

JC 107: Hebraisms and Jewish concepts in the New Testament

Lesson 1: Explanation

explanation

False claim: "The New Testament is a Gentile book."

The New Testament was written in Greek, but it was a Jewish Greek.

What was the common spoken language in Israel in the 1st century?

Imagine an American Jew writing a book to other Americans...

Would he write it in Hebrew?

Would his English be "Gentile" English?

The NT Greek is NOT classical Greek. It's a Jewish Greek.

3 ways this is seen

Words Used

Sentence Structure Used

Concepts Taught

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Lesson 2: Examples part 1

Examples

"The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" – Matthew 6:22,23

"eye" - **ὄφθαλμός ophthalmos**

"a single eye" - **ἅπλοῦς haplous (clear, healthy, good)**

"an evil eye" - **πονηρός ponēros (wicked, evil)**

"And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." – John 2:1-5

"What to me and to you?"

"And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now." – John 2:10

"thou hast kept the good wine until now."

The same principle is true here:

"And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched" – Mark 9:43

Another similar Hebraism is the use of negative verbs to represent a strong positive affirmation. For example in Psalms 84:11 we read "*No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*" Note the negative of 'NO good thing' (being withheld) actually inferring the opposite idea that the righteous (walk uprightly), will be given ALL good things (from God).

We see this Hebraism used in John 14:18, "*I will NOT leave you comfortLESS,*" meaning, 'I will both protect and give you a most solid comfort'.

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Lesson 3: Examples part 2

examples

Another common Hebraism was to use the term 'father' to represent the originator or inventor of a new thing or approach. For example in Genesis 4:20 we have '*Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle.*'.

Also, Abraham was known as the 'father of faith'.

John 8:44, "*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.*" Clearly the Jewish people being condemned here by this quote of Jesus, were not literally the off-spring of the (literal) Devil, but were being labeled as such because they were behaving in sinful and unbelieving ways, the origins of which were being laid at the 'feet of the devil', so that the devil was their 'father'.

Another very common Hebraism is to make the 'name' of someone synonymous with that person. This is very common throughout the Tanakh, but we can clearly see its use in Acts 1:15 "*The number of names together were about an hundred and twenty.*"

Does John's Gospel make use of this Hebraism?

Yes, a number of times. For example: John 1:12, "*As many as received him = (Jesus), to them gave he power --- even to them that believe on his name.*"; John 3:18, "*He that believeth on him = (Jesus) is not condemned.*"; and John 20:31, "*Believing ye might have life through = (in) his name.*"

Jesus speaking Hebrew

And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him: and he was nigh unto the sea. And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth

at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live. And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him.

- Mark 5:21-24

While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment. And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat. – Mark 5:35-43

Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself: I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews: Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently. My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them off in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities. Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we

were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. - Acts 26:1-20

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Lesson 4: Jewish concepts

Baptism is Jewish

This originates from the Jewish practice of the Mikvah.

It is a Jewish ritual bath used for many reasons:

- To pronounce one clean
- To symbolize one's conversion
- To commemorate a special event
- To inaugurate a priest

The Messiah is a Jewish Concept

This is the word "Christ" in the New Testament

It is not Jesus' last name

It is His title "The Messiah"

This is the Greek word for Messiah (Cristos)

"Messiah" means "anointed one"

The concept of Messiah originated in the Hebrew Bible. (Psalm 2, Daniel 9...)

Christmas is Jewish

Most of the Bible verse we think of about Christmas are from the Old Testament

Isaiah 7:14

Isaiah 9:6

Micah 5:2

The Davidic Covenant is central

This all happened in Israel!

It's about the birth of the Jewish Messiah!

The local church grew out of a Jewish model.

99% of the early church were Jewish believers

The church was born at the Temple on a Jewish feast (Shavuot) – Pentacost

One of the Greek words translated “church” is “sun-a-go-gue”, or synagogue.

These were local assemblies where prayer was made, and the Bible was taught

Resurrection Sunday (Easter as some refer to it) is inseparably linked with Passover

The one time “Easter” is mentioned in the NT, it is actually the Greek word “Pascha”, and means Passover. The Hebrew is “Pesach.”

Jesus’ last meal and death were on the Passover.

Jesus is called “our Passover” in

1 Corinthians 5:7

The book of Revelation greatly parallels Ezekiel and Daniel, Zephaniah, and others, and focuses on Israel

The Time of Jacob’s Trouble, or “the Tribulation period” is for Israel, and NOT the church

After Revelation 3, we don’t see any mention of any church. Revelation 4 begins the Tribulation period

Paul’s writings are full of Jewish concepts

He begins the book of Romans by saying the gospel is “to the Jew first”

He uses Abraham as an example of one justified by faith

He constantly references Old Testament passages

He contrasts the Law with Grace again and again.

The New Testament is a Jewish book!

EVERY writer of the NT was Jewish (even Luke)!

Colossians 4 is the main reason people think Luke was Jewish

Paul says that to the Jewish people were committed the “oracles of God”, or the Scripture!

Matthew 1:1 - The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.