

Rediscovering Jesus in The Jewish Gospels

Lesson 2

Review

- **Two lenses are necessary for focused vision to “rightly divide” or interpret scripture.** Western Gentile church theology has suffered from loss of depth perception without an Old Testament Jewish lens. The New Testament was first viewed only through an O. T. Jewish lens by the Jewish crowds, disciples and Apostles. They were missing the grace for Gentiles lens. It was corrected in Acts 15:11 and clarified through Paul’s epistles.
- **Western Gentile Christians need a Jewish lens to bring into focus the Gospel accounts of the life of Jesus recorded by Jews living in the last 3 & ½ years of the O. T. period, under the Law.**
“when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” Gal. 4:4,5 Matt. 5:17
- **That dispensation of the Law was in effect until Jesus breathed his last breath on the cross. He had to die to take away the O.T./Covenant and to establish the N.T./Covenant.** “this is my blood of the New Testament which is shed” Hebrews 9:12 **When His blood was presented on Heaven's mercy seat, the New Covenant/Testament era began, referred to as the “dispensation of Grace.”** Colossians 2:14

Study Objective for Lesson 2

- **To differentiate between the Gospel of the Kingdom and the Gospel of the death, burial and resurrection**
This is a major cause of misinterpretation in the Book of Matthew. Replacement theology thrives on this error.

We must first address the wrong perception regarding “the Church” and when it began. The argument is that “If the Church Age of Grace ie: New Covenant did not begin until Jesus’ blood was on the mercy seat, then how do you explain Jesus referring to the “church,” before He died?” Stephen referenced the “church in the wilderness.” Acts 7

Diagnosing the Church’s Historic Vision Problem – Jew-lessness

Classical Gentile Christian theology developed during the 1800 year time period when Jews had no homeland nor national identity. They were scattered all over the world as Deuteronomy 28:15-68 foretold. In the minds of theologians, since no nation had existed in the land of Israel (relabelled Palestine) for 1800 years, then Israel no longer existed as a nationality, much less as a spiritual entity. The arrogance of replacement theology that was warned against in Romans 11:18-22 became the standard polity and practice. This spiritually explains the “dark ages” in which a God forsaken “church” with only an institutional form of godliness and only nominally “Christian,” developed corrupt doctrines and a demonic theological anti-Semitism. It was Satan’s greatest counterfeit of the true Church that Jesus built. While the Reformation corrected the doctrine of salvation it retained the same Jew less mindset of replacement of Israel theology. We will see how this was a fulfillment of Jesus’ parable of the “tares among the wheat” in Matthew 13.

Diagnosing our Modern Vision Problem - “Churchianity”

Why do we see church, church, church, everywhere we look in the Gospels? Some even see the Church as beginning in the O.T. time period. The problem is our “Churchianity” focus. I define that as the institutional church rather than original biblical Christianity. The “Church” that Jesus founded is a living organism, not an organization. In the epistles, minimal organizational principles are established. The problem is when the living organism becomes

dominated by a top heavy organization of institutionalism that chokes out the life of the spiritual organism. This is rebuked in the Laodicean Church in Revelation 3:18. As we will see, Jesus condemned the religious hierarchy of Israel for institutionalizing God out of the worship system that He instituted. He intended worship “in spirit and truth.” John 4

“Church” is only mentioned twice in the Gospel text. The most well known one is found in Matthew 16:18, regarding the faith confession. When Peter confessed, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” Jesus replied, “upon this rock **I will build my church.**” It is extremely important to note that His church, to be built by Him, was yet future. The entire focus of Jesus continued to be Him as Messiah, but as far as the kingdom, it became future, no longer, “at hand.” We will look at this Kingdom message and when it began to be predicted as delayed for end times.

The second time “church” is found in the Gospels is in Matthew 18:17; “tell *it* unto the church,” referring to what became the guidelines for, “church discipline,” as churches were established among the Gentiles. (1 Cor. 5; 2 Cor. 2) In both of these instances Jesus used the Greek word “*ekklesia*” meaning assembly. In Matthew 16:18 the nature of the assembly is described as divinely founded to prevail in spiritual warfare. Matthew 18:17 established that future local churches would need to be self-governing, rooting out evil practitioners, as to not to suffer internal spiritual defeat.

However, the Greek word for church from *ekklesia* could also mean an assembly of pagans. “In classical Greek, the word meant only an “assembly” without any implication of it being an assembly of “the people of God.” When the Ephesians filled the stadium praising Dianna, they were called an *ekklesia* Acts 19:32,41. “The mere use of *ekklesia* in Acts 7:38 no more proves that Israel is the church than it’s use in Acts 19:32,41, proves that the pagan Ephesians constituted the Church.”ⁱ The truth is that the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament), used *ekklesia*... because it is the best Greek word to translate the Hebrew *qahal*, emphasizing the congregation of Israel or the assembly of Israel.”ⁱⁱ In Acts 2:47, the 3,000 Jews that received Jesus as Savior, daily assembled corporately in the Temple and from house to house. For the first time, we read that the Lord added daily to an newly existing “church” – *ekklesia*. Therefore the 120 spirit filled disciples were the base church to which 3000 new souls were added. The next time “church” is mentioned in Acts 5:11 is after God killed Ananias and Saphira. Great fear came on the “church.” Clearly the formal assembly of Jewish believers who were first called the “Church,” happened in Acts 2 at Pentecost.

What about the phrase, in Acts 7:38? Stephen mentioned the “church in the wilderness.” Many have taken Stephen’s words out of context to make the argument that Israel is just the O.T. Church which has been replaced by the N.T. Church. Stephen’s message was that their Jewish forefathers even at Mt. Sinai were wicked sinners worshipping the golden calf. If they were the Church then they were the Church of the Golden Calf. He was simply calling them the *ekklesia* or assembly of Israel in the wilderness. It would be ridiculous to assume that Stephen or any Jew under the sound of his voice would have understood that phrase “church in the wilderness” to be viewed in the same family spiritually as the newly born church on the day of Pentecost. In fact at Sinai, 3000 of “the church in the wilderness,” were slain because of lewd idolatry. At Pentecost 3,000 Jews were saved by repenting and placing their faith in Jesus the Lamb of God. The Priest, elders, scribes and even Saul, a chief Pharisee, listening to Stephen, totally rejected any comparison between this new Jewish church with their wicked forefathers much less with themselves. Stephen made it clear that they were the same in wickedness. “Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers.” Acts 7:51-53 They were convicted at being compared to the golden calf worshipers and were incensed for being preached at by a deacon of Jesus’ Jewish church. Stephen’s listeners would doubtless have been opposed to any comparison to the NT style Church in the wilderness. They gnashed on him with their teeth before using stones to silence him. How can one correctly interpret Christ’s phrase of building a “church” in Matthew 16, as being yet future to his time and at the same time misinterpret Stephens use of the word church as an entity that preceding Christ by 2000 years? There is zero reference in the Old Testament texts of Israel being called a “church.” In the context of Stephen’s message, they were simply an assembly at Sinai not an O.T. Church. The Church that Jesus built, ie: “my church,” never replaced His nation or His people.

The Gospel of the Kingdom is confused with the Gospel of the death, burial and resurrection because they both share the word "Gospel," from the Greek word *eu-angel-ion*, literally good news.

What is the Gospel? To determine the answer one must ask, good news about what? It depends on the context, O.T. or N.T. and as we have seen, the life of John the Baptist and of Jesus occurred in the O.T. era. We must first compare and contrast the Gospel of the Kingdom by John the Baptist and Jesus.

John the Baptist preached "saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" Matthew 3:2.

How did John the Baptist tell them to prepare to receive the Gospel of the Kingdom?

- **PREPARE your heart for the Lord**
Luke 3:4 "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways *shall be* made smooth"
- **REPENT**
Matthew 3:2 "Repent ye"
- **BE BAPTIZED**
Matthew 3:6 "were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins."
- **GIVE LIFE EVIDENCE**
Matthew 3:8 "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" Share with the poor. Stop cheating people. Do no violence. Don't falsely accuse. Be content with your wages. Luke 3:10 – 14

Were people that only believed John's message and followed in baptism saved?

- **John the Baptist said:** "I am not the Christ." John 1:19,20
- **John said RECEIVE HIM when He arrives - He will save you.**
Luke 3:6 "And all flesh shall see the salvation of God."
- **The Apostle Paul found disciples of John.** They were not saved because they had only believed John's half of the message – Repent so you can believe on the one who comes after me. **Acts 19:1-5**
- **Even Baptism by John THE Baptist is insufficient to save. In fact, baptism has never saved anyone.**

So how were people saved in the Old Testament ? (which continued until Jesus' death) **Simply by Faith.**

By faith Abraham "believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness." Gen. 15:6

Repentance toward God and Faith in the LORD to forgive and cleanse, is the only way salvation has ever been received.

How were people saved while the Gospel of the Kingdom was being preached by Jesus? **By Faith**

We will see how Jesus clearly explained it in John chapter 3 and rebuffed Nicodemus for being a ruler in Israel yet not knowing this. That means that the message of John 3 is consistent with the salvation message in the Jewish scriptures.

Jesus' Gospel to Nicodemus

- **Scriptural illustration - Moses putting the serpent on the pole** Numbers 21:4-9 was basic Bible history taught to children probably even taught by Nicodemus in his Synagogue.

- God's judgment on sinful, complaining, Israelites was death by serpent bite.
- The people came to Moses repentant over their sin.
- God allowed a substitute for their sin, the likeness of a serpent on a pole.
- God required faith in His promise by looking at the object of their death.
- Salvation physically came when they repented, looked to the cursed snake & trusted God to reverse their death sentence and give them life.
- **Scriptural exposition applied.**

John 3:14-18 The only means of spiritual rebirth is to look to the coming suffering substitute, the Messiah who will be lifted up accursed on a pole/tree, as the substitute to take the punishment of death for our sin.

- **Scriptural investigation was necessary** 3:10 "knowest not these things?" Salvation was clear in the O.T. Jeremiah 31:30-33 describes the new birth. We need a new heart under a new covenant. His death was predicted in Daniel 9:24-27, Psalm 22, Isaiah 53. He was prophesied to die of pierced hands and feet. Zechariah 12:10; 13:6. God commands us to know, worship and kiss His Son. Psalm 2, Proverbs 30:4.

What is The Kingdom?

Jesus continued the message of the O.T. Jewish prophets and the message of John, last prophet.

- "he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the **glad tidings of the kingdom of God**" Mark 1:14, 15.
- "Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the **gospel of the kingdom**" Matt.4:23.
- Again after his opening ministry of healing on the Galilee, "Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching **the gospel of the kingdom.**" Matthew 9:35.
- The Gospel of the Kingdom was preached by Jesus for about two years up until the leaders of Israel rejected Him in Matthew 12:23-32.

Contrasts between the Gospel of the Kingdom and the Gospel of the Death Burial & Resurrection of Jesus

- The Gospel of the Kingdom according to John the Baptist was essentially: Time's almost up. The Messiah's arrival is imminent, "at hand." I am NOT He. Repent and believe in Him because He is almost here.
- The Gospel of the Kingdom according to Jesus was; Time's up. Ready or not, The Messiah is here. Repent and believe now that I am He, before I return as King Messiah.
- Gospel of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, is from the Cross until the Rapture. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

An analogy of how people are saved before and after the cross

When O.T. believers saved by faith, it could be likened to using a credit card. Salvation is received on credit before payment has been made. When N.T. believers are saved by faith it is like using a debit card. Salvation is received and paid for from the resources already on deposit.

- **The core content of salvation has always been repentance toward God for mercy regarding our sin and faith in God based on blood sacrifice, resulting in atonement, and His imparted righteousness** Rom. 10:3,4.
"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." Romans 10:3

In Lesson 3 we will clearly define the Kingdom of God and give an overview of Matthew's Gospel

ⁱ Israelology, Arnold Fruchtenbaum, Ariel Ministries, San Antonio, TX, 2018, p 29

ⁱⁱ Ibid., p166