



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: A Close Call for Jesus
Date: 29 A.D.
From: Malachi@BTimes
To: Jonah@Solomon's Portico

Issue 11

Jonah,

I knew the Nazarene was headed for trouble when he criticized the Pharisees.

Jesus Escapes Stoning



JERUSALEM--A riot broke out on the Temple grounds yesterday when religious leaders clashed with Jesus in Solomon's Portico, amidst the crowd who had come to celebrate the Feast of Dedication. According to eyewitnesses, Jesus was walking alone when a group surrounded him and began to question him aggressively, demanding that he tell them whether he was the Messiah.

Jesus responded that he had already told them, but that they did not believe. He then referred to a previous occasion when he had described himself as "the good shepherd who gives his life for the sheep." He continued, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

While the crowd were debating among themselves what this meant and who the sheep were supposed to be, Jesus went on to say that his father had given the sheep to him and that no one could take them away from him. Then he made the extraordinary claim that he would give his sheep eternal life. A whisper of "Blasphemy!" began to spread through the crowd. But when Jesus ended his speech by saying, "I and my Father are one," the whisper became a shout. People began picking up stones to stone Jesus, in accordance with the penalty prescribed by the Law for blasphemy.

Jesus asked the angry crowd why they wanted to stone him, and urged them to believe that he is one with God, because of the "works" that he has done. This response only angered his opponents more, and Jesus was forced to flee the scene.

It was not the first time that Jesus, who enjoys great popularity in Galilee, has encountered strife and controversy in Jerusalem. For here in the holy city, leaders, Temple officials, and scholars have expressed great concern over Jesus and have challenged him on numerous occasions.

After yesterday's confrontation, Jesus and his followers left the city and moved across the Jordan River, where the followers of his cousin, John the Baptizer, apparently granted him safe haven. Reports have been received that many of John's followers are now transferring their loyalty to Jesus.



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

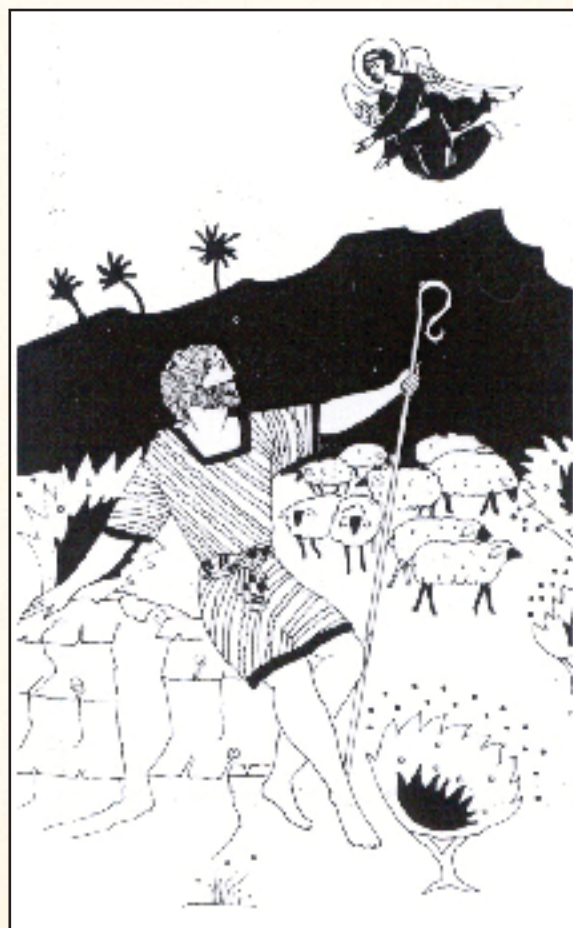
Let us recall what the Holy Scriptures teach us about the Shepherd and the end of time . . .

As I read the news, I was quick to recall that in the end days God himself will come to search, as a shepherd, for the lost sheep.

There was a time when our ancestors were ruled by King David, himself a shepherd, and the model for the messiah to come--close to God, a righteous man. After he died, the people were still living in peace and prosperity; however, they strayed from the covenant when they no longer took care of the weak and poor in their midst. Because of this, the prophets declared that God would punish his people, and bring their kingdom to its knees. But He would not abandon His people; He would set up a new and lasting Kingdom.

God Himself would come to set up the everlasting kingdom. He would, according to Jeremiah and Ezekiel, "search for His sheep and seek them out as shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep." He would restore a son of David to the throne: "They shall serve the Lord their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them." His people, now united and faithful to Him, would lead the whole world in worship of the true God:

Such was and is the hope of Israel. In the recent episode at the Temple, Jesus spoke of himself as the Shepherd, come to gather the sheep. The officials were correct to call this blasphemy.



Subj: New topic this time--forgiveness

Issue 12

Date: 29 A.D.

From: Malachi@BTimes

To: Jonah@Solomon's Portico

He seems to like stories.

Jesus Offers New Ideas on Forgiveness

The rabbis have always said that three is enough. If someone sins against you, they say, you owe it to them to forgive up to three times. One of Jesus' disciples, Peter, recently asked Jesus about the matter, suggesting that we might need to forgive as many as seven times. To Peter's surprise, Jesus told him that he was required to forgive his brother "seventy times seven times"—which is essentially to say, "Don't keep account."

Jesus went on to tell the story of a servant who owed the king an impossibly large amount of money that he could never repay. When he pleaded for more time, the king had mercy on him and forgave him his entire debt. But the forgiven servant then went out and found a fellow servant, who owed him only a small amount, and demanded payment. This man also begged for more time, but instead of showing the same mercy that had been shown to him, the first servant had the second one thrown into prison. The king became furious when he learned of it, and sent the first servant to be tortured until he repaid every cent of the original debt. In this way, Jesus concluded, will God deal with those who do not forgive.





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

Let us recall that we are to be merciful . . .

In the news today is the of a servant who had been forgiven, but who, in turn, does not forgive. He is punished for his lack of mercy.

Our scriptures speak of God's mercy as often as they speak of his judgment. Allow me to offer several instances. In the book of Psalms we have the verses:

"O Israel, hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy and with Him is abundant redemption."

David writes, knowing his sin, "I have trusted in your mercy."

In the writings of the prophets, words of warning are almost always followed by words of comfort.

"I desire mercy and not sacrifice, knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."

"To Thee, O Lord belong mercy and forgiveness."

Our God is a God of mercy. We, his people, are to likewise be merciful, and to forgive those who have offended us.

Let us recall again the words of Micah, God requires of us that we "do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God."

The implication of Jesus' story is that each of us has offended God far more than our brother can ever offend us—and that He is ready to forgive us. All we have to do is be forgiving in our turn. Forgiving more than three times--rather, forgiving always.

Subj: More on forgiveness
Date: 29 A.D.
From: Malachi@BTimes
To: Jonah@Solomon's Portico

Issue 13

Another spin on the forgiveness teaching.

Jesus' Story of the Merciful Father and the Prodigal Son

Today Jesus was heard preaching by way of a story once again. In the story, the father of two sons divides his property. The older son stays to work the land, but the younger asks for his share of possessions, and immediately heads off to a foreign country. There he squanders his inheritance on wild living. After he runs out of money and returns to his senses, he decides to go back to his father, beg for his mercy, and ask to become one of his servants. When the son returns, the father runs to meet him and immediately accepts him back as a son. He orders his servants to kill the fatted calf and throw a huge party in honor of the younger son's return.

The story ends with a dialogue between the father and the older son, who has faithfully remained by his father's side all those years. He thinks the father is being unfair since he had not yet received a feast. The father bids his older son to rejoice that his brother has returned.

The crowd seemed uneasy with the ending of the story and many were heard defending the older son's cause. Jesus did not stay to receive questions.



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

Let us recall how the Lord was merciful to King David .

..

In the news today we have another story to ponder from Jesus of Nazareth.

The father loved both of his sons, yet the ways that he treated them can hardly be called equal or fair. What could Jesus possibly mean by telling such a story? Why does he often speak of forgiveness, even so far as blaspheming when he forgives the sin of a person who has come for a healing. These questions I cannot answer. However, I feel that there is something profound in the story I just quoted. The situation is so simple--we cannot help wishing for justice: for the father to turn the younger son away and celebrate the wisdom of the older son. Yet Jesus shows us another ending: the joy of finding one who was lost, and is now found. While we wish for justice, our hearts rejoice in the mercy of the father toward the younger son.

In our scriptures we often read of the Lord's mercy. Perhaps the greatest instance is that of King David after his most grievous sin. King David took Bathsheba, the wife of another man, after sending the man to his death at the front line of a battle. The prophet Nathan spoke God's words of condemnation to David, who then repented. In his words found in the psalms we read:

"For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight--that you may be found just when you speak, and blameless when You judge."

"You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart--these, O God, You will not despise."

David trusted in God's mercy, and it was given. Oh that God be merciful to us all.

Subj: Jesus' Friend Lazarus
Date: 30 A.D.
From: Malachi@BTimes
To: Jonah@Solomon's Portico

Issue 14

I would not believe this except for all the people who were eyewitnesses.

Lazarus Called Out of the Tomb

BETHANY— Lazarus of Bethany, who died several days ago, shuffled to the entrance of his own tomb yesterday and stood while others, stunned, slowly unwrapped his grave clothes.

Dozens of witnesses looked on as Jesus, long-time friend of Lazarus and his family, came to the tomb entrance and called his friend forth. Lazarus' return from death took place in the middle of the traditional seven-day mourning period, during which numerous friends and relatives were gathered at Lazarus' home to offer condolences and pay respects.

"We all saw it," one eyewitness explained. "Mary (Lazarus' sister) got up all of a sudden and ran out of the house. We followed and saw Mary and Jesus weeping, and then we walked behind them as they headed to the tomb."

Jesus ordered bystanders to roll the stone away. They obeyed, despite cries of protest from the crowd and from Lazarus' sister Martha. "I simply told the Master that there would be an awful stench," Martha said, "but that was before I knew what he was going to do."

According to witnesses, Jesus uttered a short prayer and then shouted Lazarus' name into the darkness of the tomb. "Jesus' voice went right through me. Never in my life have I heard a voice like that," commented one observer. It was then that Lazarus emerged.

Prior to Lazarus' death, rumors had circulated that Jesus, who had healed so many, might come to the aid of his close friend. Many religious leaders from nearby Jerusalem were thus watching the situation closely. When Lazarus died and several days passed, speculation about a miraculous healing by Jesus died down and the leaders returned to Jerusalem. The Pharisees, though, did not expect Jesus to march into Bethany after they had left and raise his friend from the dead in front of a large crowd of mourners. Many of the mourners stayed on to join a feast for the returned Lazarus, while some left for Jerusalem to notify authorities of the day's events.





From the desk of The Scribe

"History in Service of Wisdom"

Let us consider belief in the resurrection . . .

Well, it has finally come to this--Jesus raising a man from the dead. This is not easily explained, so I won't try. I can, however, explain our belief in the resurrection.

When our ancestors walked the earth, they knew, as we do, that death is certain. Beyond death, they believed, was a dark and shadowy place called Sheol where the dead continued in a lesser state of existence. There they were but "shades" or shadows of their former selves, and were thus unable to praise God as the living do.

But even from the beginning, God showed His power over death. Through prophets like Elisha, God revived several dead people. And through the prophets, God began to unveil the future of Israel. He taught more clearly about His own defeat of death.

According to the Prophet Ezekiel, the people of Israel, destroyed by warfare, would be as dead as dry bones, but God in His mercy would knit the bones together, cover them with flesh, and breathe life into them again. According to Hosea, after two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live before Him."

An important prophecy comes from Isaiah who foretold the coming of a Suffering Servant who would be crushed to death but then return to "see light" and make many holy.

Then God informed Daniel that at the end of time the dead shall awake, "some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

So it was that our ancestors began to understand that God, the Author of Life, would not allow death, our enemy, to have the victory in the end. These days, there are those among us who doubt the resurrection. But Jesus has affirmed its reality, first in words and now most powerfully in his deed of raising a man from the dead.

The words of Jesus, the signs, his actions, all lead me to consider a future I did not think I would see.



Subj: Jesus is in Jerusalem!
Date: 30 A.D.
From: Malachi@BTimes
To: Jonah@Solomon's Portico

Issue 15

Jerusalem Crowds Hail Jesus

JERUSALEM— Passover pilgrims from all over crowded the streets and city gates in order to greet Jesus as he entered the city yesterday. They waved palm branches and spread cloaks on the ground, gestures usually reserved for royalty. Yet Jesus rode into the city on a donkey's colt and not, as kings do, on a horse or in a chariot. Some hailed him as "the King of Israel," while others sang Passover hymns such as "Hosanna!" and "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"



The large crowd, clearly supportive of Jesus, received him eagerly. Observers noted, though, that the entrance marked the first time that Jesus entered Jerusalem publicly. The significance of the public entrance did not escape the notice of Temple authorities and religious leaders. As one Pharisee put it, "We have known all along that Jesus aims to translate his popularity into power. Now Jesus' purposes have become quite clear. Neither Rome nor the Sanhedrin will look favorably on this disgraceful demonstration."



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

Let us consider Jesus and David . . .



Having no sooner finished my last commentary, I was handed another news story for a later edition of the Biblical Times. I did not need to read it, however, for I was there. When so many hailed him as the king of the Jews, my mind was already racing to recall what the scriptures said about David, our second king, and the one who has given us our example for the Messiah.

God, who promised to raise up a leader "after His own heart," chose David to be king over Israel. David proved himself by stepping forward to fight the Philistine champion, the giant Goliath. He defeated the Philistines and many other rival nations.

He was close to God. So much of his life, prayers, and experience of God are found in the psalms. God honored David, courageous and faithful, when he promised through later prophets that the Messiah would be one of David's descendants.

And now we have one who is being hailed as king of the Jews. It appears that we are growing ever closer to the eternal kingdom, promised to David 1000 years ago. Jesus, a shepherd. David, a shep-

herd. Both close to God; humble men destined for greatness. It is even rumored that Jesus was born in Bethlehem of the house of David. Hosanna!

With Jesus moving into Jerusalem, harness the wagons, for the Romans will soon be moving out!

Subj: Jesus at the Temple

Issue 16

Date: 30 A.D.

From: Malachi@BTimes

To: Jonah@Solomon's Portico

This Jesus is headed for ruin. By the way, Shadrach is having a clearance sale on lamps--the stock left over after this Jesus fellow knocked over his display.

Jesus Rages at Temple Merchants

JERUSALEM— Overturned tables and fallen booths littered the ground. Bullocks, goats, and sheep ran free in the Temple courts. Merchants scrambled to gather up scattered money and merchandise. And in the center of the tumult stood Jesus of Nazareth, scourge of rope in hand and anger in his voice. "He called us thieves and robbers," one merchant said, "and he started driving the animals away and upsetting our tables."

Jesus' actions quickly produced chaos and confusion. Stunned worshippers looked on as Jesus stormed from table to table rebuking the merchants, freeing animals, and flinging trays of money around. No one dared to oppose Jesus while he worked—whether from shock, fear, or both is unclear.

Jesus' own followers were equally surprised by the outburst. "None of us expected this," one of Jesus' disciples explained. "When we arrived at the Temple court, his expression changed. He shouted, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' and then he set to work. No debate, no discussion, no dialogue."

Jesus' actions came just moments after he was greeted by admiring crowds on his way into the city. He had traveled from the city gates straight up to the Temple, as Passover pilgrims traditionally do. Unlike most pilgrims, though, Jesus began, as one pilgrim from Caesarea put it, to "cleanse the Temple." The pilgrim commented further, "I was glad to see the place shaken up. It feels like a market here, and a crooked one at that. These moneychangers and animal-sellers charge tourists' prices, if you know what I mean. Many of us just can't afford to come."

Temple officials, however, criticized Jesus. One Levite asked, "Who does this Jesus think he is? He has no authority in the Temple and no right to do the things he is doing." After the merchants and moneychangers left, crowds gathered in the Temple courts to hear Jesus and bring their sick to him. The chief priests, who could not be reached for comment, reportedly met behind closed doors to discuss the situation.





From the desk of The Scribe

"History in Service of Wisdom"

Let us recall the holiness of the Temple . . .

So, people are surprised and shocked by the actions of Jesus at the Temple. I am not. I say this knowing that my editor may not print any more of my commentaries. We should have driven out the merchants and money changers long ago. The temple should be an area set apart--holy--a place where we come to meet God, without the noise of the merchants.

Jesus' actions reminded me of the occupation of the Syrian forces two centuries ago. The Syrian king Antiochus IV conquered Jerusalem and drove out faithful priests, set up an altar to Zeus in the holy Temple, and even ordered that pigs be sacrificed there to the gods of the Greeks. With the Temple thus desecrated, proper worship was impossible and the Temple fell into disrepair. Plants grew wild in its courts, and the old priests' chambers lay in ruins.

After the Syrian king was driven from the land by Judas Maccabees and his brothers, they inspected the ruined Temple. One described the sanctuary as "desolate," "profane," and filled with "putrid carcasses and idols." Priests, knowledgeable in the Law of God, began the purification process. We recall this event during eight days of celebration--Hannukah.

God's temple is meant for worship. Jesus has done what is right. Instead of the Temple officials asking, "Who does this Jesus think he is?" Let them turn the question on themselves, and all who read this as well, "Who do YOU think this Jesus is?" May he advance fearlessly, steadily and surely as he brings the kingdom God has promised.

