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Monday, November 30, 2015

LESSON NOTES (EXPLORE THE BIBLE)

MATTHEW — THE ENEMY FINDS THE LORD GOD IN CHRIST

All the Lord's Days, December, January, February
Teaching and Study Preparation

OVERVIEW

Preparation for Sessions "1-13" Matthew

Romans 13 is an irritating chapter in Scripture. It is there we learn that paying taxes is more than pragmatics. Paying taxes is part of our duty as believers in Jesus the Christ; He made it quite clear we are give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. Paul added to the conversation in Romans by declaring, "For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing..." (Romans 13:6). Yep, we pay our taxes not because of IRS codes, but because we answer to a higher power.

In the days of Matthew, however, the Roman equivalent of the IRS was even more ominous. Tax collection was done by agents, almost always indigenous individuals; i.e., people who knew where the money was. Rather than pay these collectors a "salary," they were paid by a commission of sorts where they could charge whatever the market bore. When this system was implemented among the Maccabee-impassioned citizens of Judah, all hell broke loose. It was neither politically correct to be a tax collector nor a Jew. To be both? Well, that was Matthew.

When Matthew was given the opportunity to serve the Lord God Jehovah, he became the worst disciple—no teacher or prophet of any standing would permit a *tax collector, a whore of Rome* to be a student. Yet, Jesus the Christ showed that anyone could be a follower, if he follows the One. And so we have this rather poignant description, by none other than Matthew himself...

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"

On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' [He is quoting Hosea 6:6] For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." —Matthew 9:9-13



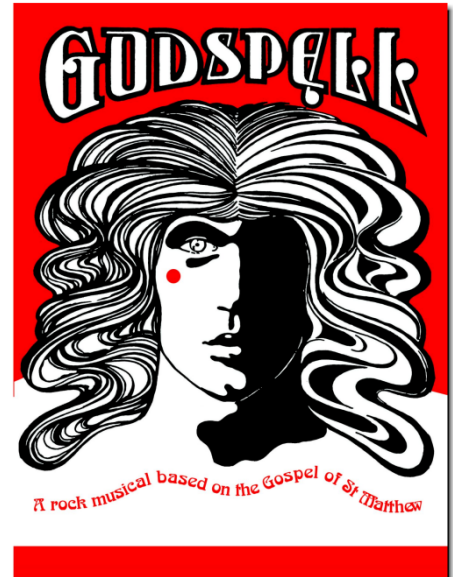
Note the irony—Jesus’ reputation was on the line. Jesus was consorting with a whore of Rome. Matthew’s reputation was on the line as well. Matthew was consorting with a revolutionary, a man who would soon prove Himself to be Deity, Rome’s most serious adversary, ever. How do we know they were “consorting?” Nothing sealed the bargain of friendship more publicly than eating dinner together, not at the local Village Inn, but in one’s home. Jesus was indeed consorting with sinners.

CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT

Matthew was not written in a vacuum. Lots of pressures, cultural anomalies and Holy Spirit Himself are reflected in his record of the Christ. For Matthew, Jesus the Christ was indeed Jesus Christ Superstar. To know Him through Matthew was indeed a Godspell. Here’s what you need to know...

OVERVIEW OF CONTEXTS—HISTORY, CULTURE, POLITICS

The Scriptures we call the “New Testament” are best understood, not starting with the book of Matthew, but with the context of New Testament history, context, culture, time, economy, and especially the immediately preceding history. We call this period the “Inter-Testament” time, or the “Quiet” time, or “The Gap.”

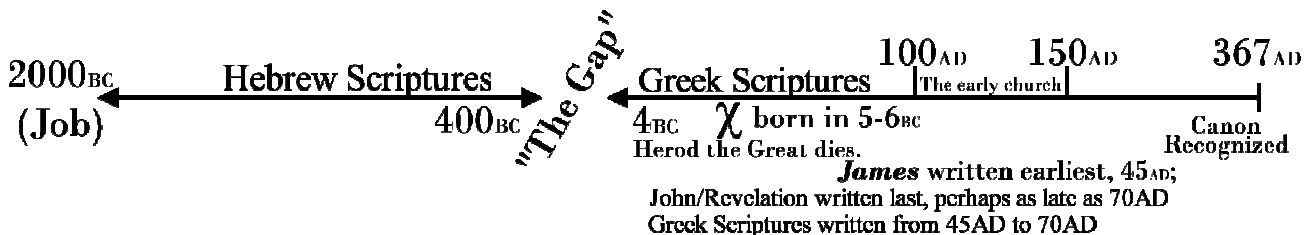


For believers who trust the Scriptures as the being the actual word of the Lord God Jehovah, understanding these contexts of history, culture, politics and

economics is absolutely critical. It would be similar to reading the US Constitution, e.g., the 14th and 15th amendments, without knowing what happened in 1861-1865. And, what happened prior to 1789 in North America and elsewhere? Could we really understand “We the people...” in the Constitution without know that context?



A TIMELINE ...



WHY THESE CONTEXTS ARE CRITICAL

Historicity distinguishes Christianity—it is a historical event. While the Hebrew Scriptures were created over a relatively long period of time (1500 years+), the Christian Scriptures were written over a period of 50 years, most of which was written within a historical context [the *Apocalypse* being a possible exception].

Note Galatians 4:4 where Paul denotes that Christ’s coming to earth was providentially fortuitous.

“But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.”

To understand the New Testament, one must understand the “gap” between the Hebrew Scriptures and Greek Scriptures, the “New Testament;” i.e., the 400 year period of revelatory silence. In terms of political history, our religion, and literature, however, this gap was quite loud. Only the canon was quiet.

A SHORT COURSE IN INTER-TESTAMENTAL HISTORY: POLITICS, RELIGION, LITERATURE



1. Changes in Politics



Overview: Babylonians were conquered by Persia who was conquered by Greece (Alexander) whose conquests facilitate *koine* Greek, not only simplified Greek, but also the *lingua franca* of the middle east and beyond. While many in Palestine knew Aramaic and Hebrew, all knew *koine* Greek.

- ✓ Of the several versions of Greek (classical, aka *attic*, or iconic) they were stabilized by their simplification into *koine* Greek. When Alexander dies in 330BC—*koine* becomes common for everyone—most people were bi- if not tri-lingual. *Koine* is the *lingua franca* until the latter part of the 1st century AD; note again how Galatians 4:4, “in the fullness of time,” comes to bear.
- ✓ Ptolemy – Egypt LXX – Septuagint¹ (the *koine* Greek Hebrew Scriptures) was made circa 250BC.²

Nota Bene: the LXX is sometimes a loose paraphrase rather than a translation; e.g., Jeremiah is much shorter in LXX vs. the Hebrew text.

¹ Matthew used the LXX regarding the description of Mary as a virgin (parthenos παρθενοϋς) which is clearly “virgin,” whereas the Hebrew “alma” can indeed mean “young girl.”

² Jewish legend says that 72 scholars, under the sponsorship of Ptolemy Philadelphus (c. 250 B.C.), were brought together on the island of Pharos, near Alexandria, where they produced a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures in 72 days. From this tradition the Latin word for 70, “Septuagint,” became the name attached to the translation. The Roman numeral for 70, LXX, is used as an abbreviation for it.

Behind the legend lies the probability that at least the five books of Moses (the Torah) were translated into Greek c. 250 B.C. for the use of the Greek-speaking Jews of Alexandria. The rest of the Hebrew Scriptures and some noncanonical books were also included in the LXX before the dawning of the Christian era, though it is difficult to be certain when. See next page...

- ✓ Seleucids 300-140BC successor to Alexander the Great's control of Palestine
- ✓ Antiochus IV (*aka* Epiphanes³) 174-164BC was the most important of the Seleucids

1. Profaned the temple with a statue of himself **and** sacrificed a pig; clearly an abomination, resulting in a deserted and defiled temple.
2. This profanity served to fire the Maccabean revolt of 167BC; Jews won their independence for 70+ years.
3. But, the temple was still desecrated and
4. And, there was no prophet!



THEN CAME THE ROMANS

- ✓ Romans ruled from 63BC; conquered by General Pompey
- ✓ Julius Caesar is emperor — *pax romana* served to create a stable civil environment; Julius reigned until March of 44BC
- ✓ Augustus* (*aka* Octavius) until 14AD
- ✓ Tiberius* until 37AD (emperor during Christ's crucifixion)
- ✓ Caligula until 41AD
- ✓ Claudius* until 54AD
- ✓ Nero until 68AD
- ✓ Galba
- ✓ Otho
- ✓ Domitian (circa 95)
- ✓ 1st century begins



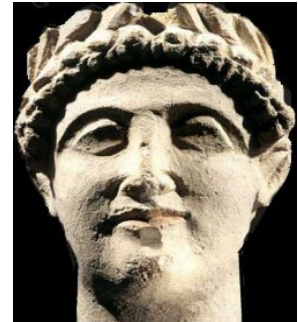
* Mentioned in Scripture

The Septuagint quickly became the Bible of the Jews outside Palestine who, like the Alexandrians, no longer spoke Hebrew. It would be difficult to overestimate its influence. It made the Scriptures available both to the Jews who no longer spoke their ancestral language and to the entire Greek-speaking world. It later became the Bible of the early church. Also, its widespread popularity and use contributed to the retention of the Apocrypha by most branches of Christendom, including Protestants until the dawn of the 20th century. Excerpted from Compton's Interactive Bible NIV © 1996 as edited and revised by D. Thomas Porter.

³“god in the flesh”

Herod the Great until 4BC

- ✓ Appointed “king,” actually a functional governor.
- ✓ Worst ruler over Palestine: corrupt, created dissension, “Herodian” party; family filled with incest.
- ✓ When the magi arrived, seeking the “King of the Jews,” Herod the Great was concerned for that was his title.
- ✓ Started an impressive building program—including the temple which takes the place of the temple profaned by Antiochus IV (Epiphanes). Took 46 years to build; started in 18BC. Also an amphitheatre in Caesarea, aqueduct from Galilee to Caesarea.



Herod the Great and His Grandsons			
Decreed all his sons be killed at his death; υς (pig) vs. υιος (son)			
“Better to be Herod’s pig than his son.”			
Phillip ^A	Phillip ^B	Herod Archaleus	Herod Antipas
Married to Herodias & divorces to marry the wife of the other Phillip ^B — John the Baptist objected.	Luke 3:1 Iturea and Traconitis	Judea Matthew 2:22	Luke 3:1 Galilee and Perea The “Fox”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Herod the Great’s grandson, Agrippa I (“Herod”) is mentioned in Acts 12:1 ✓ Another grandson, Agrippa II is the ruler mentioned in Acts 25:13 (Paul’s trial) 			

⁴ See also Appendix A: BACKGROUND ON THE HEROD’S OF THE NEW TESTAMENT PERIOD IN PALESTINE.

2. Changes in Judaism

- ⌘ Malachi—post-exilic prophet/writings
- ⌘ No temple—synagogue is developed during the captivity and for continues throughout the 400 year “gap.” It took 10 adult males to start/to be present to create a synagogue.
- ⌘ In the synagogue the Law is read, the Psalms are chanted. A yad is used to point to the Scripture—it’s never touched.
- ⌘ One of the 7 elders reads 1/7 of their assignment; *then* they go to the prophets.
- ⌘ During the life of Christ, He is following the tradition of Judaism—He goes to the synagogue in Capernaum, and to the temple in Jerusalem.



Diaspora

- ⌘ The “scattered seeds” of Jews throughout the Middle East, Asia Minor, and Europe/Egypt. Some stay in Babylon after Nehemiah’s return. Alexandria (Egypt) also became a major hub of “the dispersed” (remember Jeremiah’s destination).
- ⌘ The Babylonian Talmud came from these diasporadic Jews.
- ⌘ The “Book” became the measure of legitimacy, so much that biblio-idolatry was manifested.

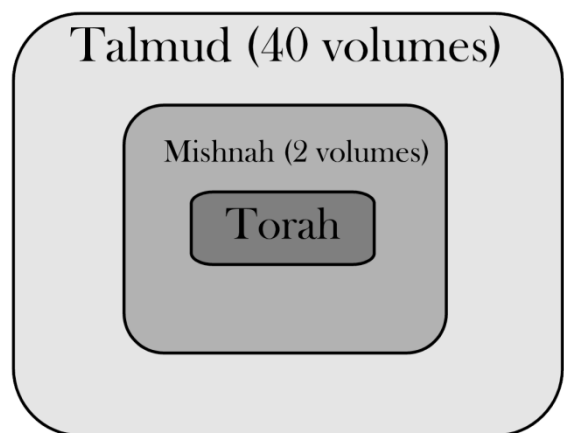
Mishnah

- ⌘ Jewish debate during the inter-testament period ... Hermeneutics start with which is “Scripture from Jehovah...”
- ⌘ Torah (Pentateuch, which only the Sadducees accepted) or
- ⌘ Torah and the Prophets (recognized by the Pharisees)

Hermeneutical Goal: Create a hedge around the Torah—to protect it and those who wish to follow it. For example, *what constitutes a burden on the Sabbath?*

Examples of Issues and Questions Asked/Covered by the Mishnah ...

- a) Is a certificate of divorce valid after death?
- b) Bills of divorce may not be written with non-permanent ink, but the media (even a cow horn) on which the certificate is written must be delivered/given to the recipient.
- c) Women can write a divorce bill, but is valid only if signed/received by the husband.
- d) Trials—in capital cases wrong witnesses are “let his blood be on us and our children;” thus construct of imputation is illustrated—save one, save all; guilt for one is guilt for all.



- e) Trials—two witnesses. If both agree, okay. If one disagrees, both are ruled invalid. If one does not know, evidence is invalid. If both don't know, then evidence is valid.
- f) Trials—people can not be executed on the same day they have been condemned.
- g) Trials—a unanimous vote is not necessary for execution, a simple majority suffices. Jesus was convicted because of a majority presence in the Sanhedrin.
- h) Stoning—before execution, one should be allowed to confess (to share in the world to come; Pharisees only).
- i) Stoning—afterwards: the corpse must be hanged for public education. But you are not to leave a hanging body on a tree overnight—only for blasphemers and idolators.
- j) You must wait a year before putting the bones of a corpse into an ossuary.

Shammai – strict school of interpretation.

Hillel – loose school of interpretation.

LITERATURE OF THE INTER-TESTAMENT PERIOD

The Apocrypha

- ✓ No prophet until John the Baptist.
- ✓ *The Apocrypha* (means “hidden away”) was accepted by the Roman Catholic, and Greek Orthodox churches. Accepted by Protestants until early 20th century.
 - ⌘ Very popular because no recognized prophet during this period; attracted crowds then, and now.
 - ⌘ They were looking for Messiah and eschatologically so. Overall...
 - Doctrine: e.g., belief in praying to the saints comes from II Macabees (pagans praying for the dead) whereas, I Macabees is excellent history.
 - 15 books in the apocrypha—authorship is almost always unknown.
 - Jews hid them away (not part of the Jewish canon). Thus, they were “deuter-on-canonical”—never received by Jews as inspired.

Exemplars include:

- *Additions to the Book of Esther*—puts theology explicitly into text, adds 6 chapters—interspersed in RC; this version is used as Esther canonical.

Nota Bene on Canonicity:

Vincent of Levens c 400 proposed this “rule of faith” (*regula fidei*). “That which always everywhere and by all is received.” *Quod semper ubique ab omnibus receptum est.*

[How and that Holy Spirit guided this process is essentially a matter of reasoned faith.]

- **Daniel & Bel & Susanna & Dragon**—RC, GO Bibles both have 14 chapters, not “separate” book. Mss are never in Aramaic or Hebrew, Greek only. By the way, the LXX **does** include the apocrypha.

“Susanna” 64 added verses to Daniel as an extra chapter; great detective story (And the type of tree you saw Susanna being raped under?)

“Bel and the Dragon” another detective story; two idols Bel, becomes chapter 14 of Daniel. Cyrus is mentioned as king; footprints of flour prove Bel priests cheated.

“The Dragon” represents some sort of living dragon/serpent or the idol of same, “It’s not a god ... I can slay this living dragon without a sword.” –Daniel Also, Habakkuk was taken by God from Judea to Babylon and back to Judea.

- **Book of Judith** great artists of the renaissance used Judith as inspiration for scenes; Judith cuts off head of Assyrian general; deliberately fictional, or poor history. But, there are historical problems: 1st sentence reads, “Nebuchadnezzar, ruler of Assyria from Nineveh ...”
- **Book of Tobit** features a dog as a pet, unusual for the middle east; main story – woman gets married seven times and each is killed by a demon, solve the problem by driving the demon away – fishy ashes will drive him away according to the angel “Uriel.”
- **Psalm 151** – ascribed to David, after fighting Goliath (only in Greek, “I removed his head ...”)
- **Letter from/of Baruch** (Jeremiah’s secretary) features complaints about idolatry; RC keeps it as a separate (LXX, however, integrates it with Jeremiah). “A false idol is like a scarecrow in a cucumber patch.”
- **I Esdras** considers the issue of whether wine, king, or women is the strongest force – speeches are given by three of Zerubbabel’s guards; concludes that “Truth is the strongest of all.”
- **II Esdras** sounds authentic at first, but there is no evidence of Hebrew language; never received by the Jews as authentic “Behold the signs ... Babylon shall be seen desolate, sun shines at night, stones talk, stars fall, dead sea will cast up fish.” Dividing time or new age (some of the Revelation echoes these phrases). Last judgment Messiah shall be revealed 400 year reign Messiah shall die 7 days (years) and earth reverts to primeval state – then the resurrection occurs. “Only the splendor of the glory of the most high shall shine.” Contains a parable of the sower (similar to the parable of the soils by Jesus).

Lots of language/expression similarities – not content except in rare instances. Jesus used the traditional expressions of the time and literature to communicate [just as we might use “what goes around comes around” not supporting “karma,” but sharing the idea that sin has consequences.]

Nota Bene:

The apocrypha were **not** read in the synagogue, but “prophecy” was nonetheless popular/hot then, just as now.

- *Wisdom of Solomon* claims to be written by someone calling himself Solomon; written in Hebrew style, although in Greek. Probably a devotional book, doctrinally innocuous; e.g., “Perverse thoughts separate men from God.” Sometimes almost prophetic: “Let us lie in wait for the righteous man, accuses us for sins against our training, the very sight of him is a burden to us.”
- *Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach (Greek) or Ecclesiasticus (Latin)* is not heretical in content, generally apropos, good devotional, genre of wisdom literature. Author is open as to who he is; Hebrew origins; fragments found on Qumran scrolls. *Prologue* tells the background including it not being “canonical” (scripture). Goal: progress toward living toward the Law. c 180BC Similar to Proverbs—biggest in the apocrypha. Example passages include:

“Wisdom (σοφία sophia) was created before all things. The Lord created *her*.”

“The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord.”

“Do not set your heart on your wealth.”

“Do not worry about who will have power over you.”

“Be so not confident of the atonement that you sin.”

“A man’s tongue is his downfall.”

“Blessed is the man who does not blunder with his lips.”

“Never repeat a conversation and you will lose nothing.”

“Let us now praise famous men.” Parallel to Hebrews 11; yet focused on Phineas, Joshua, Caleb, Samuel, David, Solomon, Reaboam, Judges, Nathan, Elijah, Hezekiah, Josiah, Jeremiah, Zurrubabel, Enoch (back to), Joseph, Shem, Seth, then Simon, son of Ananias (unknown). Ends with a psalm—“in His time God will reward you.”

- I Macabees is history written by the victors (not the Selucids, of course).
- II-IV Macabees becomes more philosophical and propangandish; religio-philosophical speculation.
- I Macabees and II Macabees are deutero-canonical; whereas, III & IV Macabees are considered pseudepigrapha. Pure philosophy: e.g., “The temperate mind controls the emotions.” Typically stoic.

- **Jubilees** 50 year cycles, fictionalized. Account of Noah and flood details were dramatic and numbered. Some strange stuff—Abraham’s criticism of his father’s idol worship—his father says keep quiet or they will kill you (i.e., be quiet about disclosing the non-deity of the idols.)
- **Life of Adam and Eve** starts with departure from Eden. Attempts to clarify attempts at redemption once they left Eden; second temptation, characterized as Adam’s fault. Angel’s food was in paradise; considers the nature of penitence. Continues the story of Cain and Abel, how Seth was educated. Sun darkened for 7 days (years?) with Adam’s death [end of the dinosaurs?].
- **Apocryphose of Elijah** Why pile sin upon sin—“Listen wise men of the earth” [Queen lyric?]; parallels to Revelation “He will command nothing to happen for 6 months.” Or, “When Messiah comes, the sign of the cross will precede him,” interpolated by Christian translators. Some passages reflect the desolation/desecration of the Temple.

Written during the Macabean revolt of 165BC, “succor blood and become the salvation of the people.” Origen refers to the **Apocryphose of Elijah**.

- **Assumption of Moses** Jude 9 refers to the Assumption of Moses⁵ Interesting because there are no discernible traces of Christian influence. Latin translation from Greek with apparent Semetic original text source. Messanic kingdom will destroy Satanic influence. God will exalt you to the stars with God himself. Perhaps the inspiration for the Mormon doctrine “What God once was, we are, and what God is, we can be?”⁶



- **I & II Enoch** Jude 14-15 refers to the prophecies of Enoch⁷ from **Enoch** 1:9. Longest of the pseudepigrapha (108 chapters); extremely popular 400BC-100AD. **I Enoch** 6 refers to the Genesis 6 passages about the “sons of God” (as do 2 Peter and Jude 6). See also I Peter 3:19ff “preaching to spirits in prison.” Speaks of 12 gates in heaven similar to Revelation’s 12 gates of the new Jerusalem. In Revelation 5:6, parallel to the idea of the lamb as a victorious military leader seems to come from the apocalyptic tradition (1 Enoch 90:9; Testament of Joseph 19:8). I Enoch was written 163-63BC.

II Enoch has a different author, written 1-50AD. Two men appeared to me—arms like golden wings. Angels guard paradise [from?]...lots of parallels to language in the NT.

⁵But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!”

⁶After you become a good Mormon, you have the potential of becoming a god, (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pages 345-347, 354); God resides near a star called Kolob, *Pearl of Great Price*, pages 34-35; *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 428.)

⁷Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: “See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”

- *Apocalypse of Abraham* 10 plagues, except 10th = quakes
- *Testament of Abraham* last judgment, between 2 gates sat a wondrous person, lay a book 10 cubits (15ft) thick with angels holding pen & ink, and scales.

- Pseudepigrapha – no one thinks they are canonical, pages and pages, approximately 200 books. Often attributed to “known” authors: e.g., Ezekiel or Abraham or Peter.
- Yet, Jesus and the apostles **do** allude/quote the apocrypha. (see page 731 of Carson & Moo) For example ...

✓ Jude 6, 9	✓ Acts 17:28 <u>Cleanthes</u>
✓ Peter in both epistles	✓ I Cor 15:33 <u>Meanider</u>
✓ John in the Revelation	✓ Titus 1:12 <u>Epimendes</u>
✓ Jesus’ parable of the sower/soils	✓ Jude 14-15 <u>I Enoch 1:9</u>

AND JUST WHAT IS THE “CANON?”⁸

1. **Recognized as “scripture;”** i.e., the textual body conforms to the “rule of faith.” In other words, the text in question was recognized as normative, consistent with orthodox thought and belief.
2. **Accepted as “divine revelation;”** i.e., accepted by the early church as such; contact with apostles was presumed. For example, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, even though a popular text, was rejected from the canon because it failed to have an apostolic connection and was not written in the 1st century. And, “wherever the Fathers suspect pseudonymity, they reject the work.”⁹
3. **Written during the 1st century**—the presumption is that the text, if incorrect, would be more easily identified as such because some of the eye witnesses would still be living.

The NT canon was indeed written in the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4); e.g., the verb in 1 Corinthians 15:8 expresses Paul’s use of *ektroma* (εκτρομα)—i.e., *ripped from the womb of Judaism*.

Seven books, however, were disputed in the canon discovery process:

1. 2nd John
2. 3rd John
3. Philemon (too personal?)
4. 2nd Peter
(very different from 1st Peter)
5. Revelation
(only 300 ancient manuscripts)

Nota Bene:
Clement as early as 95
quoted 1 Corinthians **and**
Hebrews as authoritative.

⁸See also pages 736-737 of Carson & Moo.

⁹Ibid, page 736.

6. Hebrews (who wrote it?)
7. Jude (quotes pseudepigrapha)

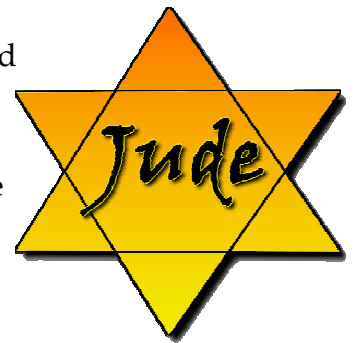
WHAT ABOUT THE “DEAD SEA SCROLLS?”

Sixty eight years ago, a shepherd came upon some sealed jars within a cave on the west side of the Dead Sea. Fragments of included passages and books from Jesus’ Scriptures, some of the Apocrypha, apocalyptic works, false books, and quite a few books written by the sect which produced them. About one-third are Biblical—Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and Psalms are quoted the most often in the Greek Scriptures. Included was a complete scroll of Isaiah. This meant that we finally had texts of Scriptures that were 1,000 years closer. Until, 1947, in other words, the texts for the Greek Scriptures were more numerous and older than the Hebrew Scriptures! Their discovery has also improved our understanding of Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic.

BELIEVERS CONTINUED TO BE AFFECTED BY SOCIETY

To understand believers in the days of Jesus, one must understand the influence of the inter-testamental period. For example...

1. *Diaspora*. The dispersal of believers throughout the world increased the influence of the Lord God. Believers were first called “Jews” because only the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Levi were “re-tained” in the area called “Judea.” Cut off from the temple and the sacred land of Abraham, believers focused on a study of the Torah and synagogue life. When believers in Messiah worked to bring to the whole world, the diaspora were a valuable asset.
2. *Synagogue*. Cut off from the temple, surrounded by non-believers, and with no nation to call our own, we created the “synagogue.” We concentrated on learning and obeying God’s law instead of nationhood; we focused upon personal piety instead of sacramental rituals (e.g., no sacrifices). Wherever we could carry God’s word, the Torah, we could bring our faith to synagogues, establishing them wherever resources allowed. The synagogue was the model for the Christian church; for example, James speaks of who we unjustly favor or discriminate against as the συναγωγὴν (synagogen; James 2:2; as does the writer of Hebrews in 10:25).
3. *Sadducees*. They were the cool believers. Known as aristocratic, they adopted much of the secular culture. Small but politically powerful, controlling the high priesthood. They only believed the Torah was inspired and correspondingly rejected the notion of a resurrection because nothing in Moses (The Law, aka Torah) supports such an idea.



4. *Essenes*. A small sect of believers who found their roots in the Maccabean revolt and high times. They were strict, yet considered the priesthood corrupt, thus rejecting rituals and the sacrificial system of the temple. Most scholars think the Dead Sea scrolls were produced by an Essene group. Convinced of their validity—that is they thought they were the only, true remnant—they tended to be apocalyptic in focus, separatist in practice, and looking forward to two messiahs, one political and one spiritual. The destruction of the temple in 70AD destroyed their apocalyptic prospects.
5. *Pharisees*. Known as hedge builders, the Pharisees sought to honor the Lord God by strict obedience to the Law. Also few in number, they were nonetheless popular among believers as they were the protectors and developers of the synagogue—an island of God in a sea of paganism. They were the only sect to survive the onslaught of 70AD. They became the historical foundation of believers who have yet to accept Jesus of Nazareth as either Messiah or Deity.¹⁰

MATTHEW'S AGENDA

It may seem odd to talk about an “agenda” for Matthew, but his record of the Christ while on earth was devoted to his brotherhood of fellow Jews. Clarifying and evincing Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah (“the anointed one”) for whom all believers were looking—that was his editing agenda. For example, consider his genealogy. Unlike Luke’s which begins with Adam, his begins with Abraham. Being “Hebrew” was an inherent attribute of the Messiah. If Jesus of Nazareth were not a descendant of Abraham, and David of course, then He was not Messiah.

Intriguingly, however, he makes a clear point of providing anomalous elements within his genealogy—women are listed (e.g., Bathsheba), gentile pagans (e.g., Rahab and Ruth), as well as some men with questionable credentials (e.g., Manasseh and Amon).

He was sensitive to orthodox believers who considered using the actual name of God disrespectful, if not blasphemous. For example, consider his language usage—“kingdom of heaven”

¹⁰Christians typically assume modern Judaism parallels the belief structures when Jesus the Messiah was on earth. **Modern Judaism**, however, *rejects the notion* that Mashiach (Messiah) is divine. To wit:

“The notion of an innocent, divine or semi-divine being who will sacrifice himself to save us from the consequences of our own sins is a purely Christian concept that has no basis in Jewish thought. Unfortunately, this Christian concept has become so deeply ingrained in the English word ‘messiah’ that this English word can no longer be used to refer to the Jewish concept. The word ‘mashiach’ will be used throughout ...”

Furthermore...

“The mashiach will be a great political leader descended from King David (Jeremiah 23:5). The mashiach is often referred to as “mashiach ben David” (mashiach, son of David). He will be well-versed in Jewish law, and observant of its commandments (Isaiah 11:2-5). He will be a charismatic leader, inspiring others to follow his example. He will be a great military leader, who will win battles for Israel. He will be a great judge, who makes righteous decisions (Jeremiah 33:15). *But above all, he will be a human being, not a god, demi-god or other supernatural being.*” From <http://www.jewfaq.org/mashiach.htm> as referenced 11/10/2015.

rather than “kingdom of God.” Matthew 4:17 reads, “From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”

Furthermore, his writing, geared to orthodox believers, is problematic for the uninitiated—he does not explain religious practices. His intended audience would have been bored with an explanation of Passover, even with its tremendous prophetic significance for the Christ and His observance of Passover, Hanukah, Pentecost, etc.

Most intriguingly, however, is Matthew’s profession before meeting Jesus the Christ. Tax collectors were the whores of Rome—they worked against their own people to increase the coffers of the oppressor, Rome. Since they were paid on a commission, tax collectors were not known for mercy, but for greed and corruption. Matthew’s record of his meeting Jesus provides a moving testimonial of the power of the Christ...

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and `sinners'?"

On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ [He is quoting Hosea 6:6] For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” –Matthew 9:9-13

Matthew gave up a lucrative government job, knowing full well he would be always be known as one of “them.” Even his master continued to use his status as an example of corruption—“ If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the *tax collectors* doing that?” –Matthew 5:46

THE LAW

Matthew departed from some believers’ conception of “The Law.” Often limited then to the Torah (especially by Sadducean believers), Matthew clearly includes the Prophets and the Writings (e.g., the Psalms; he quotes Psalm 78:2 noting this is “what was spoken through the prophet,” (Matthew 13:35).

The Law for Matthew was an overriding theme in his record. Understanding the “fulfillment of the Law” (5:17) by Jesus the Christ was a pivot point in an understanding that this Jesus of Nazareth was indeed Messiah. Understanding just what Jesus meant by fulfilling the Law is a major issue for all post-Christ believers.

The Law is true and righteous because it reflects its Author and who He is. The authority is neither under nor over the Law; the authority is Law. The Law is right and true because it reflects God Himself.

Therefore, Jesus the Christ can say, and we can believe with all assured trust (faith), that He came not to abolish the Law but to fulfill it. A “fulfilled” law satisfies the Law-Giver. It satisfies

the Law-Executor. It satisfies the Seeker of Justice. This may be the greatest statement of the Gospel—the Law is fulfilled. God is satisfied. See *Appendix B: The Law/Gospel Question* for more information.

MATTHEW AS A BOOK OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Early readers and users of Matthew strongly felt he was indeed the author. Some modern critics, however, noting the presumed dependence on Mark's gospel for a substantial part of his record, have questioned Matthew as the author. His name "Matthew" means "gift of Yahweh;" he was also known as Levi in the records of Luke and Mark.

Matthew's intended readers were his kinsmen. More quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures are used than any other author of the Greek Scriptures. This was especially pronounced when showing similarities between Hebrew Scripture prophecy and incidents in Christ's life while He was on earth as Jesus. Matthew not only sought to convince readers Jesus was a descendant of Abraham via his genealogy, he also refers to Jesus as the "Son of *David*" numerous times (1:1; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9,15; 22:41-45).

Even though his audience was pre-Christ believers, or because he especially wanted Jews to know the significance of Jesus: Matthew notes pagan Magi came to worship Jesus. The language of the great commission is clearly not limited to Hebrews. He makes significant note of Jesus' comment about the centurion (probably a non-Jew)— "I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel."

SUMMARY

When you study Matthew, you are studying the history of people's first personal, face-to-face, kinetic encounter with the Lord God Almighty. As the Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth pointed to a new covenant, a new understanding of who Yahweh is and how to understand Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In Jesus of Nazareth we see the magnificence of obedience to purpose, the profound passion of God devoted to His creation, and the perfect resolution of justice and mercy. His name was Jesus. Matthew was His tax collector.

Appendix A:

BACKGROUND ON THE HEROD'S OF THE NEW TESTAMENT PERIOD IN PALESTINE¹¹

1. Herod the Great. When the Roman ruler Pompey organized the East in 63 B.C., he appointed Hyrcanus, the second person of that name, to be the high-priestly ruler over Galilee, Samaria, Judea, and Perea. Antipater, an Idumean, was Hyrcanus' senior officer. Gabinius modified Pompey's arrangement in 57 by reducing Hyrcanus' authority and dividing the ethnarchy into autonomous communities. Notable services rendered at Alexandria to Julius Caesar in 48BC led to the restoration of Hyrcanus' authority and the appointment (in 47BC) of Antipater to the procuratorship of Judea. Antipater persuaded the now-aged Hyrcanus to appoint Phasael, Antipater's eldest son, to the prefecture of Jerusalem, and Herod, his second son, to the governorship of Galilee.

When Antipater was murdered in 43 BC, his two sons succeeded to his position in Hyrcanus' court—the year after Julius Caesar's assassination. The Parthians penetrated Palestine, carried off Hyrcanus, and drove Phasael, also a captive, to suicide. Herod eluded both military action and Parthian treachery. He won the support of Octavian and Antony—by charm, daring, political acumen, and consummate diplomacy.

Two years of tireless activity (39-37 B.C.) made him, by age 36, the master of his inheritance. He was a ruthless fighter, a cunning negotiator, a subtle diplomat, and an opportunist. For 34 years he governed subjects who hated him.

In 30 BC Herod succeeded in retaining the favor of Octavian, shared even though that favor had been with the defeated rival Antony. He was confirmed in his kingdom, and for the rest of his life he never departed from the policy of supporting the emperor and in all ways promoting his honor. For example, the restored town of Samaria was called Sebaste, the Greek rendering of Augustus; Caesarea was built to form a harbor on the difficult open coast of Palestine, providing Rome a base on the edge of a turbulent province and forming a center of Caesar-worship in the land of the nationalistic and monotheistic Jews.

Herod followed a policy of Hellenization, establishing games at Jerusalem and adorning many of the Hellenistic cities of his domain. At the same time he sought to reconcile the Jews, who hated his pro-Roman and Hellenizing policies and who never forgave him for his Edomite blood. During the great famine of 25 BC in Judea and Samaria, Herod spared no trouble or private expense to import Egyptian grain. In the 18th year of his reign (20) he began to build the great Jerusalem temple, which was 46 years under construction (John 2:20). He was married to Mariamne, the heiress of the Hasmonean house. He built up a nobility of service, drawing on both Jews and Greeks. He encouraged the political party of the Herodians (Mark 3:6; 12:13), whose policy seems to have been the support of the royal house and a Hellenized society.

The king's sister Salome and his son Antipater by Doris, his first consort, seem to have been in league against Mariamne, his favorite wife. Mariamne was put to death in 29BC and her two sons, Alexander and Aristobulus, in 7 BC. Antipater himself was put to death by Herod in the last days of Herod's reign. Herod died in 4 BC, but not before the murder of the innocent babies of Bethlehem (Matthew 2:16-18).

¹¹Excerpted from Compton's Interactive Bible NIV © 1996 as edited and revised by D. Thomas Porter.

2. Archelaus. Herod's will divided the kingdom. Archelaus, son of Malthace, a Samaritan woman, took Judea and Idumea—by far the choicest share. Herod Antipas, of the same mother, received Galilee and Perea; and Philip, son of a Jewess named Cleopatra, took Iturea, Trachonitis, and associated districts in the northeast. Archelaus, who inherited his father's vices without his ability, took the title of king and violently put down the disorders that broke out in Jerusalem (cf. Matt 2:22-23).

Archelaus went to Rome to secure from Augustus confirmation of his position before the situation in Palestine could be presented in too lurid a light by his enemies. Archelaus' petition was opposed in person by Herod Antipas and by a Jewish embassy. Somewhat surprisingly, Augustus declared in favor of Archelaus, though he denied him the royal title, providing the background for the Parable of the Pounds (Luke 19:11-27).

3. Herod Antipas (the word is an abbreviation for Antipater). “That fox” (Luke 13:32) has reference to his cunning, his subtle diplomacy, and his astute management of a difficult situation—qualities that enabled Antipas to retain his puppet position and petty royal power until AD 39. His half-brother Philip (not the tetrarch of Iturea) was the son of an unnamed wife of Herod I. As the daughter of Aristobulus, son of Herod I and Mariamne, Herodias was Philip's niece as well as his wife. They lived quietly in Rome, and it was here that Antipas met Herodias.

Herod came home to find a troublesome frontier war on his lands. He celebrated his birthday and had John the Baptist executed (Mark 6:14-29) at the stronghold of Machaerus. The crime so dramatically contrived was the final turning point in Herod's life. Until then there had been some faint aspiration for good (Mark 6:20). Emperor Caligula deposed Antipas on suspicion of treason, a charge leveled by Antipas' nephew, Herod Agrippa I.

4. Philip, tetrarch of Iturea. Salome—Herodias' daughter, the dancer of the Machaerus feast—married her uncle Philip, tetrarch of Iturea, about 30. Philip seems to have been the best of Herod's three surviving [grand] sons. He beautified the town of Caesarea Philippi and marked his continuation of the Herodian pro-Roman policy by changing the name of the northern Bethsaida to Julias, after Augustus' daughter.

5. Herod Agrippa I. The [great] grandson of Herod I, son of Aristobulus and brother of Herodias, he had been brought up in Rome under the protection of Tiberius' favorite son, Drusus. He had all the Herodian charm and diplomatic subtlety, and in A.D. 37, on Caligula's succession as emperor, Herod Agrippa was granted Philip's realm. Galilee and Perea were added when Antipas and Herodias were exiled. The malicious word in Rome had paid rich dividends. When Caligula was assassinated in 41, Agrippa remained in the favor of Claudius, who turned over to Agrippa's control the whole area of his grandfather's kingdom. He succeeded to such power, moreover, with the consent and the favor of the Jews. Agrippa died in 44 (Acts 12:20-23).

6. Herod Agrippa II. Agrippa left a teen-age son, whom Claudius made king of Chalcis in AD 48. In 53 the territory of Philip the tetrarch and Lysanias were added to this realm, together with an area on the western side of Galilee, including Tiberias. The appointment carried the title of king, so in 53 Agrippa became Agrippa II, last of the Herodian line. As Festus' guest, he heard the defense of Paul (Acts 25). After the fashion of Eastern monarchies, Agrippa was married to his sister Bernice. Another sister was the wife of Antonius Felix, the procurator of Judea, whom Festus had succeeded.

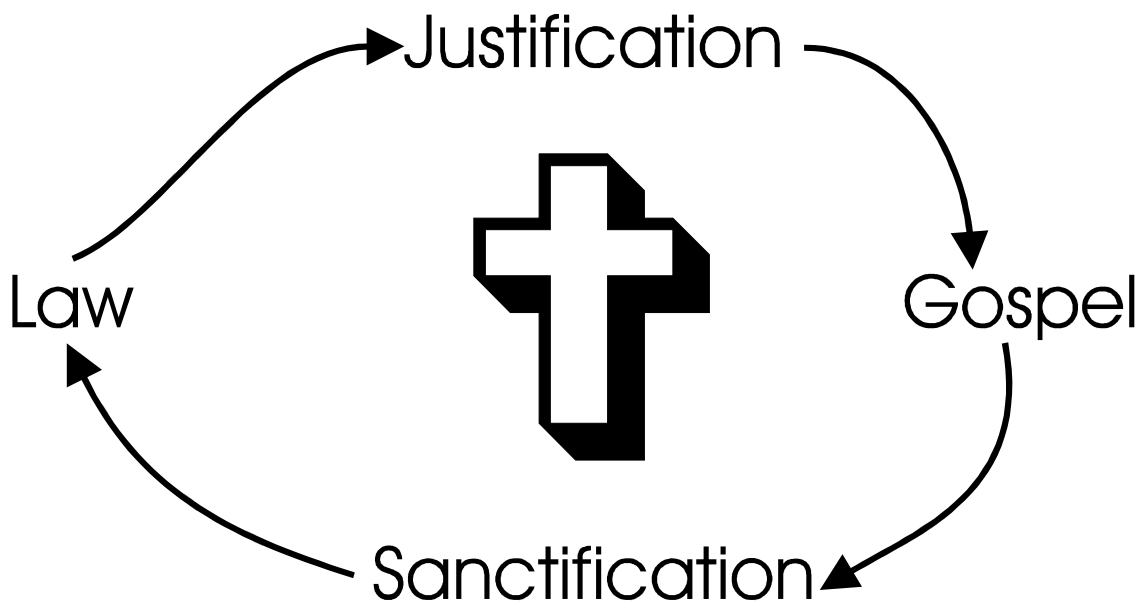
Agrippa lived on in the garrison town of Caesarea to see the vast ruin and destruction of his country in the Great Revolt of 66 to 70. So ended the Herods, an astonishingly able family, whose pro-Roman policy went far to postpone the inevitable clash between Rome and the Jews, and played, in consequence, an unwitting but significant part in holding the peace during the formative years of the Christian church in Palestine.

Relevancy of the Law¹²

- ⌘ While the Hebrew Scriptures quantitatively contain more moral laws and duties, the NT qualitatively is more important for Christian ethics—the NT is explicitly directed toward Spirit-indwelled believers.
- ⌘ NT moral law and duties are built upon (i.e., it elaborates and clarifies) the Hebrew Scriptures. See, for instance, Matthew 5:21,27,33,38,43 ... “You have heard it said ..., but I say ...”
- ⌘ Indeed there is no new morality revealed in the NT.

Law:

Creates knowledge of sin, and hopefully a sense of needing to be saved from sin’s consequences—separation from God.



¹²“The purpose of the Law is to crush you.” –David Jones, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Ethics, SEBTS).

Why? “So you can do all things through Christ who πληροω (play-row-oh) the Law. Submission to the Law builds a ‘get over yourself’ mindset. It is inherently sanctifying. It forces you to deal with yourself.” –D. Thomas Porter, Ph.D.

HOW SPECIFICALLY THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL RELATE

Matthew 5:17 – *I came not to destroy the Law but to fulfill the Law.*

The Law is true and righteous because it reflects its Author and who He is. The authority is neither under nor over the Law; the authority is Law. The Law is right and true because it reflects God Himself.

Therefore, Jesus the Christ can say, and we can believe with all assured trust (faith), that He came not to abolish the Law but to fulfill it. A “fulfilled” law satisfies the Law-Giver. It satisfies the Law-Executor. It satisfies the Seeker of Justice. This may be the greatest statement of the Gospel—the Law is fulfilled. God is satisfied.

So, what was Jesus saying when Matthew used the word “fulfill” in 5:17? The Greek is πληρωω (play-row-oh) which is used in Scripture with a wide range of meanings: to complete, to accomplish, to obey, to clarify, to bring to maturity, to ratify, to culminate, and/or to perfect. Thus, there are a variety of conclusions which one might draw from Christ’s statement. How you view the “difference” between the “old” and the “new” testaments will largely affect what verb you choose.

If you believe that Christ came to “complete” the Law, then its constraints on human behavior are lifted—they no longer bind us (discontinuity). If you believe that Christ came to “ratify” the Law, then its constraints continue to this day (hyper-continuity). If you believe that Christ came to “bring to maturity” the Law, then its constraints need to be understood fully (e.g., “... you have heard it said, but I say ...;” continuity).

DISCONTINUITY VS. CONTINUITY IN SCRIPTURE

DISCONTINUITY

The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it. Luke 6:16

For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. John 1:17

For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. Romans 6:14

Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. Romans 10:4

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. Galatians 5:18

CONTINUITY

It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law. Luke 6:17

Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law. Romans 3:31

So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. Romans 7:12

Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts. I Corinthians 7:19

Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. Galatians 3:21

The Structure/Purposes of the Law

1. Civil
2. Ceremonial
3. Moral ... functions:

A. Social — **Chain** to restrain, provide order (e.g., murder is wrong)

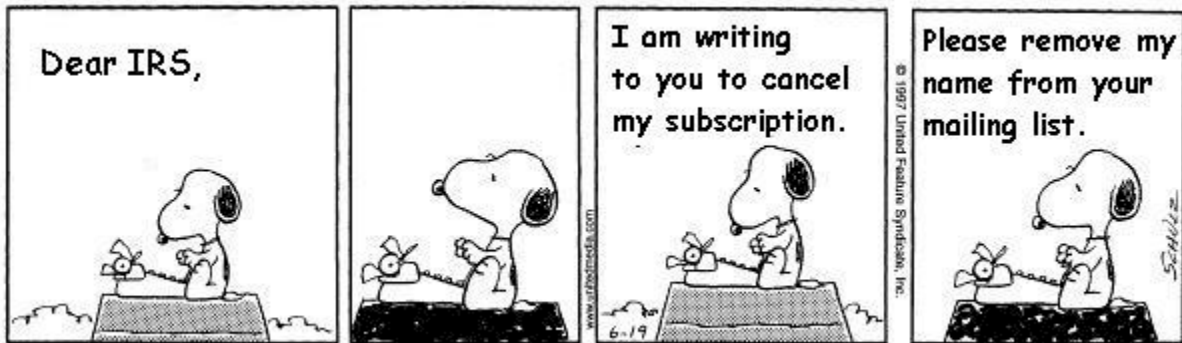


B. Convictional — **Mirror** to set the bar to show your true condition; what you can and can not do.



C. Didactic — **Lamp** shows believers what to do, a schoolmaster as it were.





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