

Introduction to Jewishness of the Gospels

Introduction

- 5 The Gospels were written within a Jewish life style and within the Jewish society. It might be augured that Luke's is different yet ultimately he also wrote based on the account of Jewish wittiness. This leaves us with the single difficulty today; what is a Jewish context in the 1st century CE ? [if you do not know what CE means ask me]
- 10 This study came out of my need to see us talk about the writing that witnesses to the Master's life. It also arose from a long discussion that I had with Michelle and Hamish Deans in which I finally accepted that I can talk above people understanding, as my wife has told me that I do. I think that what I have given someone to read is easy but in reality it is
- 15 beyond their ability to understand or comprehend as my wife again has pointed out. What really came home to me from discussion with Michelle was that they needed something that could be studied and the reader did not have to worry about or sort the Jewish and the Christian heresy from what they are reading. That Messianic believer would find
- 20 that what they are reading is accessible regardless of the background or education and that they would not have to worry about error whether Christian or Jewish. That it would provide access to the original languages without actual knowledge of the original languages, and access to the great ideas of both faiths which we have accepted as true as
- 25 we have emerged. Finally, it is that I have one over riding need that is to teach and mentor Disciples. I ask all that are here with me to speak to me plainly about whether or not what I am saying to you and what I am giving you to read is accessible to all. I have also committed to giving written notes to everyone so that you can review it after we are done.
- 30 So what does that mean for us today? I would like to use a silly song *Yankee Doodle*, you know the Song, *Yankee Doodle went to town riding on a pony and stuck a feather in his cap and called it macaroni*. The song if taken as statement of faith; could have a number of interruptions. On the Fourth of July some Americans might say, the revolutionary
- 35 soldiers were so hungry that they called their hats after their favorite food. The more fundamentalist American Patriots on July 4th would eat their hats while calling them after their favorite food. While more Liberal American Patriots would eat all different types of pasta that might be called macaroni. The more conservative would only eat the elbow form
- 40 of macaroni. The question then, what is correct understanding of it? We could see all sorts of divisions in understanding of the application of the song because it was taken out of context. So then what does it mean? If you look up in dictionary that covers older meanings you find that macaroni refers to a person style of clothing in the 1700. That the
- 45 American revolutionary soldiers look so bad compared to there British,

the Americans were very plain. So while the American Soldiers were on their way to battle the women would pluck feathers to give soldiers to put in their hats to make them look macaroni or simply put, to look better or fancier¹.

5 What does this story have to do with us today? It teaches us that without the right context we can make text say what we want it to. The human mind longs to explain things and create meaning if does not have meaning that is clearly seen by us today.

10 What do we need to understand the writings of the Gospels then? I think that the first thing we need to understand is that books of the time at the writing of the Gospels books/scrolls were rare and parchment or papyrus expensive. Let us consider parchment and papyrus because they were the most common material of writing at this time (clay, metal, potsherds, wood and linen were also used not used for books). We today buy paper inexpensively, massive paper roles are made daily at paper plants that far outstrip the production of paper at the time of writing of apostolic scriptures. A single man could make approximately 8 sheets of papyrus a day and a single piece of parchment, took weeks to produce. So writing materials were expensive and so only what was necessary was written, what was unusual was recorded. What was not recorded was what was understood to have happened. The other thing that codex form had not yet been invented and so everything was on scrolls. The codex form is what we understand to be books today with pages back to back with both sides of the paper used, writing on back was not done for the most part with scrolls. The other thing scrolls were bulky you cannot just carry around a scroll in your back pocket. So the Gospels are the same length simply because of the physical restrictions of a scroll. So space was premium as well as the writing material so things were written concisely to teach what was needed and not what as already understood.

Now back to the Yankee Doodle story I first heard it used by Daniel Lancaster in explaining why we needed to understand the gospel from a Jewish perspective. He referred to teaching of the Master Mat 6:22-23 (22) *"The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, (23) but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!* What is sad most people do not understand this text, they think that it refers to what is read and watched, in fact if you look at Luke 11;34-36 account one might think that this is correct view.

40 Again we must remember that different writer added or subtract to the context of the text. If we look at the text it appears to be saying that it is what we look at that determines what we are. William Barclay's commentary in his first volume on Matthew makes this pointⁱⁱ in first section. We should consider this a Conservative Christian point of view.

45 Some more liberal might see it the 3rd eye a kabalistic or new age view of the spiritual eye. Well the question is, is this a correct view, are they cooking macaroni or eating their hat? What is the Jewish context? It is clear that by just looking at context it is about generosity. In fact

William Barclay admits to this the last section of his discussion. In fact in my own experience in the church it was hammered home it is what you look at is your eye of the soul. If we look at the text in Mathew in complete way;

5 *Mat 6:21-31 (21) For where your treasure is, there your heart will
be also. (22) "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is
healthy, your whole body will be full of light, (23) but if your eye is
bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you
is darkness, how great is the darkness! (24) "No one can serve two
10 masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will
be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God
and money. (25) "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your
life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body,
what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more
15 than clothing? (26) Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor
reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.
Are you not of more value than they? (27) And which of you by
being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? (28) And
why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field,
20 how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, (29) yet I tell you, even
Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. (30) But
if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and
tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you,
O you of little faith? (31) Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What
25 shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'*

It is clearly talking about generosity and worry about money this is reinforced in the Jewish Literature that comes from the second century CE.ⁱⁱⁱ . We can now see through this example that many commentators are really operating in a vacuum. We must therefore no longer place
30 ourselves in a vacuum. In many ways we must wipe the board clean and start afresh, start with a clean slate. We must ask ourselves one question is what would the reader in Galilee or a believer in Jerusalem have understood? We must not be afraid of an answer that disagrees with everything we have been taught. We are on journey of discovery. So long
35 ago the road and the way as hidden to us but today it is open and available to us if we only have the courage to ask the questions and to find the answers.

The next question we must ask ourselves is whether the idea of the New Testament really valid? What does New Testament mean? Where
40 did the idea of New Testament come from? These are important questions and when I first dealt with them I was amazed at the answer I found and more importantly it changed my view of the New Testament and it challenged the validity of the single leaf of paper that separates them. I want to be clear though that documents that we find in what is
45 called the New Testament are inspired by Hashem.

I reject of the idea that there is New Testament or division though. First Fruits of Zion has a DVD set by Tim Hegg called What so New about the New Covenant in which he points out that New Covenant is

not new to New Testament but is found really in the Prophets and even the Torah. Let us look at;

5 Jer 31:31-40 " (31) "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, (32) not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. (33) But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those
10 days, declares the LORD: I will put my law(the word here is Torah) within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (34) And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (35) Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar-- the LORD of hosts is his name: (36) "If this fixed order departs from before me, declares the LORD, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever." (37) Thus says the LORD: "If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below can be explored, then I will cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done, declares the LORD." (38) "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when the city shall be rebuilt for the LORD from the tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate. (39) And the measuring line shall go out farther, straight to the hill Gareb, and shall then turn to Goah. (40) The whole valley of the dead bodies and the ashes, and all the fields as far as the brook Kidron, to the corner of the Horse Gate toward the east, shall be sacred to the LORD. It shall not be uprooted or overthrown anymore forever."

35 Here in verse 31 we are told what new covenant is and this was given to the children of Abraham which are those that keep the Commandments of Hashem and have the Testimony of Yeshua! The church rejects the Torah of Hashem or the Commandments of Hashem so they cannot have the new covenant. In fact the New Covenant is about having the Torah written on your hearts; Not having Torah thrown away.
40 What the New Testament is is having the Torah written upon your heart. This was given also the Torah Lev 26:41 and Deut 10:16 (circumcise the foreskin of your Heart), Deut. 4:29, (the Shema) 6:5, Deut 9:4 (Gifts of Hashem given by Grace), and Deut 30:11-14 (the commands of Hashem are accessible).

45 Where did the idea of New Testament come from? It came from a heretic by the name of Marcion^{iv}. He developed a theology that said that the God of Jews was no longer God and that a new God had come with new scriptures which we called the "The New Testament". So he threw

out all the works that he thought were too Hebrew. This took place around 150 CE. He was a Gnostic. The Church fully rejected this at the time of his life and argued very much against him^v. Yet in the council of Nicene in 325 the church fathers who now had fully rejected the Torah adopted the idea of the New Testament and the books that we have and that the church replaced Israel. Finally the idea of New Testament is valid in Jer 31 but not to set a group of writings aside and say that they have superseded the other writing. This is not a correct approach to the idea, the division that church has called the New Testament we call it the **Apostolic Writings**.

Some of my thoughts about the age of the Master he approximately 30 years of age when he started his ministry he was senior or elder in every respect. We must remember that average life span of person in first CE was 25 years of age^{vi}, (yet those of the aristocracy lived to be in their 60s).

Finally I will be using a number of references and commentaries; I want everyone to understand that I will use both Jewish and Christian material as well as Messianic Material. I will reference anything that I do use. If you need more info on reference used let me know.

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ⁱ This story I first heard from First Fruits of Zion's Introduction to Torah Club CD which I recommend to all and found at the site ffoz.org

ⁱⁱ William Barclay Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of Matthew volume 1 pg 243

ⁱⁱⁱ The references are Tosefta Peah 4:8-18 and as referred to in Brad H Young The Parables; Jewish Tradition Christian interpretation. Pg 245 Babylonian Talmud B. Bat 11a Jerusalem Talmud Peah 15b

^{iv} You will find reference to Him in any History of the Church

^v See volum3 of the Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 3 The Writings of Tertullian esword

^{vi} Brain K. Harvey Rome Lives: Ancient Roman life as Illustrated by Latin Inscriptions