin 5:2), both the authors of Matthew & Mark note that the Sanhedrin illegally honored this testimony (see Matthew 26:62's & Mark 14:60's “Have you no answer to that which they say against you?”). This violation of the Law was made even more egregious in light of the fact that it was required by Law for all witnesses to testify truthfully (see Exodus 20:16 & Exodus 23:2), and that to fail to do so in a capital case was in & of itself a capital offense (see Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5 & Mishnah Sanhedrin 6:2) – in this case a capital offense that was not only not punished, but actually openly encouraged.

*Jesus' conviction was based on *one-sided evidence* ... Aside from the aforementioned illegality regarding the witness testimony of Jesus' trial (see Exodus 23:1's “You shall not join hands with the wicked to act as a malicious witness” and Deuteronomy 5:20's “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor”), said proceeding was illegitimate for a number of other evidentiary reasons. **First** & foremost, the merits of Jesus' defense were completely ignored. Jewish Law essentially demanded that all those with evidence must testify in court (see Leviticus 5:1), that witnesses must be intensely cross-examined (see Mishnah Sanhedrin 3:6's “Bring them in and instill fear in them” & Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:2's “The more one examines a witness, the more praiseworthy he becomes”), and that capital cases especially must have intense “examination and inquiry” into the facts surrounding the charge (see Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:1). The Law also demanded that judges weigh every capital accusation with impeccable sincerity (via Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5). Quite obviously, none of these tenets were fulfilled in Jesus' case. None of his friends, family members, or disciples were brought forth, nor were any other favorable witnesses called to testify on his behalf. **Secondly**, the oral Law made it illegal to open any capital trial with a call for conviction (see Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:1). Indeed, as it is in any sincerely civilized society, in ancient Israel all accused were considered innocent until proven guilty. This tenet, too, was violated during Jesus' proceeding. **Thirdly** and finally – and some would say most egregiously, Jesus was required to testify against himself – and indeed was ultimately condemned on the offering of the same (see Matthew 26:63-65, Mark 14:61-63, & Luke 22:67-71), and this in direct abrogation of the established Law of the day (see Maimonides on Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:2 – as well as Talmud Sanhedrin 9b).

*The charges against Jesus were *altered mid-trial* ... The priests & elders of the Sanhedrin were so desperate to be rid of Jesus that they illegally altered the charges brought against him when presenting the same to Pilate – shifting their allegations from blasphemy against God (see Matthew 26:63-66, Mark 14:61-64, & Luke 22:67-71)⁹⁷ to sedition against Roman authority (“We found this man perverting the nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the Emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah – that is, a king ... He stirs up the people throughout all of Judea with his teaching” – see Luke 23:2-5); a charge of which he was ultimately convicted without the presence of any substantiating evidence in support of the same (see Matthew 27:17-26, Mark 15:12-15, Luke 23:20-24, & John 18:38 + John 19:4-16).

96 NOTE that Mark 14:57-59 (written before the texts of Matthew were conceived &/or copied) speaks to the same evidence, and makes clear that “even on this point [the witnesses'] testimony did not agree” ... NOTE as well that neither the Gospel of Luke nor the Gospel of John mention the hearing of witness testimony at all.

97 NOTE that Jesus never once said that he would “destroy the Temple of God”, but rather that he would “destroy *this* temple” (see John 2:19) – namely, the “temple” of his own person, not the actual Temple itself (see John 2:22).

*Penultimately, the Sanhedrin convicted Jesus with an *illegitimately unanimous* verdict ... While it was true that a majority opinion of the Sanhedrin was considered necessary to convict in capital cases (as long as the majority advantage was greater than one – see [Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:1](#)) and while it was also clearly true that the vast majority of the Sanhedrin were in favor of convicting Jesus, Jewish oral Law made it just as clear that unanimous decisions in favor of capital conviction were evidence of a tainted court, and that all litigants so judged were to be granted an *acquittal* thereby (also via [Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:1](#)).⁹⁸

*Finally, the Sanhedrin rendered an *illegitimate verdict* at Jesus' trial for the following reasons: **01**) The trial took place in a non-sanctified venue (i.e. in the private residence of Caiaphas, the high priest – see [Matthew 26:57](#); also [Mark 14:54](#) & [John 18:24](#)) instead of in the legally recognized Hall of Hewn Stone (see [Mishnah Middot 5:4](#), [Talmud Idolatry 1:8](#), & Maimonides' comment in [Sanhedrin 14](#) “A sentence of death can be pronounced only so long as the Sanhedrin holds its sessions in the appointed place”) ... **02**) The verdict was rendered despite the lack of any reasonably reliable testimony from witnesses (see [Exodus 23:7](#)) ... **03**) A verdict of blasphemy was rendered against Jesus even though the Law required that convicted blasphemers must first explicitly utter the name of God (see [Mishnah Sanhedrin 7:5](#)) – something Jesus never did during his trial ... **04**) The priests & elders of the Sanhedrin openly called for Jesus' crucifixion (and Jesus was indeed ultimately crucified) even though crucifixion was an unsanctioned form of execution under Jewish Law (see [Mishnah Sanhedrin 7:1](#)) ... **05**) Jesus was crucified despite the fact that convicted blasphemers were required by Jewish Law to be stoned to death (see [Mishnah Sanhedrin 7:4](#)) ... and **06**) According to the Law Jesus was required to be immediately executed after his conviction, and yet the Sanhedrin took him instead to Pilate's headquarters – essentially to be tried a second time on a seemingly new set of charges (see [Mishnah Sanhedrin 6:1](#)).

*“You shall not render an unjust verdict ...
With justice shall you judge your neighbor;
by the blood of him you shall not profit ...
Keep far from all false charges, and
kill not the innocent or those in the right.”*
(Leviticus 19:15-16 & Exodus 23:7)

98 To be fair, [Luke 23:50-51](#) makes it clear that Joseph of Arimathea had not agreed with either the Sanhedrin's plan to arrest and try Jesus nor the death sentence that was subsequently levied upon him. This would mean that if he was indeed present at the rendering of the final verdict (as must have been the case, otherwise the necessary quorum of 71 judges would not have been met – see [Mishnah Sanhedrin 1:5](#)) then he would have officially dissented, and the subsequent 70 to 1 vote for Jesus' conviction would have been thereby legitimized.

Chapter 03: Jesus & the Law

... how he directly commented upon the Law's major categories
(as well as many of the individual rules residing therein)

After the previous chapter's thorough exposé of the various major episodes of Jesus' ministry (and how those instances showed him openly & overarchingly challenging his culture's traditional interpretations of the Jewish Law), it can come as no surprise that the content of his Gospel sayings, sermons, & teachings show him fulfilling the same goal with equal verve in relation to the specific regulations residing within that Law. While many scholars divide the Old Testament's 613 divine regulations (or *Mitzvot*) into three major categories⁹⁹, the following analysis of Jesus' opinion thereof will divide those same regulations into the following five: **GOD** and the appropriate worship thereof¹⁰⁰, **the Temple** and appropriate worship therein¹⁰¹, **the Holy Festivals** and the appropriate observance thereof¹⁰², **the Community** and appropriate dealings therein¹⁰³, and **the Justice System** and the regulations dealing therewith¹⁰⁴.

In truth, while Jesus did not specifically comment on every single law contained within the Hebrew Bible, the pages that follow will show that he did indeed offer individual commentaries on many of them and that he most certainly announced recommendations &/or pronounced amendments that pertained to them all – recommendations that encouraged all of humanity (Jews and non-Jews alike) to transcend our basest instincts in favor of becoming humble & kind stewards of the planet; and amendments to the Law that encouraged all Jews to transcend the same – to shatter the prison made of dogmatic regulations & traditional expectation; in essence releasing all desire & attachment to being proper “Children of Israel,” and thereafter becoming true **Children of God** instead.



99 With those three categories being the *Mishpatim* (those laws that are deemed to be self-evident, such as the commandments to avoid murder and thievery), the *Edot* (those regulations that serve to commemorate important events in Jewish history, such as the Sabbath-based rules that testify to God having created the world in six days and then resting on the seventh), and the *Chukim* (those rules with no known rationale that are still perceived as manifestations of the Divine Will, such as the prohibition against wearing articles of clothing made from different fibers or against eating the flesh of murdered pigs).

100 including **God Itself** & the proper relationship therewith (see page 53), one's **proper prayer** thereto (see page 55), and the forbidden &/or **false worship** thereof (idolatry et al – see page 57)

101 including respecting **the Temple** in general (see page 59), honoring the **priests** therein (page 60), and paying proper **tithes & taxes** (see page 63) & making proper offerings of **sacrifice** thereto (see page 64)

102 including the proper honoring of the **Sabbath** (see page 66) and the correct celebration of **Passover** (see page 67), **Sukkot** (see page 68), and **Hanukkah** (see page 70)

103 including interacting with **the Community** in general (see page 73), rules regarding **marriage & divorce** (see page 74), regulations related to **sex & sexual relationships** (see page 75), what makes for ritual **cleanliness** (dealing with **lepers & the dead** et al – see page 76), the proper making & upholding of **vows** (see page 77), how to treat **the poor** (see page 77), how to treat **foreigners & strangers** (see page 79), how to treat **kings & other rulers** (see page 80), how to treat **enemies** (see page 81), proper **clothing & dress** (see page 83), proper **diet** (see page 85), proper regulation of local **agriculture** (see page 87), and proper **business** dealings (interacting with clients, partners, employees, & servants et al – see page 88)

104 including land & **property** rights (see page 93), monetary damages & **civil restitution** (see page 94), **criminal offenses** & their appropriate punishments (see page 95), and identifying & respecting proper **prophecy** (see page 97)

“The spiritually enlightened of all ages – Jesus Christ included – have all been uniformly distinguished by a kind of perceptive purity; an acute & unceasing ability to see past the confines of religious dogma and pierce the veils of primal fear & cellular self-interest – to refuse to shackle God in man's minuscule images thereof – to embrace the glory that is the boundlessness of God's perfect Love, and then to live as humble-yet-bold emissaries of the same. Indeed, the divine tenderness known to such as these cannot be contained in the weak-walled vessels of any church, much less the hollow-winded words of any preacher confined thereby. As such it is precisely among the heretics of history that we find men & women who were filled to the brim with this same glowing awareness – men who were frequently judged to be rabble-rousers or lunatics; women who were often condemned as demoniacs or witches. Later, more awakened ages came to view those rebels quite differently, of course – seeing them far more correctly as trailblazers of peace; as light-bearers in the deepest darkness; as saints in times of sinfulness. Looked at through this lens, those like Copernicus and Tolstoy and Voltaire and Rumi are no longer opposed to the likes of Jesus of Nazareth or Francis of Assisi, but rather become Soulmates to the same. As such, we would all do well to remember that Truth is kept viable by the uncompromising progressions of heresy, we would all do well to remember that our culture is kept vibrant by the unyielding challenge of heretics, and we would all do even better by remembering to enliven our time accordingly.” ~ inspired by Albert Einstein & Yevgeny Zamyatin

03a: Jesus on **GOD** ... (& the worship thereof)

There are number of Old Testament laws that dealt directly with honoring God¹⁰⁵ – believing wholeheartedly that He¹⁰⁶ & He alone exists (see Exodus 20:2-3 & Deuteronomy 5:6), revering His name (see Leviticus 22:32) and refusing to blaspheme or take that name in vain (see Exodus 22:28, Leviticus 19:12, & Leviticus 24:16); cherishing Him internally with one's entire being (see Deuteronomy 6:4-6), worshiping Him externally with all of one's will & passion (see Deuteronomy 6:13, Deuteronomy 10:20, & Deuteronomy 13:4), refusing to challenge His authority (see Deuteronomy 6:16), and willingly keeping His edicts and steadfastly imitating His ways (see Deuteronomy 28:9). It goes almost without saying that these were some of the more revered edicts in the Hebrew Bible in Jesus' day, and it bears noting that Jesus – radical reformer though he was – not only refused to amend these commandments, but repeatedly and vehemently championed them.¹⁰⁷ That having been duly noted, just because Jesus adamantly abided by these laws does not mean he wasn't true to his role as a bold reformer in relation to them. For even though he did indeed choose to honor God devoutly throughout his ministry, the heavenly “Father” he chose to honor was quite different from the God honored by his more traditional Jewish compatriots – a God of harsh wrath¹⁰⁸ and a dispenser of stern judgment¹⁰⁹ – a God to be coddled as much as worshiped – a God to be feared as much as respected,¹¹⁰

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- 105 It bears noting that all references made to “God” in this tome refer to either YHWH or Adonai (written as “LORD” from Genesis 1:1 through Exodus 3:14 in many English biblical translations) **not** the Elohim (identified as “God” in those same passages). It is a little known probability that there were actually two *competing* celestial forces at work in the earliest books of the Bible; the former representing the divine essence most know as God, and the latter illustrating the often less-than-moral desires & deeds of “fallen angels” merely posing as the same.
- 106 In harmony with the blatantly patriarchal language of the ancient texts, I too will refer to God via masculine pronouns herein – pronouns which even Jesus employed during his sermons & teachings (see the 120+ times he refers to God as his “Father” in the Gospels). That having been said, it is worth mentioning that God is **not** exclusively male in the ancient manuscripts, with the Divine having a distinctly feminine essence (at least in part) in Genesis 1:27 & Deuteronomy 32:18, with the Greek term for the Holy Spirit (*pneuma*, Strong's #4151) being distinctly gender-neutral in John 14:26 (also John 15:26 & John 16:13-14 et al), and with Jesus repeatedly honoring “the Father *which* is in Heaven” (**not** “*who* is in Heaven” – see Matthew 5:16, Matthew 5:45-48, Matthew 6:1-9, & Matthew 6:18 et al).
- 107 see Mark 10:18, Matthew 19:17, & Luke 18:19 (“Why do you call me good? No one is truly good but God alone.”) – also Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30, & Luke 10:27 (“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.”) – as well as John 12:28 (“Father, [let me] glorify your name”), John 12:44 (“Whoever believes in me believes not in me but in Him who sent me”), and John 15:26 (“When the Advocate comes – the Spirit of Truth who comes from the Father, He will testify on my behalf”) etc etc etc ...
- 108 see Exodus 32:10 (“Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot and I might consume them”), Leviticus 26:25 (“I will bring the sword against you, executing great vengeance for the covenant”), Numbers 11:1, Numbers 32:13, Deuteronomy 31:17, Deuteronomy 32:35-41 (“Vengeance is mine ... because the day of their calamity is at hand; their doom will come swiftly”), 2 Kings 23:25-27, Job 4:9, Psalm 7:11, Psalm 78:59, Psalm 99:8, Isaiah 1:24, Isaiah 13:13, Isaiah 47:3, Isaiah 59:17, Isaiah 63:14, Jeremiah 5:29, Jeremiah 46:10, Jeremiah 51:11, Jeremiah 51:56, Lamentations 2:2, Ezekiel 7:8, Ezekiel 8:18, Ezekiel 22:31, Ezekiel 25:17, Micah 5:15, Nahum 1:2, and Habakkuk 3:12 et al
- 109 see Exodus 20:5 (“for I the Lord your God am a jealous God; punishing children for the iniquities of their parents”), Leviticus 20, Leviticus 26:14-39, Deuteronomy 5:9, Joshua 7:11-12, 2 Kings 17, Job 36:17, Psalm 34:21-22, Psalm 37:38, Psalm 75:6-7, Psalm 99:8, Psalm 109:7, Proverbs 11:21, Proverbs 12:2, Ecclesiastes 12:14, Isaiah 13:11, Isaiah 26:21, Isaiah 59:18, Jeremiah 21:14, Jeremiah 31:39-30, Ezekiel 18, Amos 3:14, Nahum 1:3, and Zephaniah 1:12 et al – in intriguing contrast with Isaiah 55:7 & Jeremiah 31:31-34 et al
- 110 While it is true that the Hebrew word *yare* (Strong's #3372) did mean “to revere in awe” (see Exodus 20:20) as much as it meant “to fear”, it is just as true that it was **not** the Hebrew *ahab* (Strong's #157), a word which meant “to love” (a la Deuteronomy 6:5-6) – see Deuteronomy 6:24 (“Then the Lord commanded us to observe all the statutes, to fear [Him] our God for our lasting good”), Deuteronomy 14:23, Joshua 24:14, Psalm 31:9, Psalm 147:11, Proverbs 9:10, Job 28:28, Nehemiah 1:11, Ecclesiastes 3:14, Isaiah 33:6, Malachi 4:2, & Zephaniah 3:7 et al – in contrast with Isaiah 41:10

Indeed, in stark contrast to the aforementioned “Lord” of anger & condemnation, Jesus spoke repeatedly of a “Father in Heaven” who was gentle and kind – a God who was the essence of a perfect Love that knew neither fear nor punishment (see Matthew 5:39-48 + 1 John 4:18¹¹¹); a God whose mercy was pure (see Luke 6:27-36 + Luke 10:29-37¹¹²) and whose forgiveness was given to all without bound or limit (see Matthew 18:21-22¹¹³); a God who was more familiar friend than oppressive overlord (see Mark 14:36¹¹⁴); a God who resided within human hearts as much as He did above their heads (see John 14:10-26).¹¹⁵

“Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does His works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then at least believe me because of the works themselves ... And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees It nor knows It. And yet you know Him because He abides with you and lives within you ... In a little while the world will no longer see me, and yet you will still see me ... And on that day you will understand that I am in my Father, and that you are in me, and that I am in you.”

~ Jesus Christ (John 14:10-20)



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- 111 Biblical literalists would do well to NOTE that the “algebraic” combination of these two passages not only proves God’s Love to be limitless, but also completely disavows the existence of Hell as it is traditionally known – see Matthew 5:44-48’s “Be perfect [with your Love] just as [the Love of] your heavenly Father is perfect” alongside 1 John 4:18’s “perfect Love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in Love.”
- 112 NOTE not only that Luke 6:35-36 makes it explicitly clear that God’s mercy is boundless – given to friend and enemy alike (“Love your enemies; do good and give to others while expecting nothing in return. [If you do so] your reward will be great, and you will be considered Children of the Most High; for He is just as kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”), but also that Luke 10:29-37 makes exactly the same point with symbolism that is equally potent – making the hero of its tale a Samaritan (a cultural *enemy* of the Jews in ancient times) who “showed mercy” (something that can only be given to one who has wronged us).
- 113 While seemingly innocuous at first glance, this passage is deeply profound when examined in greater depth. For the number of forgiveness – “70 x 7 times” – mentioned therein is significant for at least two reasons – **01**) because the only other time it is found in the Bible (Genesis 4:24) it refers to the vengeance that will be visited upon a wrongdoer (providing yet another example of how thoroughly Jesus was in challenging the accepted interpretations of the Law), and **02**) because numbers had intentional meaning for the authors of the ancient manuscripts – with “seven” being the Jewish number for completeness, and “seventy” referring directly to the 70 nations of humanity mentioned in Genesis 10. As such, Matthew 18:21-22 does not encourage forgiving others “a lot”, but rather in-courages all to forgive as Jesus’ heavenly Father forgives – perfectly: forgiving every offender and doing so fully, without any limit or condition.
- 114 Though this is the only time in the New Testament that we see Jesus refer to God as “Abba” (what some scholars believe was an Aramaic term of intimate affection), the Gospels are interlaced with instances where Jesus speaks to his heavenly Father both directly and personally (see Matthew 11:25-26, Matthew 26:39-42, Luke 10:21, Luke 22:41-44, Luke 23:34, Luke 23:46, John 11:41-42, John 12:27-28, & all of John 17 et al).
- 115 see 1 John 4:16’s “God is Love, and all those who abide in Love abide in God, and God abides in them” – also John 6:45’s “and they shall all be taught by God”, along with the texts of John 16:12-15 & John 16:25 ...

Jesus on *prayer* ... (the how & the why thereof)

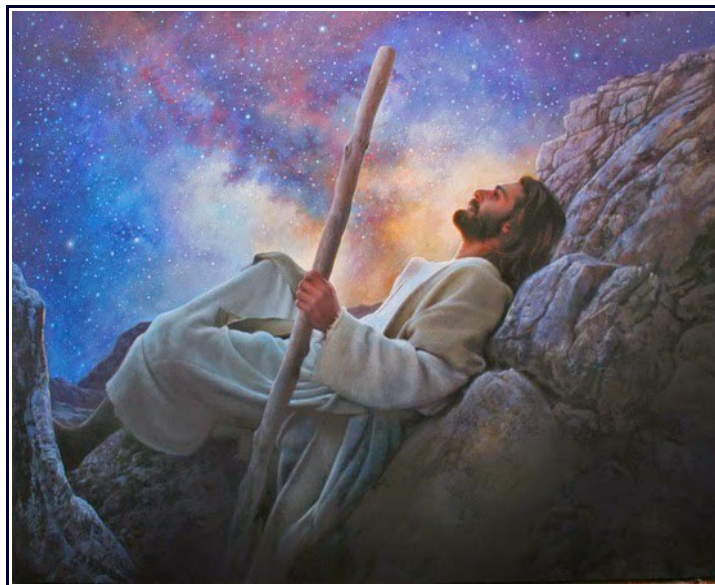
While it is true that Jesus obviously agreed with the Law's clear contention that prayer was a crucial part of Jewish life, it is just as true that Jesus took great exception to the way prayers were traditionally conducted as well as to the compulsory nature of the same. Consider ...

*Whereas the Law required that prayers be offered statically every day (via Exodus 23:25, Deuteronomy 6:13, Deuteronomy 10:20, & Deuteronomy 11:13¹¹⁶ – with three daily prayers being seemingly mandated by Psalm 55:18 & Daniel 6:11, and dozens of regulations related thereto being seemingly required by the various chapters of the Mishnah Berakhot) and after every meal (see Deuteronomy 8:10), Jesus let his prayers flow spontaneously (see Matthew 14:23, Matthew 26:36, Mark 1:35, Mark 6:46, Luke 5:16, Luke 6:12, Luke 9:18, & Luke 11:1 et al).

*Whereas the Law required that the *Shema* be said verbatim every morning & every evening (see Deuteronomy 6:7 – along with Mishnah Berakhot 1:1-3), Jesus railed against the rote recitation of the same (see Matthew 6:7's “When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases like the Gentiles, for they [incorrectly] believe they will be heard because of their many words”).¹¹⁷

*Whereas the Law seemed to imply that prayers were to be offered in public (see “among the people” in Leviticus 22:32 & the “congregation” mentioned in Leviticus 19:2 et al – along with Matthew 6:5 where Jesus calls out all “hypocrites, [who] love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners”), Jesus makes it clear that it is far more preferable to pray anonymously and in private (see Matthew 6:6).

*Whereas the Law seemed to demand that prayers were especially viable whenever offered up by groups of ten or more worshipers (called a *Minyan* – see Mishnah Megillah 4:3, Talmud Megillah 4:4 & Talmud Megillah 23b), Jesus openly stated that the Divine is present “wherever two or three gather” (Matthew 18:20) and that of those two (or three) God counts as one of them (see John 8:17-18) – meaning, of course, that the Divine is fully present even when praying alone and in secret.



116 The Talmud notes that the Hebrew word translated as “serve” in these verses (*abad*, Strong's #5647) refers to prayer.

117 NOTE that immediately thereafter Jesus offers up what is now commonly known as *The Lord's Prayer* (see Matthew 6:9-13 & Luke 11:1-4 – also Psalm 91); verses that were therefore *not* meant to be cited word-for-word in church on Sundays, but rather verses that set forth a collection of general themes (humble reverence, selfless thanksgiving, unconditional forgiveness, & inevitable redemption) that provided an overarching framework for all spontaneously flowing prayers.

*Whereas the Law seemingly required Jews to cry out to God whenever in personal want or fear (see Numbers 10:9), Jesus encouraged his listeners to worry not about the things that they themselves might lack (see Matthew 6:25-33, Luke 12:22-32, Luke 21:34-36, & John 4:31-38) – to be serenely silent during times of personal discomfort (see Matthew 6:16-18) and think not about their own desires, but rather desire to fulfill the needs of those in need (see Matthew 24:12-14 & Matthew 25:35-40 – also Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:40-46, John 12:27-28, John 18:11b, & Matthew 26:39's “Father, let not my own will but rather thine be done”).¹¹⁸

*Whereas the Law clearly proscribed prayer as being words that evidenced a subservient obedience to God (see see Leviticus 22:32 & Deuteronomy 6:5 – also Deuteronomy 28:9), Jesus redefined what it meant to pray – centering the same on **actions** done in the service to and for the betterment of others (see Matthew 7:21's “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only those who **do** the will of my Father” – also Matthew 13:18-23, Matthew 24:12-14, Luke 6:46, Luke 13:25-29, & John 13:15-17 et al). Indeed, this is why the crux of Jesus' entire ministry hinged on encouraging others to “**Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is even now at hand.**” (see Matthew 4:17 – also Matthew 3:8, Mark 1:14-15, Luke 4:14-21, Luke 5:31-32, Luke 17:3, & Luke 24:46-48)¹¹⁹

“The Way of Jesus Christ cannot be imposed upon others without their will, nor can it be mapped by one's mind without boldly walking its narrow path. Indeed, a full recognition of The Way requires an active participation in following Jesus Christ – in humbly emulating his life and boldly embodying his Love. And this is how we become truly reborn; only while taking his hand, closing our eyes, opening our hearts, and walking through sometimes strange and ever threatening territories – in circumstances that are often daunting and happenstances that seem more than dangerous. Here and here alone can we reawaken to what we have known since our beginning. Here and here alone can we have our prayers answered – by turning them into deeds of peace.” ~ inspired by Eugene Peterson

118 While it is true that Jesus regularly implied that those who prayed for personal wishes would have the same granted by the Father, it is important to look at the wording of those particular verses and the contexts surrounding them. Matthew 7:7 does indeed have Jesus stating “ask and you shall receive” and yet it does so immediately after Jesus admonishes his listeners to avoid wasting their gifts on unwilling recipients and just before citing the giving-based Golden Rule as the bellwether for moral choices (see Matthew 7:6-12). Luke 11:9 makes the same claim, and yet immediately after speaking about desiring to give to others (see Luke 11:5-8). Matthew 18:19 seems to imply that prayers for personal benefit will be granted by God “whenever two of you agree on earth” – a condition that is the heart of loving harmony. Matthew 21:22 & Mark 11:24 have Jesus stating that whatever is prayed for “in faith” will be granted, and yet the latter of which is immediately followed by the selfless admonition “whenever you stand praying, forgive,” and both do so in the context of the withered fig tree – a symbolic reference to the replacement of Jewish legal traditions by The Way of Christ (see pages 34-35 herein). Finally, the Gospel of John contains three references to the fulfillment of personal prayers. Two of them have Jesus requiring said prayers to be made “in my name” (John 14:13 & John 16:23) – something that can only be done when praying in alignment with the actual meaning of Jesus' name (*Yeshua* – a Hebrew name which essentially means “God is an internal guide”); a meaning that can only be embodied while praying to be of service to the needs of others. The final reference has Jesus requiring that the relevant prayer be made while “you abide in me and my works abide in you” (John 15:7) – a mandate that cannot be fulfilled except while praying to serve rather than to be served.

119 Critical here is the correct understanding of the Greek word translated as “repent” (*metanoeo*, Strong's #3340) – a word that did not mean “regret” or “self criticize” or “admit fault,” but rather meant “to wholeheartedly alter &/or renew one's complete way of being.”

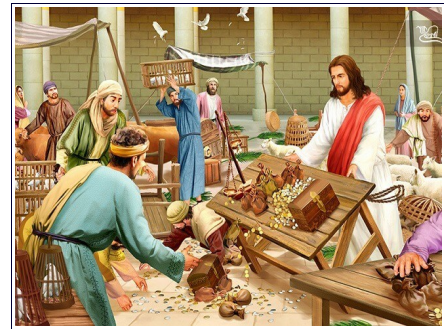
Jesus on *idolatry* ...

(and the nature of false worship)

While there are literally dozens of Old Testament regulations defining &/or prohibiting various types of false worship (especially the worship of idols¹²⁰), Jesus spent essentially no time during his ministry directly commenting on the same. That having been said, it is worth noting that Jesus did *indirectly* seek to amend the Law regarding these commandments as well, doing so in the following subtle-yet-potent ways:

*Firstly (and admittedly least significantly), Jesus' actions formulated a not-so-subtle commentary on the Law's prohibition of magic & witchcraft.¹²¹ Indeed, nowhere in Jewish literature does it state that the Messiah¹²² would have paranormal powers or be able to perform supernatural feats, only that he would liberate Israel from her oppressors. And yet throughout the Gospels we see Jesus performing miraculous deeds that can only be described as magical – the reading of minds, the exorcising of demons, the healing of long-term hemorrhaging, the curing of paralysis, bringing sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, giving his disciples similar powers of healing &/or over demons, calmly “*passing through*” angry mobs, stilling violent storms, walking on water, and even seemingly raising the dead.¹²³

*Secondly, while the Law demanded that no sacrifices be made to false gods (see [Exodus 22:20](#)), Jesus made one of his missions to abolish sacrifice altogether – openly stating that God himself wanted “*mercy, not sacrifice*” ([Matthew 9:13](#)) and then brazenly entering the Temple making said sacrifices at least temporarily impossible (by twice destroying the money-changing tables therein & chasing the imminent animal victims thereof therefrom – see [John 2:13-16](#) in the beginning of his ministry and [Matthew 21:12-17](#), [Mark 11:15-19](#), & [Luke 19:45-48](#) near his ministry's end).¹²⁴



120 See the commandments prohibiting the making of idols (see [Exodus 20:23](#), [Exodus 34:17](#), & [Leviticus 19:4b](#)), the worship of idols (see [Exodus 20:5a](#) & [Leviticus 19:4a](#)), adopting the customs of idolaters (see [Leviticus 18:3](#) & [Leviticus 20:23](#)), enticing others to idolatry (see [Deuteronomy 13:6-10](#)), &/or possessing anything from idolatrous villages that have been “appropriately” destroyed (see [Deuteronomy 13:13-18](#)).

121 Not only was witchcraft itself prohibited, but all forms of magical divination were forbidden along with it (see [Leviticus 19:26-31](#) & [Deuteronomy 18:10-11](#)) ... Indeed, the practice of magic was so despised by the Law that all convictions thereof were punishable by death (see [Exodus 22:18](#)).

122 It is worth noting that even if Jesus had claimed to be the Davidian Messiah (a holy status he repeatedly & quite vehemently denied – see [Matthew 22:41-45](#), [Mark:12:35-37](#), & [Luke 20:41-44](#) – as well as [John 14:12-20](#), and [Matthew 4:1-10](#) juxtaposed with [Daniel 7:13-14](#)), doing so would not have been in any way blasphemous under the Law. Indeed, blasphemy was a Jewish crime that occurred whenever one took God's holy name in vain &/or claimed to possess authority that only God possessed. Yes, it is true that – in contrast to the Jewish priests of the day who would openly claim their authority from what “the Torah says” – Jesus did openly claim that his personal interpretations carried equal if not superior weight thereto (see the many “*You have heard it said ... and yet I tell you*” statements made in [Matthew 5-7's Sermon on the Mount](#)). Even so, never once did Jesus set himself up as being above or even equal to his heavenly Father, and indeed repeatedly & unequivocally deferred all praise to the same (see [Matthew 19:17](#), [Mark 10:18](#), [Luke 18:19](#), [John 5:41](#), [John 7:16](#), [John 8:50-54](#), & [John 12:44-47](#) et al).

123 NOTE that all of these “miracles” either have rational alternative explanations or are discounted by Jesus himself. Still, they clearly *appeared* to be magic-based, and thus clearly had the *appearance* of being a commentary on the Law – a commentary against the inflexible punishment of deeds deemed heretical, and for the acceptance of any & all actions (even traditionally illegal ones) that bore the “good fruit” of peace.

124 It bears noting that Jesus' actions mentioned here might also have been an enlightened rebuke of “the Elohim” – the false gods (“fallen angels,” actually) who posed as “God” from [Genesis 2](#) through [Exodus 3:14](#), and who then gave humanity the majority of the Law's commandments (including those allowing for the cruel execution of animals for food in [Genesis 9](#), and all of the regulations thereafter related to the cruel slaughter of animals for ceremonial sacrifice).

*Thirdly & finally (and by far most significantly), Jesus made a repeated point throughout his ministry of exposing the essentially idolatrous hypocrisy of the scribes & the Pharisees (and the Sadducees, and the priests) – calling them out over & over & over again for hoarding material wealth &/or cherishing social status; essentially worshiping personal power & superficial comfort instead of giving properly humble homage to the Lord their God ...

“Avoid storing up for yourselves treasures on earth, but instead store up treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust can consume and where thieves cannot break in and steal. For where your treasure rests, there will your heart also reside ... No one can simultaneously obey two masters, for a servant will always be devoted to the one at the expense of the other. So it is with God and material possessions, which is why you cannot serve both God and wealth ... Oh you hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied rightly about you when he said: 'This people honors me with their lips, and yet their hearts are far from me' ... Truly I tell you, it is nearly impossible for the wealthy to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Indeed, it is harder for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than it is for a wealthy man to enter the Kingdom of God ... You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold or the sanctuary that has made that gold sacred? ... Woe to you, scribes & Pharisees. You hypocrites! For you clean the outside of your cup & plate, and yet inside are full of greed and self-indulgence.”

~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 6:19-24, Matthew 15:7-8, Matthew 19:23-24, & Matthew 23:17-25)



03b: Jesus on *the Temple* ... (and all worship therein)

Jewish culture in Jesus' day was a religion-based society, and as such it can come as no surprise that more than a handful of the regulations found in the Old Testament focus on the Temple upon which the Jewish religion was centered at that time.¹²⁵ Similarly, seeing as how Jesus' primary mission was one of religious reform, it can also come as no surprise that his thoughts on the Temple (including the priests who benefited therefrom, the tithes & taxes that were paid thereto, and the sacrifices that were made therein) were just as radical as those he announced about other matters of the Law. Consider ...

*Whereas the Law strongly implied that the Temple was the singular place where God resided – *the* place from whence the Kingdom of Heaven could be accessed, Jesus spoke quite differently about the same – claiming instead that “*the Kingdom of Heaven [was much more] like a mustard seed ... the smallest of all the seeds;*” a seed that came from *a ubiquitous weed* found in all corners of that region; a seed that nevertheless could become a tree large enough to allow “*all the birds of the air to come and nest therein.*” (see Matthew 13:31-32, Mark 4:30-32, & Luke 13:18-19)

*Whereas the Law implied that the Temple was the most magnificent of holy places (and therefore worthy of the glory of God), Jesus felt very differently – dramatically diminishing the Temple's supposed grandeur by boldly stating that “*the Kingdom of Heaven is [much more] like the [small amount of] yeast that a woman [needs to mix] into three full measures of flour in order to leaven it all*”¹²⁶ (see Matthew 13:33 & Luke 13:20-21); quite clearly implying that one did not at all need to enter the gaudy magnificence of the Temple in order to access the Divine; that access thereto was available to everyone, and that even the least noteworthy of abodes could imbue one's Soul with the same.

*Whereas the Temple was seen to be an immutable & everlasting symbol of God's presence and His Love – a permanent fixture of Jewish culture that was meant to be duly revered as such (see Leviticus 19:30), Jesus quite openly decried the same – at one point indicating the buildings of the Temple complex and saying “*You see all these, do you not? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here upon the other. All will be thrown down.*” (see Matthew 24:1-2, Mark 13:1-2, & Luke 21:5-6)



125 See the commandments to build a holy Sanctuary in which God would supposedly reside (see Exodus 25:8-9 & Deuteronomy 12:11), to keep a lamp ever-lit in the Tent of Meeting and a fire ever-burning on the sacrificial altar (see Exodus 27:20-21 & Leviticus 6:12-13, respectively), to regularly clean all sacrificial ash from the altar (see Leviticus 6:10), to grant only sober priests access to the Sanctuary (see Leviticus 10:9-11), to revere the Sanctuary and keep watch over it continually (see Leviticus 19:30 & Numbers 18:2-5, respectively) – just to name a few ...

126 NOTE that “three measures” of flour is roughly **9 gallons** worth of the same – enough to bake **52 large loaves** of bread; enough to feed not only herself but essentially her **entire village** ... NOTE as well that it is a “woman” who is enlivening the Kingdom in this teaching, in extremely stark contrast to the Temple's priesthood of Jesus' day – which was exclusively male ... Finally, NOTE that **the Kingdom of Heaven** is directly equated with “yeast” – the same yeast that was explicitly *forbidden* to be present in any sacrifice offered in the Temple (see Leviticus 2:11)!

Jesus on *the priesthood* ...

(the roles of & the reverence for those tending the Temple)

It goes almost without saying that any society placing immense reverence upon its central Temple would be expected to bestow equal honor upon the priests inhabiting the same, and such was indeed the case in ancient Israel. On the one hand, the Law demanded that its priests¹²⁷ adhere to strict behavioral guidelines.¹²⁸ On the other hand, the Law demanded that those priests be treated with the deepest respect – an almost profound honor – by the Jewish layman (see [Leviticus 21:8-10a](#)). Of course, here as well Jesus was true to form in his open rejection of this man-elevated status. Consider ...

*Whereas it was clear that the Law gave the priesthood the ability (indeed, the daily duty) to bless the Jewish people (see [Numbers 6:23-28](#)), Jesus took it upon himself to repeatedly perform this traditionally priestly duty – openly & unabashedly blessing “the poor in spirit” ([Matthew 5:3](#)), “those who mourn” ([Matthew 5:4](#)), “the meek” ([Matthew 5:5](#)), “those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” ([Matthew 5:6](#)), “the merciful” ([Matthew 5:7](#)), “the pure in heart” ([Matthew 5:8](#)), “the peacemakers” ([Matthew 5:9](#)), those “persecuted for righteousness' sake” ([Matthew 5:10](#)), those persecuted &/or slandered for championing The Way of Christ ([Matthew 5:11](#) & [Luke 6:22](#)), those “who take no offense” at his message ([Matthew 11:6](#) & [Luke 7:23](#)), those who truly understood his teachings ([Matthew 13:16](#) & [Luke 10:23](#)), those who were “destitute” ([Luke 6:20](#)), those who were hungry ([Matthew 6:21a](#)), those who were saddened ([Matthew 6:21b](#)), “those who hear the Word of God and obey the same” ([Luke 11:28](#)), those who enlivened his teachings on selfless service ([John 13:15-17](#)), and those who believed in the practicality of his message without proof of the same ([John 20:29](#) – see also [Luke 24:50](#)).

*Whereas the Law strongly implied that it was the special knowledge held by the priesthood that provided the foundation of Jewish culture and the sanctity of Jewish salvation, Jesus had the seeming gall (and the outright courage) to say “Everyone then who hears *these words of mine* and acts on them will become like a wise man who built his house on stone.”¹²⁹ (see [Matthew 7:24-27](#) & [Luke 6:47-49](#)) Indeed, the Gospels often mention that Jesus, while not a priest himself, taught “as one having [priestly] authority” (see [Matthew 7:28-29](#) – also [Matthew 13:54](#), [Matthew 22:33](#), [Mark 1:22](#), [Mark 12:17](#), [Luke 4:32](#), [Luke 20:26](#), & [John 7:15](#)), and he is even seen giving other non-priests (his disciples) priestly powers & authorities (see [Matthew 10:1-16](#), [Mark 6:7-13](#), [Luke 9:1-6](#), & [Luke 10:1-12](#)).



127 The Old Testament regulations mention the [Kohanim](#) and the [Levites](#) when speaking of the priesthood, with the former being the priests who performed the Temple's holy duties and the latter essentially being helpers thereof – assigned to play music, provide Temple security, wash the [Kohanim's](#) hands & feet before services, or bestow Temple maintenance.

128 ... such as maintaining proper personal dress & hygiene ([Leviticus 10:6](#)), washing their hands & feet before every service ([Exodus 30:19](#)), wearing the requisite vestments during each service ([Exodus 28:2-4](#)), remaining within the bounds of the Sanctuary's Courtyard during every service ([Leviticus 10:7](#)), never touching the dead ([Leviticus 21:1](#)) unless mourning a deceased relative ([Leviticus 21:3](#)), never marrying divorcees or otherwise profaned women ([Leviticus 21:7](#)), and remaining ritually clean whenever serving in the Sanctuary ([Leviticus 22:2-3](#)) ...

129 This was a reference made even more bold by its obvious allusion to the stone-built holy sanctuaries mentioned in [Exodus 20:24-26](#), [Deuteronomy 12:2-27](#), [1 Kings 5:17-18](#), [1 Kings 6:7](#), and [Amos 5:11](#) et al ...

*Whereas the Law endowed priests (and their Pharisee scribes) with great power and demanded they be deeply respected (if not outright revered) by the Jewish layman (see Exodus 19:6, Leviticus 10:3, Leviticus 19:32 – also Matthew 23:6, Mark 12:38, Luke 11:43 & Luke 20:46 et al), Jesus had the audacity to criticize them publicly – calling out & sternly rebuking their material opulence (see Matthew 11:8), their general ignorance (see Matthew 11:25), their faulty interpretations of the Law (even equating the same with yeast, a highly impolite analogy in Jewish culture – see Matthew 16:5-12), their arrogance (see Matthew 23:11-12, John 9:40-41, & Luke 14:11's “For all who exalt themselves will be humbled”), their love of receiving undue honor in public (see Matthew 23:5-10, Mark 12:38-40, Luke 11:43, & Luke 20:45-47's “They will receive the greater condemnation”, along with Luke 14:7-10), their adoration of material wealth (see Luke 16:14-15), their cold-hearted callousness (see Matthew 23:13-14¹³⁰ & Luke 11:52), their dogmatic zealotry (see Matthew 23:15), their moral hypocrisy (see Matthew 23:25-28 & even likening them to “unmarked graves” – a scathing insult for any Jew, much less a supposedly esteemed religious leader – in Luke 11:37-44), and their hollow piousness (see Luke 18:9-14, where even the hated tax collector was presented as more holy than the Pharisees). Indeed, Jesus had the gall to state that “many who are [considered] first will be last, and [many thought to be] last will be first”¹³¹ (see Matthew 19:30 – also Matthew 20:16, Mark 10:31, & Luke 13:30), implying that even the gravest of repentant sinners would enter the Kingdom of God before even the most superficially devout of priests – a sentiment echoed by Jesus on the many occasions where he raised up “very young children” as the bellwether of spiritual purity, *not* the priestly elite (see Matthew 18:1-14, Matthew 19:13-15, Mark 9:33-37, & Luke 9:46-48). And as if that wasn't bold enough, Jesus even went out of his way to imply that it was the priestly scribes & Pharisees who were not only inaccurate in their living of the Law, but active saboteurs thereof who were purposefully keeping others from understanding &/or enlivening the same (see Matthew 18:6-7, Mark 9:42, Luke 17:1-2, & Luke 11:52's “Woe to you scribes [and Pharisees]! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You do not enter [the Sanctuary] yourselves, and yet you hinder those who are attempting to enter” – in juxtaposition with Leviticus 19:14's call to “put no stumbling block before the blind”).

*Whereas the Law established the priests as the sole presenters of spiritual truth, Jesus blatantly proclaimed himself to be just such an authority as well – calling on others to “*follow me*” instead of the traditional priestly leadership¹³² (see Matthew 4:19, Matthew 8:22, Matthew 9:9, Matthew 10:38, Matthew 16:24, Matthew 19:28, Mark 1:17, Mark 8:34, Mark 10:21, Luke 5:27, Luke 9:23, Luke 18:22, John 1:43, John 8:12, & John 12:26 et al). He called for others to “*acknowledge me*” (i.e. honor his teachings; see Matthew 10:32-33 – also Mark 8:37-38 & Luke 12:8-9) and “*welcome me*” (i.e. accept him as a viable prophet; see Matthew 10:40-42 – also Mark 9:41, Luke 10:16, John 5:23, & John 13:20), he claimed to be a true emissary of God the Father (see John 8:19-23, John 12:44-45's “whomever sees me sees [a reflection of] Him who sent me”, John 13:20, & John 15:18-24 et al), and he even openly called for others to become disciples of *his Way, his Truth, and his Life* (i.e. those who would emulate his life by enlivening his teachings on the Law; see John 14:6's “No one comes to the Father except *through me*” – also Matthew 10:24-25, Matthew 10:37-38, Matthew 11:29, Matthew 16:24, Luke 6:40, Luke 14:26-33, John 8:31-32, John 13:34-35, & John 15:4-8 et al).



130 NOTE that Jesus accusing the scribes & Pharisees of “devouring widows' houses” in this passage takes on special significance in light of the fact that God was a famed “defender of widows” (Psalm 68:5) – openly providing for them in Deuteronomy 16:11-14, Isaiah 10:1-3, Jeremiah 22:1-5, & Ezekiel 22:6-7. Indeed, even Jesus himself is seen caring for widows in Luke 7 & John 19, making this particular rebuke even more potent.

131 While not directly relevant to the point at hand, it is intriguing to look at this statement in light of the final chapters of the Gospel of Luke, where we see Peter – for first of Jesus' followers – “getting it” last (denying Jesus three times on the night of his pre-arranged arrest; see Luke 22:54-62) and the “bandit” on the cross next to Jesus – the very last of Jesus' ministerial converts – attaining entrance to Jesus' Kingdom seemingly before all others (see Luke 23:39-43).

132 And this was no mere hollow summons, as evidenced by the large crowds who apparently *did* follow him – see Matthew 4:25, Matthew 8:1, Matthew 12:15, Matthew 14:13, Matthew 19:2, Mark 2:15, Mark 3:7, Mark 5:24, Luke 7:9, Luke 9:11, Luke 14:25, John 6:2, & John 12:12-17 et al ...

*Whereas the Law required that priests be anointed with sacred oil (oil that was not allowed to be used “in any ordinary anointing of the body” and oil that was not allowed to be made or concocted by any unsanctioned individual – see Exodus 30:25-33), Jesus went out of his way to have himself so anointed (see Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9, Luke 7:36-50, & John 12:1-11).

*Finally, whereas the Law tended to “dumb down” the populace – having the common folk believe that they were neither intelligent nor sophisticated enough to attain spiritual well-being without the assistance of the priests, Jesus preached the opposite doctrine – namely, that priestly mediators were completely unnecessary for the attainment of spiritual redemption; that each & every individual (Jew and non-Jew alike) could attain entry into what he called “the Kingdom of Heaven” by simply enlivening the underlying intent of the commandments in their everyday dealings with others (see Matthew 7:7, Matthew 7:21, Matthew 13:18-23, Matthew 18:19-20, Matthew 24:12-14, Mark 4:11-12, Mark 10:13-16, Luke 11:9, Luke 8:11-15, Luke 18:15-17, John 13:15-17, John 14:13, John 15:7, & John 16:23 – along with Note 118 on page 56 herein).

“Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me will scatter ... For now is the judgment of this world, and now is the time when the rulers of this world will be driven out.” ~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 12:30 & John 12:31)



“Then some of the Pharisees said to him, 'Teacher, tell your disciples to stop praising you and your message.' And Jesus answered, 'Truly, I tell you: if my supporters were to become silent, the stones would begin to shout.' ... Then the Pharisees turned to one another and said, 'You see, we can do nothing, for the entire world has already gone after him.'” ~ via Luke 19:39 & John 12:19

Jesus on *tithing & taxes* ...

(both what to pay and how to pay it)

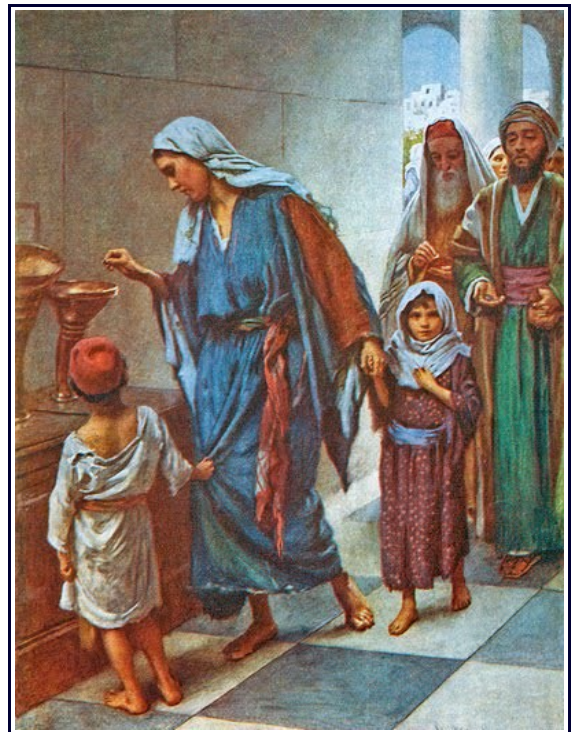
Unsurprisingly, the Law was quite explicit in requiring every devout Jew to pay tithes to the Temple and its priests (see Exodus 22:29, Leviticus 27:30, Numbers 18:24-26, Deuteronomy 12:19, Deuteronomy 14:22-29, & Deuteronomy 18:3-4 et al), and equally typical was Jesus' thorough rebuke of the same ...

*Whereas the Law required that tithes be offered publicly (and often with great fanfare), Jesus encouraged his listeners to give to others anonymously instead, saying: “Whenever you give alms, do not be like the hypocrites in the synagogues and on the streets – sounding a trumpet before them that they might be praised by others¹³³ ... But rather, whenever you give alms do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing – so that your alms might be given in secret, and your heavenly Father who sees in secret will reward you accordingly.” (via Matthew 6:1-4)

*Whereas the Law mandated that the primary Temple tax be paid every year (see Exodus 30:13), Jesus cast great doubt upon the same; asking Peter “From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tribute? From their children or from others?” and then – after Peter had answered “from others” – stating “Then the children are free [from the same]” (see Matthew 17:24-26); boldly implying that the Temple tax was not legally binding for all true Children of God.¹³⁴

*Whereas the Law (via Leviticus 27:32-33 & Numbers 18:24-26 et al) required that a certain percentage of one's gleanings be offered (and whereas legal tradition lauded larger donations with a greater honor), Jesus expressed a very different opinion – encouraging listeners to give whatever they could, and noting that it was the most self-sacrificial giving that was always the most worthy, not the largest amount given. (“Truly, this poor widow [who only tithed two copper coins] has given more than all those contributing greater amounts to the treasury. For they have given from their abundance, while she from her poverty gave everything she had to live on.” ~ via Matthew 12:41-44 & Luke 21:1-4)

*Finally, whereas the Law demanded that material things (money &/or portions of herds & harvests) be given as tithes, Jesus harshly criticized the scribes & Pharisees for doing so at the expense of “the far weightier matters of the Law; namely justice and mercy and the [perfect] Love of God” (see Matthew 23:23 & Luke 11:42 – also Luke 18:9-14) and sternly lauding his other listeners to avoid making the same mistake.



133 NOTE here the fitting symbolism – with “the left hand” traditionally representing the hand that takes &/or yearns to receive (in this case yearning to receive the accolades of others) and “the right hand” traditionally representing the hand of giving &/or the hand that yearns to provide for others – see Genesis 48:14, Psalm 63:8, Psalm 110:1, Isaiah 41:10-13, Jeremiah 22:24, Matthew 22:44, Matthew 25:31-46, Matthew 26:64, Mark 14:62, Mark 16:19, & Luke 22:69 et al.

134 While it is true that Jesus went on to encourage Peter to pay the yearly fee – not because it was legally mandated, but rather “so that we do not give offense to them” – he did so by having Peter pull a shekel coin (worth an amount that was exactly enough to pay the yearly Temple tax for two people) from the mouth of a fish (see Matthew 17:27); thereby sarcastically reinforcing his original contention.

Jesus on *sacred sacrifices* . . .

(and the what & the why of proper offering)

Since its inception, Jewish culture has relied upon the practice of animal sacrifice as its primary medium for the atonement of sin, and as such it can come as no surprise that a significant number of the regulations demanded by Jewish Law proscribe the whens and the hows of the same.¹³⁵ That having been said, it has also been clearly shown herein that the underlying intention of Jesus' ministry was the radical reform of that same Law, and as such it can come as even less of a surprise to realize that he offered many bold commentaries on the same during the same. Consider . . .

*Whereas the Law demanded that animal sacrifices be made to atone for one's misdeeds (see Exodus 20:24 & Leviticus 5:7) and that those sacrifices be made in the Temple itself (see Leviticus 17:3-4, Deuteronomy 12:13-14, & Deuteronomy 12:26), Jesus made it dramatically clear at the beginning of his ministry that the time for such barbarity had long-since passed (doing so by "cleansing the Temple"¹³⁶ thereof in John 2:13-17; loudly demanding that those who were "selling cattle, sheep, and doves" for imminent sacrificial slaughter immediately "cease making my father's house a marketplace" – before then making his own "whip of grass cords" and using the same to drive those animals out of the Temple altogether).

*Whereas the Law required that offerings be made to atone for one's sins (see Leviticus 4:27-28, Leviticus 5:17-19, & Leviticus 6:24-30), to cleanse one from guilt (see Leviticus 7:1-10), &/or to effectuate peace (see Leviticus 7:11-18), Jesus blatantly rebuked this notion when he told the Pharisees, "Go and learn what this truly means: I desire mercy, *not sacrifice*."¹³⁷

*It is also interesting to note that, while the Law strictly required all sacrifices to be sanctified with salt (see Leviticus 2:13), Jesus symbolically transposed the same requirement onto all human choices (by boldly stating: "You are the salt of the earth, and yet if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? . . . Everyone will be salted with fire . . . [so] have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another." ~ Matthew 5:13 & Mark 4:49-50 – see also Luke 14:34-35).

135 Among them, see those rules proscribing what/who can and cannot be offered (see Exodus 23:19, Leviticus 2:11, Leviticus 22:20-27, Leviticus 27:10, Numbers 5:15, Deuteronomy 12:15, Deuteronomy 17:1, & Deuteronomy 23:19 et al); those proscribing the ramifications of the offering of "first fruits" (see Exodus 13:2, Exodus 13:13, Exodus 23:19, Exodus 34:20, Leviticus 23:14, Numbers 18:15-17, & Deuteronomy 26:5-10 et al); those proscribing which portions of the offering can be eaten, when, and by whom (see Exodus 29:33, Leviticus 6:16, Leviticus 7:15-19, Leviticus 19:6-8, & Deuteronomy 12:17 et al); and those proscribing who should give an offering & how they should do so (see Leviticus 4:13, Leviticus 6:13, Leviticus 12:6, Leviticus 14:10, Leviticus 15:13-15, & Numbers 28:3 et al) . . .

136 Though Jesus is seen performing an eerily similar "Temple cleansing" near the end of his ministry (described in Matthew 21:12-13, Mark 11:15-17, & Luke 19:45-46), it is obvious to any careful reader of the Gospels that the incident portrayed therein had a very different objective to the one told in John 2 – with the former clearly orchestrated as a blatant critique of the materialistic hypocrisy of the money-changers in the Temple and the priests who directly benefited therefrom (quoting Jeremiah 7:11 while he did so – "My house shall be called a house of prayer, and yet you are making it a den of robbers"), and the latter just as obviously making a bold statement against the raw brutality and unjust wickedness of the slaughter of innocent animals required by the sacrificial offerings mandated by the Law.

137 Doing so indeed on more than one occasion – initially after being accused by the Pharisees of inappropriately sharing a meal "with tax collectors and sinners" (see Matthew 9:11-13 & Mark 2:15-17 – also Luke 5:29-32) and later after being accused by them again – this time for illegally gathering grain on the Sabbath (see Matthew 12:1-7). Admittedly, Jesus did not make these statements in direct reference to the practice of animal sacrifice, and yet the originating Old Testament verse he cited in both instances did just that (see Hosea 6:6's "For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice; the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings"). Indeed, apropos to the case at hand (and similar to other cases sprinkled throughout the Hebrew Bible – see 1 Samuel 15:22, Isaiah 1:11-17, Amos 5:21-24, & Micah 6:6-8 et al), the claim of Hosea 6:6 had been made to lambast the Jews of that time for attempting to justify their sins via the offering of proscribed animal sacrifices – similar to Jesus' critique of the Pharisees of his day, for hypocritically honoring the demands of the Law while simultaneously ignoring the humble compassion that was supposed to underlie the same.

*Penultimately, while the Law gave very specific instructions related to the sacrifice, serving, and consumption of the lamb that was to be offered up for the Passover meal (see [Exodus 12:6-10](#), [Exodus 12:43-48](#), [Exodus 23:15-18](#), & [Numbers 9:11-12](#)), Jesus fully abdicated the same by having his disciples eat only leavened bread¹³⁸ at his own self-orchestrated paschal “Last Supper” (see [Matthew 26:17-30](#), [Mark 14:12-26](#), [Luke 22:7-39](#), & [John 13:1-30](#)).

*Finally, whereas the Law demanded that all sacrifices consist of material possessions (including money, portions of one's harvest, &/or the extinguished lives of enslaved animals) and that they be given in direct proportion to one's state of wealth and well-being (see [Leviticus 5:7](#) & [Deuteronomy 14:22-26](#) et al), Jesus made it exceedingly clear throughout his ministry that these things no longer mattered – that the only thing that qualified one for true spiritual redemption was a life of willing self-sacrifice for others (see [Matthew 10:38-39](#), [Matthew 24:12-14](#), [Luke 14:27-33](#), & [John 12:25](#) et al), especially the downtrodden in one's community ([Matthew 25:35-40](#)) &/or the enemies in one's life ([Matthew 5:44-48](#)).



“It is correct for animal rights advocates to be critical of the Christian tradition, a tradition which has been amazingly callous towards animals over the course of its history. In truth, Christian theologians have for the most part been disturbingly neglectful of the cause of animals (if not downright dismissive thereof), and many of them remain so to this day. Indeed, Christians and Jews alike have all too often allowed their ancient texts to be read in such a way as to fully justify humankind's abject tyranny over (and vile abuse of) our non-human cousins. For this reason many proponents in the animal rights movement look understandably upon Christianity as though it were an unambiguous enemy, and yet this need not continue to be the case. For Christianity, much like the vast majority of its religious counterparts, holds within the pages of its sacred texts vast resources; a voluminous archive of wit & wisdom waiting patiently to be set into motion by those who are moral and just; a collection of truth that could engender an ethic in relation to animals that – much like its professed Lord & Savior – would finally be compassionate and kind and true.” ~ inspired by Andrew Linzey

138 NOTE as well how Jesus symbolically offered himself in place of the requisite sacrificial lamb (see “this is my body” via [Matthew 26:26](#), [Mark 14:22](#), & [Luke 22:19](#)) – the same selfless mindset and the same self-sacrificial lifestyle that would thereafter be required of anyone & everyone desiring to truly “follow him” (see [Matthew 16:24-25](#), [Mark 8:34-35](#), & [Luke 9:23-24](#)) and thereby enter his “Kingdom of Heaven” (see [John 13:15-17](#), [John 14:1-4](#), & [John 15:1-13](#) et al) ...

03c: Jesus on the *Holy Festivals* ... (& the observance thereof)

One of the most powerful ways that the Law sought to preserve Jewish culture was via a collection of commandments that demanded both the consistent honoring of a weekly & monthly calendar¹³⁹ alongside the regular observance of an intricate series of seasonal festivals (see Exodus 23:14, Leviticus 23, & Deuteronomy 16:14-16). Seeing as how participating in these celebrations was critical to remaining a Jew of good standing according to the Law, it is not surprising to see Jesus going to great lengths during his ministry to challenge both the place the Jewish calendar held in his society (see “Do not worry about tomorrow ... Today’s troubles are enough for today.” ~ Matthew 6:34 and “Not every one who merely says ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only those who do the will of my heavenly Father.” ~ Matthew 7:21 and “If you understand these things, blessed are you while you do them.” ~ John 13:17 et al) as well as the major festivals¹⁴⁰ that maintained that calendar’s viability. Consider ...

Jesus on *the Sabbath* ... (& who the true Lord is thereof)

The Law was explicitly clear that no work was to be done on the Sabbath – the seventh day of every week; a day that was to be revered – essentially with rest or ceremony (see Exodus 16:29, Exodus 20:8-10, Exodus 23:12, Exodus 25:30, Exodus 34:21, Exodus 35:2-3, & Numbers 28:9-10 et al). Of course, there was great debate as to just what constituted “work” for this regulation,¹⁴¹ and so Jesus (unsurprisingly) had quite a bit to say about the matter – proclaiming quite boldly (and at the time quite heretically) that “the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (see Mark 2:27 – also Matthew 12:8 & Luke 6:5) and that “it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath” (see Matthew 12:12 – also Mark 3:1-5 & Luke 6:6-10) – and this, regardless of what is being done. And he was consistently brazen about the matter as well – calling out the Pharisees’ legal hypocrisy after they accused his disciples of violating the Sabbath by plucking heads of grain in a field (referencing 1 Samuel 21:1-6 in the process – see Matthew 12:1-8, Mark 2:23-28, & Luke 6:1-5), and doing the same when the Pharisees criticized him for healing the injured & the ill on the Sabbath in their synagogues (see Matthew 12:9-13, Mark 3:1-6, Luke 6:6-11, Luke 13:10-17, Luke 14:1-5, John 5:5-17, & John 7:21-24).

“You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the manger, and lead it to give it water? And so ought not this woman be equally set free from bondage on the Sabbath?” And after this all his opponents were put to shame, and the crowd rejoiced at the wonderful things he was doing.” ~ Luke 13:15-17

139 The Jewish calendar was & remains primarily a lunar one – see Exodus 12:2, Leviticus 23:15, & Numbers 28:11 et al.

140 ... among these being: *Passover*, the Feast of Salvation (for many a celebration that also includes the Feast of Unleavened Bread & the Feast of First Fruits) – celebrating the initial Jewish deliverance from slavery; *Shavuot*, the Feast of Weeks, celebrating the summer harvest; *Rosh Hashanah*, the Festival of Trumpets, celebrating liberation from oppression (see Numbers 29:1); *Yom Kippur*, the Festival of Atonement, where confessions are given for past misdeeds; *Sukkot*, the Festival of Booths, celebrating the shelter God provided Jews in their initial wilderness-wandering; and *Hanukkah*, the Festival of Lights (also the Festival of Dedication), celebrating the Jewish defeat of the Seleucidian Empire (see 1 Maccabees & 2 Maccabees) and the rededication of the Temple thereafter ...

141 Violating this commandment was punishable with death (see Exodus 31:14-15) and as such the Jewish priests and scribes of that age went to great lengths to explicitly define every conceivable deed that would qualify as “working” on the Sabbath. Jeremiah 17:21-22 was sometimes cited as prohibiting the “carrying of any burden” on the Sabbath, and yet the majority of Jewish scholars were eventually in agreement that the symmetry between Genesis 2:1-3 & Exodus 31:1-11 meant that “work” (the Hebrew *melakha* in these passages) pertained to anything involving creativity or creation or exercising dominion over one’s surroundings. As such, Jewish authorities ended up listing 39 different categories of activity that qualified as “work” in relation to the Sabbath prohibition thereof (see Mishnah Shabbat 7:2) – among them planting, plowing, reaping, gathering, threshing, winnowing, grinding, kneading, cooking, baking, laundering, combing, dyeing, spinning, weaving, sewing, writing, erasing, building, demolishing, igniting, extinguishing, & carrying.

Jesus on *the Passover* ...

(& the hows & why of its celebration)

Passover was one the most important holy festivals in the Jewish Calendar¹⁴², and as such it made complete sense both that the Law contained dozens of regulations pertaining solely thereto (see [Exodus 12:16](#), [Leviticus 23:6-8](#), & [Numbers 9:11](#) et al) *and* that Jesus went to great lengths to formulate one of his most intricate legal commentaries thereupon.¹⁴³ Indeed, while more than a few scholars wholeheartedly believe that Jesus' "Last Supper" was not an actual Passover repast¹⁴⁴, Jesus' obviously purposeful orchestration of that final communal meal presented an obvious commentary on the Jewish Law (along with a loud call for the radical reform thereof) nonetheless. Consider ...

*First & foremost, whereas the Law called for the Passover Seder to commemorate the Jews being spared from God's incredible wrath (see [Exodus 12:1-10](#)), Jesus' "Last Supper" celebrated the "rebirth" of a very different God – a God of infinite mercy and perfect Love (see [Matthew 26:1-2](#) & the "new covenant" mentioned in [Mark 14:24](#) & [Luke 22:20](#) – along with [Matthew 5:48](#), [Luke 6:36](#), & [John 5:22+John 8:15+John 12:47](#) et al).

*Secondly, whereas the Law demanded quite explicitly that no foodstuffs containing yeast be consumed during the Passover (see [Exodus 12:15-20](#), [Exodus 13:3-7](#), & [Deuteronomy 16:3](#) et al), Jesus and his disciples ate *leavened bread* at their "Last Supper."¹⁴⁵

*Thirdly, whereas the Law was unequivocal in mandating that a lamb be slaughtered and eaten during the Passover meal (see [Exodus 12:6-10](#), [Exodus 12:43-48](#), [Exodus 23:18](#), & [Numbers 9:11-12](#) et al), Jesus' "Last Supper" with his disciples contained no such act of slaughter-based cruelty (see [Matthew 26](#), [Mark 14](#), [Luke 22](#), & [John 13](#)). Indeed, in place of that lamb, Jesus symbolically offered himself instead (or rather, offered the Truth of his Way of Living – see [John 13:15-17+John 14:6](#), alongside the "my blood" & "my body" he announced in [Matthew 26:26-28](#), [Mark 14:22-24](#), & [Luke 22:19-20](#)).

*Finally, whereas the Law proscribed the re-telling of the initial Exodus story at Passover (see [Exodus 13:8](#)), Jesus refused to do so – telling his disciples to partake of his bread & wine's "new covenant" instead, and asking that they do so "in remembrance of me" (see [Luke 22:19-20](#) – a clear & bold reference to God's promise in [Jeremiah 31:35](#) that His previously wrathful ways would be replaced by merciful ones).

142 ... see Note 57 on page 36 herein

143 ... refer to pages 36-42 herein for a far more in-depth analysis of the same

144 The facts are strong in support of this contention – namely, that the "Last Supper" of Jesus and his disciples was partaken several days before the traditional Seder meal; evidenced at least partially by the following facts – **01**) that [John 19:14](#) plainly states that it was Jesus' crucifixion that took place on "the Day of Preparation for Passover", meaning that Jesus would have been seemingly dying on the cross at essentially the same time the Passover sacrifices were being offered and several hours *before* to the Seder meal was then celebrated in Jewish homes later that evening ... **02**) that a celebration of the "Last Supper" on the actual Passover Eve would have meant that Jesus' trial(s) and his crucifixion would have taken place during the seven-day Passover holiday that followed – activities which no Jewish authority figure could have performed at that time without violating the Law (a la [Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:1](#)) ... **03**) that [John 18:28](#) clearly shows the Jewish priests & elders refusing to enter Pilate's headquarters "so as to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover" *thereafter*. The latter having been said, it is admittedly possible that the *pascha* mentioned by Jesus was a reference to the entire 8-day Passover period (per [2 Chronicles 30:22](#) & [Ezekiel 45:21](#) – a la [Luke 22:1-7](#) &/or [Acts 12:3-4](#)), and thus that the "Passover" the priests & elders were concerned about defiling in [John 18:28](#) was the sacrificial meal of *Chagigah* and not the primary Passover meal that would indeed have taken place the night before.

145 NOTE the flagrant contrast between the leavened *arton* (Strong's #740) that Jesus and his disciples ate in [Matthew 26:26](#), [Mark 14:22](#), & [Luke 22:19](#) and the unleavened *azumos* (Strong's #106) they were traditionally called to eat in [Matthew 26:17](#), [Mark 14:12](#), & [Luke 22:7](#). In addition, while it is true that [John 13:25](#) does use the Greek term for "morsel" (*psomion* Strong's #5596) instead of the one for "leavened bread," an examination of [Ruth 2:14](#) (where the Hebrew equivalent of that same term is also used) shows that even [John](#) essentially claimed thereby that Jesus did indeed dip *leavened bread* into the supposedly Paschal Cup.

Jesus on *Sukkot* . . .

(and its Festival of Booths)

Sukkot (or The Festival of Booths) was another of the major seasonal celebrations commanded by the Law (see [Leviticus 23:34-42](#) & [Numbers 29:12-34](#)), and as such it makes sense not only that Jesus would preach his message of radical legal reform in the lone instance where Sukkot is specifically mentioned in the texts¹⁴⁶ (see [John 7](#) & [John 8](#)), but also that he would subtly-yet-powerfully allude to the same at other times during his ministry as well. Consider . . .

*While the Law mandated that all Jews make a Jerusalem pilgrimage to participate in the Sukkot celebration¹⁴⁷, Jesus at first refused to do so altogether (see [John 7:2-9](#)) and then ultimately did so in secret (see [John 7:10](#)). More importantly, after arriving he didn't participate in the festivities, but seemingly remained hidden from view until “the middle of the festival,” when he entered the Temple and began teaching instead (see [John 7:14-24](#)) – boldly criticizing the hypocrisy of his Jewish listeners (“Did not Moses give you the Law? And yet none of you keeps the Law” ~ [John 7:19](#)) while openly calling for less adherence to tradition & ritual and more enlivening of God's will (“Do not judge by appearances, but judge rather with just discernment” ~ [John 7:24](#)). A few days later, on the festival's final day, he continued on with his tradition-challenging mission; loudly imploring all within earshot to come to him instead of the priests – to drink from the “living water” of his teachings instead of participating in Sukkot's culminating ritual of pouring water upon the Temple floor (see [Mishnah Sukkah 4:9](#) & [John 7:37-38](#)'s “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. For as the Scriptures have said: 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'”¹⁴⁸). Finally, and perhaps most tellingly, Jesus openly proclaims during the festival that he himself is “the light of the world” and that those who followed his teaching would be blessed with “the light of life” (see [John 8:12](#)) – a most rebellious utterance indeed, considering that the illumination of the Temple was one of the more important Sukkot rituals, and that the lamps thereof had probably only just been lit when Jesus made this call most bold.¹⁴⁹



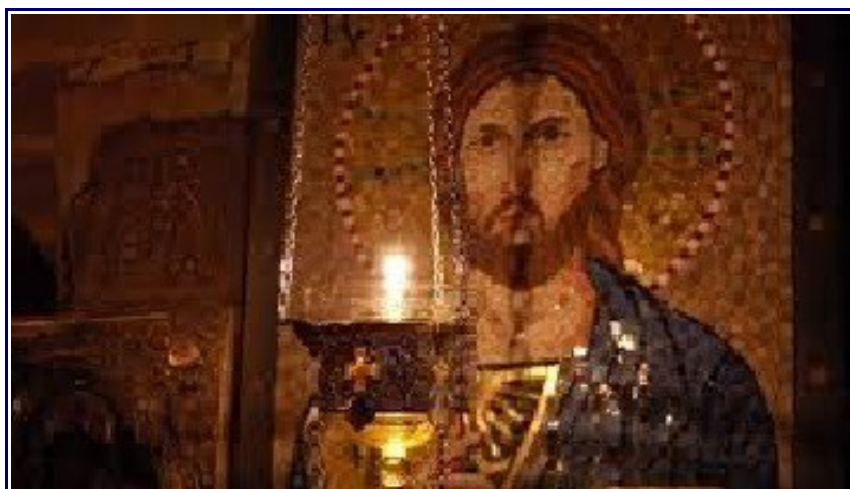
146 Some scholars believe that Jesus' ceremonial entry into Jerusalem near the end of his ministry (see [Matthew 21:1-11](#), [Mark 11:1-11](#), [Luke 19:28-44](#), & [John 12:12-19](#)) occurred on or around Sukkot, and yet the majority of evidence rejects this notion. For starters, all four of the Gospel accounts follow said entry with Jesus & his disciples eating a Passover meal shortly thereafter (see [Matthew 26](#), [Mark 14](#), [Luke 22](#), & [John 13](#)). In addition, while it is true that palm branches were traditionally waved during Sukkot, [John 12](#) is the only “triumphal entry” recounting that specifically mentions palm fronds, and even here it is far more likely that said waving is being done to commemorate the liberation of Jerusalem some 100 years prior – as told by [1 Maccabees 13:51-52](#), a tale that would still have been well-known in Jesus' day (“[And] the Jews entered [the Jerusalem citadel] with praise and palm branches – with the playing of cymbals and stringed instruments, and with the singing of hymns – because a great enemy had been crushed and removed from Israel. And Simon decreed that every year they should celebrate that day with great rejoicing.”). Indeed, it is highly telling that Jesus in all three of the Synoptic Gospels heads into the Temple itself shortly after entering the city to such symbolic fanfare and upturns the money-changing tables that were the primary source of priestly wealth & influence at the time.

147 Sukkot was & remains a celebration of thanksgiving commemorating God's assistance during the Jews' 40 years of wandering in the desert – a celebration during which Jews from all over the land would come to build their required “booths” all over Jerusalem and live therein.

148 Interestingly, the exact words “Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water” are not found in any portion of any text in the Old Testament. That having been said, similar thoughts & connotations are frequently mentioned therein – see [Exodus 17:6](#), [Numbers 20:11](#), [Psalm 114:8](#), [Isaiah 44:3](#), [Isaiah 55:1](#), [Isaiah 58:11](#), [Joel 2:23](#), [Joel 3:18](#), [Ezekiel 47:1](#), [Ezekiel 47:12](#), [Zechariah 13:1](#), & [Zechariah 14:8](#) et al.

149 NOTE also Jesus' similar proclamation in [John 9:4-5](#) (“As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world”), a proclamation made just after healing a blind man on the Sabbath – and just hours after Sukkot had culminated.

*Of course, not all of Jesus' calls to religious reform were so blatant. Indeed, there were a few more subtle references to the mandates of the Sukkot celebration that he offered during his ministry as well. Where the Law demanded homage to the then-respected traditions of the Temple's priests & elders to fulfill Sukkot's primary purpose (that being: gratefulness to God for the guidance he had given the Jews during their Exodus from Egypt, and the freedom he had ultimately granted them thereby), Jesus spoke up at the conclusion of that very festival and said otherwise – unquestionably claiming that his teachings, if emulated, would provide the same liberation that Sukkot was intended to celebrate (see “If you continue in my word, you will truly be my disciples. And you will thereby know the Truth, and that Truth will set you free” via John 8:31-32) ... In addition, where the Law demanded that celebrants live in self-made booths for the duration of the Sukkot week (see *Leviticus 23:42-43* & *Mishnah Sukkah 1:1-11*), Jesus had made it quite clear that the true follower of his Way was essentially a homeless servant of his or her community; that “the Son of Man¹⁵⁰ has nowhere to lay his head” (see *Matthew 8:20* & *Luke 9:58*) ... Finally, perhaps the most subtle reference of all unites the foundation of Jesus' ministry (which was essentially spiritual rebirth via willing self-sacrifice – see *John 3:3-9*, *John 13:15-17*, & *Matthew 24:12-14* et al) with the foundation of the Sukkot celebration (which was essentially the rebirth of Judaism via the Jews' God-guided Exodus from Egypt) alongside the intriguing fact that Jesus was in all probability born during Sukkot itself.¹⁵¹



150 NOTE that it would be most hypocritical of the humility-adoring Jesus (see *Matthew 18:3-4* & *Matthew 23:12*) to repeatedly refer to himself in the 3rd person as “the Son of Man.” And indeed, with but a few exceptions, he more often than not refuses to do so (see *Matthew 12:8*, *Matthew 13:37-43*, *Matthew 18:11*, *Matthew 20:28*, & *Matthew 24:30* et al) – using the phrase instead as it was primarily used in the Old Testament: as a reference to humanity in general (or at least the internal, enlivening essence thereof – see *Numbers 23:19*, *Psalms 8:4*, *Psalms 53:2*, *Micah 5:7*, *Ezekiel 2:3* et al). Indeed, in most telling fashion, the only place in the Hebrew Bible where “the Son of Man” does refer to the lone Davidian Messiah (see *Daniel 7:13-14*), that messianic figure is shown willingly receiving exactly the same gifts of power & reverence that Jesus himself *rejects* after being offered them *by Satan* (see *Matthew 4:1-10* & *Luke 4:1-11*).

151 The evidence for this postulation is multiple & varied – **First:** simply counting back 33.5 years (see *Numbers 4:3* + *Matthew 3:15*, along with *Luke 3:23*, *John 2*, *John 6*, & *John 13* et al) from the conclusion of Jesus' ministry (which ended on his Passover crucifixion) has his birth occurring during Sukkot ... **Second:** John the Baptist was conceived shortly after Abia (see *Luke 1:5* + *1 Chronicles 24:10* + *Luke 1:23-24* & *Matthew 17:10-13*) and therefore born around Passover. Jesus was conceived 6 months after John (see *Luke 1:24-36*) and was therefore also born 6 months after John's birth – or 6 months after Passover, during Sukkot ... Interestingly, if Jesus was indeed circumcised on the “eighth day” after his birth and if he happened to have been born on the first day of Sukkot, then his circumcision would have fallen on the *Shemini Atzeret* – the day of sacred assembly when the Jews completed and restarted their annual full reading of the Torah (see *Leviticus 23:39*). As such, the 8th day of Sukkot – the possible day of Jesus' circumcision (and therefore also his official cultural “birthday” as a Jew) – was essentially the annual *fulfillment* of the Torah; something Jesus announced as essentially being the primary purpose of his ministry in *Matthew 5:17-18*.

Jesus on *Hanukkah* ...

(and its Festival of Dedication)

Though there is only one brief mention of Hanukkah in the Gospels, it is worth examining the little that Jesus did & said during the same. While not a holy festival proscribed by the Old Testament, Hanukkah was still an important celebration in Jesus' day – a celebration that commemorated the rededication of the Jerusalem Temple (and the relighting of the sacred altar fire therein – see 1 Maccabees 5:59) after the successful Maccabean Revolt against the Seleucidian Empire (as recorded in 1 Maccabees 4:36-58, 2 Maccabees 1:18-34, & 2 Maccabees 10:1-8)¹⁵² ... Fittingly, Jesus – a prophet who was striving to facilitate a rededication of the Law – is seen radically teaching at this festival (see his words & deeds at “the Festival of Dedication” in John 10:22-39) right after having publicly proclaimed himself to be a spiritual “shepherd” of the Jewish people (much like the imminently awaited Davidian Messiah, as written of in Ezekiel 34 – see John 10:1-18). Of course, Jesus had already made it repeatedly clear during his ministry that he was *not* going to fulfill that particular prophecy (see John 5:41, John 6:15, John 7:16, John 8:50-54 – along with Matthew 22:41-45, Mark 12:35-37, & Luke 20:41-44) but was instead offering access to a very different heavenly “Kingdom” (see Matthew 10:7 & Luke 17:20-21 et al) by acting as an emissary of *his* heavenly Father; a God of humble Love & selfless Peace (see John 13:15-17 & John 15:1-5 – along with Matthew 5:9, Matthew 5:48, & Matthew 18:3-4 et al).

Indeed, this is why he answered with a cryptic negative¹⁵³ when pressed as to his potentially messianic identity (see John 10:24 – where he was directly asked: “If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly,” and John 10:25-30 – where he affirmed that he was *a* representative of the Divine that resides within all humans, *not* that he was the sole saving Messiah, saying: “I have told you, and yet you do not believe. The works that I do *in my Father's name* [which was unconditionally perfect, selfless Love] testify to me; and yet you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. My sheep hear my voice ... and they follow me [i.e. they emulate his teachings – see Matthew 7:21, Matthew 16:28, & Matthew 24:12-14 et al] ... The Father and I are one.”) ... While it is true that the Jews, as was so often the case, completely misinterpreted his words and thus wanted to stone him for the same (see John 10:31), Jesus went on to clarify once more that he was *not* claiming to be the sole Son of God, nor the coming of the longed-for Messiah – but was merely a man showing them The Way of salvation; a Way founded upon an active *fulfillment* of the Law¹⁵⁴ via deeds of humble Love & selfless service (“I have shown you many good works from the Father” ~ John 10:32); a Way that they all could walk if they would simply choose to let go of their pious arrogance regarding their self-cherished religious status – a more *sanctified*¹⁵⁵ state of being that they could all enliven if they would simply humble themselves and act accordingly.

152 While not a part of the traditionally accepted Palestinian biblical canon, 1 Maccabees & 2 Maccabees are included in the Alexandrian canon – known by many as the *Septuagint* (often abbreviated in scholarly literature as *LXX*).

153 NOTE that Roman intelligence (then headquartered just to the northwest of the Temple) was well aware of the then popular *Psalm of Solomon*; the text of which foresaw the imminent arrival of a Davidian ruler who would overthrow the Roman occupiers and re-establish a Jewish reign over the region (see *Psalm of Solomon* 17). As such, it was doubly incumbent upon Jesus to be indirect in all his utterances related to his potential messianic status. On the one hand, directly answering “No” would have dismantled much of the interest in the selfless message of his ministry that he had been cultivating up to that point. On the other hand, directly – and incorrectly – answering “Yes” would have led to his immediate arrest by the Romans for insurrection; an arrest that would have dismantled the intricate plans he had already begun making for his upcoming Passover crucifixion. As such, he proclaims *not* that he is the Messiah, but rather that “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30) – a claim directly reflective of the one made by Antiochus IV; the claim that ultimately led to the Maccabean Revolt, which inspired the celebration of very Hanukkah festival at which said claim was being made.

154 Remember that this entire work is based upon Jesus bold claim in Matthew 5:17-18 that he had come to “fulfill” the Law – a term translated from the Greek *plerosai* (Strong's #4137); a term which meant “to hone” or “to perfect” or “to complete” or “to enliven”, *not* “to support” or “to affirm” or “to blindly uphold.”

155 The use of the word “sanctified” here is certainly purposeful, and certainly supportive of the claims made on this page – seeing as how the Hebrew equivalent for the Greek word here used for the same (*hegiasen*, Strong's #37) also means “to dedicate” (see *qadash*, Strong's #6942 in Exodus 2:3, Exodus 13:2, Exodus 19:10, Exodus 20:8, & Exodus 29:33) – which was the very essence & fundamental purpose of the Hanukkah commemoration!

*“Is it not written in your Law: ‘I said, you are gods’? So since those to whom the Word of God came were called ‘gods’ – and since the Scriptures cannot be annulled – how can you say that one who the Father has **sanctified** and sent into the world is blaspheming simply because he correctly says, ‘I am God’s Son’? Indeed, if I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me. And yet since I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you might thereby know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father – and that you are in me and I, in you.”*

~ Jesus Christ (John 10:34-38 + John 14:20b)



“I have come as a light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me shall not remain in darkness. In truth, I do not judge anyone who hears my words but does not keep them, for I came not to judge the world, but to offer it a path to salvation ... The eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is healthy, then your entire body will be full of light. And yet if your eye is unhealthy, then your whole body will be full of darkness ... And so it is that I give you a new commandment: Love one another. Indeed, just as I have Loved you, so shall you show Love for one another ... Very truly, the one who believes in me will do the works I have done, and in fact will do even greater works than those.”

~ Jesus Christ (John 12:46-47, Matthew 6:22, John 13:34, & John 14:12)

“The gospel of Christ becomes meaningless and the life of Jesus becomes hypocritical unless we choose to believe that he lived, shared, and died with but one purpose in mind: namely, to inspire us to make a brand-new creation – not to admonish people towards better morals or honor a religion of a better salvation, but rather to co-create a community filled with prophets and professional lovers; men and women who willingly surrender to the mystery of the Fire of the Spirit on a daily basis; willingly surrender to the Flame of the Soul demanding us to live in full fidelity to the perfect Love of *his* heavenly Father; men and women who choose to enter into the very center of it all, into the very heart and ultimate mystery of Christ's life of joyous self-sacrifice; into the glowing center of the spiritual conflagration that simultaneously consumes, purifies, and sets aglow every interaction with bold gentleness, soothing peace, courageous kindness, and reckless Love.” ~ inspired by Brennan Manning

03d: Jesus on *the Community* ... (& all its relationships therein)

The primary goal of any society's legal system is to encourage (if not force) its citizens to live together in harmony. And yet what is seemingly unique about the Law of ancient Judea was that it did more than merely proscribe punishments for specific acts of improper behavior – it actually demanded that its citizens be good to one another as well. Indeed, it was a direct violation of the Law in Jesus' day to hate a fellow Israelite (see [Leviticus 19:17](#)), to hold a grudge against one's neighbor (see [Leviticus 19:18](#)), to refuse to relieve a neighbor of his or her burdens (see [Exodus 23:5](#) & [Deuteronomy 22:4](#)), to neglect to help a neighbor in danger (see [Leviticus 19:16](#)), to refuse to show honor towards the old & the wise (see [Leviticus 19:32](#)), to take revenge upon a wrongdoing neighbor (see [Leviticus 19:18](#)), to put a fellow Jew to shame (see [Leviticus 19:17](#)), &/or to neglect to openly rebuke a communal sinner (see [Leviticus 19:17](#)).

That having been said, even though Jesus obviously agreed with the underlying principles of these edicts (see [Matthew 5:39-48](#) & [Luke 6:27-36](#) et al), he still went out of his way to challenge them as well – by openly encouraging his fellow Jews to *transcend* the same. For Jesus it was not enough to merely “obey the Law” in regards to one's neighbors. Jesus wanted his followers (all Jews, actually) to give at every opportunity, not only during those times mandated by the Law; to **give to everyone**, and this whether it was legally required to do so or not (see [Matthew 5:42](#) & [Luke 6:30](#)'s “**Give to everyone** who asks of you, and if **anyone** steals your possessions, do not ask for their return”). Indeed, where the Law demanded that all Jews treat their fellow Jews with basic respect, Jesus demanded that everyone treat everyone else – Jew & non-Jew alike – with loving tenderness. Where the Law's 10 Commandments proscribed how Jews were to honor God by essentially announcing what they were explicitly forbidden to do to one another (see [Exodus 20:2-17](#) & [Deuteronomy 5:6-21](#)), Jesus made it clear that merely “obeying the Law” was not enough – that proactively open acts of selfless generosity to any & all in need were required for salvation as well (see [Matthew 19:18-21](#) & [Luke 18:20-22](#)).¹⁵⁶ And where the Law was admittedly correct in insisting that Jews not judge their fellow Israelites, Jesus made it discernibly lucid that this was not enough either – that we have all been called not merely to avoid judging others, but rather to focus on cleansing our own sins of callous selfishness by reaching out to others with acts of forgiving kindness (see [Matthew 7:1-5](#), [Matthew 18:21-22](#), [Matthew 23:25-26](#), [Luke 6:36-42](#), & [John 8:1-11](#) et al).¹⁵⁷

Yes, it was indeed the case that Jesus essentially affirmed the Ten Commandments by coagulating the final five of them into a single echo of [Leviticus 19:18](#)'s command to “**Love your neighbor**” (see [Matthew 22:37-40](#), [Mark 12:30-31](#), & [Luke 10:25-27](#) – also [Deuteronomy 15:7-8](#)'s “do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your needy neighbor”), and yet it is critical to realize that he radically redefined the term “neighbor” in the process – transforming it from the Law's traditional meaning of “fellow Jew” to his gospel's new meaning of “stranger &/or enemy” (see [Luke 10:29-37](#)).

156 All four of the canonical Gospels are filled with examples reflecting this Truth of Christ's Life & Way – see [Matthew 7:21](#), [Matthew 13:18-23](#), [Matthew 16:24](#), [Matthew 24:12-14](#), [Luke 9:23](#), [Luke 10:38-42](#)'s “the better part”, [Luke 21:1-4](#), [John 9:1-3](#), [John 13:34-35](#), and [John 15:1-5](#) et al ...

157 It is admittedly true that Jesus did offer stern rebukes to the sinful during his ministry, and yet it is crucial to realize that he always did so in the context of his selfless Way, his humble Truth, and his loving Life – telling his followers to “avoid giving what is holy to dogs or throwing your pearls before swine” (see [Matthew 7:6](#)), but only after having their humble gifts be repeatedly rejected by the same (see [Matthew 7:12](#) – also [Matthew 15:22-28](#)); to “shake the dust from your feet” and leave disbelievers behind (see [Matthew 10:14](#)), but only after having “proclaimed the Good News” and its salvational message of selfless kindness (see [Matthew 10:7](#)); to lambaste communities (not singular individuals residing therein) who refuse to adopt The Way of Christ when offered the same (see [Matthew 11:21-24](#) & [Luke 10:13-15](#) et al), but only after having devoutly offered the same (see [Matthew 11:20](#)); to sternly correct the sinful behavior of a fellow disciple (see [Matthew 18:15-17](#)), but only with a humble heart and a forgiving tongue (see [Luke 17:3-4](#) & [John 20:23](#)) ...

Jesus on *marriage & family* ...

(and how to respect & honor the same)

The ancient Jewish culture (and as such also the ancient Law of the Israelites) was in great part founded upon familial relations remaining tight-knit. Indeed, the very first law given to the Jews in the Bible was God's command for them to “be fruitful and multiply” (see Genesis 1:28 – also Leviticus 26:9)¹⁵⁸, and one of the Law's primary “Ten Commandments” was the requirement to “honor your mother and father” (see Exodus 20:12, Leviticus 19:3, & Deuteronomy 5:16). As such, verbally cursing or physically striking one's parents – or in any other way acting as a “rebellious son” – was considered in ancient Israel to be an offense that warranted (and indeed mandated) the death penalty (see Exodus 20:12, Exodus 21:15-17, Leviticus 20:9, & Deuteronomy 21:18-21). In stark contrast, Jesus not only preached a gospel founded upon a radical forgiveness of sin (including those sins deemed by the Law to be capital crimes – see Matthew 6:12-15, Matthew 9:13, Matthew 18:21-22¹⁵⁹, Matthew 26:28, Mark 2:17, Mark 11:25, Luke 5:32, Luke 6:37, Luke 7:47-48, Luke 17:3-4, & John 8:1-11 et al), he also openly redefined what it meant to be considered “family” under the Law – stating quite boldly (and, certainly according to the legal interpretations of the Pharisees, quite heretically): “Whomever comes to me and does not hate¹⁶⁰ father and mother, wife and children, and brothers and sisters-- yes, even life itself – cannot be my disciple.” (see Luke 14:26 – also Matthew 10:37)



Indeed, once when he was informed that his mother and brothers were waiting to speak with him, he had the audacity to point to his nearby followers and reply, “Here are my mother and my brothers. For whomever does the will of my heavenly Father¹⁶¹ is my true brother and sister and mother.” (see Matthew 12:46-50, Mark 3:31-35, & Luke 8:19-21 – also Matthew 23:9, Luke 22:28-30, John 15:14, & John 19:26-27), and another time even announced to his disciples that, “everyone who has left homes or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for the sake of my Good News ... will receive a hundredfold in this age, and eternal life in the age to come.” (see Mark 10:28-30 – also Matthew 19:27-29 & Luke 18:28-30)

158 NOTE that this commandment – along with most if not all of the other Mitzvot found in the Torah – was actually given by “the *Elohim*,” the Greek word for “gods” in *the plural* (Strong's #430 – directly distinguishable from *el*, the same word's singular form – Strong's #410, as found in Isaiah 45:22) that is incorrectly translated as the singular moniker “God” in most Bibles. In truth, the *Elohim* actually represent highly dysfunctional “fallen angels” – very much like the highly dysfunctional commandments they announce throughout the Pentateuch, and very unlike the Father of perfect Love (*YHWH* or *Adonai* in the ancient texts, translated as “LORD” in many Bibles – see Strong's #3068 & #113, respectively) who Jesus adores, worships, and follows (see Matthew 5:48, Luke 6:36, & 1 John 4 et al).

159 NOTE that Jesus' reference to the sum of “seventy times seven times” in this passage is quite significant – first & foremost for the way it dramatically (and obviously purposefully) contrasts with the only other time it is used in the entire Bible (see Genesis 4:24), and secondly for the way it symbolically calls for everyone in the entire world (the *seventy* nations mentioned in Genesis 10) to be forgiven completely & without limitation (with *seven* representing *completion* or *perfection* in the Jewish culture of the day).

160 NOTE the Greek word here translated as “hate” is *miseo* (Strong's #3404), a term that just as often meant “to love less than” or “to hold in less esteem” (see also Matthew 5:43-44, Matthew 24:9-10, & Luke 6:22-27 et al).

161 It is worth remembering that Jesus' heavenly Father was the embodiment of “perfect Love” (Matthew 5:48) – a Love that knew neither fear nor punishment (1 John 4:18). And as such, the will of said Father can only summon its followers to a similar purity of selfless service and all-forgiving caring.

The Law was also quite clear in both its furtherance of marriage (for procreative purposes, as well as to assure the sustainability of the Jewish culture – see [Genesis 2:24](#), [Deuteronomy 22:13](#), [Deuteronomy 23:2-9](#), [Deuteronomy 24:5](#)) and its frowning upon divorce (probably for similar reasons – see [Deuteronomy 22:19](#) & [Deuteronomy 24:1-4](#)). As such, it comes as no surprise when we see Jesus – radical reformer of the Law that he was – clearly downplaying the sanctity of marital unions while also denouncing the dissolution of any such unions already sanctified. Whereas the Law identified marriage as a sacred contract, Jesus made it quite clear that marriage was anything but heavenly, saying that “in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are instead like angels in Heaven” (see [Matthew 22:25-30](#)¹⁶² – also [Mark 12:18-25](#) & [Luke 20:27-36](#)) and even affirmed his disciples' opinion that “it is better not to marry.” (see [Matthew 19:10-11](#)) In addition, whereas the Law made it clear that divorce was allowed by anyone providing his wife with the required certificate thereof, Jesus denounced divorce entirely – making it equally clear that “[it was] because of your hardness of heart [that Moses] wrote this commencement for you, and yet ... what God has joined together, let no one separate ... [As such] anyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery.” (see [Mark 10:2-12](#) – also [Matthew 5:31-32](#)¹⁶³ & [Luke 16:18](#))

Jesus on *sexual relations* ...

(and their place in Jewish society)

Though the Law made it clear from its very beginning that the law-abiding Jewish citizen was required to “be fruitful and multiply” (see [Genesis 1:28](#)), it was just as adamant in circumscribing which sexual relationships were appropriate and which were sinful. Premarital intercourse was forbidden (see [Deuteronomy 23:18](#)), as was any act of incest (proscribed with no small amount of detail in [Leviticus 18](#)¹⁶⁴), any act of homosexual intercourse (see [Leviticus 18:22](#) & [Leviticus 20:13](#)), and any sexual act committed outside the bounds of sanctified marriage (i.e. any acts of adultery – see [Exodus 20:14](#), [Numbers 5:11-30](#), [Leviticus 18:20](#), & [Deuteronomy 5:18](#)) ... Intriguingly (though not surprisingly), Jesus made a point to amend these legal stipulations as well – going out of his way to be non-condemningly kind to an openly gay centurion (see [Matthew 8:5-13](#), [Luke 7:1-10](#), & [John 4:46-53](#) – as well as the thorough analysis provided on page 27 herein), to be publicly forgiving of a vehemently accused adulteress (see [John 8:2-11](#) – also the information provided on page 25 herein, as well as [Matthew 5:28](#)'s “everyone who even glances at a woman with lust has already committed adultery”), and even to champion sexual celibacy for every Jewish citizen – married & unmarried alike ...

“There are eunuchs who have been so from birth, there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. Let everyone who can abide by this proclamation do so.” ~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 19:12)



162 NOTE that this passage has Jesus also directly abrogating the legal edict proclaimed in [Deuteronomy 25:5](#) ...

163 NOTE that the phrase “except on the grounds of unchastity” present in this passage (and also found in [Matthew 19:3-11](#)) is completely absent in the reflective passages found in all three of the other canonical Gospels.

164 Interestingly, it is worth noting that – despite providing a seemingly exhaustive list of the familial relations with which one is prohibited from engaging sexually – nowhere in [Leviticus 18](#) (indeed nowhere else in the rest of the Bible) are sexual acts with one's own daughter prohibited. As an additional aside, it is equally intriguing that the phrase used by [Leviticus](#) to denote forbidden sexual acts is “you shall not uncover the nakedness of” – something Jesus literally & explicitly did when he disrobed completely in front of his disciples (all openly proclaimed members of his spiritually sanctified “family” – see [Matthew 12:46-50](#), [Mark 3:31-35](#), & [Luke 8:19-21](#)) before washing their feet in [John 13:3-12](#).

Jesus on *maintaining personal purity* ...

(most notably in relation to menstruating women, lepers, and the dead)

Remaining ritually clean was an extremely important edict of the Law of ancient Israel (see [Leviticus 11:43](#) & [Deuteronomy 14:3](#)), for without such cleanliness one could not partake of or participate in the Jewish religion's required sacrifices &/or celebrations. There were many ways to become *tamei* (unclean), and acquiring such a spiritual taint required a subsequent spiritual removal thereof (most often by immersing oneself in the purifying waters of a *mikvah* bath – see [Leviticus 15:6](#) & [Numbers 19:19-22](#) et al) – before one could in effect re-enter the Jewish spiritual community. Again unsurprisingly, Jesus had a radically different take on this matter as well. Consider ...

*Whereas the Law made “unclean” (and thus essentially untouchable) all women who were “lying in” after having given birth (see [Leviticus 12:2-5](#)), all women suffering from any form of vaginal discharge (see [Leviticus 15:25-27](#)), and all women who happened to be menstruating (see [Leviticus 15:19-24](#)), Jesus took no issue whatsoever with being publicly touched by a woman who had been bleeding for twelve years (see [Matthew 9:20-22](#), [Mark 5:25-34](#), & [Luke 8:43-48](#)).

*Whereas the Law made “unclean” (and thus essentially untouchable) all lepers (see [Leviticus 13:2-49](#) & [Numbers 5:1-4](#)) and even the residences thereof (see [Leviticus 14:34-46](#)), Jesus had no qualms about gently caressing those who were suffering from the same (see [Matthew 8:1-4](#), [Mark 1:40-45](#), & [Luke 5:12-16](#) et al).

*Whereas the Law made “unclean” anyone who touched the corpse of any sentient being (see [Leviticus 11:39](#), [Numbers 19:11-16](#), & [Deuteronomy 18:11](#) et al), Jesus regularly interacted with those who were considered to be dead¹⁶⁵ or those believed to be on the verge thereof (see [Matthew 9:18-25](#), [Mark 5:35-43](#), [Luke 7:11-16](#), [Luke 8:49-56](#), & [John 11:17-44](#)).



¹⁶⁵ Even though it is true that Jesus repeatedly proclaimed that said individuals were not dead at all (doing so more often than not by publicly rebuking their premature mourners and stating that the relevant individuals were “merely sleeping” – see [Matthew 9:24](#), [Mark 5:39](#), & [Luke 8:52](#), as well as [John 11:4](#)), it was clear to all that his actions expressed the clear appearance of violating the Law nonetheless.

Jesus on *vows & oaths* ...

(including the making & the keeping thereof)

The ancient Law (much like most of the other mad-made moral codes constructed both before & since) made it quite clear that its citizens were required to be both frugal in the making of oaths & promises (see Exodus 18:21 & Exodus 20:7, & Deuteronomy 10:20 – also Leviticus 19:11) and consequent in the fulfillment thereof (see Leviticus 19:12, Numbers 30:2-3, & Deuteronomy 23:21-24). And yet even though Jesus was a huge fan of flagrant honesty (see Matthew 5:37's “Let your word be ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’ – for anything other than this comes from the evil one”), he was definitely *not* a supporter of the making of vows or oaths (see Matthew 5:33-36, Matthew 21:28-32, Matthew 23:16-22, & Mark 7:14-23 et al) – preferring instead that his followers let their Love remain completely volitional, and their actions do their talking for them (see Matthew 7:21, Matthew 13:18-23, Matthew 24:12-14, Luke 6:46-49, Luke 9:23, & John 13:15-17 et al) ...

*“Indeed I say to you, **do not swear at all** – neither by Heaven, for it is the throne of God; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King; nor even by your own head, for you cannot make a single hair upon it white or black.” ~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:33-36)*

Jesus on *the downtrodden* ...

(on caring for the poor & all others in need)

While the Law did expressly command the ancient Israelites to care for the impoverished & other less-fortunate members of their community (see Exodus 21:22, Leviticus 19:9, Leviticus 23:22, Deuteronomy 14:28-29, Deuteronomy 15:17-11, & Deuteronomy 24:19-21 et al), Jesus – as was so often the case – took these admonitions several great steps further; making one's generous support of the poor one of the keys to salvation itself (see Matthew 25:35-40 & Luke 16:19-31). Consider ...

*Whereas the Law demanded that Jews cause no undue stress to orphans &/or widows (see Exodus 22:22 – also Psalm 68:5), Jesus courageously cared for the same (see Luke 7:11-15) and abrasively condemned those who did not (see Mark 12:40 & Luke 20:47).

*Whereas the Law forbid loaning to the poor with interest (see Exodus 22:25), Jesus openly called for the forgiving of even the principle sums owed thereby (see Matthew 5:42, Matthew 6:12-15, Matthew 18:23-27, Luke 6:30-36, & Luke 7:42 et al).

“And forgive us our debts, just as we have also forgiven our debtors ... For if we forgive others their trespasses, our heavenly Father will also forgive us; and if we do not forgive others their debts, neither will our Father be able to forgive us ours.” ~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 6:12-15)



“The gospel of Paul created Christianity, and as a result the focal point of Christianity remains Jesus Christ to this day. And yet Paul never knew the most important thing; the critical point that his Christianity has long since forgotten – namely, that the Gospel of Christ has nothing at all to do with worshipping Jesus – that the message of Jesus Christ is solely about becoming a humble embodiment of selfless Love.”

~ inspired by Gary Amirault



Jesus on *strangers & foreigners* ...

(and being kind Jew & Gentile alike)

Intriguingly, while on one hand the ancient Law of Israel expressly demanded that Jews be kind to all strangers in speech and deed (see [Exodus 22:20-21](#) & [Deuteronomy 10:19](#) et al) and forbade Jews from insulting or gossiping about their fellow Israelites (see [Leviticus 19:14-16](#) & [Leviticus 25:17](#) et al), that same Law went out of its way to engender and entrench a deep-seated prejudice (if not an outright bigotry) against all non-Israelites – forbidding Jews from intermarrying with Gentiles (see [Deuteronomy 7:3](#)), demanding the expulsion of all non-Jews (including all “idolaters”) from the land of Israel (see [Exodus 23:33](#) & [Deuteronomy 7:2](#)), forbidding Jews from making pacts or covenants with any citizen from a Canaanite nation (see [Exodus 23:32](#)), and demanding that Jews lend to aliens at interest (see [Deuteronomy 23:21](#)) while non-leniently exacting any & all debts owed therefrom (see [Deuteronomy 15:3](#)). Almost needless to say, Jesus was in no way a supporter of such blatantly unkind hypocrisies. Consider ...

*Whereas the Law demanded Jews to exude an open enmity towards all Canaanites (see [Genesis 9:20-27](#) & [Deuteronomy 20:16-18](#)), Jesus went out of his way to be openly kind towards the same (see [Matthew 15:22-28](#) & [Mark 7:24-30](#)).

*Whereas the Law (along with contemporary cultural convention¹⁶⁶) encouraged an acute distrust – if not an open enmity – between Jews & Samaritans (as alluded to in [Matthew 10:5](#), [Luke 9:51-54](#), [John 4:9b](#), & [John 8:48](#)), Jesus was publicly gentle towards the same (see [Matthew 28:19](#), [Mark 16:15](#), [Luke 9:55](#), & [John 4:1-24](#)), making a Samaritan the hero of his only parable that defined what it meant to be a truly salvational “neighbor” (a la his second Great Commandment: “Love your neighbor as yourself” in [Matthew 22:35-40](#), [Mark 12:28-31](#), & [Luke 10:25-28](#) – see also [John 13:31-35](#)) – the only time in the Gospels he provided such an explanation (see [Luke 10:29-37](#))¹⁶⁷, and even making a Samaritan leper seem similarly heroic in his own subsequent encounter with the same (see [Luke 17:11-19](#)).



166 This was a convention founded in hundreds of years of intense religious disagreement; primarily centered around a discrepancy of belief related to the location of the Jewish holy center, with Jews believing it to be located in Jerusalem and Samaritans proclaiming the same to be found on Mount Gerizim (see [2 Kings 17:24-41](#) & [Ezra 4:7-16](#) et al).

167 It is worth noting that the Samaritan in this tale qualifies as being a Jesusian “neighbor” because he is the one who “shows mercy” – something that can only be given to one who has trespassed against us; something that only be given to an enemy, which the Samaritans & the Jews were to each other at the time. NOTE as well [2 Kings 6:15-23](#), a passage which provides a strikingly merciful backdrop to Jesus' parable – with Elisha rebuking a king's desire to murder his blinded Aramean enemies in Samaria, and commanding food & water be brought to them instead; an act of mercy which inspired a festive banquet to be thrown and the enmity between the Jews and the Arameans to subside.

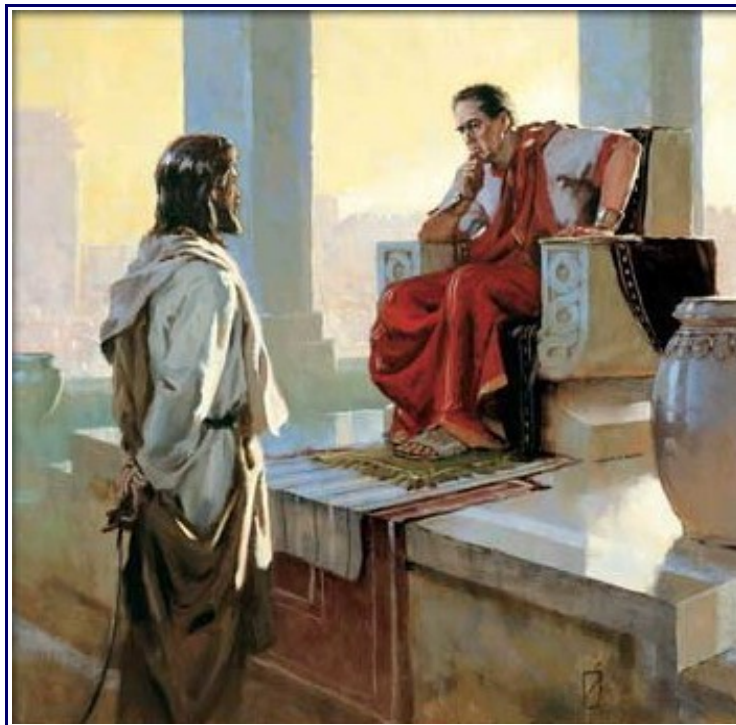
Jesus on *kings & leaders* ... (and the nature of false homage)

The ancient Judean Law also mandated the appointment of a political leader (or “king” – see Deuteronomy 17:15a) for the Jewish society; a ruler who was required to be humble and just (see Deuteronomy 17:16-20), and a ruler who was required to be respected by his citizenry (see Exodus 22:28). Of course, Jesus' non-fond views on politics & mistrust of politicians were themes quite consistently shared throughout the course of his ministry, so it can come as no surprise to see that he had a relatively avant garde take on the Law's opinions related thereto as well. Consider ...

*Whereas the Law made it illegal to curse or otherwise disrespect a communal leader (see Exodus 22:28), Jesus is regularly seen to directly confront &/or be brazenly dismissive towards the same (see Matthew 21:12-17, Matthew 21:23-46, Matthew 23, Mark 14:53-65, Mark 15:1-5, Luke 20:1-8, Luke 20:9-19, Luke 22:66-71, John 2:13-21, John 18:19-23, & John 19:8-11 et al).

*Whereas the Law demanded that the respected ruler – the Jewish people's “king” – be a fellow Israelite (see Deuteronomy 17:15b), Jesus quite openly stated that a leader's lineage was essentially irrelevant, instead boldly proclaiming “Give therefore to the Emperor the things that are the Emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (see Matthew 22:21, Mark 12:17, & Luke 20:25), and this regardless of a ruler's social status or parental heritage.

*Whereas the Law seemed to clearly give political & religious leaders places of honor in the Jewish culture, Jesus repeatedly downplayed the same – himself refusing on more than one occasion to be made king (see Matthew 4:1-10, Matthew 27:11, Mark 15:2, Luke 4:1-11, Luke 23:3, John 16:25, & John 18:37 et al), and openly downplaying any supposed significance earthly rulers might claim (see especially John 18:36's “My kingdom is not of this world. For if my kingdom were of this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. And yet as it is, my kingdom is not from here”).



Jesus on one's *enemies* ...

(both those at home & those abroad)

Seeing as how the ancient Law of Israel was exceptionally Judea-centric (see page 79), it can come as no surprise to realize that there were more than a few Old Testament regulations proscribing how the Israelites were to prepare for war (see [Deuteronomy 20:2](#), where a priest was required by Law to bolster the courage of Jewish troops preparing for battle), how the Israelites were to engage in warfare (see [Deuteronomy 23:11-15](#), where the physical & spiritual cleanliness of Jewish war camps was proscribed), and how the Israelites were to treat their conquered foes at the conclusion of any military battle (that being, more often than not, brutally & ruthlessly – see [Leviticus 25:44-46](#), [Deuteronomy 20:12-20](#), & [Deuteronomy 25:17-19](#)). In addition, seeing as how Jesus was not only a self-professed radical reformer of the Law but also a radical proclaimer of peace (see [Matthew 5:9](#), [Matthew 5:39-48](#), [Mark 9:49-50](#), [Luke 6:27-36](#), [John 14:27](#), [John 15:11](#), & [John 16:33](#) – also [Isaiah 9:6](#), [Isaiah 11:6-9](#), [Isaiah 52:7](#), [Hebrews 8:6-13](#), [Hebrews 13:20](#), & [James 3:18](#) et al), it can also come as no surprise that his ministry was interlaced with bold calls for a more radical actualization of the latter. Consider ...

*Whereas the Law demanded that soldiers never fear their enemies (see [Deuteronomy 3:22](#), [Deuteronomy 7:21](#), & [Deuteronomy 20:1](#)) and that they refuse to head into battle before first “settling the sources of all softness” (see [Deuteronomy 20:2-8](#)), Jesus demanded exactly the opposite – namely, that all soldiers choose to humbly & courageously love their enemies instead (see [Matthew 5:9](#)'s “Blessed are peacemakers” – alongside the text of [Matthew 5:43-48](#)¹⁶⁸ & [Luke 6:27-36](#) et al).

*Whereas the Law demanded that military men prepare for battle by offering their opponent(s) a proposal of peace beforehand (see [Deuteronomy 20:10](#)), Jesus admonished his followers to set down their weapons entirely and prepare for peace instead – reminding them that “all who take up the sword will ultimately be destroyed¹⁶⁹ by the same” (see [Matthew 26:52](#) – also [Mark 14:50-51](#) & [John 18:10-11](#)).¹⁷⁰

168 NOTE not only Jesus' clear call to expand [Leviticus 19:18](#)'s “Love your [fellow Israelite] neighbor” to include one's non-Israelites enemies, but also his summons for that Love to become “*perfect*, just as [the Love of] your heavenly Father is perfect” ([Matthew 5:48](#)) – a Love that not only refuses to fear an enemy, but one that also refuses to attack or punish him as well (see [1 John 4:18](#) – along with [Exodus 23:4-5](#)). Indeed, Jesus' summons in [Matthew 5:48](#) (as well as the deeper implications he announces in [Matthew 18:21-22](#) & [Luke 6:36](#) et al) openly (and indeed, quite heretically) calls for replacing the fear of God seemingly demanded by [Deuteronomy 18:13](#) & [Leviticus 19:2](#) with a loving adoration thereof instead.

169 While traditional translations most often render this biblical phrase as “those who live by the sword will die by the sword,” the translation offered herein is far more accurate – with the Greek *labontes* (Strong's #2983) meaning “take up” “raise” or “utilize” (not “live by”) and the Greek *apolountai* (Strong's #622) meaning “completely destroy” or “utterly annihilate” (not merely “die” or “perish”) ...

170 While it is indeed true that Jesus uttered the statement “I have not come to bring peace, but a sword” in [Matthew 10:34](#), a closer examination of the biblical scholarship surrounding the same reveals that this utterance was *not* a call to violence of any sort or kind, but was rather a warning for all his followers – about the external conflict his message would bring to their familial relationships, and the internal discord his message would bring to their mental psyches. In truth, he announces the former quite directly in the two verses that immediately follow the one in question (“For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, ... and one's foes will be members of one's own household” ~ [Matthew 10:35-36](#)), and just as clearly in the verses that synoptically parallel it in the Gospel of Luke (“Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, [not peace] but *division*” ~ [Luke 12:51](#)). Just as tellingly, he affirms the latter by specifically referencing a “sword” – a term often used by Jesus in the Gospels when calling for non-violence (see [Matthew 26:52-55](#), [Luke 22:49-52](#), & [John 18:10-11](#)) and a word employed for similar purposes in several places throughout the rest of the Bible as well (see [Isaiah 49:2](#)'s “He made my mouth like a sharp sword” along with [Hebrews 4:12](#)'s “The Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword”) ... NOTE as well that Jesus does at one point seem to demand his disciples to prepare for violence when he tells them “the one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one” (see [Luke 22:36b](#)), and yet the sincere student of the texts would do well to read onward a bit before drawing any faulty conclusions – a due diligence that is rewarded in recognizing Jesus' statement as the facetious jab it was clearly intended to be (“And the disciples said [to Jesus] 'Look, here are two swords,' and Jesus replied: 'It is enough.'” ~ [Luke 22:38](#)).

*Whereas the Law was in large part constructed to ensure the survival of the Israelites via military conquest of their enemies, Jesus made it metaphorically crystalline that salvation only came to those who chose to actively care for their enemies instead (see the *Parable of the Good Samaritan* in Luke 10:29-37).¹⁷¹



“But love your enemies, do good, and give to them while expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great [if you do so], and you will become Children of the Most High. For He is kind as well to the ungrateful and the wicked. So be merciful [to your enemies], just as your Father is merciful [to all].” ~ Jesus Christ (Luke 6:35-36)

171 NOTE first and foremost that this is the only place in the entire Bible where Jesus directly defines the term “neighbor” – the same “neighbor” we are all to openly & courageous Love if we are to ever attain entrance into his Kingdom of Heaven (see Matthew 22:37-40, Mark 12:30-21, & Luke 10:25-28). Secondly, and even more importantly, NOTE that Jesus does so by equating our “neighbor” with our “*enemy*” – making the hero of his tale a Samaritan (at that time an open enemy of the Jews) who “shows mercy” (something that can only be given to one who has wronged us).

Jesus on *ceremonial ritual & dress* ...

(including what to wear and how to wear it)

The Law was also quite explicit regarding what types of clothing the Israelites were allowed to wear (a la the regulation demanding that braided *tzitzit* be worn on the corners of one's prayer shawl¹⁷² per [Numbers 15:38](#) & [Deuteronomy 22:12](#), the regulation forbidding cross-dressing per [Deuteronomy 22:5](#), the regulation forbidding wearing garments made of both wool & linen per [Deuteronomy 22:11](#), and the regulation demanding that men wear *tefillin* on their foreheads and upper arms per [Deuteronomy 6:4-8](#) & [Deuteronomy 11:18](#)) as well as the ways Jews were allowed to maintain their personal appearance (a la the regulation prohibiting Israelites men from cutting their beards or the hair growing down the sides of their temples per [Leviticus 19:27](#) and the regulation prohibiting Israelites from piercing their own flesh or tattooing their own skin per [Leviticus 19:28](#)). Despite these edicts (indeed, in all probability in order to directly “spite” them), Jesus founds ways to openly rebuke many of the same. Consider ...

*Where the Law strictly regulated what a devout Jew was to wear and how he or she should appear to others, Jesus told his followers to essentially dismiss all such concerns – boldly saying, “Do not worry about your body, or about what you should wear. For is not the body more than mere clothing? Indeed, think instead on the lilies of the field; how they grow without toiling or spinning, and yet are clothed in ways far more beautiful even than Solomon in all his finest glory. Therefore do not worry about what you should wear or how you should appear, for it is the Gentiles who long for such things. Strive instead to enter the Kingdom of God by enlivening His loving righteousness, and all your more petty needs will be met as well.” (see [Matthew 6:25-33](#) & also [Luke 12:22-31](#)) ...

*Where the representatives of the Law enjoyed displaying their religious fineries as required by the Torah, Jesus sternly frowned upon such superficial piousness – chastising all listeners who looked for guidance in the words of those wearing “soft robes” (see [Matthew 11:7-8](#) & [Luke 7:24-25](#)) and rebuking all the superficial scribes and Pharisees who “made their phylacteries broad & their fringes long” in order to “have the place of honor at banquets, obtain the best seats in the synagogues, and be greeted with homage in the marketplaces” (see [Matthew 23:4-7](#)) – who would all do far better to “clean the inside of [their] cups” before dressing up the outside thereof (see [Matthew 23:25-28](#)).

“What did you go out into the wilderness to look upon? A mere reed shaken by the wind? In truth, what then did you go out to see? Merely one dressed in soft robes?”

~ Jesus Christ ([Matthew 11:7-8](#))



¹⁷² There is some biblical evidence showing that Jesus did indeed at times honor this commandment – see [Matthew 9:20-21](#), [Matthew 14:36](#), [Matthew 23:5](#), [Mark 6:5-6](#), & [Luke 8:44](#) ...

Jesus on *circumcision* ...

(and the non-necessity thereof)

One of the more well-known tenets of the Jewish Law was & still remains that all male children must be circumcised (see [Genesis 17:9-12](#) & [Leviticus 12:3](#)). True to form, Jesus boldly commented on this regulation as well (though admittedly more subtly than usual – and even though Jesus himself was indeed circumcised in accordance with the Law; see [Luke 1:59](#)) when he rebuked “the Jews” in the Temple¹⁷³ by raising his own deeds of selfless kindness above the Law's mere circumcisory requirements (thereby exposing the abject hypocrisy of those same critics – see [John 7:14-24](#)), and doing so in a manner that was intentionally abrupt to circumcisers and circumcision alike.¹⁷⁴

*“Do not judge by mere appearances,
but rather judge with just discernment.”*

~ Jesus Christ ([John 7:24](#))



Jesus on *one's residence* ...

(including the location & tending thereof)

Providing another subtle-yet-potent point of contrast, where the Law demanded that every Jew in good standing hang a [Mezuzah](#) containing the Law's primary commandments on his or her door (see [Deuteronomy 6:9](#)), Jesus made it clear that the true Child of God is essentially homeless (or residence-free; serving wherever there is a need & residing wherever there is an invitation to do so); having “[nowhere \[personal or permanent\] to lay his or her head](#)” (see [Matthew 8:20](#))¹⁷⁵ – thus making the [Mezuzah](#) essentially irrelevant.

173 This incident occurred during “the Festival of Booths” – or Sukkot – and as such the mention of “the Jews” here speaks to the certain throng of Jewish laypeople in attendance, as well as to the priests & scribes who were certainly present.

174 While it is true that the Jews of Jesus' day saw circumcision more as a healing than as an amputation, more than a few Jews in attendance (and all of the Gospel's non-Jewish readers – seeing as how the tale was written in their native tongue of Koine Greek) would have understood Jesus lambasting intent. Even the Jewish historian & scholar Maimonides admitted that the male penis is undoubtedly weakened by circumcision, and as such the flagrant irony of Jesus critically contrasting the Law's requirement of circumcision with his recent deed of healing that had “made a man *completely whole*” (*holon hygie*, Strong's #3650 & #5199) would not have been lost on anyone paying sincere attention thereto. As a final point of emphasis, Jesus made the aforementioned contention even more crystalline when he claimed that the regulation requiring circumcision came “not from Moses, but [merely] from the patriarchs” (i.e. customs which could be more readily overturned or amended – see [John 7:22](#)) – a claim that was only partially true, seeing as how both [Genesis](#) & [Leviticus](#) did indeed state that circumcision was in fact a clear facet of God's legal proclamation.

175 This edict fits seamlessly with Jesus' itinerant ministry – as well as with his firm belief that all of his true followers would “do the works I do, and even greater works than these” ([John 14:12](#)) ... Secondly, it is just as intriguing to NOTE that the statement made by Jesus just two verses after this one (“Follow me, and let [those who are already] dead bury their dead” ~ [Matthew 8:22](#) – also [Luke 9:60](#)) seems to openly discount & even dismiss Jewish burial regulations (see [Deuteronomy 21:23](#) et al); the portion of the Law dealing with where Jews were to “reside” after their death.

Jesus on *food & sustenance* ...

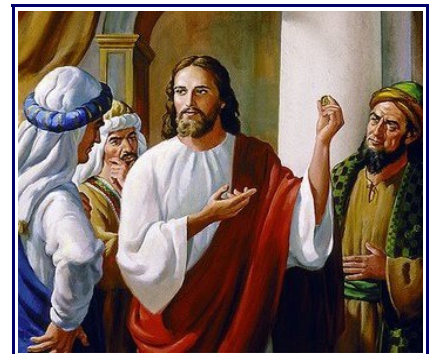
(what could be eaten & how it could be procured)

Seeing as how one of the primary purposes underlying any legal codex is the preservation of the health of its citizenry – and seeing as how one of the primary additional purposes of the Jewish Law was the preservation of the spiritual purity of the same, it can come as little surprise that a significant portion of the 613 edicts of that Law had to do with proscribing what &/or who could or could not be eaten by the Jewish people (see [Leviticus 20:25](#)). As such, animals who had split hooves and who chewed their cud could be killed and their corpses consumed (see [Leviticus 11:3](#) & [Deuteronomy 14:6](#)) while all those who didn't, couldn't (per [Leviticus 11:4-8](#) & [Deuteronomy 14:7-8](#)). Aquatic beings having fins & scales could be killed and their corpses eaten (see [Leviticus 11:9](#) & [Deuteronomy 14:9](#)) while all those who didn't, couldn't (per [Leviticus 11:10-12](#) & [Deuteronomy 14:10](#)). Birds could be killed and their corpses eaten, as long as they were not considered “unclean” (i.e. essentially those avians who were neither scavengers nor predators – see [Leviticus 11:13-19](#) & [Deuteronomy 14:12-18](#)). It was not allowed for Israelites to kill and consume insects who walked on all fours (per [Deuteronomy 14:19](#)) – except for those who happened to have “[jointed legs above their feet](#)” (i.e. locusts, crickets, grasshoppers, and the like – see [Leviticus 11:20-21](#)). Likewise was it forbidden to kill & then consume the corpses of animals who “[swarm upon the ground](#)” (i.e. rodents &/or lizards – see [Leviticus 11:29-30](#)) &/or those who “[swarm upon the earth](#)” (i.e. snakes, worms, millipedes, & centipedes – see [Leviticus 11:41-44](#)). In addition, quite a few potential sources of “food” were forbidden for obvious health reasons – primarily the carcasses of animals who had not been slaughtered by human hands; those having either already died of natural causes (per [Leviticus 11:24-39](#) & [Deuteronomy 14:21](#)) or those having already been killed by other animals (per [Leviticus 22:31](#)). The consumption of blood was also expressly forbidden (see [Leviticus 7:26](#) & [Deuteronomy 12:23](#)).

That having all been duly noted, it is just as unsurprising to see that Jesus Christ – legal radical that he was – went out of his way to boldly if not brazenly challenge the sanctity of these dietary rules as well. Consider that, whereas the Law called for the devout Jew to exude a great deal of energy worrying about whether or not he or she remained within the extremely specific bounds of dietary (and therefore spiritual) “purity,” Jesus had the audacity to stand forth and brazenly state: “Do not worry at all about your life, that is – what you will eat or drink. For is not your life more than mere food? Indeed, can any of you by so worrying add even a single hour to your life? Therefore worry not about what you will eat or what you will drink, for it is the Gentiles who uselessly focus upon the same. Strive instead to enter the Kingdom of God by enlivening His righteous way, and all the other more petty things will be given to you as well.” (see [Matthew 6:25-33](#) & [Luke 12:22-31](#)). Yes, it is true what some conservative apologists say – namely, that the aforementioned passage speaks more to Jesus gently dismissing the fear caused by the layman's regular encounter with hunger than it does to his rejection of the ridiculous & often overbearing meticulousness of the dietary shackles of the Law. And yet reject the latter he did later in that same Gospel, and with great verve & courage did he do so ...

*“There is nothing outside a person that by entering him can defile ... Indeed, whatever enters a person from outside cannot defile, for it enters not the heart but the stomach, and thereafter exits into the sewer. And so it is that **I declare all foods to be clean.**”*

~ Jesus Christ (Mark 7:14-19 – also Matthew 15:10-20)



*In addition, whereas the Law also limited how food and drink were to be consumed – by forbidding Jews from acting as gluttons or drunkards (see [Leviticus 19:26](#) & [Deuteronomy 21:20](#)), Jesus openly downplayed this prohibition as well (per [Matthew 11:19](#) & [Luke 7:34](#)).

*Finally, in keeping with the Law's goal of maintaining the purity of its populace, its edicts bred strict & binding religious traditions that regulated who could eat with whom – traditions that Jesus taunted and decried at frequent turn.¹⁷⁶ As a primary example, the rabbinic rules of the Pharisees forbade Jews of good standing from partaking of any meal with “sinners” – those who knowingly and openly violated the Law (see [Mishnah Abot 1:7](#)'s “Keep thee far from an evil neighbor and consort not with the wicked” – as well as [Leviticus 15:31](#), [Numbers 16:21](#), [Deuteronomy 14:2](#), [Ezra 9:1](#), [Tobit 4:17](#), [Sirach 1:25](#), [Jubilees 22:16](#), [Luke 10:31-32](#), [Acts 10:28](#), [1 Corinthians 15:33](#), and the rabbinic *midrash* on [Exodus 18:1](#) – *Mekilta Amalek 3:55-57*, which reads “Let not a man ever associate with a wicked person, not even for the purpose of bringing him near to the Torah”). In addition, eating with tax collectors¹⁷⁷ was seen by devout adherents of the Law as being equally sacrilegious (see [Mishnah Nedarim 3:4](#), [Mishnah Kilayim 9:2](#), & [Mishnah Bava Qamma 10:2](#) – intimated as well in [Proverbs 13:8-13](#), [Proverbs 14:10](#), [Matthew 5:46](#), [Matthew 11:19](#), [Matthew 18:17](#), [Matthew 21:31-32](#) & [Luke 18:9-14](#)). Despite this (or probably because of it), Jesus often chose to do just that – unabashedly dining “with many tax collectors and sinners” on a number of occasions,¹⁷⁸ and openly rebuking the scribes & Pharisees for criticizing his doing so (see [Matthew 9:7-13](#), [Mark 2:13-17](#), [Luke 5:27-32](#), [Luke 15:1-7](#), & [Luke 19:1-10](#)¹⁷⁹).



176 This was especially evident at his two Eucharistic “mass feedings” (see [Matthew 14:13-21](#) & [Matthew 15:32-39](#) – also [Mark 6:31-44](#), [Mark 8:1-10](#), [Luke 9:12-17](#), & [John 6:1-14](#)), where Jesus brazenly showed no concern whatsoever for the purity (or lack thereof) of those with whom he partook those ceremonial meals.

177 The “tax collectors” in the Bible (*telones*, Strong's #5057) were actually Jews who had sub-contracted out to collect public revenues for the occupying Romans. In addition to being seen as turncoats, they were doubly despised for their tendency to forcibly collect more than Rome's demanded levies and then keeping those unjust difference for themselves (hence Jesus' admonition against the same in [Luke 3:13](#)). This better explains why Jesus' enemies would try to trap him with the especially devious “Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar?” ([Matthew 22:17](#)) and why he answered that charge so cryptically afterwards ([Matthew 22:18-21](#)) – seeing as how a clear “No” would have been viewed as sedition against Rome and a clear “Yes” would have been viewed as a violation of Jewish legal tradition.

178 Jesus also went out of his way to summon tax collectors to follow him and be his friends, and sometimes even become his disciples (see [Matthew 10:3](#), [Luke 3:12-14](#), [Luke 7:29](#), [Luke 7:33-34](#), and also [Luke 18:9-14](#)).

179 This particular passage relays the story of Jesus' interaction with Zacchaeus, a man who was more than a mere tax collector; a man who was an *architelones* (Strong's #754) – an especially hated “chief tax collector”; a fact that made Jesus' kindness towards him all the more stunning, and thus all the more meaningful.

Jesus on *agriculture & animal husbandry* ...

(especially humankind's proper relationship to our animal cousins)

Though the Law proscribed a number of regulations pertaining to the sowing & reaping of crops (see [Leviticus 19:19-24](#) & [Deuteronomy 22:9-10](#) et al), Jesus rarely referenced the same – and then ever indirectly (see [Matthew 8:37](#)'s “the harvest is plentiful, yet the laborers are few”, [Luke 10:2](#)'s “ask the Lord to send out laborers into His harvest”, and [John 4:35](#)'s “look around you and see how the fields are even now ripe for harvesting”). That having been said, the Law was just as concerned with what is still today called “animal agriculture” – that being: the confinement, the enslavement, and ultimately the murder of non-human animals (primarily as sources of food). Interestingly enough, even though the ancient Law allowed and even demanded that these beings be slaughtered, a number of Old Testament regulations were (hypocritically) concerned with said animals' well-being (see [Exodus 23:19](#), [Leviticus 22:6-8](#), & [Deuteronomy 12:20-23](#)).

And yet fittingly, these proscriptions were not nearly enough for Jesus – a man who claimed to comprehend (and indeed be a champion of) perfect, selfless Love (see [Matthew 5:39-48](#), [Matthew 24:12-14](#), [Luke 10:29-37](#), [John 13:15-17](#), & [John 15:8-17](#)); a man who openly lauded “mercy, not sacrifice” ([Matthew 9:13](#)); a man who – if he had truly mastered his heavenly Father's all-Loving will (see [Matthew 5:48](#), [Matthew 7:21](#), & [Luke 6:36](#)) – would have staunchly refused to harm any innocent creatures at all (much less murder them for palate pleasure or needless nourishment)¹⁸⁰; indeed a man who bravely championed the rights of all animals by standing up to many of the animal-abusive legal traditions of his day¹⁸¹ – summoning his first disciples away from their cold-hearted labors as fishermen (see [Matthew 4:18-22](#), [Mark 1:16-20](#), & [Luke 5:10-11](#)), freeing all soon-to-be-slaughtered animals from the Temple (and overturning the money-changing tables that enabled those brutal sacrifices to continue – see [John 2:13-16](#))¹⁸², and brazenly refusing to slaughter a lamb and eat its corpse at his final Passover meal (see [Matthew 26](#), [Mark 14](#), [Luke 22](#), & [John 13](#)).



180 While it is true that Jesus appears to encourage others to eat fish during the “mass feedings” mentioned in [Matthew 14](#) & [Matthew 15](#) (see also [Mark 6](#) & [Mark 8](#)), these passages actually show Jesus only offering the people bread and only collecting scraps of bread after they were finished. Indeed, more than a few scholars have noted that the earliest recorded manuscripts of these tales do not mention fish at all (Jesus also neglected to mention fish when later referencing those same feedings – see [Matthew 16:5-12](#), [Mark 8:19-20](#), & [John 6:26](#)), which makes perfect sense, seeing as how fish would never be placed in baskets alongside bread, and seeing as how both events took place on a shoreline; a location where Jesus' fishermen disciples could have caught as much fish as they wanted had they desired to do so.

181 While it is true that a handful of biblical passages seem to show Jesus supporting the killing & eating of fish (see [Luke 5:4-6](#), [Luke 24:41-43](#), & [John 21:5-14](#)), all of the same have readily explanatory “outs” that allow Christians & non-Christians alike to see Jesus as being a pseudo-enlightened “honey vegan” instead of a far more ignorant pescatarian.

182 Intriguingly, the word “thieves” Jesus uses in this passage to repudiate those in the Temple who are changing currencies & thereby enabling the selling of animals for sacrifice is actually the Greek word *lestes* in the ancient manuscripts (Strong's #3027) – a word that did not indicate a mere “thief”, but rather described a brutally violent “marauder; one who exploits the vulnerable with violence”; a term that quite aptly describes every single slaughterhouse worker to this day ... More support for this definition comes from two other instances in the Bible where the same Greek term is found – first, Jesus' not-so-subtle criticism of the violent group of heavily armed “thieves” who came to haul him off to his crucifixion (see [Luke 22:52](#) & [Matthew 26:55](#)) and second, to describe the two “thieves” who were later crucified with him on the hill of Golgotha (see [Mark 15:27](#) & [Matthew 27:44](#) – remembering that crucifixion was a particularly painful form of execution that the Romans reserved for political insurgents &/or other violent criminals).

Jesus on *business practices* ... (and the nature of greed & money)

While the Law professed many regulations designed to ensure fair trade practices amongst all Jews – and thereby give all Israelites equal opportunities to accumulate monetary wealth, Jesus saw things in the economic realm quite differently. Consider ...

*Whereas the Law demanded that business be conducted fairly and that no one be defrauded when buying or selling goods or services (see Exodus 22:24, Leviticus 25:14, Leviticus 19:35-36, & Deuteronomy 25:13), Jesus demanded that his followers focus on going a large step further – on looking for ways to not merely treat others fairly but rather to serve them self-sacrificially (see Matthew 5:7, Matthew 5:20, Matthew 16:24-26, Matthew 18:21-22, Matthew 24:12-14, Mark 4:24, Mark 8:31-35, Mark 9:35, Mark 10:21, Mark 10:43-45, Mark 12:41-44, Luke 6:30-31, Luke 6:38, Luke 9:23-24, Luke 14:26-27, Luke 18:22, & Luke 21:1-4 et al).

*Whereas the Law was quite clear in demanding that the poor be treated fairly by those who were wealthier (see Exodus 22:24-26, Leviticus 25:37, Deuteronomy 15:9, & Deuteronomy 24:12-17), Jesus extolled his followers to give to the poor without expecting or requiring anything from them in return – not to give to them fairly, but to give to them *period* (see Matthew 5:42, Matthew 6:1-4, Matthew 19:21, Matthew 25:35-40, Luke 3:10-12, Luke 6:35-38, Luke 12:33-34, & Luke 14:12-14 et al).

*Whereas the Law demanded that creditors never exact payment from debtors by force or extortion (see Leviticus 19:13 & Deuteronomy 24:10) and to forgive all debts every seventh year (see Leviticus 25:24 & Deuteronomy 15:2), Jesus called for listeners who were owed payments to forgive the same both immediately & fully (see Matthew 6:12, Matthew 18:21-35, Luke 6:30, Luke 7:41-43, & Luke 11:4).

*Whereas the Law indirectly-yet-clearly lauded material wealth and thereby encouraged every upstanding Jew to accumulate the same, Jesus loudly & repeatedly denounced any & all similarly materialistic fixations – boldly exclaiming “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth ... but store up treasures in heaven instead” (Matthew 6:19-20), “Sell your possessions and give alms instead ... for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Luke 12:33-34), “The cares of the world and the lure of wealth come in and choke the Word, yielding nothing in return” (Mark 4:19), “You cannot [simultaneously] serve God and wealth” (see Matthew 6:24 & Luke 16:13 – also Luke 16:19-31), “It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a man who is wealthy to enter the Kingdom of God” (see Matthew 19:24 – also Mark 10:25 & Luke 18:25), “Woe to you who are wealthy, for you have already received your consolation” (Luke 6:24), and “None of you can become my disciples if you do not give up all your possessions” (Luke 14:33).

*Whereas the Law explicitly regulated the prompt and just payment of all workers (see Leviticus 19:13 & Deuteronomy 24:15), Jesus decried the same by implying that it was right to reward all those who in any way endeavored – those who worked short & poorly, as well as those who worked long & well (see Matthew 20:1-16 – also Matthew 19:30, Mark 10:31, & Luke 13:30).¹⁸³



183 Jesus regularly uttered the phrase “the last will be first, and the first will be last” in the Gospels, and its implications exceed the mere monetary – with the revolutionary “bandit” on his Golgothan cross being the “last” to be summoned by Jesus to his humbly selfless “Way” and yet the “first” to enter that “Kingdom” (see Luke 23:42-43); and this in stark contrast to Jesus' disciples, who were the “first” ones to receive Jesus' Gospel but who were also some of the “last” to wholeheartedly enliven the same (see Luke 24:36-38 et al).

*Finally, and perhaps most importantly, whereas the Law demanded that all owned slaves & bonded servants¹⁸⁴ be treated fairly (see [Exodus 21:2-10](#) & [Deuteronomy 15:12-15](#)),¹⁸⁵ Jesus went out of his way to repeatedly exclaim that all of his listeners focus instead on making their lives about selfless service (especially for the downtrodden in their communities &/or the enemies in their lives – see [Matthew 25:35-40](#) & [Matthew 5:44-48](#)), and thereby in effect become “slaves” themselves (see [Matthew 20:26-27](#)’s “whoever wishes to be great among you must be as a servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must become as a slave” – also [Matthew 20:28](#), [Matthew 23:11](#), [Mark 9:35](#), [Mark 10:45](#), [Luke 22:26-27](#), & [John 13:12-17](#)).¹⁸⁶



“Strive to enter through the narrow door ... Indeed people will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and they will all eat in the Kingdom of God. For some are currently last who will be first, and some are currently first who will be last ... So when you are invited to a wedding banquet, do not sit in any place of honor ... For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, just as all who humble themselves will be exalted.”

~ Jesus Christ ([Luke 13:24-30](#) & [Luke 14:8-11](#))

184 NOTE that slavery had a longstanding place of acceptance in the Jewish culture (going all the way back to [Genesis 9:25](#)), that slaves were an integral part of the economic workings of ancient Israel, and that the word often translated as “slaves” in the Bible more often than not implied an often volitional form of indentured servitude. Though children could indeed be legally sold into bondage to pay off a debt ([Leviticus 25:44](#)), it was common for adult Jews to voluntarily do the same for a fixed period of time – most often six years ([Leviticus 25:35](#)).

185 The ancient Judean Law did indeed establish a set of minimum standards within which slaves were to be treated. Though non-Israelite slaves were treated as mere chattel ([Leviticus 24:44-46](#)), Israelite slaves were to be treated as members of their owner’s extended family ([Deuteronomy 16:14](#)), were not to be overworked ([Leviticus 25:43](#) & [Leviticus 25:53](#)), were not to be worked on any Sabbath ([Exodus 23:12](#)), and were to be freed after six years of service ([Exodus 21:2](#)) and given livestock, grain, and wine as parting gifts at that time ([Deuteronomy 15:13-14](#)).

186 While it is true that Jesus never once spoke out against slavery directly – and while it is also true that he used slave/master relationships to illuminate a number of his parables (see [Matthew 24:45-51](#), [Luke 12:41-48](#), & [Luke 17:7-10](#) et al), it is just as true that he was a brazen critic of any & all social divisions of class &/or strata, as well as a zealous champion of freedom and justice for all – something those same parables pungently exude and potently illustrate.

"Whenever there is any conflict or even mild tension between something Jesus said in the Gospels and any sayings or ideals found elsewhere in the Bible, the tiebreaker always goes to Jesus."

~ via Benjamin Corey



03e: Jesus on *the Justice System* ...

(the regulation thereof & the adherence thereto)

The ancient Law of the Israelites, as might well be expected, was also in part designed to establish a system of justice that governed the prosecution of all suspected civil & criminal infractions. It mandated the appointment of judges in every Israelite community (see [Deuteronomy 16:18](#)), it required that all those accused of any legal infraction appear before those magistrates (see [Exodus 22:8](#)), and it demanded that all the rulings of said legal officials be both accepted & honored (see [Exodus 22:27](#) & [Deuteronomy 17:10-11](#)). Again without surprise (especially in light of how notoriously fond he was of unblemished mercy & unconditional forgiveness), Jesus offered a regularly critical commentary on this portion of the Law as well. Consider ...

*Whereas the Law's justice system was designed to judge its Jewish citizens fairly,¹⁸⁷ Jesus called for them to not be judged at all – telling his listeners quite unequivocally, “Do not judge, so that you may not be judged; for with the judgment you make you will be judged and the measure you give will be the measure you receive” ([Matthew 7:1-2](#) – also [Luke 6:37](#)),¹⁸⁸ boldly claiming that “unless you change and become as humble as children¹⁸⁹ you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven” (via [Matthew 18:3-4](#)), reminding all his potential followers that “only those completely without sin should cast the first stone” (per [John 8:7](#)), and plainly noting that “all those who exalt themselves are destined to be humbled” (see [Matthew 23:12](#)).



*Whereas the Law often called for justice to be meted out via “fair retribution” (a la “an eye for an eye” – see [Exodus 21:23-25](#)), Jesus called for transgressors to be forgiven “seventy times seven times”¹⁹⁰ (see [Matthew 18:21-22](#) – also [Matthew 18:32-35](#), [Luke 15:11-32](#), & [Luke 17:3-4](#)).

187 Jewish legal officials were regulated by the same Law they were called to adjudicate, in that they were explicitly required to treat all parties in any litigation with pure impartiality and render fully just decisions therein (see [Leviticus 19:15](#) & [Deuteronomy 1:17a](#)) – doing so without favoring great men (see [Leviticus 19:15](#)), without fearing bad men (see [Deuteronomy 1:17b](#)), without having sympathy for poor men (see [Exodus 23:3](#) & [Leviticus 19:15](#)), without discriminating against foreign men (see [Deuteronomy 24:17](#)), and without being too harsh on sinning men (see [Exodus 23:6](#)).

188 While it is true that Jesus did later make the statement “Do not judge by mere appearances, but rather judge with righteous judgment” in [John 7:24](#), it is important for any earnest student of the Scriptures to understand the following: **01** the Hebrew word often translated as “judgment” in the Old Testament is *misphat* (Strong's #4941) – a word which actually means “to provide justice” (often associated with legal rules & regulations), *not* “to condemn” or “to correct” ... **02** the Greek word translated as “judgment” in both [Matthew 7:1-2](#) & [John 7:24](#) is *krisin* (Strong's #2920) – a word which implies the passing of a judicial sentence upon another ... **03** the latter “judgment” of [John 7:24](#) is modified therein by the Greek word *dikaos* (Strong's #1342) – a word which means “just” or “impartial” or “correct” more than the oft-translated “righteous” (a translation which carries with it arrogantly critical undertones that violate the very nature of Jesus' entire ministry) ... **04** the word translated as “judge” in both cases is the Greek *krinete* (Strong's #2919) – a word which could mean either “distinguish” or “condemn.” As such, when viewed in the context of the sum of Jesus' Gospel teachings, there is no contradiction or conflict between the two statements – [Matthew 7:1-2](#) extols us to avoid critically condemning others in general or as people, while [John 7:24](#) mandates that we use *impartial* discernment in the (hopefully very few) times we choose to examine their actions.

189 The Greek word often translated as “children” in this passage is *paidia* (Strong's #3813) – a term which actually means “very young child,” “infant,” or “toddler.”

190 In stark contrast to the vengeance called for in [Genesis 4:24](#) (the only other time in the biblical manuscripts where the sum of “seventy times seven” is directly referenced), Jesus boldly states in [Matthew 18](#) that everyone (the “seventy” nations of humanity mentioned in [Genesis 10](#)) was to be forgiven perfectly (the well-noted meaning of the number “seven” in Jewish culture) – that is, completely & without exception .

*Whereas the Law mandated that all sinners either be called before a tribunal to be prosecuted or confess to a priest and make amends thereby (see [Leviticus 5:2-7](#) & [Numbers 5:6-7](#)), Jesus told his followers that this was completely unnecessary – that they themselves had the full moral authority to absolve all wrongdoers of any misdeeds that might have been committed (see Jesus' example on the cross, where he stated via [Luke 23:34](#) “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do” – along with his admonition via [John 20:23](#) “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them”).

*Whereas ancient Jewish legal traditions called for Israelites to rightfully accuse all wrongdoers and bring them thereby to trial (see [Leviticus 5:1](#) et al), Jesus encouraged them to do no such thing – indeed, asking them to “be reconciled to your brother or sister” and “come to terms with all your accusers before you ever arrive with them in court” (via [Matthew 5:23-26](#) & [Luke 12:57-59](#)).

*Whereas the Law strictly regulated the witness testimony that was required for any potential judicial conviction (see [Exodus 23:1-7](#), [Numbers 25:30](#), & [Deuteronomy 24:16](#) et al), Jesus made it clear that such regulations were essentially unnecessary – that all would ultimately be “tried” by their own deeds (see [Matthew 12:36-37](#) & [Luke 19:22](#) – along with [John 3:18](#) + [John 14:12](#) & [Matthew 25:31-46](#)¹⁹¹) and that the choices of each & every person thereby essentially “testify on their own behalf” (see [John 8:13-14](#) & [John 13:17](#)).



In the eyes of any all-Loving God, there can be no judgment or condemnation -- only forgiveness, acceptance, and unconditional Love.

What we are born to be (the caring stewards of the Earth and the gentle caregivers of all Her sentient inhabitants) is God's gift to us ... Choosing to become the same is our greatest gift to God.

191 This passage, otherwise known as the *Parable of the Sheep and the Goats*, points out quite powerfully that Jesus believes the time for courts and witnesses has passed; that the “sheep” (notoriously gentle & selfless animals) will via their kind actions be soaked in salvation on “the right hand” (traditionally the hand of giving) of the Father, while those qualifying as “goats” (just as notoriously known for their acts of ravenous greed) will via their selfish choices succumb to their own damnation on “the left hand” (traditionally the hand of taking) of the same.

Jesus on *land & property rights* ...

(what we should do with what we think we “own”)

Though the Law did in significant part delineate the property rights of its Jewish citizenry (see Exodus 22:1-9, Leviticus 25:23-27, Leviticus 25:34, Numbers 27:8-11, Deuteronomy 19:14, Deuteronomy 22:1-3, & Deuteronomy 23:26 et al), Jesus – who more often than not spoke to those who were deprived, destitute, &/or disenfranchised; those for whom such concerns of ownership were of far less concern – spent little time in the Gospel texts commenting on the same. That having been said, when he did offer his few nuggets of wisdom related thereto, they proved to be courageously truthful nuggets indeed. Consider ...

*Whereas the Law focused upon sternly prohibiting acts of robbery & theft (see Exodus 20:15 & Deuteronomy 5:19¹⁹² – along with Exodus 21:37, Leviticus 5:23, & Leviticus 19:11-13), Jesus commanded his followers to selflessly give of their both their money & their possessions (see Matthew 19:21, Mark 10:21, Luke 12:13-21, Luke 12:33-34, Luke 14:33, & Luke 18:22 et al).¹⁹³

*Whereas the Law made it clear that it was forbidden to even covet the possession of others (a la Exodus 20:17 & Deuteronomy 5:21), Jesus strongly admonished his listeners to be thankful for one's station instead (and this, no matter how destitute – see Matthew 6:22-25 & Luke 6:20-22 et al) and to joyfully serve God's will by giving to others even when having very little oneself (see Matthew 6:25-33, Matthew 20:26-28, Matthew 26:39, Mark 12:41-44, Mark 14:36, Luke 6:29-30, Luke 6:38, Luke 21:1-4, & Luke 22:42).



192 It is worth noting that the prohibition against “stealing” listed in these versions of “the Ten Commandments” has been traditionally interpreted by a significant majority of scholars to relate to *human* theft (that is, *kidnapping* – see the Talmudic Midrash commentary *Sanhedrin* 86a on Exodus 20:15; also Exodus 21:16 & Deuteronomy 24:7, both which also proscribe the death penalty for the offense of taking another human). That having been said, the Hebrew word translated as “steal” in said verses (*ganab*, Strong's #1589) is indeed far more often than not used in the biblical texts to indicate the theft of another's possessions or chattel – see Exodus 22:12, Leviticus 19:11, & Joshua 7:11 et al.

193 While it is indeed true that Jesus openly stated “ask and it will be provided” (see Matthew 7:7 & Luke 11:9) and “I have come that they might have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10), it is critical to remember two things: **01**) that any such seemingly materialistic promises completely contradict the blatantly selfless nature of Jesus' ministry, and **02**) that Jesus only promised that all prayers made “in Christ's name” would be fulfilled (i.e. those who actively “abide in him” by fulfilling his commandments of selfless Love – see John 14:13, John 15:7, John 15:16, & John 16:23-24; also 1 John 3:22 & 1 John 5:14-15); something that could only be done by those who prayed to be of greater service to others &/or primarily yearned to relieve their burdens.

Jesus on *civil damages & restitution* ...

(and how forgiveness engenders true fairness & equity)

One of the primary purposes of any legal system is the setting forth of regulations designed to make a harmed party whole again (making reparations for damage done &/or paying retribution for losses caused), and such was the case for the Law of ancient Israel as well (see [Exodus 21:18-35](#), [Exodus 22:1-14](#), [Leviticus 24:21](#), & [Deuteronomy 22:8](#) et al). That having been noted, Jesus had a very different take on such matters – demanding that his followers refuse to condemn wrongdoers for their misdeeds (see [Matthew 7:1-2](#), [Matthew 23:12](#), [Luke 6:36-37](#), & [John 8:7](#) et al) and that they forgive others for all of their trespasses – instead of demanding a fair recompense for the same (see [Matthew 5:23-25](#), [Matthew 6:12-15](#)¹⁹⁴, [Matthew 18:3-4](#), [Matthew 18:21-22](#), [Matthew 24:12-14](#), [Mark 11:25](#), & [Luke 17:3-4](#) et al).



“Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like toddlers, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Indeed whoever becomes humble like this very young child becomes greatest in the Kingdom ... Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in Heaven ... As such, not merely seven times shall you forgive a wrongdoer, but seventy times seven times.” ~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 18:3-22)

¹⁹⁴ It is also interesting to NOTE that the words of [Matthew 6:14-15](#) seem to supplant the Law's requirement of Jews to make sin offerings (see [Leviticus 4:27](#)), seem to eliminate the Law's demand that sinners publicly confess (see [Numbers 5:7](#)), and seem to make needless the Law's regulation calling for the open reproving of others' misconduct (see [Leviticus 19:17](#)).

Jesus on *crimes & punishments* ...

(and how forgiveness manifests the viability of justice)

Penultimately, the ancient Law was also concerned with maintaining its own semblance of justice – by strictly proscribing a collection of “appropriate punishments” for various criminal infractions; essentially doing so under the primitive but then-still-moral rubric of “an eye for an eye.” (see Exodus 21:23-25, Leviticus 24:19-20, & Deuteronomy 19:21) And while the representatives of this judicial apparatus claimed it to be fair, merciful, and just¹⁹⁵, in reality it was anything but – mandating brutal forms of execution (most often stoning, but also decapitation or conflagration¹⁹⁶) for any number of offenses, including murder¹⁹⁷ (see Exodus 21:12-14 & Numbers 35:16-21), kidnapping (see Exodus 21:16 & Deuteronomy 24:7), physically striking or verbally insulting one's mother or father (see Exodus 21:15-17 & Leviticus 20:9), being an otherwise “rebellious son” (see Deuteronomy 21:18-21), infanticide (see Leviticus 20:2), working on the Sabbath (see Exodus 35:2 & Numbers 15:32-36), committing adultery (see Leviticus 20:10 & Deuteronomy 22:22), engaging in incest (see Leviticus 18:6-18 & Leviticus 20:1-14), engaging in sexual acts with a non-human animal (see Leviticus 20:15-16), engaging in consensual premarital intercourse (with any man if you are a woman – see Deuteronomy 22:20-21, or with a betrothed woman if you are man – see Deuteronomy 22:23-24), giving false testimony during a capital trial (see Deuteronomy 19:16-19), engaging in male homosexual intercourse¹⁹⁸ (see Leviticus 18:22 & Leviticus 20:13), raping a betrothed woman¹⁹⁹ (see Deuteronomy 22:25), committing acts of blasphemy or prophesying falsely (see Leviticus 24:16, Deuteronomy 22:6, & Deuteronomy 28:20), engaging in witchcraft or acts of augury (see Exodus 22:17 & Leviticus 20:27), in any way worshipping idols or false gods (see Leviticus 20:2 & Deuteronomy 13:7-19), or being in any way insubordinate to a priest (see Deuteronomy 17:12).

195 While true that the ancient Jewish Law did not allow more than 40 lashes to be inflicted upon perpetrators in non-capital cases (see Deuteronomy 25:1-3) and while it was also true that several other crimes were punished by mere banishment from the Jewish community (“cut off from the people” for manslaughter via Numbers 35:22-28, for openly breaking the Law without remorse via Numbers 15:30-31, for incest via Leviticus 18:29, for uncircumcision via Genesis 17:14, for neglecting the Passover via Numbers 9:13, for witchcraft via Leviticus 20:6, for eating blood via Leviticus 7:27, for making holy ointment for private use via Exodus 30:32-33, for general neglect of personal purity via Numbers 19:11-20, & for killing a sacrificial animal anywhere other than at the Tabernacle/Temple via Leviticus 17:4), neither of these judicial alternatives can be even remotely labeled as “merciful” and their application can in no way diminish the abject barbarity that will ever be execution – of either those guilty or those innocent – via stoning, conflagration, or decapitation ... In addition, it is worth noting that even though the vile practice of bodily mutilation is only mentioned once in the biblical texts as an acceptable means of punishment (where the hand of any woman who grabs a man's penis during an altercation must be amputated via Deuteronomy 25:12; an edict expressly countermanded by Jesus in Matthew 5:30, Matthew 18:8-9, & Mark 9:43-48), it is demanded in that particular instance nonetheless.

196 Only in relatively few instances did the ancient Law specifically proscribe the particular method of execution to be inflicted upon capital offenders (*stoning* for acts of blasphemy, idolatry, Sabbath-breaking, female premarital sex, or being a rebellious son – *conflagration* for the commission of bigamy with one's wife's mother or the prostitution of a priest's daughter – and *decapitation* “by the sword” for heretical apostasy), with all others simply calling for a violent death, often in conjunction with the phrase “that their blood shall be upon them.” Most scholars agree that this latter expression intimated death by stoning (see also Exodus 19:13 & Leviticus 20:27). The ancient manuscripts do mention “hanging” (see Numbers 25:4 & Deuteronomy 21:22) and yet rabbinical sources more often than not feel that this is a reference to post-execution exposure of the corpse to the elements (see Mishnah Sanhedrin 6:4 &/or Midrash Sanhedrin 75b) – not death via strangulation.

197 Intriguingly, while brutally murdering slaves was considered a criminal offense under the Law, murdering them mildly or incidentally was completely acceptable (see Exodus 21:20-21) – not the most just of judicial systems by any means.

198 Interestingly, nowhere in the Law is lesbianism (homosexual intercourse between two women) prohibited in any way.

199 In another highly revealing tell as to the less-than-moral fundamentals of the ancient Law of Israel, while it was indeed a capital offense to rape a betrothed woman, it was not to rape one who was unbetrothed – with the penalty for the latter being a mere payment of 50 shekels and a lifelong forced marriage to the victim thereof (see Deuteronomy 22:28-29).

Almost needless to say, Jesus was not at all supportive of the Law's harsh views on justice, much less its barbaric attempts to effectuate the same. Aside from his aforementioned adoration of abject & unconditional forgiveness²⁰⁰ (see [Matthew 5:7](#), [Matthew 5:38-39](#), [Matthew 5:44-48](#), [Matthew 18:21-22](#), [Matthew 26:28](#), [Mark 11:25](#), [Luke 6:27-37](#), [Luke 7:47-50](#), [Luke 10:29-37](#), [Luke 15:11-20](#), & [John 5:24 + John 14:12](#) et al) and his open affirmation of seeking humble reconciliation instead of judicial reprieve (see [Matthew 5:23-25](#), [Matthew 5:38-40](#)²⁰¹, & [Luke 12:57-58](#)), Jesus loudly denounced the blatant overarching hypocrisies of the criminal judgments made by the Law's prosecuting magistrates (see [Matthew 23:2-4](#), [Matthew 23:13-14](#), [Matthew 23:23-28](#), [Luke 11:39-46](#), & [Luke 11:52](#)) and made specifically moot a number of the more fundamental tents of the Jewish judicial code as well – noting that we are all essentially guilty of murder (see [Matthew 5:21-22](#)²⁰²), that we are all essentially guilty of adultery (see [Matthew 5:27-28](#)), and that we are all essentially guilty of oath-breaking (see [Matthew 5:33-37](#)); fundamentally declaring thereby that we would all do far better looking into the mirror to seek, find, and then correct our own flaws than in looking outward and attempting to identify, criticize, and correct others' theirs (see [Matthew 5:29-30](#), [Matthew 7:1-2](#), [Matthew 18:8-9](#), [Matthew 23:12](#), [Mark 9:43-48](#), [Mark 9:49-50](#), [Luke 6:37-42](#), & [John 8:7-11](#)²⁰³ et al).

“For some reason, the most vocal Christians among us never mention the gentle glories of Jesus' Beatitudes. And yet, often with tears welling up in their eyes, these same supposed champions of Christ often openly demand that the Bible's 10 Commandments be read aloud or raised up in public spaces. Of course, we need not be reminded that this is an allegiance with Moses, not Jesus. Indeed, how odd that I haven't yet heard a single one of these religious representatives demand that a single verse from the Sermon on the Mount be posted anywhere. Where is Jesus' '[Blessed are the merciful](#)' hung in any courtroom? Where can his '[Blessed are the peacemakers](#)' be found in the Pentagon or read on Capitol Hill?” ~ via Kurt Vonnegut

200 While it is true that Jesus did indeed state that “[whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven](#)” (see [Matthew 12:32](#), [Mark 3:29](#), & [Luke 12.10](#)), this truth in no way detracts from either Jesus' open disdain for judicial punishment or his affirmation of unconditional forgiveness. Indeed, Jesus made it quite clear that his heavenly Father was a champion of unconditional Love ([Matthew 5:48](#)) and limitless mercy ([Luke 6:27-36](#)), and that this Divine Essence – which included the “[Spirit of Truth](#)” (otherwise known as the Holy Spirit) – resided within each & every human being (see [Luke 17:20-21](#) & [John 14:12-26](#)). As such, when Jesus claims that “[blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven](#)”, he is not claiming that certain sinning individuals should be or will be damned for their blasphemous transgressions, but is rather relaying the simple psychological fact that anyone acting against the selflessly loving inclinations of his or her Highest Self will suffer from powerful subconscious undercurrents of guilt & shame as a result.

201 NOTE that Jesus' words in [Matthew 5:40](#) both directly allude to the ancient legal tradition prohibiting the keeping of another person's cloak overnight (see [Exodus 22:26-27](#) & [Deuteronomy 24:12-13](#)) and indirectly allude to the Old Testament regulation prohibiting the denuding of one's closest kin (see [Leviticus 18:6](#)).

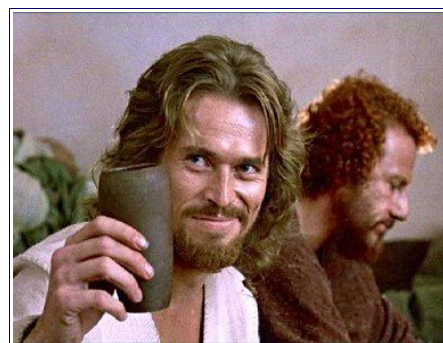
202 All humans are inescapably programmed to respond instinctively to any threat or fear with some form of anger. As such, Jesus boldly proclaims here that no one is able to throw the first stone at another sinner – even one who has committed the highly loathed act of murder. NOTE as well that [Matthew 5:22](#) thereby radically expands the Law's prohibition against slander (see [Leviticus 25:17](#)) ... As an intriguing sidebar, NOTE as well that Jesus seems to hypocritically expose himself later in [Matthew 23:7](#) by calling the Pharisees “[blind fools](#)”, though the case can readily be made that Jesus' latter statement was merely a factual one about the Pharisees, while his former proclamation condemned all negative utterances that were emotionally charged (i.e. anger-inspired).

203 NOTE that accusing witnesses in all capital trials were required by Law to throw the first stone during any subsequently convicted criminal's execution (see [Deuteronomy 13:9](#)).

Jesus on *prophecy & prophesying* ... (on what makes a false prophet & how appears the true disciple)

Finally, the law of ancient Israel made it clear that false prophesy was not to be uttered and that false prophets were not to be followed (indeed, that they were to be executed – see [Deuteronomy 18:20](#)). That having been said, Jesus seemed to openly flaunt this edict – not only proclaiming himself to be a prophet who denounced the traditionally accepted interpretations of the Law²⁰⁴ (see [Matthew 10:26-27](#), [Matthew 13:57-58](#), [Mark 4:22](#), [Mark 6:1-6](#), [Luke 4:15-30](#), [Luke 12:2-3](#), [John 4:44](#), [John 5:36-38](#), [John 6:36-42](#), [John 7:3-15](#), [John 8:12](#), [John 12:35-37](#), [John 10:34-35](#), [John 12:46](#), & [John 15:1-7](#) et al), but also proclaiming that there was essentially nothing special about that status – essentially stating that every Jewish layman should have the courage to live his or her life as a “prophet” as well²⁰⁵ (see [Matthew 5:14-16](#)’s “You are the light of the world ... Let your light shine before others, so that they might see your good works and thereafter give glory to your Father in Heaven” and [Luke 11:28](#)’s “Blessed rather are all those who hear the Word of God and abide in it” – along with [Matthew 6:22-23](#), [Matthew 28:16-20](#), [Mark 4:21-23](#), [Mark 9:38-41](#), [Mark 16:14-18](#), [Luke 8:16-18](#), [Luke 9:49-50](#), [Luke 11:33-36](#), [Luke 24:44-49](#), [John 1:5](#), [John 3:19-21](#), [John 15:16-17](#), & [John 20:19-23](#) et al). Consider ...

*Whereas the Law clearly defined blasphemy as the unforgivable usurping of God's celestial authority²⁰⁶ (&/or an unforgivable lack of respect or homage paid to God – see [Exodus 20:6](#), [Exodus 22:28](#), [Leviticus 22:32](#), [Deuteronomy 11:1](#), & [Deuteronomy 13:1-4](#)), Jesus openly amended this demand for reverence – stating that “people will be forgiven for every sin and blasphemy” except for “blasphemy against the [selfless will of the internal] Spirit” (see [Matthew 12:31-32](#), [Mark 3:28-30](#), & [Luke 12:10](#) – alongside [John 14:12-26](#)).



204 The ancient Law made it clear that true prophets were those who neither added to nor took away from the Torah (see [Deuteronomy 18:15](#)) and this tome makes it just as clear that Jesus had come to essentially do just that; not to blindly uphold or abjectly support the Law, but rather to “*fulfill*” it – to amend it and edit it and hone it; thereby *perfecting* and *completing* the same (see [Matthew 5:17-18](#)) ... In addition, and as an intriguing aside, the Law demanded that no one prophesy in the name of any gods other than *the Elohim* – the same gods who had offered and made binding the 613 Mitzvot of the Pentateuch (again, see [Deuteronomy 18:20](#) – along with [Exodus 20:3-5](#) & [Deuteronomy 5:7-9](#)). Of course, Jesus was an open worshiper of *YHWH* (also known as *Adonai* in the ancient manuscripts), a very different God from the one(s) who had originally pronounced the regulations and commandments of the Jewish Law – a God of a very different Love (see [Matthew 5:48](#)) and a God with a very different view towards both justice and legal remedy (see [Matthew 18:21-22](#), [Luke 6:36](#), & [1 John 4:18](#) et al).

205 While it is true that the words of [Mark 16:17-18](#) seem to have Jesus announcing several astounding traits that are exhibited by the (obviously) exclusive few who qualify as “those who [truly] believe” (including the casting out of demons, the ability to speak in tongues, the handling of serpents, an immunity to all poisons, and the power to heal the ill by mere touch), it is crucial to realize three things – **01**) that the vast majority of scholars believe that all the words of [Mark 16:9-20](#) (much like the entirety of [John 21](#)) were not part of the original text of that Gospel; that they were actually added hundreds of years later by subsequent scribes, and thus are not the actual Word of God, **02**) that all humans must possess these abilities in one form or another if any of them do (see [John 14:12-20](#)), and **03**) that even if a “true prophet” does possess such capabilities, it would be a violation of the pure humility required for salvation to openly flaunt the same (see [Matthew 18:3-4](#) et al).

206 Additionally intriguing is the fact that, while the Law specifically identified false prophets as those whose words did not come to pass (see [Deuteronomy 18:21-22](#)), Jesus own words seemingly failed to manifest on a number of occasions (see [Matthew 10:23](#)’s “you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes”, [Matthew 16:28](#)’s “there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom”, & [Matthew 24:34](#)’s “this generation shall not pass, until all *these things* [among them: “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven will be shaken” a la [Matthew 24:29](#)] have been fulfilled”) – though this can just as readily be seen as a failure to truly comprehend what he actually meant by the term *Son of Man*.

*Whereas the Law's conventional interpreters believed that true prophets could provide proof thereof via the performance of miraculous “signs & wonders” (a la Moses bringing water forth from a stone in Numbers 20:7-11 or the miraculous deeds of Elijah read in 1 Kings 17-18), Jesus made it clear that he would *not* offer the same as proof of the same²⁰⁷ (see Matthew 12:38-40²⁰⁸, Matthew 16:1-4, Mark 8:11-13, Luke 11:29-32, Luke 12:54-56, Luke 23:8-9, John 2:18-21, & John 6:30-35).

*Whereas the Law demanded that its “true adherents” strictly abide by the conservative interpretations of its regulations as provided by its priestly authorities (including the “scribes and Pharisees” in Jesus' day – see Deuteronomy 11:18-28, Deuteronomy 12:32, Deuteronomy 13:4-5, & Deuteronomy 17:8-12 et al), Jesus made it clear that people were to in essence interpret the Law for themselves – to test various interpretations of the regulations found in the Scriptures, to do the best they could to “do good” therewith, and then to evaluate the truth by looking at the end results; to personally “know them by their fruits” as it were (see Matthew 7:15-20 – also Matthew 3:10, Matthew 11:16-18, Matthew 12:33-35, Luke 3:9, Luke 6:43-45, Luke 7:24-35, Luke 13:6-9²⁰⁹, & John 15:4-5 et al).

*Whereas the Law had its priests, scribes, and Pharisees directly and specifically order the common folk to follow their own strictly conservative interpretations of the Law, Jesus spoke to his listeners cryptically & metaphorically in parables – thereby encouraging them to decipher & rediscover the Law's deeper Truths for themselves (see Matthew 13:10-17, Mark 4:10-12, Mark 4:24-25, Luke 8:9-10, Luke 8:17-18, Luke 10:23-24, Luke 12:47-48, Luke 19:26, John 12:39-40, & John 16:25 et al).

*Whereas the Law's representatives shied away from allowing their fellow humans to transcend their still-primitive stations of superficiality & subservience (calling them instead to merely worship appropriately via hollow ritual and mere mental belief), Jesus repeatedly encouraged his listeners to actualize their innate inner divinity (what he frequently called “the Son of God” and sometimes, “the Son of Man”) by making their spiritual *belief* meaningful – by acting accordingly in their day to day dealings with others (see John 3:16-18, John 5:22-24, John 6:29, John 6:47-51, John 6:61-64, John 7:16-18, John 10:32-38, John 11:25-26, John 14:1-7, John 14:12-14, John 15:8-17, John 17:1-4, & John 20:26-29 et al).



207 In addition to these specific instances, Jesus also went out of his way to regularly & vehemently deny that he ever produced any true miracles (see Matthew 12:38-39, Matthew 16:4, Luke 8:52, Luke 11:29, John 11:4, & John 11:11 – as well as Matthew 8:4, Matthew 9:30, Matthew 12:16, Mark 1:44, Mark 5:43, Mark 7:36, Mark 8:26, Luke 5:14, & Luke 8:56 et al), much less that he was the lone, hoped-for Davidian Messiah (see Matthew 16:20, Matthew 22:18, Matthew 22:41-45, Matthew 24:1-2, Matthew 24:23-27, Matthew 26:63-64, Mark 1:25, Mark 1:38, Mark 3:12, Mark 8:27-30, Mark 9:9, Mark 10:17-18, Mark 10:31, Mark 10:39-40, Mark 12:14-17, Mark 12:35-37, Mark 14:3-8, Luke 4:5-8, Luke 4:35, Luke 4:41, Luke 8:39, Luke 9:18-21, Luke 11:28, Luke 17:14-15, Luke 18:18-19, Luke 19:20-26, Luke 19:41-44, Luke 22:70, Luke 23:35, John 5:41-44, John 6:15, John 6:35-45, John 7:18, John 8:50-54, John 12:3-7, John 12:44-45, John 12:49, John 13:13, & John 14:12-20 et al – as well as the juxtaposition of Daniel 7:13-14 with Matthew 4:1-10).

208 NOTE that the “sign of Jonah” (see Jonah 1:17) mentioned herein and elsewhere was not referencing a miraculous resurrection event, but rather was Jesus calling attention to his upcoming, willingly self-orchestrated crucifixion. After all, “something greater than Solomon” had come indeed (see Matthew 12:40-42) ... [For an exhaustive biblical proof of this Truth, feel free to examine Part 2 (commencing on page 35) of my book *Exhuming Easter*.]

209 NOTE that this parable reflects the Law's demand that fruit cannot be eaten from a tree until its fourth year (see Leviticus 19:20-25), and yet does so in a manner that symbolically embodies Jesus' call for his followers to persist resiliently in selflessly serving & humbly caring for others (see Matthew 24:12-14 & John 13:15-17 et al).

“For God so loved the world that he gave every being His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but might know eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but rather that the world might be saved through His Way. Indeed, those who believe in Him are not condemned; even as those who do not believe in Him are condemned already -- because they have not actualized the name of the only Son of God ... Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but instantly passes instead from death to life ... For this is the work of God: that you believe in Him whom He has sent ... Anyone who resolves to do the will of God will know whether a teaching is from God ... After all, is it not written in the Law: ‘I said, you are gods’? As such, if those to whom the Word of God came were rightly called ‘gods’ – and the Scripture cannot rightly be annulled – can you say those who the Father has sanctified and sent into the world are blaspheming because they say, ‘I am God’s Son’? ... You already know the way to the place I am going ... for I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life, and no one can rediscover the Father except by enlivening the same ... Very truly, I tell you, those who believe in me will do the works I do, and in fact will do even greater works than these ... And on that day you will know that I am in my Father, and that you are in me, and that I am in you ... For my Father is glorified by this and this alone: that you bear much fruit and thereby become my disciples ... If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my Love ... And this is my most important commandment: that you Love one another as I have Loved you. No one has greater Love than this, to lay down one’s life for another. I have appointed you to go and bear fruit ... and am giving you these commands so that you might truly Love one another.” ~ Jesus Christ (John 3:16-18, John 5:24, John 6:29, John 7:17, John 10:34-36, John 14:4-6, John 14:12-20, & John 15:8-17)

“The purely indiscriminate and utterly selfless nature of compassion within Christ's Kingdom of Heaven is by far the dominant perspective of Jesus' teachings in the Gospels. And yet what is a compassion that is both abjectly indiscriminate and perfectly selfless? Well, look at a rose, for instance. Is it possible for the rose to offer its fragrance to the good people and withhold it from the bad? To do so would no longer be a rose. Or think about a glowing lamp – can it withhold its warming rays from a wicked person who seeks to pause and bask in its light? To do so would no longer be a lamp. Or how about a majestic tree that offers shade only to the worthy while allowing those more sinful to burn and shrivel under a noonday's glare? To do so would no longer be a tree ... No, the rose gives its soothing aroma to all – and the lamp its enervating warmth – and the tree its saving shade. This is the primary quality of Christlike compassion: a character that is given to all both indiscriminately and selflessly. And this is precisely what makes God's Kingdom arrive on Earth as it is in Heaven – exactly what allows for our entry into the state of perfect bliss that Jesus quite affectionately called '*the Kingdom of God.*' It is a way of compassion that allows for no exceptions, it is a way of forgiveness that allows for no limitation, it is a way of tenderness that allows for no hesitation, and it is a way of kindness that allows for no labels, no demands, no regulations, and no divisions.” ~ via Anthony DeMello & Brennan Manning

Chapter 04: Jesus & the Prophets

... how he commented upon the other mandates
& additional edicts in the Old Testament texts

It is well worth remembering that [Matthew 5:17](#) has Jesus clearly stating: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law *or the prophets*, for I have come not to abolish but to fulfill them.” As such, no examination of Jesus' radical reform of the former (“the Law” – the 613 regulatory Mitzvot sprinkled throughout the Hebrew Bible's first five volumes, previously discussed at length therein) can be truly complete without also examining how he felt about the latter – namely, “the prophets”²¹⁰ (the supposedly divinely-inspired Old Testament writings of Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the 12 “minor prophets”²¹¹, and – at least for the sake of this treatise – Daniel & Psalms as well²¹²); writings that were well-known by Jesus' fellow Jews, writings that were sacredly respected by the religious authorities of Jesus' day, and writings that Jesus went out of his way to both illuminate and challenge during his ministry.²¹³

Feel free to consider the following examples thereof ...

Busking the Beatitudes

One of the more famous portions of Jesus' many Gospel sermons is known as “the Beatitudes,” nine verses near the beginning of [Matthew 5](#) that make up the introduction to his famed *Sermon on the Mount*. And yet despite their rampant popularity (among Christians & non-Christians alike), many remain unaware that the inspiration for all nine of these wonderful “Blessed be's” came primarily from [Isaiah](#) &/or the [Psalms](#),²¹⁴ and thus that Jesus' utterance thereof provided not only an inspirational sharing of their profound wisdom, but served as a bold commentary on “the prophets” in general as well.

210 While quite a few Christian scholars have been known to divide the Hebrew Bible (what they tend to call “the Old Testament”) into five sections, Jewish scholars (those more in tune with the way Jesus would have viewed the sacred texts in his day) tend to divide it into three – the *Torah* (the first five books of the Bible, those containing “the Law” – also called the Pentateuch), the *Nevi'im* (also called “the prophets”), and the *Ketuvim* (also called “the writings”). The latter consisted of books of wisdom (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes), poetry (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, and Esther), and history (Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and 1 & 2 Chronicles), while “the prophets” include the history-laden works of the “former prophets” (Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, and 1 & 2 Kings), the longer works of the “major prophets” (Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel) and the 12 shorter works of the “minor prophets” (see Note 211) ... Admittedly, some scholars believe that Lamentations (supposedly written by Jeremiah himself) belongs alongside the other “major prophets.” Others place the heavily historical 1 & 2 Kings in with the other *Ketuvim* and consider the potently prophetic Daniel to be a “major prophet” as well ... Regardless of how they are categorized, it is important to NOTE that Jesus either directly referenced or indirectly alluded to a vast swath of them during his ministry – a three year mission intended & designed to radically reform the way these texts were to be read, worshiped, &/or practiced by his fellow Jews.

211 These books (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi) are listed chronologically in most Bibles, and are labeled as “minor” not due to their less vibrant content, but rather because of their much shorter length.

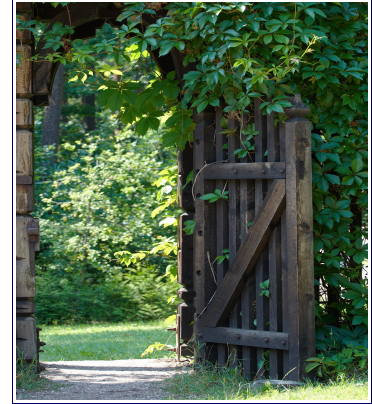
212 Even though many modern scholars do not feel that these two books officially belong to “the prophets”, Jesus' regular reference & frequent allusion to both meant that he obviously felt otherwise.

213 While it is true that Jesus did not directly comment on all of the writings of “the prophets” (rarely alluding to or even completely ignoring the writings of Joshua, Judges, Kings, Joel, Obadiah, Nahum, and Haggai), he commented either profusely &/or potently on others (including & especially Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah).

214 [Matthew 5:3](#)'s “Blessed are the poor in spirit” recalls [Isaiah 57:15](#) & [Isaiah 66:2](#) ... [Matthew 5:4](#)'s “Blessed are those who mourn” hints at [Isaiah 61:2](#) & [Isaiah 66:10](#) ... [Matthew 5:5](#)'s “Blessed are the meek” summons up [Psalm 37:11](#) & [Psalm 149:4](#) ... [Matthew 5:6](#)'s “Blessed are those who hunger for righteousness” alludes to [Psalm 11:3-7](#) & [Isaiah 51:1-8](#) ... [Matthew 5:7](#)'s “Blessed are the merciful” recollects [Proverbs 3:3-4](#) & [Proverbs 11:17](#) ... [Matthew 5:8](#)'s “Blessed are the pure in heart” reminds of [Psalm 24:4](#) & [Psalm 51:10](#) ... [Matthew 5:9](#)'s “Blessed are the peacemakers” speaks to [Isaiah 26:12](#) & [Psalm 122:8-9](#) ... and [Matthew 5:10-11](#)'s “Blessed are those who are persecuted” makes bold reference to [Isaiah 66:2](#) & [Psalm 119:85-87](#) – (refer as well to [Luke 6:20-26](#))

Passing through the Narrow Gate

The book of [Isaiah](#) was without doubt one of Jesus' favorites, so it comes as no surprise that he seemed to extract one of his ministry's favorite metaphors from the same – namely, *the Narrow Gate* (representing the self-sacrificial entrance to the “difficult road” that runs directly between the safety of emotional callousness and the decadence of material abundance) – with [Isaiah 35:8](#) (“A road shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way ... It shall be for God's people and no traveler upon it, not even fools, shall go astray”) clearly being one of the primary inspirations for [Matthew 7:13-14](#)'s “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road smooth that leads to destruction – and there are many who take it, while the gate is narrow and the road challenging that leads to life – and there are few who find it.”²¹⁵ (see also [Luke 13:23-24](#))



Casting out the Demons

Though completely absent from the Gospel of [John](#),²¹⁶ all three of the Synoptic Gospels make regular mention of Jesus seemingly casting out demons from those who have been apparently possessed thereby (see [Matthew 8:16](#), [Matthew 8:29-34](#), [Matthew 12:23-29](#), [Matthew 15:21-28](#), [Matthew 17:14-20](#), [Mark 1:23-34](#), [Mark 3:20-27](#), [Mark 5:1-20](#), [Mark 7:24-30](#), [Mark 9:14-29](#), [Luke 4:33-41](#), [Luke 8:26-39](#), [Luke 9:37-42](#), & [Luke 11:14-22](#) – indirectly [Matthew 7:22](#) & [John 8:48-52](#) as well). Despite the fact that one of those recountings directly mentioned “the prophet [Isaiah](#)” as support for Jesus doing so ([Matthew 8:17](#)), this reference is not exactly on point²¹⁷, and it is equally fair to note that there are no explicit references whatsoever to exorcism in the entire Old Testament.²¹⁸ That having been said, there are several references in the Hebrew Bible to the existence of demons (see [Leviticus 16:8-10](#), [Leviticus 17:7](#), [Deuteronomy 32:17](#), [Judges 9:23](#), [2 Chronicles 11:15](#), [Psalm 16:37](#), [1 Samuel 28:13](#), [Isaiah 8:19](#)²¹⁹, [Isaiah 13:21](#), & [Isaiah 34:14](#) et al) and quite a few allusions to the ability of those demons to influence or harm human beings (if not directly possess them – see [Psalm 91:5-6](#), [1 Samuel 16:15](#), [1 Samuel 18:10-12](#), & [1 Kings 22:22-23](#)) as well. In addition, it is worth noting that [Psalm 91](#) was notably employed by priests to exorcise demons in the years both preceding and following Jesus' ministry – the same [Psalm](#) a portion of which Satan himself quoted to Jesus in the wilderness (see [Matthew 4:11-12](#)).

215 NOTE that even though Jesus truthfully exclaims that few end up finding and then traveling this most noble road, he also makes the incredibly important point in [Matthew 7:7](#) that all who earnestly seek that Way do indeed find it.

216 While it is true that no specific case of either demon possession or demonic exorcism is recorded anywhere in [John's](#) Gospel, Jesus is himself accused by his enemies of being demon-possessed in [John 7:20-21](#).

217 [Isaiah 53:4](#) is referenced here – a verse that implies the Messiah will “bear our infirmities and carry our diseases”, *not* that he could or would exorcise demonic spirits from those possessed thereby.

218 NOTE the possible exception of David causing a “harmful spirit” to depart from Saul on multiple occasions via the playing of a harp in [1 Samuel 16:14-19](#). Some scholars also feel that the Law's strict condemnation of mediums and other spirit-based “magic workers” (see [Leviticus 20:6](#) & [Leviticus 20:27](#)) implies that possessions were cultivated thereby – seeing as how these individuals were presumed to be guilty of a crime, not merely inflicted with an illness.

219 It is importantly intriguing to realize that the term used in both [1 Samuel 28:13](#) & [Isaiah 8:19](#) to refer to the demon(s) in question was the Hebrew word *Elohim* (a term meaning “gods”, see Strong's #430) – the same *plural* Hebrew word used to reference the “God” who recklessly demands that Noah & his sons “tyrannize and overfill the earth” (see the literal Hebrew wording of [Genesis 9:1-7](#)), who ruthlessly destroy Sodom & Gomorrah (in [Genesis 19](#)), and who wickedly torment Abraham (by demanding he sacrifice his own son in [Genesis 22](#)). NOTE as well the explicit distinction made between the almighty **YHWH** and the less-than-perfect *Elohim* in [Psalm 95:3](#) – a distinction that is readily apparent for any earnest student of the Scriptures who notices the stark difference between the primarily compassionate edicts offered by **YHWH** (translated in many Bibles as “LORD” from [Genesis 1:1](#) through [Exodus 3:14](#), the point at which the *Elohim* quite brazenly steal **YHWH's** name for themselves) and the highly dysfunctional (if not downright evil) orders handed down by the *Elohim* (written as “God” before [Exodus 3:14](#) in many translations, and as “LORD God” thereafter).

Walking on the Waters

The dramatic scene of Jesus walking on water is mentioned in three of the four canonical Gospels (see [Matthew 14:22-34](#), [Mark 6:45-53](#), & [John 6:15-21](#)²²⁰), and as such it comes as no surprise to find this same image rooted throughout the Old Testament manuscripts as well – with [Job 9:8](#) plainly stating that “[God] alone stretched out the heavens and walked upon the waves of the sea”, with [Sirach 24:5](#) having God proclaim “I orbited the heavenly sphere alone and walked on the waves of the sea”, and with [Psalm 77:19](#) exclaiming “Your way was through the sea; your path, through the mighty waters.”²²¹ Of course, as Jesus himself pointed out on more than one occasion, the witnessing of such apparent “miracles”²²² was *not* to be seen as a summons to worship him (see [Matthew 19:17](#), [Mark 10:18](#), & [Luke 18:19](#) et al)²²³, but rather was a call to those doing said witnessing to strengthen their own faith-based potency – by releasing their fears (see [Matthew 14:27](#), [Mark 6:50](#), & [John 6:20](#)), setting aside their doubts (see [Matthew 6:30](#), [Matthew 8:26](#), & [Matthew 14:31](#)), and then acting accordingly (see [Matthew 14:29](#) & [John 14:12](#) – also [Matthew 7:21](#) & [Matthew 24:12-14](#)).



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- 220 Interestingly, the Johanne account of this tale does not have Jesus entering the boat at all, but rather has said vessel arriving at the land towards which they were traveling “*immediately*” after Jesus told the disciples to release their fear.
- 221 These and all similar references are in all likelihood recalling [Genesis 1:2](#)’s “the Spirit of God sweeping over the face of the waters”, and quite possibly also reference a more literal reading of [Daniel 12:5-7](#) – namely, “One of them said to the man clothed in linen, *the one who was above the waters*, ‘How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?’ And the man clothed in linen, *the one who was above the waters*, lifted his hands toward heaven, swore by Him who lives forever, and said that all would come to pass when the shattering of the power of the holy people had finally come to an end.”
- 222 Aside from the fact that Jesus repeatedly denied being the agent of such “signs & wonders” (see [Matthew 12:38-39](#), [Matthew 16:4](#), [Luke 8:52](#), [Luke 11:29](#), & [John 11:4-11](#) et al), a number of scholars have specifically noted that the walking on water episode was possibly not miraculous at all – with some suggesting that Jesus’ disciples were confused by the high winds and darkness, some noting that a few Markian manuscripts show Jesus walking on the shore and not the waves, some believing that Jesus merely waded through the surf or the shallows or on a sandbar, and still others believing that the entire tale was merely a potent allegorical metaphor familiar to many cultures ... In all fairness, it is also worthy of NOTE that, much like Moses in [Exodus 14:21-29](#) or Elijah in [2 Kings 2:8](#) (see also [Psalm 107:29](#) & [Jonah 1:3-17](#)), Jesus is seen in all three of the Synoptic Gospels as being one with the apparent power to calm high winds and soothe the rough seas (see [Matthew 8:25-27](#), [Mark 4:35-41](#), & [Luke 8:22-25](#)).
- 223 NOTE two things of intriguing importance here – **01**) that Jesus did not say “I am he” or “it is I” in [Matthew 14:27](#) & [Mark 6:50](#), but rather attempted to calm his disciples by stating “***I, I am***” (*ego eimi*, Strong’s #1473 & #1510); a phrase that recalled the holy *Spirit of Truth* residing within every human Soul, not merely Jesus himself – see also [Matthew 16:28](#), [Luke 21:27](#), [John 10:35-36](#), & [John 14:20-26](#) et al) ... and also **02**) that [Matthew](#) having the disciples label Jesus as being “the Son of God” in [Matthew 14:33](#) (a proclamation fully missing in the reflective accounts of [Mark](#) and [John](#)) is actually evidence *against* the veracity of that claim (noting the repeatedly illuminate fact that Jesus’ disciples never once accurately comprehended the message of his ministry – see [Matthew 15:16](#), [Matthew 16:12](#), [Mark 4:13](#), [Mark 8:18](#), [Mark 8:33](#), [Mark 10:24-32](#), [John 6:68](#), [John 16:25](#), & [John 20:29](#) et al).

“The exercise of power, no matter how well-intentioned or seemingly divine, always in its end causes suffering. Love, on the other hand – being fully vulnerable, and thus utterly disinterested in all things traditionally seen as mighty or potent – absorbs the suffering of others and brings only peace. And so it is that, in the point of greatest convergence on a hill called Calvary, the celestial Father of Jesus renounced the former for the latter – replaced celebrations of victory with humble acts of service, and renounced all manifestations of power for the sake of perfect harmony ... And so it is for all sincere followers of The Way of Christ that they choose over & over again to abide in the inclinations of an enraptured heart, rather than succumb to the cautiously callous reasonings of the theological mind.”

~ inspired by Philip Yancey & A. W. Tozer

Feeding the Multitudes

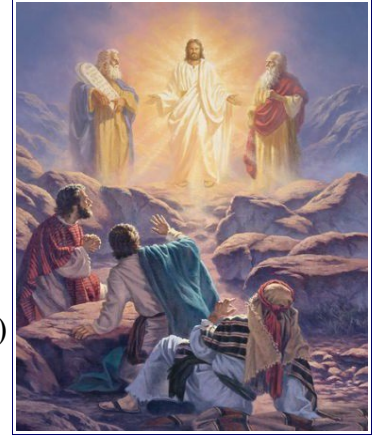
“The feeding of the 5000” (the only “miracle”²²⁴ mentioned in all four canonical Gospels – see [Matthew 14:13-21](#), [Mark 6:30-44](#), [Luke 9:10-19](#), & [John 6:1-14](#)) and “the feeding of the 4000” (mentioned only in [Matthew 15:32-38](#) & [Mark 8:1-10](#)) directly reflect other seemingly miraculous feedings mentioned in the Old Testament (see [1 Kings 17:1-16](#), [1 Kings 19:1-8](#), and especially [2 Kings 4:38-44](#) – along with, of course, the *manna* that fell from heaven as recorded in [Exodus 16:4-36](#)²²⁵) and indirectly allude to the ceremonial feasts that accompanied the anointing of biblical kings past (see [1 Samuel 9:12-24](#), [1 Kings 1:9-10](#), & [Daniel 5:1](#) et al). There is little doubt that the two feedings relay two separate events²²⁶, and there is just as little doubt that they were both effectuated & relayed for two separate reasons – with the former taking place near the Jewish community of Bethsaida and implying that The Way of Christ would bring salvation to all Jews²²⁷, and the latter taking place near the Gentile region of the Decapolis and showing that the same Way would bring the same salvation to the rest of humanity as well.²²⁸



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- 224 This feeding was pretty clearly a ritualized Eucharistic one – with everyone present “filled” not because they had eaten their fill, but rather because the smallest of crumbs ingested during any such ceremony was per se spiritually filling. As such, these feedings provided not only a foreshadowing of Jesus' imminent Passover self-sacrifice (i.e. his crucifixion; the intricate planning of which was almost certainly already underway – see [Mark 8:31-33](#), and also [Matthew 16:21-28](#) & [Luke 9:22-27](#)) but also reflected the Jewish *todah*; the ceremonial sacrifice offered in ancient Israel after a person had been saved by any life-threatening situation (see also the words of [John 6:25-27](#), especially Jesus' call therein to “work not for the food that perishes, but rather for the food that gives eternal life”) ... Indeed, Jesus himself exclaims later in the Scriptures that the two feedings are both meaningful & distinctive (see [Matthew 16:9-10](#) & [Mark 8:19-21](#), where he explicitly states the same), and the fact the his disciples are still filled with doubt at the commencement of “the feeding of the 4000” (see [Matthew 15:33](#) & [Mark 8:4](#)) – immediately after having witnessed the 5000-fold feeding – evidences at the very least that the former “miracle” was anything but miraculous.
- 225 Recalling the same heavenly bread directly referenced by Jesus himself in [John 6:30-35](#) & [John 6:53-58](#), when he claimed that the new Gospel of his ministry was a far better “bread of life” – that those who had eaten of the *manna* of the Old Covenant had died, while those “who eat of this [i.e. his ministry's] bread will live forever.”
- 226 Jesus himself noted that the two events affected different-sized crowds (5000 vs 4000), employed two different amounts of sustenance (five loaves & two fish vs seven loaves & a few fish) – with distinctively different amounts left over thereafter (12 baskets vs 7 baskets), used two different types & sizes of baskets (the large *kophinous* vs the even larger *spyridas* – see [Acts 9:25](#), where Paul escaped by being lowered down in the latter), were carried out one after the other (ergo, at two different times during his ministry), and took place in two different locations (near the Jewish town of Bethsaida vs near the Gentile region of the Decapolis).
- 227 The *five loaves* recalls the five books of the Jewish Law and the *twelve smaller baskets* of left-overs clearly refers to the twelve tribes of Israel.
- 228 The *seven loaves* and the *seven larger baskets* of left-overs strongly recall both the seven days that God took to create all that is, as well as the perfect completion symbolized by the number seven itself in Jewish symbology – thus hinting strongly that Jesus' ministry could metaphorically feed the entirety of humanity.

The Transfiguration of Christ (& the return of Elijah)

“The Transfiguration of Christ” (see Matthew 17:1-13, Mark 9:2-13, Luke 9:28-36 – also 2 Peter 1:16-18²²⁹) is another Jesus-based New Testament incident that intentionally summons forth a vivid remembrance of a specific Old Testament recounting – specifically the return of Elijah mentioned in the book of Micah.²³⁰ In this tale, Jesus and three of his disciples (Peter, James, & John) head up together to the summit of a mountain to pray. Jesus then begins to radiate bright rays of light, and Moses & Elijah are seen standing next to him. A voice then emanates from “a bright cloud” above them, saying “This is my beloved Son. Listen to him.”²³¹ To a man, the disciples were “overcome by fear” at this, and yet Jesus admonished them against the same – telling them to “rise and do not be afraid.” When they looked up immediately thereafter only Jesus remained, and he sternly ordered them to “tell no one” what they had seen.²³² (see Matthew 17:9, Mark 9:9, & Luke 9:35 – recalling him making similar demands after the previous performance of several supposed miracles: a la Matthew 8:4, Matthew 16:20, Mark 1:44, Mark 7:36, & Luke 5:14 – also John 6:15 et al) It is after this that the three asked Jesus “Why, then, do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” and that he thereafter replied “I tell you that Elijah has already come.” (see Matthew 17:10-12 & Mark 9:11-13)



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- 229 Some believers feel that John 1:14's “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory – the glory of a father's only son” refers to the transfiguration event as well, though a plethora of evidence strongly suggests otherwise. **First** & foremost, “the Word” mentioned in John 1 was literally the Greek word *logos* (Strong's #3056) – at the time of that Gospel's writing a reference not to Jesus himself or a singular Messianic Savior, but rather to the “divine animator” within all sentient beings that makes them self-aware and gives their consciousness its moral purchase. And John 1 affirms this notion clearly enough – noting that “all things came into being through [the *logos*]” (John 1:3a), that “what has come into being was a life that was the light of all people” (John 1:3b-4), that this light was “the true light, which enlightens everyone” (John 1:9) and that “from [the *logos*] fullness we have all received, grace upon grace” (John 1:16). This truth is also affirmed by the ancient wording of John 1:14 itself, where the term often translated as “among us” is actually the Greek term *en* (Strong's #1787 – see also Luke 17:21) – a word which meant “in” or “within” **not** “around” or “nearby” or “in the midst of” ... **Secondly**, Jesus made it similarly clear that his message was equally available to everyone, and that the benefits of its implementation had nothing at all to do with worshiping him individually – that even though he was indeed a pure messenger of The Way of Christ (see John 14:6 et al); a Way that was both distinctly different from and vastly superior to the Jewish Law (a la John 1:17's “The Law was given through Moses, and yet grace & truth came via Jesus Christ”), he was **not** himself to be singled out for honor as being an emissary of the same (see Matthew 19:17, Mark 10:18, & Luke 18:19 et al). In truth, Jesus' vehement sanctification of humility (see Matthew 18:3-4 & Matthew 23:12 et al) along with his open disdain for hypocrisy (see Matthew 23) meant that he rarely if ever referred to himself in the 3rd person during his ministry's sermons & teachings.
- 230 Indeed, Matthew 11:2-5 had already seen Jesus being asked by John “Are you the one who is to come?” (with Jesus' answer thereto recalling the words of both Isaiah 35:5 & Isaiah 29:18) Matthew 11:10 then goes on to reference “my messenger who will prepare your Way” (see also Luke 7:27) – the same messenger forecast by Malachi 3:1 (“Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me”) – the same messenger who was identified as Elijah in Malachi 4:5 (also Matthew 11:14 & Mark 9:11) – the same Elijah who Jesus noted was **not** he himself, but rather John the Baptist, in Matthew 17:10-13 (NOTE the people's continued misunderstanding of the same in Matthew 27:46-50 & Mark 15:34-37) – meaning that the transfigurative vision of Moses & Elijah was representative of the two divine messengers who had come before Jesus (with the former having offered up the Law, and the latter having “made the way straight” for Jesus' New Covenant's amending transcendence thereof – see Hebrews 8:8-13).
- 231 Directly recalling Jesus' baptism (see Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22, & John 1:32-34) – the moment when his ministry of legal transcendence officially took over for John's and commenced in full.
- 232 How intriguing that Mark 9:10 notes that “they kept the matter to themselves” and that Luke 9:36 adds that “they kept silent and in those days told no one of the things they had seen” – seeing as how the account could never have made it into those Gospels unless at least one of them had indeed later spoken about said event.

Jesus & the Cup of Christ

Throughout the texts of the Hebrew Bible the “cup” functioned as a powerful metaphor for every individual's chosen fate (“The LORD is my chosen portion and the cup of my inheritance” ~ Psalm 16:5) – either the “cup of wrath” for those who are disobedient towards the Law by being selfish towards others²³³ or the “cup of salvation” for those who abide in the will of that heavenly Father.²³⁴ The writings of “the prophets” make specific mention of this “cup” as well, with Jeremiah making direct & threatening mention of “the cup of wrath” (see Jeremiah 25:15-29 & Jeremiah 49:12 – also Habakkuk 2:15-16) and Isaiah mentioning a merciful offer of reprieve from the same (see Isaiah 51:17-22's “See how I have taken from your hand the cup of staggering. You shall drink no more from the bowl of my wrath”) ... And yet in direct allusion thereto, Jesus offers a very different “cup” to his followers; not a cup of leniency or comfort to those merely obedient to the edicts of the Law, but rather a cup of willingly joyful self-sacrifice for one's fellows – a cup of unconditional kindness for all strangers, a cup of forgiving mercy for all enemies, a cup of selfless service for all those abused &/or downtrodden. For this is the “Cup of Grace” from which Jesus asks us to drink – a cup filled with the selfless Love of his newer & far better covenant (see Hebrews 8:8-13), a cup we each must “pour out for the many for the forgiveness of their transgressions” (see Matthew 26:27-28), a cup of courageous self-sacrifice that is often terrifying to imbibe (via Matthew 26:39's “Father, let this cup pass from me, and yet let not my will but rather thine be done” – also Mark 14:36, Luke 22:42, & John 18:11) and yet a cup that must be imbibed nonetheless (see Matthew 18:3-4, Matthew 24:12-14, Matthew 26:53-54, Luke 9:23, John 13:15-17, & John 18:11 et al).²³⁵ And indeed, this is the very same cup Jesus references when answering the query of “the sons of Zebedee” in Mark 10:35-40, telling them in no uncertain terms that asking for personal glory &/or seeking individual reward have no place in the lives of his Way's true followers (“You do not understand what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am drinking?” ~ Mark 10:38) – that selfless service & humble kindness form the only path to the salvation provided by his Kingdom²³⁶, and that any other heavenly rewards that might come therefrom are not his to give, but rather will come automatically to all those who enliven his teachings – to all “those for whom it has been prepared [by the Father]” (Mark 10:40).²³⁷



233 Psalm 11:5-6 exclaims that “The LORD tests both the righteous and the wicked, and His soul despises the lovers of violence. On the wicked will rain coals of fire & sulfur; a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup” and Psalm 75:8 similarly states that “In the land of the LORD there is a cup of foaming wine. He will pour a draught from it, and the wicked of the earth shall drain it to the dregs.”

234 NOTE the positive contrast provided by both Psalm 23:5-6 (where David writes “You anoint my head with oil and my cup overflows”, and this while metaphorically sitting at a table prepared “in the presence of my enemies”; readily explaining why the psalmist concludes the same passage by proclaiming “Goodness *and* mercy will quite assuredly follow me all the days of my life”) and Psalm 116:13-14 (where this same, mercy-full “cup of salvation” is referenced).

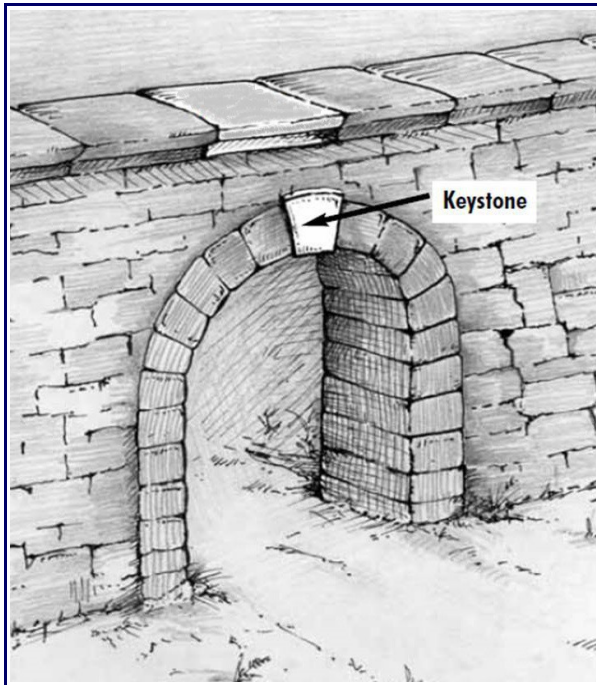
235 Even Paul, the self-anointed faux apostle, recognized this Truth (though he clearly failed to practice the same) when he plainly & quite correctly wrote that, “We cannot [simultaneously] drink from the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons.” (see 1 Corinthians 10:21).

236 This is why Jesus repeatedly calls upon his listeners to follow him *like very young children* – toddlers who have yet to forget that life is not about what one can attain or accumulate, but rather is a blessed opportunity to enhance the joy of others &/or relieve their burdens (see Matthew 18:3-10, Mark 9:33-37, Mark 10:13-15, & Luke 6:35 – also John 12:36).

237 This encounter is also shared in Matthew 20:20-23, though in Matthew's account it is the mother of James & John who asks for the mentioned blessing, not the men themselves. It is unclear why the author of this Gospel added the mother's role to the tale, and yet most scholars are in agreement that Mark is the first thereof, and that the two accounts relay the same encounter. Either way, it is important to NOTE that Jesus' question in the ancient Greek manuscripts of both Gospels is posed in such a way that a negative response from James & John is correctly expected – that it was impossible for anyone seeking selfishly to find the salvation that comes from his Way's humble selflessness.

Rejecting the Cornerstone

Another dynamic reference to “the prophets” made by Jesus is his mention of “the stone that the builders rejected” (see Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:10-11, & Luke 20:17) – the stone mentioned in Psalm 118:22-23²³⁸ – the stone that “has become the cornerstone”²³⁹ – the stone, rejected by the “builders” of the Law, upon which the new covenant of his ministry was founded (see Jeremiah 31:31-33, Matthew 24:12-14, John 1:17, & John 15:8-17 – also Hebrews 8:8-13 & 1 Peter 2:5) – the stone of selfless service & self-sacrificial kindness that cannot be washed away by even the greatest storm or most painful tragedy (a la Matthew 7:24-25 & Luke 6:46-48) – the stone that “crushes [the life of] anyone upon whom it falls” and yet merely “breaks to pieces” the ego of anyone who willingly chooses to fall upon it (see Matthew 21:43-44 & Luke 20:18).²⁴⁰



“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on stone. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew & beat fiercely on that house, and yet it did not fall, because it had been built on stone.”

~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 7:24-25)

238 “The right hand of the LORD does valiantly; and the right hand of the LORD is exalted ... Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD ... I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. For the stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the LORD’s doing, and it is marvelous to our eyes.” ~ Psalm 118:15-23 ... NOTE here that it is “the right hand of the LORD” that is exalted; the hand of humble generosity that becomes “the chief cornerstone” and thereby “becomes [our] salvation.”

239 Whereas the Hebrew of Psalm 118:22 refers to the “chief cornerstone” (*pinnah leros* – Strong’s #6438 & #7218), the Greek texts of Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:10, & Luke 20:17 all make mention of the “primary corner” (*kephalon gonias* – Strong’s #2776 & #1137). As such, seeing as how the latter three passages were all inspired by the former one – and seeing as how Jesus is referring to the culmination of a building process and not the initiation thereof, a more proper translation of this term would be “keystone”; the final singular stone installed in the construction of any wall or portal (not one of the 2-4 “cornerstones” that frame the foundation at the beginning thereof).

240 NOTE first and foremost that this cryptic statement employs two very different Greek words for “broken” (*synthlathesetai* – Strong’s #4917) and “crushed” (*likmesei* – Strong’s #3039), with the former meaning merely “to break into various pieces” and the latter meaning “to pulverize” or “to grind into dust” or “to obliterate” ... NOTE as well that this same phrasing directly recalls (and metaphorically amends) the words of “the prophets” found in Isaiah 8:14, Zechariah 12:3, & Daniel 2:34-44 ... Finally, NOTE that this particular passage summons up the following words of Jesus, uttered while he was trudging his way to Golgotha at the very end of his ministry: “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but rather weep for yourselves and your children. For the days are surely coming when ... they will cry to the mountains, ‘Fall upon us’; and to the hills, ‘Cover us over.’” (see Luke 23:28-31)

Offering up the Celestial Banquet

In a direct reference to the “feast for all peoples” mentioned in Isaiah 25:6-8²⁴¹ (see also Isaiah 55:1-2, Isaiah 61:10, Jeremiah 31:31-34²⁴², Nehemiah 8:9-12²⁴³, & Psalm 63:5 – along with the Banquet mentioned in the proclamations of Talmud Pesachim 119 & Midrash Rabbah Exodus 25:8), Jesus likens the Kingdom of God to the “wedding banquet” given by a king for his son in Matthew 22:1-14.²⁴⁴ In this tale (distinct from the one found in Luke 14:15-24²⁴⁵), the invitees to the banquet are summoned by the king who had invited them to the same. Upon receiving said summons, they each somewhat flippantly declined to attend for one reason or another, whereupon the incensed king instructed his servants to “go into the streets and *invite everyone you find*.”²⁴⁶ Thereafter, the king arrived and noticed a man who was not dressed in proper wedding attire, whereupon he instructed his servants to bind the man and “*throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*.”²⁴⁷ At first glance, such harshness would seem to perfectly reflect the highly exclusive “Messianic Banquet” that the Old Testament claimed would be offered to only those Jews who were obedient to the Law, and yet closer examination actually reveals a great distinction between the two – with Jesus' latter feast being inclusively & unconditionally offered to all those *not* originally invited to attend; all those who ultimately chose to transcend the Law by following his selfless Way instead.

241 NOTE that, in stark contrast to the compassion-based ministry of Jesus Christ (which would undeniably hold a final banquet fully devoid of any innocent suffering), this Old Testament feast consists of “rich food filled with marrow.” In contrast to that contrast, NOTE as well that this older feast would have God obliterating “the shroud that is cast over all peoples” – recalling the Temple's curtain that is torn asunder after the crucifixion of Christ on Golgotha (his own “mountain”), a rent that finally allowed everyone direct access to the Temple's previously shrouded Holy of Holies.

242 The original covenant mentioned herein is considered by many to be the equivalent of a marriage contract between God & Israel – a covenant that was broken & abandoned, and thus a covenant that Jesus came to refurbish and re-establish (see also Matthew 24:12-14, Mark 14:24, Luke 22:20, John 1:17, Hebrews 8:8-13, & Hebrews 9:15 et al) thereafter summoning a renewed & bettered “wedding banquet” as well – this one between God and the entirety of humanity.

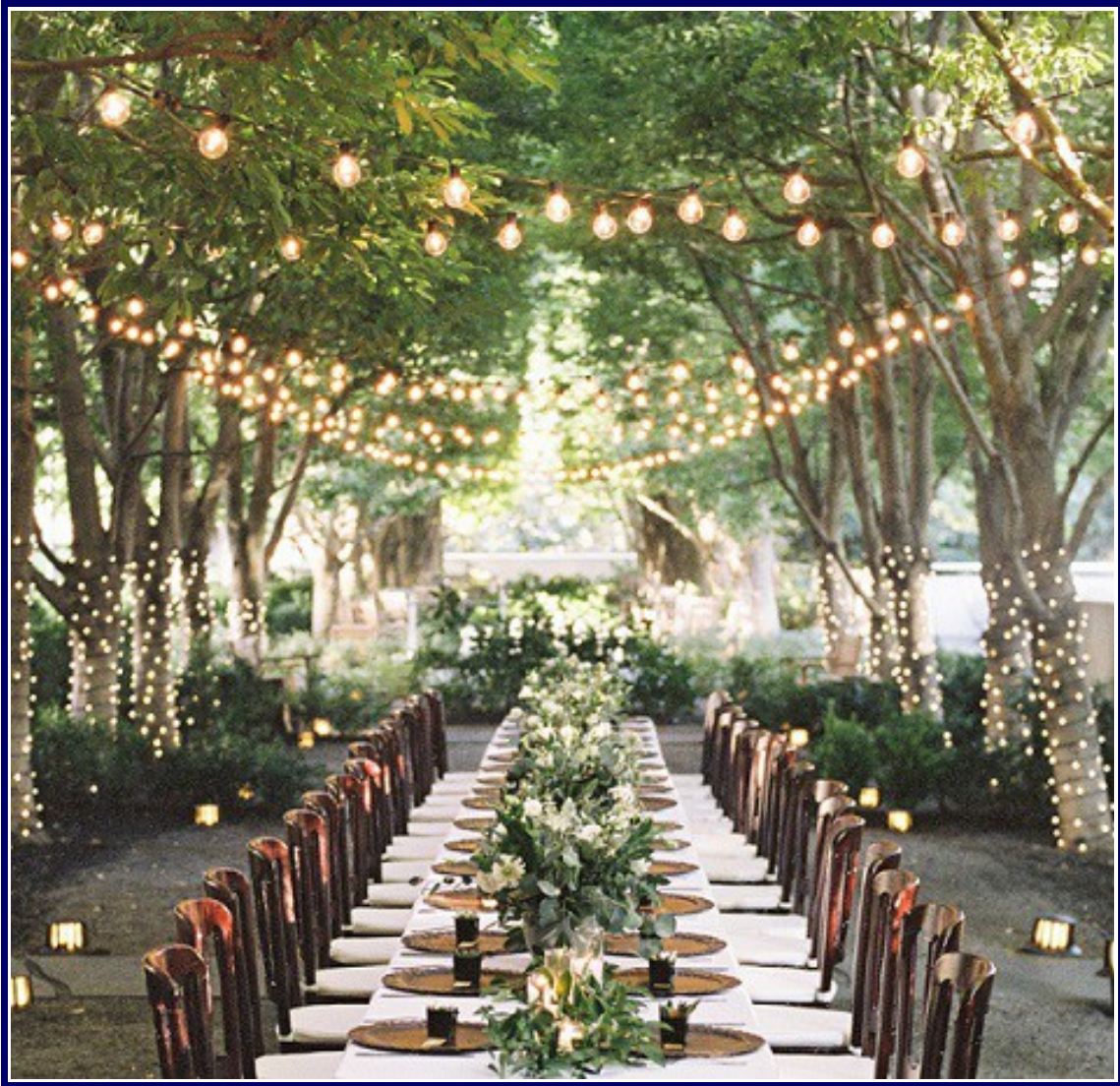
243 NOTE in this passage that “all the people wept when they heard the words of the Law,” and yet were told to rejoice instead, “for the joy of the LORD is your strength.” (see John 15:11)

244 Refer as well to Matthew 8:11-12 (where Jesus has Gentiles seated at the table with the most revered Jewish Patriarchs), Matthew 14:13-21 & Matthew 15:32-38 (especially the latter – where Jesus feeds the multitudes regardless of their citizenship or creed), Matthew 15:21-28 (where the Canaanite woman is included in that meal), Matthew 8:5-13 (where Jesus lauds the faith of the homosexual centurion by proclaiming “I have not seen such faith in anyone in Israel. Many shall come from the east and the west to recline at the table with Abraham & Isaac & Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven, while the original heirs to the Kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness”), and Luke 15:11-32 (where the Messianic Banquet is symbolically foreshadowed by the merciful “father” in the *Parable of the Prodigal Son*).

245 Whereas the former telling is one of harsh retribution for acts of selfish hypocrisy &/or ungrateful greed (which makes sense contextually, seeing as how it is relayed at a time during Jesus' ministry when he was facing extreme opposition from the Jewish leadership), the latter focuses on encouraging its listeners to deeds of selfless kindness. Whereas the former is a wedding banquet thrown by a king, the latter is a “great dinner” given by “someone.” Whereas the original guests in the former become aloof or angry when invited – and thus are destroyed, those in the latter merely provide excuses for their lack of attendance – and thus are merely passed over. Whereas the king in the former ultimately had his servants go out into the streets and invite “everyone – both the good and the bad,” the man in the latter had his servants ultimately go out into the streets to invite “the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame” – and then everyone else thereafter.

246 This is actually an especially intriguing verse, seeing as how the servants then went and “gathered all they had found, both the good and the bad” to fill the banquet hall with guests – and this, just after the king himself had seemingly murdered all the “bad” invitees who had rejected his summons.

247 **First** of all, NOTE that “weeping and gnashing of teeth” was *not* used in the biblical texts to convey physical pain or psychological terror, but rather the intense emotional distress (sadness, anger, &/or frustration) suffered by all those whose selfish desires are fully thwarted. **Second**, the condemned man's sentence was not applied due to his poor appearance (the lack of the “wedding garment”), but rather because he had ungratefully rejected the robes that all in attendance had been given to wear during the proceedings (see Matthew 22:12). **Third**, the “outer darkness” into which the king casts the indignant guest was not Hell as many know it, but rather a common Jewish punitive exclamation (see Judith 16:17, Wisdom 17:21, & Ezra 7:93 – also Matthew 5:29, Matthew 13:42-50, & Matthew 22:13 et al).



“Why do some people champion heretics? Far more often than not for the very same reason that churches accuses them of heresy – solely because it serves their longings for security &/or power to do so. This is why heretics preaching unpopular doctrines are burned and crucified, and this is why heretics preaching dogmas too strong to suppress or destroy are ultimately proclaimed to be saints clothed in orthodoxy ... Any heaven that is right & true will cover the smallest of mole hills as much as the tallest of mountains, the same as any God worth worshiping will radiate a mercy that is boundless and a Love that is perfect. If there isn't a seat at the banquet for everyone, then what is being offered from its platters isn't worth eating.” ~ inspired by Umberto Eco & Abraham Wright

The coming of the Son of Man

On more than one occasion in the Gospels, Jesus is seen clearly recalling “the prophets” when he boldly cites Daniel 7:13-14 while proclaiming, “then they will see the Son of Man²⁴⁸ coming in clouds with power and great glory” – initially doing so after having predicted “the desolating abomination”²⁴⁹ that would overtake the people of Israel (see Matthew 24:30b, Mark 13:26, & Luke 21:27), and later doing so after having been publicly questioned as to whether or not he was the sole Davidian Messiah (see Matthew 26:64 & Mark 14:62²⁵⁰ – also Acts 7:56’s “I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God”²⁵¹, along with Luke 23:2-3 & John 18:33-37).

248 The expression “Son of Man” is a highly controversial one, to say the least, with still no scholarly consensus as to its exact meaning. It appears 107 times in the Old Testament texts – with the vast majority of those references being directed to Ezekiel himself in the book bearing his name, and in 32 of those times it appears in its plural form (“sons of men” – that is, human beings in general). It is also used therein to explicitly contrast the lowly status of humanity against the exalted nature of celestial beings (see Numbers 23:19, Job 25:6, Psalm 8:4, Psalm 144:3, & Isaiah 51:12 et al) ... While also citing the same general “Son of Man” in a similar humanity-in-general context in Hebrews 2:6, the 81 references thereto in the Gospels of the New Testament for the most part made the same into the definite and seemingly singular “the Son of Man.” Despite this awkward & quite ambiguous wording (found nowhere else in Greek antiquity), the phrase still almost exclusively refers to all of humanity – or at the very least to a ubiquitous spiritual essence residing therein. Yes, there are a minority of instances where Jesus uses the phrase to refer to himself (see Matthew 20:17-19, Mark 8:31-32, Mark 10:32-34, Luke 18:31-34, & John 9:35-37), and yet these are without question exceptions to a far greater rule – a rule that has him almost exclusively referring to “the Son of Man” in one of three primary contexts: the “exaltation” that comes to all those choosing to live selflessly and thereby walk his Way (see Matthew 25:31-32, Mark 8:38, Luke 12:8, Luke 21:36, John 1:51, John 6:26, & John 6:53 et al), the “suffering” that all must endure on their way to the same (see Matthew 13:41, Mark 8:31, & Mark 9:9-12 et al), and the “earthly work” of caring for others – the deeds of willing self-sacrifice that lead through the latter in order to effectuate the former (see Matthew 11:19, Mark 2:10, Luke 9:58, John 5:27, & John 12:34-35 et al).

249 Matthew 24:15 & Mark 13:14’s “desolating sacrilege” (see also Luke 21:20) both allude to Daniel 9:27’s “the consummation which is poured out upon the desolate” (either referencing 1 Maccabees’ recounting of the heretical actions of Antiochus IV in the mid-2nd century BC or post-event “prophesying” the destruction of the Temple that took place in 70 AD – see also Daniel 8:13, Daniel 11:31, & Daniel 12:11) just as the subsequently noted celestial signs (those that will arrive “immediately after the suffering of those days” – see Matthew 24:29, Mark 13:24-25, & Luke 21:25-26) directly recall the awful “Day of Judgment” mentioned in Isaiah 13:9-10, Amos 5:18-20, Joel 2:10-11, Joel 3:14-15, Zephaniah 1:14-16, & Ezekiel 32 et al... A minority of scholars feel that those same verses refer to the iconoclastically wrathful “2nd Coming” seemingly mentioned in Matthew 16:27’s “For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and will then repay everyone for what has been done” (see also Mark 8:38 & Luke 9:26’s “of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father” – as well as the words of Matthew 25:31, uttered just before the telling of his *Parable of the Goats & the Sheep*) and yet **Jesus rejects this notion** wholeheartedly in all three instances by clearly announcing that “there are some standing right here before me who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom” immediately thereafter (see Matthew 16:28, Mark 9:1, & Luke 9:27 – also John 3:13) – once again making it clear that “the coming of the Son of Man” was an *internally* generated transcendence of being available to all human beings, not merely an external messianic event specific to himself ... It is also worth noting that Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish high holiday also known as the “Festival of Trumpets”) was celebrated as a time of repentance (the essential foundation of Jesus’ entire ministry – see Matthew 3:2, Matthew 4:17, & Matthew 24:31 et al – though for Jesus this concept was a behavioral rebirth, not a verbal profession of guilt or an emotional confession of sin) and that it was traditionally tied to the Jewish recognition of a coming Day of Judgment (see Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 1:2) – the time when “the Son of Man” would also arrive on “clouds of glory” (see Isaiah 40:5).

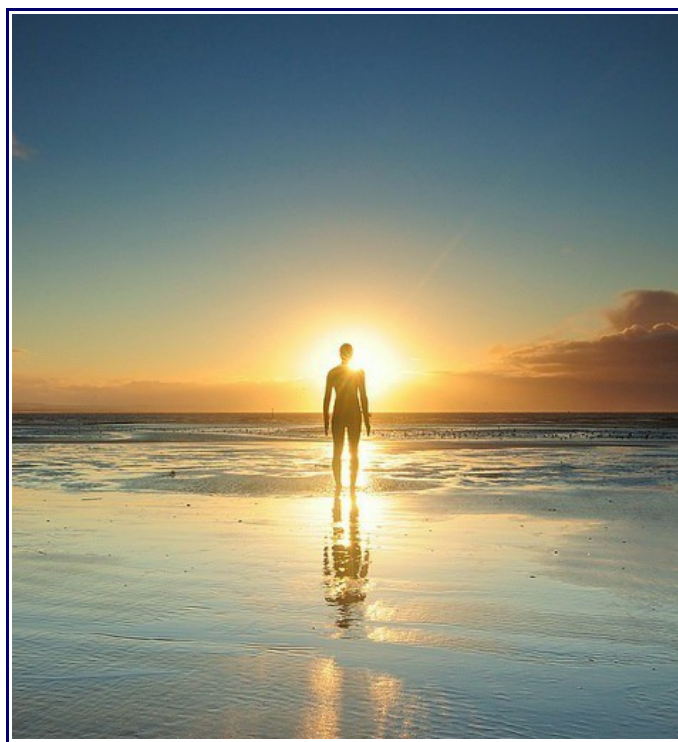
250 NOTE that in both instances he actually states that he is **not** said celestial savior – in Matthew answering “You say so” (which, in light of his words in Luke 23:3+John 6:15+John 18:36, is quite literally a negative) and in Mark offering not a “Yes I am” but rather an “**I, I am**” (*ego eimi* in the Greek manuscripts) – a clear reference to the divine “Son of Man” that resides within all human beings (see John 8:28, John 10:34-35, & John 14:12-26 et al), not only Jesus himself (see Matthew 19:17, Mark 10:18, Luke 18:19, John 5:41, John 7:16, John 8:50-54, & John 12:44 et al).

251 Remember that “the right hand of God” is the hand of selfless generosity – the hand that transcends legal regulations in order to “do good anyway” (see Matthew 12:8, Mark 2:27-28, & Luke 6:5 et al) – the hand that must indeed be humbly extended in order to enliven Jesus’ Way of Christ (see Matthew 13:37-42, Matthew 18:11, & Mark 10:35-45 et al).

Indeed, the language of this particular passage from the book of **Daniel** could be neither more reflective of Jesus' courageous “heresy” nor more important to his ministry's call to religious reform – for **Daniel 7:13-14** is in fact the only passage in the entire Bible where the phrase “**the Son of Man**” explicitly refers to the longed-for Davidian Messiah,²⁵² with that same supposed savior willingly receiving “**dominion and glory and kingship of all peoples and nations**”; essentially the same rewards that were **rejected** by Jesus after he was offered them **by Satan** in the wilderness (see **Matthew 4:1-10** & **Luke 4:1-13**). And this remarkable distinction is made even more lucid when the reader realizes that the few self-specific “**Son of Man**” references Jesus does employ in the Gospels foreshadow the pre-orchestrated & intentionally pain-full end to his ministry (see **Matthew 20:17-19**, **Matthew 25:31**, **Mark 8:31-32**, **Mark 10:32-34**, & **Luke 18:31-34**), *not* the glory & abundance-rich end that **Daniel 7** promises (see **Daniel 7:13-14**'s “**And I saw one like a Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven. He came to the Ancient One, and was ... given dominion and glory and kingship over all peoples and nations**”) ...

“While Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and said to them on the way, 'See, we are going to Jerusalem, where the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified’

~ Matthew 20:17-19



“For just as the Father has life in Himself, so too has He granted the Son to have life in himself; and has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man ... [In contrast], you judge by human standards. I [on the other hand] judge no one.”

~ Jesus Christ (**John 5:26-27** & **John 8:15**)

252 There are admittedly a handful of other Old Testament verses &/or passages that either indirectly refer to a heavenly “Son” as a potentially messianic figure (see **Psalm 2:7**, **Proverbs 30:4**, **Isaiah 9:6-7**, **Hosea 11:1**, **Micah 5:1-3**, & **Daniel 3:25**) or directly refer to the “**clouds of heaven**” mentioned in **Daniel 7:13** (see **Exodus 40:34**, **1 Kings 8:11**, **2 Chronicles 5:13**, **Ezekiel 10:4**, **Ezekiel 30:3**, **Joel 2:2**, **Isaiah 4:5**, **Nahum 1:3**, & **Zephaniah 1:15**).

Speaking from the Cross

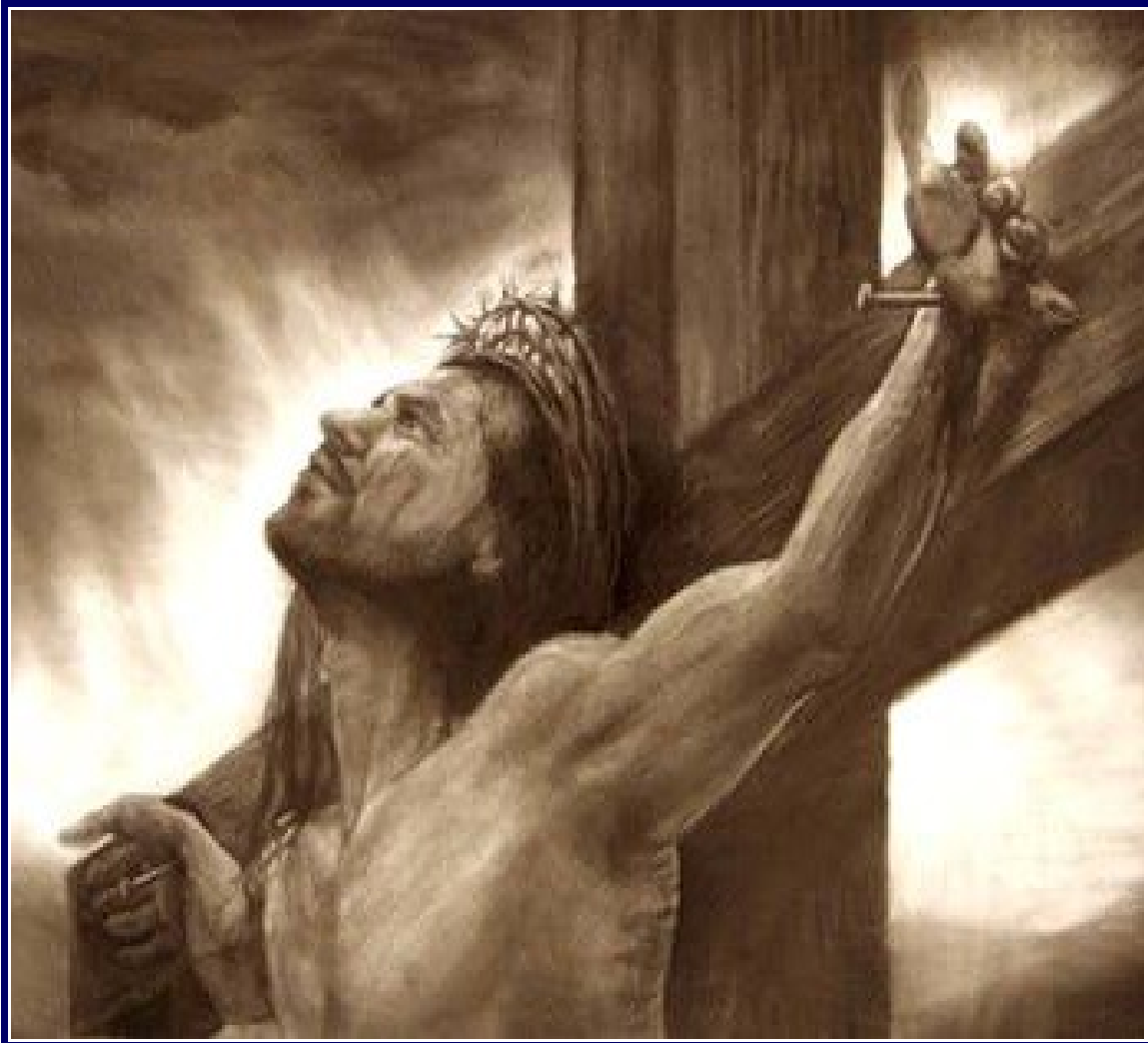
One of the more misunderstood (and also one of the more important) statements Jesus makes in the Bible is the one he utters near the very end of his ministry – when he is hanging from the cross on Golgotha after being crucified and loudly exclaims “*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*” – the Aramaic equivalent of “My God, my God – Why have you forsaken me?” (see Matthew 27:46 & Mark 15:34) This utterance inspired some of those nearby to errantly wonder whether Jesus was calling for Elijah to come and save him (see Matthew 27:47-49 & Mark 15:35-36),²⁵³ and yet shortly thereafter he took a drink of “sour wine” and “breathed his last” (see Matthew 27:48-50 & Mark 15:36-37 – also Luke 23:36-46 & John 19:28-30)²⁵⁴ ... And the source of the ubiquitous misreading of this scene is that most believe Jesus' cry to be one of complainant or anguish, when in reality it is one of gratitude & triumph. For Jesus is not calling out to bemoan his apparent abandonment or whine about his state of suffering, but is rather directly quoting the first verse of Psalm 22 – a Psalm that was very well-known at the time (being quite certainly familiar to all Jews in attendance) – a Psalm that specifically reflected what had led to him being crucified on that hill: the resilient endurance displayed by his ministry (Psalm 22:2), the innate viability of faith-full living (Psalm 22:4-5), the scorn he had experienced from strangers and the indignation he had felt from fellow Jews (Psalm 22:6), the mockery he had received from his accusers (Psalm 22:7), the legend told of his holy birth (Psalm 22:9-10), the fickleness of his weak-willed disciples (Psalm 22:11), his thirst that was then quenched by the drugged wine (Psalm 22:15), the Roman soldiers and other “evildoers” (i.e. those who did not sincerely respect the deepest callings of the Law – for Jesus, the “scribes & the Pharisees”) who surrounded his cross (Psalm 22:16-17), the lots that were cast for his clothing (Psalm 22:18), and the profound thankfulness felt for & humble gratitude professed to God by every true follower of The Way of Christ (and this, especially during times of poverty, pain, trial, or trauma – Psalm 22:23-26). As such, Jesus is not whining about his difficult end during this pivotal moment, nor is he raising himself up as a messianic fulfiller of Davidian prophecy. Rather, he is in this moment quite powerfully reminding his audience one final time of the ultimate message of his ministry – namely, that salvation comes from intentionally sacrificing oneself for others, and from doing so actively, joyfully, humbly, and gratefully.²⁵⁵

253 In minor contrast, the Gospel of Luke has both the Temple priests and Roman soldiers in attendance (as well as one of the two revolutionaries being crucified with him) mocking Jesus and telling him to “save yourself” (a la Luke 23:35-39) – something no true adherent of The Way of Christ would ever do (see Matthew 16:24-26, Matthew 20:26, Matthew 24:12-14, Mark 8:34, Mark 9:35, Mark 10:44, Luke 9:23, & Luke 22:26 et al).

254 NOTE that in all four Gospel accounts Jesus drank of a similar seemingly-drugged draught shortly before “breathing his last”, NOTE that the statement made by Jesus in Luke 23:46 is him directly quoting from Psalm 31:5, NOTE that Jesus saying “I am thirsty” in John 19:28 is an open allusion to Psalm 69:3 (& foreshadows Psalm 69:21), and NOTE that the Greek phrasing used in all four Gospel recountings of Jesus' “death” (the “breathed his last” of Mark 15:37 & Luke 23:46 – *exepnseusen*, the “gave up his spirit” of Matthew 27:50 – *apheken to pneuma*, & the “surrendered his spirit” of John 19:30 – *paredoken to pneuma*) implicitly describe him willingly, intentionally, & purposefully doing so.

255 The spiritual Salvation of this quite radical Gospel (see Matthew 10:7 & Matthew 24:12-14) was offered in stark contrast to the far lesser “salvation” provided by the Law – with the latter being offered only via the fickle grace of the Temple's priestly authorities, and the former given to all directly from the all-loving Father within (hence the tearing of the Temple's curtain that separated the “unworthy” common folk from the Holy of Holies after Jesus' self-orchestrated sacrifice* on the cross – see Matthew 27:51, Mark 15:38, & Luke 23:45).

*NOTE that Jesus “[knew] all that was to happen to him” (John 18:4) – namely, that he in all probability pre-planned his own crucifixion. He repeatedly told his disciples ahead of time that he was going to be “handed over to the chief priests” to then “rise again after three days” (Matthew 20:17-19 – see also Mark 9:30-32, Luke 9:22, Luke 9:44, John 12:27 et al), he regularly showed that he had pre-arranged the event (see Matthew 21:1-9, Matthew 21:17, Matthew 26:18, Mark 11:11, Luke 9:52, Luke 10:1, Luke 19:5, John 7:10 et al), and he frequently noted that he was doing everything purposefully “so that the Scripture might be fulfilled” (see Matthew 26:54-56, Luke 24:44, John 12:23-34, John 17:12, & John 18:11 et al).



*“My God, my God – Why have you forsaken me? ...
Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do ...
Into thy hands I commend my spirit ... It is accomplished.”*

~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 27:46, Luke 23:34, Luke 23:46, & John 19:30)

“Jesus Christ lived in the midst of his enemies. At the end all his disciples deserted him, and on the Cross he was utterly alone and surrounded by evildoers and mockers. And yet for this very cause he had come: to bring Love into times of fear, to bring Generosity into times of lack, to bring Peace to all enemies & Forgiveness to all transgressors. So too the Follower of his Way belongs not in the seclusion of a cloistered life but rather in the thick of all foes and wickedness. There is his commission and this is her work. For to reside in the Kingdom is to bring Light to all in darkness – to bring Love to times of conflict & hardship. And those who will not suffer the same want nothing of the Kingdom of Christ; he wanting merely to revel with friends, she to sit solely with roses & lilies. Oh you hollow blasphemers of Christ! For if Jesus had done what you are doing who would ever have been offered his true Salvation?” ~ inspired by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Annulling the Anointment & Spurning the Saviorship (Jesus' repetitive & vehement insistence that he was *not* the Davidian Messiah)

Though there are admittedly a number of claimed prophecies in the Old Testament's "Law & prophets" that supposedly foretell and even announce Jesus as one who becomes the embodiment of the long longed-for Messiah – "a prophet like [Moses]" (see Deuteronomy 18:15²⁵⁶) who was summoned "to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives ... and comfort all who mourn." (via Isaiah 61:1-2)²⁵⁷ And yet despite the prevalence of these seemingly transcendent forecastings, all of them are for various reasons fundamentally lacking in prophetic legitimacy.²⁵⁸ Some don't correctly reflect the life of Jesus as portrayed in the Gospels or have yet to come to pass (see Isaiah 11:12²⁵⁹, Micah 5:2²⁶⁰, & Isaiah 9:6-7 et al), some are so vague that hundreds of additional candidates would qualify for Messiahship thereby (see Isaiah 7:14²⁶¹, Isaiah 9:1-2²⁶², & Isaiah 52:7 et al), and others were clearly fulfilled intentionally after the fact – either by Jesus himself (see Isaiah 53:5 & Jeremiah 31:31-34 et al) or by him with the help of friends &/or disciples (see Psalm 22, Psalm 34:19-20, Zechariah 9:9²⁶³, & Zechariah 11:12-14 et al).

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- 256 While it is true that this long-foretold "prophet" was indeed explicitly announced by Peter as being Jesus Christ in Acts 3:18-22, Jesus himself seemingly renounced this claim in John 14:12-26, John 15:26, & John 16:13-14 – on all three occasions clearly stating that this same oft-prophesied "prophet" was actually the latent moral essence that resides within all human beings; the internal "Advocate" or "Spirit of Truth" that enables us all to make the most difficult choice (i.e. to love our enemies) in the most difficult moments (i.e. while being persecuted by the same – see Matthew 5:44-48 et al). And this particular interpretation is indeed supported by the actual wording of Deuteronomy 18:15 itself – with the word typically translated as "among" therein being the Hebrew word *miqqerbeka* (Strong's #7130); a word that actually meant "from *within*" not merely "from the midst of."
- 257 This is the very passage from "the prophets" that Jesus himself quotes the only time in the Bible he is seen publicly orating Scripture in a synagogue (see Luke 4:16-21). Of special intrigue in this instance is the fact that he closes this particular sermon with the bold statement "today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing", and this after having intentionally omitted Isaiah 61:2's "the day of vengeance of our God" from the same – in so doing clearly transforming the traditionally prophesied Messiah-of-holy-violence into a never before intoned Prophet-of-humble-peace.
- 258 Many of these Old Testament "prophecies" are clearly describing particular events long-since past (a la Daniel 9:24:27's "abomination that desolates" – a passage most scholars believe refers to the murder of the high priest Onias III and Antiochus IV's erecting a statue of Zeus in the Temple in & around the Maccabean Revolt of 167 BCE, *not* the 2nd Coming of Christ as intimated in Matthew 24:15 & Mark 13:14) and others seem to refer to the entire Jewish citizenry, not solely Jesus himself (a la Hosea 11:1's "Out of Egypt I have called my son" – a verse which truly has nothing at all to do with Jesus' childhood, as is falsely claimed in Matthew 2:14, or Isaiah 53:5 – where it is at the very least a great stretch to say that the "suffering servant" therein solely prophesies Jesus on the cross).
- 259 While some refer to the foundation of the State of Israel as a fulfillment of this verse, there can be little argument that the full diaspora of non-Israelite Jews ("the outcasts of Israel ... from the four corners of the earth") has clearly yet to return.
- 260 More than a few Christian apologists have latched onto this verse as the fulfilled prophecy that Jesus was the Messiah because he was born in Bethlehem. Aside from the fact that Jesus never once did "rule in Israel" as the rest of that same verse states (see "My kingdom is not of this world" ~ John 18:36), most scholars agree to starkly disagree about Matthew 2:4-6's bold claim that Jesus as the Messiah was indeed born there. Indeed, the concept that Bethlehem was the birthplace of the Messiah appears in no Jewish literary source until several centuries after the death of Jesus, and the New Testament itself cites the common understanding among Jews at the time that the birthplace of the Messiah remained unknown at the time (see John 7:26-27). As such, despite the admitted fact that Jesus' birth in Bethlehem is one of the few portions of his story that exists in all four Gospel accounts, many biblical scholars believe that his birth stories are more literary invention than historical fact, created by the Gospel authors to lend credence to his longed-for divinity.
- 261 NOTE that this verse does not predict that the Messiah will be born of a "virgin" but rather that he would be born of an *almah* (Strong's #5959) – a Hebrew term meaning "young maiden" or "young woman" (see also Exodus 2:8, Psalm 68:25, & Songs of Solomon 6:8 et al).
- 262 NOTE that the Masroetic text of Matthew 4:12-16 merely denotes "the region of the nations," while it is the Greek Septuagint that expands the same to reflect Isaiah 9:1-2's "the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali."
- 263 NOTE that Matthew 21:1-3 makes it exceedingly clear that the "donkey" required by this "prophecy" was without a doubt an acquisition arranged by Jesus ahead of time in order to fulfill the same.

And yet these are in no way the only examples proving this point. In fact, there are dozens of other instances & texts – many of them instigated &/or professed by Jesus himself – that definitively show that Jesus was indeed *not* the highly-desired Messiah. Consider ...

First & foremost, the Messiah was prophesied as being an ancestor of David²⁶⁴ – a Jewish king who would one day forcefully liberate Israel from her oppressors (see Psalm 2:8-9, Psalm 72:4, Isaiah 2:4, & Isaiah 9:4 et al). It bears noting that Jesus explicitly rejected both these notions throughout the Gospels – resolutely renouncing his oft-proclaimed kinship with David²⁶⁵ (see his open reference to Psalm 110²⁶⁶, where he plainly states “If David calls [the Messiah] Lord, how can [the Messiah] be [David's] son?” – see Matthew 22:41-45, Mark 12:35-37, & Luke 20:41-44), explicitly rejecting the notion that he was the Messiah (see Matthew 16:20-28, Matthew 19:17, Matthew 26:63-64+Matthew 27:11+John 18:36, Mark 8:29-30, Mark 10:18, Mark 14:8, Luke 9:18-21, Luke 18:19, Luke 22:70+Luke 23:3+John 18:36, & John 5:41 et al), and vehemently refusing to advocate violence as a means of transcendence (against Rome or any other human authority – see Matthew 5:9, Matthew 20:25-28, Matthew 22:20-21, Matthew 26:53-56, Mark 1:38, Mark 12:17, Mark 14:48-49, Luke 9:51-55, Luke 22:24-38, & Luke 23:35 et al).

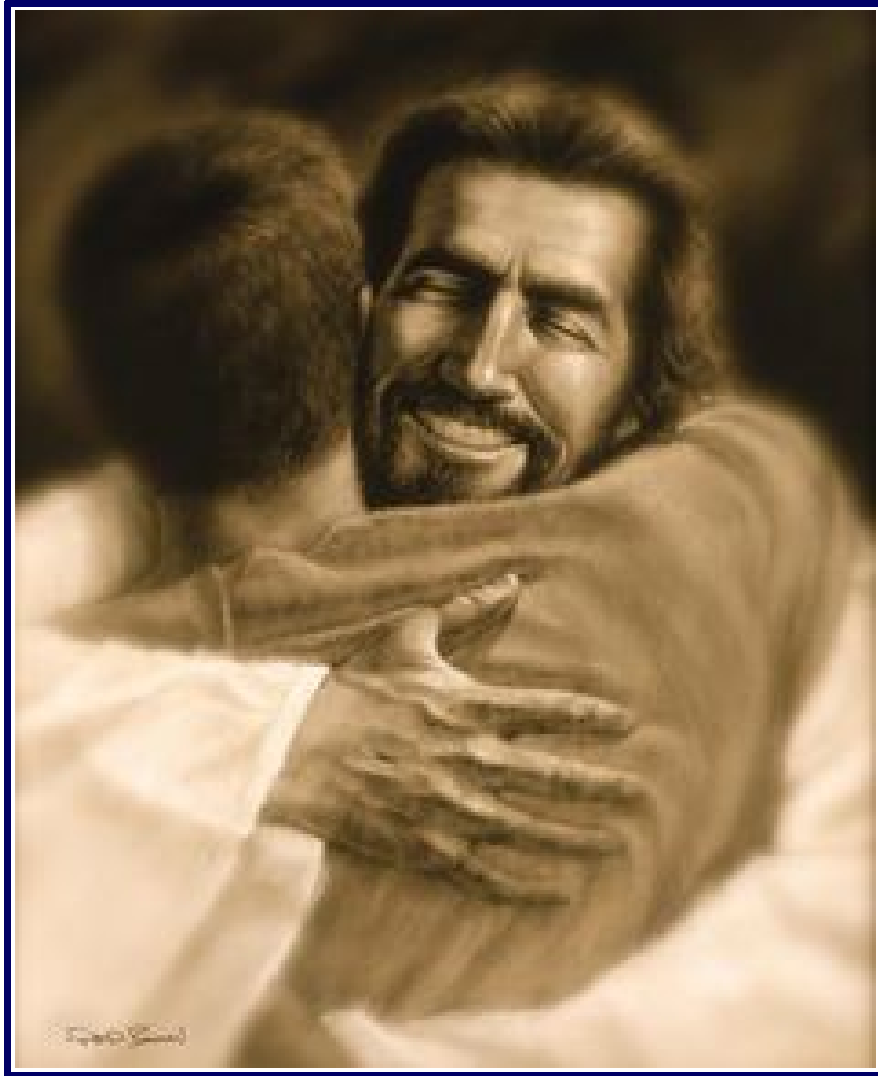
264 The Hebrew Bible promised both that the Messiah would come from the lineage of Abraham (see Genesis 21:12, reflected in Galatians 3:16) and David (see Psalm 132:11, reflected in Matthew 12:23 & Acts 2:29-30). Fittingly then, the text of 2 Samuel 7:12-16 clearly announces God's covenant with David – a covenant that includes the messianic promise: “I will raise up your offspring after you – he who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me.” ... Jeremiah 23:5 also seems to reflect the same pronouncement when stating “The days are surely coming when I will raise up for David a righteous branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness throughout the land.” ... Ezekiel 34:23-24 also establishes David (and thus his heirs) as being the rightful ruler of Israel, though it is worth noting that some scholars mention that Ezekiel 34:15-24 cannot refer to David at all – since Israel was divided into two separate realms until after the death of Solomon, David's son.

265 Despite the fact that the authors of the Gospels of Matthew & Luke both openly believed that Jesus was indeed a direct descendant of David (see Matthew 1:1-6, Luke 1:32, Luke 2:4, & Luke 3:31) and the fact that all three of the Synoptic Gospels regularly show the people (mostly non-Jews, the blind, &/or his clearly clueless disciples) expressing the same belief (see Matthew 9:27, Matthew 15:22, Matthew 20:30-31, Matthew 21:9, Matthew 22:42, Mark 10:47, Mark 11:10-11, Mark 12:11, Luke 18:38-39, & Luke 20:17), there remains considerable debate amongst scholars as to whether or not this was actually the case. For one, Matthew & Luke present two remarkably different genealogies for Jesus (see Matthew 1:1-17 & Luke 3:23-38), with the former presenting 42 generations from David to Joseph and the latter presenting 77 (and with there being remarkably little overlap between the names listed within the two). It bears noting that the Matthean count of 42 generations is achieved only by omitting several names (Ahaziah, Jehoash, and Amaziah – possibly because they were especially wicked rulers, and yet probably in order to attain the clearly desired three sets of 14 – double the Jewish perfection represented by the number *seven*, and also directly reflective of the gematrical value for the name *David*). Most notable of all, Matthew claims Joseph's father to be Jacob while Luke says his father was Heli. Many Christians resolve this blatant discrepancy by claiming that Matthew's genealogy is the lineage of Joseph while Luke's denotes the line of Mary (and this despite the fact that Luke makes it very clear that Mary was the cousin of Elizabeth a la Luke 1:5 – & thereby descendant of Aaron, and thus a member of the tribe of Levi – *not* David's tribe of Judah). Indeed, this truth is further supported by Jesus himself when he publicly renounced Mary's status as his mother (“My mother and my brothers are [my disciples]; those who hear the Word of God and enliven it” ~ Luke 8:21) as well as when he rebuked a bystander who had just praised “the womb that bore you” by exclaiming “Blessed rather are those who hear the Word of God and obey the same.” (see Luke 11:27-28). In addition, while it remains true that Matthew & Luke both clearly claim that Joseph was indeed from the House of David, those same Gospels also unabashedly proclaim that Jesus was actually born of a virgin – a claim that makes null & void Joseph's Davidian lineage. Indeed, tribal lineage in ancient Judea was explicitly traced through a person's father (see Numbers 1:18 et al), and as such Jesus' supposed virgin birth ironically negates any claim that he was the Messiah. That having been said, the virgin-birth prophecy is actually a scriptural fabrication (see Note 261 on the previous page), and as such Jesus was in all likelihood truthfully the physiological son of Joseph, and thus indeed a member of the line of David – a status he openly & repeatedly & vehemently *abdicated* – both explicitly & symbolically – during his ministry thereafter.

266 NOTE as well that Psalm 110:1 notes that the Messiah will sit at God's “right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool” – announcing a level of callous cruelty that no one sitting at the selflessly giving “right hand of God” could ever advocate, and indeed an expression of abject violence that Jesus himself openly renounced & devoutly rejected during his ministry (see Matthew 5:44-48 & Luke 6:29-37 et al).

“Let all turn away from causing harm and be kind instead. Let all seek peace and pursue it avidly ... A harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace ... So pursue peace with everyone, and the selflessness without which no one will know the Lord.” ~ unknown (1 Peter 3:11, James 3:18, & Hebrews 12:14)

“Peace I leave with you and my peace I give to you ... I have said this all to you, so that through my way you might know peace ... Salt is per se pure; and yet if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season with it? Renew the salt in yourselves – by being at peace with one another.” ~ Jesus Christ (John 14:27, John 16:33, & Mark 9:50)



*“By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high breaks upon us;
bringing light to those who sit in darkness
and guiding all feet onto the way of peace.”
(Luke 1:78-79)*

As a *second* point of intrigue, [Isaiah 35:5-6](#) in truth seemingly predicted that the Messiah would perform healing miracles upon his arrival (specifically, returning sight to the blind, granting hearing to the deaf, providing mobility to the lame, and giving speech to the mute²⁶⁷). Full disclosure also bears noting that Jesus does in fact seem to both verbally proclaim a fulfillment of this prophecy (via is proclamation to John as quoted in [Matthew 11:2-6](#) & [Luke 7:18-23](#)) and even seems to physically effectuate the same on multiple occasions throughout his Gospel ministry – purportedly doing so both generally (for the masses that tended to gravitate to him – see [Matthew 4:23-24](#), [Matthew 12:15](#), [Matthew 14:13](#), [Matthew 14:35-36](#), [Matthew 15:30-31](#), [Matthew 19:1-2](#), [Matthew 21:14](#), [Mark 1:32-33](#), [Mark 3:9-10](#), [Mark 6:5](#), [Mark 6:54-56](#), [Luke 4:40](#), [Luke 5:17](#), [Luke 6:18-19](#), [Luke 7:21](#), [Luke 9:11](#), & [John 11:47](#)) and specifically (for particular individuals who came to him in need; bringing sight to the blind in [Matthew 9:27-30a](#), [Matthew 20:29-34](#), [Mark 8:23-25](#), [Mark 10:46-52](#)²⁶⁸, [Luke 18:35-43a](#), & [John 9:1-7](#) – granting hearing to the deaf in [Mark 7:32-35](#) & [Luke 22:50-51](#)²⁶⁹ – providing mobility to the crippled in [Matthew 8:5-13](#), [Mark 3:1-5](#), [Luke 5:18-25](#), [Luke 6:6-10](#), [Luke 13:10-13](#), & [John 5:2-9](#) – giving speech to the muted in [Matthew 12:22](#) & [Mark 7:32-35](#) – and returning health to the ill or otherwise afflicted in [Matthew 8:2-4](#), [Mark 1:29-31](#), [Mark 1:40-42](#), [Mark 5:23+39-42](#), [Mark 5:25-29](#), [Luke 4:38-39](#), [Luke 5:12-13](#), [Luke 7:2-10](#), [Luke 8:41-42+49-55](#), [Luke 8:43-44](#), [Luke 14:2-4](#), [John 4:46-51](#), & [John 11:1-44](#)²⁷⁰).

267 This supposed prophecy is also referenced elsewhere – most notably in [Isaiah 6:10](#) (“Make the mind of this people dull. Stop their ears and shut their eyes, so that they may not look with their eyes or listen with their ears or comprehend with their minds and thereby turn and be healed” – see also [Jeremiah 5:21](#) & [Ezekiel 12:2](#)), a verse that is openly cited in both [Matthew 13:15](#) & [Mark 4:12](#) (see also [Luke 8:10](#) & [Acts 28:27](#), as well as the similarly active repentance mentioned in [Luke 1:17](#), [Acts 3:19](#), [Acts 11:21](#), [Acts 15:19](#), [Acts 22:32](#), & [Acts 26:18](#)) – though it is worth noting that Jesus does so with a completely different context; one in full alignment with his ministry of humble mercy (see [Matthew's](#) “that I might heal them” & [Mark's](#) “so that they might be forgiven” – both of which employ the Greek *epistrepso*in/Strong's #1994 to imply that his listeners are to *return* to his selfless Way [intriguingly, see [Isaiah 35:8](#)]; essentially to “become again as young children”), and in stark contrast to the message of harsh retribution provided by the author of [Isaiah 6](#) (who uses the similar Hebrew *wasab*/Strong's #7725 to preclude a similar *return* to all deemed unworthy thereof).

268 NOTE that returning sight to Bartimaeus (also mentioned in [Matthew 20:29-34](#) & [Luke 18:35-43](#)) is the last healing miracle attributed to Jesus in [Mark's](#) Gospel and tellingly (and quite critically) unifies [Mark's](#) common emphasis on the disciples' “blindness” (i.e. their astounding inability to comprehend the fundamental purpose of Jesus' ministry of radical selflessness) with the necessity of following Jesus to Jerusalem – where his pre-arranged crucifixion would finally make his message unmistakably recognizable to Jews & Gentiles alike (or so Jesus thought/intended) ... Also of interest & intrigue, Bartimaeus' exclamation at this juncture of [Mark's](#) story was the very first public acknowledgment of Jesus as being *the* Christ (and coming just after Peter had privately proclaimed Jesus to be the same in [Mark 8:27-30](#) – a mistake for which Jesus himself sternly *rebuked him* immediately thereafter); a claim fittingly made *while Bartimaeus was still blind* ... NOTE as well that some scholars have identified a conjunctive significance between [Mark's](#) story about Bartimaeus and Plato's tale of Timaeus, with the latter delivering one of Plato's most important cosmological treatises – one that happens to announce sight as being the foundation of all knowledge.

269 Interestingly, though all four Gospel accounts mention a servant losing an ear in the Garden of Gethsemane (see [Matthew 26:51](#), [Mark 14:47](#), [Luke 22:50](#), & [John 18:10-11](#)), only [Luke](#) has Jesus healing that loss of hearing.

270 Of obvious NOTE regarding Jesus supposedly bringing Lazarus “back from the dead” is the irrefutable fact that [John](#) is only Gospel author to mention the event at all – and this, even though the tale without question recounts by far the most stunning of Jesus' “miracles.” While a minority of scholars explain this remarkable omission by claiming that Peter – one of the primary sources of information for the Synoptic authors – was not present for this particular resurrection, it is far more likely that this “miracle” was simply no such thing; that the story instead either recounted Jesus providing staged medical assistance to one who was (pretending to be) gravely ill, or that it was fully fabricated by the Gospel authors and never took place at all. Indeed, there is scriptural evidence for the former in the shockingly lackadaisical manner in which Jesus journeys to his friend's aide after hearing of his illness, the self-assuredness with which he announces – even from afar – that “This illness does not lead to death” and that “Our friend Lazarus has [merely] fallen asleep”, and Jesus' obvious distress (see [verses 36-38](#)) when he arrives and finds that Lazarus was much worse off than originally thought – an emotional trauma that would not have been evident had Jesus been an actual miracle-working “Son of God.” The latter theory – that this particular “healing” was in fact a literary fabrication – is supported by Jesus callously slow tempo of travel after being informed of Lazarus' condition, coupled with Lazarus then being drawn forth from his tomb after [four days](#), seeing as how Jewish legal tradition at the time (due to the regularity with which supposedly dead individuals “rose” after being misdiagnosed) did not pronounce actual death until a body had lain in its tomb for four full days.

Despite these undeniable scriptural mentions – and despite the additional fact that large crowds of people obviously believed in Jesus' power to heal them (as evidenced by them repeatedly thronging to him to be healed – see Matthew 4:24-25, Matthew 7:28, Matthew 8:1, Matthew 12:15, Matthew 14:13, Matthew 14:35, Matthew 15:30a, Matthew 19:2, Matthew 20:29, Mark 3:7-8, Mark 5:21, Mark 5:24, Mark 6:55-56, Luke 4:40, Luke 5:15-17, Luke 6:18, Luke 8:40, Luke 9:11, Luke 9:37, & Luke 12:1), almost without fail Jesus told his listeners over & over & over again that he was doing no such thing²⁷¹ (see Matthew 9:24, Mark 5:39, Luke 8:52, John 5:19, & John 11:4-11) – that is was *their* faith (coupled with the power of the heavenly Father residing within them) that was healing their maladies and making them whole again²⁷² (see Matthew 8:13, Matthew 9:29, Mark 5:19, Mark 5:34, Mark 7:29, Mark 9:23, Mark 10:52, Luke 5:20-25, Luke 7:9-10, Luke 8:39, Luke 8:48, Luke 8:50, Luke 17:19, Luke 18:42, & John 4:50), and that they were to tell no one that he was the Messiah even if they errantly believed otherwise (see Matthew 8:4, Matthew 9:30, Matthew 12:16, Mark 1:44, Mark 5:43, Mark 7:36, Mark 8:26, Luke 5:14, & Luke 8:56).



“With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before them, to return the hearts of parents to their children and the wayward ways of the disobedient to the wise Way of the righteous ... to open their eyes so that they might turn away from the darkness and towards the Light; away from the power of Satan and towards the Love of God.”

~ via Luke 1:17 & Acts 26:18

271 It is worth it to NOTE that this claim is not only in complete harmony with the fundamental message of Jesus' Gospel ministry (i.e. that willing self-sacrifice is The Way to his Kingdom of Heaven – see Matthew 7:21, Matthew 13:18-23, Matthew 24:12-14, Matthew 25:35-40, Luke 9:23, Luke 17:20-21, John 13:15-17, John 14:12-26, & John 15:8-17 et al), but it actually makes his actions even more noble & amazing. After all, what effort is truly required for an omniscient & all-powerful “Son of God” to full his mission of enduring a few years of persecution and ultimately but a few hours on a cross before sitting for eternity in Heaven at the right hand of God thereafter? In contrast, how phenomenal (and truly Divine) that same mission becomes when willingly fulfilled by a “mere man” choosing in the face of great pain & fear to do the same!

272 NOTE as well that it was extremely difficult (if not nigh impossible) for Jesus to do any similar “deeds of power” when surrounded by those of little or no faith therein (see Matthew 13:54-58 & Mark 6:2-6).

Thirdly, it is well worth noting that Jesus himself repeatedly and quite vehemently denied being any sort of uniquely divine being during his Gospel ministry. Yes, it is true that he did often state that he was *an* exemplary embodiment of “the Son of God” that resides within all sentient beings (see the entire Gospel of John²⁷³, especially John 14), and yet he made it just as clear just as often that he was *not* the *only* such embodiment thereof (see Matthew 19:17, Mark 10:18, Luke 18:19, & John 14:12-26 et al) and thus that he was quite certainly *not* the lone Davidian Messiah prophesied by “the prophets”²⁷⁴ – the sole Messiah who his disciples & many of his listeners longed for him to be. Indeed, quite regularly it was actually “demons” (the spawn of “the father of lies” – see John 8:44) who falsely proclaimed Jesus to be the sole “Son of God” (see Mark 1:24, Mark 3:11, Luke 4:34, & Luke 4:41a) and he sternly silenced them just as regularly whenever they did so (see Mark 1:25, Mark 1:34²⁷⁵, Mark 3:12, Luke 4:35, Luke 4:41b, & Luke 8:38-39).

In addition, though it is also true that Jesus' disciples regularly intimated that he was the sole “Son of God” (see Matthew 14:30, Matthew 16:16, Mark 8:29, Luke 9:20, John 1:49, John 6:69, John 10:24, & John 14:8 et al), the Gospels also repeatedly show them to be fully ignorant as to the actual purpose of Jesus' ministry, much less the selfless content of his teachings (see Matthew 15:15-18, Matthew 16:8-11, Matthew 18:1, Matthew 19:16, Matthew 19:25, Matthew 20:21-28, Mark 8:15-21, Mark 8:32-33, Mark 9:33-35, Mark 10:13-14, Mark 10:23-24, Mark 10:37-45, Mark 13:4, Luke 9:45, Luke 19:11, John 6:60-66, John 7:3-4, John 8:33, John 12:34, & John 14:22 et al) – a fact which helps to explain why Jesus was in the end quite frustrated with their lack of understanding (see Matthew 16:23, Matthew 17:17, Mark 8:33, Mark 9:19, Luke 9:41, John 8:25, John 8:43, & John 14:9-10 et al) as well as why he vehemently demanded that they not tell anyone that he was the Messiah (see Matthew 12:16, Matthew 16:20, Mark 8:30, & Luke 9:21 et al).

273 Feel free to read the following passages in this far grander context – a context that allows Jesus' ministry to remain “humble as a young child” (a la Matthew 18:3-4) while avoiding all inconsistency &/or hypocrisy: “If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who first descended from the same – that being, the Son of Man ... The Father loves the Son and has placed all things in his hands. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; just as whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but must endure God's wrath ... The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he Himself is doing; and he will show him greater works than these ... Many search the Scriptures because they think that in them they have eternal life and that it is they that testify on my behalf, and yet you refuse to come to me and live my Way ... I do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them, for I came not to judge the world, but to offer it salvation. The one who rejects me and does not receive my word has a judge. Indeed on the last day the word that I have spoken will serve as judge, for I have not spoken on my own, but the Father who sent me has Himself given me a commandment about what to say. And I know that this commandment is eternal life ... Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. And if God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in Himself and will glorify him immediately ... Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do, and in fact will do even greater works than these ... If you love me, you will uphold my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you an additional Advocate to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees It nor knows It. You know It, because It abides with you, and will live within you ... And it is on that day you will know that I am in my Father, and that you are in me, and that I am in you ... They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them ... Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them ... If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I ... And my Father is glorified by this: that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; so abide in that love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love ... And this is my commandment: that you Love one another just as I have Loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you ... And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last ... I am giving you these commands so that you might Love one another.” ~ Jesus Christ (John 3:12-15, John 3:35-36, John 5:20, John 5:39-40, John 12:47-50, John 13:31-32, John 14:12-28, & John 15:8-17)

274 While it is true that there are a number of verses in the Gospels that seem to show Jesus contradicting himself on the matter of his supposed Messiahship (see John 4:25-26, John 8:24-29, John 8:56-58, & John 9:35-37 et al) these passages do not show him to utter “I am he” or “I am”, but rather have him stating “***I, Iam***” (the Greek *ego eimi* – Strong's #1473 & #1510) – or, if translated in a manner consistent with the rest of his teachings, “I am an embodiment of the ***I Am***.” True enough, he also states “the Father and I are one” in John 10:30, and yet it is just as true that he later explains that we are all on equal spiritual footing therewith – that “I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.” (John 14:20)

275 Please NOTE that Mark 1:34 & Luke 4:41 do not state that they demons knew Jesus was indeed the Messiah (as most translations intimate) but rather that they (incorrectly) “*believed*” (the Greek term *edeisan* – Strong's #1492) him to be so.

Fourthly & finally, while many cite Jesus' crucifixion and supposed resurrection as proof that he was the Davidian Messiah, the verses seemingly prophesying the same were well known at the time, and thus actually prove far more convincingly that Jesus purposefully orchestrated the entire event – that he enlisted the help of a small-yet-dedicated cadre of accomplices to help him bring his ministry to a close in a way that perfectly illustrated his ministry's self-sacrificial message. Consider ...

*Quite significantly (as explained more thoroughly on page 113 previously herein), Jesus loudly quotes the first verse of **Psalm 22** from the cross itself; a **Psalm** that was well-known to all Jews in attendance, and a citing thereof that clearly showed that Jesus had pre-arranged its symbolic fulfillment.²⁷⁶

*Despite his disciples and later “followers” professing otherwise (e.g. Peter in **Acts 2:24-32** & Paul throughout his biblical epistles), **Psalm 16** did **not** prophesy Jesus' post-crucifixion resurrection as much as it foretold “the path of life” (**Psalm 16:11a**) – the Way of Christ; a way of selfless living that embodies the omni-generous and ever-forgiving “right hand” of the Father (**Psalm 16:11b**).

*Though **Isaiah 53:5** does mention a “man of suffering” who would be “wounded for our transgressions” (and while **Acts 8:26-36** does show Philip citing the same), this apparent prognostication is not crucifixion-specific, nor does it accurately describe Jesus Christ – a man who did not suffer on the cross, but rather willingly & joyfully endured his painful three+ hours thereupon (see **Luke 23:34-43** & **John 19:36-30**). Indeed, in actuality the author of this section of **Isaiah**²⁷⁷ is specifically referring to the suffering of the Jewish people at the hands of “the nations” (see **Isaiah 41:8-9**, **Isaiah 44:1**, **Isaiah 44:21**, **Isaiah 45:4**, **Isaiah 48:20**, & **Isaiah 49:3**), not the longed-for Messiah.

*While some Christians cite **Zechariah 12:10**'s “when they look upon the one whom they have pierced” as prophesying Jesus being speared while on the cross²⁷⁸ (interestingly, a graphic event mentioned in only one of the four Gospels – **John 19:32-37**), there are number of problems with this postulation. First, it is difficult to base prophecy upon this particular verse – both because it has remained theologically charged for so many centuries, and because its Hebrew wording is unusually complex. A second validity-dispersion is cast by the Septuagint, which provides the very different “when they look upon the one whom they have reviled” (an equally acceptable translation of the Hebrew *daqar* - Strong's #1856). Thirdly, while the Greek of **John 19:37** does indeed use the language “look upon one,” the actual Hebrew in **Zechariah** reads “look upon me” (calling to question why **John** would misquote **Zechariah** at this juncture – especially ironic considering that the Greek *plirow* in **John 19:36** means “match” more than “fulfill”). Finally, the text of **Zechariah** was clearly contemporary (see **Zechariah 12:9**'s “it shall come to pass in that day”), meaning that it could only have referred to Jesus had he been pierced during a time when God was destroying all of Israel's enemies.

276 Contrary to popular belief, **Psalm 22** was not a call of despair, but was rather an evincing of pure gratitude – not a “Why have you forsaken me, God,” but rather a “Thank you no matter what, God.” Indeed, the contents of this particular **Psalm** loudly announced Jesus' summons to willing self-sacrifice by reflecting many of the more important portions of his 3-year ministry – the resilient endurance he displayed during the same (**Psalm 22:2**), the innate viability of humbly faith-full living (**Psalm 22:4-5**), the scorn he had felt from strangers and the indignation he had received from fellow Jews (**Psalm 22:6**), the mockery he had been given by his accusers (**Psalm 22:7**), the legend still told of his supposed holy birth (**Psalm 22:9-10**), the fickleness of his weak-willed disciples (**Psalm 22:11**), his thirst that was then quenched by the drugged wine (**Psalm 22:15**), the Roman soldiers and other “evildoers” who surrounded him while on the cross (**Psalm 22:16-17**), the lots that were cast for his clothing (**Psalm 22:18**), the profound & humble gratitude professed to God by every true follower of The Way of Christ (especially during times of poverty, pain, trial, or trauma – **Psalm 22:23-26**).

277 The vast majority of biblical scholars recognize that the book of **Isaiah** had three separate authors (**Isaiah I**, who wrote **Isaiah 1-39** – **Isaiah II**, who penned **Isaiah 40-55** – & **Isaiah III**, who scribed the rest), with the second of whom – at least according to how many times he referenced it in the Gospels – clearly being Jesus' personal favorite.

278 NOTE that a suffering Messiah figure was not unknown in **Zechariah**'s time, and that **Zechariah** himself spoke of an ill-treated “shepherd” in his scroll, and even intimates (counter-prophetically, at least as far as Jesus is concerned) that he will be pierced by a sword (not a spear – see **Zechariah 13:6-7**).

*Most telling of all, Jesus himself went out of his way to tell his disciples quite plainly that he had already organized his crucifixion, his burial, and his subsequent escape from the grave – telling them in no uncertain terms on a number of occasions that “the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders & chief priests & scribes, and be killed, and then on the third day be raised” (see Mark 8:31 & Luke 9:22 – also Matthew 16:21, Matthew 17:12b, Matthew 17:22-23, Matthew 20:18-19, Matthew 26:12, Mark 9:12, Mark 9:31, Mark 10:32-34, Mark 14:8, Luke 9:44, Luke 13:32b-33, Luke 17:25, Luke 18:31-33, Luke 22:22, Luke 24:46, John 5:25, John 7:6, John 7:33-34, John 8:20-21, John 10:11-18, John 12:7, John 12:23-24, John 12:27-33, John 13:1-3, John 13:33, & John 16:10 et al). This would explain why he was so brash in confronting the Roman authorities during his ministry (see Matthew 27:11-13, Mark 15:2-4, Luke 13:31-32a, Luke 23:3, Luke 23:8-9, & John 19:8-11), why he was so boldly confrontational in his dealings with the priests of the Temple (as well as “the scribes & Pharisees” – see Matthew 21:12-16, Matthew 21:23-27, Matthew 21:43-46, Matthew 23, Matthew 26:62-64, Mark 11:15-18, Mark 11:27-33, Mark 12:38-40, Mark 14:60-62, Luke 4:21-29, Luke 6:1-11, Luke 16:14-16, Luke 18:9-14, Luke 19:45-48, Luke 20:1-8, Luke 20:17-19, Luke 20:45-47, Luke 22:70, John 7:32-34, John 8:3-9, John 9:39-41, John 10:31-39, & John 18:19-23 et al), and even why he wept so bitterly in Gethsemane the evening before his incredibly courageous (and obviously terrifying) sacrifice (see Matthew 26:37-38, Mark 14:34-35, & Luke 22:41-44).

*Indeed, the evidence in the biblical texts is overwhelming that the crucifixion of Jesus was pre-planned – from him sending out 72 disciples ahead of time (probably to reconnoiter important locations and make critical arrangements – see Luke 10:1), to the assistance he clearly pre-acquired related to the donkey he obtained before entering Jerusalem (see Matthew 21:1-3, Mark 11:1-3, & Luke 19:29-34), to the obvious preparations he had made for the “Last Supper” with his disciples (see Matthew 26:17-19, Mark 14:12-16, & Luke 22:7-13), to him flagrantly enlisting Judas' assistance in “betraying” him to the Jewish authorities²⁷⁹ (see Matthew 26:20-25, John 6:70-71, & John 13:18-27), to the obvious pre-orchestration of his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane (see Matthew 26:54-56, Mark 14:43-49, Luke 22:47-53, & John 18:1-9), to the clear pre-arrangements he made related to his “burial” thereafter (see Matthew 27:57-66, Mark 15:40-47, Luke 23:50-56, & John 19:38-42), to the surreptitiously secretive meetings he held with his disciples after his “resurrection” (see Matthew 28:8-20, Mark 16:14-16²⁸⁰, Luke 24:13-45, John 20:19-23, & John 21:15-19²⁸¹ – also Acts 1:4-8).

“And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God? ... He is God not of the dead, but of the living.” ~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 22:31-32 – also Mark 12:26-27 & Luke 20:37-38)



279 NOTE first of all that Jesus comes right out and admits to Judas' enlistment in John 13:18a (“I know whom I have chosen”) and even states why he did so in John 13:18b (“It is to fulfill the scripture: The one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me” – referring to Psalm 41:9). Secondly, NOTE that any Judas-type of betrayal – along with its obvious logistical advantages – provided a fulfillment of the additional apparent prophecy mentioned in Zechariah 11:12-14 (“So I took my 30 shekels of silver and threw them into the treasury in the house of the Lord. Then I broke my second Staff of Unity, thereby annulling all brotherhood ties between Judah & Israel”). Finally, NOTE that Jesus cryptically announces said collusion to all in attendance by answering “You said so” (in essence “No, you are my assistant, not a traitor” – see John 6:15+John 18:33-37, along with Matthew 27:11 & Luke 23:3) to Judas' query in Matthew 26:25.

280 NOTE that the vast majority of scholars recognize that the original Gospel of Mark concluded with verse 16:8, with the rest of its currently accepted verses having been added by various scribes for various reasons thereafter.

281 NOTE that the majority of biblical scholars believe that the entire chapter of John 21 was added by a scribe(s) at some point after its original was completed.

In closing, while there are many additional references Jesus makes to “the prophets” in the Gospels (references that just as clearly illustrate his ministry's primary goal of expanding the Jewish people's adherence to the edicts of the Old Testament scriptures)²⁸², the case has been soundly made that Jesus did not blindly support the texts of the Hebrew Bible as much as he encouraged others to transcend them in order to truly fulfill them; to live lives in harmony with his newer & better covenant (based in selfless service for others – see John 15:8-17 & Hebrews 8:8-13) instead of merely being legally obedient to the older covenant of the “Law & the prophets” (for one's own benefit &/or salvation).

“I must proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God to the other regions as well, for I was sent for that very purpose ... Indeed, for this I was born and for this I came into the world: to testify to the Truth ... Know that my teaching is not mine, but rather His who sent me ... And know that whomever believes in me believes not in me but rather in Him who sent me ... And on that day you will know that I am in the Father, and that you are in me, and that I am in you ... Indeed, among all those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist, and yet even the very least of those in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he ... And yet my yoke is easy and my burden is light ... So if any of you wish to be my followers, simply deny yourself by taking up your cross daily, and then come and emulate me.” ~ Jesus Christ (Luke 4:43, John 18:37, John 7:16, John 14:20, Matthew 11:11, Matthew 11:30, & Luke 9:23)

282 Consider: Jesus cites Psalm 6:8-9 in Matthew 7:23 ... He recalls Hosea 6:6's “I desire mercy, not sacrifice” in Matthew 9:13 & Matthew 12:7 ... The first plank of his two-part Gospel (that “the Kingdom of Heaven is already here at hand” – noted in Matthew 10:7) reflects numerous passages from Ezekiel 40 & Isaiah 40-55 ... Matthew 10:26's “nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered” (referring to the deeper Truths of the Scriptures being hoarded & intentionally hidden by the priests & elders) alludes to the “hidden riches” of Isaiah 45:3 ... The inter-familial discord Jesus mentions in Matthew 10:35-36 & Luke 12:52-53 recalls the similar conflicts noted in Micah 7:6 ... The episode recalled by Jesus in Matthew 12:3 (also Mark 2:25-26 & Luke 6:3-4) directly refers to 1 Samuel 21:6 ... The primary passage of Matthew 13:14-15 (also found in Mark 4:11-13 & Luke 8:10) directly cites to Isaiah 6:9-10 ... As further evidence that Jesus felt the Psalms to be part of “the prophets,” he quotes Psalm 78:2 as the same in Matthew 13:34-35 (see also Mark 4:33-34) ... Jesus quotes Isaiah 29:3 to his hypocritical religious adversaries in Matthew 15:7-9 (also Mark 7:6-7) ... While not a traditional reference to “the prophets,” it is worth noting that Jesus alludes to both Genesis 1:27 & Genesis 2:24 in Matthew 19:4-6 & Mark 10:6-8 ... Jesus specifically alludes to Jeremiah 32:17's “Nothing is too difficult for [God]” in Matthew 19:26 (also Mark 10:27 & Luke 18:27 – appropriately tied to John 14:20-26) ... Jesus contrastingly conjoins Isaiah 56:7's “house of prayer” with Jeremiah 7:11's “den of thieves” in Matthew 21:13, Mark 11:17, & Luke 19:46 ... He refers to Psalm 8:2's “out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants” in Matthew 21:16 (almost certainly hearkening back to the “toddlers” he lauded in Matthew 18:3-4) ... Jesus summons up Isaiah 5:1-2's “vineyard watchtower” in Matthew 21:33, Mark 12:1, & Luke 20:9 ... He uses the histories of Genesis 4:8 & 2 Chronicles 24:21-22 (admittedly also not officially recognized portions of “the prophets”) to lambast the scribes & Pharisees in Matthew 23:35 & Luke 11:51 ... The “desolate house” & the “name of the LORD” mentioned in Matthew 23:38-39 & Luke 13:35 refer to Jeremiah 12:7, Jeremiah 22:5, & Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 118:26, respectively ... Jesus strongly hints at Isaiah 51:16 in Matthew 24:35 ... The massive destruction of Genesis 7:4 is recalled by Jesus in Matthew 24:37 ... The “scattered sheep” of Zechariah 13:7 are pseudo-prophetically utilized by Jesus in Matthew 26:31 & Mark 14:27 ... In Mark 8:18 Jesus hearkens his listeners back to Jeremiah 5:21 & Ezekiel 12:2 ... Jesus employs the words of Isaiah 66:24 in Matthew 18:8 & Mark 9:44-48 (where he directly speaks of *Gehenna* – the ever-burning trash heap located just outside Jerusalem at the time) ... In notable contrast to 1 Samuel 15:22 (where obedience to God is “better than sacrifice”), Jesus notes in Mark 12:33 that it is loving God by caring for one's neighbor that is truly better than the same ... Jesus alludes to the warnings of Jeremiah 29:8 in Mark 13:5 ... The betrayals mentioned in Mark 13:12 & Luke 14:26 hearken back to those stated in Micah 7:6 ... Jesus' promise in Mark 13:31 confirms the same one proclaimed by Isaiah 40:8 ... In the only time Jesus is seen publicly reading Scripture in the Bible in Luke 4:17-19, he cites Isaiah 61:1-2 (purposefully & fittingly omitting the “vengeance of our God” mentioned therein) ... Just after that reading, Jesus potentially alludes to the events of 1 Kings 17:1-9, 1 Kings 18:1-2, & 2 Kings 5:14 in Luke 4:25-27 ... Luke 6:24's “woe to you who are wealthy” recalls Amos 6:1 ... Jesus' seemingly callous phrasing of Luke 10:4 is actually a reference to 2 Kings 4:29 ... Jesus' reference to the fall of Satan in Luke 10:18 alludes to similar descriptions provided by Isaiah 14:12-15 & Ezekiel 28:11-19 ... Jesus' call to humility in Luke 14:8 directly recalls the similar encouragement of Proverbs 25:6 ... Isaiah 53:12's “and he was numbered with the transgressors” is directly mentioned by Jesus in Luke 22:37 ... Jesus also explicitly refers to Isaiah 54:13 in John 6:45 (though the former mentions that “children” would be “taught by God” while the latter has Jesus proclaiming that *everyone* would be taught by Him) ... Jesus overtly quotes from Psalm 82:6 in John 10:34 ... Jesus' mention of being purposefully “hated without a cause” in John 15:25 was a direct reflection of the same phrase in Psalm 35:19.

“I’ve never fully understood how Christianity could become so tried & tame & traditional, given its claimed founder’s life immersed amongst lepers, drunkards, prostitutes, and tax collectors. Even though he came from a common family, Jesus clearly had the spiritual clout & the mental fortitude required to have greatly prospered in the high-end religious scene of his day. And yet he dismissed and scoffed at and even openly rejected the same; choosing instead to boldly admonish the powerful while openly befriending all manner of people considered lowly or sinful or untouchable. Indeed, he spent the vast majority of his time with outcasts for whom life was not at all easy – and thereby, in the midst of those who were downtrodden & suffering, he became the embodiment of perfect Love.” ~ via Nadia Bolz-Weber

“The most simple yet potent of Truths is the fact that the Divine works from the inside out, while the world fails from the outside in. Indeed, the world creates slums while supposedly striving to remove people from them, all while the internal Christ removes the slums living within people – quite often by inspiring us to sacrifice for those living in the world’s slums. The world creates churches that claim to mold men by restructuring their environment. Christ, on the other hand, creates new men & women by encouraging them to caringly do the same ... This is why the only church worth attending is the one living within you – the one composed of equal parts Love and Courage; the one comprised of a conscience set in bold motion.”
~ via Ezra Taft Benson & Abhijit Naskar

Chapter 05: Jesus & the (spoken) Law

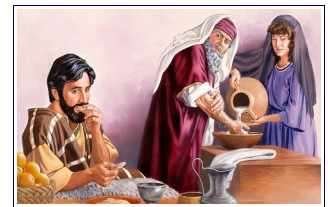
... how he commented upon the oral Torah
& other religious traditions of the Pharisees

While it is true that [Matthew 5:17-18](#) seems to refer to the written “Law and prophets” of the Hebrew Bible of the day, it bears noting that Jewish culture at the time gave almost equal honor to the oral commentaries on the Law (made by Jewish rabbinical leaders at the time, and later written down as the [Mishnah](#) some 150+ years after the death of Jesus) and the legal traditions of the Pharisees that were promulgated therefrom. Without much surprise, Jesus spoke about these commentaries & traditions in the Gospels; doing so in much the same way he did on the written Law and its “prophets” – that is to say, critically and reformatively (see [Mark 7:6-8](#)'s “Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. In vain do they worship me, teaching their human precepts as [though it were] legal doctrine.’ Indeed, you abandon the [true] commandments of God and hold to human traditions instead.” – also [Matthew 15:3-9](#)). Consider the following three additional examples thereof ...

*Even though the Law of Moses only required one *ritualized fasting* to be made by the Jews²⁸³ (see [Leviticus 23:26-32](#) – called “the fast” in [Acts 27:9](#)), the Pharisees & other Jewish religious leaders of Jesus' day had adopted strict and somewhat complicated legal regulations regarding fasting (see [Mishnah Taanit 1:4-7](#), [Mishnah Taanit 2:6-10](#), [Mishnah Taanit 3:1-9](#), & [Mishnah Taanit 4:3](#) et al); petty rules Jesus boldly ignored (see [Matthew 9:14-15](#), [Mark 2:18-22](#), & [Luke 5:33-39](#)) and against which he openly protested (essentially calling for fasts to be performed privately & personally instead of publicly & religiously – see [Matthew 4:1-10](#) & [Matthew 6:16-18](#)).

*While the Law did indeed require that no one perform *work on the Sabbath* (the Hebrew *melakah*, Strong's #4399 – see [Exodus 20:8-10](#) & [Deuteronomy 5:12-14](#); also [Genesis 2:2-3](#)) and though many of “the prophets” also upheld this particular prohibition in their writings (see [Isaiah 56:2](#), [Jeremiah 17:22-25](#), [Ezekiel 20:19-20](#), [Amos 8:3-5](#), & [Nehemiah 10:30-31](#) et al), there was great debate amongst the Jewish religious authorities thereafter as to what actions or deeds qualified as said prohibited “work.” Eventually the rabbis came to agree on 39 activities that were expressly forbidden on that day (all of which related directly or indirectly to the [creating](#) mentioned in [Genesis 2](#) – see [Mishnah Shabbat 7:2](#)), two of which being reaping & winnowing – both activities which Jesus expressly & publicly allowed his disciples to perform (see [Matthew 12:1-8](#), [Mark 2:23-28](#), & [Luke 6:1-5](#)).

*Finally, while the Law nowhere required the washing of hands before eating, the Pharisees had made this as a legal requirement in Jesus' day (see [Mishnah Yadayim 1:1-5](#) & [Mishnah Yadayim 2:1-4](#) – also [Orach Chaim 158:1-2](#)). While such an edict was indeed a prudent one²⁸⁴, Jesus took open exception to the Pharisees making the same legally binding by boldly & openly allowing his disciples to ignore it (see [Matthew 15:1-9](#), [Mark 7:1-13](#), & [Luke 11:37-41](#)).



283 It is true as well that fasting is mentioned once in “the prophets” (see [Zechariah 7:1-19](#)) – a passage the Jews used to mandate four additional annual fasts: the fast of the 4th month that commemorated the breaking of the tablets recorded in [Exodus 32:19](#) (&/or the famine mentioned in [Jeremiah 52:6-7](#)), the fast of the 5th month that commemorated the sacking of the Temple described in [Jeremiah 52:12-13](#), the fast of the 7th month that commemorated the murder of Gedaliah mentioned in [Jeremiah 4:1-2](#), and the fast of the 10th month that commemorated the beginning of the siege of Nebuchadnezzar recorded in [Jeremiah 52:4](#). Other less important ceremonial fasts were also mentioned as being held for various reasons (see [Esther 4:16](#), [1 Samuel 7:6](#), [2 Chronicles 20:3](#), [Jeremiah 36:6-10](#), & [Nehemiah 9:1](#) et al), and yet all of these were also public & highly ritualized affairs – calling forth the same critique Jesus espoused in [Matthew 6](#).

284 The near-Eastern method of eating without the use of utensils made a pre-meal washing of the hands sensical at the very least. Of course, as evidenced by his focus on their hypocrisy in challenging such a transgression, Jesus was not decrying the washing of hands as much as he was denouncing the Pharisees egotistically altering the rule of Law.

“We all clean many things as we go through life – and yet for the most part most of us do so in futility. We clean our clothes and yet wear them over unclean hearts. We wash our hands and yet leave our souls untouched. We pour water over our heads and it cleans the dirt from our skin as it drips to our feet, and yet we leave our thoughts and our words and our deeds for our fellow man fully removed from that renewed pristinity ... Indeed, even the cleanest of maids & housekeepers often show an exquisite ability for making cleanliness more disquieting than the dirt they wash away. And just as cleanliness is indeed next to godliness, many do the very same by their religion; purifying their outward appearance while leaving their thoughts & intentions submerged in the filth of superficiality & the sludge of self-indulgence.”

~ inspired by Nesta Jojoe Erskine & Charles Dickens



CONCLUSION

In summation, while many Christians still use the words of [Matthew 5:17-18](#)²⁸⁵ to justify their use of Old Testament scriptures to support many of their anti-Christian opinions²⁸⁶, this treatise has now confirmed without doubt that such a practice is not biblically valid. For, as the previous 126 pages have clearly & somewhat exhaustively shown, Jesus was in no way either a blind follower of the “[Law and the prophets](#)” or even an avid supporter thereof. Rather, as he definitively stated in the same aforementioned passage, he came to “[fulfill](#)” that Law – that is: to hone it to perfection; to make it whole and bring it to its fullest completion; to allow its adherents (Jews and non-Jews alike) to fully transcend the limitations of its popular religious regulations, and thereby enliven its deepest & most wondrous majesty in their everyday dealings with others instead.

*“Many false prophets will arise and mislead many. And because of the increase in lawlessness, Love of many will grow cold. And yet the one who endures [in Love] to the end will be saved. And **this** is the Good News of the Kingdom that must be proclaimed throughout the world; as a true testimony to all the nations; that the end might then come ... If you continue to emulate my Word, then you are truly my disciples, and you will know the Truth – and the Truth will set you free ... Indeed, by this all men will know that you are my disciples: if you show Love towards one another ... My Father is glorified solely by this: that you bear fruit and thereby become my disciples. As the Father as Loved me perfectly, so have I Loved you. Abide in this Love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in this Love ... And this is my primary commandment: that you Love all others in the same manner as I have Loved you.”*

~ Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:11-14, John 8:31-32, John 13:35, & John 15:8-12)

“The Law was indeed given through Moses, and yet Grace & Truth have come through Jesus Christ.” ~ unknown (John 1:17)

285 The text of which reads: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the prophets, for I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. Truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not even a single stroke of a single letter will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.” ... NOTE first & foremost that the Greek word commonly translated as “[fulfill](#)” (*plerosai*, Strong's #4137) in verse 17 does not mean “to follow” or “to obey” or “to support”, but rather “to hone” or “to perfect” or “to make whole” or “to reform” **and** that the Greek word commonly translated as “accomplished” (*genetai*, Strong's #1096) in verse 18 does not mean “obeyed” or “advocated” or “blindly followed”, but rather “to cause to become” or “to enliven” ... NOTE as well that Luke 16:16-17 (“The Law and the prophets were in effect until John came, and since then the Good News of the Kingdom of God is proclaimed. Everyone tries to enter it by force, and yet it is easier for both heaven and earth to pass away than for even a single stroke of a single letter in the Law to fall”) is sometimes used for the same Old-Testament-excusing purpose, and yet it is crucial to realize three things related thereto: **01**) the “Good News” Jesus mentions in verse 16 is *his* Good News – namely the glorious Truth that *his* “Kingdom of God” (mentioned in the same verse) is “already at hand” (i.e. viable in every present moment of every conscious life –see [Matthew 10:7](#) & [Luke 17:20-21](#)) and that entrance into the same is granted to anyone who chooses to persist in selflessly caring for his or her neighbor (primarily the downtrodden in our communities &/or the enemies in our lives – see [Matthew 24:12-14](#) via [Matthew 25:35-40](#) & [Luke 10:29-37](#)), and **02**) the Greek word translated as “fall” in verse 17 (and also commonly & incorrectly translated as “fail”) is *pipto* (Strong's #4098) – a term that specifically relates to something “descending from a higher place to a lower one”, which was exactly how Jesus felt about what the Pharisees were doing to the potential majesties resting latent within the Law (see [Luke 16:14-15](#) et al).

286 Among them being: the denigration of women, the advocacy of gun ownership in the name of “self defense”, the furtherance of war in the name of patriotism &/or profit, the justification of the death penalty and other forms of “fair punishment”, the propagation of racism &/or homophobic bigotry, the “prudent” personal accumulation of material wealth, and the callous abandonment of social services for the poor &/or the underprivileged.

In essence, Jesus made his ministry about showing his listeners & followers that the Law was neither to be blindly followed nor abjectly replaced. Rather it was to be courageously *transcended* by “maxing it out” – by making life a mission not of obedience to religious authorities or revolting against the same, but of perfectly selfless Love instead; a Love that was always within his hearers' power to actualize, and thus a Salvation that was ever within their grasp as well.²⁸⁷ This is why Jesus always stoutly stood up to his Pharisee critics & scribal challengers, this is why Jesus arranged to symbolically (and indeed quite brazenly) reflect the prophecy of **Zechariah 9:9** by “triumphantly” entering Jerusalem during the Festival of Booths by riding on the back of a donkey, this is why Jesus intentionally (and quite melodramatically) overturned the money-changing tables in the Temple and freed all the animals imprisoned therein, this is why Jesus was boldly silent whenever challenged by Jewish & Roman authorities alike, this is why Jesus courageously simplified the Ten Commandments – making them simultaneously more potent and easier for the common folk to enliven (see **Matthew 22:37-40**, **Mark 12:29-31**, & especially **Luke 10:27-28's** “do this and you shall Live”), this is why Jesus told his challengers – with an obvious sense of sarcasm – to “give to the Emperor the things that are the Emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (see **Matthew 22:20-21**, **Mark 12:17**, & **Luke 20:25**) as well as why he (with just as much obvious insincerity) told a similar provocateur to collect his Temple tax from the mouth of a first-caught fish (and this, immediately after having openly proclaimed that “the children are free” from the same obligation – see **Matthew 17:24-27**). And this is also why Jesus warned his listeners that their own end is was nigh, and that all who chose to ignore his ministry's message would suffer greatly during that inevitable demise (see **Matthew 13:47-50**, **Matthew 24:6-22**, **Matthew 24:37-41**, **Matthew 25:31-44**²⁸⁸, **Mark 8:34-38**, **Mark 13:7-20**, **Luke 9:23-26**, **Luke 17:22-35**, **Luke 21:9-28**, **John 5:25-29**, & **John 12:25-26** et al).

Finally (and most importantly), this is why Jesus went out of his way to repeatedly remind his listeners that the “**Spirit of Truth**” (their source of true power and the foundation for their true Salvation) was always their own (see **Matthew 11:25-27**, **Matthew 12:43-45**, **Matthew 13:36-43**, **Matthew 24:23-27**, **Luke 10:21-22**, **Luke 11:24-26**, **John 3:35**, **John 8:34-36**, & **John 10:14-15** et al) and that it ever resided within them (see **Matthew 13:44-46**, **Luke 17:20-21**, **John 14:12-26**, **John 15:26**, & **John 16:7-14** et al); that **now** was always the best time to “remain [selflessly] awake” and thereby attain the same (see **Matthew 24:28**, **Matthew 24:42-51**, **Matthew 25:13**, **Mark 13:32-36**, **Luke 12:35-46**, **Luke 17:37**, **Luke 21:34-36**, & **John 12:30-32** et al), and that all could do so fully & completely by simply enlivening his Way of selfless Love (see **Matthew 7:21**, **Matthew 13:18-23**, **Matthew 16:24-27**, **Matthew 19:17-21**, **Mark 10:19-21**, **Luke 9:23**, **Luke 18:20-22**, **John 8:31-38**, **John 13:15-17**, & **John 17:13-24** et al).

287 ... a la his claim that “the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact will do even greater works than these” in **John 14:12**, his statement “on that day you will know that I am in my Father, and that you are in me, and that I am in you” in **John 14:20**, and his promise that “if you ask anything of the Father **in my name*** He will give it to you” in **John 16:23** – see also **Matthew 7:7**, **Matthew 7:21**, **Matthew 17:19-21**, **Matthew 18:3-4**, **Matthew 18:19**, **Matthew 21:22**, **Mark 11:24**, **Luke 6:46-49**, **Luke 11:9**, **John 13:15-17**, **John 13:34-35**, **John 14:13**, & **John 15:7**.

*NOTE that the verses that have Jesus uttering the phrase “**in my name**” would have been spoken by Jesus as “**b'sheme**”, which is Aramaic for “with my sound” or “in harmony with my way of being.” As such, in harmony with his other self-deprecating statements (see **Mark 10:18**, **John 5:41**, **John 7:16**, **John 8:50-54**, **John 12:44** et al), here Jesus is **not** calling to be himself honored or worshiped, but is rather summoning his listeners to actively *emulate* his teachings. And this interpretation is in full alignment with the actual meaning of his actual name – with the Hebrew *Yehoshua* meaning “God is a saving guide”, with the Aramaic *Yeshua* meaning “he offers salvation” (see also **Matthew 1:21**), and with **Matthew 1:22-23's** *Emmanuel* meaning “God is with(in) us.” Note as well that *Yeshua* might also be a reflection of the past tense of the Hebrew word *t'shuva*, a word that means “to change completely” – a meaning fully in alignment with the Greek word translated as “repent” in the biblical texts (see **Matthew 4:17**, **Mark 1:16** & **Luke 5:32** et al); a word that meant not “to admit wrongdoing” but rather “to fully and actively alter one's way of being.”

288 NOTE as well that the saved “sheep” in **Matthew 25** refer to those on God's “right hand” – i.e. those who have chosen to follow Jesus' Way of humbly loving self-sacrifice, while the “goats” mentioned therein (notorious for their greedily ravenous appetites) are those sitting on God's “left hand” – i.e. those who continue to succumb to temptations of materialistic accumulation and selfish hoardings of pleasure &/or comfort.

In closing then – and as a purely practical matter, if you consider yourself to be a traditional Christian (i.e. a follower of the biblical teachings espoused by the “apostle” Paul²⁸⁹) and someone who sincerely & non-hypocritically believes in adhering to the edicts of the Word of God as found in the Bible, then the contents of this tome have made it no longer possible for you to biblically justify a number of unjust (&/or a the very least uncaring) beliefs; among them in any way denigrating women as less-than-equally-first-class citizens, advocating for weapon ownership in the name of “self-defense,” in any way supporting acts of war (be they in the name of protection or patriotism or profit), justifying or in any way affirming the death penalty or any other similar form of “fair punishment” for violent crimes, propagating racism &/or homophobic bigotry, excusing the “prudent” (or even the “responsible”) accumulation of material wealth, and/or callously seeking to deny social services for &/or assistance to the poor &/or underprivileged. You may without question continue to harbor such beliefs, of course, and yet you most certainly *cannot* correctly claim that they are in any way Christian (seeing as how they are all in direct & obvious violation of The Way of Jesus Christ). For Jesus' teachings in the Gospel (brilliantly provided by both his beautiful words and his bold deeds) encourage us all not to abandon the Law by seeking our own salvation, but rather to *fulfill* the Law – by wholeheartedly transcending the same.²⁹⁰



289 While it is true that Paul told his followers that “Christ is the end of the Law” (Romans 10:4) and that worshipping Jesus Christ as the sole “Son of God” was the key to salvation (see Rome 10:8-9 & 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 et al), Jesus himself regularly & vehemently denounced both of these claims in the Gospels. Yes, it is true that Paul at times seems to lucidly reflect The Way of Christ in his letters (e.g. “Love is the fulfilling of the Law” ~ Romans 13:10), and yet even the most causal of glances at the two men's two very different gospels (Paul's cited above and Jesus' specifically noted in Matthew 10:7 & Matthew 24:12-14) and two very different ministries (Paul's encouraging others to bring personal salvation to themselves and Jesus' empowering his listeners to give peace & joy to others) shows that Paul's call to complete legal abandonment is fully at odds with the teachings of Christ. Intriguingly, Jesus says the same (albeit indirectly – see Matthew 7:15-20 & Mark 13:21-23 et al) and quite interestingly, even Paul himself agrees (“For if there was Glory in the ministry of condemnation, much more does the ministry of liberation abound in Glory! ... Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only ‘in Christ’ is it set aside. To this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.” ~ 2 Corinthians 3:9-15 – refer also to Hebrews 7:18-22 & Hebrews 8:6-13, though Hebrews was admittedly in all probability not written by Paul).

290 In addition to the massive amount of scriptural evidence for this claim already provided herein, NOTE how Jesus – during his infamous critique of the scribes & Pharisees – radically *expands* the practical penumbra of the Law in Matthew 13:13-26; transforming Exodus 21:22's call to cease oppressing the weak into a summons to openly Love them, and morphing Deuteronomy 6:7's call to merely know the Law into a summons to fully enliven the same. Indeed, NOTE as well how he directly recalls Leviticus 18:5 in Luke 10:28 – clearly exclaiming thereby that the Law was finally to be boldly *embodied*, not blindly followed or blandly forsaken.

“Ultimately – at least for those who choose to follow his Way, the gifts of the Master are these: the overwhelming Joy that comes from true freedom, the profound Peace that comes from sincere acceptance, and the raucous inner Revelry that comes from a spiritual transformation that is real – all of which made solely possible by radically living the Bliss that was his perfect Love. The religion of Christianity begins with sin and dead-ends at the “salvation” of the cross. The Way of Christ, however, begins with that same sin but becomes a never-ending intimacy with the heavenly Father via endless acts of humble caring. For in truth, Jesus didn't escape his fleshly death – just as none of us can hope for the same. No, instead Jesus conquered death by choosing to boldly walk The Way – and thereby truly & fully live in the time he had been given. The vast magnificence of this Truth is stunning in this & every moment – but only if we allow it to wash over us; and only if we then act accordingly thereafter. It is a Truth that means that Jesus was everything he claimed to be, and thus so much more than the Christian church allowed him to become.” ~ anonymous



***“And I will take one from a thousand
and two from every ten thousand,
and they shall Become a single One.”***
~ Jesus (Gospel of Thomas 23)