

## Matthew 11-12, Luke 11 – Ep 194: CFM

### Luke 11.1-13: The Lord's Prayer

And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples (Luke 11.1).

1. The title (Greek *kyrios*) can signal a title of respect like Master. It also recalls the Septuagint word for Jehovah and may give the disciple's request a decided sacred sense.<sup>1</sup>

Give us this day our daily bread (Luke 11.3). Greek: τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δίδου ἡμῖν τὸ καθ' ἡμέραν. The ἐπιούσιον bread = "The Yahweh bread" = *epiousion* only appears only here and in Luke 11.3 in the Greek NT. This is a participle of the Greek verb εἶμι.

Exodus 3.14 shows the connection between *epiousion* and the God of the Old Testament. When Moses asks God his name, he responds: *הָיְהוֹה אֲשֶׁר אֲהִיֶה* *ehyeh asher ehyeh* "I will be what I will be," or "I AM what I AM." This is the connection to the Greek use of the verb "to be" = εἶμι. This is "I AM that I AM" in a Greek context, this bread is the "being upon" bread, or "The Yahweh Bread."

### Luke 11.14-36, Matthew 12.22-30; Mark 3.19-27: Jesus is accused of casting out devils by Beelzebub

By whom do your children cast them out? (Matt. 12.27)

Matt. 12.27 Greek: καὶ εἰ ἐγὼ ἐν Βεελζεβοῦλ ἐκβάλλω τὰ δαιμόνια οἱ υἱοὶ ὑμῶν ἐν τίνι ἐκβάλλουσιν διὰ τοῦτο αὐτοὶ ὑμῶν ἔσονται κριταὶ "And if I in *the power* of Beelzebub cast out demons, *then by who* do your children *cast out the demons*? So through this *logic* they will be your judges! (my translation)

This question put the Pharisees in a predicament. Like the question, 'The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?' (Luke 20.4), any answer would completely wreck them in front of all who witnessed this exchange.

"Their 'children' were other people who were performing similar miraculous healings of people possessed by evil spirits. These persons had power not possessed by the accusers, and they were therefore more powerful than the Pharisaic rulers. The logic was that if these healings were done by the power of Satan, then Satan had more power than the Pharisees and they would become subject to him. Again they were caught in their faulty reasoning.

"On the other hand, if Jesus had 'cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God' had come unto the Pharisees (Matt. 12:28), and they were rejecting or fighting against it. Jesus then declared by what power these others were performing miracles (a truth restored in the Joseph Smith Translation): 'They also cast out devils by the Spirit of God, for unto them is given power over devils, that they may cast them out.' (JST, Matt. 12:23; cf. Matt. 12:28.) These others, members of the Church of Jesus Christ who held priesthood power, were not using the power of Satan but were using the power of God delegated to them as members of the kingdom of God. The kingdom was restored and the Pharisees were fighting against it."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S. Kent Brown, *The Testimony of Luke: New Testament Commentary*, Brigham Young University, 2015, p. 551.

<sup>2</sup> Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet, eds., *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 5: The Gospels*, Deseret Book, 2004, 253.

### Luke 11.37-54: Pharisees, Scribes and Lawyers rebuked for Hypocrisy

Thus far, Pharisees are known to us largely as persons who scrutinize Jesus' legal observance and who repeatedly find themselves at odds with his legal views and religious practices. The fact that a Pharisee would even invite Jesus to dinner suggests a certain openness to him, though we should also recognize that the extension of hospitality might itself serve as a test. *The extension and acceptance of an invitation signaled the abeyance of hostility, a social contract whereby host and guest were to act with honor toward one another.* This would require, for example, that Jesus prepare for the meal in the way prescribed by the Pharisees and that he withhold any negative (insulting) valuations of the host or his treatment in the home of the host; to perform otherwise would signal a breach in the implicit social contract. Unlike the parallel scene in 7:36–50, in this account no evidence is brought forward to suggest that Jesus has been snubbed. To the contrary, *the cryptic form of Luke's narration—Jesus “went in and took his place at the table”—at first masks what the Pharisee cannot miss: Jesus snubbed his host by failing to wash before the meal.* Even then the Pharisee maintains social propriety, for he does not call attention to his guest's behavior, in spite of its aberrant quality.

Handwashing before a meal in this case was **not an issue of physical but of ritual cleanliness**. As a behavior concerned with purity, it is not an OT requirement though it might be seen as a remote implicature of the law. Its importance in this scene is not thereby blunted, however, because, in the setting Luke envisages, “the concern for clean hands is a symbol of concern for a strong overall system of purity.” Handwashing apparently served as a boundary-making and-keeping device (like fasting, 5:33); **to overlook this practice was to mark oneself as an outsider in this community**. In light of the laws of hospitality, failure to wash in this scene also constituted an insult to the host.<sup>3</sup>

Woe unto you! For you build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them! (Luke 11.47)

### Killing the Prophets

#### To which prophets is Jesus referring?

In Luke 11:47-50, Jesus is referring to the prophets of the Hebrew Bible who were killed by the leaders of the Jewish people during the time of the Old Testament. These prophets, who were sent by God to speak out against the sins and injustices of the Israelites and their leaders, were often rejected and persecuted for their message.

Some examples of the Prophets that Jesus may have been referring to are:

Isaiah, who was sawn in half by King Manasseh, according to the tradition.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Joel Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, Eerdmans, 1997, p. 665, electronic version, emphasis added.

<sup>4</sup> The account of Isaiah being sawn in half is not found in the Hebrew Bible. The tradition that Isaiah was sawn in half is a part of Christian Apocryphal texts and is not considered to be canonical in some religious traditions. The tradition is found in the apocryphal text called the *Martyrdom of Isaiah* (see also *The Ascension of Isaiah*). This apocryphal text is not considered as part of the canon of scripture by Jews or by many Christians. The text is considered as part of the Pseudepigrapha, a collection of texts written in the same style and language as the Hebrew Bible but not considered part of the canon. It's possible that this tradition was passed down through oral tradition and not recorded in scripture, but it debated by many. As to the two texts *The Martyrdom of Isaiah* and *The Ascension of Isaiah*, these are two separate texts, but they are related in that they both deal with the story of the prophet Isaiah. The texts are considered to be part of the Pseudepigrapha, a collection of texts written in the

Jeremiah, who was thrown into a cistern (Jer. 38.6).<sup>5</sup>

Zechariah, who was stoned to death in the temple (2 Chron. 24.20-22).<sup>6</sup>

Elijah, who was pursued by Jezebel in her attempt to slay him (1 Kings 19).

King Josiah kills the “*Cemarim*” (or “*Kumara*” in some translations, 2 Kings 23.5-20).<sup>7</sup>

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same style and language as the Hebrew Bible but not considered part of the canon (see D&C 91 on ways to read these texts). *The Ascension of Isaiah* is an apocalypse that tells the story of Isaiah's ascent through the seven heavens, where he sees the Lord seated on his throne, and the future events that will occur on earth. It also includes the story of Isaiah's execution in the form of being sawn in half. *The Martyrdom of Isaiah*, on the other hand, is an apocryphal text that gives an account of the death of the prophet Isaiah, relating Isaiah's execution by his son-in-law, King Manasseh of Judah, by being sawn in half. This text also elaborates on the story of Isaiah's martyrdom, including the details of how and why it happened.

<sup>5</sup> The account of the prophet Jeremiah being killed is not found in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). ***The Bible does not give a specific account of Jeremiah's death***, but it does describe the persecution and difficulties he faced during his lifetime. Jeremiah is referred to as the "weeping prophet" because of the sorrowful messages he delivered to the Israelites about their impending destruction and exile. He was often opposed and persecuted by the Israelite leaders for his message, and he was thrown into a cistern by the officials of King Zedekiah of Judah (Jeremiah 38:6). Also, in Jeremiah 26:23, it is mentioned that the officials of King Jehoiakim of Judah sought to put Jeremiah to death for his prophecy against the city. ***According to tradition, his countrymen did kill him, probably being killed in Egypt after the Exile.*** See: [Jeremiah, The Jewish Encyclopedia](#).

<sup>6</sup> The Zechariah in 2 Chronicles 24 is not the prophet Zechariah, but rather a different individual, who is described as the son of Jehoiada, the priest. According to 2 Chronicles 24:20-22, he was stoned to death by the people of Jerusalem, at the command of King Joash of Judah, after he gave a message from God which condemned their idolatry and other sins. The account in 2 Chronicles 24 states that Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, spoke out against the king and the people for their idolatry and other sins, and as a result, he was killed by the people who were incited by the king. It should be noted that this Zechariah is not the Prophet Zechariah, one of the twelve minor prophets in the Old Testament, but another individual with the same name.

<sup>7</sup> וְהִשָּׁבִית אֶת-הַכֹּמָרִים “And he put down the *Cemarim*” (2 Kings 23.5a, my translation). The *Cemarim* are not mentioned in any other parts of the Bible and their identity is not certain. It is believed by some scholars that the word "Cemarim" is a Hebrew word derived from the Akkadian word "*kimtu*" which means "priest". But the exact meaning of the word is not clear from the context. Some scholars believe that the "Cemarim" were a group of priests or religious leaders who were associated with the worship of foreign gods, specifically the god Ba'al and the goddess Asherah. They may have been involved in the practices of divination, magic and idol worship. According to 2 Kings 23, King Josiah sought to eliminate their influence and centralized the worship of God in the Temple of Jerusalem. Margaret Barker, a British biblical scholar, argues that the *Cemarim* mentioned in 2 Kings 23 were Melchizedek Priests. According to her theory, the *Cemarim* were part of a pre-exilic temple tradition that predates the Jerusalem temple, in which the High Priest was identified with Melchizedek, a figure from the book of Genesis who is described as a priest of God Most High. Barker argues that this tradition was suppressed during the reforms of King Josiah, who sought to centralize worship in the Jerusalem temple and eliminate other forms of worship. This fits with what is going on during the reforms of Josiah and the shift towards radical monotheism happening in this time period of the late 7<sup>th</sup> century. Margaret Barker explains the execution of the *Cemarim*: “The Deuteronomic historian's favourable account of Josiah's changes should be read with this in mind. When the king ordered the destruction and removal of anything that the Deuteronomists would not tolerate, not everyone considered this a reform. Josiah altered the religion of the city and the religion of the rural areas, so this was not a case of one of these traditions taking over the other. This was a wholesale change, but nobody knows where these 'reformers' originated. Josiah removed from the temple all the vessels for Baal, for Asherah and for the host of heaven (2 Kgs 23.4), because Deuteronomy forbade dealing with the host of heaven (Deut. 4.19) despite the LORD's ancient role as the LORD of Hosts (Isa. 6.3), a title which survived in liturgy, but not in the Deuteronomists' materials. Josiah deposed the 'idolatrous' priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense at the

Zenock and Zenos were two prophets from the Old Testament that are not mentioned in this record. However, the Book of Mormon informs us that they were slain for their testimonies. (See: Helaman 8.19 and Alma 33.15-17).

It should be noted that there were many prophets who were killed by the Israelites throughout the history of the Old Testament, and Jesus may have been making a general reference to them all.

The Pharisees were probably singled out here by Jesus due to their power and ability to hinder others from following the Savior. The Savior sees the sins of rebellion and hypocrisy differently than that of the sins of weakness. Elder Richard G. Scott taught:

“The joyful news for anyone who desires to be rid of the consequences of past poor choices is that ***the Lord sees weaknesses differently than He does rebellion***. Whereas the Lord warns that unrepented rebellion will bring punishment, when the Lord speaks of weaknesses, it is always with mercy.”<sup>8</sup>

Joseph F. Smith put it this way:

“I believe in obeying the commandments of God, or else get out of the way. We ought not to be stumbling blocks to those who are trying to enter in at the door. God will hold us responsible for this. If there is a man on earth that has done wrong because I have set him the example, I am in some measure responsible for that wrong, and I will have to pay the debt in some way.”<sup>9</sup>

#### **Matthew 11:2-19: Luke 7.18-35: John sends messengers to Jesus and Jesus testifies of John**

1. John sends two of his disciples to Jesus, saying, “Are you he that should come?” (Luke 7.18-19).<sup>10</sup>
2. Jesus responds, “Go your way, and tell John what you have seen and heard: how the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised, the gospel is preached to the poor!” (Luke 7.22).

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high places, those who burned incense to Baal and to the host of heaven (2 Kgs 23.5). 4.6). Josiah broke down the houses of the 'male cult prostitutes' in the temple precincts, where the women wove hangings for Asherah (2 Kgs 23.7). The Hebrew consonants for 'male cult prostitutes' are the same as those for holy ones, angels qdsm, and, given what is known about the censorship methods of the ancient scribes, reading the letters in this way could have been deliberate.<sup>12</sup> Josiah's breaking down the houses of the holy ones could have been his suppression of the cult of the heavenly host. These two elements alone indicate that Josiah abolished what is recognizable as the veneration of Wisdom and her seventy sons, the angels. Almost all that Josiah swept away can be matched to elements in the older religion, not in the cults of Canaan, but in the religion of the patriarchs and the prophets.” See: Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy*, T&T Clark, 2004, p. 149. Note: Matt Bowen wrote an article where he compares the putting down of the priests by both Josiah and King Noah in their respective traditions. See: “[Putting down the priests](#)” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 51 (2022): 105-114.

<sup>8</sup> Richard G. Scott, Personal Strength through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, October 2013 General Conference, emphasis added. See also: Proverbs 28:13; 1 Corinthians 2:3; 15:43; 2 Corinthians 13:4; James 3:17; 2 Nephi 3:13; Jacob 4:7; Alma 34:17; 3 Nephi 22:8; Ether 12:26–28; Doctrine and Covenants 24:11; 35:17; 38:14; 62:1.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph F. Smith, *Collected Discourses*, 4:153.

<sup>10</sup> “Many Bible commentators have thought that John himself was wavering while in prison, wondering and even doubting whether Jesus was the Messiah, and therefore had sent these two disciples to enquire. That is not likely, however, since John knew by revelation who Jesus was.” Robert J. Matthews, *Behold the Messiah*, Bookcraft, 1994, p. 49. The popular show *The Chosen* ([Season 3, episode 6: Intensity in Tent City, 47:30](#)) portrays this event as a time when even John the Baptist began to lack faith. Perhaps both readings may have some merit here.

3. John's messengers depart (Luke 7.24).
4. Jesus explains John's greatness as a prophet (Luke 7.24-35).
  - a. "Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist" (Luke 7.28).<sup>11</sup>
    - i. This is a coded statement.<sup>12</sup>
    - ii. "He that is least in the kingdom is greater than he" (Luke 7.28). Here Jesus is referring to himself.<sup>13</sup>
  - b. John came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and ye say, "He hath a devil" (Luke 7.33).
  - c. The Son of Man is come eating and drinking, and ye say "Behold a gluttonous man and a winebibber!" (Luke 7.34).

### Matthew 11.20-24: It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon!<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Joseph Smith commented on this passage when he said:

"How is it that John was considered one of the greatest prophets? His miracles could not have constituted his greatness. First. He was entrusted with a divine mission of preparing the way before the face of the Lord. Whoever had such a trust committed to him before or since? No man. Secondly. He was entrusted with the important mission, and it was required at his hands, to baptize the Son of Man. Whoever had the honor of doing that? Whoever had so great a privilege and glory? Whoever led the Son of God into the waters of baptism, and had the privilege of beholding the Holy Ghost descend in the form of a dove, or rather in the sign of the dove, in witness of that administration? ... Thirdly. John, at that time, was the only legal administrator in the affairs of the kingdom there was then on the earth, and holding the keys of power. The Jews had to obey his instructions or be damned, by their own law; and Christ Himself fulfilled all righteousness in becoming obedient to the law which he had given to Moses on the mount, and thereby magnified it and made it honorable, instead of destroying it. ... These three reasons constitute him the greatest prophet born of a woman." [Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith, The Mission of John the Baptist, chapter 6.](#)

<sup>12</sup> This passage is rich in meaning. Matthew quotes Malachi 3:1 to identify John the Baptist as a messenger, which in both Malachi's Hebrew (*malakh*) and Matthew's Greek (*angelos*) is an angel. In Hebrews 1:4, the Melchizedek priest Jesus is better than the *angeli*. The Baptist is specifically the angel who prepares the way, as in Isaiah 40. John "rises" because he is an angel-priest who ascends through the temple. **None "born of women" is greater than John the Baptist, which is strange if you think of Christ's mother as mortal Mary, but makes perfect sense when you see Christ as the Lord, the son of the Virgin in the Holy of Holies.** This understanding, in light of the first verses of John 1, also explains the statement that the "least in the kingdom of heaven" is greater than John. The occupants of the kingdom of heaven, which is the Holy of Holies (Matthew 7:21-23), are God upon his throne, the Virgin who is a lamp who is a tree, and the Son who is the Word. The least (*mikroteros*, 'smaller') of these is presumably the Son, and he is greater than John the Baptist (John 1:15). Why does the kingdom of heaven suffer violence? Because the false priests the evangelists call 'hypocrites' (a Greek word meaning 'actors') hold the Jerusalem temple, as Matthew says, "by force." John is Elias, a fact Matthew identifies as a mystery by saying "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear..." David Butler, [The Goodness and the Mysteries: On the Path of the Book of Mormon's Visionary Men](#), Create Space, 2012, p. 41-42.

<sup>13</sup> How was the least in the kingdom of heaven greater than he? [See Luke 7:28.] "In reply I asked—Whom did Jesus have reference to as being the least? Jesus was looked upon as having the least claim in God's kingdom, and [seemingly] was least entitled to their credulity as a prophet; as though He had said—'He that is considered the least among you is greater than John—that is I myself.'" Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:260–61.

<sup>14</sup> Jewish people thought of Tyre and Sidon as purely pagan cities (cf. 1 Kings 16:31), though some of their inhabitants who were exposed to the truth had been known to repent (1 Kings 17:9-24). "Sackcloth and ashes"

1. In Mark iii. 8; Luke vi. 17, we are distinctly told that "they about Tyre and Sidon" were among His hearers, and the witnesses of His miracles; and He had on two separate occasions at least been publicly greeted by the title, "Son of David" (Matt. ix. 27; xii. 23).<sup>15</sup>
2. Spencer W. Kimball spoke of these destroyed cities, "We ask our guide: 'Where is Chorazin?' He shakes his head. There is no Chorazin. We conclude it must have been on those hills above where now are sprouting grain and vegetables and dry weeds... 'Where is Bethsaida?' Our guide shakes his head again. There is no Bethsaida. 'Capernaum, then?' we ask, 'Where is that important place, the port where fish were loaded, traded, marketed?' He shakes his head again, then smiles as he thinks it through and changes the accent, and 'Oh, you mean Capernaum.' He shows us the ruins of a large synagogue... 'But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.' We found that Tyre and Sidon still exist on the Mediterranean coast. "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.' (Matt. 11:21-24.) "And then we remember that only prophets and angels had visited Sodom to call that people to repentance, but for these tri-cities the Creator, the Lord, the Christ had come in person and for nearly three years had dwelt among them and performed the miracles and taught the gospel. They had ignored and rejected him. (We cannot remember ever reading about any Church branches in these cities.) Sodom and Gomorrah went up in smoke 'as the smoke of a furnace.' If these cities were more rebellious than Tyre and Sidon, more corrupt than Sodom, and more wicked than Gomorrah, we think we understand."<sup>16</sup>

### Matthew 11.25-30: My yoke is easy and my burden is light

1. "Happily, the commandment 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart' (Matt. 11:29) is a principle which carries an accompanying and compensating promise from Jesus: 'and ye shall find rest unto your souls.' This is a very special form of rest resulting from the shedding of certain needless burdens: fatiguing insincerity, exhausting hypocrisy, and the strength-sapping quest for recognition, praise, and power. Those of us who fall short, in one way or another, often do so because we carry such unnecessary and heavy baggage. Being overloaded, we sometimes stumble, and then we feel sorry for ourselves."<sup>17</sup>
2. (There are those) who resist the good news of the easy yoke and the light burden (Matthew 11:28-30) and instead imagine such difficult requirements for salvation that they know they cannot possibly make it. *Believing that God can't save them puts some people in a state of despair, which, for perverse carnal reasons, they prefer instead of joy. **Their concern with their own sins and weaknesses is usually obsessive***, and it often gives them a certain carnal satisfaction ('Your problems and sins are trivial, but mine are too complex even for God to

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was dressing characteristic of mourning, including the mourning of repentance (Job 42.6; Dan 9:3). Chorazin and Bethsaida were among the small villages on the lake of Galilee where Jesus ministered; Chorazin was a short walk, less than two miles, from Capernaum. It was unknown to people outside Palestine. Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, IVP Academic, 2014, p. 74-75.

<sup>15</sup> Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ*, Cumorah Foundation, 2008, p. 289.

<sup>16</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, "[The Unforgettable Holy Land](#)," *Conference Report, April 1961*.

<sup>17</sup> Neal A. Maxwell, "'Meek and Lowly'" as found in [The Neal A. Maxwell quote book](#), Bookcraft, 1997, p. 35.

resolve!') These individuals need to repent, not (at least not at first) of any single transgression but rather of their wallowing self-indulgence on the one hand and their lack of faith in the infinite power of Christ on the other."<sup>18</sup>

### **Matthew 12.1-13: It is lawful to do well on the Sabbath**

As one may gather here, informal dialogues could occur in smaller synagogue gatherings in this period that are quite different from the stricter ritual observed in many synagogues today. The predominant school of Pharisees in this period, the [Shammaites](#), did not allow praying for the sick on the sabbath; the minority school, however, the Hillelites<sup>19</sup> (who later became predominant after 70 AD), allowed it. The Essenes would have forbidden even rescuing an animal on the sabbath, but many Pharisees and most other Jewish interpreters would have agreed with Jesus. Pits were sometimes dug to capture predators such as wolves, but livestock could fall into them as well. Counterquestions (as here, answering 12:10) were common in the debates of Jewish teachers. Jesus here uses a standard Jewish argument, "how much more" (*qal vahomer*): If one is concerned for a sheep, how much more for a person? This too was an argument his opponents had to understand, and by analogy it showed the inconsistency of their interpretation of biblical sabbath laws.<sup>20</sup>

Matthew 12.12-13. Pharisees even debated whether medicine could be applied on the sabbath. By contrast, Jesus here not only applied no medicine; he did not even lay hands on the man.<sup>21</sup>

### **Things to do on the Sabbath**

Mark 2.27 – "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

Mark 1.21; Luke 13.10 – Teach

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<sup>18</sup> Stephen E. Robinson, [Following Christ: The Parable of the Divers and More Good News](#), Deseret Book, p. 129, emphasis added.

<sup>19</sup> The Hillelites and Shammaites were two groups of rabbis in ancient Judaism who had different interpretations of Jewish law and tradition. They disagreed on a variety of issues, but some of the main areas of disagreement included the interpretation of the Sabbath, the proper way to perform ritual purification, and the interpretation of certain verses in the Hebrew Bible. Additionally, the Hillelites were known for their more lenient approach to Jewish law, while the Shammaites were known for their more strict approach. In most cases, though not always, Beit Hillel's opinion is the more lenient and tolerant of the two. In nearly all cases, Beit Hillel's opinion has been accepted as normative by halacha, and is the opinion followed by modern Jews. See: [Houses of Hillel and Shammai](#). See also: [Bet Hillel and Bet Shammai](#). An example of a stricter interpretation of Jewish law by the Shammaites is their approach to the laws of Shabbat (the Sabbath). The Hillelites, by contrast, had a more lenient approach. Examples of the differences between the houses abound. One example is that the Hillelites allowed for the kindling of a fire on the Sabbath, which was prohibited by the Shammaites, as they interpreted the biblical prohibition of "kindling a fire" on the Sabbath more strictly. Another example is that Hillelites allowed for carrying objects in the public domain on Shabbat, while the Shammaites prohibited it, considering it as a form of work. See [The Jewish Quarterly Review](#), Volume 19, edited by Abrahams and Montefiore, London, MacMillan and Company, 1907, p. 622.

These are just examples and there were other areas in which the Shammaites had stricter interpretation of Jewish law and tradition.

<sup>20</sup> Keener, p. 76.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

Mark 2.26 (JST) – The Sabbath was given unto man for a day of rest

Mark 3.4 – Save Life

John 9.14 – Jesus opened eyes on the Sabbath

### **Matthew 12.14-21: The Pharisees council how to destroy Jesus, Matthew quotes Isaiah**

Destroying Jesus (Matt. 12.14-16)

Pharisees, who had little political power in this period, could do no better than plot. Jewish courts could not enforce the death penalty in this period, although the law of Moses allowed it for sabbath violation (Ex 31:14; 35:2). Indeed, these Pharisees violate standard Pharisaic ethics, which could tolerate opposing biblical arguments and which emphasized leniency, especially regarding death sentences. The issue is not their official ethics (which often resemble those of Jesus) but their hearts.<sup>22</sup>

Behold my servant, whom I have chosen... I will put my spirit upon him (Matt. 12.17-21).

Here Jesus is quoting Isaiah 42.1-4:

Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law. (Isaiah 42.1-4)

Matthew does not report Jesus quoting this portion of Isaiah (Isa. 42.4a-b):

וְלֹא יִכְהָה וְלֹא יִרְוַץ עַד-יֵשִׁים בְּאָרֶץ מִשְׁפָּט “He will not **grow weak/faint** nor be **discouraged** until he has established fairness/justice on the earth”

Perhaps he omits this because unfairness still exists in his day. Perhaps there were other reasons. Essentially Matthew is emphasizing that Jesus is the servant spoken of by Isaiah. We see a similar pattern in Abinadi’s proclamation to the wicked king Noah in the Book of Mormon.

A bruised reed shall he not break (Matt. 12.20).

A reed was used for measuring and for support, so that once its straightness was lost by bending or cracking it was of no further use. A strip of linen cloth used as a lamp wick, if it smokes, is of no use for giving light and is simply a source of pollution; it is in danger of going out altogether. Common sense would demand that both be replaced, the reed being snapped and discarded or burned and the wick extinguished. **The imagery thus describes an extraordinary willingness to encourage damaged or vulnerable people**, giving them a further opportunity to succeed which a results-oriented society would deny them. **The servant will not be quick to condemn and to discard, but will persevere until God’s purpose of “justice” has been achieved.**<sup>23</sup>

### **Matthew 12.31-37; Mark 3.28-30: No Forgiveness for Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost**

<sup>22</sup> Keener, p. 76.

<sup>23</sup> R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Eerdmans, 2007, p. 444 electronic version, emphasis added.



Many Jewish teachers taught that one's sufferings in this life could make up for sins; but certain grave sins would be carried over into the world to come. (Some teachers declared similarly that King Manasseh's repentance allowed him to be forgiven in this world but not in the world to come.) "Highhanded" sins—deliberate rebellion against God—could not be \*atoned for under Old Testament law. Blasphemy was punishable by death (Lev 24:10-23).<sup>24</sup>

Joseph Smith declared:

"All sins shall be forgiven, except the sin against the Holy Ghost; for Jesus will save all except the sons of perdition. What must a man do to commit the unpardonable sin? ***He must receive the Holy Ghost, have the heavens opened unto him, and know God, and then sin against Him.*** After a man has sinned against the Holy Ghost, there is no repentance for him. ***He has got to say that the sun does not shine while he sees it; he has got to deny Jesus Christ when the heavens have been opened unto him, and to deny the plan of salvation with his eyes open to the truth of it; and from that time he begins to be an enemy.***'

"The sin against the Holy Ghost is unpardonable because it is not covered by the atoning blood of Christ and because no amount of personal suffering on the part of the sinner can atone for the pernicious deed."<sup>25</sup>

#### **Matthew 12.38-45: Jesus discusses signs**

A wicked and adulterous generation (Matt. 12.39)

Γενεὰ πονηρὰ καὶ μοιχαλὶς σημεῖον ἐπιζητεῖ "An evil and adulterous<sup>26</sup> generation seeks a sign!" (Matt. 12.39b my translation)

Joseph Smith said:

"'When I was preaching in Philadelphia,' the Prophet said, 'a Quaker called out for a sign. I told him to be still. After the sermon, he again asked for a sign. I told the congregation the man was an adulterer; that a wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and that the Lord had said to me in a revelation, that any man who wanted a sign was an adulterous person. 'It is true,' cried one, 'for I caught him in the very act,' which the man afterwards confessed when he was baptized.'<sup>27</sup>

On another occasion he taught:

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<sup>24</sup> Keener, p. 77.

<sup>25</sup> Kent P. Jackson, ed., *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 8: Alma 30 to Moroni*, Deseret Book, 2004, p. 49-50. To me (Mike Day), I see the Atonement of Christ as one of infinite power. For this reason, I do not interpret Jesus' words here as being that someone can commit a sin that cannot be fixed. Rather, I see this sin as a description of one who wants nothing to do with redemption. In other words, I do not read this as a sin of one who wants forgiveness but cannot obtain it, rather as one who wants nothing to do with Jesus and his light. I cannot read this passage in any other way due to my belief that the Atonement is of infinite power. See also Joseph Fielding Smith's comments in *Doctrines of Salvation Volume 3*, p. 153 and Volume 1 p. 49.

<sup>26</sup> μοιχαλὶς, from μοιχός – an adulterer, also figuratively as one who is faithless towards God, or the ungodly.

<sup>27</sup> Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 278.

"The principle is as correct as the one that Jesus put forth in saying that he who seeketh a sign is an adulterous person; and that principle is eternal, undeviating, and firm as the pillars of heaven; for whenever you see a man seeking after a sign, you may set it down that he is an adulterous man."<sup>28</sup>

Signs are given for a purpose:

1. To help those who desire to follow Christ to believe: (Hel. 14.12, 28-29; 16.5).
2. To leave the wicked without an excuse, so that a "righteous judgment" might come upon them: (Hel.14.29; Hel. 15.17; D&C 88.82).

### **The Sign of Jonah (Matt. 12.40-41)**

Some scholars have been critical of the story of Jonah, claiming that the story was too incredible to be true. Many see Christ's reference to the incident gives credence to the story as it appears in our Old Testament. The following story is also interesting:

"In 1891, a whaling crew operating off the Falkland Islands was beset with difficulties. A whale, which emerged when a harpoon sunk into its flesh, turned on the small boat and capsized it. Three of the men who were overboard were unable to make it back to the mother vessel. Later that evening, the dying whale surfaced and was rigged to the side of the whaling ship. When the crew began the task of butchering it, one of the three missing men, James Bartley, was found inside the whale's stomach. He had survived in his mammalian undersea prison for 15 hours! The acidity of the whale's stomach had permanently bleached his skin and removed his hair, and he was almost blind. Unable to continue his chosen trade, Bartley turned to shoe making and remained a cobbler the rest of his life."<sup>29</sup>

### **Matthew 12.46-50; Mark 3.31-35; Luke 8.19-21: Whoever does the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, sister, and mother**

Jesus' statement about who is family is revolutionary. First, given the efforts that Mark has taken to suggest Jesus' exalted status and authority, to now show Jesus recognizing a large crowd as his family is quite extraordinary. Next, given the role of the biological family in this society, Jesus is presenting an absolutely revolutionary teaching. The passage does leave open the door to his biological family becoming part of his new family- he has not rejected them; he just can't welcome them into the new family until they do the will of God. Jesus isn't presented as being antifamily, but, when in conflict, doing the will of God supersedes obligation to biological family. It is important not to focus too much on the exclusion of his family (who, according to later tradition, did eventually come to believe in him (Acts 1.14) but on the inclusiveness that Jesus is offering to all people who want to follow him. Unstated here is the cost of discipleship- all of these people have left their families, including Jesus. The rupture of family relationships is the cost of doing the will of God by being with Jesus.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 3: 385.

<sup>29</sup> John A. Tvedtnes, "[Jonah](#)," *Ensign*, June 1974. **This story is disputed.** Historians have since concluded that the *Star of the East* was not a whaler, and there was no James Bartley on its crew manifest, while scientists confirm it is not possible to survive for 15 hours in the stomach of a sperm whale. See: Woolveridge, "[Did a 19th-century sailor get swallowed by a sperm whale and survive?](#)" *Australian Geographic*, Mar. 2, 2017.

<sup>30</sup> Julie Smith, *The Gospel According to Mark, Brigham Young University New Testament Commentary*, BYU Studies, 2018, p. 252.

"There is a pathetic irony in the Savior's words. Surely no one wants families to be forever, joined and united, more than Jesus. No one wants father and mother, brother and sister, parents and children-families-to be close and at peace more than the Christ. And yet the Lord here highlights a less than pleasant point-that gospel living costs something, even occasionally the loss of family and friends. It may well result in division and variance."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Robert L. Millet, [\*An Eye Single to the Glory of God: Reflections on the Cost of Discipleship\*](#), Deseret Book, 1991, 87.