

# The Gospel According to Matthew

Part I  
Chapters I - IV

Notes and Comments

Biblical Commentary Series

B. P. Harris

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Assembly Bookshelf  
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# Matthew

## Introduction

Author: Matthew

Date: c. 60 A.D.

Historical witness assigns this gospel to Matthew. One of the earliest witnesses was Papias who lived shortly after the death of the apostle John. Regarding this gospel he says, “Matthew put together the oracles [of the Lord] in the Hebrew language, and each one interpreted them as best he could.”<sup>1</sup> Added to this testimony is that of Irenaeus who says the following, “Matthew also issued a written gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome...”<sup>2</sup>

Thus, we have at least two witnesses who say that Matthew—1) was the author of this gospel, and 2) that he wrote his gospel in the Hebrew language; additionally, Irenaeus says that it was written around the time Peter and Paul were supposedly preaching the gospel in Rome. Now we do not have any direct biblical confirmation that Peter ever preached in Rome, but we do have confirmation that Paul preached the gospel in Rome (Acts 28:16-31). Most assign the date for Paul being in Rome around 60AD; therefore, if the witness of Irenaeus is accurate, then the Gospel of Matthew was written sometime around 60AD. (Regarding Peter, some think the reference to she who is in Babylon in his first epistle refers symbolically to Rome, but in all likelihood this refers to the actual area of Babylon where a large Jewish population resided.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, no doubt, he may have also, eventually, preached the gospel in Rome; there certainly is no biblical text that would contradict this historical testimony.)

But, even though Matthew may have originally written his gospel in the Hebrew language, we do not have an extant Hebrew gospel;<sup>4</sup> we only have a Greek gospel. This has led some to believe that the historical witness is inaccurate and that Matthew never composed such a gospel in the Hebrew language, rather, he composed it in Greek. However, others believe he composed both—the Hebrew Gospel first being written around 45 A.D., and the Greek copy being written around 60 A.D. In fact, an early Christian, by the name of Origen, directly affirms his Greek gospel, saying, “Let us now consider what the word *epiousion* [ἐπιούσιον—Matt. 6:11], *needful*, means. First of all it should be known that the word *epiousion* is not found in any Greek writer whether in philosophy or in common usage, but seems to have been formed by the evangelists. At least Matthew and Luke, in having given it to the world, concur in using it in identical form...”<sup>5</sup>

## Matthew

Consequently, if one is able to accept the witness of early Christians regarding the authorship of the Gospel, why would we not accept their witness regarding the language of its composition? (It must be remembered that none of the four Gospels directly identify who wrote them; it is tradition that assigns them to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.) As such, I tend to believe the latter opinion that Matthew first wrote his gospel in Hebrew for the children of Israel, as witnessed by early Christians, and then, at a later time, wrote it in the Greek language for Gentiles. This makes perfect sense since the Scripture clearly states that the gospel was for the Jew first, and then for the Greek, and it was our Lord, Himself, who instructed the apostles to first bear witness in Jerusalem, then Judea, Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Therefore, assuming the historical affirmation that Matthew's Gospel was, indeed, the first gospel written (contrary to modern assertions that Mark was the first gospel) the fact of it being composed in Hebrew for the children of Israel makes perfect sense. And, later, when he was ready to leave the land of Israel and "go into all the world," as the Lord Jesus had instructed him, it also makes sense that he would then translate his Hebrew original into the Greek language, or, perhaps, even enlarge his original gospel into the Greek text we now possess, simply because his ultimate commission was to "make disciples of all nations," and a Greek copy of his gospel would aid him in that task. (Tradition says that Matthew proclaimed the gospel, not only in the regions of Parthia, but also the regions of Ethiopia.)

In fact, this might be behind the gospel's opening declaration that Jesus Christ was not only the son of David (mentioned for his Hebrew audience) but also the son of Abraham (mentioned for his Gentile audience). Abraham, of course, was not only the father of the Hebrew nation, he was also considered a father of many nations (Gen. 17:4, cf. Rom. 4:17).

This fact might also reconcile Irenaeus' statement that the gospel was written in Hebrew at the time of Peter and Paul preaching in Rome. The two different compositions may have become confused, so that in reality, it was the Greek Gospel that was written around the time of Peter and Paul's preaching in Rome, not the Hebrew. (It, more than likely, would have been written around 45 A.D, before Matthew's departure for distant lands.)

But, the end of the matter is this; whatever view one decides to take regarding the gospel's original composition, most would still agree that in the end the Holy Spirit inspired Matthew into composing a Greek copy of his gospel for all nations (which we now possess) without ever compromising its unique Jewish structure and witness.

## Matthew

### **1:1 The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.**

The Greek phrase Βίβλος γενέσεως, “book of the generation” in this verse is used only here and two other places in the Greek LXX, Gen. 2:4 and Gen. 5:1. The word γενέσεως, which is the genitive of γένεσις, carries the meaning of birth, begetting, genealogy or generation. It is used only one other time in Matthew in verse 18 of this chapter where it is translated “birth.” It is important to realize that the word carries the idea of procession and source. It speaks of “coming forth.” The same idea is brought forward in Micah 5:2 which speaks of the “coming forth” as well as of the “goings forth” of the Messiah.

**Micah 5:2** But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he **come forth** unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose **goings forth** have been from of old, from everlasting. KJV

The “coming forth” points to the Messiah’s human generation or begetting from Mary, and the “going forth” points to two different aspects of the Messiah—His going forth *from of old*, referring to all the Old Testament theophanies of the Messiah, and His going forth *from everlasting*, referring to our Lord’s eternal generation from the Father.

Matthew begins with the human generation of the Son from the virgin Mary in time, whereas, for example, John in his Gospel begins with the eternal generation of the Son from everlasting.

Additionally, Matthew takes the human generation from the virgin Mary back to David and Abraham, whereas Luke, in his Gospel, for example, takes his human generation back to Adam. This makes perfect sense when we realize that Matthew’s emphasis is primarily on the Jewishness of the Lord Jesus Christ, whereas Luke’s emphasis is on the overall humanity of our Lord, as the Promised Seed promised to all men (Gen. 3:15), Jew and Gentile alike.

However, perhaps Matthew is also hinting at this universal message of the cross with his decision to

Byzantine Text  
Matthew 1:1  
**Βίβλος γενέσεως**  
Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ,  
υἱοῦ Δαυίδ, υἱοῦ  
Ἀβραάμ.

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reference our Lord's twofold descent from both David and Abraham (before he gives our Lord's genealogy in detail). Why would he do this? Well certainly, as was just said, this emphasizes the Jewish credentials of Jesus as the Messiah, for Abraham was the father of the Jewish nation and David was the king of Israel, of whose seed, we are told, the Messiah would reign forever and ever. But, perhaps, this twofold designation might also hint (as was intimated in the introduction) that the Jewish Messiah was also to be a light unto the nations, for Abraham is also called the father of many nations, and by emphasizing Abraham, as well as David, Matthew would be declaring that the Gospel is for both Jew and Gentile—to the Jew first—yes, but also to the Gentile. (This might also hint that Matthew's Gospel, originally written in the Hebrew language, was later translated into the Greek language by him for the continuing propagation of the gospel of Jesus Christ to every nation.)

As to why Jesus is called the son of David, and the son of Abraham, when it is clear that he was not the immediate child of either, it is simply because it was a common Jewish concept that one's ancestor was seen as one's father, and in the same way one's descendant was seen as one's son. Thus Jesus could be called the son of David, or the son of Abraham.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the Holy Spirit begins the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the idea of "generation" and "procession." Why is this important? It is because this bespeaks the importance of "source." Jesus could only be the Messiah, if the source of his humanity was that of David through the virgin Mary. He had to be of royal lineage. The promise was that the Messiah would be "of" David (See Ps. 132:11).<sup>a</sup> In the same way, he had to be the son of Abraham if he was to be the seed mentioned by Paul in Epistle to Galatians (See Gal. 3:16).<sup>b</sup>

Matthew begins his Gospel with the Messianic credentials of our Lord. He was the son of David, the son of Abraham, the promised Messiah of Israel.

Additionally, the concept of generation addresses

<sup>a</sup> **Psalm 132:11**

The LORD hath sworn *in* truth **unto David**; he will not turn from it; **Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.** KJV

<sup>b</sup> **Gal. 3:16** Now

to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, **And to thy seed, which is Christ.** KJV



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the question of the prophet Isaiah when he asked, “Who shall declare his generation?” (Isa. 53:8).

“He was taken from prison and from judgment: and **who shall declare his generation?** for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.” KJV

The Ethiopian eunuch, upon reading this same passage, asked the same question of Phillip, “of whom does the prophet speak, of himself or some other man?” (Acts 8:34).

Philip answers the question by declaring that Isaiah is speaking of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Acts 8:33-35** In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. <sup>34</sup>And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? <sup>35</sup> Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. KJV

The Greek word “generation” in Acts 8:33, and in Isa. 53:8 LXX, is the Greek word γενεά. Now while the Greek word usually bespeaks a “generation” of people and not, necessarily, the “begetting” of an individual person, it is sometimes used of one’s birth, e.g. Gen. 25:13; 31:3 LXX (the same with the Hebrew word *dor*, e.g. Num. 9:10; Deut. 23:8).

Vine defines the word as follows: “connected with ginomai, “to become,” primarily signifies “a begetting, or birth;” hence, that which has been begotten, a family; or successive members of a genealogy...”<sup>6</sup>

Many early Christians applied this verse to our Lord’s generation (some to His eternal and some to His human generation). Today, many apply it to the generation in which our Lord lived, or to the duration of His life—perhaps so, but I believe it primarily refers to His human generation (apart from Joseph) from Mary, i.e. His miraculous birth from the virgin.

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If this is so, then we can see how Matthew answers the question posed by Isaiah—“who shall declare his generation?” Matthew does so by actually declaring the “**generation**” of Jesus the Messiah. The word “declare,” in Isaiah 53:8 LXX, and in Acts 8:33, is the Greek word διηγέομαι, which carries the idea of describing something in detail. Vine defined it this way: “to conduct a **narration** through to the end.”<sup>7</sup> Matthew gives this narration. He first declares the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham, declaring in detail the genealogy of His birth, His miraculous conception, His virgin birth, and then, continuing on with the **narration** of His life, he concludes with his death, burial and resurrection. How wonderful is the story of Jesus!

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## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Generation speaks of source. What is our “generation?” Of whom are we? What is the source of our life, of our living? Are we sons of God, or sons of disobedience? If we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and believe the good news that Matthew is about to present to us in this Gospel, then we are the sons of God.<sup>c</sup> But if we do not believe the good news of this Gospel. If we doubt that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Messiah, who died for our sins, then, we remain the “sons of disobedience,”<sup>d</sup> upon which the wrath of God will fall.

Or, looking at it from a more general perspective; what is the source of the decisions we make in our life? Are we following the will of God, or do we follow the will of our own heart? Are our decisions “of” God, or are they “of” ourselves?

And, finally, what is the source of our living and work for God? The Lord Jesus said the Son of God could do “nothing of himself” (Jn. 5:19). All that the Son did, he did by the guidance of his Father. He did not dream up great works for God; nor did not use his own creativity to find new ways to do the work of God. He simply followed the will of his Father; he

<sup>c</sup> **Jn. 1:12** But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become **the sons of God**, even to them that believe on his name. KJV

<sup>d</sup> **Eph. 2:1-3** And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in **the sons of disobedience**.

Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. NASB

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simply did what the Father was doing. Even the very words he spoke were the words from God the Father (Jn. 8:28).

May we search our own heart to find out what is the source of our life, our living and work? Are we born again? Are we living for him? Do we follow our own creativity, our own thoughts and ideas, or do we walk by the Spirit of God in Christ Jesus, only doing those things he wills to do through us? After all we are told to walk even as he walked.<sup>e</sup>

If someone was to declare “our” generation, what would they say?

**2 Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren;  
3 And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;**

And so begins the generation of Jesus Christ. And what is interesting is that Matthew, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, introduces four women in the genealogy or human generation of Jesus Christ. The first is Tamar.

The story of Tamar is related to us in Genesis 38. It is a story of broken promises and lack of faith. I believe Tamar is included in order to remind us of all those who attempt to bring about God’s will by their own machinations. Tamar was promised Shelah to raise up the lineage of Er, Judah’s first born son who had died. She should have trusted God and waited for Him to bring the promise to fruition in His own time, and if He chose not to, be willing to bow to the will of God, being willing to die alone, bereft of children. This, indeed, is not an easy choice; it can only be borne by the grace of God. But rather than trusting God, she became impatient, and conspired to bring about the desire of her heart by her own means.

Yet, in all this Tamar was labeled more righteous than Judah, and so was forgiven.<sup>f</sup> But, obviously, Tamar was not righteous in her act of enticement, immorality, and deception. She was more righteous

<sup>e</sup> **I John 2:6** He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. KJV

<sup>f</sup> **Genesis 38:26** And Judah acknowledged them, and said, **She hath been more righteous than I;** because that I gave her not to Shelah my son. And he knew her again no more. KJV

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only in “comparison” to Judah. And so, if Tamar was considered more righteous than Judah, what does this tell us about the character of Judah. Scripture suggests that if Judah’s character was upright, Tamar could never have considered such a course of action.

And so, by this inclusion of Tamar into the genealogy of Jesus, we have our attention drawn to a specific time in the life of Judah. It introduces into the genealogy of our Lord a reminder of the need for **mercy, forgiveness** and **fidelity**. Judah should have honored his pledge to Tamar. He did not; yet Matthew will show that Judah’s descendant, the coming Messiah, will be, unlike Judah, **faithful** in all ways, **merciful** and **full of forgiveness**.

**4 And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon;  
5 And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;**

The next woman introduced into the genealogy of our Lord is Rahab in verse 5. Rahab, like Tamar, was engaged in immorality. However, with Rahab it was more than a lapse of judgment, it was a way of life. Nevertheless, Rahab repented of her way of life and trusted in the Lord God Almighty and so was delivered.

Rahab speaks of **faith** and **deliverance**. She was delivered by Joshua and became the great, great grandmother of David. The inclusion of Rahab into the genealogy of our Lord brings the fact that faith brings salvation and deliverance. It brings to the forefront that the Jesus the Messiah will be a Saviour, like Joshua. And like, Joshua, he will grant **deliverance** to those who **believe** in Him.

Next we have Ruth introduced in verse 5. Ruth was the great, grandmother of David. Unlike, Tamar or Rahab, Ruth was a righteous Gentile. She left her Gentile background and pledged her fidelity to the God of Israel (Ruth 2:10-12; 3:11) <sup>g</sup>

She too was a widow like Tamar, but unlike Tamar, she had faith in God’s provision and so

<sup>g</sup> **Ruth 3:11** And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman. KJV

**Ruth 2:11-12** Boaz replied to her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know. "May the LORD reward your work, and your wages be full from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge." NASB

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refused to return to the heathen gods of her people (Ruth 1: 15-17). Also, unlike Tamar she was willing, if necessary, to die childless (Ruth 1:17). Thus, Boaz prayed the Lord would reward Ruth for her faith and fidelity.

Ruth did not resort to sin to achieve her ways or to bring about her security. She remained faithful in her virtue and waited on God, trusting in his goodness and grace.

Ruth bespeaks **the provision of God**. By her inclusion in the genealogy of our Lord we are reminded that even in our own righteousness and virtue, we are still in need of a Deliverer.<sup>h</sup> The Lord accomplished this with Ruth by a Kinsman-Redeemer.

The story of Ruth points to the Kinsman-Redeemer of all mankind, and, as such, Matthew includes Ruth in the genealogy of Jesus to remind us that Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Jesse, the son of Boaz, will be the **Kinsman-Redeemer** of all mankind,<sup>i</sup> not only for the Jew, but also for the Gentile, both sinner and saint, “for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

**6 And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias;**

The last woman in the genealogy of our Lord is not named, but we know it was Bathsheba. The Greek text simply uses the feminine article τῆς as a pronoun. The words “that had been the wife” are not in the Greek text, but are supplied in English to complete the thought.

I believe this is significant because the purpose for her inclusion was not for us to focus on Bathsheba, per se, but to focus on this time in the life of David (II Sam. 11: 1-27).

Scripture says that this was the one great failure of David.<sup>j</sup> He committed not only adultery with Bathsheba, but also killed her husband by his intrigue with Joab. According to the Law of Moses such

<sup>h</sup> **Titus 3:5a** Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us. KJV

<sup>i</sup> **Job 19:25** For I know *that* my redeemer liveth, and *that* he shall stand at the latter *day* upon the earth: KJV

<sup>j</sup> **I Kings 15:5** Because David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. KJV

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action demanded death. King David should have been put to death for his sin (Lev. 20:10).<sup>k</sup> And yet, we find that the LORD spared the life of David. II Sam. 12:13 (NASB) says,

**II Sam. 12:13** Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has **taken away** your sin; **you shall not die.**" However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you **shall surely die.** NASB

David's life was spared, but we do find that the LORD required the life of the innocent baby. He said that the child that is born to you shall surely die.

What is interesting in this passage is that the same Hebrew word translated "taken away" (*abar*) is the same Hebrew word used of the Passover night (albeit with a different sense) when the Lord "**passed**" through the land of Egypt in judgment.<sup>1</sup>

In one sense, we see the LORD passing over the sin of David, without judgment. **But judgment still had to come, and that judgment fell on the little innocent baby.**

How horrible must David had felt, knowing that for his sin an innocent baby must die. All the darkness of sin that should have fallen upon him, instead, fell upon one who was innocent of the sin.

Dear brethren, we all are like David. Even though we may have not sinned like King David, we all have sinned, and sin requires judgment and that judgment is death! "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23), "The soul that sins must die." (Eze. 18:20), and "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). If not us, who will die for our sins?

I believe that Matthew included the last women in the genealogy of our Lord to focus our attention on a little baby he will soon introduce. This little child must also suffer because of sin, but not because of the sin of one man, but because of the sins of all mankind!

This was that holy Child, who all one day would turn against.<sup>m</sup> This was the one who was not only

<sup>k</sup> **Lev. 20:10** If there is a man who commits adultery with another man's wife, one who commits adultery with his friend's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. NASB

<sup>1</sup> **Ex. 12:12** For I will **pass** (*abar*) through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord. KJV

<sup>m</sup> **Acts 4:27-28**

For of a truth against thy **holy Child Jesus**, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

<sup>28</sup> For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. KJV

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innocent as David's young child was innocent, but, unlike David's child, was also pure and innocent even in his *nature*. Not only did He not have one taint of sin in his Person, He had no sin nature, being born of a virgin, unlike the child of David and Bathsheba. He was the innocent One, who took upon Himself the likeness of sinful flesh<sup>n</sup> to die for our sins!

Yes, the wages of sin is death, **but he bore our sins in his own body upon the cross.**<sup>o</sup> He who knew no sin, became sin in our behalf<sup>p</sup> that we might live and live unto eternal life. What blessed thought is this!

So we see four women introduced into the genealogy of our Lord: Tamar – bespeaking the “Faithful One” who would come, Rahab – bespeaking the “Saviour” who would come, Ruth – bespeaking the “Kinsman-Redeemer” who would come, and, finally, her who was of Uriah – bespeaking the “Holy Child” who would come to die for the sins of the world! Amen.

**7 And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa;**

**8 And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias;**

**9 And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias;**

**10 And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias;**

**11 And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon:**

**12 And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel;**

**13 And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor;**

**1:14 And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud;**

**1:15 And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob;**

**1:16 And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of**

<sup>n</sup> **Rom. 8:3** For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the **likeness of sinful flesh**, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: KJV

<sup>o</sup> **I Pet. 2:24** And He Himself **bore our sins in His body on the cross**, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. NASB

<sup>p</sup> **II Cor. 5:21** He made Him who knew no sin **to be sin on our behalf**, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. NASB

## Matthew

### **Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.**

When we come to verse 16 we see a change in the Greek text of the genealogies. In the preceding cases, where a woman was introduced into the lineage, we find the direct assertion that the father begat a son, “ἐκ,” (out of) the woman; for example of Ruth it says, Βοὸζ δὲ ἐγέννησεν τὸν Ὠβηδ ἐκ τῆς Ῥούθ (Boaz begat Obed “of” Ruth). The verb “begat,” (ἐγέννησεν), being a transitive verb in the active voice, with the object, the child, being in the accusative case, clearly shows that the named father was the one doing the begetting.

This structure, however, is changed in this verse. The verb begat is now in the passive voice and the direct object that was in the accusative case, now becomes the subject in the nominative case. The father, in this case, Joseph, is no longer presented as the one doing the begetting. Nor is the son, in this case, Jesus, shown as the object, i.e. the one begotten by Joseph. Joseph is not presented as the begetter of Jesus! This is completely different than all the previous examples in the genealogy.

The change from the active to the passive voice slows the reader down and makes him pause and wonder, “What is Matthew trying to say?” “Why does he change his format?” “Why does he not directly say Joseph begat Jesus?”

Nor, do we find a direct agent in this begetting; normally, with passive verbs, this can be done by the use of the preposition ὑπο and the genitive. In other words, normally it would read, “so and so (the child) was begotten by so and so (the father). Yet the passive verb in this verse is used without a direct agent. Why? “What is Matthew trying to tell us?” “Why does he not use a direct agent?” I believe there are a number on reason for this.

First, it dramatically breaks the flow of the text or genealogy where each father was shown to be the begetter of the son. This demonstrates that the reader



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should understand there is a different relationship between Joseph and Jesus.

Second, it grammatically allows an implied agent, (which in verse 18 will be shown to be none other than the Holy Spirit). Thus Matthew lays the groundwork for his presentation of the virgin birth.

And, third, it also allows an indirect agent to be introduced, which I believe Matthew shows to be none other than the virgin Mary.

Jesus was not only the Eternal Son, very God of very God, as to his Deity, but was he was also very Man of very Man, as to his humanity. Yet he was not directly “of” man in his begetting. Therefore, the only way he could be of man, meaning “of” David, “of” Abraham, and ultimately “of” the first man, Adam, was for him to receive his human nature from his mother Mary, who was, indeed, a descendant of David, Abraham and Adam. He did not receive His human nature through his father Joseph. This is the tremendous declaration of Matthew—the birth of our Saviour was a virgin birth as prophesied in Isa. 7:14.<sup>q</sup> Jesus was begotten “of” Mary, “out” of Mary, not out of Joseph.

Furthermore, the Greek word, ἐγεννήθη, translated “born,” in Matthew 1:16, is the same Greek word translated “begat” in all the other instances in the genealogy of our Lord. (It has a different ending simply because ἐγεννήθη is the passive form and ἐγέννησεν is the active). Most think that begetting is a verb reserved only for the male. This is not so. The Holy Spirit also uses the word for the female. It is used in this way with Mary and is also used in this way with Elizabeth in Luke 1:57 where it appears in the active form just like it does here in Matthew when it is used of those fathers in the genealogy.<sup>f</sup>

It is the exact same word and should be understood to have the same meaning with Mary as it had with the aforementioned fathers in the genealogy. However, most English translations do not bring this out, translating the word as “born.” But one English translation that does bring out this fact is Young’s Literal Translation. He translates the word as

<sup>q</sup> **Isa. 7:14**  
Therefore will the Lord himself give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and shall **bring forth** a son, and call his name Immanuel. (Darby’s Version)

<sup>r</sup> **Luke 1:57** Now Elisabeth’s full time came that she should be delivered; and she **brought forth** a son. KJV  
**Luke 1:57** Τῇ δὲ Ἐλισάβετ ἐπλήσθη ὁ χρόνος τοῦ τεκεῖν αὐτήν καὶ ἐγέννησεν υἱόν.

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“begotten.”<sup>s</sup>

Part of the confusion may result from a misunderstanding of the word. The basal meaning of the word is to “bring forth.” When used of the male it refers to his part in “bringing forth” a child, and when used of the female it refers to her part in “bringing forth” a child.

In the Old Testament, for instance, in the aforementioned verse in Isaiah 7:14, where the virgin birth is prophesied, the word that is used for begat is the Hebrew word “yalad.” Yalad also carries the basal sense of “bring forth,” (as can be seen in Darby’s translation of the verse). And, as with the Greek word ἐγεννήθη (γεννάω), it is also used with the female gender, (e.g. Isa. 7:14; Gen. 3:16), and with the male gender, (the genealogy in Gen. 11: 10-26).

Therefore, when we are told in this verse in Matthew that Jesus was ἐγεννήθη, we are being told he was begotten “out” of Mary and not “out” of Joseph. This insures our Lord’s virgin birth, the importance of which, we will bring out later.

How wonderful is this verse in Matthew. It lays the foundation for our salvation. In Scripture, a sacrifice for sin has to be without blemish. Because Jesus was born of a virgin, he was without blemish; he was sinless, pure and innocent. He did not have a sin nature! Some believe this is because he was begotten of a virgin and not by Joseph, for the sin nature may, indeed, be passed on by the male progenitor in conception. Jesus was “of” Mary and not “of” Joseph. And this brings us to our last point.

Jesus, for our salvation, needed to be very God of very God and very Man of very Man. By being God, his death was efficacious, by being Man his death was “securing;” it allowed him to die for our sins (Heb. 2: 9-16). We will see in verse 18 how he is very God of Very God, but in this verse we see he was very Man of very Man. It is heretical to diminish the Divine nature of our Saviour. He was co-equal, co-eternal and consubstantial with God his Father. But it is also heretical to diminish his human nature.

<sup>s</sup> **Matt. 1:16** And Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was **begotten** Jesus, who is named Christ.— Young’s Literal Translation

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He had to be made like unto us in all points for him to effect our salvation. And this was accomplished by being begotten of Mary.

**Hebrews 2:16-17** For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. <sup>17</sup> Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

Tertullian, an early Christian, has an excellent comment on the reality of our Lord's human nature as declared in this verse. He stated:

But to what shifts your resort, in your attempt to rob the syllable ἐκ (of) of its proper force as a preposition, and to substitute another for it in a sense not found throughout the Holy Scriptures! You say that He was born **through** a virgin, not **of** a virgin, and in a womb, not of a womb, because the angel in the dream said to Joseph, "That which is born in her" (not of her) "is of the Holy Ghost." But the fact is, if he had meant "of her," he must have said "in her;" for that which was of her, was also in her. The angel's expression, therefore, "in her," has precisely the same meaning as the phrase "of her." It is, however, a fortunate circumstance that Matthew also, when tracing down the Lord's descent from Abraham to Mary, says, "Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Christ." But Paul, too, silences these critics when he says, "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman." Does he mean through a woman, or in a woman? Nay more, for the sake of greater emphasis, he uses the word "made" rather than born, although the use of the latter expression would have been simpler. But by saying "made," he not only confirmed the statement, "The Word was made flesh," but he also asserted the reality of the flesh which was made of a virgin.<sup>8</sup>

How wonderful is this verse of Scripture that lays the foundation for our salvation!

**17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the**

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**carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.**

Matthew divides the generations from Abraham to Jesus into three equal groupings of fourteen generations (counting inclusively).

Now we know by comparing the different genealogies recorded for us in Scripture that there were more generations than is shown by Matthew. But this does not mean that the Bible contradicts itself, for it was not an unusual custom of the Jews to sometimes vary their genealogies for specific purposes.

For instance, compare the two genealogies of Ezra ancestors in I Chronicles 6: 1-14 and Ezra 7:1-5. Ezra, as you can see (see Fig. 1), left out *Amariah*, *Ahitub*, *Zadok*, *Ahimaaz*, *Azariah*, and *Johanan* from his record. This was not because Ezra made a mistake. The priests were very meticulous regarding their genealogical records. It is simply because it was not uncommon for Jews to give highlights of one's genealogical record for specific purposes.

This is not that unusual. Even in the English language we might do this. However, since we do not have the Hebrew mentality where a "grandson" or a "great-grandson" would also be known as a "son," we would probably use a more generic word as "descendant." Thus, as an example, if a Mayflower descendant, (in fact, one whom I personally know), wanted to speak of his genealogy in America, which goes back to 1620, he might say that he was a descendant of so and so, who was a descendant of so and so, who was a descendant of so and so, who was a descendant of so and so, who was a descendant of Isaac Allerton on the Mayflower. Now, the fact that he only mentions five generations, does not mean he does not know the names of other descendants in the record, it only means he picked a few ancestors from each century to demonstrate his lineage.

# Matthew

**Fig. 1**

| I Chronicles 6: 1-14 | Ezra 7:1-5 |
|----------------------|------------|
| Aaron                | Aaron      |
| Eleazar              | Eleazar    |
| Phinehas             | Phinehas   |
| Abishua              | Abishua    |
| Bukki                | Bukki      |
| Uzzi                 | Uzzi       |
| Zerahiah             | Zerahiah   |
| Meraioth             | Meraioth   |
| <i>Amariah</i>       |            |
| <i>Ahitub</i>        |            |
| <i>Zadok</i>         |            |
| <i>Ahimaaz</i>       |            |
| <i>Azariah</i>       |            |
| <i>Johanan</i>       |            |
| Azariah              | Azariah    |
| Amariah              | Amariah    |
| Ahitub               | Ahitub     |
| Zadok                | Zadok      |
| Shallum              | Shallum    |
| Hilkiah              | Hilkiah    |
| Azariah              | Azariah    |
| Seriaiah             | Seriaiah   |
| _____                | _____      |
| Ezra                 | Ezra       |

Therefore, we see Matthew did not make a mistake in his genealogy of Jesus. Sometimes the Jews might shorten their records for the purpose of emphasis, whereby they might show forth only the most important personages in the record, much like was done in the first verse of this chapter. In fact, we have a very concise and shortened genealogy of Jesus in the first verse of this chapter. Jesus was the son of David, the son of Abraham!—a short, but accurate genealogy from a Hebrew mindset!<sup>t</sup>

Other times, Israelites might shorten their genealogies for the purpose of memorization. That

<sup>t</sup> **Matt. 1:1** The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham  
KJV

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might be the case for this record before us. Matthew might have shortened the genealogy into three groups of fourteen in order to facilitate memorization.

However, I think there was another reason why Matthew shortened this genealogy, and this, of course was done under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. By shortening the record into groups of fourteen, the number fourteen is emphasized. Why is this? Is the number fourteen significant?

I remember a sermon preached upon this passage by Charles L. Feinberg either in the late 1960's or early 1970's (sorry, I cannot remember the exact date). Now, Charles Feinberg was raised as an Orthodox Jew, and while he was preparing for the rabbinate, after graduating from the Hebrew Institute of Pittsburgh, he met the Messiah in his heart and became a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ in 1930. He later became the first dean of Talbot Theological Seminary, having before been a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary.

In this sermon he mentioned that the reason he believed Matthew divided the genealogy into fourteen generations was to emphasize that Jesus was the son of David. You see, in the Hebrew language, numbers are assigned to letters of the alphabet and the three letters in the name of **David** (דָּוִד),<sup>u</sup> Dalet, Vav, Dalet, (the Hebrew alphabet had no vowels), add up to fourteen! David was a revered King in Israel, and every Jew knew the Messiah would be the son of **David**. By grouping the genealogies into three groupings of fourteen, Matthew is emphasizing the number fourteen, which emphasized the fact that Jesus was the Messiah, was the promised son of **David**!

How wonderful was this sermon. But I think there might be further reason why Matthew, or should I say the Holy Spirit, grouped our Lord's lineage into three groupings of fourteen.

Fourteen, as Charles Feinberg mentioned, refers to Jesus as being the son of David. This, I believe can be taken to refer to our Lord's humanity. He was the son of David, the son of Abraham, the son of Adam.

<sup>u</sup> **Ruth 4:22** ועבד הוליד את־ישי וישי הוליד את־דוד

**Ruth 4:22** And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David.

## Matthew

He was the Promised Seed! He truly was the Son of Man. But we know he also was the Son of God! How might this be shown?

Is it not interesting that Matthew divides the record into “three” groupings of fourteen, rather than shortening the genealogy even more, (as we have already shown was an acceptable practice), into one group of fourteen ancestors or generations. Why did he group it into “three” groups? Could it not be because he begins his Gospel as he ends his Gospel.

He ends his Gospel in Matt. 28:19 with Three Persons who are one in Essence, Nature and Being – the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Could it not be that he begins his Gospel with three groupings in order give a quiet “hint” to the Blessed Trinity, and show that the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, was none other than the eternal Son of God, the second Person of the Eternal and Blessed Trinity?

So, perhaps, the number fourteen points to the Human Nature of our Lord, and the number three ultimately points to the Divine Nature of our Lord. Two Natures unionized in one Person, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation. What a wonderful Saviour is Jesus our Lord!

**1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.**

In this verse we have, what some have labeled a “subsequent infinitive,” which means the action of the infinitive occurs “subsequent” to the action of the main verb. Or one could say the action of the main verb occurs “before” the action of the infinitive.

The key for understanding this is the preposition πρὶν + ἢ + the infinitive, which in this case is the infinitive συνελθεῖν (come together), being used in relationship with the main verb, which in this case, is εὑρέθη (was found).<sup>v</sup> And in this verse Matthew places the subsequent infinitive before the main verb.

<sup>v</sup> **Matt. 1:18** Τοῦ δὲ Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ ἡ γέννησις οὕτως ἦν. Μνηστευθείσης γὰρ τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ Μαρίας τῷ Ἰωσήφ, πρὶν ἢ συνελθεῖν αὐτοῦς, εὑρέθη ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχουσα ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου.

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(It equally could have been placed after the main verb and the sentence would still have said the same thing). So why place it before? Sometimes in Greek this is done for emphasis. In other words, Matthew is emphasizing that Joseph and Mary had never come together. He is emphasizing that Jesus was not begotten of Joseph. Joseph was not the natural father of Jesus. He was his legal father, for although Joseph was married to Mary, he was not his natural father, for Joseph and Mary had never come together in physical union.

However, this, in and of itself, does not demonstrate that it was a virgin birth, for one might conjecture that Mary was with child by someone else, whereby Jesus would be born illegitimately. In fact, this was a blasphemous charge that was circulated among the people concerning our Lord, as is shown in John 8:39-42.<sup>w</sup>

However, nothing could be further from the truth. In the very next phrase, he tells us Jesus was “of” the Holy Spirit. Mary was with child, not of Joseph, nor, as some blasphemously suggested of someone else, but she was with child “of” the Holy Spirit! This bespeaks the virgin birth of our Lord.

Matthew tells us very plainly that Jesus was “of” Mary in verse 16. Matthew used the same language used for the male gender and applied it to Mary. This showed that Jesus was Very Man of Very Man. He received his human nature out of Mary. This was done to secure our salvation as we already mentioned.

But Matthew also uses the very same language and says that Jesus was also “of” the Holy Spirit. In verse 16 he says, *Μαρίας, ἐξ ἧς ἐγεννήθη Ἰησοῦς* (Mary, out of whom was begotten Jesus). In verse 18 he says Mary was with child, *ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου*, (out of the Holy Spirit). Both prepositions are the same. (It is just that in Greek ἐκ is written ἐξ before vowels). This shows us that in one Person the divine nature of our Lord was unionized with the human nature that was out of Mary by a direct miracle of the Holy Spirit. Mary did not begot a human person in

<sup>w</sup> **John 8:39-42**

They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. 40 "But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. 41 "You are doing the deeds of your father." They said to Him, "**We were not born of fornication;** we have one Father: God."42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. NASB



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and of herself, to which, of the Holy Spirit, a Divine Nature was added. No, the child was begotten of Mary and of God in one indivisible act. Thus it should be noted that the Divine Nature was not unionized with a human person, as if the Divine Nature of the Son was unionized with a human person named Jesus. No, the Divine Nature of the Son was unionized with the human nature from Mary in one Person, i.e. the second Person of the Godhead. It was an incarnation through unionization. He was truly Man—spirit, soul and body, but the personhood of Jesus was in the eternal Person of the Son. Theologically, this is called *enhypostasis*. The personhood of Jesus is the Personhood of the eternal Son. This also shows that the human nature of Jesus was *anhypostatic*. The human nature was impersonal. In other words, the Eternal Son did not unionize with a human individual named Jesus. This was one of the heresies of early Gnosticism. They taught that the Divine Person descended upon a human individual named Jesus. Scripture prohibits such an understanding.

Another thing that this shows is that Jesus was not the result of some sexual union of God and Mary, as some have blasphemously suggested. (Of course, such a thing would be impossible for God is not human as some cults have suggested). Rather the Holy thing was the result of the Divine Incarnation of the Eternal Son, the Word of God <sup>x</sup> made flesh, by the mutual working of the Blessed Trinity—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

It was a work of the Father, for Luke says the power of the Most High shall overshadow you (Luke 1:35).<sup>y</sup> And three verses earlier Luke says that Jesus shall be called the Son of the Most High.<sup>z</sup> The Most High God is none other than God the Father.

It was the work of the Son, for the Son also took part in his own incarnation. Paul tells us in Phil. 2:7-8 that the Son “emptied himself,” taking on the form of a servant. The verb “empty” and the participle “take” are in the active voice in Greek, which demonstrate that the subject is the one performing the action. The

<sup>x</sup> **John 1:14** And the **Word was made flesh**, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. KJV

<sup>y</sup> **Luke 1:35** And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and **the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee**: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God. ASV

<sup>z</sup> **Luke 1:32** He shall be great, and shall be **called the Son of the Most High**: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: ASV

## Matthew

subject of the verb in this case, of course, is the Son. Also we find that the next participle, γενόμενος, (being made), is in the middle voice. And, even though Paul used the reflexive pronoun ἑαυτὸν (himself) with the other participles, and with this one he does not, he may still be using the middle voice of this participle, in its reflexive sense, to further indicate that it was the Son, Himself, who also participated in his own incarnation.<sup>a</sup>

These two participles then would be considered participles of means, showing how the Son emptied himself. He emptied himself of his glory by “taking” on the form of a servant, and by “making himself” in likeness of men, or as Paul says in another epistle in the “likeness of sinful flesh.”

And finally, it was the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit came upon Mary so that the child would be “of” the Holy Spirit, as we have seen. As the Holy Spirit was the creative breath of God in the Old Creation, so too, the Holy Spirit took part in this New Creation. A body was prepared for our Lord, as writer of Hebrews says in 10:5.

**Hebrews 10:5** Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: KJV

A new thing was created, as Jeremiah says in 31:22.

**Jeremiah 31:22** How long wilt thou go hither and thither, O thou backsliding daughter? for Jehovah hath created a new thing in the earth: a woman shall encompass a man. ASV

In other words, by the creative act of the Holy Spirit, the humanity of our Lord was prepared “out of” and “in” Mary, so that the Divine Logos might be made flesh. \*

So we see the Lord Jesus Christ was also Very God of Very God, and by the mutual working of all Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, was made flesh. The incarnation was the only way the death of a man could be efficacious. He was more than an ordinary

<sup>a</sup> **Phil. 2:7-8** but **emptied** Himself, **taking** the form of a bond-servant, and **being made** in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. NASB

\* A most excellent note on this verse is made by Jamieson, Fausett and Brown. See the comment at the end of this first chapter.

## Matthew

man, for he was the God Man by the miraculous conception in Mary – of Mary and of the Holy Spirit. Only He, who was of the same substance as God, (homousios), could be acceptable to God (Eph. 1:3-6). Only He, who is none other than the LORD God Almighty, could save us from our sins. He is Jehovah † and we are accepted in the Beloved because he is consubstantial (one) with the Father, and he is Man, the Promised Seed, of Mary and of Eve. This is everything the phrase “of the Holy Spirit” affirms.

How wonderful is our Lord Jesus Christ. Truly a child was born, and a Son was given and his name is Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6).

† See the excursus,  
ON THE NAME  
JEHOVAH, below

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### EXCURSUS ON THE NAME JEHOVAH

In the Holy Scriptures, the Hebrew letters YHWH make up the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Ancient Hebrew writing had no vowels, or any vowel designations. Therefore, since no one knows which vowels make up the correct pronunciation of YHVH, the pronunciation of YHVH is simply not known. Out of respect for the sacredness of the name, most Jews, from shortly before the days of Christ, simply would pronounce Adonai when reading YHVH, and because of Deut. 12:3-4, they would be circumspect in writing the actual name. God’s name is holy and we should always revere His name.

The Jewish Encyclopedia says this regarding this regarding the name.

“JEHOVAH: A mispronunciation (introduced by Christian theologians, but almost entirely disregarded by the Jews) of the Hebrew "YHWH," the (ineffable) name of God (the Tetragrammaton or “Shem ha-Meforash”). This pronunciation is grammatically impossible; it arose through pronouncing the vowels of the “kere” ... Adonay... with the consonants of the “ketib”...YHWH... These substitutions of “Adonay” and “Elohim” for YHWH were devised to avoid the profanation of the Ineffable Name.”<sup>9</sup>

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Today, most Christians accept the fact that Jehovah (the Latinized form of Yahovah) is no longer considered to be the actual pronunciation of the Hebrew name. Nevertheless the name Jehovah has become a common English appellation used by many English speaking Christians for the name YHVH. But, just because it may be an incorrect pronunciation, does not mean the name should be rejected out of hand by English speaking Christians; it simply means it should just be recognized as one of many English translations of the Hebrew name YHVH (sometimes YHWH)—others being Yahweh, Yahveh and LORD.

The most common appellation used by English speaking Christians (and Jews) is the name LORD. Yet, no one rejects LORD because it is not an exact equivalent to YHWH. Most, simply accept it as the English translation for YHWH; in the same way, most accept the English “God” as an acceptable translation for the Hebrew “Elohim.”

In this same way, Jehovah, has become an acceptable translation of YHVH even though, obviously, most do not consider it an exact equivalent to YHVH. What is important to realize is that no one knows the exact pronunciation of YHVH, so, unless one wants to adopt the pronunciation of Adonai, or Ha-Shem for YHVH, Jehovah, Yahweh, Yahveh, or LORD are all acceptable translations of the Tetragrammaton into a foreign tongue. If that is understood, then I do not believe there is anything wrong with using Jehovah as a translation of YHVH, any more than using LORD. After all, most Jews (if not all) reject Jehovah as an accurate pronunciation of the name, so, obviously, no one can be guilty of taking His Name in vain, as some think would be the case if that was an accurate pronunciation. It becomes just another English translation of the name like LORD.

It does not seem that God’s names, necessarily, have to be “transliterated” into another language when one undertakes a translation of the Scriptures.

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Nor, does it seem that God requires a correct pronunciation of His name, when His name is so translated. The Jews did not do so when they translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek. For example, they did not transliterate, and thereby insure a correct pronunciation of “Elohim” in Greek, but rather they used the Greek word θεός (Theos). This is all the more amazing because θεός was used of pagan deities in Greek language! (In the Old Testament, Elohim was the name revealed by God, and it was man who dishonored it by using it of pagans.) In the same way, YHVH was translated by the Greek Κύριος, (Kurios) a nomenclature also used of pagan deities and humans pretending to be divine.

In fact, when we come to the New Testament, the Holy Spirit of God, Himself, by inspiration, chose not to transliterate His own name into the Greek language for correct pronunciation and/or correct form; He too uses θεός and Κύριος. So, if we use the precedent of God Himself, it cannot be wrong to do the same thing, and use a different written form and/or pronunciation, when translating the names of God into English. After all, the name Jehovah, at least, retains the equivalent written consonants of God’s name—JeHoVaH—even though it may not be the correct pronunciation. At least, its Latinized letters are closer to יהוה (YHVH) in consonantal form than the English LORD, and LORD is the common translation used by both Jews and Christians alike in their English translations of Scripture. So if one does not reject LORD because of its inaccurate written form and pronunciation, then one certainly cannot reject the English JEHOVAH.

With all that being said, sometimes, throughout this book, we might use the designation Jehovah, the written form YHWH, or YHVH, and most certainly, most of the time, the name LORD, and/or Lord (in this case, Lord, meaning the same thing as LORD, and not, necessarily, meaning just Master, or Adonai). They all are acceptable English translations of the Hebrew יהוה, the wonderful name of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

# Matthew

Exodus 6:3 And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them. KJV

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**1:19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.**

Joseph must have been greatly distressed upon learning that Mary was with child. How did this happen? What was he to do?

He probably was heartbroken that his betrothed might have been unfaithful (that is in him mind). But who? He knew most people in Nazareth. What a terrible time that must have been for Joseph.

Nevertheless, he still loved Mary and did not want to publicly shame her, for according to the Law of Moses, such sin could result in a judgment of death.<sup>b</sup>

Now, Joseph was a righteous man, but he was also a merciful man. He knew the character of his espoused wife. He knew she was a faithful daughter of Israel. Mary must have had a reputation that was well-respected, for she was one who had found favor before God (Luke 1:30).<sup>c</sup> And she must have been known as one who trusted in God, for her faith was well recognized by Elizabeth, as is mentioned in Luke 1:45.

**Luke 1:45** And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. KJV

And so, because of his love, Joseph considered another option. He could put her away privately with a bill of divorcement<sup>d</sup> and the situation would not have to become a public affair where she most certainly would have been put to shame, and, under certain conditions, could have been judged to have committed a capital crime.

But some might wonder, well, if Joseph was a

<sup>b</sup>**Deut. 22:23-24** If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; <sup>24</sup>Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbor's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you. KJV

<sup>c</sup> Luke 1:30 And the angel said unto her: "Fear not Mary: for thou has found grace with God." Tyndale Version

<sup>d</sup>**Deut. 24:1** When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. KJV

## Matthew

righteous man and he still loved her, why did he not just forgive her and continue on with the marriage?

The answer is because he was a righteous man. We have to remember, since Scripture does not record any thought in Joseph's mind of her being forced, the only other thing he may have thought was that she had been unfaithful to him. If she had been forced, according to the law, she would have been considered innocent and the marriage could have continued.<sup>e</sup> But since there was no indication that such thought came up into the mind of Joseph the only other conclusion left open to him was that she might have been unfaithful; after all, the evidence was right before him, she was with child.

Apparently, Joseph doubted her story. And Scripture implies as much, for in the next verse he is told he should not be "afraid" to take her as his wife. Why would he be fearful to take her as wife if he believed her story? He would have been fearful because unfaithfulness was considered to be, not just a sin against the betrothed, but also against society. As such, something had to be done, for to do nothing would be allowing an evil to remain in Israel. To do nothing would be condoning the sin, and that, in itself, would be an unrighteous act. That is why he would be afraid to still take her as a wife. He himself would be sinning.

Remember, in Joseph's mind, since she admitted no wrongdoing, she must have been an unrepentant sinner, and so, since he was righteous, something had to be done to remove that evil from Israel and the only option left for him was to put her away.

Scripture was clear; in the land of Israel such sin must be put away. Indeed, righteousness requires of us the same action in the Church today. Evil must be removed from an assembly when one member commits an egregious sin and yet refuses to admit his or her wrongdoing. Paul says, in such a case, "put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (I Cor. 5:13b).<sup>f</sup>

Well, in the same way an Israelite was commanded to not allow such evil to remain in the

<sup>e</sup> **Deut. 22:25-26a**

But if a man find a betrothed damsel in the field, and the man force her, and lie with her: then the man only that lay with her shall die: <sup>26</sup> But unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing; there is in the damsel no sin worthy of death  
KJV

<sup>f</sup> **I Cor. 5: 13b**

Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.  
KJV

<sup>g</sup> **Deut. 22:22**

If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: **so shalt thou put away evil from Israel.** KJV

## Matthew

assembly of Israel (Deut. 22:22b).<sup>g</sup>

If Joseph had not done anything, (since, apparently in his eyes Mary was being unrepentant, not admitting her sin), he would have also been guilty of sinning by allowing such evil to remain in Israel.

The only difference between then and now is that under the Old Covenant in Israel they removed such evil from their midst by physical means, by the death penalty. In the Church such evil is removed by refusal of fellowship, not by a sentence of death. †

However, it must be noted that the death penalty for such a sin was rarely exercised in Israel anymore due to Roman restrictions (Jn. 18:31). Rather, a bill of divorcement was required. The divorce could be done by public trial or it could be done privately. Joseph chose the latter because of his continued love for Mary. But either way, it had to be done, since Mary admitted to no wrongdoing, in spite of being with child.

In Joseph's mind, if Mary had repented, perhaps, the sin could have been covered in mercy. It was covered in the case of King David and his adultery with Bathsheba, and even the God of Israel exercised such mercy in regard to Israel's adultery against Himself (Jer. 3:1).<sup>h</sup> But since she did not admit she had been unfaithful, the only course left open for a righteous Israelite was to put that evil away from Israel by an act personal divorce. This is why Joseph could not simply ignore the supposed sin and allow the marriage contract to be completed; such an act would be considered "unrighteous" since the sin of adultery was also considered to be a sin against society and, as such, it needed to be dealt with by him.

But while Joseph was mulling these things over in his mind and angel appeared to him in a dream, as the next verse states (which we will presently consider). But first let's see if we might learn something from this.

† The Church is called to follow the Law of Christ, which is the spiritual fulfillment of the Law of Moses (I Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2). The Church was never called to institute the death penalty for sin, in and of herself. Scripture assigns that to the authorities that are established by God (Rom. 13:1-5).

<sup>h</sup> **Jer. 3:1** They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; **yet return again to me, saith the LORD.**

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT



## Matthew

It is important to realize that when sin is left unconfessed it affects more than just oneself; it affects all those around us. Sin is like leaven. If left unjudged it will spread and eventually change the whole character of those who come into contact with it. Mary had not sinned, but since Joseph did not know, he gives us an example of how righteousness must be maintained no matter how hard or difficult it might be. Why? Because others could eventually be hurt by the sin condoned.

However, it also shows us that righteousness will always seek to cover the sins of others.<sup>i</sup> It will be merciful. It will never seek to harshly judge another by parading their sin in public. It will be humble because it will realize that we are all sinners before God and even our own righteousness appears as filthy rags before a Thrice Holy God.<sup>j</sup>

**1:20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.**

**1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.**

The angel told Joseph to not fear. He should not be afraid he would be offending the righteousness of God by completing the betrothal contract, taking Mary to be his wife. The angel assured him Mary was speaking the truth. She was still a virgin. She had not sinned. The angel was saying he would not be allowing an evil to remain in Israel by keeping his wife. He would not be acting unrighteous before God. He would not be guilty of ignoring the Law of Moses.

What a relief this must have been to Joseph to find out that Mary had been faithful to him, and that, indeed, she was of such a special character before the God of Israel, that God, Himself, had chosen her to

<sup>i</sup> **I Peter 4:8**

Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. NASB

<sup>j</sup> **Isaiah 64:6**

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. KJV

## Matthew

be the mother of the Messiah!

But on the other hand, it must have also saddened his heart that he did not readily believe his beloved Mary when she told him that she had never been unfaithful.

But the most important thing, in all of this, is to see how the spiritual character of Mary shines forth. She did not lessen the love or respect she had for her husband § even though he had doubted her; she knew how strange her story must have sounded to Joseph's ears. She bore no ill will to him. How unlike today, when such a lack of trust might be met with scorn and derision and self-indignation.

Mary was truly a godly young woman and one of a gentle and quiet spirit that was precious in the sight of God. She should be honored by all as the one chosen to be the mother of our Lord, one truly blessed among women.

**1:22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,**

**1:23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.**

It is unfortunate how verse 22 has been translated in most English versions for it robs us of an important spiritual principle.

Most translations translate the conjunction δὲ as “now,” or “so,” or leave it untranslated all together. This gives the impression that the message of the angel ended in verse 21 and verses 22 and 23 are a comment by Matthew. Not at all! The conjunction δὲ would be better translated as a continuative conjunction just as it was done in verse 21.

Verses 22 and 23 are part of the continuing message of the angel! Thus, the first part of the verse should read, “And all this has happened.” The angel is giving further comfort and assurance to Joseph by pointing him to the Word of God! Joseph need not

§ Perhaps it should be noted, so as not to cause confusion, that according to Jewish custom, even though Joseph and Mary were only betrothed, they still were considered married— husband and wife. Now, during the betrothal period they could not come together, even though they were considered legally married; it was only after the final completion of the marriage contract that they were allowed conjugal rights. Sometimes the betrothal period lasted many months.

## Matthew

be afraid, because what happened to Mary was a fulfillment of Scripture. The angel is directing Joseph to God's Word, for faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God!"

This is an important spiritual principle that is afforded us by this verse. All things must be based upon the Eternal Word of God. All things must be judged by the Scripture. We should always test the spirits and look the written Word given to us by God. It is the foundation of our faith. Even the angel of God pointed Joseph to the Eternal Word of God.

Therefore, I believe this portion of the text should be understood as follows with Matthew's words in bold print and the angels in italics:

**“But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, *“Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins; and all this has happened so that might be fulfilled the word of the Lord through the prophet, saying, ‘Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son,’ and they shall call his name Emmanuel,”* (which is, being interpreted, God with us). Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife.”**

Thus, the angel's message begins with the words, “Joseph, thou son of David...and ends with a quote from the first part of Isa. 7:14, ‘Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son’ and the words, “and they shall call his name Emmanuel.” The last phrase, “and they shall call his name Emmanuel,” is not a direct quote from Scripture but is a prophetic statement by the angel, for the angel changes the verb “call” from the singular to the plural. Isa. 7:14 actually says, “she shall call his name Emmanuel,”<sup>k</sup> but the angel says “they shall call

<sup>k</sup> **Isa. 7:14**  
Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. KJV

## Matthew

his name Emmanuel.” Why would the angel do this?

There may be a number of possibilities. 1) The angel may not have even said this and this is actually part of Matthew parenthesis, so that this phrase is a comment by Matthew. The parenthesis would then read, “And they shall call his name Emmanuel, which is, being interpreted, God with us”. In other words, these are the words of Matthew and not the angel. The angel left off speaking after the phrase, “and shall bring forth a son.” If this is the way it is, then Matthew is making a comment about the prophecy, declaring that others besides the virgin will call him Emmanuel. This would explain the change from the singular verb to the plural verb. 2) There may be a variant at this portion of Isaiah and the variant is being quoted. I think this is the least possibility because the underlying Hebrew had a singular noun not only in the Masoretic text, but also in the text used by the Septuagint translators. 3) This I believe is the most likely reason and will be the reason we will discuss in detail. The last phrase is the word of the angel, like we already mentioned, but the angel is not quoting Scripture, but is giving Joseph further confirmation as to the truth of the virgin birth and the Divine Nature of the child. Scripture says that in the mouth of two or three witnesses let every fact be established. Well, the angel is assuring Joseph as to the fact of the virgin birth by telling him there will be other witnesses raised up by God. Not only is the story of the virgin birth being confirmed to Joseph by an appeal to God’s Word, the angel is also assuring Joseph of the truth of the miraculous conception by showing him that others will also bear witness to the fact that the child is not of human paternity. In other words, others will also recognize that the child is none other than “God with us.” This explains the change from the singular to the plural.

And this is exactly what repeatedly happened during those early years of our Saviour days on earth.

Elizabeth, our Lord’s own relative, perhaps, a great aunt, or first cousin twice removed (Scripture does not give the exact relationship) was one of the

## Matthew

first to proclaim the Deity of the child. Elizabeth declared that Mary was the mother of the Lord (Lu. 1:43-45). In other words, Elizabeth is declaring that Mary will be the mother of our LORD, i.e. Jehovah incarnated! And I am sure Mary must have told this to Joseph.

**Luke 1:43** And whence is this to me, that **the mother of my Lord** should come to me? 44 For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. 45 And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. KJV

Next, Zacharias bears witness to the Deity of our Lord by declaring that in the House of David a “horn of salvation” had been raised up.<sup>1</sup> “Horn of Salvation” is a Messianic title that is used only in two other places in Scripture. It is used in II Sam. 22:3 and Psalms 18:2.<sup>m</sup> In both places the “Horn of Salvation” is declared to be none other than the LORD God Himself. Zacharias is, therefore, declaring the LORD God Himself was incarnated in the womb of Mary—Mary, who was of the house of David.

And then, we have the witness of the shepherds who were told the following by the angel of the Lord: “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, **which is Christ the Lord**. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” (Lu. 2:10-12). The shepherds were told that the babe was none other than “Christ the Lord.” He was the LORD God Almighty – Jehovah Himself. And, they in turn, Scripture tells us, declared these things to Mary and Joseph.<sup>n</sup> This is another witness to the Deity of the child.

And then finally, we find Simeon in the temple declaring the Deity of the Child. Upon seeing the little baby Jesus, Simeon takes him up in his arms and blesses God, thanking him that he allowed him to see “Thy Salvation.” Some believe this term was rooted in the Person of the Messiah and, therefore, a

<sup>1</sup> **Luke 1:67-69**

And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, 68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, 69 And hath raised up an **horn of salvation** for us in the house of his servant David. KJV

<sup>m</sup> **Psalms 18:2** The **LORD** is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and **the horn of my salvation**, my stronghold. NASB

<sup>n</sup> **Luke 2:16-18** So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. 17 When they had seen this, **they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child.** 18 And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. NASB

## Matthew

Messianic title; but whether it was or not, more importantly, it tells us that the one who Simeon had seen was the “Lord’s Christ” (Lu. 2:25).<sup>o</sup> This is significant for the Lord’s Christ refers to a Messianic Psalm.

Psalm 2 declares in verse 2: “The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers gathered themselves together, against the Lord, and against his Christ” (Brenton’s English Translation, LXX). This Psalm not only speaks of the Son’s eternal generation from the Father, his begetting in the incarnation, and, finally, his resurrection from the dead, it also identifies him as being the Lord (Adonai) who scoffs (Ps. 2:4). The Lord’s Christ is none other than Adonai and Adonai, in Ps. 68:20, is none other than God Himself! <sup>p</sup> Simeon was declaring that the child he held in his arms was, indeed, Emmanuel, God with us.

So we see the angel brings the word of the Lord to Joseph, directs him to the Word of God and in particular to the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14, and then assures him of the future testimony of godly men and women—two or three witnesses. Matthew is showing forth the truth of the virgin birth of our Lord, Jehovah Himself, being begotten of the Holy Spirit and of the virgin Mary in the flesh.

Truly, that moment in time was the fullness of time when “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).

One last mention should be made before we leave this verse. The verse quoted by the angel is Isaiah 7:14. Much has been made of the fact that the Hebrew word used in Isaiah 7:14 is not a Hebrew word that necessarily means virgin. This, of course, is emphasized by those who wish to discredit the virgin birth. A few points should be mentioned regarding this observation.

First and foremost, it should be mentioned the Hebrew word does not preclude the young woman from being a virgin. It is used that way in other

<sup>o</sup> **Luke 2:25-26**

And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. <sup>26</sup> And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, **before he had seen the Lord's Christ.**  
KJV

<sup>p</sup> e.g. **Ps. 68:20** He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord (Adonai) belong the issues from death. KJV

## Matthew

places in the Old Testament. For example, we find that it is used that way in Gen. 24:43, Song of Solomon. 6:8).<sup>q</sup>

Second, the LXX translators, who were Jews, understood the word in Isa. 7:14 to be referring to a virgin and not a married woman because they used the Greek word παρθένος which definitely meant a virgin (c.f. Lev. 21:10,13, see verse 13 in Greek LXX).<sup>r</sup> However, some dispute this also and claim παρθένος can also be used of a young married woman. Albeit, they cannot deny that it can refer to a woman who is, indeed, a virgin. So this brings us to our third and final point.

Matthew definitively uses παρθένος for a virgin. None can dispute this fact. He repeatedly makes clear that she was a virgin and the word he uses is παρθένος. So it matters not if certain ones wish to dispute as to whether the Hebrew word means virgin in Isa. 7:14. The Hebrew word does not preclude this meaning. The LXX translators thought it meant a virgin, but more importantly the angel of the Lord declared that the word in Isa. 7:14 meant a virgin. And Matthew, a first century Jew, understood the word to mean a virgin in that verse. What better witness could we have, the Angel of the Lord and the apostle Matthew understood the word to mean the virgin. If one wishes to argue with the angel of the Lord, that is their prerogative, but I will say Amen to his declaration!

Now, that being said, we know the witness of the angel of the Lord will make no difference to those who deny the virgin birth, for they do not believe in the veracity of the Gospel of Matthew, or in its inspiration. But, even they must admit that a first century Jew by the name of Matthew, or whoever they believe wrote the document, believed the Greek word παρθένος meant a virgin, and so used it that way in this Gospel.

Consequently, the assertions made about the Hebrew word used in Isa. 7:14, in regard to the virgin birth, are really much ado about nothing. The word does not preclude the women being a virgin, and a

<sup>q</sup> **Gen. 24:43**

Behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass, that when the **virgin** cometh forth to draw water, and I say to her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to drink; KJV

**Song of Solomon.**

**6:8** There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and **virgins** without number.

<sup>r</sup> **Lev. 21:10,13**

And he that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes; 13 **And he shall take a wife in her virginity.** KJV

**Lev. 21:13** οὗτος γυναῖκα **παρθένον** ἐκ τοῦ γένους αὐτοῦ λήμψεται  
LXX

## Matthew

first century Jew adds his witness to this understanding. The issue is not the word, but the issue is faith. Does one have faith in the veracity of Matthew's Gospel, and, that God, indeed, sent the angel of the Lord to declare to all the fact that Jesus was born of the virgin Mary?

**1:24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:**

Now we see the faith and righteousness of the one called to be a father to Jesus. He did not hesitate to obey the angel of the Lord. His fear, that arose from his righteous character, was assuaged and he boldly took Mary to be his wife. He cared not what others might think. He knew that many would now think he had been the unfaithful one in the betrothal period with Mary, especially since he decided to not divorce her. He knew that many would now think that he was the one who had been with her, and that he was the father of the child. But it mattered not to Joseph. He knew the truth and he believed the word of the Lord. He trusted in God and was willing to suffer for his namesake by false rumor, gossip and innuendo.

**1:25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.**

Joseph's righteous character continues to shine forth in this last verse. He considered the miraculous conception and birth of our Saviour to be sacred. He willingly kept apart from his wife until Jesus was born. He believed that a holy thing had occurred in his beloved Mary. He considered sacred the miraculous conception of the Lord Jesus by not "knowing" her till Jesus, Emmanuel was born.

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### NOTE ON JEREMIAH 31:22 <sup>s</sup>

"...But the Christian fathers (Augustine, etc.) almost unanimously interpreted it of the Virgin Mary

### <sup>s</sup> Jeremiah 31:22

How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth [land] , A woman shall compass a man. KJV



## Matthew

compassing Christ in her womb. This view is favored:—

(1) By the connection; it gives a reason why the exiles should desire a return to their country, namely, because Christ was conceived there.

(2) The word "created" implies a divine power put forth in the creation of a body in the Virgin's womb by the Holy Ghost for the second Adam, such as was exerted in creating the first Adam (#Lu 1:35 Heb 10:5).

(3) The phrase, "a new thing," something unprecedented; a man whose like had never existed before, at once God and man; a mother out of the ordinary course of nature, at once mother and virgin. An extraordinary mode of generation; one conceived by the Holy Ghost without man.

(4) The specification "in the land" (not "earth," as English Version), namely, of Judah, where probably Christ was conceived, in Hebron (compare #Lu 1:39,42,44, with #Jos 21:11) or else in Nazareth, "in the territory" of Israel, to whom #Jer 31:5,6,15,18,21 refer; His birth was at Beth-lehem (#Mic 5:2 Mt 2:5,6). As the place of His nativity, and of His being reared (#Mt 2:23), and of His preaching (#Hag 2:7 Mal 3:1), are specified, so it is likely the Holy Spirit designated the place of His being conceived.

(5) The Hebrew for "woman" implies an individual, as the Virgin Mary, rather than a collection of persons.

(6) The restoration of Israel is grounded on God's covenant in Christ, to whom, therefore, allusion is naturally made as the foundation of Israel's hope (compare #Isa 7:14). The Virgin Mary's conception of Messiah in the womb answers to the "Virgin of Israel" (therefore so called, #Jer 31:21), that is, Israel and her sons at their final restoration, receiving Jesus as Messiah (#Zec 12:10).

(7) The reference to the conception of the child Messiah accords with the mention of the massacre of "children" referred to in #Jer 31:15 (compare #Mt 2:17). (8) The Hebrew for "man" is properly "mighty man," a term applied to God (#De 10:17); and to Christ (#Zec 13:7; compare #Ps 45:3 Isa 9:6).<sup>10</sup>

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**Matthew 2**

**2:1 Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,  
2:2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.**

There is no way for sure to know who the “wise men” were. Most assume they were three in number because of the three gifts that were offered to Jesus, but Scripture does not tell us how many.

The Greek word that is translated “wise men” is μάγοι in the Greek. The word is used only in this chapter of Matthew and in the book of Acts in the New Testament. In Acts 13:6, 8 it is used of a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus, also known as Elymas. The word is the same word as found here and could be also translated as “wise man,” but is rather translated as “sorcerer” or “magician” because he obviously was of an evil sort. But the word itself does not necessarily indicate evil.

In the LXX version of the Old Testament, which we have already seen was known by Matthew, the word occurs only in Daniel. <sup>a</sup> There it was also used in a pagan evil sense, but also in a more neutral sense, since Daniel was made “master” as the King James Versions says, or “chief” or “ruler,” as the LXX says, of the “wise men,” μάγων.<sup>b</sup>

In other words, I am sure that Daniel made known to those pagan men under him the one true God and no doubt tried to lead them into the truth. As such, it is possible some of the wise men may have become believers in the one true God of Israel. And as such, being among the priestly caste, they may have passed on this knowledge to those after them. It would not even surprise me that these learned men, wishing to know all things, may have indeed, obtained some of the Jewish Scriptures from the large Jewish

<sup>a</sup> Daniel 1:20; 2:2, 10, 27; 4:7; 5:7, 11, 15

<sup>b</sup>**Dan.5:11b** “...καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς Ναβουχοδονοσορ ὁ πατήρ σου ἄρχοντα ἐπαιδῶν **μάγων** χaldaίων γαζαρηῶν κατέστησεν αὐτόν.  
“...and the king, Nebuchadnezzar, your father, appointed him ruler of enchanters, **wise men**, Chaldeans and diviners.

## Matthew

population in that part of the earth and thus knew something of the prophetic scriptures, as well as the prophecy of the “Star out of Jacob” in the book of Numbers (Num. 24:17).

**Num. 24:17** I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. KJV

What is also interesting is that these wise men came to worship him. The word in the text before us is προσκυνῆσαι. In the New Testament this word was a word reserved for the worship to God, and as such was refused by both men and by angels.<sup>c</sup>

For example, when Satan demands worship from Jesus in the wilderness (using the same word), Jesus declares that such worship is reserved only for God.<sup>d</sup> This becomes all the more significant when we realize that Jesus freely accepted such worship from others (e.g. Matt 18:33).

**Matt. 14:33** Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God. KJV

Now this does not mean that the word cannot be used of simple obeisance and honor shown to another human being; it is even used with this sense by Jesus himself in his parable on forgiveness (Matt. 18:26). Yet even in this, Jesus was careful to indicate that the king in the parable was understood to represent his heavenly Father. So even in this exception it still points to God.

As such, I think it is significant that Matthew uses this word, vis-à-vis the wise men. They came to “worship” Jesus, indicating that in their mind, Jesus was more than just another king, but was, indeed, in some sense divine. Now, as to whether they fully understood that Jesus was none other than Eternal Word, the Son of God manifested in human flesh, Scripture does not tell us, but it would not surprise

<sup>c</sup> **Acts 10:25-26**

And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. <sup>26</sup> But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.

**Rev. 22:8-9** And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. <sup>9</sup> Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God. KJV

<sup>d</sup>**Matt.4:9-10** And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. <sup>10</sup> Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. KJV

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me that they understood there was some type of divine implications in His birth. If not, why travel such a long distance for an ordinary human being. Nor should it be a surprise to us that they saw more in his birth, for, as we already mentioned, many godly Jews understood the divine implications of Jesus birth.

Nevertheless, it must still be admitted that Scripture does not tell us for sure, so such a conclusion must be only presented as a possibility. Yet, this understanding might be further confirmed when we get to verse eight and find out that Herod also wishes to worship the child Jesus. Why would king Herod show obeisance to a child? But we will discuss that when we get to verse eight.

In any case, this announcement of the wise men was wonderful news from their perspective, but was troubling news from the perspective of Herod and others within Jerusalem as we will see in the next verse.

### **2:3 When Herod the king had heard *these things*, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.**

Why would Herod and Jerusalem be troubled? From Herod's perspective, he would be troubled because he became king through bloody intrigue and murder. Herod was not a Jew by birth (although he claimed to be a proselyte). He was an Idumean (a descendant of Edom). He knew full well that the promise was through Jacob and not Esau. Esau was never chosen by God to rule Israel. In one sense, his rule was a usurpation of the right given to the tribe of Judah (although, most certainly God allowed him to be king for a time. As Paul says, "there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God" (Rom 13:1 NASB).

Therefore, we see he was troubled because his authority was being undermined from a religious legal standpoint, because of the birth of one who was of the seed of David, considered a king by these wise men.

## Matthew

Secondly, he owed his kingship to Rome. It was his opposition to the Parthian empire (which had helped the last Hasmonean king of Judah, Antigonus, gain power in Jerusalem) that endeared him to Rome and propelled him into his kingship. In fact, it was Antony, and Caesar, himself, who suggested to the Roman Senate that Herod be made king of the Jews – a suggestion which they soon took up and made official by majority vote.

And so, since Herod knew that all of Israel expected the soon appearance of the Jewish Messiah, one that would free the Jews of all foreign rule, i.e. Rome, he knew his political power would be undermined, from a political standpoint, by the birth of this newly announced Jewish Messiah.

Consequently, Herod, who was already paranoid about threats to his rule, was brought into much turmoil by the announcement of the wise men.

As for the reason why Jerusalem, itself, would be troubled, one need only look to all the benefits Herod had bestowed upon them in order to purchase their loyalty and support

Herod appointed only those who were loyal to him in Jerusalem. He controlled the Sanhedrin as much as one could control the Sanhedrin through special appointments and the installation of a high priest from outside the land of Israel, from the Alexandrian family of Boethos. This insured their continued support and loyalty. In fact, this merging of political power, wealth, and religious loyalty in Jerusalem eventually produced what became known as the Herodian Party in the New Testament (Mark 3:6).

The Herodian Party was a party that opposed against any nationalistic tendencies among the people; by violent oppression and intrigue it cruelly extinguished any rising hopes among the people, especially when those hopes were based upon a Jewish Messiah.

So this fact, more than likely, is one of the reasons why Matthew would say that Jerusalem was also troubled. He was referring to the Herodian Party. Their position and wealth, and status, guaranteed by

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King Herod himself, would be jeopardized if another king arose. And so this ruling class became troubled by any perceived threat to its existence.

And, finally, I am sure that even the ordinary person in the street may have been troubled, for they well knew how any perceived threat was cruelly put down by Herod. As such, even though all Jews would have welcomed, to some extent, the redemption and deliverance promised by a Jewish Messiah, their support would be very tenuous because they were less zealous than their northern brethren, and any disturbance or war of independence would certainly have brought trials and tribulation in their daily lives. And, because their lives were so intertwined with the present world, they were unwilling to suffer. This was so unlike their northern brethren who supported the political party known as the Zealots, whose members were not only willing to suffer trials in their fight for freedom, they were also willing to suffer death.

This was the milieu in which the startling announcement of the wise men was made.

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### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Christians, and/or the Church should ever be careful with whom they allow themselves to be aligned. The love of money has always brought heartache to the Christian.<sup>e</sup> The same would apply to the Church. Whenever, the Church has allied itself with money and political power, misery and heartache have always followed. In such cases, the Church, rather than being overjoyed by the presence of the King of kings in the Word of God or by the lives of spiritual believers who have surrendered themselves to His rule, actually becomes troubled by the convicting power of the King of kings, as manifested in the Word of God or by His presence in the spiritual lives of certain of His people. And so, because of this false alignment, they find themselves losing their first

<sup>e</sup> **I Tim. 6:9-10**

But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. <sup>10</sup> For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. KJV

<sup>f</sup> **II Tim. 4:10a**

For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world. KJV

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love, and find themselves more like Demas, who, loving the present world forsook the truth.<sup>f</sup> How awful it is for the Lord to be found outside the Church knocking on the door, waiting to be invited within.<sup>g</sup>

Does the Lord's presence in his Word and His commands in the Scripture, bring a joy to our hearts or do the demands of our King bring trouble to our satiated hearts? May we ever take to heart our Lord's Parable of the Sower in Matt. 13:20-22,<sup>h</sup> and seek to never be troubled like Jerusalem by the presence of the One who is King of kings and Lord of lords.

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**2:4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.**

This next verse tells us that Herod gathered all the chief priest and scribes together to find out where the Messiah should be born.

This shows us a couple of things. First, it shows us the ignorance of Herod. A king was commanded to read the Scriptures daily (Deut. 17:18-19).

**Deut. 17:18-19** Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes. NASB

The Scripture should have been his daily delight, if, indeed, he desired to be king, but it was not, for he was a usurper and feigned piety. He did not even know where Scripture said the Christ would be born. He was ignorant of the Word and needed the help of the chief priests and scribes.

The chief priests and scribes, on the other hand knew the Word of God, but it did not profit them, for,

<sup>g</sup> **Rev. 3:19-20** As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. <sup>20</sup>

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. KJV

<sup>h</sup> **Matt. 13:20-22**

The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. NASB

## Matthew

like the children of Israel of old, their knowledge of Scripture was not mixed with faith, as the writer to the Hebrews reminded his readers should always be the case.<sup>i</sup>

**2:5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet,  
2:6 And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.**

Matthew records what the chief priests and scribes told Herod. This is important because the chief priests and scribes did not quote the entire verse (Micah 5:2) to Herod! The last part of the verse reads: “whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”<sup>j</sup>

Obviously, their hearts were not right before God. They knew the rest of the verse, but they refused to state it, for if they did, they would have to choose the Christ over Herod, for the Christ was from everlasting.

Just as an aside, it is most unfortunate that many modern translations of the Bible mistranslate this verse from Micah. Many render the phrase, “from everlasting, as, “from ancient times,” or something of a similar vein. Unfortunately, many who affirm such a new translation have also departed from the Historic Christian Faith, denying the eternal generation of the Son of God from the Father.

Now one might think, “My, that is a critical judgment.” Dear reader, yes it is a critical judgment, because it is a critical issue. Criticism is bad if it is mistaken and unkind, but criticism is right, if it is true and done in love.

This verse in Micah deals with an aspect of the Faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints. Many of the same Christians who mistranslate this verse have also departed from the Historic Christian Faith today in regard to the eternal generation of the Son from the Father. The Historic Christian Faith has

<sup>i</sup> **Heb. 4:2** For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. KJV

<sup>j</sup> **Micah 5:2** But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; **whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.**



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always affirmed his eternal begetting, and this verse has always been a foundation verse for that doctrine. He has always proceeded forth from the Father, as He himself declared in John 8:42,<sup>k</sup> and this verse bespeaks that proceeding, that “going forth” that has been from everlasting. He is the eternal Son of an eternal Father.

So we should not apologize for such contending, for we are commanded by Jude to “contend” for the Faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints.

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown have a wonderful comment on this verse in Micah.

“**..goings forth . . . from everlasting**—the plain antithesis of this clause, to “come forth out of thee ” (from Beth-lehem), shows that the eternal generation of the Son is meant. The terms convey the strongest assertion of infinite duration of which the Hebrew language is capable (cf. Psalm 90. 2; Proverbs 8. 22, 23; John 1.1). Messiah's generation as man coming forth unto God to do His will on earth is from Beth-lehem; but as Son of God, His goings forth are from everlasting. The promise of the Redeemer at first was vaguely general (Genesis 3.15). Then the Shemitic division of mankind is declared as the quarter in which He was to be looked for (Genesis 9. 26, 27); then it grows clearer, defining the race and nation whence the Deliverer should come, vis., the seed of Abraham, the Jews (Genesis 12. S); then the particular tribe, Judah (Genesis 40.10); then the family, that of David (Psalm 89.10, 20); then the very town of His birth, here. And as His coming drew nigh, the very parentage (Matthew 1.1; Luke 1. and 2.); and then all the scattered rays of prophecy concentrate in Jesus, as their focus (Hebrews 1.1, 2).”<sup>11</sup>

May we not be guilty of withholding the truth it teaches by mistranslating the text, for, in one sense, that is worse than withholding the truth of the last phrase by not quoting it at all (as was done the chief priests and scribes). The Faith is not open to negotiation, and the eternal generation of the Son of God from the Father is an essential part of the Faith once for all delivered to the saints. It is a shame that some who mistranslate this verse have also departed from the Historic Christian Faith.

<sup>k</sup> **John 8:42** Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. KJV

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## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Herod desired to be king of the Jews, but he failed miserably in that ambition. God may have allowed him a place of authority in his providential wisdom, but Herod never trusted daily in the God of Israel, for he did not even know the Word of God.

But dear brethren, how well do we know the Word of God? We may not be a king of a nation or land, but we are told we were made “kings and priests” unto God (Rev. 1:5-6).<sup>1</sup>

The king of Israel was told to read the Scripture daily; we too are kings? Do we read the Scriptures daily? The Word of God is perfect, restoring the soul; it should be our daily delight.

But equally true, it should be mixed with the faith. When the Scripture is read without faith it can be held in the mind as mere knowledge. But when it is read with faith the “words” are trusted and treasured and taken to heart. To read the Word of God without faith will produce a lifeless religion. To read the Word of God with faith will produce a vibrant devotion. Knowledge without faith produces an arrogant assessment that lacks love for God and love for men, but knowledge with faith produces a humility before God and love for God and all men.<sup>m</sup> Do we have ears to hear in full assurance of faith, or do we have hearts that have become dull hearing because we walk not by faith.<sup>n</sup> The Word of God is living and powerful sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and it is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12).

May it pierce through to our hearts by the precious ministry of the Holy Spirit, so that we all may approach God’s Word with hearts full of faith, and so that the words that we hear, we will trust, and the words that we trust, we will do.<sup>o</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> **Rev. 1:5-6** And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, **6** And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

<sup>m</sup> **I Cor. 8:1b** Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies. NASB

<sup>n</sup> **Matt. 13:15** For the heart of this people has become dull, And with their ears they scarcely hear, And they have closed their eyes Lest they should see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart and return, And I should heal them.’ NASB

<sup>o</sup> **James 1:12** But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. KJV

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**2:7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.**

**2:8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found *him*, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.**

Herod is threatened by the announcement of the wise men. He has a plan, unbeknownst to the wise men, to kill the child. But in order to carry out his plan he needs to know the approximate age of the new king. And so he asks the wise men when the star appeared, and tries to cover up his real motives by telling them he also wants to worship the child.

As we mentioned before, why would someone like king Herod wish to come and bow before this child if the child was just an ordinary human being. The fact that Herod states that he also wishes to worship the child shows that the wise men considered the newly born King of the Jews was more than a mere man. But again, Scripture does not indicate the depth of their understanding of this truth, but Scripture does give us a clue.

Scripture equates the supposed worship of Herod with the same worship of the wise men by use of the little word “καὶγὼ.”<sup>P</sup> The word is translated in English as “I also” or “I too” and brings in the idea of “similarity” or “like manner.” So the reader is being told that the type of worship of Herod wishes to give is of the same nature or type of worship the wise men wish to give. Thus, if Matthew was using προσκυνέω with the wise men to indicate a simple human obeisance of one human to another human, then Herod would be stating he wished to also come and bow down to the baby Jesus as one human to another.

However, this would be highly unlikely, since a reigning king does not normally come and bow down to any other human being, let alone a little baby! This

<sup>P</sup> **Matt. 2:8** And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that **I also (καὶγὼ)** may come and **worship (προσκυνήσω)** him

## Matthew

demonstrates to us that in all likelihood, the wise men must have considered Jesus to more than just a mere human being, but must have also considered him to be in some way Divine. If this was not so, they would have been highly suspicious if king Herod wanted to also come and bow down to a baby. Kings do not act that way, and so, since Scripture does not indicate any suspicion on the part of the wise men, they must have thought that Herod was a true believer in God, who wished also to come and worship before the Christ, for the wise men must have known that many Jews of that time also considered the Messiah to be of Divine origin.

Alfred Edersheim bespeaks of this truth in his classic work, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. In speaking of latter Rabbinic works after the Christian era, he states that one would think that they would present the Messiah in a less than dignified manner since Christians proclaimed him to be the Eternal Son of God, but he mentions that one finds the opposite is actually the truth. This, according to Edersheim shows that much of the writing of that time was rooted in “long held beliefs.” In fact, in some of their writing he states that “the premundane, if not the eternal existence of the Messiah appears as matter of common belief.”<sup>12</sup> (For a fuller accounting of this fact see note at the end of this chapter).

Therefore, since the wise men were not suspicious of king Herod, this verse acts as a warning to the believer that Satan has the ability to impersonate and counterfeit true piety in those under his sway. Herod no doubt was held under the power of the spirit of the world that now works in the sons of disobedience (Eph. 2:1-3). Herod was a child of wrath even as the others, yet he appeared to the wise men as a pious king, looking and longing for the hope of Israel. How true is the admonition of our Lord to look out for wolves in sheep's clothing!<sup>14</sup>

**2:9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went**

<sup>14</sup> **Matt. 7:15**  
Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. KJV

## Matthew

**before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.**

**2:10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.**

Lately, there has been resurgence in trying to identify the Star of Bethlehem, so as to ascertain the date of the birth of Christ. Is there anything wrong with trying to date the birth of our Saviour? Absolutely, not! The Holy Spirit, himself, gives us a historical reference point to tell us the approximate time of the Lord's birth (Lu. 2:1-2).<sup>†</sup> There is nothing wrong in trying to identify the date. The Lord has always worked within dates. Consider the genealogies of Genesis or the prophetic dates of Daniel. Everything He does is done exactly at the right time, or as he says in Galatians - in the "fullness of the time" (Gal. 4:4).

However, that does not mean that it is alright to use any and all methods in trying to determine this date. Everything we do must be in accordance with Scripture. There may be some methods which are not profitable. For instance, a popular method lately is the method of observing heavenly events and then trying to reconcile them with Scripture. Is this a method that should be acceptable to a believer? I would have to say no. Not that there is anything wrong with believing the star of Bethlehem might have been an historical and heavenly occurrence. The problem is believers are looking to the stars to decipher "so-called" heavenly messages given to us by God in order to ascertain Scriptural events.

The Lord forbids such a practice. Isaiah 47:13 states negatively the following,

**Isaiah 47:13** Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the interpreters of the heavens, the observers of the stars, who predict according to the new moons what shall come upon thee, stand up, and save thee.  
Darby's Version

Therefore, we see that Scripture condemns the practice of using the stars or using the constellations

<sup>†</sup> **Luke 2:1-2** Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth.<sup>2</sup> This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.  
NASB

## Matthew

or zodiac in interpreting prophetic events. It is a very dangerous practice for the Christian. Why? Because such a practice is a mixture of the things of the world and the things of the Lord, and anything that has its source from the world will eventually be detrimental to the spiritual walk of the believer.

Now, that is not to say that there is anything wrong with looking to the stars or lights in the firmament, in and of themselves. They are given to us by God for signs, seasons, days and years (Gen. 1:14).<sup>s</sup> They are even given to mankind in certain cases to warn him of impending judgment (Joel 2:31; Rev. 6:12, etc.).<sup>t</sup> These are an appropriate and biblical usage of stars. However, if we go beyond this and utilize the stars to interpret the Bible, we are in danger of exceeding what is written.

In light of this, it is highly unlikely that the star of Bethlehem was a convergence of planets, and/or a retrograde motion of Jupiter, as some claim today, for it says the star “went before” the wise men. (It must be remembered the Greek word ἀστήρ had a broader meaning than just an actual star; it could be used of any bright object in the sky, whether it be a comet or planet, or even angels.<sup>u</sup> It meant any luminous object in the sky).

Matthew tells us in this verse the star is actually “moving” ahead of the wise men. It was leading them. It was “going before” them. This same Greek word, προάγω, is used in such verses as Matt. 21:9 and Mark 10:32 where it also bespeaks a leading or going before –

**Matt. 21:9** And the multitudes **going before** Him, and those who followed after were crying out, saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!" NASB

**Mark 10:32** And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus **went before** them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. KJV

The word is not a verb of being, but is a verb of motion! The Holy Spirit in Matthew tells us that the

<sup>s</sup> **Gen. 1:14** And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: KJV

<sup>t</sup> **Joel 2:31** The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come.

**Rev. 6:12** And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

<sup>u</sup> **Rev. 12:4** And his tail drew the **third part of the stars of heaven**, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. KJV

## Matthew

star moved ahead of them until they got to Bethlehem. It actually led them for the five or six mile trek from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. This is all the more important when we realize that if the road they used was the same road that was used in the 19th century, at one point on the journey they actually turn and travel northeastward for a short time. The road was not a straight line south, but turned around in the hills of Judea. In other words, in some cases the star would be traveling south, then perhaps east, then northeastward, maybe west, then south again. The star literally “went before” them as they traversed south on the road to Bethlehem no matter which direction they were travelling on the way. While a planet may appear to be moving as one travels, it would not change its direction moving south, then east, then south again – this star actually changed directions according to Matthew.

Next it says the star came to a stop; it went before them till it stopped and stood over where the young child dwelt. Obviously if something comes to a stop it presumes it had been moving. The fact that the star came to a “stop” means it was indeed really moving ahead. It did not just appear to “go before” the wise men, but it indeed moved ahead of them. If it was not moving it could not come to a stop!

An actual star or planet does not do this. It appears to travel with us as we travel, but it does not come to a stop and come to a standstill. For example, let us assume the star was, indeed, a planet, as some claim, and, let’s assume that, after the wise men reached Bethlehem, they continued travelling south; would not the star still appear as if it was traveling with them? Yes, of course it would. But, since Matthew tells us the star stood still, if the wise men continued their trek south, they would have had to turn around and look backward to see the star, for the Bible says it literally stood still over the child, not that it “appeared” to stand still. A planet, of course, could not do this. If the star was a planet it would still appear to go before the wise men even on their way further south.

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The key is that the Scripture says the star came to an actual stop. This was not simply the retrograde movement of a planet, but was an actual standing still of the star because it was placed right over the house where Jesus dwelt. The Greek word used of this standing is ἔστη; it is the aorist indicative of the verb ἵστημι, which means to “set in place.” The star was “going before” the wise men till it “set itself in place” directly above the town of Bethlehem.

But that is not all. It does not say it simply stood over Bethlehem, but it stood directly over where the child was. In other words, the star apparently descended to such a degree that one could tell the very house in Bethlehem where Jesus dwelt. Its movement was so precise, that the wise men knew exactly where they would find Joseph, Mary and the young child Jesus.

And so in conclusion, if all this was true, what was the star of Bethlehem? What was Matthew trying to intimate to the reader by the account of this star? More than likely, although one could never be dogmatic, the star was nothing more than the very glory of the Lord.

In the Old Testament, in the book of Ezekiel, we find the glory of Lord associated with the cherubim. In Ezekiel 10: 4, 18-19; 11:23 we read:

**Ezekiel 10: 4, 18-19; 11:23** Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub to the threshold of the temple, and the temple was filled with the cloud and the court was filled with the brightness of the glory of the LORD. <sup>18</sup> “Then the glory of the LORD departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims. <sup>19</sup> And the cherubims lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight: when they went out, the wheels also were beside them, and every one stood at the door of the east gate of the LORD’S house; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above.” <sup>11:23</sup> “And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city.”  
NASB

The glory of the Lord, the glory of God is a great light that can outshine even the sun—our own star.



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When Paul was met by the Lord on the road to Damascus, it says a great light shone round about him, above the brightness of the sun, shining about him at noon or midday. <sup>v</sup> How bright must have been that light! And, in the new Jerusalem, it says there will no need of the sun and moon for the glory of God will illumine the city (Rev. 21:23).

Additionally, when we read of the glory of Lord in Ezekiel, we find the glory departing from the temple because of the sins of the people. It departed from the temple, then the city, and then from the mount on the east, (which is the mount of Olives—the same mount where our Lord departed and ascended back unto heaven. Acts 1:9-12). The temple that was bereft of the glory of the Lord was soon destroyed. And even after the rebuilding of the temple by Ezra, we are not told that the glory returned, (perhaps, because the Ark of the Covenant was never found after their return from Babylon, at least according to Scripture). It was the ark of the testimony over which the Lord dwelt, and from which he shone forth, filling the tabernacle with his glory (Ps. 80:1; Ex.25:22).

**Ps. 80:1** To the chief musician upon Shoshannimeduth, A Psalm of Asaph. Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that **dwestest between the cherubims, shine forth.** KJV

**Exodus 25:22** And there I will meet with thee, and **I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony,** of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel. KJV

But the ark of the testimony was not present in the temple that was rebuilt by those who returned from captivity.

So, even though it once rested over the tabernacle that was in the wilderness (Ex. 40: 38),<sup>w</sup> we are told in Ezekiel, that because of man's sin, the glory of the Lord had departed from the earth, not even returning in Ezra's time.

With this knowledge, how significant it is that the

<sup>v</sup> **Acts 26:13** 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. KJV

<sup>w</sup> **Exodus 40:38** For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys. KJV

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glory of the Lord returns to the earth with the incarnation of the eternal Son of God. The glory once more hovered above the tabernacle of God, but this time above the true tabernacle and the true ark of the testimony, above the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who became flesh and tabernacled among us; he was the real temple of God (Jn 1:14; Isa. 40:3-5).<sup>x</sup>

This, indeed, may have been the star that the Magi saw. Remember, the glory of God was as bright as the sun, nay brighter than the sun, and brighter than any star. The Greek word used for star encompassed any bright object in the sky. It could very well be that the wise men saw the glory of the Lord returning with the cherubim to the place above the true tabernacle of God, above the Only Begotten Son of God.

The Father is called the Father of lights, and the Son is called the Light of the world, and the Spirit is called the Spirit of Glory. As the glory of the Most High overshadowed Mary in the incarnation of the Son, perhaps, also the glory of the Lord appeared as a star (ἀστήρ) to the wise men to lead them to the Son, coming to rest over the place where the young child tabernacled in our midst.

If this is so, how wonderful it is to read this verse below in light of this star – which may have been the glory of the Lord leading the wise men to the One who would be the Saviour of all mankind, to both Jew and Gentile alike.

**Isa. 60:1-3** Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.<sup>2</sup> For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: **but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.**<sup>3</sup> **And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.**

The glory of the Lord that will rise upon Israel is the glory of the Lord that shone upon the Christ. That glory can only shine forth upon Israel, because it first shown forth upon Him who tabernacled among us. He is the Lord of glory,<sup>y</sup> and the glory of God the

<sup>x</sup> **John 1:14** And the Word became flesh, and did **tabernacle among us, and we beheld his glory**, glory as of an only begotten of a father, full of grace and truth.— (Young's Literal Version)

**Isa. 40:3-5** A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God."<sup>4</sup> "Let every valley be lifted up, And every mountain and hill be made low; And let the rough ground become a plain, And the rugged terrain a broad valley;<sup>5</sup> **Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, And all flesh will see it together;** For the mouth of the LORD has spoken." NASB

<sup>y</sup> **I Cor. 2:8** Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified **the Lord of glory.** KJV

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Father is found in him, and the Spirit of glory rests upon him, and He, Himself, is none other than the King of glory.<sup>z</sup>

**2:11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.**

After the wise men entered the house, finding the young child with Mary, they fell down and worshipped Him. Notice Matthew did not say they worshiped Mary, nor Mary and the young child together; they worshipped Jesus only.

Mary is to be honored and blessed as the mother of our Lord, but she is not to be venerated or worshipped as is taught by many churches.

In the Second Vatican Council the Catholic Church stated:

The Sacred Synod teaches this Catholic doctrine advisedly and at the same time admonishes all the sons of the Church that the cult, especially the liturgical cult, of the Blessed Virgin, be generously fostered, and that the practices and exercises of devotion towards her, recommended by the teaching authority of the Church in the course of centuries, be highly esteemed, and that those decrees, which were given in the early days regarding the cult images of Christ, the Blessed Virgin and the saints, be religiously observed.<sup>13</sup>

The decrees mentioned, the ones that are to be religiously observed, include those decrees from the Seventh Ecumenical Council in 787 A.D. That Council decreed, in opposition to Scripture, that Mary was to be given devotion, which they refer to as προσκύνησις. It states:

“...to wit, the figure of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, of our spotless Lady, the Mother of God, of the honourable Angels, of all Saints and of all pious people. For by so much more frequently as they are seen in artistic representation, by so much more readily are men lifted up

<sup>z</sup> **Psalm 24:10**  
Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah. KJV

## Matthew

to the memory of their prototypes, and to a longing after them; and to these should be given due salutation and honourable reverence (ἀσπασμὸν καὶ τιμητικὴν προσκύνησιν), not indeed that true worship of faith (λατρείαν) which pertains alone to the divine nature...”<sup>14</sup>

Now, it should be pointed out that they make a distinction between worship (λατρείαν), and what they call reverence or veneration (προσκύνησιν). The former, they say is to be given only to God; the latter is to be given to saints, angels, and most especially to Mary. By making this distinction they believe they are protecting the proper dignity that belongs only to God and are being faithful to Scripture. But dear brethren, this is a contradiction of Scripture. Scripture teaches us that worship (προσκυνέω) which they call veneration is to be given only to the Lord. It matters not that in English we translate it as veneration, rather than worship. In the Greek, it still is an act that should be reserved, according to the examples of the New Testament, to God only.

Peter refused such “veneration” (προσεκύνησεν),\* when given to him.

**Acts 10:25-26** And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped (**προσεκύνησεν**) him. <sup>26</sup> But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man. KJV <sup>a</sup>

And it was equally refused by angels. <sup>b</sup>

**Rev. 22:8-9** And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down **to worship (προσκυνήσαι) before the feet of the angel** which showed me these things. <sup>9</sup> Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: **worship (προσκύνησον) God.** KJV <sup>b</sup>

As we mentioned before, this act is reserved only for God in the New Testament and the one time it is lawfully used otherwise, it is used by our Lord of a king in a parable that was meant to represent none other than God the Father, Himself (Matt. 18:23-35).

\* It should be noted that Greek is a highly inflected language. As such, even though the Greek verb προσκυνέω is inflected differently in the following verses, it still is the same Greek word.

<sup>a</sup> **Acts 10:25-26** Ὡς δὲ ἐγένετο τοῦ εἰσελθεῖν τὸν Πέτρον, συναντήσας αὐτῷ ὁ Κορνήλιος πεσὼν ἐπὶ τοὺς πόδας **προσεκύνησεν** <sup>26</sup> ὁ δὲ Πέτρος ἤγειρεν αὐτὸν λέγων• ἀνάστηθι• καὶ ἐγὼ αὐτὸς ἄνθρωπος εἰμι.

<sup>b</sup> **Rev. 22:8-9** Καγὼ Ἰωάννης ὁ ἀκούων καὶ βλέπων ταῦτα. καὶ ὅτε ἤκουσα καὶ ἔβλεψα, ἔπεσα **προσκυνήσαι** ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ποδῶν τοῦ ἀγγέλου τοῦ δεικνύοντός μοι ταῦτα. <sup>9</sup> καὶ λέγει μοι• ὄρα μὴ• σύνδουλός σου εἰμι καὶ τῶν ἀδελφῶν σου τῶν προφητῶν καὶ τῶν τηρούντων τοὺς λόγους τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου• τῷ θεῷ **προσκύνησον.**

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It is wrong for any Christian to presume a better understanding of what is necessary and beneficial for our spiritual walk than what God has already given us in the New Testament by his apostles. We have the witness of an apostle and the witness of angel that the veneration or obeisance that is given to anyone other than the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit is not a beneficial thing for a Christian to do. In fact, it is detrimental to the spiritual well-being of the Christian. We would do well to obey God rather than man in this matter. Even the Lord Jesus himself told Satan that προσκυνέω should be given to the God alone .

**Matthew 4:10** Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. KJV <sup>c</sup>

What better example to follow than our Lord?

Therefore, it is most instructive that the Holy Spirit records for us that worship, or if you wish, veneration, in the portion of Scripture, was only given to Jesus; they worshiped Him (προσεκύνησαν αὐτῷ) not his mother Mary, nor Jesus and his mother together, but Jesus only. Worship or veneration should only be given to God. We would be wise to emulate the wise men.

Does that mean, then, that Mary should be forgotten? No, of course not; we should always honor Mary as the mother of our Lord and call her “blessed.” She should be membered and given honor as a maidservant of the Lord. The writer of Hebrews encourages us to imitate those who have gone before us. <sup>d</sup> Certainly her faith and patience in the midst of false accusation and rumor should not only be remembered, it should also be honored; certainly, as the mother of our Lord it is not wrong to honor her. Paul tells us we should give honor to those to whom honor is due. <sup>e</sup> Indeed, when we meet her in heaven, as well as Joseph, the stepfather of our Lord, I am sure we will remember and honour them for their faithfulness as the ones called by God to be the

<sup>c</sup> **Matt. 4:10** τότε λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς• ὕπαγε, σατανᾶ• γέγραπται γάρ• κύριον τὸν θεόν σου προσκυνήσεις καὶ αὐτῷ μόνῳ λατρεύσεις.

<sup>d</sup> **Hebrews 6:12** that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. NASB

<sup>e</sup> **Rom. 13:7** ἀπόδοτε πᾶσιν τὰς ὀφειλάς, τῷ τὸν φόρον τὸν φόρον, τῷ τὸ τέλος τὸ τέλος, τῷ τὸν φόβον τὸν φόβον, τῷ τὴν τιμὴν τὴν τιμὴν.

**Rom. 13:7** Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; **honour** to whom **honour**. KJV

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human parents of our Lord in his incarnation. Honour (τιμή) is appropriate and biblical, but we should never give her any special veneration (προσκυνέω) or worship. That is reserved for the Son and for the Father and the Holy Spirit.

As for the gifts of worship given to the young child, we are told that the gifts were gold, frankincense and myrrh. This is what has led some to believe that there were not more than three wise men, for certainly, one would not travel such a long distance to worship the king and not give him a gift, (unless, of course, the gifts were so large that they were the common gifts of all the wise men). But, since the family of our Lord was poor, the indication is that these gifts, while not being insignificant, were nevertheless not enough to change their status in society.

As for the symbolism behind the gifts, much as been written. Gold has been seen to represent the royalty of our Lord Jesus Christ, frankincense, his deity, and myrrh his suffering and death.

I would only add that gold might represent the coming importance of our Lord's faith. It was by His faith that God was able to justify us by our faith.<sup>f</sup> Many times gold represents faith in Scripture.<sup>g</sup> Frankincense might represent the intercession in prayer of our Lord by which we are sanctified and kept from the accusations of the evil one (c.f. Ex. 30:34-36; Rom. 8:34). And myrrh might represent that he was the only one who could die for sins of mankind, thereby freeing us from any condemnation and allowing us to be justified and sanctified in his presence. All three aspects are brought together in Rom. 8:33-34.

**Romans 8:33-34** Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies;<sup>34</sup> who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. NASB

Or, perhaps the three gifts might symbolize that when we come in worship to God, we must not come

<sup>f</sup> **Rom. 3:22** Even the righteousness of God which is by **faith of Jesus Christ** unto all and upon all them **that believe**: for there is no difference. KJV

<sup>g</sup> **I Peter 1:7** That the trial of your **faith**, being much more precious than of **gold** that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. KJV

<sup>h</sup> **Deut. 16:16** "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; **and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed.** NKJV

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empty handed; <sup>h</sup> we must first come in faith (gold), then we must come with praise and thanksgiving in our hearts (frankincense), and, finally we must come with the presentation of our bodies as a living sacrifice (myrrh), in other words, we must come in absolute surrender, reckoning ourselves dead to sin, trusting solely in the one who was crucified for us.

And, finally some have concluded that the wise men and gifts were part of the prophetic fulfillment of Scripture which says:

**Isaiah 60:6** A multitude of camels will cover you, The young camels of Midian and Ephah; All those from Sheba will come; **They will bring gold and frankincense, And will bear good news of the praises of the LORD.** NASB

Either way, the gifts bespeak love and adoration for the King of Israel, He who is and ever will be the King of kings and Lord of lords, the Lord Jehovah Himself.

**2:12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.**

The fact that God needed to warn the wise men to not return to king Herod, shows that Herod, apparently, was successful in fooling the wise in regard to his own piety before God, and his own desire to worship the young child. The wise men did not see the “wolf” in sheep’s clothing.

As Christians, we must ever be vigilant, by the discernment of the Holy Spirit, to recognize wolves in sheep’s clothing, those who would seek to harm Christ, albeit not now the actual body of our Lord, but now through his body which is his Church (cf. Acts 26:9-15).

**2:13 And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the**

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**young child to destroy him.**

**2:14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:**

**2:15 And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.**

“Out of Egypt have I called my son” is a quote from Hosea 11:1 which says,

**Hosea 11:1** When Israel was a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son.

Now some might read this portion of Hosea and conclude that this is speaking of the nation of Israel and not the Son of God. Indeed, this is true, the immediate context is talking of Israel, and so some may wonder how can Matthew ignore the context and declare the coming forth of Jesus with Joseph, Mary from Egypt was a fulfillment of this verse? To understand this we must first understand a Jewish hermeneutic called Peshet, which some believed should be classified as a midrashic hermeneutic, (in fact, some call it Midrash-Peshet), and others believe should be classified as a parallel, distinct, and separate hermeneutic. However, we will use it in its broadest sense, calling it a midrashic hermeneutic, because the Peshet interpretation (which is technically redundant, for Peshet means “interpretation”) arose out of the milieu of midrashic hermeneutics of ancient Judaism. † But, first, what is a midrashic hermeneutic? Let me quote from Bibliotheca Sacra.

“The following extract from the article ' Midrash ' in the ' Jewish Encyclopaedia ' throws some light on the meaning of this expression: A term occurring as early as 2 Chron. xiii 22, xxiv 27, though perhaps not in the sense in which it came to be used later, and denoting “exposition,” “exegesis,” especially that of the Scriptures. In contradistinction to literal interpretation ... the term “midrash” designates an exegesis which, going more

† Therefore, some may feel our application of the term Peshet might be too broad in its usage and prefer more specific terms contained in Midrashic hermeneutics, thereby restricting the term Peshet to eschatological contexts. We understand this, but for the sake of continuity we are using the term Peshet in a very broad sense in order to show the Christocentric mindset of the early Christians. Therefore, we are using Peshet as a general term for all Midrashic interpretation.



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deeply than the mere literal sense, attempts to penetrate into the spirit of the Scriptures, to examine the text from all sides, and thereby to derive interpretations which are not immediately obvious.”<sup>15</sup>

This was the type of hermeneutic used by the apostles of Christ, especially Paul the apostle. For example, Paul declares that the “ascending on high,” in Ps. 68:18, is a reference to Christ “ascending on high” in Eph. 4:8. Now, literally, the Psalm is bespeaking David and the occurrences at that time, yet Paul declares that verse bespeaks the ascension of Christ. How can that be? Was Paul ignoring the literal meaning to make it say something it did not say? No, not at all, remember the Midrashic hermeneutic “designates an exegesis which, going more deeply than the mere literal sense, attempts to penetrate into the spirit of the Scriptures, to examine the text from all sides, and thereby to derive interpretations which are not immediately obvious.” Paul was utilizing this hermeneutic to declare a truth of the text that was not apparent from a literal viewpoint. No one before him would have understood that Psalm to speak of Christ’s ascension. *It took the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to interpret that verse.*

And so when we get to this passage of Hosea 11:1 we see that Matthew was also using a Peshet interpretation, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, based upon this common Midrashic understanding.

This was a common hermeneutic of the first century. Its purpose was to pull out truths hidden in Scripture for the benefit of God’s people. *They were not ignoring the literal meaning of the text, but were interpreting various Scriptures from a Christocentric point of view.*

However, we should mention here that there is a huge difference between the apostles using that hermeneutic and other Christians using that hermeneutic. Today, we should focus on a literal hermeneutic.

The danger with a Peshet hermeneutic is that one

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can come up with any interpretation one wants. The apostles were able to properly use it because they were infallibly guided by the Holy Spirit (Jn. 16:13).<sup>i</sup> However, no one else could ever claim such infallibility or inspiration. They were revealing new revelation for the Church under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and, therefore, were kept free from error. All their interpretations were correct. However, the revelation is now complete. There is no new revelation today. It is recorded for us in their writings which constitute the New Testament. The apostles could be dogmatic that a certain verse in the Old Testament spoke of Christ in a certain way because they were writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We are not.

Nevertheless, it still may be alright for us to use this hermeneutic in order to bring out things concerning Christ in the Old Testament, if we do it in a very limited sense. In other words, there may still be things in the Old Testament that bespeak our Saviour that the apostles did not reveal or even write about, (e.g. Joseph as a picture of Christ, or how the Tabernacle in the Old Testament can be a type of Christ), but because we do not have the authority of the Holy Spirit to declare that such an interpretation is absolutely true, we must be content with declaring we “think” this bespeaks our Saviour. For instance, we have all read commentary on the beauty of Christ in the Tabernacle, and it is most edifying, but we can never say for sure that such an interpretation is correct beyond all error. Some teachers will look at an article of the Tabernacle and apply it to Christ in a totally different way than we may apply it. Therefore, we can only be dogmatic if the article of the tabernacle that we are discussing was discussed by the apostles and given an authoritative interpretation.

Consequently, we should be content to follow the principle of a literal hermeneutic, as admonished in Scripture (Jn. 21:23),<sup>j</sup> and only use the Peshier interpretation in a limited and non-dogmatic way.

Therefore, we can now see why Matthew reveals to us that this verse also applies to the Only-Begotten

<sup>i</sup> **John 16:13** Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. KJV

<sup>j</sup> **John 21:23** Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? KJV

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Son of God. He was using a Peshet hermeneutic. As such, we should ask ourselves, “What truth is God demonstrating from this Peshet?”

This chapter of Hosea, which Matthew refers to, speaks of God’s love for Israel; it speaks of the nation as being a son of God and, as such, it speaks of God’s calling them out of Egypt. But it tells us that Israel did not listen to God as to a father; it tells us they disobeyed him, not realizing the love and care God had given to them. Because of that, the chapter tells us that God will discipline Israel, but, that ultimately, because of his enduring love for them, he will also restore them.

And so, because any Israelite would know this story, Matthew is making a contrast when he applies verse 1 to the Lord Jesus Christ. By making this contrast, Matthew is telling Israel to consider the true Son. He, like them, came out of Egypt. But, unlike them, he listened and obeyed God his Father.<sup>k</sup> Israel refused to listen to God and all the prophets that called them to back to God, but the Son ever listened to God and his prophets, i.e. the Word of God; he obeyed the Word in every way; he fulfilled the Torah to the utmost degree; <sup>l</sup> he pleased the Father in all things. But, I believe, Matthew is also telling them that, unlike the nation of old, the Son was grateful and respectful to God, returning his love.

In other words, he is telling them that Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah, acted like a son should act, like Israel of old should have acted, and that, as such, they should be careful to not make the same mistake their ancient brethren made by once more missing the love God is showing to them, this time in the Person of his Only-Begotten Son.

This time, he is saying, God is speaking through his Son; back then he spoke through prophets, <sup>m</sup> such as Hosea, who said in verse 3 of the chapter – “Yet it is I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them in My arms; But they did not know that I healed them.”

Matthew is declaring to the nation of Israel that God is teaching you through his Son; he is teaching you to walk by Christ. Are you listening? God is

<sup>k</sup> **John 8:29** And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him. NASB

<sup>l</sup> **Matthew 5:17** Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. KJV

<sup>m</sup> **Heb. 1:1-2** God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, <sup>2</sup> in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. NASB

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taking you up into his arms by his Son who is the Good Shepherd. Do you not know this? God is healing you of your sicknesses and diseases in the Person of the Messiah. Are you grateful? Are realizing all this?

But, alas, Matthew fears they are committing the same mistake. Verse 7 in Hosea says, "So My people are bent on turning from Me. Though they call them to the One on High, None at all exalts Him."

Their ancient brethren turned away from God, and even though God sent prophets to call them back to the Most High, they refused to listen and exalt God.

This time Matthew is saying God sent his own Son to call them back to the Most High. But, like Israel of old, he fears the leaders of the nation have turned their backs to the Son, and as such, to God the Father; he fears they are seeking to retain their own position of power and authority within the nation, rather than turning it over to the Son, the Messiah, the King.<sup>o</sup> He is appealing to them to not commit the same mistake.

By revealing this Peshier, Matthew is pleading with Israel to turn back to God and listen to the Messiah, God's Beloved Son, the One who was also called out of Egypt, the one who did the things that were pleasing to the Father. Obey the Son and you will obey the Father. Listen to the Son and you will be listening to the Father. Receive the Son and you will be receiving the Father. Follow Jesus the Messiah, for when you follow him you are following God and acting as a true son should act, and as your ancient brethren of old should have acted.

**2:16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.**

**2:17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying,**

**2:18 In Rama was there a voice heard,**

**o Luke 20:9-10;13-14** And He began to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard and rented it out to vine-growers, and went on a journey for a long time.<sup>10</sup> "At the harvest time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, so that they would give him some of the produce of the vineyard; but the vine-growers beat him and sent him away empty-handed."<sup>13</sup> "The owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.'"<sup>14</sup> "But when the vine-growers saw him, they reasoned with one another, saying, 'This is the heir; let us kill him so that the inheritance will be ours.'" NASB

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**lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.**

The true nature of Herod's heart is now revealed. Herod had no desire to worship the child; he desired to kill the child. How awful was this despicable act of Herod. It demonstrates that his quest for power had no end. He was even willing to kill innocent children. How dark is the heart of man.

Matthew tells us that this awful act was prophesied by Jeremiah. The prophecy is found in Jer. 31:15.<sup>p</sup>

**2:19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,**

**2:20 Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.**

**2:21 And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.**

**2:22 But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:**

**2:23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.**

In verses 19-23 we have recorded for us the second, and then the third and final appearance of an angel to Joseph. How interesting it is to notice that God regularly used angels to direct the stepfather of our Lord. This, in itself, I believe is a fulfillment of the prophetic word given to us in Ps. 91:10-11.<sup>q</sup>

Angels were sent by God to guard the young child against the evil that could be wrought by man, (as was just saw in verses 16-18). They accomplished their mission by warning Joseph in dreams. This time

<sup>p</sup> **Jer. 31:15** Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. KJV

<sup>q</sup> **Ps. 91:10-12** There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. 11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. 12 They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. KJV

## Matthew

he was directed to return to the land of Israel for Herod was dead. Perhaps, this might have protected the child from some evil that may have befallen him in Egypt. We simply do not know, but we do know Joseph was told it was time to return to Israel. It is also interesting that there were others that sought to kill Jesus (vs. 20). Perhaps, Herod had heard that a family had escaped from Bethlehem unto Egypt and so had hired assassins to kill the child if they should return. Notice that in verse 20 it says “they (plural) are dead which sought the young child's life,” not just Herod is dead which sought the young's child's life.” But by this time we are told that all the ones who sought to kill the child were dead.

However, we find that soon, apparently, Herod's son Archelaus may have followed in father's footsteps, for in the third and final dream Joseph was warned again in such a way that caused him, to return not to Bethlehem, but to return once more to the village where he once dwelt—Nazareth.

This led to our Lord receiving the appellation “Nazarene.” Matthew tells us this was a fulfillment of that which was spoken by the prophets, “He shall be called a Nazarene.” But search as one may, one will not find this statement made by any Old Testament prophet.

Consequently, some have tried to apply this declaration by Matthew to the fact that the Greek word *Ναζωραῖος* is closely linked to the Hebrew word *Netzer* in Isa. 11:1-2. <sup>r</sup> Jamieson, Fausset and Brown have this to say regarding this viewpoint.

The best explanation of the origin of this name appears to be that which traces it to the word *netzer* in #Isa 11:1—the *small twig, sprout, or sucker*, which the prophet there says, “shall come forth from the stem (or rather, ‘stump’) of Jesse, the branch which should fructify from his roots.” The little town of Nazareth, mentioned neither in the Old Testament nor in JOSEPHUS, was probably so called from its insignificance: a weak twig in contrast to a stately tree; and a special contempt seemed to rest upon it—“Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (#Joh 1:46)—over and above the general contempt in which all Galilee was held,

<sup>r</sup> **Isa. 11:1-2** And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: <sup>2</sup> And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. KJV

## Matthew

from the number of Gentiles that settled in the upper territories of it, and, in the estimation of the Jews, debased it. Thus, in the providential arrangement by which our Lord was brought up at the insignificant and opprobrious town called *Nazareth*, there was involved, first, a local humiliation; next, an allusion to Isaiah's prediction of His lowly, twig-like upspringing from the branchless, dried-up stump of Jesse; and yet further, a standing memorial of that humiliation which "the prophets," in a number of the most striking predictions, had attached to the Messiah.<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps, indeed, this was the purpose of our Lord being known as a Nazarene. Ultimately, it pointed to him as the Branch, the promised Messiah, the son of David, one from the stem of Jesse. If so then this is the verse in the prophets referred to by Matthew. But has we have said, this is not a direct quote of the declaration claimed by Matthew, and in all of the Old Testament such a quote cannot be found. Does this mean Matthew made a mistake? No, of course not, Matthew knew what was in the Old Testament. He would not make such an obvious mistake, and, besides, it was not possible for him to make a mistake since he was writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

So why did Matthew say this? The answer can be found if we look closely to Matthew's statement. He simply says, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets." He does not indicate any specific prophet. So, in all likelihood, Matthew was referring to other writings or oral traditions that contained other sayings of prophets that are no longer extant.

This would not be unusual, for there were many books of different prophets among the Jews that were never accepted it into the Canon of Scripture. For example, II Chronicles 9:29 tells us of some of these books (cf. also I Chron. 29:29).

**II Chronicles 9:29** Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, first and last, are they not written in the **book of Nathan the prophet**, and in the **prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite**, and in the **visions of Iddo the seer** against Jeroboam the son of Nebat?

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Additionally, the following verses speak of different sayings made by prophets of which we have no knowledge (II Chron. 12:15; 13:22).<sup>s</sup>

However, some of these prophecies were preserved for us in the Old Testament. For example, II Kings. 14:25 records for us one of these prophecies made by the prophet Jonah that cannot be found in his own book in the Old Testament—the book of Jonah.

The verse preserves for us this prophecy:

**II Kings 14:25** He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gathhepher.

Consequently, even though the full prophecy of Jonah, in this instance, was not inspired to be in the Canon of Scripture, a small snippet was preserved in this book of Kings.

The same thing occurs in the New Testament in regard to the prophecies of Enoch. The book of Enoch was not a book that was inspired to be in the Canon of Scripture, however, Jude records one portion that was inspired since it is included in his epistle—Jude 1:14.<sup>t</sup>

Or take Paul—he records for us the names of Jannes and Jambres, the names of the magicians that opposed Moses, even though those names will not be found in the Old Testament. They were apparently known to Paul by oral tradition or from certain writings. However, since Paul records them for us in II Tim. 3:8, we know that these were their true names.<sup>u</sup>

And, finally, we have Luke 11:49<sup>v</sup> which contains a saying from a book possibly known as “the Wisdom of God,” which is no longer extant. (However, it should also be noted that some believe Luke is simply calling Christ the Wisdom of God, which, if so, this may simply be referring to the statement made by Jesus in Matt. 23:34).

<sup>s</sup> **II Chron. 12:15b**  
“... are they not **written in the book of Shem-ahiah the prophet, and of Iddo the seer** concerning genealogies?”KJV  
**II Chron. 13:22**  
“And the rest of the acts of Abijah ...are **written in the story of the prophet Iddo.**”  
KJV

<sup>t</sup> **Jude 1:14** And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, **Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,** KJV

<sup>u</sup> **II Timothy 3:8**  
Now as **Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses,** so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. KJV

<sup>v</sup> **Luke 11:49**  
Therefore also said **the wisdom of God,** I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: KJV



## Matthew

Therefore, getting back to Matthew's quote, "He shall be called a Nazarene," he may be simply recording for us a portion of a book now lost to us, but still known to Jews in that day; and by its inclusion in Matthews Gospel, he is preserving for us an inspired declaration made by some Old Testament prophet.

But in the end, it matters not which view is correct, for we know, by the inspiration of the New Testament, that some prophets made this important declaration concerning our Saviour. If that prophet was Isaiah, then Matthew may have been referring to Isa. 11:1, pointing the Jews to the fact that Jesus was the promised Branch prophesied by Isaiah.

But, there may be another aspect of this important declaration that Matthew wished to convey to his brethren in that day, and it may be this.

When Samuel was sent by God to find a new king for Israel who would save Israel from their enemies, he was sent to the small village of Bethlehem. In the same way, Matthew is sending the hearts of his brethren to a small village in Galilee—Nazareth. Both were lowly villages and both were homes to kings who would be Deliverers to Israel. Yet both kings, at first, were not considered to be "kingly."

And so, it is pointing to Jesus as a lowly one, just like his father David, was a lowly one, a lowly shepherd not even considered worthy enough to be brought in before Samuel when Samuel was looking for the next king of Israel who would be the anointed (Christ) of the Lord. And, like his father David, Matthew is telling us that Jesus, the lowly carpenter from Nazareth is indeed the anointed one, the king of Israel. Perhaps, he reminding his brethren to not look at outward things, but to look at the inward things (I Sam. 16:6-7) <sup>w</sup> and see as the Lord sees, otherwise they might fail to recognize the Lord's true anointed, their true King, in the same way David's brethren could not see David as the one God would choose to be king (see I Sam. 16:1-12).

What a lesson this should be for us today who are so wont to look at things outwardly not recognizing

### <sup>w</sup> I Sam. 16:6-7

And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the Lord's anointed is before him. <sup>7</sup> But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. KJV

## Matthew

the true inward beauty of the Lord, not recognizing his presence in things that appear outwardly as weak and feeble. May the Lord forgive us of our lack of faith to see his hand in the smallest of things. May he forgive us for craving the biggest and the best in the things of the Lord, thinking that will insure lasting success. Only the Lord can insure success that will last unto eternity; the rest will burn away as wood, hay and stubble.

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### **NOTES ON THE ANCIENT JEWISH BELIEF CONCERNING THE MESSIAH**

Let us first look at Alfred Edersheim and his evidence regarding ancient Jewish belief concerning the Messiah.

“These two inferences, derived from the Gospel-narratives, are in exact accordance with the whole line of ancient Jewish teaching. Beginning with the LXX rendering of Genesis 49: 10, and especially of Numbers 24: 7, 17, we gather, that the Kingdom of the Messiah was higher than any that is earthly, and destined to subdue them all. But the rendering of Psalm 72: 5, 7; Psalm 110: 3; and especially of Isaiah 9, carries us much farther. They convey the idea, that the existence of this Messiah was regarded as pre-mundane – before the moon, (Ps. 72), before the morning-star (Ps. 110), and eternal – and His Person and dignity as superior to that of men and Angels: 'the Angel of the Great Council' (Isa. 9:6), probably 'the Angel of the Face'—a view fully confirmed by the rendering of the Targum...”

“Even more distinct are the statements in the so-called 'Book of Enoch.' Critics are substantially agreed, that the oldest part of it (chs. 1-36 and 72-105) dates from between 150 and 130 B.C. The part next in date is full of Messianic allusions; but, as a certain class of modern writers has ascribed to it a post-Christian date, and, however ungrounded, to Christian authorship, it may be better not to refer to it in the present argument, the more so as we have other testimony from the time of Herod. Not to speak, therefore, of such peculiar designations of the Messiah as 'the Woman's Son,' 'the Son of Man,' 'the Elect,' and 'the

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Just One,' we mark that the Messiah is expressly designated in the oldest portion as 'the Son of God' ('I and My Son' Enoch 105.2)...”

“Still more explicit is that beautiful collection of eighteen Psalms, dating from about half a century before Christ, which bears the name of 'the Psalter of Solomon.' A chaste anticipation of the Messianic Kingdom (in Ps. Sol.11) is followed by a full description of its need and its blessings, to which the concluding Psalm forms an apt epilogue. The King Who reigns is of the house of David. He is the Son of David, Who comes at the time known to God only, to reign over Israel. He is a righteous King, taught of God.' He is Christ the Lord (χριστὸς κυρίου – Ps. Sol. 17:36), exactly as in the LXX translation of Lamentations 4: 20). 'He is pure from sin,' which qualifies Him for ruling His people, and banishing sinners by His word (Ps. Sol. 17:41). 'Never in His days will He be infirm towards His God, since God renders Him strong in the Holy Ghost,' wise in counsel, with might and righteousness ('mighty in deed and word'). The blessing of the Lord being upon Him, He does not fail (Ps. Sol. 17.42, 43). 'This is the beauty of the King of Israel, Whom God hath chosen, to set Him over the house of Israel to rule it' (Ps. Sol. 17:47). Thus invincible, not by outward might, but in His God, He will bring His people the blessings of restoration to their tribal possessions, and of righteousness, but break in pieces His enemies, not by outward weapons, but by the word of His mouth; purify Jerusalem, and judge the nations, who will be subject to His rule, and behold and own His glory" (Ps. Sol. 17.25-35). Manifestly, this is not an earthly Kingdom, nor yet an earthly King.”<sup>17</sup>

And in regard to the varied Jewish viewpoints concerning the Messiah's relationship with God we have the following evidence, first as seen in Philo and then as seen in certain various biblical texts. It must be remembered that Herod and many within the Sanhedrin were certainly influenced by Hellenistic Jewish thought, or, for those who might take issue with such a claim, at the minimum, they were certainly well aware of their thoughts regarding the Messiah. † This evidence is referenced by Alan F. Segal when he states:

“Here Philo makes no disclaimer about the metaphoric

† It must be remembered that Boethos, appointed as High Priest by King Herod, was from the same city as Philo of Alexandria.

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quality of the terms he is using. He unabashedly calls the logos a “second God.” This in calling attention to various similar scriptural passages, the rabbis were not just stylizing theoretical arguments. Real traditions of a “second God” were present in Judaism as early as the time of Philo.”<sup>18</sup>

The primary biblical texts that influenced such thinking were –

“... (1) Dan. 7:9f, and the speculations about the identity of the “son of man,” (2) the Ex. 24 theophany, possibly together with other passages in the Bible where God is pictured in the form of a man (3) the related descriptions of the angel of YHWH who carries the divine name (e.g. Gen. 16:7f., 21:17f., 22:11, 31:11f., Ex. 3:2f., Ju. 2:1f., as well as Ex. 23:21f.), [and] (4)scriptural verses which describe God as plural (Gen. 1:26).”<sup>19</sup>

All of these, Alan Segal states, gave...

“... a good inkling of the kinds of traditions which must have been current in the Hellenistic Jewish communities of the first century.”<sup>20</sup>

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### Matthew 3

**3:1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea,**

**3:2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**

**3:3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.**

In this verse, John begins his prophetic ministry, and his first proclamation to the children of Israel was that they should “repent” because the kingdom of heaven was at hand. But what was the scriptural basis for his ministry? Matthew tells us in the next verse – Isaiah 40:3. But before we can begin to

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understand John's prophetic ministry, one question must first be asked, "What did John mean by his proclamation and what were the expectations of the people at that time?"

To answer this question we must look at John's plea from three perspectives. First, we must understand what he meant by "repent." Second, we must understand what he meant by the phrase the "kingdom of heaven." And, third we must understand what he meant by "at hand."

So, let's look at the first perspective; what did John mean by "repent?" It is important to remember that John was not only a prophet, but he was also a priest of the tribe of Levi; as such, a priest would sometimes witness the people's confession of sin, their repentance from some iniquity (e.g. Lev. 5:1-5; Num. 5:5-8). In fact, John Gill makes this comment regarding the form of the confession said before the priest in his notation from Lev. 5:5.<sup>a</sup>

"Fagius, from the Jewish writers, has given us the form of it, which was this;" 'I beseech thee, O Lord, I have sinned, I have done wickedly, I have transgressed before thee, so and so have I done; and, lo, I repent, and am ashamed of what I have done, and I will never do the same again.'

"Though perhaps this form may be of too modern a date, yet doubtless somewhat like this was pronounced; and they make confession of sin necessary to all sacrifices, and say atonement is not made by them without repentance and confession (Maimon. Hilchot Teshubah, c. 1. sect. 1)."<sup>21</sup>

So we see that it was not unusual for John, being a prophet and a priest, to call for the repentance of the people. What was unusual was the manner in which he did so, a manner which we will study presently. But for a prophet, or a priest, to admonish the people to repentance was not unusual, even if it was done outside the confines of the temple where a priest normally served. There are many examples of God's people who repented, and confessed their sins in prayer to God for forgiveness outside the confines of the temple. David prays as such as seen in Psalm. 51.

<sup>a</sup> **Leviticus 5:5-6**

"So it shall be when he becomes guilty in one of these, **that he shall confess that in which he has sinned.**"<sup>6</sup> 'He shall also bring his guilt offering to the LORD for his sin which he has committed, a female from the flock, a lamb or a goat as a sin offering. So the priest shall make atonement on his behalf for his sin.'" NASB

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Asaph does the same for the people in Psalm 79. Solomon tells Israel to pray for forgiveness of sin, even if they were outside the land (I Kings 8:33-34). And Daniel prayed from Babylon for forgiveness of his sins and the sins of the people (Dan. 9:3-21).

And, so, like those before him, John calls the people to repentance even though he was serving outside the temple proper. This was his work as a prophet. His purpose was to make ready the heart of the people for the Messiah and, like Isaiah before him, John recognizes that outward acts of righteousness is not what the coming Messiah desired; rather, he was going to desire the inward righteousness of the heart. Isaiah 1:11-18 speaks to this as can be seen to the right column.<sup>b</sup>

And when Jesus came, Jesus praises the scribe for recognizing this need for inward righteousness rather than mere outward acts.

**Mark 12:28-34** And one of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?"<sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord;'<sup>30</sup> and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'<sup>31</sup> "The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."<sup>32</sup> And the scribe said to Him, "Right, Teacher, **You have truly stated that He is One; and there is no one else besides Him;**<sup>33</sup> **and to love Him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as himself, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.**"<sup>34</sup> And when Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions. NASB

So this was John's mission, to make straight the paths which had been made crooked by sin of the people of Israel (Isa. 40: 3-4). In other words, as a prophet, John's purpose was to make known to the people of Israel their sins and to proclaim, like Isaiah,

<sup>b</sup> **Isa. 1:11, 13,18**

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.<sup>13</sup> Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.<sup>15</sup> And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.<sup>16</sup> **Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;**<sup>17</sup> Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.KJV

## Matthew

that sin had made the people's paths crooked before the Lord (Isa. 59:7-8).<sup>c</sup> John's mission was to make known to Israel their evil ways in preparation for the Messiah, whether he was making it known to a leader in Israel, or to the people. Isa. 40:4 says he will make every mountain and hill low.<sup>d</sup> It mattered not if the person was a mountain, i.e. a leader in the nation like King Herod, or the chief priests, or the Pharisees. John's purpose was to bring every person with authority to a place of lowliness before God by bringing to light their evil heart. Nor did it matter if the person was but a hill, or indeed, just a rough patch of ground (i.e. the common people). John's mission was the same; he was to make known to them their sin. Why? So they would see the error of their ways and flee from the wrath to come, whether referring to the temporal, i.e. the coming destruction of Jerusalem (which did occur in 70 A.D, although John would not have known of this particular date) or eternal, the wrath of the lake of fire. This making known their sin was the means by which the crooked paths would be made straight so that there would be no places to hide since the paths would be straight and full of light with no place for shadows.

This was John's mission as a prophet. But what was to be done for those who did respond to his message and repent? The Law required a sacrifice for sin whenever the iniquity of a leader or of a common person was made known. However, those leaders such as the Pharisees, the Saducees, and the chief scribes were blind and did not understand that their righteousness was as filthy rags. They did not see themselves as full of sin. They did not understand they may have been whited sepulchers without, but were tombs of dead bones within. In the same way, the common people were blinded by their adherence to outward ritual and formality; they had forgotten the inward righteousness of the heart that was desired by God.

But for those who did see, what was to be done? What was to be done for those who repented and sought forgiveness? The Law was clear; a sacrifice

<sup>c</sup> **Isaiah 59:7-8**

Their feet run to evil, And they hasten to shed innocent blood; Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; Devastation and destruction are in their highways<sup>8</sup> They do not know the way of peace, And there is no justice in their tracks; They have made their paths crooked; Whoever treads on them does not know peace. NASB

<sup>d</sup> **Isaiah 40:4**

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and **the crooked shall be made straight**, and the rough places plain: KJV

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for sin must be made, whether it was a leader or the common people.<sup>e</sup>

This is where John's mission as a priest also comes about. A prophet would point them unto repentance and confession of sin, as we have already said, but a priest would know that God still required a blood sacrifice, and John, as a Levitical priest, would know this, but John also knew the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin (c.f. Heb. 10:4). So what was John to do? John knew the answer and he proclaimed it in Jn. 1: 36. He pointed the people to Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God which would take away the sin of the whole world. Sacrifice and blood was still required, but John knew that only the blood of the Lamb would suffice (Jn. 1: 19-36).

This too was his mission, and in pointing the repentant to the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God, John was fulfilling that part of his mission to lift up every valley, i.e. to raise up the vision of those who repented in humble contrition to the true sacrifice that would cover their sins—the Messiah. It was not the sacrifices of the temple that would save them, but the sacrifice of the Eternal Son of God coming in the likeness of sinful flesh.

So now we see what John meant by “repent!” He showed the people of Israel that God demanded they turn away from their evil and selfish hearts; he showed them that all their blood sacrifices and burnt offerings meant nothing to God because the people remained unrepentant in their spirits and blinded in their self-righteousness. He pointed them to the true sacrifice that would take away their sins, the One whose blood, (unlike the endless blood of animal sacrifices), would cleanse them from their iniquity and make them whiter than snow, the Person who could save them from the wrath to come—the Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect Lamb of God.

Let's now turn our attention to the second perspective. What did he mean by the “kingdom of heaven?”

Some have made a distinction between Matthew's choice of the kingdom of heaven as opposed to the

<sup>e</sup> Lev. 4:22-23

**When a leader sins** and unintentionally does any one of all the things which the LORD God has commanded not to be done, and he becomes guilty, 23 if his sin which he has committed is made known to him, he shall bring for his offering a goat, a male without defect. NASB

Lev. 4:27-28

**“Now if anyone of the common people sins** unintentionally in doing any of the things which the LORD has commanded not to be done, and becomes guilty,<sup>28</sup> Or if his sin, which he hath sinned, come to his knowledge: then he shall bring his offering, a kid of the goats, a female without blemish, for his sin which he hath sinned.” NASB



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other gospel writer's choice of kingdom of God. But in reality, there is not really any major difference between the two. "Heaven" was also a designation for "God."

Alfred Edersheim mentions in his classic work, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, the following.

"According to the Rabbinic views of the time, the terms 'Kingdom,' ' Kingdom of heaven,' and ' Kingdom of God ' (in the Targum on Micah iv. 7 'Kingdom of Jehovah'), were equivalent. In fact, the word 'heaven' was very often used instead of 'God,' so as to avoid unduly familiarizing the ear with the Sacred Name. This, probably, accounts for the exclusive use of the expression ' Kingdom of Heaven' in the Gospel by St. Matthew."<sup>22</sup>

And, John Lightfoot relates the following in his works—

"This phrase, and 'the kingdom of heaven, ' are but one and the same in sense, though they differ in a word; as will plainly and easily appear by comparing these places: —  
...<sup>23</sup>  
...

Here are a few of the examples he gives.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Matt. 5: 3Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the <b>kingdom of heaven.</b> | Luke 6:20Blessed be ye poor; for yours is the <b>kingdom of God.</b>              |
| Matt. 19:14 Suffer little children, &c; for of such is the <b>kingdom of heaven.</b>  | Mark 10:14 Suffer little children, &c; for of such is the <b>kingdom of God.</b>  |
| Matt. 13:11 To you it is given to know the mysteries of the <b>kingdom of heaven.</b> | Luke 8: 10 To you it is given to know the mysteries of the <b>kingdom of God.</b> |

He then continues—

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“...And many more such-like parallel places in the evangelists might be produced, in which, by the indifferent use of these expressions, they show abundantly, that ' the kingdom of heaven,' and 'the kingdom of God,' do mean and signify but one and the same thing. And the reason of this indifferent use of it is, because the Jews usually called God 'Heaven.' ...and their authors [i.e. Rabbis] infinitely [so], in such passages as these; ... 'A man is to fear his teacher, as he is to fear Heaven,' ... 'Such a one casts off the fear of Heaven, ' ... 'The name of Heaven is blasphemed.’”<sup>24</sup>

He also relates how the same appellation of “Heaven” for the name of “God” is sometimes found in Scriptures. For example, he gives us these two examples.

**Luke 15:21** And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against **heaven** and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’” NASB

**Matt. 21:24-26** And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. <sup>25</sup> The baptism of John, whence was it? from **heaven**, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From **heaven**; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? <sup>26</sup> But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. KJV

Obviously, if one sins against heaven, it must mean one is sinning against God. And if one is receiving authority from heaven, it must mean such a one is receiving authority from God.

And so we see that Matthew’s replacement of the word “God” with the word “Heaven” in the phrase “kingdom of Heaven,” was just a common appellation utilized by the Jews during that time, and by comparing Scripture with Scripture we see that the two phrases are completely synonymous.

The Holy Spirit also demonstrates this fact by the very words of our Lord in Matthew 19:23-24. Matthew records for us the following.

## Matthew

**Matt. 19:23-24** Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the **kingdom of heaven**.<sup>24</sup> And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the **kingdom of God**.” KJV

As one can see, in verse 23, Jesus uses “kingdom of heaven,” but then, in the very next verse, Jesus changes the phrase to “kingdom of God,” yet, obviously he is referring to one and the same thing. Thus in this discourse, Jesus, himself, is showing us that the two phrases are synonymous.

Nevertheless, in spite of this, one finds, in a few places (besides the example above) where Matthew retains the phrase “kingdom of God” (i.e. Matt. 6:33; 12:28; 21:31, 43) rather than the phrase “kingdom of heaven.”

More than likely, this is done for special emphasis upon the very nature and Person of God the Father as opposed to his ruling or authority. In other words, even though the two phrases are synonymous, more than likely, the phrase “kingdom of heaven” in Matthew was used to emphasize a slightly different aspect of that kingdom. The phrase “kingdom of heaven” emphasizes the overall “rule of God” upon earth, whereas the phrase “kingdom of God” emphasizes not only the rule but also the Divine Person behind that rule being manifested. It slightly changes the focus away from the simple rule of God upon earth to the “character” of the One ruling. Thus one’s focus is enlarged to include the character His kingdom and not just the authority of His kingdom..

Alfred Edersheim states:

“...A review of many passages on the subject shows that, in the Jewish mind, the expression ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ referred, not so much to any particular period, as in general to the Rule of God—as acknowledged, manifested, and eventually perfected. Very often it is the equivalent for personal acknowledgment of God: the taking upon oneself of the ‘yoke’ of ‘the Kingdom,’ or of the commandments—the former preceding and conditioning the latter.”<sup>25</sup>

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This may account for the change of the phrase in those few verses (as well as pointing to Jesus being the LORD God incarnate, but we will discuss that matter when we reach those verses).

Thus we see Matthew uses the phrase “kingdom of heaven” more often than any other Gospel writer as he was primarily writing his Gospel for the Jews; and so he used the appellation “Heaven” for “God,” to emphasize the actual “rule of God” upon earth.

The third and final perspective we would like to look at is what did John mean by the fact that the kingdom of heaven was at hand?

The English phrase “at hand” is the Greek word ἤγγικεν. It is the third person perfect active voice of ἐγγίζω. The word carries the idea of something or someone being near temporally or spatially. This meaning is clearly shown back to back in Matthew 26:45-46.<sup>f</sup>

In verse 45 we see ἤγγικεν used temporally. Jesus is saying the hour of his arrest had drawn near, the time had arrived. Whereas, in the very next verse, verse 46, the same word is used indicating that Judas was nearby; he had drawn nigh spatially.

So when we come to the phrase, “the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” or, “the kingdom of heaven has drawn nigh,” we must ask ourselves how is the Greek verb ἤγγικεν being used in the context of the verse—temporally or spatially.

Now, no doubt John and the people of Israel would have understood the word temporally. The nation believed a Messiah would bring them immediate deliverance from their Roman oppressors, and the immediate setting up of his kingdom upon the earth. Most assuredly, John was expecting this and it might have been the thought that prompted his question to Jesus in Matt. 11:3. Indeed, this idea was so prevalent that Jesus, himself, had to disabuse the people of this notion.<sup>g</sup>

However, it should not surprise us that many times prophets would accurately speak words given to them by the Holy Spirit without fully

<sup>f</sup> **Matt. 26:45- 46**

Τότε ἔρχεται πρὸς τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ, καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς, Καθεύδετε τὸ λοιπὸν καὶ ἀναπαύεσθε· ἰδοὺ, ἤγγικεν ἡ ὥρα, καὶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδίδοται εἰς χεῖρας ἀμαρτωλῶν.  
<sup>46</sup> Ἐγείρεσθε, ἄγωμεν Ἴδού, ἤγγικεν ὁ παραδιδούς με.

**Matt. 26: 45-46**

Then he comes to the disciples and says to them, Sleep on now and take your rest; behold, **the hour** has **drawn nigh**, and the Son of man is delivered up into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us go; behold, **he** that delivers me up has **drawn nigh**. (Darby)

<sup>g</sup> **Luke 19:11** And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and **because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear**. KJV

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understanding their true meaning or application. The apostle Peter addresses this point in his first epistle in (I Pet. 1:10-11).<sup>h</sup> Jesus also refers to this fact in Matt. 13:17.<sup>i</sup>

And, in the Old Testament, we find a perfect example in Daniel. He accurately recorded the very words given to him by God, yet he did not understand their full import (see Dan. 12: 8).<sup>j</sup>

It would be perfectly normal for John the Baptist to shout forth, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, all the while thinking in his own mind, that the kingdom of heaven, or millennial reign of Christ, was going to appear very shortly. But that does not mean that was the true intent of Holy Spirit. Jesus will later give forth the true intent of those words for he will say the same thing, but He will speak those words with a *spatial* intent and not a *temporal* intent (Matt. 4:17). Jesus will declare that the kingdom of heaven is nigh, having drawn near, in none other than himself. He was the manifestation of the kingdom of heaven and He was standing right before them *spatially*. The "rule of God" in heaven was being manifested in Son of Man on earth for he was obedient in all things.

John the Baptist used ἤγγικεν in its temporal sense for he, as with all Jews, even the disciples of our Lord, expected the kingdom of heaven to appear momentarily in Israel and with it, the establishment of the Messianic rule on earth. However, our Lord was not using ἤγγικεν *temporally*, but rather, *spatially*, declaring to the people that the kingdom of heaven was near, in their midst, being manifested in the Christ, the Son of the Living God (cf. Luke 17:21 Darby's Version).

This was an aspect of the kingdom that none understood. It was a mystery hidden from John and the nation. And, as we continue with our study in Matthew, we will find that Jesus will begin to correct the nation's misunderstanding concerning the kingdom of heaven and, instead, will reveal, to his disciples, the mysteries of the kingdom.

The same thing happened to the apostle John (not

<sup>h</sup> **I Peter 1:10-11**

Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: <sup>11</sup> Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. KJV

<sup>i</sup> **Matt. 13:17** For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them. KJV

<sup>j</sup> **Dan. 12:8** As for me, I heard but could not understand; so I said, "My lord, what will be the outcome of these events?" NASB

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the Baptist) in the Book of Revelation. He accurately writes down his vision of the woman sitting on the beast without ever understanding its significance or meaning, that is, until the angel declares it to him (Rev. 17:6-7).<sup>k</sup> Sometimes, in Scripture, declarations are made, or visions are seen, but true meaning only comes when it is revealed.

So now that we have examined the three aspects underlying John's prophetic "ministry," let us continue our look at the John the Baptist and the content of his prophetic "message" and the outward sign accompanying that message.

**3:4 And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.**

**3:5 Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan,**

**3:6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.**

John's appearance in Israel brought much excitement in Israel. Matthew tells us Jerusalem, all of Judea and the region around the Jordan came out to see him and be baptized by him. We will look at his baptism in a few verses hence, but first we must ask why did Matthew tell us about the raiment of John?

Matthew mentions he was dressed in camel's hair with a leather girdle about his loins or waist. This hairy garment with the leather belt or girdle would no doubt remind the children of Israel of that prophet of old—Elijah, who was described in Scripture as a hairy man, with a leather girdle about his loins.<sup>1</sup> He was a well known prophet in the hearts of the people for they looked for him at every Passover Seder

The leather girdle with the garment made of camel's hair must have given this appearance. It is important to note this camel garment is not the soft piece of clothing known today made from camel's hair, but was more than likely a skin with the camel's hair intact. Shorn camel's hair, woven into a piece of

<sup>k</sup> **Rev. 17:6-7** And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. And when I saw her, I wondered greatly.<sup>7</sup> And the angel said to me, "Why do you wonder? I shall tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.  
NASB

<sup>1</sup> **II Kings 1:7** He said to them, "What kind of man was he who came up to meet you and spoke these words to you?"<sup>7</sup> They answered him, "He was a hairy man with a leather girdle bound about his loins." And he said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite."  
NASB

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clothing, can be quite soft, but we are told specifically John did not wear soft clothing (Matt. 11:8) <sup>m</sup> and so his raiment was more than likely the skin of a camel with the hair unshorn. In some cases, the outer hair of the camel can grow to over 12 inches in length, thus giving the appearance of a hairy man.

Thus, many of the nation believed John was none other than Elijah the prophet returned (as we will see later). His dress certainly reinforced this belief and contributed to the belief that the coming millennial kingdom of heaven was, indeed, at hand, that it was to be set up on earth at any time, for right before the kingdom would be set up, Scripture says Elijah would first return. <sup>n</sup>

**3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?**

When the Pharisees come to John, he has an additional word for them; he warns them of the wrath to come. The “wrath to come” that John the Baptist would be referring to would be the wrath of the great and terrible day of the Lord. As we have already said, in John’s mind the kingdom of heaven was about to appear and with its appearance would be the Day of the Lord wherein the wrath of God would be poured out, not only upon the nations of the world, but also upon the disobedient within the nation of Israel.

Malachi speaks of this wrath, the wrath connected with the appearance of the Messenger, i.e. John the Baptist (Mal. 3:1- 4:6). Of course, John did not know that between his appearance and the wrath of the great day of the Lord would be the Age of Grace wherein the Gospel would be preached to all nations so the Lord could take out for Himself a people, not only from among the nations of the world, but also from the believing Jews within Israel, so as to build His Church, composed of both Jew and Gentile alike. John did not know this; he expected the immediate appearance of the kingdom of Heaven and the wrath

<sup>m</sup> **Matt. 11: 7- 9**

And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? <sup>8</sup> **But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.** <sup>9</sup>

But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.

<sup>n</sup> **Mal. 4:5-6**

Behold, **I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:** <sup>6</sup>And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

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of God manifested in the Day of the Lord.

And so this is what prompted John to ask the Pharisees and Sadducees about who had warned them to flee from the coming wrath, fleeing, of course, from the wrath of God that would shortly be poured out on others.

The Pharisees and Sadducees, of course, thought they were the obedient ones within the nation, and the others were sinners. The wrath would be poured on others, not on themselves. They did not know that they were the disobedient ones, the sinners with whom God would pour out his wrath.

And so, because of this, John pronounces an indictment upon them calling them a generation of vipers. This must have taken them aback for they thought they were the only ones that truly pleased God; but John speaks correctly (fulfilling his ministry) for the passage in Malachi identifies the character of those who would be disobedient in Israel; and since John identifies himself to the Pharisees and Sadducees as the one sent to prepare the way of the Lord, he knows their minds would be directed back to the Word of God (for they knew their Bible) not only to Isaiah, but also to that passage in Malachi which speaks of the same messenger sent by God, as can be seen to the right.<sup>o</sup>

In fact, the Lord clearly references this passage in Malachi when identifying John as one like unto Elijah who was to come (Matt. 11: 10, 14)—the prophecy concerning Elijah being found at the conclusion of the passage which begins with the messenger of the Lord in chapter three and ends with the messenger being identified as Elijah (Mal. 4:5).<sup>p</sup>

**Matthew 11: 10, 14** This is the one about whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You. <sup>14</sup> And if you care to accept it, he himself is Elijah, who was to come.” NASB

As such, John knows very well that when they read the prophecy of Malachi, they would read the indictment against Israel made by the LORD of hosts,

<sup>o</sup> **Malachi 3:1-3**

**"Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me.**

And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts. <sup>2</sup>

"But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. <sup>3</sup>

"And He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness. NASB

<sup>p</sup> **Mal 4:5** Behold, I am going to **send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.** NASB



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where He clearly states who would be the disobedient ones (Mal. 3:5).

**Mal 3:5** Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the **sorcerers** and against the **adulterers** and against those **who swear falsely**, and against those **who oppress the wage** earner in his wages, **the widow** and the orphan, and those who **turn aside the alien**, and **do not fear Me**,” says the LORD of hosts.  
NASB

Many of these several characteristics are applied by Scripture to many of those Pharisees and Sadducees within the nation who were always boasting before men and before God that they were the righteous ones within the nation of Israel.

They are symbolically seen as **sorcerers** (i.e. those who mislead the unsuspecting) when Jesus, Himself, calls them serpents and a “generation of vipers” (Matt. 23: 27,33).

**Matthew 23:27, 33** Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. <sup>33</sup> Ye **serpents, ye generation of vipers**, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? KJV

Poison, among the Jews at that time, was considered a prime ingredient of sorcery, and so Jesus is declaring that the Pharisees and Sadducees are the ones who are poisoning the hearts of the nation by their false teaching.

They are identified as **adulterers** in Matt. 12:39, as well as those who **swear falsely** in Matt. 23:16.

**Matt. 12:39** “But he answered and said unto them, An evil and **adulterous generation** seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.” KJV

**Matthew 23:15-16** Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold

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more the child of hell than yourselves. <sup>16</sup>Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall **swear by the temple, it is nothing**; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! KJV

In Matt. 23:25 they are shown to be **robbers**, more than likely, by oppressing the wage earner in his wages, and are also seen as those who oppress the **widow** in Matt. 23:14.

**Matt 23:25** “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are **full of robbery** and self-indulgence. NASB

**Matt. 23:14** Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for **ye devour widows' houses**, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

And, of course, as is the case with most that are self-righteous, the Pharisees and Sadducees were incredulous that anyone would ever consider the fact that they were the disobedient ones within the nation. Malachi 3:7 says,

**Malachi 3:7** From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes, and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the LORD of hosts. "**But you say, 'How shall we return?'**" NASB

They must have thought they had to be the only righteous ones within Israel since they were conscientious to observe the law even down to the smallest requirement, the tithing of the smallest of herbs (Matt. 23:23).

**Matt. 23:23** Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the **weightier matters of the law**, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. KJV

However, despite their boast, the LORD of hosts

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in Malachi believed they were not keeping the Law. And, indeed, they were not, for, while they observed the lighter requirements of the Law, they neglected the weightier matters of the Law as the Lord Jesus said above in Matthew 23:23.

In fact, in Mark 7:9-13 the Lord not only says the same regarding their not keeping important points of the Law, he actually gives an example.

**Mark 7:9-13** He was also saying to them, "You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition. <sup>10</sup> "For Moses said, 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER'; and, 'HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER, IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH';<sup>11</sup> but you say, 'If a man says to *his* father or *his* mother, whatever I have that would help you is Corban (that is to say, given *to God*),' <sup>12</sup> you no longer permit him to do anything for *his* father or *his* mother; <sup>13</sup> *thus* invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that." NASB

### **3:8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance**

And, so we see the reason why John the Baptist asked the Pharisees and Sadducees about who had warned them about the coming wrath. He was directing them back to the Word of God, hoping that they would see the true condition of their heart by the light of Scripture and so receive his baptism, not in hypocrisy, but with a true repentance and confession of their sin before God.

**3:9 And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.**

A common thought among the Jews at that time was that they would be ultimately saved by the merits of Abraham. They believed Abraham's faith secured the salvation of all his children, and, therefore, they would be saved by simply being of the physical seed

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of Abraham.

Alfred Edersheim relates the following regarding this common belief.

“...no principle was more fully established in the popular conviction, than that all Israel had part in the world to come (Sanh. X. I), and this, specifically, because of their connection with Abraham. This appears not only from the New Testament, from Philo, and Josephus, but from many Rabbinic passages. ‘The merits of the Fathers,’ is one of the commonest phrases in the mouth of the Rabbis. Abraham was represented as sitting at the gate of Gehenna, to deliver any Israelite who otherwise might have been consigned to its terrors. In fact, by their descent from Abraham, all the children of Israel were nobles, infinitely higher than any proselytes. ‘What,’ exclaims the Talmud, ‘shall the born Israelite stand upon the earth, and the proselyte be in heaven?’”<sup>26</sup>

This common perception of merit is also addressed by Paul in his epistle to the Romans in chapter three. And if we take this viewpoint mentioned above into account, one can see why the King James Version translated the phrase, πίστεως Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ, in Rom. 3:22 as the “faith of Jesus Christ,”<sup>9</sup> rather than the more common “faith in Jesus Christ” reflected in most modern translations.

In Greek, the phrase can be understood in one of two ways. It can be understood by what is called a subjective genitive where the genitive “Jesus Christ” is understood as the subject of the verbal idea contained in the noun “faith.” In other words, it is the faith of Jesus Christ, the faith Jesus Christ exercised. Or it can be understood by what is called an objective genitive where the genitive “Jesus Christ” is understood as the object of the verbal idea contained in the word “faith.” In other words, it bespeaks our “faith” toward or concerning Jesus Christ, i.e. our “faith in Jesus Christ.”

Both translations are a perfectly acceptable according to the grammar of the Greek language; as such, we must rely on overall context to help us

<sup>9</sup> **Rom. 3:22** Even the righteousness of God which is by **faith of Jesus Christ (πίστεως Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ)** unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: KJV

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determine the best way to understand what Paul was really saying.

When we do this, understanding that most Jews believed the merits of Abraham's faith would be applied to all his seed unto salvation, and, that Paul concludes the verse in question with the participle πιστεύοντας which does, indeed, refer to "our" faith in Christ Jesus, the genitive most assuredly is a subjective genitive as the King James translators gave us, and so the "faith" must be referring to the faith "of" Jesus Christ. It is His faith that secures our salvation, not Abraham's faith; it is His merit that saves us, not any merit of Abraham.

**3:10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.**

**3:11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire:**

**3:12 Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.**

These verses continue the thought of Malachi's prophecy as seen in the fourth chapter, especially in chapter 4, verse 1.

**Malachi 4:1** "For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze," says the LORD of hosts, "so that it will leave them neither root nor branch." NASB

Once again, John the Baptist was directing their thoughts back to the Word of God, warning them that it would be better for them to be baptized by him unto repentance, than to be baptized by the judgmental fires of the coming Messiah. They had

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two choices; they could repent and so be baptized by the Christ with the Holy Spirit of grace, or they could continue in their self-righteous ways and be baptized by the coming fire of judgment.

John, of course, again, did not understand that between the two baptisms, the baptism of the Holy Spirit given on the Day of Pentecost and the baptism of fire that would occur at the second coming of Christ, would be the entire Church Age.

**3:13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.**

**3:14 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?**

We now come to the baptism of Jesus by John. However, in order to understand this momentous occasion two things need to be understood. 1) The nature of John's baptism. 2) The nature of Jesus's baptism.

As to the first—the nature of John's baptism—one first needs to understand that John's baptism was a new ordinance introduced by God unto Israel; it was not an expression of the water baptism or washing found in the Old Testament. Baptism, as practiced by John, was never an ordinance practiced before in Israel.

John Gill, who addresses this important issue, in his notation on John 1:25 from his *Exposition on the New Testament*, states it this way:

“Since he denied that he was the Messiah, or Elias that was to come before the Messiah, according to the expectation of the Jews, or that prophet, or a prophet, they demand by what authority he introduced a new rite and ordinance among them, which they had never been used to; for though there were divers washings or baptisms among them, enjoined by the law of Moses in certain cases, and others which obtained by tradition, as the immersion of themselves after they had been at market, and of cups, pots, brazen vessels, and tables, yet nothing of this kind that John administered: and as for the baptism of proselytes, it seems to be of a later date than this, and had

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no manner of likeness to it. The ordinance John administered was such, as they apprehended that no one ought to practise, unless he was the Messiah, or his forerunner, or some eminent prophet; they insist upon it therefore, that since he denied he was either of these, that he would show his credentials, and what commission he had from God to baptize; or they suggest he was liable to be called to an account by their Sanhedrim, and be condemned as a false prophet, or an innovator in religious affairs. From hence it appears, that the Jews expected that baptism would be administered in the times of the Messiah, and his forerunner; but from whence they had this notion, it is not easy to say, whether from Zechariah 13:1, as Grotius, or from Ezekiel 36:25, as Lightfoot; nor do they speak contemptibly of it, but rather consider it as a very solemn affair, to be performed only by great personages...and it is also evident from hence, that no such practice had obtained before among them, or they would not have been alarmed at it, as they were; nor would they have troubled themselves to have sent after John, and inquire of him who he was, that should practise in this manner.”<sup>27</sup>

The reason this is such an important issue is because many confuse John’s baptism, as was said before, with the Levitical washings of the priests and people in the Old Testament.

John was a priest, but his baptism was different for a number of reasons:

1) The washings in the Law, that had to do with service to God in the Tabernacle, were restricted to the Levites and to the priests.<sup>r</sup> John’s baptism was for everyone, irregardless of the tribe to which they belonged.

2) Many of the washings in the Old Testament were associated with blood (e.g. Lev. 14:8,14).<sup>s</sup> There was no blood associated with John’s baptism.

3) Many of the other washings, not having to do with the service in the Tabernacle (found not only in the Law but also in their man-made traditions) were done by the person himself (like the washings done for cleansing or purification—e. g. Lev. 17:15)<sup>t</sup> while the baptism of John was administered by an

<sup>r</sup> **Ex. 29:4** And **Aaron and his sons** thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and **shalt wash them with water.** KJV

<sup>s</sup> Lev. 14:8, 14 And he that is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, **and wash himself in water**, that he may be clean: and after that he shall come into the camp, and shall tarry abroad out of his tent seven days.<sup>14</sup> And the priest **shall take some of the blood of the trespass offering**, and the priest shall put it upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot: KJV

<sup>t</sup> **Lev. 17:15b** “...he shall both wash his clothes, and **bathe himself in water**, and be unclean until the even: then shall he be clean.” KJV

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agent, i.e. by John the Baptist, himself.

4) The washings of the Law had nothing to do with repentance, per se, whereas the baptism of John was directly associated with the repentance.

5) Jesus intimates that John's Baptism of water was a new thing in Israel by His asking the chief priests and elders in Matt. 21:25 if the source of John's baptism was from heaven or from men.<sup>u</sup> The chief priests and elders realized the people regarded John's baptism as being a new thing commanded by the God in heaven through His prophet John. If John's baptism was no different than the Old Testament washings that they were all familiar with, then Jesus would not have had to ask the question.

So we see that the baptism of John was a new ordinance of the Lord, never commanded in the Law. It was a preparatory ordinance pointing to the New Testament (Covenant), and had nothing to do with the Old Testament (Covenant). It was a transitory ordinance between the Old and New Testament. It was preparatory. It fulfilled the Old Testament and introduced the beginning of the New Testament.

In fact, as far as I can tell, the Greek word for baptism or baptize, was never used by Jews in the Greek Old Testament for the washings in Israel. So it was not a common ceremonial word used in the Jewish Greek Old Testament. It is only used twice in the entire Jewish Canon of Scripture. Once it was used of a Gentile named Naaman who was commanded to dip himself in the Jordan river seven times in II Kings 5:14.<sup>v</sup> And, second, it was used in Isa. 21:4,<sup>w</sup> not in a literal sense, but in a figurative sense of the overwhelming character of sin (also cf. its usage in the LXX Apocrypha Judith 12:7 and Sirach 34:25). These are the only two times it was used in the Greek Old Testament.

The Greek word "baptize" truly became a new religious word for the Jew, having been utilized by the Holy Spirit in the New Testament to bespeak a new thing introduced in Israel. It was a new ordinance introduced by the Lord in heaven for Israel. Why? Because the Lord was going to do a new

<sup>u</sup> **Matt. 21:25**

"The baptism of John was from what source, from heaven or from men? And they began reasoning among themselves, saying, If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say to us, 'Then why did you not believe him?' "

NASB

<sup>v</sup> **II Kings 5:14** So

Naiman went down, and **dipped** himself seven times in Jordan, according to the word of Elisaie: and his flesh returned to him as the flesh of a little child, and he was cleansed.

(Brenton's Version)

<sup>w</sup> **Isaiah 21:4**

My heart wanders, and transgression **overwhelms** me; my soul is occupied with fear.

(Brenton's Version)



## Matthew

thing in Israel.

Isaiah 48:6-8 says,

**Isaiah 48:6-8** Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare it? I have showed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them. <sup>7</sup>They are created now, and not from the beginning; even before the day when thou heardest them not; lest thou shouldest say, Behold, I knew them. <sup>8</sup>Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time that thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb. KJV

Now, no doubt, this is primarily referring to Israel's coming deliverance from their Babylonian captivity, but I also believe it has a dual significance, setting the stage for the ultimate deliverance from captivity that Isaiah will shortly speak about—mankind's deliverance from the captivity of sin.

As such, it also refers to the new thing that would shortly be manifested in Israel by the Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, spoken of by Isaiah just a few verses later in verses 16 and 17,<sup>x</sup> and then one chapter later in chapter 49, verses 6-8,<sup>d</sup> spoken of as the coming Servant who would bring grace to all of mankind, being be a Light to the nations.

**Isa. 49: 6-8** And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be **my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles**, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth. <sup>7</sup>Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee. <sup>8</sup>Thus saith the Lord, **In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee:** and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages. KJV

(Paul ties this passage of Scripture from Isaiah with

<sup>x</sup> **Isa. 48:16-17**

Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me. <sup>17</sup> Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go. KJV

## Matthew

the dispensation of grace in II Cor. 6:1-2).

And, then, finally, in chapter 53, spoken of as the Root out of dry ground, the Righteous One, the One led as a Lamb to the slaughter, the One who was “wounded for our transgressions.

So this was the new thing God began to manifest through the ministry of John the Baptist. He was going to prepare a people for the salvation to come, and his chosen vessel for this was John, the voice of the one crying in the wilderness who would prepare the way for the coming Lamb of God.

**Matt. 11:7-10** And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? <sup>8</sup> But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. <sup>9</sup> But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. <sup>10</sup> For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall **prepare** thy way before thee. KJV

The whole purpose of John's ministry and baptism was to **prepare** the way of the Lord, and this preparation entailed the beginning of a new thing.

It is interesting that the word chosen by the Holy Spirit to describe this new thing, this new work, is the Greek word κατασκευάσει, translated “prepare in Matt. 11:10.” <sup>y</sup> This word is used when new things are created, formed, or constructed. It bespeaks something that did not exist before. For example, in Isa. 43:7, in the LXX, it is used for the Hebrew word “bara,” meaning create. <sup>z</sup> In Isa. 45:7 it translates the Hebrew word “yatsar,” meaning to fashion or form. <sup>a</sup> In Hebrews 3:4 it is used in the sense build or construct. <sup>b</sup>

In all these cases, it bespeaks bringing something new into existence that was not there before. Therefore, consider Luke 1:17, for example, which reads in the KJV as—

**Luke 1:17** And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the

<sup>y</sup> **Matt. 11:10** For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall **prepare** (κατασκευάσει) thy way before thee.

<sup>z</sup> **Isaiah 43:7** Even every one that is called by my name: for I have **created** him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him. KJV

<sup>a</sup> **Isaiah 45:7** I **form** the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things. KJV

<sup>b</sup> **Hebrews 3:4** For every house is **built** by someone, but the builder of all things is God. NASB

## Matthew

children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people **prepared** for the Lord. KJV

Here the same word is used, where the ministry of John the Baptist is also spoken of—so we could substitute *form* for *prepare* and translate it as follows:

“And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people **formed** for the Lord.”

John was sent by God in order to *form*, or to *prepare* a people for the Lord Jesus Christ—a people gleaned out from the entire nation of Israel prepared for salvation by first understanding what was behind John’s baptism of repentance—a new ordinance given by God to prepare them for the coming of His Son. It taught them that the “works of the Law” did not justify or cleanse anyone, even though they might be pronounced ceremonially clean by the priests in Jerusalem. They accepted that John was also a priest, and as a priest he was charged with instructing the people,<sup>c</sup> and as both a prophet and, indeed, a priest, he was saying, “You are not clean. Repent! Realize you are still in your sins (see Jer. 2:22).<sup>d</sup> Be baptized in the water confessing your sins. Repent! Prepare your hearts for the Lord.

God was telling the people of Israel to “change their mind” about what they were being told about righteousness and salvation by the leaders and chief priest in Israel, and, instead, He was telling them to listen to John, for he was the one preparing them for the manifestation of His Son, the Lamb of God, the only One who could “truly” take away their sins, those sins that the blood of goats and calves could never take away. The Holy Spirit was telling them to “repent and believe the Gospel. Look unto Jesus!”

And that brings us to the second point—the nature of Jesus’ baptism. Why was Jesus baptized by John and how was our Lord’s baptism different than the baptism of repentance given to the people?

When Jesus came to be baptized by John, John

<sup>c</sup> **Malachi 2:7** For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. NASB

<sup>d</sup> **Jeremiah 2:22** Although you wash yourself with lye And use much soap, The stain of your iniquity is before Me,’ declares the Lord GOD. NASB

## Matthew

protested, for, apparently, he knew Jesus as his cousin and he knew Jesus was more righteous than he. But this seems to be the extent of John's knowledge of Jesus. He did not fully understand who Jesus was. This is revealed to us in the Gospel of John.

In John 1:19-34 we have an account of another meeting between John and Jesus that is not recorded for us in any other gospel.

In Matthew 3:7-12 we see Pharisees and Sadducees coming to John for baptism. But in John 1:19-26 we have priests and Levites coming to John. This is a different group of Israelites and so points to a different meeting.

Thus, when comparison is made between all four gospels we find that before this account in John 1:19-34, the baptism of Jesus had already occurred and his forty days in the wilderness had already been accomplished. This meeting recorded in John, therefore, occurs on our Lord's return from the wilderness, as he was on his way to Galilee (cf. Luke 4:14). It is not an account of his baptism, but refers the reader back to his baptism.

Matthew, Mark and Luke do not mention this meeting, but John records it for us. So this meeting occurs after Jesus' baptism, after his return from the wilderness and before John's arrest by Herod. Apparently, on his way back to Galilee, Jesus stays in the vicinity with John for a few days.

This is significant because it helps explain the nature of Jesus' baptism, as recorded for us in Matthew.

Notice that John tells us that John the Baptist did not know Jesus.

**John 1:31** "I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water." NKJV

What does this mean? Were they not cousins? Did they not know each other? Does not Matthew intimate that John knew Jesus when Jesus came to be

## Matthew

baptized? Therefore, how could John the Baptist tell us he did not know Jesus when he came to be baptized?

More than likely, they met many times, at least in Jerusalem, when they would go on their annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem. And, it is more than likely that Joseph and Mary and Jesus would have visited Zacharias, Elizabeth and John many times during the early years of Jesus' life. Scripture intimates this connection when it tells us that Joseph and Mary would travel with their relatives.<sup>e</sup>

Not only that, as we already said, if John did not know who Jesus was, how would he know to say to Jesus when he came to be baptized by him, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" If John did not know Him, then John just would have seen Him as another Israelite coming to him for baptism.

But since John said he was the one who really needed to be baptized by Jesus, most certainly he knew this was his cousin Jesus coming for baptism, and since he knew how righteous and good his cousin was (for John would have certainly witnessed the sinless character of Jesus growing up) he protests and instead says that Jesus should be the one to baptizing him! Yet, we cannot escape the fact that the Gospel of John clearly says John the Baptist did not know Jesus. So what does this mean?

Perhaps, the New American Standard Bible might help us. It translates the phrase in verse 31 and 33 from John 1:30-34 as "I did not recognize Him," and in verse 30 explains to us what it was John did not recognize in Jesus.

**John 1:30-34** This is He on behalf of whom I said, After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, **for He existed before me.**<sup>31</sup> **And I did not recognize Him, but in order that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water.**<sup>32</sup> John testified saying, I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him.<sup>33</sup> I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him,

<sup>e</sup> **Luke 2:44** but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they began **looking for Him among their relatives** and acquaintances.  
NASB

## Matthew

this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' <sup>34</sup> I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.  
NASB

Verse 30 says that John was preparing the way for someone who existed before him. Now, of course, we know Jesus was born after John and not before, but human patronage is not what John was talking about. In verse 33 and 34 he tells us that God had previously told him the one who has the Spirit descending upon him is the one for whom John is preparing the way. In other words, that that one would be none other than the LORD God, the one for whom John, as the voice crying in the wilderness, was preparing.

So, what we see is that John did not recognize, he did not know, that his cousin Jesus was none other than the One for whose way he was preparing, that Jesus was not just his cousin, He was none other than Jehovah incarnate. In other words, even though, humanly speaking, he was born after him, he really was the one who existed before him for He was none other than the LORD God Himself. This is what John meant when he said he did not know Him, or recognize Him.

John most certainly knew his cousin Jesus and so knew he was more righteous than he. But he did not know that Jesus was his LORD and his God. It took a divine sign from heaven to signify this to John and this fact explains why Jesus' baptism was different from the baptism of repentance John performed for other Israelites.

God told John he was to look for the one upon whom the Holy Spirit descends and remains upon, for that one would be the Son of God, the One whose way he was preparing.

Thus in verse 31, John is telling us the other reason why he was baptizing. His baptism had a twofold purpose. It was to prepare the hearts of the people in repentance for the LORD, *but it also was to bring about the manifestation of Jehovah incarnate to the people of Israel.* And, as we have already mentioned in our comments on the Messiah in chapter two, many Jews at that day understood that

## Matthew

the Messiah would in some way be Divine, or, at the minimum, would, most certainly be premundane. This is what John recognized in Jesus when he saw the Holy Spirit descend upon Him. This was the other purpose of his baptism—to manifest the Son of God to the world and, in doing so, show forth the One who has the Lamb of God would take away the sins of the world.

This is why on this return visit by Jesus to John (as he was on his way back to Galilee) John repeatedly says when he sees Jesus, “Behold the Lamb of God.” John, had finally found the One for whom he was waiting his whole life, the One for which purpose He was sent by God to baptize. This explains for us the nature of Jesus’ baptism. His baptism was different; His was not a baptism of “repentance,” but was a baptism of “manifestation.”

Thus, repentance was not the only reason for John’s baptism. His baptism was also meant to show forth to the people the manifestation of the Messiah, the Son of God. His baptism served a dual purpose. On one side it was for the people, the sinners and on the other side it was for the Messiah, the sinless Lamb of God. In one sense it prophetically showed forth the purpose of the incarnation. It showed forth the **sinfulness** of mankind and, thus, the need for a baptism of repentance, and it showed forth the **sinlessness** of the Son, and, thus, the manifestation of the Lamb of God that would take away the sin of the world.

Now that we understand the nature of John’s baptism and the nature of Jesus’ baptism, we can now continue and explain the final reason for Jesus’ baptism. So let’s return to Matthew’s account.

**3:15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer *it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.***

After the protest by John the Baptist, and his intimation that Jesus was more righteous than he, and thus should be the one to baptize John instead, Jesus

## Matthew

tells him to permit his baptism for now. By using the phrase, Ἀφες ἄρτι, “permit it for now,” or, “allow it for now,” Jesus affirms the truth behind John’s protest; He is not denying the assertion. But it seems that Jesus is gently reminding John that his baptism had a dual purpose. We emphasize again, at this point in time, before the descent of the Holy Spirit, John did not realize that his cousin was none other YHWH, the LORD, the One for whose way he had been preparing for all along. Jesus is reminding John of God’s word to him that, “He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, **this is the One** who baptizes in the Holy Spirit” (Jn. 1:33), and John’s own declaration that, “After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, **for He existed before me. I did not recognize Him**, but so that **He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water**” (Jn. 1: 30b-31). Only He that is equal to the Holy Spirit could baptize in the Holy Spirit, and only He who is the great I AM could be the one who existed before John, thus being the LORD, YHWH, and the One whose way John had been preparing for all along. Thus, Jesus is letting John know this time had now come. The ultimate purpose of John’s ministry was about to be fulfilled. This is what is meant by our Lord’s word to John that, “it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.”

Literally, the phrase, οὕτως γὰρ πρέπον ἐστὶν ἡμῖν πληρῶσαι πᾶσαν δικαιοσύνην, could be translated, “for thus it is appropriate for us to fulfill every righteous act. Or, it could be paraphrased, “it is completely appropriate that you and I perform the mitzvot that is given to us by God.” In other words, we must both obey the commands that are given to us by God.

We are told in Psalms 119:172 that every command of God is righteous.

**Ps. 119:172** My tongue shall speak of thy word: for **all thy commandments are righteousness**. KJV

To say that we are called to fulfill, or to perform



## Matthew

every act of “righteousness” is no different than saying we are called to obey every “command” of God.

You were commanded by God to baptize so that I might be properly manifested to Israel. I was commanded by my Father to be obedient in all my ways, and He has commanded me to be baptized by you (not unto repentance, for you are right, I am more righteous, indeed, I am sinless) but to be baptized by you to be manifested unto Israel by the Holy Spirit descending upon Me. Thus it is proper for “us” to “fulfill,” to “perform,” to “obey” God in this righteous act.

This usage of πληρῶσαι with the sense of “obey” is also seen in the epistle to the Colossians. In Col. 1:25 Paul, like John the Baptist, was given a ministry to perform; a stewardship to fulfill. Paul says,

**Col 1:25** “...of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God.” NKJV

Paul uses the same word πληρῶσαι, in this verse, as Matthew does in his Gospel, and I think he is using it with this same sense of obey. Like John, Paul was given a word, a commandment by God to fulfill, to obey, and like John the Baptist, Paul was careful to fulfill or obey that command.<sup>f</sup>

The same word is also used in Col. 4:17 with this nuance of fulfilling, through obedience. Paul says to Archippus to take heed to the ministry or the stewardship that was given to him, to fulfill it through his faithful obedience.

**Col 4:17** And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it. NASB

Therefore, this may well be the thought behind our Lord’s statement that “it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.

**3:16** And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up

<sup>f</sup> **Acts 26:15-19**

And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. <sup>16</sup> 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;<sup>17</sup> Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,<sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup>**Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:** KJV

## Matthew

**straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:**

**3:17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.**

In these two verses we see the beginning of our Lord's public ministry. With the public obedience of our Lord and John the Baptist we see the Father in heaven pronouncing the Lord Jesus as being His beloved Son and being the one in whom He is well-pleased.

Why did the Holy Spirit choose to include this occurrence of our Lord's life upon the earth? This question can be answered when we remember that our Lord was the archetype of Adam, and Adam was the ectype (Rom. 5:14).<sup>g</sup> From the very first, our Lord's coming was promised to Adam and Eve as being the Promised Seed of the woman, who would come to crush the head of the serpent, the serpent, of course, being a representation of Satan. All of creation and all of human history pointed forth to His coming, and so the Holy Spirit was directing the readers of this Gospel back to that truth foretold in the Genesis account with this occurrence in our Lord's life.

This is further seen by the overall setting, which parallels the Genesis account. In Genesis 1:1-2<sup>h</sup> we see the Spirit of God "hovering," in the midst of heaven and earth, over the waters (the word translated "hovering," is translated "hovers" in Deut. 32:11, in both the NKJV and the NASB, where it is used of a bird hovering in the air).<sup>i</sup>

This imagery is carried over by Matthew in his Gospel. First, we have the heaven and, obviously, the earth and water in verse 16. Then, over Jesus, in the baptismal water we see the Holy Spirit descending (hovering) like a dove upon Him. Then, as in the Genesis account, where the voice of God is next introduced with the words, "Let there be light," we have the voice of God introduced with the words,

<sup>g</sup> **Romans 5:14**

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a **type** of Him who was to come. NASB

<sup>h</sup> **Gen. 1:2** The

earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was **hovering** over the face of the waters. NKJV

<sup>i</sup> **Deut. 32:11** Like

an eagle that stirs up its nest, That **hovers** over its young, He spread His wings and caught them, He carried them on His pinions. NASB

## Matthew

“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” This is all the more significant because a few verses later, Matthew identifies Jesus as a “great light” (Matt. 4:16),<sup>j</sup> and, of course, in the Gospel of John, Jesus quite plainly says, “I am the Light of the world.” The parallel to Genesis is quite striking.

Matthew is identifying Jesus as the light of the world that will bring “life” to a dead and dark world, as the light in the Genesis account brought “life” to a dead and dark earth. The old creation was ushered in with the Spirit of God hovering over the waters and the new creation was ushered in with the Spirit of God hovering over the baptismal waters, and in both accounts we have a “great light” that is present to sustain that which God created.

But this is not all. In the Genesis account we have “man” coming forth, being made in the “image and likeness of God.” In Matthew’s account we have the Man Christ Jesus coming forth from the baptismal water, being, of course, the Eternal Son who always existed as the “image of the invisible God.”<sup>k</sup>

And, finally, we have the account in Matthew conclude with the pronouncement of God from heaven that He was “well-pleased” with His beloved Son. This parallels the account in Genesis that God was well-pleased with Adam, who also was a son of God,<sup>l</sup> since everything God made was pronounced as being “very good” (obviously, Adam must be included in the statement of Gen. 1:31). Of course, the one difference is that Adam was a son by creation in time, whereas our Lord was a Son from eternity, being eternally begotten, not made.

This parallel is all the more confirmed for us by the Holy Spirit, because Scripture tells us in I Cor. 15: 45,47 that Jesus was the “last Adam,” the “second Man.”<sup>m</sup>

And so we see this paralleled between the two accounts. This is important to understand because it lays the basis for understanding the first portion of Matthew chapter four, which we will now presently see after a brief excursus on the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>j</sup> **Matt. 4:16** The people which sat in darkness saw **great light**; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. KJV

<sup>k</sup> **Col. 1:15** He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. NASB

<sup>l</sup> **Lu. 3:38** Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God. KJV

<sup>m</sup> **I Cor. 15:45,47** And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the **last Adam** was made a quickening spirit.  
<sup>47</sup> The first man is of the earth, earthy: the **second man** is the Lord from heaven. KJV

### EXCURSUS ON THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Broadly speaking, there are three main aspects to the Kingdom of Heaven, and it is important to keep all three distinct. First, there is the manifestation of the Kingdom of Heaven in the Old Testament. Second, there is the mystery form of the Kingdom of Heaven in the New Testament. And, finally, there is the Millennial rule of the Kingdom of Heaven when the Lord returns. However, all this is based upon the fact that the concept of a kingdom is rooted in the eternal relationship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Father has ever been the source of all things within the Blessed Trinity revealing the eternal order of the Father first, then the Son and then the Holy Spirit. As such, eternally the Son has always deferred to the Father in all things (Prov. 8: 22-30; Jn. 1:1, 14, 18). During his sojourn on earth He continued to defer or obey the Father in all things showing forth the kingdom (Jn. 5:19, 30; 12:49; I Cor. 11:3). He submitted Himself, so to speak, to the rule of God. This is why He could tell His disciples that the "kingdom of God" was in their midst. He, Himself, was the manifestation of the kingdom of Heaven upon earth as He always obeyed the Father in all things.<sup>n</sup> And at the end of days, when He delivers the kingdom up to the Father, He will continue to defer to the Father (I Cor. 15:24, 28). The kingdom of God is none other than an external expression of the Blessed order of Father, Son and Holy Spirit within the Godhead.

The Church has always recognized this blessed truth, and it has always understood that God manifested His authority or rule throughout Israel in the Old Testament. However, under the New Testament, the way this authority, or the way the kingdom of Heaven is expressed (up to and including the millennium) has always been a source of disagreement among Christians. Christians have generally viewed the kingdom of God from

<sup>n</sup> **Luke 17:21** nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst. NASB

## Matthew

three different perspectives—Premillennialism, Postmillennialism, and Amillennialism.

Generally speaking, Premillennialism understands that the kingdom of God is now manifested spiritually and will be manifested on this earth physically after the second coming of Christ when He ushers in the Millennium, at which time He will physically rule and reign upon the earth for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4-9).<sup>o</sup> After that time the viewpoint believes there will be the final judgment, usually called the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20: 11-15), after which time eternity is ushered in with the creation of the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:1).

Postmillennialism, on the other hand, understands the period of time referenced in Rev. 20:4-9 to be a blessed time upon this earth wherein the kingdom of God is exercised throughout the earth by Christ ruling from heaven through His Church. This blessed time will come by the gradual spread of the gospel over all the earth and by a gradual Christianization of the world by the acceptance of the gospel, wherein evil is minimized (but not necessarily eliminated) and Christian morality reigns. After this blessed time of peace and moral order, (not necessarily a thousand years) Christ will physically return to the earth to judge all of mankind and usher in eternity.

The last perspective, Amillennialism—unlike Premillennialism, which believes in a literal and physical reign of Christ upon the earth for a thousand years “after” His second coming, and Postmillennialism which believes in an unspecified period of peace and morality coming from the gradual Christianization of the world, being the result of Christ reigning through His Church from His place in heaven, “before” His second coming—Amillennialism believes there is no time period of peace and tranquility “before” Christ returns to earth at His second coming, nor does it believe that “after” Christ returns to earth He will physically rule and reign for a thousand years from the restored nation of Israel. It believes Rev. 20: 4-9 simply refers to the

<sup>o</sup> **Rev. 20:4-5** And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they **lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.** <sup>5</sup> But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. KJV

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Church Age and is a symbolic period of time, not a literal period of time. It asserts the time period in Rev. 20:4-9 began with the ascension of Christ to heaven and ends with His second coming. It also asserts that those Christians who die during this time are now ruling and reigning with Christ in heaven. It does not believe that a blessed period of time upon this earth will ever occur before Christ returns to earth a second time (like Postmillennialism); rather it believes persecution is the Church's lot and that only after the eventual rise of the Antichrist will Christ return, not to rule and reign for a thousand years in the restored kingdom of Israel (like Premillennialism) but to rule and reign in a new heaven and new earth for eternity, after the Great White Throne judgment. It does not take the thousand years in a literal sense with Christ physically ruling from Israel. Part of the reason for this is because it believes the Church has superseded Israel, and, as such, being the new Israel, has fulfilled all those Old Testament prophecies of Israel's future restoration (this view is commonly known by some as supersessionism).

These are the three main perspectives regarding the present and future manifestation of the kingdom of Heaven upon earth. Of course, these are only broad generalizations; each viewpoint has its own variations, but the important question to ask in our study is what perspective would a first century reader of the gospel think Matthew was proclaiming regarding the kingdom of God?

In the study of Scripture it is important to follow the three primary hermeneutics given to us by the Holy Spirit. First, the literal hermeneutic as exemplified for us in John 21:21-24. Second, the grammatical hermeneutic as exemplified for us in Gal. 3:16. And, finally the historical hermeneutic as exemplified for us in Mark 7:1-4.

The first hermeneutic, the literal, shows us it is very important to take Scripture in its plain and literal sense unless the context warrants otherwise. For instance, Paul gives us the example of an allegory in Gal. 4:22-24; where, obviously, there is a deeper

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meaning to the story and not just a literal understanding (much like the Peshier interpretation which we have already discussed), but apart from those times when the context warrants otherwise, Scripture should normally be taken in its plain and literal sense. This common hermeneutic is also confirmed by those examples in Scripture where a writer thought it was necessary to clarify a statement that, if taken literally, might be misunderstood or misapplied (e.g. Jn. 2: 18-21).<sup>p</sup> Obviously, this needed clarification showed us that the writer expected the reader would normally take things literally, otherwise, why was a clarification needed.

When we take this approach, and when we realize that Matthew was primarily writing to those of a Jewish background (whether Jewish Christians or unbelieving Jews) we see he took it for granted that his readers would understand certain terminologies or concepts. He did not need to clarify certain terms or concepts because he knew his readers would (unlike Mark, who, because he wrote primarily wrote to Gentiles, had to clarify certain concepts, e.g. Mk. 7:2-3) take them by their normal understanding of the term within historical milieu of their time.

This is true with the term the “kingdom of Heaven” or “kingdom of God.” Matthew knew his readers, without any clarification on his part, would take the term within its normal Jewish meaning. As such he knew they would understand the common Jewish viewpoint that God was going to send the Messiah to sit upon the throne of His glory,<sup>q</sup> to rule and reign upon the earth, in a future, literal, and physical kingdom of Israel in the land (cf. also Matt. 6:13; 8:11; 16:28; 19:28).

This understanding, of course, would preclude the postmillennial perspective, for Matthew clearly states that the blessed time of the kingdom comes “**after**” the Lord returns to the earth, not before. It also would preclude the Amillennial perspective because it bespeaks a future, earthly, physical kingdom upon earth after the Church age, but before the new heavens and new earth (and not just a present

<sup>p</sup> **John. 2: 18-21**

Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? <sup>19</sup>Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. <sup>20</sup>Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? <sup>21</sup>But he spake of the temple of his body. KJV

<sup>q</sup> **Matt. 25:31**

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall **he sit upon the throne of his glory.** KJV

## Matthew

spiritual kingdom—also cf. Matt. 25: 13-32, especially the phrase “long time” in verse 19).

Therefore, that leaves us with the premillennial perspective which teaches that Christ physically returns a second time to earth to set up His kingdom over all the earth, ruling from a restored nation of Israel, and wherein the apostles are promised to sit upon the twelve thrones judging the nation Israel along with Him (Matt. 19:28).<sup>r</sup> This was the common viewpoint of Jews in Matthew’s day. Matthew did not need to explain this concept to his readers who were primarily Jews and were ones who understood the future kingdom of God in this way, along with its promise of the Messiah ruling from Zion; nor did he need to make any qualification as to the literal meaning of this viewpoint (as John did in his gospel regarding the Lord’s statement regarding the temple); nor did he indicate an allegory or spiritualization of the concept like Paul did in his epistle to the Galatians. He knew his readers would take the term with its normal sense.

Alfred Edersheim addresses this normal understanding and common hope of every Israelite concerning the kingdom of God in his classic work entitled *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*.

“And still, there was an even stronger bond in their common hope. That hope pointed them all, wherever scattered, back to Palestine. To them the coming of the Messiah undoubtedly implied the restoration of Israel’s kingdom, and, as a first part in it, the return of the dispersed. Indeed, every devout Jew prayed, day by day: ‘Proclaim by Thy loud trumpet our deliverance, and raise up a banner to gather our dispersed, and gather us together from the four ends of the earth. Blessed be Thou, Lord! Who gatherest the outcasts of Thy people Israel.’ That prayer included in its generality also the lost ten tribes. So, for example, the prophecy was rendered: ‘They hasten hither, like a bird out of Egypt,’—referring to Israel of old; ‘and like a dove out of the land of Assyria’—referring to the ten tribes. And thus even these wanderers, so long lost, were to be reckoned in the fold of the Good Shepherd.

It is worthwhile to trace, how universally and warmly both Eastern and Western Judaism cherished this hope of

<sup>r</sup> **Matt. 19:28** And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. KJV



## Matthew

all Israel's return to their own land. The Targumim bear repeated reference to it; and although there may be question as to the exact date of these paraphrases, it cannot be doubted, that in this respect they represented the views of the Synagogue at the time of Jesus..."

"...The winds would blow to bring together the dispersed; nay, if there were a single Israelite in a land, however distant, he would be restored. With every honour would the nations bring them back. The patriarchs and all the just would rise to share in the joys of the new possession of their land; new hymns as well as the old ones would rise to the praise of God. Nay, the bounds of the land would be extended far beyond what they had ever been, and made as wide as originally promised to Abraham. Nor would that possession be ever taken from them, nor those joys be ever succeeded by sorrows. In view of such general expectations we cannot fail to mark with what wonderful sobriety the Apostles put the question to Jesus: 'Wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?'"<sup>28</sup>

Therefore, because this was the common understanding of Matthew's readers, and because the Holy Spirit did not clarify or modify that general understanding, one should understand the general concept of the kingdom of Heaven by a literal and historical hermeneutic. The promise, that the kingdom of Heaven would come with the promised Messiah, the King, sitting upon the throne of David, ruling from Zion, still held good. Israel, as a nation, would be restored. It would come in the future. It would be a physical kingdom. It would appear with the promised coming of the Son of Man, our Lord Jesus Christ, and it would appear after His second coming.

However, even though Matthew expected his readers to understand that future kingdom in its normal sense, the one thing he knew every Israelite did not understand was that between the kingdom as manifested in the Old Testament and that kingdom of Heaven that would be manifested in the Millennium, would be a period of indefinite time, called the Church Age, wherein the kingdom would be manifested not physically upon the earth, but

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spiritually within the Church. The Church did not replace or supersede Israel. Christ was not currently reigning over all the earth through the Church. That still referred to a future time after his Second Coming when the kingdom would be restored to Israel at the beginning of the Millennium. Until that time the kingdom was manifested spiritually in the Church. The ordinary Jew did not understand this, nor did John the Baptist, nor did Matthew and the disciples of our Lord at first—when the Lord first spoke in parables. This was the mystery form of the kingdom and this was the form of the kingdom that was hidden from the nation of Israel, but was especially revealed by our Lord to His disciples, as recorded by Matthew in the various explanations given by the Lord to His disciples of His parables of the kingdom. This spiritual aspect of the kingdom was clarified by Matthew, primarily with the inclusion of the parables in chapter thirteen of his Gospel, but the physical aspect of the kingdom of God he did not clarify for he knew his readers would still take it in its ordinary sense.

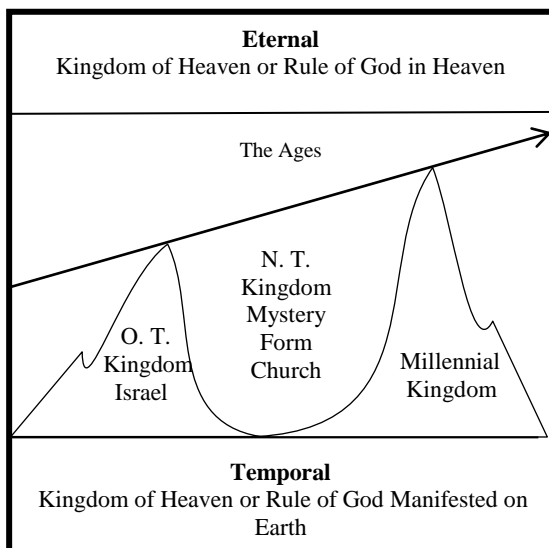
These are the three general forms of the kingdom given to us in Scripture manifesting forth the eternal communion and order of the Blessed Trinity—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (see chart below). This order or authority of the Father within the communion of the Godhead (i.e. the manifestation of divine authority) was demonstrated to the world in the Old Testament by the kingdom or rule of God within Israel. And it will be demonstrated to the world in the future dispensation of the millennium when Christ will rule and reign on the throne of David within a restored Israel upon earth. But now, during this dispensation, it is spiritually manifested by the Church whenever she accepts the rule of God within her heart and whenever she is not grieving the Holy Spirit of God.<sup>z</sup>

<sup>z</sup> **Rom. 14:16-18**

Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil;<sup>17</sup> **for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.**<sup>18</sup>

For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.

# Matthew



## Matthew 4

**4:1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.**

Having seen the parallel with the creation account in Genesis and the baptismal account in Matthew, we can now understand why Matthew now includes the temptation of Jesus. This parallels the temptation account in the book of Genesis. As the **first Adam** was tempted, so the **last Adam** was tempted. As the **first man** was tempted by a serpent called a beast, i.e. one of the wild beasts of the field, so the **second Man** was tempted in the presence of wild beasts (the Greek word **θηρίων** that is used in Mark 1:13, when our Lord is tempted, is also the same word used in the temptation story in Gen. 3:1 in the LXX for the Hebrew word *chayyah*) specifically, being tempted in the presence of that same wild beast from the garden, i.e. the dragon, serpent of old, who is the devil (See verses at right). <sup>a</sup> The **first Adam** failed and sinned,

<sup>a</sup> **Gen. 3:1** Now the **serpent** was more subtil than any **beast (θηρίων)** of the field which the **LORD God** had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

**Mark 1:13** Καὶ ἦν ἐκεῖ ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ἡμέρας τεσσαράκοντα πειραζόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ Σατανᾶ, καὶ ἦν μετὰ τῶν **θηρίων**, καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι διηκόνουν αὐτῷ.

**Mark 1:13** And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild **beasts**; and the angels ministered unto him. KJV

**Rev. 20:2** And he laid hold on the dragon, that **old serpent**, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. KJV

## Matthew

the **last Adam** did not. But the question must be asked, “What was the purpose of our Lord’s temptation?” It is to that question we would like to turn our attention before we look at the temptations in detail.

When Adam and Eve were tempted to sin—Eve through deception by listening to the voice of the serpent, and Adam, not by deception, but by listening to the voice of his wife—when they were tempted to break the one commandment of God, we are told that dire consequences occurred in the world. Paul tells us in Rom. 5:12 that by Adam’s deliberate transgression sin entered into the world and death through sin. Although Adam was a son of God, he failed in his first test of obedience.

**Romans 5:12-14** Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned--(For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. NKJV

When Adam sinned, his failure extended to all his posterity. Human nature, itself, became tainted by sin, forever dooming every human being to death. This shows forth the principle of procession within creation. Everything was created to be after its kind. An apple tree always produced an apple tree after its kind. A lamb always produced offspring after its kind, and Adam, after the fall, was doomed to produce offspring after his kind, full of sin and death. Because of this, our Lord, as the second Man, came to undo this terrible consequence.

If our Lord had not come, this terrible consequence of sin could never have been undone, because Satan would always be prowling about as a roaring lion, a wild beast seeking to take advantage of the sin nature within us, causing us to sin.<sup>b</sup> And even if someone was able to not sin (which Scripture says is impossible since all have sinned and fallen

<sup>b</sup> **Rom. 7:7-11**

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. <sup>8</sup> But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. <sup>9</sup> For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. <sup>10</sup> And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. <sup>11</sup> For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. KJV

## Matthew

short of the glory of God) one still would be condemned to eternal death, for along with the sin that entered the world, death also entered into the human race through Adam's transgression, and since everything is after its kind, death also passed on to every human being—a patrimony of sin and death. Because of procession, this consequence could never be undone, and so God started over with a new creation, through another, the last Adam, the second Man.

You see, when one is saved and forgiven of one's sins by faith in Christ, one is not restored to be like Adam of old, as he was before his fall. No, that can never be undone. Sin is sin and death is death. In Adam all must die.<sup>c</sup>

The old creation is not restored; it dies; it must come to an end because procession can never be changed. Everything is after its kind. But, in the verse we just quoted above we are given God's remedy. Paul says that in Christ all shall be made alive!

God's solution to Adam's fall was to start over in His Son as the second Man, the last Adam. God did away with the first, the old creation and began anew in a new creation!<sup>d</sup> God sent His Son to this earth as the head over a new creation. He came to die for the sins of Adam's race in order to start over again as the second Man, as the last Adam. And so, just as the first Adam was tested, just as the first Adam was tempted, the last Adam was also tested and was also tempted. This is a great mystery, but just as through the transgression of one, i.e. the first Adam, sin and death passed to all men, so by the one act of righteousness, i.e. by the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, life passed on to all men, that is to those who would put their trust in Him. This was God's solution to Adam's fall.

**Rom. 5:18-19** So then as through **one transgression** there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through **one act of righteousness** there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. NASB

<sup>c</sup> **I Cor. 15:22** For as **in Adam all die**, even so in **Christ shall all be made alive**. KJV

<sup>d</sup> **II Cor. 5:17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation**; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. NKJV

## Matthew

This one act of righteousness, spoken of by Paul (in its broadest sense) would no doubt refer to our Lord's entire sojourn on this earth. As Paul says in another epistle (Phil. 2: 8), his entire sojourn on this earth was a life of complete obedience, a life of complete righteousness, culminating in that ultimate act of righteousness, his own death upon the cross.<sup>e</sup>

Yet, Paul in the verse before us parallels our Lord's "one act of righteousness" with Adam's "one act of disobedience." So, if this is true, what was Adam's one act of disobedience? Of course, it was his failure with Eve in failing to obey God's command concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was his deliberate act of sin, his succumbing to temptation, his breaking the command of God.

So, because of Paul's parallel, the "one act of righteousness," in its narrowest sense, would apply to our Lord's victory over that same serpent of old, the devil, whereby, through His obedience (the opposite of Adam's disobedience) He would succour righteousness for all who would ultimately believe in Him. Of course, His one act of righteousness alone in the wilderness could not undo the penalty of our sin. He still had to die upon the cross as our sacrifice, bearing our sins in his body upon the tree. But the reason He was the only one who could die in our place, bearing our sin in his body upon the cross, thus paying our debt of sin, was because He was sinless in his nature, and righteous in all his ways. His triumph over the devil in the wilderness proved this point, showing forth the fact that He was the Passover Lamb, the Lamb chosen by God to take away the sin of the world. His one act of righteousness and the inability of Satan to cause Him to sin, demonstrated that He, indeed, was the only one who could pay the penalty for sin, and as such become the head of a new creation.

J. N. Darby said it this way while speaking of this truth in Romans chapter five.

<sup>e</sup> **Philippians. 2: 8**

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. KJV

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“The parenthesis closes with verse 17, and the apostle resumes in verse 18 the train of thought interrupted at verse 12. The consequences of Adam's fall concern all; in the same way the free gift through the work of Christ concerns all. The gospel can thus be applied to all; it addresses the whole world, all sinners. In verse 19 we have the actual application. By the disobedience of one man, the many connected with him, that is to say all men are found in the condition of this one, which is a sinful condition. By the obedience of one man, all who are connected with him, that is, all Christians, are found in the position of this One, namely, in a position of righteousness before God. **Adam was the figure of the Man that was to come.** In the one we were lost, in the other all those who are connected with Him are saved, righteous before God. The guilt of a man depends upon what he has done; his actual condition, on the contrary, on what Adam has done. **Adam and Christ are the heads of two races; the one of a sinful, and the other of a race righteous before God, and here life and standing are inseparable.** The law came in by the way between the first and second Adam. The root of the fallen human race was Adam, the first man. The Head and the root of life of the blessed and saved race is Christ.” [emphasis mine]<sup>29</sup>

And so, we see the first reason for His temptation in the wilderness was to show forth His purity, His sinlessness, and His righteousness. His temptation was not just to see if He would sin or not; no, that was impossibility; He was impeccable. He was tempted to prove that He could not sin, and that, as such, He was the Saviour of the world, the Lamb of God, the last Adam, the second Man, the head of a new creation. How wonderful is our Lord Jesus Christ!

Yet Scripture tells us there was another reason He was tempted. The first reason had to do with our *salvation* by showing us He was the only One qualified to be mankind's Saviour; the second reason had to do with our *sanctification*, showing us He is our High Priest who is able to help us.

Scripture says our Lord was tempted in order to “help” those who are already saved, to sympathize with them, to give aid to those of the new creation, to

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succour us when we are tempted.

Hebrews 4:15 says—

**Heb. 4:15** For we have not an **high priest** which cannot be **touched with the feeling** of our infirmities; **but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.**

And Hebrews 2:16-18 says—

**Heb. 2:16-18** For verily he took not *on him the nature of* angels; but he took on *him* the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered **being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.** KJV

Our Saviour suffered, being tempted, in order to succour us. We find such tender mercy because He was “touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” The Greek word translated “touched with the feeling” in Heb. 4:15 is συμπαθέω<sup>\*30</sup> (sumpatheo) from which we get our English word—sympathy.

By being tempted like us, our Lord (in his humanity) was able to sympathize with the weaknesses of those who fall into temptation. And because of this sympathy He was able to offer aid, understanding, and succour. Our Lord allowed Himself to be tempted by the devil of old for you and for me. He understands us more than anyone else. Oh, how we should continually cry out to Him during our pilgrimage upon this earth when confronted with temptation; we should seek His help and seek His aid for He knows what we are experiencing because Scripture clearly says he was tempted in all points like as we, yet without sin. If we but wait upon Him and trust Him when we are tempted He will help us. If we but seek His help, he will intercede for us as our High Priest; he will disciple us as our Master. He will lead us away from our temptations into a life of holiness and peace. It may not come over night, but it

\* **συμπαθέω**, ὦ, f.  
ἦσω (συμπαθής.)  
*to sympathize with, to feel with another, to be affected in like manner.*



## Matthew

will come. And even in those times when we fail and we do sin, giving in to the temptation, he still will help us and aid us, giving us succour, because He is our High Priest and the One who is “touched with the feeling of our infirmities.”

And as our High Priest he will ever forgive us, being merciful; and he will ever intercede for us, being faithful. As we confess our sins, he will aid us so that we might continue on in our sanctification and, by his help, be ready to help our brethren in like manner (See Luke 22:31-32).<sup>f</sup>

What a wonderful Saviour and High Priest we have!

**4:2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.**

**4:3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.**

**4:4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.**

The first temptation of our Lord begins with hunger. Satan challenges our Lord to satisfy His hunger by changing the stones before Him into bread. This parallels the first temptation of Eve in that she no doubt was hungry since the text says she saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food. What Satan may have done was to wait until she had a natural hunger before tempting her; perhaps he waited till noon time, for we are told the Lord came later in the cool of the day.

Thus, Eve may have had an involuntarily act of hunger, whereas Jesus had a voluntary act of hunger, caused by His fasting.

As Satan took advantage of Eve’s natural hunger, so he tries to take advantage of our Lord’s natural hunger, but the difference between the two was Jesus was hungry on purpose, whereas Eve was not. This lengthy hunger, caused by fasting, emphasizes even

<sup>f</sup> **Luke 22:31-32**  
“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” NASB

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more that our Lord Jesus Christ could not be tempted to sin. Whereas our first parents failed, even with a minor hunger, our Lord succeeded with an extreme hunger.

The second parallel has to do with whose voice do we listen to, God's or another's? Eve paid attention to the voice of the serpent, rather than to the voice of her husband (as he was the one that had to tell her about the command of God, since Eve had not been created when the command was given to Adam to not eat of the tree). On the other hand, Adam listened to the voice of his wife, and not to the voice of the God.

But our Lord, since he only ever listened to the voice of his Father (Jn. 6:38; 8:26; 12:49),<sup>g</sup> did not listen to the voice of Satan when Satan encouraged Him to change the stones into bread but rather responded to Satan's temptation with a quote from Scripture, reflecting the voice of God. He told Satan that "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." His quote was taken from the last part of Deut. 8:3, from a context that speaks of the reason for Israel's time in the wilderness. The passage reads as follows.

**Deut. 8:1-10** All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers.<sup>2</sup> And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.<sup>3</sup> And he humbled thee, and **suffered thee to hunger**, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know **that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.**<sup>4</sup> Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years.<sup>5</sup> Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee.<sup>6</sup> Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him.<sup>7</sup> For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out

<sup>g</sup> **John 6:38** For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. KJV  
**John 8:26** I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him. KJV  
**John 12:49** For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. KJV

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of valleys and hills; <sup>8</sup> A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; <sup>9</sup> **A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness**, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass. <sup>10</sup> When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. KJV

The significance of this is that our Lord directs our attention to another parallel. This quote parallels our Lord's temptation with that of the nation of Israel's. (We must remember Matthew began his Gospel with the declaration that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy in Hosea that out of Egypt he called his son—Hos. 11:1; Matt. 2:15. As Israel was seen as God's son, so our Lord, the eternal Son of God, was recognized as "the" Son of God, not only eternally, but also by His incarnation. So, not only do we see Jesus defeating Satan in His temptation, in contradistinction to Adam and Eve, we also see Him defeating Satan in His temptation, in contradistinction to the nation of Israel. As such, we see our Lord not only representing the Gentiles with the comparison to Adam and Eve, we see Him representing the Jews with the comparison to Israel, showing that our Lord represented all mankind as the Saviour.)

Deut. 8:1-10 says God led the Israelites into the wilderness to suffer hunger to test them, to see if they would trust and obey. In other words, to see if they believed God's promise to take care of them and to see if they would believe that they would be brought safely into the land where they were told that bread would be more than abundant. (See verse 9 above in Deut. 8:1-10).

The promise of God, the word given to them, was that He would take care of them and that He would fulfill His promise to them to sustain them until they entered that land where they would eat "bread without scarceness." In other words, He assured them they would not die in the wilderness from hunger because He promised He would bring them into the

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land where bread would be abundant! By appealing to this portion of Scripture our Lord, the Son of God, reminds us that, unlike Israel (who is also seen as a son of God) He ever trusted in the word and promises of His Father. He succeeded where Israel failed. Remember, Satan begins this temptation with the question, “If thou art the Son of God.” If Jesus had succumbed and turned the stone into bread it would have shown, not only His lack of faith in the promise of God, but also His discontentment with the trial ordered by God, as Israel showed their discontentment with their trial.

Additionally, it would have been a precedent and a declaration that it is fine to exercise our own power to deliver ourselves in the things of God, rather than trusting in the providence and power of God to deliver us. Jesus certainly had the power as the Son of God to change stones into bread, but to do so would have been a betrayal of His trust in His Father. Satan knew Jesus was the Son of God, as did all the evil spirits and demons. Satan would have surely witnessed the angelic declarations at our Lord’s birth and would have seen the star rest above the child, and witnessed the worship of the magi, and later witnessed the prophecy of Simeon in the temple and the prophecy of Anna. Satan knew he was the Son of God, but the reason he questioned whether Jesus was, indeed, the Son of God was his desire to distract Jesus from the real reason for this first temptation. He used the same tactic with Eve, when he said, under the guise of learning, “Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'” Satan knew the command of God. He simply wanted to deceive Eve by pretending to be an animal created by God that simply wanted to learn the things of God. So too, Satan pretended that he wanted to learn the things of God, i.e. if Jesus was indeed the Son of God, as if, with such knowledge he would both honor Him and worship Him. It is as if he wanted Jesus to think, “This is a good thing to teach someone the truth of who I am? Is it not a good thing for any creature of God to know that God has sent His only-

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begotten Son to this earth—that His eternal Word has, indeed, become flesh?” This tactic of Satan has never changed and we should be aware of his wiles.

Many times Satan tempts us with good things. Just because something is good does not mean it is a right thing to do! *Oh, how we need to learn this truth, and Oh, how the Church needs to learn this truth.* When we do something only because it seems like a good thing to do, we walk by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, rather than by the tree of life. When we walk by the former we do things according to our own understanding, rather than according to the will of God. When we do the former we do things by the strength of our own power and understanding of good and evil, whereas when we walk by the tree of life, we do things by the leading of the Spirit of life within us.

Jesus said the Son can do nothing of himself, but only by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of his Father. This mindset of our Lord demonstrated not only His trust in His Father but also His acknowledgment that he walked by the power of God His Father and not by His own power. We are told in Luke 5:17<sup>h</sup> that even the power of His healing was done by the power of His Father. As the Son of God He could have healed anytime by His own strength and power, after all He was very God of very God, but He chose to not walk in that manner during His sojourn upon the earth; He did not do things “of himself,” but did things “of” God His Father, as He was led by the Holy Spirit of God. This showed His faithful adherence to all aspects of the law, including that aspect of the law that reminded the one under the law to never forget that all power comes not from God Himself.

**Deuteronomy 8:10-11,17-20** When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. <sup>11</sup> **Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God,** in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: <sup>17</sup> **And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me**

<sup>h</sup> **Luke 5:17** And it came about one day that He was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; **and the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing.**  
NASB

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**this wealth.** <sup>18</sup> **But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power** to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day. <sup>19</sup> And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. <sup>20</sup> As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God. KJV

Jesus defeated Satan in this first temptation by reminding Satan that just as Israel was called out of Egypt to come into their full inheritance, and just as they were warned to never forget that all their needs would be provided for by God in the wilderness, and just as God allowed them to hunger in order to test them (Deut. 8:2), so too the Son of Man was called out of Egypt and given a test like Israel. He reminded Satan that it is sin to do things by our own power and strength for it shows a lack of patience and trust in the provision of God, even if the thing done was for good reasons. He showed Satan that he trusted that he would be delivered by God and be brought by God's power into his full inheritance, all according to his Father's own timing and not his own.

And so we see this first temptation of Jesus teaches us we should do nothing of ourselves, by our own strength and wisdom, even if it appears to be a good thing, but rather we should be content with our circumstances, fully trusting in the providence, provision and power of God, and only doing those things that God the Holy Spirit directs us to do under His full blessing. It teaches us never to falter in our faith and attempt to deliver ourselves from situations by our own strength, or our own power and wisdom, but rather it teaches us to be patient and trust in God's promise.

George Muller had certainly learned this lesson. He said it this way in his Narrative,

"If we, indeed, desire our faith to be strengthened, we should not shrink from opportunities where our faith may

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be tried, and, therefore, through the trial, be strengthened. In our natural state we dislike dealing with God alone. Through our natural alienation from God we shrink from Him, and from eternal realities. This cleaves to us more or less, even after our regeneration. Hence it is, that, more or less, even as believers, we have the same shrinking from standing with God alone, – from depending upon Him alone, – from looking to Him alone: – and yet this is the very position in which we ought to be, if we wish our faith to be strengthened. The more I am in a position to be tried in faith with reference to my body, my family, my service for the Lord, my business, etc., the more shall I have opportunity of seeing God's help and deliverance; and every fresh instance, in which He helps and delivers me, will tend towards the increase of my faith. On this account, therefore, the believer should not shrink from situations, positions, circumstances, in which his faith may be tried; but should cheerfully embrace them as opportunities where he may see the hand of God stretched out on his behalf, to help and deliver him, and whereby he may thus have his faith strengthened..."

"...The last important point for the strengthening of our faith is, **that we let God work for us, when the hour of the trial of our faith comes, and do not work a deliverance of our own.** Wherever God has given faith, it is given, among other reasons, for the very purpose of being tried. Yea, however weak our faith may be, God will try it; only with this restriction, that as, in every way, He leads on gently, gradually, patiently, so also with reference to the trial of our faith. At first our faith will be tried very little in comparison with what it may be afterwards; for God never lays more upon us than He is willing to enable us to bear. Now when the trial of faith comes, we are naturally inclined to distrust God, and to trust rather in ourselves, or in our friends, or in circumstances. We will rather work a deliverance of our own somehow or other, than simply look to God and wait for His help. But if we do not patiently wait for God's help, if we work a deliverance of our own, then at the next trial of our faith it will be thus again, we shall be again inclined to deliver ourselves; and thus with every fresh instance of that kind, our faith will decrease; whilst, on the contrary, were we to stand still in order to see the salvation of God, to see His hand stretched out on our behalf, trusting in Him alone, then our faith would be increased, and with every fresh case in which the hand of God is stretched out on our

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behalf in the hour of the trial of our faith, our faith would be increased yet more. Would the believer, therefore, have his faith strengthened, he must especially, give time to God, who tries his faith in order to prove to His child, in the end, how willing He is to help and deliver him, the moment it is good for him.”<sup>31</sup>

**4:5 Then the devil teeth him up into the holy city, and septet him on a pinnacle of the temple,**

**4:6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in *their* hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.**

**4:7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.**

Since Satan could not trap Jesus in the first temptation, he decides to change his tactics and tempt Jesus in a different way. He accepts our Lord's answer that man should live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, that man should trust in God's deliverance, and trust in God's power. So now Satan tells Jesus to do just that; he decides to tempt our Lord with a specific promise of God. He challenges Jesus to prove his trust in the Word of God, his trust in the promises, and power of God by telling Him to throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple for God promised Him that the angels will protect Him from harm. In other words, he is saying the same thing he said to Eve, albeit for different reasons; he is telling Jesus, "Do not worry. Ye shall not die! God will protect you. Is He not with you? Are you not the Son of God?"

Notice that he continues to tempt Jesus under the same guise of learning. He still pretends that he simply wants to know if Jesus is the Son of God. It reminds me of another question, that of the wise men when they asked those in Jerusalem, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him" (Matthew 2:2). The wise men, with true intent and piety, asked their question because they wished to



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worship Jesus; Satan, on the other hand, asked his question as to whether Jesus was the Son of God disingenuously, because he never intended to worship the Son of God. He pretended to be pious, but in reality he was evil. He still was that serpent of old, wishing to destroy the purity of the Lord. But, again, our Lord saw through the disingenuous spirit of the devil, quoting to him another passage of Scripture taken from Deut. 6:16, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'<sup>i</sup>

This response of our Lord also has a great import for us. It is right to trust in the promises of God, believing in His power and believing in His promised presence and His care for us; but it is not right to seek to prove those things by allowing ourselves to be put into situations not of God's choosing. This once again demonstrates that our Lord did not walk by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil but rather by the tree of life.

As we mentioned before, walking by the tree of knowledge of good and evil represents walking by our own ingenuity or by our own creativity, by our own wisdom, or by our own power in our service to God. Walking by the tree of life means walking by the Holy Spirit, only doing those things that God leads us to do by the power He provides.

When Jesus was on this earth, He did not gather His disciples together and have a big strategy session for the purpose of figuring out the best way to win over the hearts of Israel, getting His disciples together to think of different creative ways on how they could bring people together so He could preach the gospel to them. Rather, He went out and prayed, seeking the guidance of His Father in heaven, and then, by the fullness of the Holy Spirit resting upon Him, obeyed that guidance. He simply obeyed His Father and did the things he was told to do and went to the places to which he was led and trusted the outcome to God (Jn. 5:19).<sup>j</sup>

He never would of thought, "Well, if I accept this challenge and go to the pinnacle of the temple, I know God will send his angels to protect me; I

<sup>i</sup> **Deut. 6:16** "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah. NASB

<sup>j</sup> **John 5:19**  
Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. NASB

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believe in His power and I know His promises never fail. We just have to use the right marketing and advertising techniques so we can draw a large crowd to witness the event. Just think of the impact it will have on Jerusalem when they see the angels save me as I am plunging to the earth; just think of what a miracle it will be to all of Jerusalem. This will surely convince them that I am the Son of God, and that I am the Messiah; just think about how many people will be saved by this event! This will surely advance the kingdom of Heaven!”

May the Lord even forgive me for suggesting such a thought in our Saviour, yet is this not exactly the way many Christians and/or churches think today? Great campaigns are thought up. Creative schemes are devised to attract large crowds to hear the gospel. Successful marketing and advertising techniques, drawn from the world of commerce, are used to draw people together. Yes, one might have pure motives, but all thought of really listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit, following the way of the cross, is set aside and, rather, the ways of the soul and of the mind are utilized to devise some plan for the advancement of the kingdom of God. Our Lord would never do such a thing. He never would dream of taking advantage of His privilege and standing before God as the Son of God and put God to test all for the sake of the advancement of God’s kingdom. Rather, He trusted in God’s ways in the carrying out of His work. He trusted in God’s wisdom and strength in the work given to Him by His Father. He did it, not by the logic of His own human soul, but by logic of God’s Spirit, if you will.

Yet was not our Lord’s human logic perfect? Yes, indeed, our Lord’s human nature was perfect in every way, His logic completely flawless, yet He never walked by His own logic in and of Himself; He always walked by the words, thoughts, and ordering of God His Father, moment by moment, day by day, ever declaring “not My will, but Thy will be done.” Yet wouldn’t His own will have been perfect! Yes, indeed, but He always declared “the Son can do

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nothing of Himself.” Anything that He might have done “of Himself” would have been good and righteous, as He was sinless in every way, yet He never walked that way, He never followed the logic and will of His own heart, but rather He always sought and followed the voice of His Father by the quiet leading of the Holy Spirit down deep in His heart,. Should we not then as “sons of God” do the same? Are we not told to walk, even as He walked?” Jesus would never tempt God with His own promises to accomplish an end whose way was not ordered by God. The end might be good; it might prove successful, but that mattered not to the Lord. He never walked by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, like Adam and Eve, but always walked by the tree of life. The world might walk that way, and does; students of someone like a Machiavelli might walk that way, and in many cases do. But the Christian should never walk that way; however, alas, many times the opposite is true and many churches and many Christians ignore the “means,” whenever they find an “end” that results in “success.” The ends should never justify the means for a true child of God.

And so ends the second temptation of our Lord. Satan first tempted Jesus to “distrust” the Word of God and His promise of deliverance by getting Him to create his own deliverance with a harmless desire, i.e. satisfying the hunger of His body. In the second temptation, Satan forgoes the avenue of the body, but tempts our Lord’s soul (his mind or logic) and so tempts Jesus to go ahead, then, and “trust” the Word of God and His promises, cast yourself down from the pinnacle and demonstrate to all who you are so they might believe and be saved. But because our Lord said no to this, saying one should never put God to the test, even for seemingly good reasons, by doing things according to our own wisdom, logic and understanding, Satan leads Jesus into the final temptation. Whereas the first had to do with a temptation to the body and the second a temptation to the soul, the last had to do with a temptation to the

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spirit of Jesus.

**4:8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;**

**4:9 And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.**

**4:10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.**

Satan true nature is now shown forth in this final temptation. He no longer pretends to simply be a learner wishing to learn if Jesus is truly the Son of God. He now reveals his true intent of his heart. He desires Jesus to worship him as the god of this world. This shows the sin in Satan's heart has never changed over the centuries since he was created. From the very beginning, when he rebelled against God, he desired to be worshiped like God.<sup>k</sup>

This final temptation reveals the disingenuous nature of our foe. To achieve his goals he will even appear as an angel of light, if it serves his purpose; he first appeared as a good creature simply wanting to learn if Jesus was the Son of God, so he, seemingly, could worship Him. This final temptation shows that Satan knew all along whom Jesus was, for if Jesus was just one mere man out all the men upon the earth, and not the Son of God, why would he then offer Him all the kingdoms of the world? A mere man would not be a threat to the most powerful of fallen creatures. Jesus did nothing in his first two temptations to answer his enquiry as to whether he was the Son of God, so why would he now offer Him the kingdoms of the world. The answer is because Satan knew all along who Jesus really was and all his previous questions were simply disingenuous questions to deceive.

Consequently, since Satan knew Jesus was the Son of God all along, he also knew the Son of God was given a promise to inherit the earth. The second Psalm plainly reveals this truth. As such, the real

<sup>k</sup> **Isaiah 14:12-14**

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, **I will exalt my throne above the stars of God:** I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: **I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.** KJV

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intention of Satan behind these three temptations was to thwart this promise made by God to his Son.

In the second temptation Satan extoiled the surety of God's promises by declaring to Jesus that the promise of God will hold sure if he casts himself from the pinnacle. But in this temptation he reveals his utter contempt for the plans and promises of God, actually thinking he might be able to derail the plans and purposes of God. But God's Word will always stand sure. The Lord will always overturn the foolish reasoning and logic of man, which in fallen man are no doubt inspired by the foolish reasoning and logic of Satan.<sup>1</sup>

This temptation parallels Satan's temptation to Eve when he told her that if she listened to his advice, she would be "like God," or as some think, "like a god." Satan was telling her if you listen to me your true purpose will be seen, you will be like God. Satan is now offering Jesus the same thing, for he is saying if you rule the world, you will be seen as God by all men. Is that not what you want? (Satan did not know that the Son thought it not robbery to be equal to God. It was not something He needed to reach out and grasp for Himself; He did not need to steal it, for His equality with God was not something he ever lost; it was His from all of eternity. Satan has always sought to be equal to God; our Lord never has, for He has always been equal to Him, being very God of very God from all of eternity.)<sup>m</sup>

This final temptation was an attempt to circumvent the ways of God. How? It was God the Father, Himself, who told the Son, 'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance (Ps. 2:8). So Satan first tries to circumvent that path by telling Jesus, you do not need to wait and ask your Father, "Ask me, and I will give you the nations!" Second, Satan knew that the one who would rule over the nations would be recognized as God for Satan most assuredly also knew the Scripture in Ps. 45:6.

**Ps. 45:6** Thy throne, **O God**, is forever and ever; A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Thy kingdom. NASB

<sup>1</sup> **Psalm 33:10a**

The Lord frustrates the counsels of the nations; he brings to nought also the **reasonings** (Gr. logismous) of the peoples, and brings to nought the counsels of princes. (Brenton Version)

**II Cor. 10:4-5a**

For the arms of our warfare are not fleshly, but powerful according to God to the overthrow of strongholds;<sup>5</sup> overthrowing **reasonings**(Gr.logismous—the Greek: n. logismos, and the adj. logikos, is where our English word logic is derived)

(Darby's Version)

<sup>m</sup> Phil. 2:6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God **a thing to be grasped** NASB

Phil. 2:6 Who, being in the form of God, **thought it not robbery to be equal with God:** KJV

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And so Satan is saying something like, “You do not need to wait to ask the Father. You can be recognized and worshipped as God right “now” if you but bow down to me!”

And finally, it was again an attempt of Satan to get Jesus to sin, for if Jesus succumbed to this temptation He would be showing His lack of patience in the things of God. It would be a self-centered act, seeking to skip the intended will of God.

Jesus knew of this promise of God in Psalms 2 and Psalms 45, but Jesus also knew that before the fulfilment of the promises in those two Psalms there would have to first be the fulfillment of Psalms 22, which spoke of his death upon the cross, and a fulfillment of Isaiah 53, which spoke of his soul being made an offering for sin. Jesus knew why he came to earth. He came to die for the sins of mankind.<sup>n</sup>

Unlike, Satan, Jesus did not need to hold on to glory, rather He was willing to empty himself of that glory and accept the way of the cross with all its humility and shame, being obedient even to the death of the cross. Jesus was willing to be humbled, and to wait for His eventual exaltation, for He knew that without his suffering no one would ever be saved. Our Lord cared more for lost sinners than He did for any glory of His own, whereas Satan cared less for lost sinners, caring for nothing but his own self-aggrandizement and glory.

Satan will ever oppose the way of the cross for it is contrary to his nature. He did the same thing when he put his own thoughts into the mind of Peter for the purpose of dissuading the Lord from taking that way of the cross (Matt. 16:21-23).<sup>o</sup>

God’s way will always be the way of the cross for such a way shows forth the true nature of God—selflessness and love. The way of Satan will always circumvent the way of the cross for it shows forth his true nature—selfishness and his own self-aggrandizement. The way of the cross brings life, and the way of Satan brings death.

<sup>n</sup> **Matt. 20:28**

Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.  
KJV

<sup>o</sup> **Matt. 16:21-23**

From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, **how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.** <sup>22</sup> Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, **Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.** <sup>23</sup> But he turned, and said unto Peter, **Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.**  
KJV

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Yet, that is not all, there was something more in this final temptation of Satan than simply trying to get Jesus to forego His death upon the cross. He also wanted the worship of Jesus.

In the first temptation, Satan tried to get Jesus to “**question**” the promises of God. In the second temptation he did the opposite and tried to get Jesus to “**trust**” in the promises of God (but act presumptuously in that trust). In this final temptation he tries to get Jesus to “**circumvent**” the promises of God by obtaining the promised goal by different means.

The first temptation was a temptation to His body. The second was a temptation to His soul and this third was a temptation to His spirit.

To obtain the promised rule upon the earth by God, all Satan asked Jesus to do was to simply worship him, but by such an act our Lord would have defiled His spirit since true worship, done in spirit and truth, must only be given to God. Worship is fundamentally a function involving our spirit, as such, false worship will ever damage our heart and leave us in darkness and sin, whereas true worship will always strengthen our heart leaving us in the light and holiness of God. And so, Jesus responds to this final temptation with a sharp rebuke and, once more, an appropriate quote from Scripture.

To quote John Gill once more, he says this regarding this final temptation of Jesus.

“... then saith Jesus to him, get thee hence, Satan...rebuking his impudence, and detesting his impiety: he had borne his insults and temptations with great patience; he had answered him with mildness and gentleness; but now his behaviour to him was intolerable, which obliged him to show his resentment, exert his power and authority, and rid himself at once of so vile a creature; giving this reason for it.<sup>32</sup>

This last temptation was an offense to the pure spirit of our Lord Jesus. Worship can only be given to God the Father, it can only be given to the Son and it can only be given to the Holy Spirit. It belongs to no

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other. Satan never accepted this truth. His pride led him to desire equal, if not superior worship. How can a creature be so self-centered and deceived?

Our Lord rebuked this final temptation of Satan with the following quote from Scripture.

**Matthew 4:10** “Then Jesus said to him, ‘Begone, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.”’ NASB

Most commentators believe Jesus is quoting Deut. 6:13, but that verse does not contain the word “worship,” but rather, the word “fear.”

**Deut. 6:13** “Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.” KJV

And so, because of this, He may actually be quoting from two other passages of Scripture, and not Deut. 6:13. If this is true, one should then read our Lord’s response to Satan with a comma inserted after God in the verse, so it would read as follows in English: “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God,” and, “serve only Him.”

If this is true then our Lord is giving a quote from Ex. 23:25 and a quote from I Sam. 7:3. He then he strings them together into one sentence with the conjunction καὶ (and) binding the two quotes together.

The first quote reads as follows:

**Ex. 23:25** **You shall worship the LORD your God**, and I will bless your bread and your water; and I will take sickness away from among you.” NRSV

The Hebrew word used in this verse, “*abad*” (commonly translated as “serve”) is sometimes translated as “worship” in some English versions and is translated once in the LXX by the same Greek word used by the Holy Spirit in Matt. 4:10, the word προσκυνουῦντες (Psalm 97:7, LXX 96:7).

The second quote reads as follows:



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**I Sam. 7:3** And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and **serve him only**: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. KJV

If these are the two verses He is quoting, it is very interesting, because the context of the first quote in Ex. 23:25 deals with the promise made to Israel about inheriting the land that was given to them if they but obey God's word and do not worship other gods, but, instead, "worship only the LORD God." How interesting. Even though Israel failed to inherit all the land that was promised to them when they crossed the Jordan river under Joshua (because they ended up disobeying God—they did worship other gods) the Son of God will not and did not fail! As such, He will most certainly inherit the earth, the entire inheritance promised to Him (contrary to Satan's offer of immediate inheritance) because the Son was always obedient in all things to the Father, even to the point of death upon a cross. Never would He give worship to anyone else but God His Father, and most certainly never to one pretending to be like God, i.e. Satan the god of this world.<sup>p</sup> Israel, called a son of God, failed by worshipping other gods; the Lord Jesus, the eternal Son of God never failed; He worshipped only God His Father.

The second quote from I Sam. 7:3, is also interesting in that the context speaks of Israel failing because they also "served" other gods and so were defeated in their purposes. As a result, Samuel tells them to "serve only the LORD God." But our Lord might also be telling Satan by this quote that he should not take any confidence in the fact that God had seemingly allowed him some victory in the midst of earth's kingdoms. Satan thought he was the ruler of the earth and that the kingdoms were his to give away. In the same way, in the story in Samuel, the Philistines defeated Israel and ruled over the land that was rightfully theirs, but soon the Philistines were defeated and, then later, under David the land of the

<sup>p</sup> **II Cor. 4:4** In whom the **god of this world** hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. KJV

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Philistines became Israel's and David ruled over them (I Chron. 18:1).<sup>q</sup> So, perhaps, by quoting this passage, our Lord is telling Satan, your defeat will come, and it will be brought about by Me, the son of David.

In any case, these may have been the two portions of Scripture that our Lord was directing the mind of Satan towards. Nevertheless, if one still considers the quote to be a quote from Deut. 6:13, it, too, is most informative.

If our Lord was quoting Deut. 6:13, He was more than likely speaking in Hebrew to Satan and so was quoting the verse as it reads in Hebrew. As such, he would have verbally used the word “*yare*” (fear) as is in the text. But, what we have recorded for us in Matthew is Greek, being a translation of the Hebrew by Matthew (as he was guided under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit). As such, if Deut. 6:13 is the verse the Lord quotes to Satan, Matthew is led by the Holy Spirit to translate the verbally spoken Hebrew word, “*yare*” (fear), by the Greek προσκυνήσεις.

Now, if this is, indeed, a translation from Deut. 6:13, we must ask ourselves, “What better translator do we have than the Holy Spirit?” It would seem that the Hebrew word “*yare*” may have also had a connotation of “worship” or “bowing down” when used in certain contexts. The Greek word προσκυνέω in a very literal sense means to “fall down before someone,” or to “bow down and prostrate oneself.” If this is the verse our Lord is referencing, then it seems the Holy Spirit is implying that Satan was trying to intimidate Jesus in this temptation causing him to fear and so worship or bow down to before him.

Perhaps, because Satan was able to show him all the kingdoms of the world from some great mountain in a moment of time, Satan was hoping to drive fear into the heart of the Lord and so cause him to bow down to his great power. (Luke 4:5 says Satan was able to show him all the kingdoms of the earth in a moment of time).<sup>r</sup> All his other temptations failed. He was not able to weaken our Lord's resolve by tempting him to deal with his physical hunger; he

### <sup>q</sup> I Chron. 18:1

Now after this it came about that David defeated the Philistines and subdued them and took Gath and its towns from the hand of the Philistines. NASB

<sup>r</sup> **Luke 4:5-6** And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. KJV

## Matthew

was not able to confuse or deceive our Lord's mind (soul) with his logical appeal to the promises of God, and so, perhaps, now, he is trying to intimidate and disquieten our Lord's spirit to no longer trust that it is God who is the one to give the kingdom's of the earth to the Son. Satan is boldly contradicting God's Word, saying "the kingdoms were given to me; I am the one who decides who will receives them." This again parallels Satan's bold contradiction of God's Word in the Genesis account (Gen. 3:4). His tactics never change. But our Lord did not succumb to the temptation, nor to his intimidation, telling Satan that the only one who should be feared and thus bowed down to and worshipped is the Lord God Almighty, not a mere creature of God!

What audacity and arrogance Satan must possess to think he could intimidate the eternal Son of God! Truly the enemy of our soul is full of self-deception. And truly, our Lord's responses under temptation should be an encouragement to us in our own struggles against the enemy of our souls.

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### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

If Jesus was quoting Deut. 6:13 with the Hebrew word *yare*, "to fear," and the Holy Spirit uses the Greek word for worship προσκυνέω to translate it, perhaps, we are being told that godly fear must ever be an aspect of our worship as Heb. 12:28 tells us.

The English Standard Version translates Heb. 12:28 as follows—

**Hebrews 12:28** Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus **let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe.** ESV

And the Bible in Basic English and the New Living Translation present the verse as follows.

**Hebrews 12:28** If then, we have a kingdom which will never be moved, let us have grace, so that we **may give**

## Matthew

**God such worship as is pleasing to him with fear and respect:** BBE

**Hebrews 12:28** Since we are receiving a Kingdom that is unshakable, let us be thankful and **please God by worshipping him with holy fear and awe.** NLT

If the Holy Spirit is translating the Hebrew word *yare* (to fear) with the Greek word *προσκυνήσεις* (to worship), He is telling us that godly fear is a requisite for true worship. And, as such, when we come before God we should always bow before Him with fear and reverence, seeing ourselves for the sinful creatures we are. (Of course, this would not apply to Jesus, as He was sinless, but it most certainly applied to Satan.) I am afraid many may have lost this mindset today. Many times, we are not bowed down by the greatness of the power of God. Many times, we do not fear Him in our worship. Many times, the godly dread of being displeasing to him does not even enter our minds. We think we are fine before God. We think we are good people. We hardly ever pray, like David of old, “Search me O God and see if there be any wicked way within me.”<sup>s</sup>

As a result, in many of our modern churches, entertainment, not conviction, has become the mainstay of our worship. In some places, the ungodly beat of the world, with an accompanying visual light show added to the music to heighten the external senses of the body and soul, has been added to the worship in order to keep the worshipers from becoming bored.

No longer is the Lord’s death, burial and resurrection the focus of our worship, as it was in the days of the early church; holy communion has now been relegated to once a month; now, “Christian” rock bands have become the staple of our worship. As a result, good “feelings” not “faith” have become the measure of our worship. Joy now comes, not by faith down deep in our spirit (for true worship must be in our spirit and truth), but from the more external feelings of our soul, stimulated by a body made to move in time with the beat and rhythm of the music.

<sup>s</sup> **Psalm 139:23-24**

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.  
KJV

## Matthew

Holy fear has become the missing element in our worship. We no longer have “fear,” that our worship may not be according to truth; we no longer have fear that our worship might not be according to the pattern given to us in the Word. We no longer fear that our worship might not be acceptable to God. We think God will always be pleased with whatever worship we offer; we have forgotten that God is not always pleased with the way we worship; we have forgotten that God was not pleased with the worship of Cain<sup>t</sup> or the worship of Nadab and Abihu.<sup>u</sup> These thoughts never enter our mind.

We want only “good feelings” in worship, not a negative feeling like “fear.” We do not want to be reminded that we might be displeasing our Father by the worldly manner of our worship. After all, worship is worship, does it really matter how it is done? Yes it does! The Holy Spirit tells us that throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. We should always worship God with a holy fear and reverence before Him.

Most assuredly, those who have come to know God will never fear “fear,” for proper fear purifies our hearts. More than likely, if we have a holy fear of displeasing God in our worship on Sunday, we will have a holy fear of displeasing God in our walk on Monday. But if we are careless in our worship of God on Sunday, we will, more than likely, be careless in our walk on Monday.

Yes, we do know that “perfect love casts out fear.” But there are different types of fear. A Christian should never fear that they might lose their eternal salvation; yes, that is a wrong kind of fear, but does not Peter tell the Christian to conduct themselves in fear during their sojourn upon this earth?<sup>v</sup> And does not Paul also tells us, by using himself as an example in I Cor. 9:27, that we should have a healthy fear of being a castaway before God?

**I Cor. 9:27** But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a **castaway**. KJV

<sup>t</sup> **Genesis 4:4-5**

“And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: <sup>5</sup> But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wrath, and his countenance fell.”

<sup>u</sup> **Lev. 10:1-2**

“Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firpans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. <sup>2</sup> And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. NASB

<sup>v</sup> **I Peter 1:17**

If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, **conduct yourselves in fear** during the time of your stay on earth. NASB

## Matthew

And does not Paul tell us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling? <sup>w</sup>

These verses have nothing to do with eternal salvation, but have everything to do with defective service. It refers to our sanctification. It speaks to our working out our salvation from sin and self. In that we should fear. For a humble spirit of fear will aid us in that aspect of salvation.

They have to do with rewards, not with our eternal inheritance. They have to do with our sanctification, not with our justification. Paul never feared God with a fear of losing his salvation. No, Paul was the champion of “justification by faith,” the herald of “salvation by grace through faith.” Paul knew that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, but Paul always retained a fear that he might displease God by sin or self, and because of that he might become a “castaway,” one disqualified from being a victor in the race that was set before him.

Fear can be a treasured friend because it magnifies God and minimizes self. And whenever a Christian minimizes himself, God will always be there to fill that vacuum with His love, presence and mercy. Moreover, as a Christian repeats this process over and over in their true worship to God, He will always be there to cast out our holy fear with His holy love, mercy and forgiveness.

Holy fear minimizes us step by step to the point that we realize that we are but sinful creatures, proclaiming like Isaiah, “Woe is me for I am a man of unclean lips.” It brings us to the point where we realize, like Paul, that “in us (that is, in our flesh,) dwelleth no good thing. And in this minimization His love will ever sanctify us step by step to a fuller understanding of our position in Christ Jesus, to a fuller understanding that in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation to those who walk by the spirit and not by the flesh (Rom. 8:2).

When a person believes, he or she believes in their heart, for with the heart or spirit, one believes unto righteousness. And this introduction into a walk

<sup>w</sup> **Philippians 2:12**

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation with fear and trembling.** NASB

## Matthew

by the spirit, this initial exercise of faith in our heart, results in our justification before God. A person is justified by faith; they are freed from any condemnation to hell by faith, not by works. Paul reminds us that by His doing we have been placed in Christ Jesus, who “became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption” (1Cor. 1:30 NASB). In the same way, the apostle John reminds us that we should not fear any condemnation or judgment by God in I John 4:16-18.<sup>x</sup> The Greek word translated “perfected” (τετελειώται) in verse 17 of I Jn. 4:16-18 is a perfect passive verb, showing us God has already perfected His love within us. It shows that the love of God that sent His Son to this earth to be the propitiation for our sins has been made full in the hearts of believers, assuring them that they never have to fear God’s condemnation to hell; our eternal salvation is sure. That love has already cast out any fear we might have of losing our position in His Son.

However, in the next verse, verse 18, John tells us that same love “continues” to cast out any fear within our hearts. The verb translated “cast out” (βάλλει) is in the present tense, showing us it is continuing in our life. Verse 17 deals with our “justification,” but verse 18 deals with our “sanctification.” We never have to fear eternal punishment, for God’s perfect love assures us of our forgiveness of sins by our eternal redemption in Christ Jesus. But we are also told that in our sanctification, until that day comes when we are glorified (perfected in love), that love which has cast out any fear of eternal punishment will continue to cast out any fear of temporal punishment or discipline we might receive by God during our sojourn on this earth as we grow and mature. We need not fear that we will ever displease Him to the point of losing our salvation, for our justification is by faith, not by works, but we should always fear that we might displease Him in our walk, ever knowing that He disciplines or punishes the ones He loves.

Our part is to maintain a holy fear in our hearts before God, knowing that He will always be with us,

### <sup>x</sup> I John 4:16-18

“We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. <sup>17</sup> By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. <sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.” NASB

## Matthew

continuing to cast out that fear, letting us know that we need not fear His discipline or temporal punishment, if we but confess our sins, for He is always faithful to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

But we must also realize that love can never cast out something that is not there. Do we maintain a holy fear of displeasing God within our hearts, especially when we come before Him in worship? If we bow down before Him in humble adoration and fear, He will always show us the fullness of His love and mercy. One day, when we are fully perfected in His love, all fear will be gone; we will be glorified and never have to fear that we might be displease Him by sin or self anymore. But until that day comes may we never be so proud and ignorant of our own sinfulness and shortcomings that we never maintain before Him a godly fear that gives Him our proper reverence and awe, not only in our walk, but also in our worship.

And so, in conclusion, we now can understand why Matthew places the account of our Lord's temptation in the beginning of his Gospel. He is declaring Jesus to be the Christ, Jehovah incarnate, the One who could not be tempted to sin, being very God of very God, impeccable in every way. He is declaring Him to be the last Adam, holy, sinless and pure, who, though coming in likeness of sinful flesh, could not be tempted to sin by a sin nature, or by anything else within Himself, for His was a virgin birth and as such He had no sin or sin nature. He is declaring Christ to be our High Priest, the One who can sympathize with us in our own temptations, having been tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. And, finally, he is showing Him to be the Saviour of our souls, of both Jew and Gentile, the One who will aid us in our sanctification until we reach that perfect state (our glorification) when His eternal love will have finally cast out all the fear within our hearts, for at that time we will be fully conformed to His image, never having to fear that we might displease Him again.



## Matthew

**4:11 Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.**

This verse demonstrates the loving care of our heavenly Father toward His only-begotten Son—ministering angels are sent to our Lord after this temptation, perhaps, to provide bread for his body, comfort for his soul, and strength to his spirit (cf. I Kings 19:5-7; Luke 22:43).<sup>y</sup>

How wonderful it is to notice that, even though our Lord was perfect and sinless in every way, faithful in all things, never faltering, or even able to falter, God still sent to our Lord (as to His humanity) succour from heaven. If God the Father comforted a “perfect” Son who would have endured to the end, even without such succour, how much more will He provide for us, “imperfect” sons and daughters, the comfort and succour we need during and after the trials and temptations we are called to endure in this life on earth?

**4:12 Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;**

**4:13 And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim:**

**4:14 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,**

**4:15 The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles;**

**4:16 The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.**

These verses are a fulfillment of Isaiah 9:1-2.<sup>z</sup> The lands of Zebulun and Naphtali occupied the northern part of Israel which had been judged by God, because of their unfaithfulness, during the reign of the kings of Israel. By wars and captivity the land had become a mixture of Jews and Gentiles. Thus it had become known as “Galilee of the Gentiles.” In fact, a major

<sup>y</sup> **I Kings 19:5-6**

And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat.<sup>6</sup> And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baked on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.

**Luke 22:43** And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

<sup>z</sup> **Isaiah 9:1-2** But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.<sup>2</sup>

The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, The light will shine on them. NASB

## Matthew

Gentile (Hellenized and Roman) city, called Sephorris, could be seen from Nazareth, being but three or four miles away. How apropos is this, that our Lord would grow up in this part of Israel (Nazareth being in Zebulon and Capernaum being in Naphtali) as He was not only the child who would be born, and the Son who would be given, the Mighty God who would sit on the throne of His father David,<sup>a</sup> but He was also the Servant who would be a Light to the Gentiles.<sup>b</sup> It not only foreshadowed His future reign over Israel as her King, but it also foreshadowed His coming inheritance of the nations (Gentiles), whereby he would be King of the whole earth,<sup>c</sup>

### **4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**

And so, as that great Light, as the child that was born, and as the Son that was given (prophesied a few verses later in Isaiah 9:6, a few verses after the prophesy regarding the fact that those in Galilee of the Gentiles would see a great light), and as the king of Israel, and the One who would be the King of the whole earth, our Lord began His ministry declaring to all as did John the Baptist, his forerunner, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." But Jesus understood the meaning behind the declaration, unlike the misunderstanding of John. Jesus was declaring to all that He Himself was the manifestation of the Kingdom of Heaven standing in their presence. In reality, He is saying to repent for the kingdom of Heaven is standing here right in front of you. The rule of God can be seen in Me. If you want to know what true submission to God is, look to Me, for the Kingdom of God is at hand, it is in your midst.

**Luke 17:21** nor will they say, 'Look, here *it is!*' or, 'There *it is!*' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst." NASB

### <sup>a</sup> **Isaiah 9:6-7a**

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup> Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish...". KJV

### <sup>b</sup> **Isa. 49:6a**

Indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the pre-served ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles. NKJV

### <sup>c</sup> **Psalm 2:8**

Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Thine inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Thy possession. NASB

## Matthew

**4:18 And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.**

**4:19 And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.**

**4:20 And they straightway left *their* nets, and followed him.**

**4:21 And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James *the son of* Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.**

**4:22 And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.**

Peter and Andrew were already disciples of the Lord before this call by the Sea of Galilee to follow Him. They were His disciples right after our Lord's baptism in the Jordan, when still in Judea, before He returned to Galilee.<sup>d</sup> As for John and James, we are not told, but we do know that they were partners of Peter and Andrew as fisherman, and we also know that before this occurrence the Lord had already been preaching and performing miracles in their midst, even within Peter's own home (See Luke 4:31-41). Therefore, more than likely, John and James were also disciples of the Lord at this time.

This is significant because it shows us that discipleship does not begin when one is able to forsake all and follow Jesus. Discipleship begins when one first **believes** in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter and Andrew were disciples before they were ever asked to forsake all and follow Him. They were already known as disciples of our Lord because they were ones who had already believed in Him. We know this because the first sign our Lord did was in Cana of Galilee, yet by the time of this calling, this calling by the Sea of Galilee, many signs and miracles had already occurred (cf. Luke 4:42-41).

In Cana, they were already known as disciples, long before they were ever asked to forsake all and follow Him in this fishing village of Capernaum (cf.

<sup>d</sup> **John 1:40-43**

One of the two who heard John speak and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.<sup>41</sup>

He found first his own brother Simon and said to him, We have found the Messiah (which translated means Christ).<sup>42</sup>

He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).<sup>43</sup>

**The next day He purposed to go into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow Me."**

NASB

## Matthew

John 2:1-2, 11-12).

John 2:1-2, 11-12 And the third day there was a **marriage in Cana of Galilee**; and the mother of Jesus was there: <sup>2</sup> And both Jesus was called, **and his disciples**, to the marriage. <sup>11</sup> This **beginning of miracles** did Jesus in **Cana of Galilee**, and manifested forth his glory; **and his disciples believed on him.** <sup>e 12</sup> After this he went **down to Capernaum**, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and **his disciples**: and they continued there not many days. KJV

How precious is this truth; our Lord, as our tender Rabbi and sole Disciple, knows how to prepare our hearts for service and ministry, and He also knows the proper time to ask us for that service and ministry. He knows the proper time to ask for more from us. Jesus did not demand that Peter and Andrew forsake all and follow Him when they first believed. They first trusted in Jesus as their Messiah when still in Judea, but after that time, they were still conducting their business as fishermen in Galilee.

Should we not follow His example and be careful not to demand more from our brethren before their hearts are prepared by the Lord. The Lord loves a cheerful giver. Brethren should never be guilted into service; rather, they should be encouraged to do what they can do according to the free will of their heart. If not, the former can lead to harsh legalism, while the latter will always lead to grace and truth. The former can lead to an eventual burn out; the latter will lead to life and peace. This is why the Lord forbade His disciples to “disciple” others. He is our only Disciple. We are called to “make disciples” to the Lord who will then be the one to disciple them. We are forbidden to do it ourselves. We have only one Rabbi, only one Disciple, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. He knows how to properly disciple us, simply because He knows all things; we do not. †

The Lord discipled each according to the particular state of their heart. He may ask one thing of one person that He does not ask of another. For example, the rich young ruler was asked to sell all he had (Lu. 18:22), whereas, Zacchaeus’ giving of half

<sup>e</sup> The Greek word believed ἐπίστευσαν in verse 11 is in the aorist tense bespeaking the fact of their belief, and not necessarily the time of their belief. If that is what was being communicated, he could have used a perfect, imperfect or present tense. Thus, within the context, I believe the fact of their belief is being emphasized, not the time of their belief, at least in this verse. At any rate, this shows they believed and were already called disciples in Cana before their call by the Sea of Galilee. In fact, even before this time in Cana, while they were still in Judea, they had already believed in Jesus as their Messiah—see John 1:41-51.)

† If one would like to further pursue this thought, please see *What is Biblical Discipleship?* by the same author.

## Matthew

of his possessions was sufficient for the Lord (Lu. 19:8). Sometimes the Lord asks one to forsake all and to follow Him in itinerant travel (today we might call such a one an “itinerant evangelist,” or “foreign missionary) whereas with others He might ask them to serve Him in one place. (The twelve were asked in Scripture to go into all the world, whereas, James, the brother of our Lord, apparently was only asked to stay in Jerusalem). Some might be asked to “live of the gospel,” while others might be asked to work with their own hands in a business (cf. I Cor. 9:1-18; Acts 18:2-3; 20:35). Some might be asked of the Lord, to remain single, while others might be asked to serve Him in marriage. The Lord knows what to demand of us and what not to demand of us; it is wrong of us to usurp His role of Rabbi and begin making demands of others, according to our own understanding, or our own standard of righteousness and/or our own spirituality. It is best to leave discipling to our Lord for He alone knows all things and only He knows the thoughts and intents of our hearts. Instead, let us “bear one another’s burdens” as He commanded us (Gal. 6:2); let us exhort each other “to love and good works” (Heb. 10:24); let us encourage each other to love the Lord our God with all our soul, with all our heart and with all our might, knowing that we have one Rabbi who disciples us, and remembering that we are all brethren, being forbidden by Him to set ourselves up as Rabbis ourselves (Matt. 23:6-8).<sup>f</sup>

And so, what we see in these verses is Peter, Andrew, John, and James’ call to ministry, their call to fuller “ministry,” not their call to “discipleship.”

**4:23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.**

**4:24 And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which**

<sup>f</sup> **Matthew 23:6-8**

And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, 7 And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. 8 **But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.** KJV

## Matthew

**were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.**

**4:25 And there followed him great multitudes of people *from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan.***

And so our Lord's public ministry begins in earnest. He manifests both grace and truth. He shows forth His grace by His healing of sickness and His casting out of demons; and He shows forth His truth, by the proclamation of His Person, and the continuing proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom—a message of salvation and a message of the true nature of righteousness, as we will now see in the next section.

# Matthew

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Roberts; James Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I* (T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1867) Pg. 446

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Roberts; James Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. V* (T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1868) Pg. 258-59

<sup>3</sup> The Greek word Βαβυλών is often used of the area of Babylon and not just the city proper. During the middle part of the first century, the city proper was, more than likely, uninhabited. As such, this word might be better translated as “Babylonia.” A large Jewish population, upwards to one million by some accounts, lived in the area at this time. In Acts 2:9 the Jews from this area are referred to as “the dwellers of Mesopotamia.” There was constant contact and social intercourse between the Jews living in Babylonia and those in Israel. Therefore, since Peter was an apostle to the circumcision, it would make perfect sense that he traveled to this area to announce the good news of Jesus Christ.

<sup>4</sup> We do have the Shem-Tov Gospel of Matthew in Hebrew and some other medieval Hebrew manuscripts of the Gospel; however, most consider these as translations, and not copies of a Hebrew original. It should also be mentioned that the Shem-Tov Gospel of Matthew contains many variations and alterations vis-à-vis the Greek Gospel of Matthew. These variations and alterations water down, and in some cases contradict the truth of Scripture, which, in turn, indicates that it was an interpolation of Matthew’s Greek Gospel. A primary indication that it was a translation of the Greek Gospel, and not a copy of an original Hebrew autograph, is the inclusion of the explanatory phrase, “which being interpreted is, God with us,” found in Matt. 1:23. Such an explanatory phrase would be completely unnecessary in a Hebrew original.

<sup>5</sup> Origen; William A. Curtis, tr., Nottingham, J. Theodore, Intro, *Sacred Invocation: Origen On Prayer* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014) Pg. 128

<sup>6</sup> W. E. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Fleming H. Revell Company, Old Tappan, NJ, 1981), pg. 42 (vol. 1)

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 281 (vol. 1)

<sup>8</sup> Alexander Roberts; James Donaldson, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. III* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI 1985), pg. 538

<sup>9</sup> Isidore Singer, Ed., *The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History, Religion, Literature, and Customs of the Jewish People from the Earliest Times to the Present Day, Volume 7* (Funk and Wagnalls, New York 1912) pg. 87-88

<sup>10</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset; David Brown, *Jamieson, Fausset & Brown’s Commentary on the Whole Bible Vol. 1* (S. S. Scranton and Company, New York, 1875) pg. 539

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 692

<sup>12</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Vol. 1* (E. R. Herrick & Company, New York, c.1897) Pg. 175

<sup>13</sup> Austin P. Flannery, ed., *Documents of Vatican II*, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, 1984), pg. 421-22

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<sup>14</sup> Philip Schaff; Henry Wace, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vo. XIV, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI 1991). Pg. 550

<sup>15</sup> G. Frederick Wright, Ed., Dallas Theological Seminary, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Volume 73 (Charles Higham & Son, London, 1916), Pg. 124

<sup>16</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset; David Brown, *Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary on the Whole Bible Vol. II* (S. S. Scranton and Company, New York, 1875) pg. 9

<sup>17</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, (Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2004), pg. 121-123

<sup>18</sup> Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven, Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism*, (E.J. Brill, Leiden, Netherlands, 1977), pg 164

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 183-84

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 180

<sup>21</sup> John Gill, *AN EXPOSITION OF THE OLD and NEW TESTAMENT; in which THE SENSE OF THE SACRED TEXT IS GIVEN; Doctrinal and practical truths are set forth in plain and easy light; DIFFICULT PASSAGES EXPLAINED; SEEMING CONTRADICTIONS RECONCILED; and whatever is material in the various Readings and several Oriental Versions is observed. THE WHOLE ILLUSTRATED WITH NOTES, TAKEN FROM THE MOST ANCIENT JEWISH WRITINGS. IN NINE VOLUMES*, Edited and revised and updated by Larry Pierce, 1994-1995. Assisted by Tom Cox, Earnie Stefanik, Paul Houghton, and Peter Robinson, and Jay Sklar, and Damaris Martin, Kerri Playford and Lori Hoffman, and others., (Printed for Mathews and Leigh, 18 Strand, by W, Clowes, Northumberland-Court, London, 1809), Digital copy sourced from: Online Bible Edition, Version 2.00.04 June 21, 2006 Copyright © 1992-2006 Importantia!

<sup>22</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Vol. 1, 8<sup>th</sup> edition (Longmans, Green, and Company, New York 1898) pg. 266-267

<sup>23</sup> John Lightfoot, *The Whole Works of the Rev. John Lightfoot: Master of Catharine Hall, Cambridge, Volume 5*, John Rogers Pitman Ed. (J.F. Dove, London, 1822) pg. 27-28

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Edersheim, *op. cit.*, pg 267

<sup>26</sup> Edersheim, *op. cit.*, pg 271

<sup>27</sup> Gill, *op. cit.*

<sup>28</sup> Edersheim, *op. cit.*, pg. 78-79

<sup>29</sup> J. N. Darby, *Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Miscellaneous 2*, On the Epistle to the Romans 5, sourced 9/4/14, from: bibletruthpublishers.com/on-the-epistle-to-the-romans-5/john-nelson-darby-jnd/collected-writings-of-j-n-darby-miscellaneous-2/1a63183/

<sup>30</sup> Edward Robinson, *A Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Longman, Brown, Green and Longman's, London 1850) pg. 688

<sup>31</sup> George Muller, *A Narrative of some of the Lord's Dealings with George Muller*, (J. Nisbet & Co., London, 1869) pg. 455-56



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<sup>32</sup> John Gill, AN EXPOSITION OF THE OLD and NEW TESTAMENT; in which THE SENSE OF THE SACRED TEXT IS GIVEN; Doctrinal and practical truths are set forth in plain and easy light; DIFFICULT PASSAGES EXPLAINED; SEEMING CONTRADICTIONS RECONCILED; and whatever is material in the various Readings and several Oriental Versions is observed. THE WHOLE ILLUSTRATED WITH NOTES, TAKEN FROM THE MOST ANCIENT JEWISH WRITINGS. IN NINE VOLUMES, Edited and revised and updated by Larry Pierce, 1994-1995. Assisted by Tom Cox, Earnie Stefanik, Paul Houghton, and Peter Robinson, and Jay Sklar, and Damaris Martin, Kerri Playford and Lori Hoffman, and others., (Printed for Mathews and Leigh, 18 Strand, by W, Clowes, Northumberland-Court, London, 1809), Digital copy sourced from: Online Bible Edition, Version 2.00.04 June 21, 2006 Copyright © 1992-2006 Importantia!

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### **About the author:**

B. P. Harris is an elder in the Church that meets in The Bible Chapel in Sacramento, CA. He was saved at a young age in 1959 at Church of the Open Door in Los Angeles, CA, but now resides in Northern California where he has been happily married for over 37 years.