



The Scribe-- Searching for Jesus Christ

In the Old Testament

If you lived when Jesus was on earth, would you have become his disciple? What about after his death and resurrection? A story from the Gospel of St. Luke helps us to understand why some people became disciples, and it has to do with the Old Testament.

After Jesus died, and rose, he appeared to two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus. He asked why they were sad, and they told him, whom they thought was a stranger, all about Jesus and the tragic death which he had suffered.

He did not seem puzzled. "Don't you see," he said, "that the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus shows that he truly was the Messiah?" He then spoke of Moses and the prophets, and all the passages that referred to the Messiah, and connected them to Jesus. Like putting on glasses, the disciples finally saw clearly that Jesus was the One who would be the savior of Israel. The story of Jesus does not truly begin with the New Testament, but rather, in the pages of the Old Testament.

"The Scribe--Searching for Jesus Christ in the Old Testament," connects the **people** and **events** and **beliefs** of the Old Testament to the New Testament. The Scribe, who works for the "Biblical Times" of Jerusalem, takes us on the search. He brings to light what was foretold--that which Jesus probably shared with the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

Subj: Jesus, again
Date: 28 A.D.
From: Malachi@BTimes
To: Jonah@Solomon's Portico

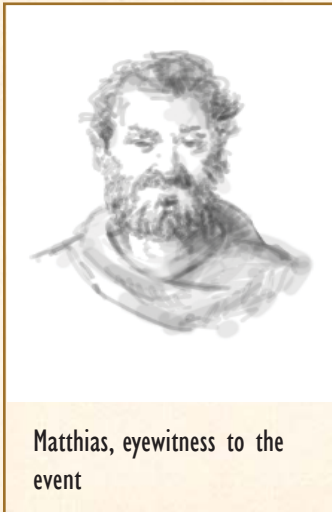
Issue 5

Jonah,

This fellow's getting bolder every day.

Jesus' Outlandish Claim

All over the country, people are talking about Jesus of Nazareth and debating about whether he is a great prophet or a dangerous troublemaker. But in one town of Israel, opinion seems to be pretty much unanimously against him—Jesus' own hometown, Nazareth.



Jesus was in Nazareth recently and attended synagogue there on the Sabbath. He read a passage from Isaiah that clearly refers to the Messiah:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has appointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

Then he told the people, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." In other words, he was claiming to be the Messiah!

Anywhere else in Israel, he probably would have found some to support his claim. But in Nazareth, they remember him growing up and learning carpentry from his father Joseph. They were convinced he was blaspheming. The men of Nazareth surrounded Jesus and forced him out of town, to the edge of a cliff. An eyewitness we spoke with said they meant to throw him over.

But then an amazing thing happened. "One minute he was on the edge of the cliff, surrounded by an angry mob," says our informant, "and the next minute he was on the other side of the crowd, calmly walking away to safety. Nobody knows how he got there. But I for one am glad he got away. Even if he is from Nazareth, he's no ordinary man. I wouldn't want to have his blood on my hands." Neither would we.



From the desk of The Scribe

"History in Service of Wisdom"

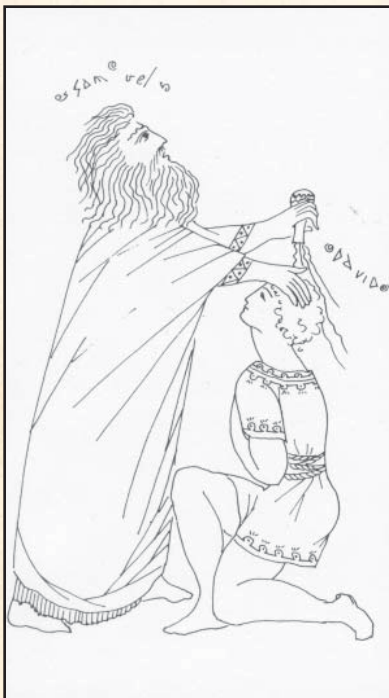
Let us consider what we know of the Messiah...

In his recent teaching in the synagogue, Jesus said he was the one, the Messiah, that the prophet Isaiah spoke of. Can this be true? Let us recall what we know about the Messiah.

Our ancestors lived through bad times: wars, slavery, invasions. During these times they asked God for a savior--someone to deliver them from their distress. Sometimes God, himself, helped from heaven. Other times he sent help through people he chose.

Prophets received word from God to anoint special men with oil, as a sign that God had chosen them. The word 'messiah' simply means 'anointed one,' and many such as Saul, Elisha, Aaron, and even Cyrus of Persia were the messiahs of old. But the greatest anointed one in the history of our people was King David.

Anointed by Samuel, David united all Israel and led us to victory over our enemies. From humble beginnings as a shepherd God made him the great shepherd of Israel, saying: "I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be ruler over my people Israel." David's descendants ruled over Judah for hundreds of years--some good, some bad.



Yet they knew another Son of David would come. He would be good, and strong. He would gather all the Israelites into his kingdom. He would be a good shepherd, one who would care for the people and teach them the ways of the Lord. They only saw this Coming One dimly, or in brief glimpses, but they spoke of him in times of deep distress. The hope arose that this One, like David, would return glory and greatness to Israel. There is more to write on this than space allows.

Subj: The Kingdom according to Jesus
Date: 28 A.D.
From: Malachi@BTimes
To: Jonah@Solomon's Portico

Issue 6

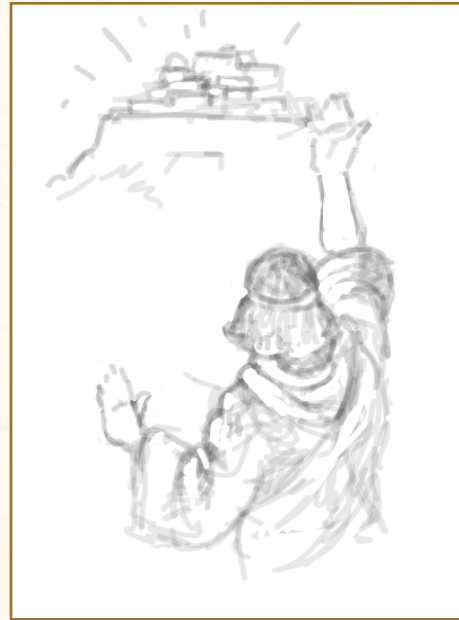
Jesus teaches on "Kingdom of God"

Timothy of Caesarea is waiting for the Kingdom of God. He explains, "Ever since the prophets spoke of it long ago, our people have known that God is going to return to us. He will restore the Kingdom." It seems that Timothy is not alone in this hope, as interest in ancient prophecies and dissatisfaction with Rome both continue to grow throughout the region.

Another reason for growing interest in a coming Kingdom has been the teaching of Jesus, the popular preacher from Nazareth. He has referred to the Kingdom often. He has instructed his followers to pray that the Kingdom would come and to seek for it earnestly.

Some religious leaders who have been critical of Jesus have also taken note of his Kingdom teaching. "The rabbi from Nazareth has only outrageous things to say," said one scholar. "He has even said that when the Kingdom is restored, many Jews will be left outside in darkness, while Gentiles enter in. This Jesus sounds like a Gentile-lover, not a leader of the Chosen People of God!"

Another ground for calling Jesus a Gentile-lover is his teaching that we should love our enemies. Another difficult and confusing teaching of Jesus is that the Kingdom should be the most important thing in a person's life. In fact, he advised followers to "seek first the Kingdom of God," without being concerned about such mundane trifles as food and clothing. Whatever else we may say of Jesus' ideas about the Kingdom of God, it seems clear that this Kingdom is not easy to attain.





From the desk of The Scribe
"History in Service of Wisdom"

Let us consider what we know of the Messiah's Kingdom . . .

In my last column I recalled for us that the Messiah will be a kingly figure, a son of David--a royal shepherd to unite Israel and rule justly. The Messiah will also be a teacher to explain His will and to show Israel how to live in His presence. He will show us the meaning of the Scriptures and how everything must come to pass.

The Messiah will also restore true worship. No longer will there be corrupt high priests or Temple officials who care more about pleasing worldly rulers than about worshipping the Ruler of All. Israel will be united in worship of the true God.

God will destroy His enemies and there will be peace--the lion will lay down with the lamb. He will restore Israel to her rightful place--leading the world in procession to the kingdom on the mountain of God, Zion.



There God and His Messiah will preside over an enormous victory banquet. In the words of the prophet Isaiah, "On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine . . . And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever.

Subj: The recent storm
Date: 28 A.D.
From: Malachi@BTimes
To: Jonah@Solomon's Portico

Issue 7

Jonah,

You don't have to worry about job security thanks to Jesus of Nazareth.

Boat Trip Nearly A Disaster

An ordinary boat trip involving Jesus of Nazareth nearly ended in disaster. The renowned teacher was attempting to cross the sea with some of his disciples when a sudden storm overtook the boat. One of the disciples who was there, Andrew, described events.

"Everything was clear when we pushed off, and we expected smooth sailing. Then this storm kicked up out of nowhere, furious. The waves were crashing in on us, and the boat was taking water. We weren't able to keep control.

"The weird thing was, the Master slept through all this. Don't ask me how. We had to wake him to tell him what was happening. Then things got pretty strange. He asks odd questions sometimes, but we couldn't believe it when he asked why we were afraid. Then he stood and spoke to the storm, telling it to be quiet. And the really incredible thing is, the storm stopped dead at just that moment. Like it was obeying him. We knew Jesus was something special, but that really blew us away."





From the desk of The Scribe

"History in Service of Wisdom"

Let us consider the signs . . .

We again are commenting on an episode involving Jesus of Nazareth. In today's column, it is his strange power over the sea that has caused many to wonder, "Could Jesus be the Messiah?" For the faithful, there is only one way to know for sure: consult the Holy Scriptures. They tell us many things about our salvation and the signs that will accompany the Messiah.

The Psalms, in particular, describe the power of God who is our salvation. In Psalm 65, the psalmist addresses God this way: "O God of our salvation . . . You who still the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the peoples."

In Psalm 89, the psalmist says to God: "You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them."

And in Psalm 107, there is an extensive description of God's control of the sea: "For He commands and raises the stormy wind, which lifts up the waves of the sea. They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths; their soul melts because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. Then they cry out to the LORD in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses. He calms the storm, so that its waves are still. Then they are glad because they are quiet; so He guides them to their desired haven."

These passages all describe God's authority over the raging seas. The seas are mighty and sometimes chaotic, but God's power over the sea is a sign of His strength and His salvation. Perhaps no sign so far is as great as that which he performed from the deck of a storm-tossed boat in the middle of the Galilean sea. He subdued the storm with only a word. He brought his disciples safely to the other side.



Subj: Jesus provides food
Date: 29 A.D.
From: Malachi@BTimes
To: Jonah@Solomon's Portico

Issue 8

Your last column had me wondering about the Nazarene. I bet you're going to write about the manna when our ancestors were in the desert. Interesting parallel.

Jesus Provides Bread for Thousands

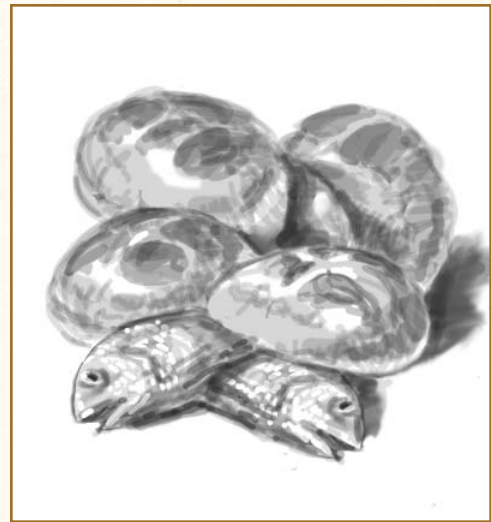
BETHSAIDA— As twilight fell on the Galilean countryside, thousands of hungry people found themselves in a deserted place without provisions. By nightfall, however, they were no longer hungry, fed as they were by one equally without provisions: Jesus of Nazareth.

The crowd had followed Jesus, who was traveling by boat on the Sea of Galilee, to a lonely spot on the shore. By the time he and his disciples disembarked, thousands were already waiting. What followed was a scene familiar to most Galileans. Jesus, surrounded by eager throngs, ministered to the sick and spoke to the crowds. But then the unexpected happened. According to one Galilean mother, "Before we knew it, it was beginning to get dark. My children were hungry, and no one in our family (including me!) had brought any bread. We were about to set off for the nearest village when we heard Jesus telling everyone to sit down."

The crowds, finding places on the grass, did sit. After speaking briefly with his disciples, Jesus stepped forward, lifted up a few loaves of bread and a couple of dried fish, and said a short prayer. Then he began handing out bread to his disciples. The disciples, like servants at a banquet, bustled through the crowd, handing out bread and fish.

According to one disciple, Philip, "Those people were hungry and none too patient. The food went fast. I don't know where it was coming from, but Jesus always had more for me when I came back to him to fill my basket." Philip continued, "Just when we finished handing out all the food, the Master sent us back out to gather all the leftovers. It's a good thing we did, because there were baskets full to spare."

This raises the question: Where did Jesus, who scarcely travels with enough provisions for his own band of disciples, let alone a huge crowd, get food for so many? No one in the crowd seemed to know for sure, but none who were familiar with Jesus seemed too surprised. As one man put it, "The Teacher loves us, and love sometimes has strange ways."





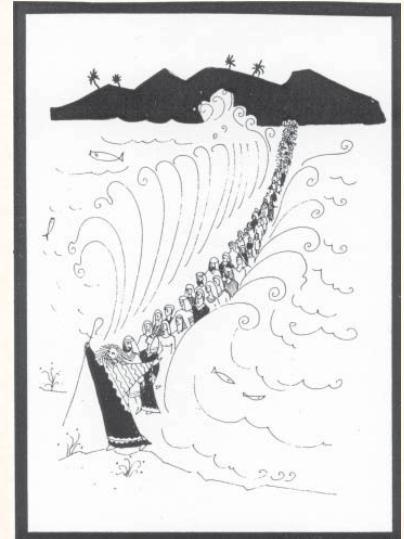
From the desk of The Scribe

"History in Service of Wisdom"

Let us recall the heavenly manna . . .

Jesus has done something extraordinary, but is it a sign? If so, a sign of what?

The Holy Scriptures tell us that God is able to feed His people, to prepare a table in the wilderness. Recall the event we know as the "exodus." Moses acted as God's voice and demanded that the Pharaoh in Egypt release the Israelites. When the Pharaoh refused, plagues were sent—10 in all—to the Egyptians. When the Pharaoh finally released God's people, God parted the Red Sea so Moses could lead them to safety. Our ancestors then began their wandering through the Red Sea, for forty years, until they arrived at the promised land.



Not long after Moses led them through the Red Sea, the Israelites began to complain. Our ancestors asked whether God had saved them from Pharaoh in Egypt only to kill them with hunger in the desert. They had left their homes with much excitement in the middle of the night, only to find themselves in the wilderness. They needed to be fed. God, in His mercy, provided manna for the ex-slaves He had brought out of Egypt—in a place where no ordinary food could be found. In so doing, He not only provided for their immediate physical need, but demonstrated His faithfulness.

I see a similarity between what Jesus did, and what God did for our ancestors. In both cases, the crowds left their homes and found themselves in a deserted place. Jesus looked out on the leaderless multitudes that had followed him, and had compassion on them—he refused to send them away empty. In like manner, Moses prayed to God to help a hungry multitude.

Now Jesus blessed and broke the few loaves of bread, and the fish, and satisfied the hunger of thousands. The Holy Scriptures show us that with God there are feasts in the desert, abundant food in places of want, and times of refreshing when our need is great. In feeding the crowds who followed him, Jesus showed himself to have power and compassion far beyond ordinary men. Perhaps the mysterious meal of Jesus by the Sea of Galilee is a sign that the God who did not forsake our hungry ancestors will not leave us hungry, ever again.

Subj: Follow-up on last story
Date: 29 A.D.
From: Malachi@BTimes
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Issue 9

Jonah,

I am back to where I started after reading this report--he seems some kind of odd ball now.

Jesus Makes an Odd Path to Gennesaret

GENNESARET— Those familiar with Jesus have to come to expect healings and exorcisms, but no one was prepared to guess Jesus' most recent mode of travel. Just hours after hosting a feast for thousands, Jesus and his disciples arrived by boat at Gennesaret. Yet it was no ordinary voyage.

The night before, Jesus had instructed the disciples to begin sailing without him, telling them that he would meet them later. The crew of disciples set out and soon encountered stiff winds and troubled seas. "We were straining at the oars—even Judas was helping—but we couldn't make any progress," reported one of Jesus' disciples. "We were tired, and some of us were getting worried when we spotted the Master walking calmly through the storm. He got in the boat with us and everything grew quiet." Another disciple added, "The strange thing was that the Master did not seem to be looking for us. He was about to walk right by us when Peter called to him. He asked if he could come to the Master. He was told that he could, and did begin to, before he fell. Jesus grabbed him." The disciples were terrified by the experience and took some time to recover.



When they arrived in Gennesaret, Jesus was met by a crowd who had followed him, looking for more miracles. Knowing that the people were hoping for another free meal, Jesus exhorted them instead to look for the bread of heaven—which he said was he himself.

In a speech that caused great distress to his disciples, and added to his opponents' arguments, Jesus claimed to have come down from heaven. "This is the bread which came down from heaven--not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever." He claimed that he has the power to raise up to heaven all those who would believe in him. He spoke of giving his life for the world. He outraged his listeners by suggesting that they should actually eat his flesh and drink his blood—presumably, after his death. He claimed that this cannibalistic feast would guarantee eternal life to those who partook of it. Jesus has certainly given his followers a mouthful to swallow this time, and many of his followers could not stomach it. They left him in droves.



From the desk of The Scribe

"History in Service of Wisdom"

Jesus: Bread of Heaven?

As I read the news of Jesus' walking on water, I thought, "Well, that just further adds to the question of who, but God, has power over nature? I was ready to find him and speak with him, myself, at that point. Then I read the rest of the story . . . What can we possibly make of this man, Jesus, who, on the one hand seems to be God's "chosen one," since he heals the sick, casts out demons and feeds the crowds with nothing, and on the other hand, leads us into a wall by stating that we can get to heaven by eating his flesh and drinking his blood?"

I am speechless, for once. I have searched tirelessly through the scriptures to find a clue from our past that can give us wisdom in regard to Jesus' recent speech. None, there are no clues. The only thing I can say is, the Messiah will usher in an everlasting kingdom--he will not die.

The debate outside my door has been loud these days. Yes, I did lean towards believing that Jesus was the Messiah previously, despite the clamor from the other scribes who disagree with me. Now, it seems to me that we must proceed cautiously with our hope that he is the Messiah.

Subj: Jesus, again
Date: 28 A.D.
From: Malachi@BTimes
To: Jonah@Solomon's Portico

Issue 10

Jonah,

This fellow's getting bolder every day.

Jesus Debates Religious Leaders

GALILEE— They came all the way from Jerusalem to see him. A group of scribes and Pharisees from the capital met with Jesus here in Galilee, as one official put it, "in order to see the young rabbi firsthand." One member of the delegation, a scholar from Jerusalem named Elishama, called the meeting "a serious disappointment." Upon meeting Jesus, he continued, "we noticed immediately that he and his disciples have no regard for the traditions of our forefathers." Evidently, Jesus failed to correct his disciples when, at the start of a meal, they "dug right in without washing hands, utensils, or anything else!" "We asked Jesus politely to explain this," Elishama continued, "but he began hurling insults at us. We do not deserve such treatment!"

An onlooker, Abiezer of Capernaum, offered a different account. "These Pharisees strolled in with their flowing robes and proud looks. They tried to belittle Jesus' disciples and Jesus stood up to them by telling them the truth. Many of us recalled how the prophets were not afraid to speak against the authorities." In the discussion that followed, Jesus criticized the Pharisees for clinging to human legal traditions while neglecting God's commandments. The example that Jesus gave concerned the honoring of parents. Abiezer described the debate: "I have always wondered about the 'Corban' law. The Pharisees say that, instead of using our money to support our aging parents, we should use our money to make offerings to God. But Jesus set them straight. He told them that it was God who commanded us to honor our parents in the first place. How could God then be pleased with an offering that is made possible by disobedience?"



As the discussion between Jesus and the Pharisees intensified, Jesus stood and called to people in the street. He gathered a large crowd around himself, glanced over at the tight group of Pharisees, and spoke loudly, "There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man." Jesus and his disciples then left the scene.



From the desk of The Scribe

"History in Service of Wisdom"

Let us consider Jesus as a prophet . . .

While many consider Jesus a teacher, I would like you to consider him as a prophet. Let me explain the similarities.

Jesus has used the words of the prophet, Isaiah, "These people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me." to speak of the Pharisees. I am sorry to say, especially since I am well acquainted with many Pharisees, that he speaks the truth. Like the leaders of old, today's Pharisees are experts in religious matters and are quite strict. And like our ancestors, they often overlook that which is most important, love and mercy. Instead, they use the Law to make themselves look better than others. I do not say this of all Pharisees, but the point needed to be made.



Another prophet of old, Micah, also told the "experts," that their worship was empty. He helped people understand what God wanted more than anything. Micah explained that God demands that his people "do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God." With this brief description of our duty to God, Micah showed the strength and simplicity of true worship.

Similarly, there is something strong and simple about the teaching of Jesus. He reminds me of Micah in that way. Recently, I understand, Jesus acknowledged that there are only two great commandments. These are, "You shall love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength," and, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself." May we live these, and walk humbly with our God.