

BIBLE STUDY IN MATTHEW  
11/10/10

OUTLINE (adapted from Blomberg, NAC):

- I. Introduction to Yeshua's ministry (1:1-4:26).
  - A. Yeshua's origin (1:1-2:23)
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    - 2. Genealogy (1:2-17)
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- II. Yeshua's ministry unfolds (4:17-16:20)
  - A. Yeshua's authority in preaching and healing (4:17-9:35)
  - B. Rising opposition to his ministry (9:36-12:50)
  - C. Progressive polarization of the response to him (13:1-16:20)
- III. The climax of Yeshua's ministry (16:21-28:20)
  - A. Focus on his coming death and resurrection (16:21-18:35)
  - B. Road to Jerusalem: impending judgment on Israel (19:1-25:46)
  - C. Yeshua's ultimate destiny (26:1-28:20)

*Congregation Yeshuat Tsion*  
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- I. Introduction to Yeshua's ministry (1:1-4:26).
- A. Yeshua's origin (1:1-2:23)
1. Heading (1:1)
- a. Right from the beginning, Matthew seeks to place the setting of his record in a clearly Jewish setting
- i. The title, "record of the genealogy," can be literally translated as "the book of the genesis [origin]," (Blomb.). The Tanach is full of examples of genealogies (e.g. I Chron. 8:28—*toldot*=תולדות).
- ii. According to Josephus, the genealogical records were stored in the Temple as "public registers," available to all. This is another indication that Matthew was written before 70CE. Having proof of one's lineage was needed to gain access to temple worship.
- iii. Matthew is identified as the former tax collector—one with much wealth and connection to the outcasts of society (Mt. 9:9-10).
- iv. The purpose for those records were part of the **corporate identity** of the people of Israel who viewed themselves not as individuals but as members of a larger whole (family, clan, tribe, nation).
- α. A typical expression to express the passing away of a king of Israel is "he was **gathered to his fathers**," (i.e. buried in the family cave/plot).
- β. That connects to the importance of someone's **name being remembered** (e.g. the daughters of Zelophehad)
- iv. In this case, the listing of Yeshua's genealogy, through the line of Joseph, was for apologetic purposes—to validate for a Jewish reader the lineage of Yeshua from David.
- b. Yeshua is described as "Christ," (**Messiah**). People often use that as part of his name, "Yeshua Christ."
- i. It is clearly a title, the Messiah—*mashiach*=משיח, the anointed one (e.g. David in I Sam. 16:13)
- ii. This was a Jewish title. The Greeks did not have a comparable notion of "an anointed one."
- α. Papias, one of the Church fathers (135 CE), wrote that Matthew first wrote his record in Hebrew/Aramaic and then translated / had it translated to Greek. He does not give any evidence to support his statement.
- β. There is a debate among those who claim that Matthew was one of the NT books written in Hebrew vs. those who claim that it was only written in Greek.
- γ. Regardless of the original language, what we have now is "Jewish Greek," a Greek that expresses the Jewish mindset of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. Christian scholarship had for centuries looked in vain for Greek thought in the NT.
- δ. We have good reason to believe that Yeshua and his disciples were tri-lingual—they spoke/communicated in Greek (commerce with Gentile neighbors in Galilee), Aramaic (the common everyday language) and Hebrew (the language of Scripture as read in the synagogue).
- iii. Yeshua avoided using the title Messiah because of the popular misconception of who Messiah should be.
- α. The 1<sup>st</sup> century view of the messiah was a political ruler/king who would inspire them and lead them to overthrow the Roman yoke (Jn. 6:15).
- β. Yeshua refers to himself as the Messiah only obliquely (Samaritan woman, Jn. 4:25 and the

Sanhedrin, Mt. 26:63).

γ. His preferred self-designation is “son of man,” (82x) because it was ambiguous enough to the listeners so that they would not attach political overtones and because of the humility involved.

δ. “Son of man,” appears mostly in Ezekiel (93x) and also **Daniel** (“son of man coming in the clouds,” **7:13**).

c. Yeshua is presented as “**son of David.**”

i. Matthew uses this title more than the other gospels (9x) because he is trying to convince the Jewish reader of the validity of Yeshua’s right to be the Messiah.

ii. This title goes back to II Sam. 7:5,11-16, where David offers to build G-d a house (temple) but G-d chooses to build David a house (dynasty) that will last forever.

iii. In Jewish literature (Pss. Sol 17:21-18:7), the Son of David appears as the “righteous warrior-king who establishes G-d’s rule in Israel.”

iv. The Hasmoneans (descendants of the Maccabees) established a 100-year long independent reign. However, it ended about 70 years prior (63 BCE) and they were known as corrupt rulers.

v. By the 1<sup>st</sup> century, this title was well known by the religious establishment (“Messiah is son of David,” Mt. 22:42) and the masses (e.g. Mt. 12:23, “this must be the son of David=the Messiah).

d. Yeshua is presented as “**son of Abraham,**” meaning, “he is one of us.” In the 1<sup>st</sup> century, it was common for Jewish people to speak of “Abraham our father,” (e.g. Mt. 3:19).

e. Additional insights into the title (1:1):

i. The Greek verb  $\gamma\epsilon\gamma\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota$  translated as “begat,” (ASV, or, NIV=“was the father of”), does not necessarily mean direct relationship. It can mean “be the ancestor of.”

ii. Son of Abraham: “son” likewise, can mean (JNTC):

α. Literally, “son of” [his father]

β. Descendent of

γ. Having the characteristics of (Bar-Naba=“Son of Encouragement”).

iii. Son of David takes us back to G-d’s covenant with David, where He promised an endless dynasty (II Sam. 7:12). As well, it is mentioned in prophetic passages (e.g. Jer. 23:5; 33:17; Ezek. 34:23; 37:24).

iv. Son of Abraham includes both identity as a Jew (Abraham our father) and as a promised Messiah (Gen. 12:3).

## 2. **Genealogy** (1:2-17)

a. Matthew and Luke give the genealogy of Yeshua with a different emphasis:

i. Matthew begins with Abraham and ends with Yeshua, through the line of Miriam (royal line).

ii. Luke begins with Yeshua in his association with his step father Joseph (legal line). Yeshua was known as the son of Joseph, who took him under wing and raised him (Jn. 6:42). Luke ends with Adam, described as “the son of G-d.”

b. The number of people (generations) in Matthew’s genealogy is 14. It is possible that this came from gematria (numerology, not necessarily evil) for David (דוד = 4=6+4).

i. That is clearly a rounded number that was a standard convention in genealogical record keeping.

ii. In a number of cases, Matthew omitted names in order to fit the genealogy to convention.

iii. Most of the genealogy comes from the Septuagint’s record in Chronicles (I Chron. 2:1-15; 3:5-24) and Ruth (4:12-22). The rest of the names probably came from extra-Biblical sources, mentioned by Josephus as “public registers” [in the temple].

- iv. It is likely that Matthew was countering charges by Yeshua's opponents that He was born illegitimately (hinted at Jn. 8:48). This became a standard accusation against Yeshua later on (e.g. Shab. 104b; Sanh. 67a and Toldot Yeshu, a Medieval scurrilous tract against Yeshua).
- c. Matthew includes 5 women in the genealogy, which was unusual and unnecessary—the line of descent went through the father: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba (1:6, by implication) and Miriyam.
- i. Three of the women were Gentile (Tamar, Rahab and Ruth). All of whom were integrated into the community of faith of Israel (e.g. Josh. 6:25; Ruth 4:11-12)
  - ii. Two of the women produced offsprings in dishonorable situations (Tamar—incestuous relation with her father-in-law; Bathsheba—resulting in the death of her husband).
  - iii. In all of them, a case can be made that they were seen as having illicit sexual activity or childbearing (Blomberg). If so, this strengthens the argument that just as G-d brought redemption in the past (better known sinners), He sent **Yeshua to bring redemption to mankind** (Mt. 1:21).
  - iv. Rahab was part of the people slated for destruction—yet, the Lord redeemed her; Ruth was part of a people (the Moabites) who were forbidden from the assembly of the Lord to the 10<sup>th</sup> generation (Deut. 23:3). With her as well, the Lord worked redemptively.
  - v. Nonetheless, it is important to realize that while the Lord wiped away sins, He did not wipe away the identity: Rahab is referred to as “the prostitute,” (James 2) and Ruth is described as “the Moabitess.”
- d. The emphasis on G-d's unusual and unexpected providence in working through human foibles continues with the list of the male progenitors of Messiah.
- i. Some of those listed were G-dly kings (Asa, Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat).
  - ii. Many others were reprobate (Ahaz, Manasseh).
  - iii. An usual example was Jeconiah, mentioned 2x by Matthew: 1:11, 12. It is commonly (and erroneously) assumed that there are two genealogies to account for the fact that Jeconiah (also Coniah) was cursed. It is important to note that those two are a totally different part of his history:
    - α. At first, he was cursed, childless and deported to Babylon (II Ki. 24:8-12; Jer. 22:30).
    - β. A Later on, he was released from prison, restored and became the father of many children (II Ki. 25:27-30; I Chron. 3:17-18; Jer. 52:31-34).
  - e. The Babylonian exile occupies a central place in the genealogy, perhaps as a symbol that Yeshua is the climax of the restoration of Israel from exile.
3. **Mary's conception: G-d becomes human** (1:18-25):
- a. JEWISH WEDDING PRACTICES:
    - i. Establishing a marriage was divided into 2 periods:
      - α. Betrothal (erusin=ארוסין “engagement”) often 1 ½ year, were considered a formal union. A break up of the relationship at that point required a divorce, necessitating a get=a writ of divorcement (e.g. Deut. 24:1, 3).
      - β. Wedding (kiddushin=קידושין), was an elaborate affair: the groom prepared housing in his father's house (Jn. 14:1-5). On the wedding night, he came to bring the bride and her maids (Mt. 25:1-12). The wedding itself was a feast with a good amount of food and wine ( Jn. 2:1-10). The bride and groom retired to the bridal chamber (chupah=חופה), where they consummated the marriage. Afterwards, the celebration continued.
    - b. As far as their families/community was concerned, Joseph and Mary were married (hence, “Mary your wife,” although the Greek gunai=γυνή can mean simply “woman”).

- i. The fact that she was pregnant constituted adultery and had to be punished severely. The Torah mandated death by stoning as the penalty but by Yeshua's day, that was rarely carried out (Jn. 8:3-6; Lev. 20:10-11).
- ii. It is quite likely that her pregnant state was not known to the larger family/community. Joseph seems to have the leeway to make a private decision. DIVORCING HER PRIVATELY WOULD HAVE SPARED HER THE PUBLIC HUMILIATION AND THE PUNISHMENT. However, it would have been obvious to the community that Mary was bearing a child out of wedlock. That latter was a preferred option.
- c. Scripture describes him as a righteous=tsadik=צדיק.
  - i. Perhaps a reader could see in her conception by the Holy Spirit an example of other instances where the Spirit of G-d came upon people of Israel for unusual tasks (e.g. Samson).
  - ii. He treats his betrothed honorably, not accusing her of unfaithfulness.
- d. Joseph receives communication from G-d via a dream.
  - i. Dreams play a significant role in the birth narrative of Yeshua, 5x in Matthew (1:20; 2:12, 13, 19, 22). In the 1<sup>st</sup> century, dreams were viewed as messages from G-d.
  - ii. A Jewish reader likely made the **connection with the other Joseph**, in whose life dreams also played a significant part (the word "dream" appears 17x in Genesis).
  - iii. The angel goes to the heart of the matter—**fear** of a scandal for both him and Mary.
- e. The angel explains that Mary's **pregnancy was due to supernatural origin** (the Holy Spirit), rather due to an illicit relationship.
  - i. For a Jewish reader of the time, this would have resonated with other SUPERNATURALLY-DERIVED BIRTHS IN THE LIVES OF THE WOMEN OF G-D (Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Hannah, Samson's mother).
  - ii. **Names** in Scripture were much more than a tag. Rather, they typically were **prophetic in nature**, predicting the character or destiny of the person named (e.g. Isaiah's two sons).
    - α. The name Yeshua makes no sense in reference to his prophetic call. Yeshua is a Germanic form of the Greek, Iesus= Ἰησοῦς, which transliterates the Hebrew Yeshua=ישוע.
    - β. Yeshua=ישוע works well in the context. "He will save" in Hebrew is Yoshia=יושיע.
    - γ. Here, Yeshua's atoning death is hinted at. The price of his "saving his people from their sins" was his death.
    - δ. It is possible that Joseph may not have made the connection to the suffering servant of G-d in Isaiah 53.
  - iii. Matthew explains to his Jewish readers that Yeshua's birth was part of G-d's over arching redemptive purposes, as **predicted in the prophets**.
    - α. Here we see one of the "fulfillment formulae" that we find in Matthew (1:22; 3:15; 4:14; 5:17; 8:17; 12:17; 21:4). In the rest of the Gospels, we only see three in John.
    - β. Most of the time, it is expressed in the form of : "this was done to fulfill [G-d's prophetic word]." G-d's program was laid out by the prophets and Yeshua's life and ministry fulfilled them.
    - γ. In one (or possibly two occasions, definitely Mt. 5:17; possibly 3:17). Also, in Luke 4:18
    - δ. "**Fulfill**" (pleiro-o=πληροω) is often taken to mean "invalidate what went on before, so that what is new is established." Rather, what it means is "**to bring to fullness**," which implies that G-d's previous revelation **served its purpose** in relationship to the previous people of G-d. Now, in Yeshua, it comes to fullness (i.e. what **was in the container previously is not emptied**).
  - iv. The quotation of the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 is a classic example of the fulfillment.

α. This is also a classic example of how critics (Jewish and others) *accuse the Gospel writers of twisting the OT Scriptures*. It is ironic that when their approach is compared with customary rabbinic exegesis, it is clear that the NT writers quoted the OT in a way that was considered appropriate in 1<sup>st</sup> century Judaism (literal [p'shat], allegorical [midrashic], mystical [sod], play on words/hints extracted from the text [remez]).

β. The context in Isaiah's day was the Syro-Ephraimite War (734-735), in which Aram (Syria) and Ephraim/Samaria (the northern kingdom) attempted to persuade Judah to join them in an anti-Assyria confederation. Ahaz refused and Judah suffered a great deal (120,000 killed). Now, they were preparing to conquer Jerusalem and replace Ahaz with a king of their choosing.

γ. Ahaz was a G-dless king (I Ki. 16:1-19). He took silver and gold from the temple and gave it to Tiglat-Pileser, the Assyrian king as a part of his request to come and protect him. He also removed the bronze altar (for sacrifices for sin) and replaced it with an altar he saw in Damascus.

δ. Yet, because Ahaz was part of the Davidic dynasty, which was protected by the covenant (II Sam. 7:12), the Lord sent Isaiah to proclaim a word of encouragement. The Lord predicted that Samaria and Aram would be devastated. In 65 years (670 BCE), the Assyrians transplanted people from their empire and settled them in Samaria. The Israelites were exiled to Assyria (722 BCE). **That prophecy (7:7-10) was fulfilled in the immediate future.**

ε. The **third part of the message (7:15-25) was also fulfilled in the immediate future (701 BCE, during Hezekiah's reign)**. This was G-d's judgment on Ahaz's refusal to trust G-d (7:7-9). He did not believe (ta'aminu) and because of that he did not stand (te'amenu). The land was laid waste so that the people were reduced to a basic diet of curds and honey (living off the land).

η. The central verse itself, 7:14, has been seen by Jewish interpreters to apply to Hezekiah. During his life time, the Samaria and Syria alliance was destroyed. Much of Judah itself was reduced to poverty.

ζ. However, the word for "sign"  $\text{ot}=\text{אָהַת}$  is an indication of a supernatural move of G-d in power. If this is merely referring to a young woman (Ahaz's wife or Isaiah's wife), who was a virgin at the time of the prophecy but got married and bore a child, that is nothing supernatural.

κ. The Hebrew word translated as "virgin" in most Christian translations  $\text{almah}=\text{עַלְמָה}$ , normally means "a young woman." Hebrew has another word that means "young woman"— $\text{betulah}=\text{בְּטוּלָה}$ . Even that word is rarely translated as "virgin," (in the TANACH [NJPS], 3/5 it simply means "young woman.")

λ. The Septuagint translated the Hebrew,  $\text{almah}=\text{עַלְמָה}$ , (possibly "a virgin or a young woman") as  $\text{parthenos}=\text{παρθενος}$ , possibly "a virgin." Later (2<sup>nd</sup> century Jewish translations, (Aquila, Theodotion, Symmachus) rendered  $\text{almah}=\text{עַלְמָה}$ , as  $\text{neanis}=\text{νεανις}$ , distinctly "a young woman," to obscure any references to Yeshua.

μ. Yet, the prophecy in 7:14 has the same announcement format as others where the birth is supernatural (e.g. Samson). More to the point, an OT context views special births as G-d's doing (e.g. matriarchs). Because of that, Matthew viewed this verse as being fulfilled in Yeshua's birth, who was truly Immanu-El.

**v. Chapter 7 has to be seen in its larger context in Isaiah (ch. 7-11).** A messianic thread runs through these chapters:

7:17—Immanuel

8:8—Immanuel

9:6-7—a child named Peleh Yo'etz, El Gibbor, Avid Ad (names that strongly suggest deity)

10:20-21 Remnant will return to the Mighty G-d (El Gibbor)

## 11:1-11 Branch of Jesse...anointed by the Spirit of G-d

### vi. YESHUA'S DEITY IS A MAJOR DIVIDING WALL:

α. Virgin birth is dismissed as pagan myth. Jewish critics describe the virgin birth as a Christian version of the myths about Zeus appearing and impregnating young women.

β. The virgin birth is popularly equated by Jewish people with the Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, which states that Mary herself was free of “original sin” [personal or hereditary sin] That doctrine is unscriptural because the only one who was free of sin is Yeshua (Heb. 4:15).

γ. Yeshua's deity specifically (and the trinity in general) is considered a form of idol worship, even though in inter-faith dialogue, Christianity is considered one of the three major monotheistic religions.

δ. We see this squeashness about explicitly expressing Yeshua's deity by the NT writers. There are very few examples of Yeshua being explicitly referred to as G-d (Jn.20:28). Rather, the apostles reflected the 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish antipathy to anything that seemed to imply polytheism. That is why Jewish people then, and today, often use euphemism in referring to G-d (HaShem [the Name], HaMakom [the Place]).

ε. One of those euphemisms is “The Word,” in Greek *logos*=λογος, and in Aramaic, *memra*=ממרא. This term clearly refers to G-d—one who was pre-existent before creation, yet, it does not explicitly say, “G-d.”

η. Often, Yeshua is referred to as “Lord,” (*kurios*=κυριος) which is also the term used when speaking of the Father.

That is the Greek word for Adonai=hwhy, but in Greek is also means “sir, master.”

### 4. Bethlehem: Herod vs. the Magi (2:1-12)

a. Matthew does not describe the birth narratives which we find in Luke. Yeshua is probably between 1-2 years old (1:7,16). His birth took place in 6 BCE; Herod's death took place in 4 BCE.

b. Magi were wise men and astronomers/ astrologers, likely in the court of Persia.

i. There is **no reason to consider them to be sorcerers**, as was Balaam and like him, they **received supernatural messages from G-d**.

ii. They made calculations based on astronomy and astrological charts.

α. The appearance of an unusual star was viewed as a sign of the coming of a king. However, from seeing a star to understanding that a king was born in Jerusalem must have required some divine discernment.

β. There are many possible options for what the star looked like astronomically. However, that is a minor consideration. The major consideration is the fact **that supernatural power was involved in how the star appeared**.

iii. Although Christian tradition names them and assumes that there were three, there is no reason to do so because of the three categories of gifts (gold, frankincense and myrrh).

c. Herod “the Great,” was Idumean (Greek for “coming from Edom”).

i. The Idumeans were forcibly converted to Judaism by one of the Hasmoneans (John Hyrcanus).

ii. Herod was granted the rule over Judea by the Romans (ruling from 37-4 BCE). He was a great builder—the temple and palaces /fortresses (Masada, Caesaria) throughout the land. As he got older, he became paranoid and had a number of his immediate family (including a wife and sons)

killed. He was afraid that no one would mourn for his death that he gave orders that leading Jewish people were to be killed on the day he died.

α. He was afraid of a usurper to his throne, especially since he did not know the identity of the child.

β. Considering Herod's insane actions, we can see why the whole city would be terrified, not knowing that kind of atrocity he might commit. Also, he probably appointed some of the chief priests—they were in charge of the 24 orders of priests.

iii. Herod convenes the Sanhedrin (Chief priests and Pharisees) to question them about the prophetic prediction of the birth of Messiah.

α. He receives a unanimous answer that the location will be Bethlehem—the home town of David.

β. They quoted Micah 5:2 without identifying it, just saying “the prophet,” (one scroll). That was considered a messianic prophecy back then and still is (TJ Ber.5a etc.).

γ. The context in Micah implies difficult times for Israel when the child would be born. The rabbis referred to this as “birth pangs of Messiah,” (TB Sanh. 98b), the time of suffering preceding the coming of Messiah (analogous to Mt. 24:21).

δ. It is possible that Matthew adds insights/words from Ezekiel 34:23 to supplement the quotation from Micah 5.

#### 5. **The new Exodus from Egypt** (2:13-15)

a. This drama operates on several levels (human levels, on the ground, 2:12-13). However, for the Lord, the *DRAMA ON THE GROUND AT ANY GIVEN TIME IS PART/A PIECE OF A LARGER SET OF BLUE PRINTS THAT HE IS WORKING* (e.g. Rom. 8:28).

i. In this case, the Lord finishes the work with the magi, instructing them to go home.

ii. This is *another example of how G-d is able to speak to those who are not believers, when He sees fit*. He does so by means of another dream (5x in these two chapters).

iii. G-d is not limited in how He can relate to us. We do not need to utter “perfect” prayers before He will hear and respond.

b. The message Joseph receives is another one that is way out of the box. We can only imagine the shock of a message from G-d in the middle of the night that instructs him to pack up in a hurry and hit the trail to Egypt.

i. Joseph knew Herod's well deserved reputation for vicious, paranoid acts. He did not need to get a second warning from the angel.

α. They were to *remain in Egypt*, not until Herod's death, but ***until they received explicit word to leave***.

β. Joseph functions as an unusual man of G-d who **receives 5 explicit communications from G-d**. When we compare him with others, we see how unusual he is (e.g. G-d appeared to Abraham—4x; Isaac—1x; Jacob—2x). ***What sets him apart is the fact that he is providing the protective umbrella for Yeshua***.

γ. G-D TOOK STEPS TO ENSURE YESHUA'S PRESERVATION—HE WAS UNTOUCHABLE UNTIL “HIS TIME” HAD COME. We see all sorts of examples of that in the Gospels (e.g. they looked to stone him and He just “disappeared,” Lk. 4:28-30; Jn. 8:59: 10:31).

δ. The priority for the preservation of Yeshua is reflected in the order of the statement, “take the child and his mother,” (2:13).

ii. Egypt in Scripture symbolizes oppression (bondage) and resorting to human help instead of G-d (Isa. 31:1; 36:6). It also functions as a *place of refuge* (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Gen. 46); I Ki. 11:14; Jer. 26:21-23; 43:7). Egypt was a Roman province, outside of Herod's jurisdiction.

iii. The trip to Egypt was a long and perilous one—crossing the Judean Hills to the coastal highway (Via Maris) that ran down to Egypt, 75 miles to the border. By the 1<sup>st</sup> century, Egypt had a population of 1 million (Philo writing in 40 CE). The Septuagint, the 1<sup>st</sup> translation of the Scripture into Greek was written in Egypt (Alexandria), approximately 150 years earlier.

iii. The family stayed in Egypt several months, till Herod died (4BCE).

c. Now we have another “fulfillment formula,” designed to demonstrate to a Jewish reader that Yeshua’s life and ministry fit into G-d’s larger plans of redemption, as spelled out in the prophets.

i. We see this expression, “**fulfilled**” or “**might be fulfilled**” **39x** in the Gospels, primarily during the time of Yeshua’s birth and his death.

ii. It appears as many times in Matthew (written to a Jewish audience) as in Luke and John (ostensibly written for an audience of Gentile believers who had become familiar with the OT).

d. Matthew’s quotation of Hosea 11:1 does not fit a straightforward prediction (e.g. Mt. 2:5-6, Bethlehem).

i. The original context refers to G-d bringing Israel out of Egypt, itself a fulfillment of his prediction to Moses (Exod. 4:22,23; also, 6:6-8). In that context, G-d refers to Israel as “my [first born] son,” (b’ni b’chori=בְּנִי בְּכוֹרִי).

ii. Also, Hosea’s context pictures a rebellious Israel, which obviously cannot apply to Yeshua.

iii. **Yet, Hosea speaks of G-d’s love for Israel (11:3-4, ahavah=affection) and predicts G-d’s redemption of Israel (11:10-11).**

e. Matthew’s application of Hosea can be viewed in one of two basic ways:

i. A traditional Christian approach views Matthew’s use as “typological” (or analogical correspondence, Blomberg, DA Carson). In other words, Matthew is not reading into Hosea what was not there in a germ.

α. On one hand, Hosea is not thinking explicitly of the messiah in making the prophecy.

β. On the other hand, Hosea was aware of how just as Israel was G-d’s son, David’s son would also be G-d’s son (II Sam. 7: 13-14).

γ. “Just as G-d brought the nation of Israel out of Egypt to inaugurate his original covenant with them, so again G-d is bringing the Messiah, who fulfills the hopes of Israel, out of Egypt, as He is about to inaugurate his new covenant,” (Blomberg, NAC, 67).

ε. The idea that G-d’s working in history provides a model for his working with later people is an accepted one by the rabbis.

ii. One MJ approach (Stern, NTC, 12-13), sees Matthews quotation of Hosea 11 as fitting the 1<sup>st</sup> century rabbinic/Pharasaic patterns of interpreting Scripture, described by the acronym PaRDeS:

α. **P**’Shat is the literal interpretation of the text, which clearly does not fit here.

β. **R**emez means “a hint,” some word or phrase hints at a larger truth not evident in the p’shat

γ. **D**’rah means “an allegory or homiletical approach,” where the interpreter reads into the text and makes a point that the text does not make (e.g. Gal. 3:24-25, “Hagar vs. Jerusalem” figuratively/allegorically).

δ. **S**od means a secret, which is derived at by use of gematria (numerology, Torah=תּוֹרָה = 611 +2 in Hebrew) or comparing minor letters (e.g. Isa. 61-p’er vs. epher).

\*\*MATTHEW WAS PROBABLY FAMILIAR WITH THE PARDES APPROACH. MORE LIKELY, THAT WAS ON HIS SCREEN.

iii. Yeshua is the ultimate son of G-d (Isa. 9:6; Ps. 2:7; Prov. 30:4), who completes the mission Israel was given and failed to accomplish. Yeshua is identified with his people, corporately, just as He identifies with them individually.

## 6. Ramah: weeping for the dead children (2:16-21).

a. Herod viewed the actions of the magi as serious loss of face (in Greek, *enepaizo*= “mocked”), which was unacceptable in that culture, especially for someone like him, who was paranoid.

i. There was a time span, enough to allow consideration for a trip to Bethlehem (5 miles S. of Jerusalem) and a return to Jerusalem.

α. This perhaps represented 1-2 days worth of travel, since the terrain was mountainous (about 2600 feet above sea level, approximately the same as that of Jerusalem).

β. **Herod raged against the Lord and his mashiach** (Ps. 2:2-4), but the Lord laughed at him.

γ. There is no historical record of the murder of the children in Bethlehem. However, that should not be surprising, since times were violent (e.g. one of the Hasmonean kings, crucified 800 Pharisees).

ii. Bethlehem was a small town and the area around it was rural. Perhaps 20 children were slaughtered. However, this slaughter, has a much greater impact than the actual number—this lines up with the **attempt by Pharaoh** to slaughter the male children.

b. Matthew views the slaughter of the innocents as a “fulfillment” of the prophecy in Jeremiah 31:15. However, in other “fulfillment formulae,” the language reads, “this happened in order [purpose from G-d] to fulfill....”

i. In its original context, this passage speaks about the mothers of Jerusalem weeping for their sons who are about to be exiled to Babylon. Rachel is viewed as the epitome of mourning Jewish mothers (“a loud lament, bitter crying, wailing”).

ii. Ramah was about 5 miles north of Jerusalem and would have been one of the first way stations (stopping places) on the way to Babylon.

α. Jeremiah himself was rescued by Nebuzaradan, the commander of the imperial guard at Ramah. Jeremiah was bound in chains along with the other Judeans being carried off into exile (Jer. 40:1).

β. According to I Sam. 10:2-3, Rachel’s grave was in that general vicinity. The Palestinian Authority considers Rachel’s tomb (a place of Jewish pilgrimage) to be a Palestinian site.

iii. The larger prophecy in **Jeremiah (31:13-17)** speaks **about restoration** of the exiles from Babylon.

α. Because the punishment (literally, the “wages,” *sachar*=שכר) have been fully paid—the 70 year duration of the exile had come to an end.

β. The language resembles that of Isaiah 40:1-2 (“her penalty has been paid in full”).

iv. Thus, Matthew refers to Jeremiah for several reasons:

α. despite Herod’s murderous plans, **Messiah survived and there is hope** for the nation.

β. The tears that began with “Rachel” at the beginning of the Babylonian exile are now finishing, with the weeping of the mothers of Bethlehem. This is part of G-d’s plan in general terms—to **turn their mourning to joy (Jer. 31:13)**

γ. The larger context of Jeremiah 31 refers to EPHRAIM=ISRAEL AS G-D’S DEAR SON. We had seen the earlier reference to Yeshua as G-d’s son.

δ. JEREMIAH INTRODUCES THE NEW COVENANT G-D WILL MAKE WITH ISRAEL.

c. Jeremiah was applying an earlier passage in Scripture (“fulfillment,” Gen. 42:36) where Rachel is grieving over the prospects of both of her sons being “no more,” (Joseph and Benjamin being in Egypt).

i. Jacob himself was prepared to grieve and considered the prospect of harm coming to Benjamin as a sure cause for him to go down to Sh’ol=שואל, in sorrow (**Gen. 42:36-38; 43:12-14**).

ii. This can be viewed as an example of “historical re-capitulation,” meaning that an earlier event is played out later in Israel’s history (Blomberg).

7. **Nazareth: coming home to obscurity** (2:19-23).

a. After Herod (the Great) died (4BCE), his kingdom was divided into 4 tetrarchies (divisions), but practically, only 3 of his sons ruled after him:

i. Archelaus ruled in Idumea (southern Israel), Judea and Samaria.

ii. Herod Antipas received control of two of the tetrarchies—he ruled in Galilee and across the Jordan in Perea.

iii. Herod Philip II ruled in Traconitis (located in modern day Syria) and Iturea (located in modern day Lebanon)

b. The sons were different:

i. Archelaus was a cruel and ineffective ruler. Shortly after he assumed the throne, he ordered a massacre to take place (Joseph. Antiq 17.9.3). The leaders of the Jewish community went to Rome to complain and shortly afterwards, he was removed.

ii. Antipas had a better reputation as a ruler. That is why Joseph and Miriyam came to Nazareth. However, Antipas proved to be a weak and cruel ruler. Their decision was no doubt also based on Nazareth being their home town (Lk. 2:39).

iii. Philip II was the best of the sons. Yeshua often retreated to his territory during his ministry (Mt. 14:13; 15:29; 16:13).

**b. Matthew’s statement stimulated much discussion because it too does not fit the mold of p’shat** (literal fulfillment).

Matt. 2:23 and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was **fulfilled** what was said through the **prophets**: “He will be called a Nazarene.”

i. There is no prophetic text that explicitly states, “he will be called a Nazarene”.

ii. There are a several options in interpreting Matthew’s meaning here.

i. The verb *natar*=נָטַר, means “to watch, to guard, to keep.” Those who are employed in these functions are called **watchmen** (Qal active plural participle נֹטְרִים, Jer 31:6; 2 Kgs 17:9; 18:8). The Lord himself is regarded as a keeper or watchman over his vineyard Israel and over all men in general [Isa. 27:3, אֲנִי יְהוָה נֹטְרֵהָ, אֶנְי יְהוָה אֶפְעֵל; Job 7:20, אֵלֶיךָ נֹטֵר הָאָדָם, הַשָּׂאֵתִי מִהָ אֶפְעֵל. It is a very close connection from *Notzri*=נוֹטְרִי, one from Nazareth to *notzer*=נוֹטֵר, a watchman]

ii. Yeshua came from a town that was **despised by the rest of the country** (e.g. Jn.1:46). The prophets predicted that the Servant of the Lord (Messiah) would be despised (Ps. 22; Isa. 52:13-53:12). In that sense, Yeshua’s living in Nazareth fulfilled the prediction of the prophets.

iii. The other, more popular option is *netzer*=נֵצֶר, which means “to **branch, shoot, sprout.**”

α. The prophets referred to G-d’s servant, code named “the branch” who would be engaged in redemption. That is a very apt description because in these prophetic passages, “*the branch*” is *associated with G-d’s redemption growing/ working through a remnant.*

β. The term “branch” (*netzer*=נֵצֶר) in Isa. 11:1 refers to one who would come from **David’s lineage.**

γ. There is another Hebrew term translated as “branch” (*tsemach*=צִמְחָה) “a branch which grows,” (Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12). In these passages, the “branch” is seen **ruling as Israel’s king** and as the one who will restore the temple.

δ. “This branch, the descendant of David epitomizes all that the Lord has promised to David (2 Sam 7:1ff.). The messianic character of this title is recognized in the Targum, rabbinical literature, and the Qumran material.”

It makes good sense that Matthew would use this title (the Branch) as applying to Yeshua: “from Nazareth” (Notzri/Natzrati= נוצרי/נוצרה) is a word play on the title “the Branch” (Netzer=נצר)

ε. “In keeping with the concept of corporate solidarity, it is not unusual to see a use of נצר which includes the **believing remnant of Israel in 60:21**. The fulfillment of the Abrahamic-Davidic-New Covenant finds all the people righteous, the land possessed forever and the “shoot” of G-d’s planting, the work of his hands, glorified (cf. 61:3). Thus **the many can be called by the name of the One who epitomizes that group** (TWOT).

### C. Yeshua’s preparation for ministry (3:1-4:16)

#### 1. John the Baptist=Yochanan Ha-Matbil, the prophetic forerunner of Messiah (3:1-12)

a. His origins [Yochanan=G-d was merciful/showed favor], **Lk. 1:13-17**:

i. Elijah-like in seeing Israel prepared as a people to serve G-d (Lk. 17)

ii. His commission was to restore families (Mal. 4:6)

b. The Torah taught much about bathing oneself to be ritually pure:

i. “Baptizo” means to dip, soak, immerse an object in a liquid.”

α. MJ’s prefers the term “t’vilah” [טבילה] because it is free of the associations with forced conversions/baptism Jews had to endure in “Christian” Europe.

β. The act of immersion / **t’vilah takes place in** a bath for ritual purity called “a **mikveh**” [מיקוה].

ii. The Torah stipulated washing=immersion for ritual cleansing on many occasions (Lev. 14-15):

α. healing/cleansing of leprosy (Lev. 14:8),

β. a person with a physical discharge (semen [15:2-18], or menstrual blood [15:18-30]) was unclean. He/she had to bathe, isolate themselves for 7 days, come to the sanctuary with a chatat=חטאת=“sin/purification offering” and an olah=עולה, “burnt/complete dedication offering.”

γ. a person who touched a corpse (Num. 5:2, 9:6, 11-13).

iii. We see that the ritual defilement, as spelled out in the Torah resulted in **secondary defilement**—any object the unclean person touched became unclean & if someone touched that object, they too became unclean. Rabbinic tradition increased the level of defilement to tertiary (3 levels).

iv. Why was so much attention devoted in the Torah to matters of ritual defilement/purification ?

α. It was a matter of obedience—G-d required it.

α. It was a **very powerful/vivid symbol of how easy it is to become defiled morally/spiritually**.

c. The **Rabbis devoted 1/6 of the Talmud to matters of ritual purification**.

i. Many homes had their own mikveh, especially in Jerusalem, so that the people could come ritually clean to corporate worship there. That was a huge potential problem because if they became ritually defiled, they had to stay away for 7 days (after which the feast would be over, Lev. 15:13-14).

ii. Peter and John observed these laws/ customs because they came to the Temple frequently (Stern in JNTC)

iii. Paul likewise observed it. When he came to the Temple to pay for the ritual cleansing of the 4 brothers who were concluding a vow, he too had to be ritually clean (Acts 21:24).

d. His mode of immersion=a major change in Torah observance/ Jewish custom of mikveh.

i. His call was unique in that it was not for the purpose of ritual cleansing, nor for cleansing from one specific sin. This was not to provide atonement for individual sins, a case where the people were remorseful for individual acts [e.g. to feel sorry that one has done this or that, [Jonah 3:9)], of having offended someone, Luke 17:3]

ii. This is a call to repent across the board. **He called people to come and be immersed as a picture of their being cleansed from a life pattern of sin.** The Greek verb for “repent” here is *metano'e'o*=μετανοέω, meaning “a change in one’s way of life as the result of a complete change of thought and attitude,” (L & N).

iii. It is both a turning from (sin) and turning to (G-d).

iv. It is analogous to the movement in Judaism today where people are called *ba'alei t'shuvah*=בעלי תשובה, those who were living a profane (secular) lifestyle and who determine to pursue a Torah observant life style.

iv. **He implies to the Pharisees that although they are physically sons of Abraham, they need a complete transformation, analogous to what a proselyte would undergo.**

v. Yeshua conveys the same message to Nicodemus that he is not currently in the Kingdom of G-d and that only if he underwent the new birth would he be able to see the Kingdom of G-d (Jn. 3:3).

This was a radical departure from traditional Judaism that taught that “all Israel has a share in the world to come,” (*olam ha-bah*).

vi. In 3:11, John does not call them to be immersed so that through the action of immersion, they will be able to repent/receive forgiveness. Rather, it is better translated, “be immersed in reference to repentance.”

e. The Day of the Lord:

i. John uses the metaphor of winnowing/threshing wheat to describe the Lord’s coming at the End of Time (3:12).

α. Here, the chaff (the wicked who have no eternal value) will be burnt

β. The wheat symbolizes the righteous who are gathered into “the barn” (G-d’s habitation)

γ. The Although John does not use the “Day of the Lord,” language, this is clearly what we see here and throughout Yeshua’s teaching as well.

δ. In Yeshua’s teaching we find a lot of references to **separation that will take place at the end time** (e.g. wheat/tares, sheep/goat, good/wicked servants [talents]).

iii. We have the same contrast in the prophets— Restoration for the righteous and judgement for the wicked (Mal. 4:1-2).

α. Restoration/comfort of Israel (Isa. 40:1-11; reflected in Lk. 2:25-32, “consolation of Israel”)

β. Imminent judgment (“coming wrath,” 3:7; Isa. 11:4), which includes cataclysm (“sun shall turn to darkness,” Joel 3:2-4). Yeshua refers to the severity of these extra-ordinary phenomena (Mt. 24:21-22).

γ. Knowing that G-d’s judgment is imminent, the sensible response is mourning for one’s sins and repenting (e.g. Isa. 13:6—“wail”; Joel 1:14—“set aside a day to gather & cry out to the Lord”; Joel 2:2-12—“repent”).

δ. This is the same theme expressed by Peter on Shavuot (Acts 2:19-21)—because the Lord’s great & awesome day is rapidly approaching, one must repent and avoid G-d’s severe wrath/judgment.

ε. The same conviction is repeated by the other apostles who called fellow believers to persevere in their faith walk because the Lord’s Day was approaching and one needed to be

prepared (Rom. 13:12—“the day is almost here; therefore let us put aside the deeds of darkness; Heb. 10:25—“let us not give up meeting together, since the Day is approaching”).

iv. Believers to day need to tune into the fact that:

α. The Lord is the righteous judge and judges continually (e.g. Heb. 4:13; II Tim. 4:8).

β. The Lord’s judgment has to begin with his family, to purge what is not of him (e.g. Rev. 21:27—“nothing impure will enter the New Jerusalem”).

f. Because of that, John’s words should not be seen as incongruous (3:11).

i. The Holy Spirit provides the power we need to do G-d’s work (Acts 1:8).

ii. However, his work is multi-faceted. G-d’s refining fire is part of his work with us, because the Holy Spirit is the **HOLY** Spirit.

2. Yeshua and his forerunner (3:13-17)

a. Review:

i. play on words in Hebrew in John’s words (3:9) **vanim**=בָּנִים, **mi-ha-avanim**=מִהָאָבִיבִים

ii. “Not fit to carry his sandals”—that was a menial job that was carried out by the household slaves.

α. People considered John to be impressive and he was greatly honored by the masses and the temple establishment (**Jn. 1:19-21**).

β. Yet, he understood that the limelight had to shift from him to Yeshua and he was delighted with that (**Jn. 3:29-30**). That was both an understanding of G-d’s program and a personal delight.

iii. “Baptize [you] in the Spirit” appears 6x in the NT. Five of those were fulfilled at Shavuot (Pentecost, Acts 1:5). α. The remaining one is in I Cor. 12:13 which states that **all believers have been immersed by/into** the Spirit.

β. The phrase “filled with/ full of the Spirit” is usually associated with the ability to boldly speak the Word of G-d (Acts 4:31) or, to praise him (Eph. 5:18).

iv. “Fire” is both refining/purifying for those who accept the message and destroying for those who spurn it (burnt like straw [Ps. 1:4]).

b. Yeshua came to be immersed (go through t’vilah) by John.

i. Location: This took place in Bethany on the other side (east) of the Jordan, likely a short distance from Jericho (Jn. 1:28).

α. There was another Bethany, a village east of Jerusalem (where Lazarus and his sisters came from).

β. The location for this Bethany is unclear. It is traditionally placed about 10 miles east of Jericho.

γ. The Later on (Jn. 3:23), John moved further north, near Salim, closer to the Kinneret (Lake of Galilee).

ii. John predicted that *Yeshua would come after him*, which normally implied that someone is following as a disciple.

α. That would be the **entry point of Yeshua** (he would come in that guise) However, there is no evidence that Yeshua was in fact a disciple of John.

β. John discerned correctly that **on one level, it would be inappropriate for Yeshua to be immersed by him (II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15)**. Everyone who came, was committed to confessing their sins before being immersed. In this case, because John was a sinner, he was the one who needed to confess his sins.

γ. John tried vigorously to prevent (διακώλυω=diakoluo=deter, keep from) Yeshua, probably from entering into the water.

- iii. Yeshua insisted, knowing that He did not come to confess sins.
- α. Yeshua operated under a **very strong sense of the need for the Father's plans to be fulfilled** (Jn. 4:34). That had already taken place from the time of his conception/birth, when He “fulfilled specific prophecies as well more general scriptural themes,” (NAC, Blomberg) .
- β. The word “fulfill” (or, “fulfilled”) appears in Matthew 15x. Matthew wants to make a definitive argument for the case that Yeshua is the Messiah of Israel who came according to the prediction of the Hebrew prophets.
- γ. “Fulfill all righteousness,” means “to **complete everything that forms part of a relationship of obedience to G-d,**” (NAC). Paul goes on to describe that as being the life lived “in/by/after the Spirit,” (**Rom. 8:4**).
- δ. In **Yeshua's case, He needed to identify closely with human sin and suffering** (e.g. **Heb. 2:15-18**).
- c. G-d places his stamp of approval on Yeshua in two ways:
  - i. The Holy Spirit came upon Yeshua for the fulfillment of his commission.
    - α. However, the Holy Spirit was part of his life from the moment of conception (Mt. 1:18, 20).
    - β. The Spirit did not come upon him as an actual dove, but in the form of one.
    - γ. Why in the form of a dove ? That is open to speculation (gentleness etc.).
    - δ. Mark adds the additional detail that the “**heavens were torn open**” (Mk. 1:10) and then the Spirit descended on him. It is likely that John was the only one to have seen that.
    - ii. A voice (a bat kol=בַּת קוֹל) came from heaven.
      - α. Judaism in the inter-testamental period considered a bat kol as how G-d spoke since the cessation of prophecy.
      - β. However, as time went on, the rabbis considered their consensus more authoritative than a voice from heaven. Perhaps, this was G-d's affirmation that He still spoke directly to his people.
      - iii. The message was one of affirmation and public presentation—**Yeshua was being launched into his public ministry**.
        - α. His sonship did not begin at that point, unlike the NIV's rendering of Psalm 2:7—“Today I have become your father.”
        - β. This scripture, as well as Isaiah 42:1, were viewed by 1<sup>st</sup> century Judaism as referring to Messiah (Tg. Isa. 42:1; 4QFlor10-14).
        - γ. His sonship This has overtones of Gen. 22:2, 12, 16 (and as well Jn. 3:16) that refer to “an only” (in the sense of being unique [yechid=יְחִידָה יָחִיד]).
  - 3. Yeshua alone: the Messiah's temptation (4:1-11)
    - a. Location: the Judean desert. He crossed the Jordan, passed Jericho and came into the high desert.
    - b. The fast:
      - i. 40 days (40 days of Moses on the mountain); 40 years in the desert
      - ii. Supernatural ability to fast for 40 days (?)
      - iii. A prolonged fast rendered him vulnerable (e.g. Elijah in a depression)
      - iv. **Yeshua suffered** through the temptations (Heb. 2:18)
    - c. Father's will (Heb. 2:17-18; 5: )
      - i. **Yeshua needed to be “tested”** in order to be prepared for his ministry.
        - α. The Greek verb peirazo=πειραζω translated “tempted” also means “to be tested.”
        - β. These temptations were used by the Father as part of Yeshua's being “perfected,” (teleioo=τελειωω , Heb. 2:10; Heb. 5:8)

- ii. Somehow, **G-d “uses” Satan’s temptations** (to commit evil) as part of his testing (for the good). This is again a re-affirmation of the sovereignty of G-d.
- d. Role of the Spirit: Yeshua was “led” by the Spirit.
  - i. The Holy Spirit was present in his life from conception
  - ii. The Holy Spirit came upon him at his t’vilah.
  - α. This was in order for him to fulfill his commission.
  - β. This aspect of the presence of the Spirit resembles the coming of the Spirit upon individuals for a supernatural equipping for their commission (the judges, Saul, David, Elijah/Elishah).
  - γ. This aspect also took place on Pentecost—equipping for the commission of spreading the GoodNews.
  - iii. Mark describes the action of the Spirit as very forceful.
  - α. **Yeshua was not “led” but “driven” to the desert by the Spirit** [the Greek verb, ek-ballo= ἐκβάλλω often means “to cast out.”
  - β. Even Matthew’s description presents Yeshua as being passive—the Spirit “led, brought up.” There are times when we see the Spirit’s action as supernaturally bringing people to a location (e.g. Philip was “beamed up” by the Spirit, Acts 8:39, arpazo= ἄρπάζω, “snatched away”).
  - e. The temptations
    - i. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> temptations **challenge Yeshua’s identity/ status as the Son of G-d.**
    - α. APPL: this is one of the basic temptations for us as well—are we anchored in our relationship/identity as children of G-d (I Jn. 3:1) ? All that we have flows from that.
    - β. Yeshua has just received a **resounding affirmation by the Father**, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased,” (Mt. 3:17).
    - γ. For Satan to be able to tempt Yeshua meant that he had to have gotten the authority from the Father to do so. As odd as it seems, G-d gives Satan authority to harass G-d’s people (Rev. 13:5-7, 12).
    - δ. The temptation was not whether Yeshua had the power/means to turn the stones into bread. Satan must have known that Yeshua had supernatural power greater than that (e.g. calm the seas).
    - ε. Rather, the **temptation was whether Yeshua would do so independently of the Father.** Yeshua’s prime directive was to carry out the Father’s will (“I do nothing on my own,” Jn. 8:28). APPL: That is also a basic temptation for us—whether we will be like Yeshua and commit wholeheartedly to do the Father’s will, or, choose to live independently.
    - η. Yeshua quotes from Deut. 8:3, which refers to G-d’s sustaining Israel in the desert by his word. There are 4 key verbs: He “afflicted you, caused you to hunger, fed you ... so that He could teach you....” **He caused Israel to hunger so that they would know that provision comes from him.**
    - APPL: In the process of **spiritual maturation**, G-d brings us into desert experiences where we are afflicted (struggling), hungry (lacking) and then, He supplies our needs so that we acknowledge/appreciate that it came from him.
    - θ. **Yeshua modeled for us that life and spiritual warfare have to be based on the Word of G-d.** In all three responses, his basic response included, “It is written.”
    - ii. The second temptation was also a challenge to his identity as the Son of G-d.
      - α. The highest point of the temple was the SE corner. Leaping from this point would have brought him over the Kidron Valley, a vertical drop of over 1300 ft. This (and the 3<sup>rd</sup> temptation) could have been done in a vision.

β. Satan perverts the Word of G-d. Ps. 91:11-12 promises G-d's protection to his people who are in grave danger. It does not promise protection when they are engaged in presumptuous action.

γ. Yeshua again responds by quoting Scripture (Deut. 6:16, which referred to Masah/Meribah in Exod. 17:1-7).

δ. The Hebrew verb for "test" is nasah=נסה, which sometimes has a positive connotation (G-d testing Abraham, Gen. 22:1) and a negative one (Israel testing G-d's patience, Num. 14:22). Nasah=נסה is always used in reference to man's action.

ε. Another key Hebrew verb bachan=בחן for test, is always positive. It means to "examine, scrutinize, test, prove," with the goal to determine the essential qualities. It typically refers to G-d doing the testing, with 3 exceptions (e.g. Mal. 3:10) where G-d is being "proved."

iii. The third temptation was in two parts:

α. The temptation to worship Satan—his prime motivation (Isa. 14:14—"I will make myself like the Most High").

β. The other issue was the temptation for Yeshua to by-pass the cross and receive the glory (Phil. 2:11) with that short cut.

γ. Yeshua's final **response was with authority as the Son of G-d**, "Get away!" This was the same message delivered to the temptation offered through Peter (Mt. 16:23). He again quotes from the Torah (Deut. 6:13).

iv. **Yeshua is refreshed by ministering angels.**

v. **Satan will come back because he is an opportunist** (Lk. 4:13—"left him until an opportune time presented itself" kairos= καιρος).

4. Yeshua settles in Capernaum (4:12:16).

a. John being put in prison was a signal to Yeshua that it was time for him to leave Judea.

i. We don't know the reason for John being imprisoned by Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee. Herod was a weak, cruel and immoral ruler (tetrach, ruler over ¼ + of Herod the Great's kingdom).

α. We do know the circumstances of John's death, spelled out in 11:1-2 and 14:1-12. He evidently moved his ministry from Judea to Galilee, Herod Antipas' territory.

β. It is unlikely that Yeshua's decision to come north to Galilee was a desire to avoid persecution by Herod.

γ. Yeshua did minister in Judea for a short spell, at the same time that John did (Jn. 1:19-2:12) and then, when John was imprisoned, he returned to Galilee through Samaria (Jn. 3:22-4:42).

δ. In the 1<sup>st</sup> century, about ½ of Galilee was Gentile (primarily Greek).

ii. **Underneath the human dynamics, was the larger issue—this was part of the Father's plans for him to go back to Galilee at this time.** It would be done in fulfillment of the prediction of the prophets, as the rest of Yeshua's life and ministry.

b. Capernaum (כפר נחום = Nahum's Village) was at the crossroads on the area—where both key roads and trade from across the lake came.

α. Yeshua evidently came to Capernaum after a violent rejection by the people of Nazareth (Lk. 4:16-31).

β. Capernaum was large enough to have a tax booth (Mt. 9:9). Also, Peter's house, which Yeshua used as a base, was located there (Mt. 8:14; Mk. 1:29; 2:1).

c. For Matthew, Capernaum's relevance was not the geographic or political considerations, but its location in relation to the tribal allotment of Zebulun and Naphtali.

i. Capernaum lay in the boundaries for Naphtali.

ii. It lay close to the allotment for Zebulun.

- α. Both of those territories could be considered Galilee that was by the sea , on the other side of the Jordan.
- β. “On the other side of the Jordan” would be from the perspective of those coming from the NE—the Assyrians—who were sent by G-d to chastise Israel.
- γ. B All of that would lead Matthew’s readers to think about the passage in Isaiah 9:1-2.
- iii. This is again, another “**fulfillment formula**” **through which Matthew builds us his case that Yeshua is the promised messiah, the one who fulfills the prophecies of Scriptures.**
- α. The passage (Isa. 9:1-2) Matthew quotes from, is part of a larger context (ch. 7-9) where we see a Messianic thread :
- α. 7:14—Immanuel = עִמָּנוּ אֱלֹהִים, born to a virgin
- β. 8:-8—the Lord ....[will bring judgment] on your land, O Immanuel
- γ. 9:5-6—a child whose name will be “Almighty G-d....”
- iv. In Isaiah’s context, the Lord spoke of judgment on Israel as well as redemption.
- v. The prophecy is very explicit regarding the location of G-d’s redemptive work:
- α. It would be taking place in the portion of Galilee that was “by the sea” (the Kinneret=Lake of Galilee, called Kinneret because its shape resembles a harp=kinor).
- β. It would also be taking place in an area where there were many Gentiles [for that reason, it is likely that Yeshua and his disciples were conversant in Greek=knew enough to be able to communicate with the Greeks. This is probably why the Greeks came to Philip wanting to see Yeshua (Jn. 12:20-21).
- γ. The light would shine first of all in the despised area of Galilee, rather than the more “enlightened” area of Judea where the centers of Jewish religious establishment were based.
- δ. This could be a foreshadowing of G-d’s plan to bring salvation to the Gentiles. However, the language makes it clear that “those living in darkness,” refers first of all to Israel. The Greek word for “people” is la’os= which typically refers to the people of Israel, rather than ethnos= “the nations.”

## II. Yeshua’s ministry unfolds (4:17-16:20)

### A. Yeshua’s authority in preaching and healing (4:17-9:35)

#### 1. Introduction to his ministry (4:17-25)

##### a. **G-d’s program always begins with the proclamation of his word. Miracles are designed to validate G-d’s word.**

- i. The “great light” which “has dawned” (4:16), begins with Yeshua proclaiming the message of the kingdom, just as John did (3:2). Before G-d’s power is unleashed through the miraculous works, G-d’s program/vision has to be spelled out, so that when it is fulfilled/ comes into reality, people will know that G-d is sovereign (Isa. 46:9-13).
- ii. “From that time on,” (4:17) marks a turning point in Yeshua’s life and ministry. It is a clue/summary Matthew gives us that what happens will be related to the kingdom of heaven [also 16:21; 26:16].
- iii. “Repent” is a common theme in the prophets (Ezek. 14:6; 18:30,32)—his people were wayward and G-d sent the prophets to call them to draw back to him. As was the case with John’s message, it is somewhat jarring because outwardly, the people were following G-d (keeping the mitzvot of the Torah etc.).
- iv. John and Yeshua’s call to prepare for the kingdom of heaven implied that people were not presently part of the kingdom. That flew in the face of 1<sup>st</sup> century rabbinic consensus that the

people of Israel were part of the Kingdom.

v. The Kingdom of G-d takes on several meanings in the NT:

α. G-d rules ultimately (Ps. 97:1)

β. Practically speaking, G-d's kingdom is not fully functioning in all people's lives. Because of people's sins, Satan has been given authority to function as "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2; Jn. 12:31; **14:30**; 16:11) and control this evil world system. Even so, his actions are circumscribed by G-d's will.

γ. When someone repents and turns to the Lord, they are added into the Kingdom of G-d. The Kingdom of G-d expands (Jn. 3:3)

δ. Through Yeshua's life and ministry, the Kingdom of G-d landed (Mt. 12:11)

ε. At the end of all time, there will be absolutely no limits on the kingdom of G-d—all that is evil will be judged and cast out (Rev. 21:8).

v. Yeshua's message is focused on the 4<sup>th</sup> meaning of the Kingdom (δ).

b. Calling of the disciples was both according to custom and differing:

i. Rabbis gathered disciples around them, whom they would teach and model. These disciples (talmidim=תלמידים) followed their rabbi from place to place. When their rabbis passed on, they established their own core of disciples. This was based on a relational knowledge.

ii. In the Gospels, the word "disciples" applies to many, who were interested in Yeshua but were not fully committed to him like the 12. Many of them left Yeshua when his message was unpalatable for them (Jn. 6:60, 66).

iii. Gathering the disciples was unusual. Interested people usually came and sought out a rabbi to become his students.

α. Yeshua follows Elijah's example in calling Elishah to be his disciple/ trainee (I Ki. 19:19).

β. Gathering the disciples was a process that lasted for awhile. It was done according to the Father's will and driven by the Holy Spirit—not casual.

γ. Simon and Andrew were in the fishing business—Peter was married and had enough money to own a house in Capernaum (Mk. 1:29). Peter's given name was Shim'on, but Yeshua gave him the nickname of Keifa=כֵּיפָא, meaning "rock," probably because of his dominant personality. We do not see much about Andrew

δ. Andrew does not occupy the central role that his brother did. However, he was one of John's disciples and encouraged Peter to come and meet Yeshua (Jn. 1:40-41). He also was instrumental in the feeding of the multitude (Jn. 6: 8).

ε. James (Ya'acov) was the first martyr (Acts 12). He and John (Yochanan) his brother were nicknamed Boanerges, Sons of Thunder, which came from the Hebrew/Aramaic "Bnei Rogez/ Regesh=sons of anger/emotion (Mk. 3:17)

iv. Yeshua's ministry summarized. After the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew will illustrate by giving specific examples of the kind of miracles Yeshua performed. Here we see three basic categories of ministry:

a. Preaching in the open air, to masses

b. Teaching in the synagogues (e.g. Lk. 4)

c. Healing, which includes casting out demons. Demonic activity included both physical and mental symptoms.

2. Yeshua's preaching on the mount (5:1-7:29)

a. Introduction & beatitudes (5:1-12)

i. Setting (5:1-2)

α. Large crowds followed Yeshua. It must have been quite a spectacle. There were instances

when the lame and the blind called out to Yeshua to heal them (e.g. Mt. 9:27; Lk. 18:38).

β. As He healed people and word spread like wildfire. People streamed from all the outlying area. Since Yeshua was in the Capernaum area, those who came from Judea, Decapolis and the rest of Trans-Jordan must have **traveled for days to get to him**.

γ. What we see in these chapters, is not the only extensive amount of teaching Yeshua gave to the multitudes. In Matthew alone, there are 4 other blocks of teaching Yeshua gave (chps 10, 13, 18, 24-25 ). Much of what we see here is re-iterated in Luke 6:17-49 (the Sermon on the Plain) and elsewhere in Luke.

δ. Yeshua sat down to teach as was customary for rabbis in the synagogue (e.g. Lk. 4:20).

ε. His audience included both his immediate circle of disciples, upon whom He lavished most of his attention. However, it is clear that at least some or all of his teaching here was heard by the multitudes (7:28). The approach of the multitudes was a signal that He needed to begin the teaching.

η. The setting is not precise, although Mt. Tabor is often considered a candidate.

θ. What we see here must have been the summary (Readers' Digest version) of the teaching. In all likelihood, his sermon lasted several hours.

ii. Kingdom blessings (5:3-12):

α. What Yeshua is doing here is presenting his inaugural address, outlining what He expects his kingdom subjects to do. It is **not only his demands for his followers but also a statement that the promises of the Kingdom (Isa. 61:1-3) are being fulfilled in him**.

β. There is a multitude of interpretation about his message. However, the setting (mountain, instruction to the people), invites a **comparison with the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai**.

\* One could view this as Yeshua's re-interpretation of the Torah. In rabbinic tradition, Messiah would do just that—re-interpret Torah.

\*Like the Torah which is impossible for man to keep, Yeshua's Torah here demonstrates "**G-d's impossible moral demands [which] disclose the depths of our sinfulness and drive us to our knees in repentance,**" [NAC, 94]. We see this struggle in Romans 7:14 as Paul recognizes his sinfulness.

\*A good approach is a "*already, but not yet*" ("realized eschatology"), which sees that the Kingdom has come through the life and ministry of Yeshua, but it is yet to unfold in fullness (Rev. 20-22).

γ. These verses (5:3-13) are called "the beatitudes," after the Latin word "beatus" used in the Vulgate (Latin Bible) to translate "blessed."

δ. The Hebrew context comes from *ashrei*=אשרי, which means "to be happy, **fortunate, in the unique position/status to enjoy G-d's favor,**" (e.g. Ps. 1:1; 144:15). It is another one of those Hebrew words that are not easily translated with just one word. It is related to a similar word, *baruch*=ברוך which means "one who has been/is being bestowed with G-d's goodness."

ε. The first blessing is to those who are "poor in Spirit."

\*That does not imply, necessarily, poor materially. There are instances where people are impoverished but unwilling to humble themselves before G-d.

\*It is the Lord's chesed that leads us to repentance; difficult circumstances may tenderize our hearts, but it is still a heart decision.

\*"Poor in Spirit" can be defined as "having the humble, dependent, vulnerable attitude of poor people even if they happen to be rich," (JNTC, 23). Paul embodies this attitude when he states that we are wise to recognize our vulnerability (I Cor. 10:12) and to celebrate the fact that G-d's excellent power is displayed through our weakness (II Cor. 12:9-10—"delight, take pleasure in

weakness=**my take on weakness is that it is a great opportunity for G-d to show his ‘stuff’**).  
 \*To the “poor in spirit” belongs the kingdom of heaven [lit. the K of H is “of them”]. Yeshua does not define this cryptic comment. However, it is important to connect with the key Hebrew word for “poor,” anavim=עֲנָוִים, which means not only “poor,” but also “afflicted, humble.”  
 These have come to be **dependent/confident on G-d alone and G-d favors them (Isa. 57:15; 66:2)**.

iii. “Blessed are those who mourn” is the 2<sup>nd</sup> of 9 beatitude (10<sup>th</sup>, depending on how one groups them).

α. It is somewhat odd for us to consider the mourners as being in a blessed state/ to be envied.

β. Mourning is associated with:

—a time of extreme grief, when we struggle with the loss of a loved one.

—a time of national emergency when the nation came together to seek G-d for his deliverance from imminent disaster, because of overwhelming odds.

—the repentance for individual or national sin.

γ. The “benefits” of mourning are:

—as deep as our mourning may be, it provides an opportunity for *G-d’s greater “grace,” (mercy/compassion/chesed) to be poured out on us* (e.g. **II Cor. 1:3**).

—as we are comforted, *we are equipped/enabled to comfort others*. This is part of our priestly ministry, as Yeshua, who suffered on our behalf, He is able to comfort us (**Heb. 2:14-18**).

—it offers a greater opportunity to “go deep with G-d,” i.e. *learn to see just how awesome his power can be in intervening on our behalf* (e.g. **II Chron. 20:1-4; Esther 4:1-3**)

—it provides the opportunity to humble oneself in *repentance and receive restoration and healing from G-d* (Ps. 51:10; Hos. 6:1; 14:4; Ezra. 10:6; **James 4:8-10**)

δ. Like the rest of the operation of the Kingdom of G-d, this “benefit” seems to be upside down to our thinking. This is typical of how G-d works—He confounds our wisdom and works opposite to our way of thinking (**I Cor. 2:19-27**).

ε. The Lord is committed to bring about restoration. Part of the picture is comforting those who mourn and replacing their sorrow with joy (**Isa. 61:1-4**).

iv. “Blessed are the meek” is often misunderstood.

α. “Meek” is often confused with “weak, gutless.”

β. However, two of the strongest men in Scripture (and history) are described as having been “meek/humble” (Num. 12:3; Mt. 11:28-29)

γ. “Meek” often appears interchangeably with its synonyms—gentle (πραῦς=praus, Mt. 11), or humble (anav=עֲנָוִים, Num. 12:3) and patience/forbearing/kindness (epieikeis= ἐπιεικείας).

There are two basic ideas here:

—controlled strength

—a desire to pull one’s punches in addressing the weak (e.g. Rom. 14:1-2; 19-21; 15:1)

—it reflects G-d’s heart who works with our weakness (Heb. 5:2).

δ. “Meekness” is not one of the values of our society, where often, whatever works is used, including using one’s strength to overcome the weak. **Societies are defined by how they treat the weak among them.**

ε. When we choose to be “meek” we know that we have the Father’s smile upon us. The blessings is that we will receive his blessings. What does this mean ?

—this does not mean that the blessings of the land have been taken away from Israel, as

some replacement theology advocates propose, since the Greek word for earth here, Gei=γῆ, is often used by the Septuagint to translate eretz=אֶרֶץ, land (of Israel).

—this is synonymous to v. 3—“theirs is the Kingdom of G-d”—our weakness/meekness provides G-d with a platform to display his power and exert his authority.

v. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Yeshua continues with this series of paradoxical statements—what is “bad” generally speaking, is seen as a virtue in the Kingdom of Heaven.

α. The normal” perspective is that hunger and thirst are to be avoided at all costs.

β. It is possible that Yeshua alludes to the **hunger and thirst experienced in the desert years.**

vi. “Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy.”

α. Ashrei=אֲשֵׁרֵי, a person who shows mercy is in a state of blessedness—he has placed themselves under G-d’s blessing and are to be envied because they have his favor.

—The one who shows mercy, demonstrates that he belongs to the Lord, because **mercy is G-d’s key attribute** (Exod. 34:5-7).

—mercy can either mean showing compassion to the one who is hurting or, not meting out the punishment due to the offender (e.g. the tax collector vs. the Pharisee).

—“Mercy” often overlaps with compassion (rachamim=רַחֲמִים), lovingkindness (chesed=חֶסֶד) and patience/forbearance.

—Yeshua taught much about mercy and forgiveness (e.g. Mt. 6:12-15) and He reflected the earlier message of the prophets (e.g. Mic. 6:8)

β. “They will be shown mercy”—this is not a quid-pro-quo (G-d gives me X units of mercy because I give to others X units of mercy). If we show mercy, we receive mercy because we are his (in covenant relationship with him).

—The grammar of “will be shown mercy” is passive—G-d does the work.

γ. Application—**showing mercy can be a challenge especially to those who have wronged/offended us.**

—We desire mercy for ourselves but justice/judgment for others. We see the justice of our cause and the wrong actions of the other person. There are 2 basic problems:

\*We forget our own sins. Yeshua taught on that issue in the parable on forgiveness (Mt. 18)

\*We forget that there is only one who is the Righteous Judge and who has all the facts.

Therefore, we must learn to **pull our punches rather than “let people have it.”** If we do that, we place ourselves under G-d’s judgment (Rom. 14).

vii. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see G-d.

α. “Pure” in heart is another example of Yeshua’s turning the tables on people’s warped priorities.

—The Pharisees were obsessed with the need for ritual purity, which existed on at least three levels (tertiary defilement—the “father” of defilement [a person touching a corpse], 2<sup>nd</sup>—that same person drinking from a cup and another one touches the cup; 3<sup>rd</sup>—that person touches another person who then becomes unclean—**Mk. 7**)

—The Torah devoted much attention to the need for ritual cleansing (e.g. Lev. 11-15; Num. 19). An unclean person could not come and worship the Lord corporately (tahor=טָהוֹר =clean; tameh=טָמֵא =unclean).

—However, the Torah and the prophets devote much attention for the need to be clean morally/spiritually. That is why the Lord provided the sacrificial system (e.g. Ps. 51).

—“Purity” does not mean perfection. Rather, it means a commitment to be **single minded in our devotion to the Lord** and our desire to please him. That is the general direction of our

lives.

—At the same time (both, and) we recognize along with Paul that our sinful nature pulls us in the opposite direction. Being pure in heart would be a hopeless task without the Holy Spirit being actively engaged and empowering us.

**β. G-d's people must be morally/spiritually clean (in heart) because that reflects our commitment to live as holy people because He is a holy** (undefiled) G-d (Lev. 19:2; Isa. 6; I Pet. 2:9).

—G-d hates our sin and our sin separates us from G-d (Isa. 59:2).

—Approaching the L-rd requires a commitment to moral/spiritual cleanness (Ps. 24:3-4; Isa. 52:12-14; II Cor. 6:16-17).

vii. Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of G-d.

α. “Blessed are the peacemakers” can be rendered “agents of peace,” because we are not truly able to “make peace.” That is G-d's job. Paul explains that the L-rds redemptive activity brings reconciliation between people and himself and between people themselves (**II Cor. 5:21-23**).

β. The Lord is described as “the G-d of Peace” (Adonai Shalom=יהוה שלום). That is why we will be called “sons of G-d,” belonging to/ in relationship with him.

—Shalom=שלום, “peace” in the sense of **absence of strife/** fighting [about ¼ of the 250x times in the OT].

—The basic root shalem=שלם means: “**completeness, wholeness, harmony, fulfillment.**”

—By extension שלם also means “unimpaired relationship with others [relational wholeness] and fulfillment in one's undertaking [ie prosperity].”

—Shalom=שלום, describes the state of **fulfillment which is the result of God's Presence** (e.g. covenant of Shalom, **Num. 25:12**). It has its source in **God** [Num. 6:26; **I Cor. 14:33**], *who speaks/brings his shalom/rest to his people* (Ps. 85:8 [9H]).

—In about 25x, shalom=שלום, is used as a greeting or a farewell, when one wishes to offer a blessing (e.g. II Sam 15:27; **Mt. 10:13**; Jn. 20:19, 21, 26—Shalom aleichem=שלום עליכם=“peace be unto you” ]).

—Since we have shalom=שלום, with the Lord, He causes us to come together in him, (**Eph. 2:14**), He is our “universal joint.”

—“Peace offering” (sh'lamim=שלמים) can better be translated “fellowship offering,” because the offering was divided into 3 portions: 1 for God [burnt], 1 for the priest and his family, 1 for the offer. It was brought as one of 3 types (Lev. 7:12-17, *TWOT=Theological Wordbook of the OT*, Moody Press, 1980):

\*Todah=תודה, a free gift brought in thanksgiving

\*N'davah=נדבה, free will offering brought out of devotion

\*Nadar=נדר, brought in fulfillment of a vow

γ. Application:

—**Being peacemakers is a challenge** because it is natural to let people fight it out rather than to get involved. What often happens is that peacemakers get pummeled from both sides. Yet, Yeshua's disciples=members of the Kingdom must be about obeying/following his commandments.

—**Shalom is both a choice/lifestyle** (“live in peace” [II Cor. 13:11] and **a fruit produced in us by the Spirit of God** (Gal. 5:22-23).

—The **Lord of Peace (Adonai Shalom), produces peace in us despite stress, conflict and persecution.**

viii. Blessed are those who are persecuted/and insulted—HOW DOES “ASHREI=אשרי, WORK IN

THESE CIRCUMSTANCES ?

α. “Persecute” (dioko=διωκω) is essentially the same as radaf=רדף which means “to chase.”

β. Sometimes these two words mean being pursued for good (e.g. “goodness and mercy shall follow [radaf=רדף] me,” (Ps. 23:6). Most of the time, it refers to persecutors chasing someone.

γ. **Suffering, including persecution, is normal for believers**—persecution is a sub-group of suffering. We suffer

δ. These two beattitudes (5:10, 11-12) are the epitome of the *inverted set of values Yeshua requires his followers to embrace.*

— We MAY FEEL MARGINALIZED by society, because we hold to values that the rest considers to be that of “losers.”

Yet, because of the presence of the Lord in our lives and the eternal/supernatural perspective we have, we are confident because we know we have Aba’s smile upon us.

—This is taught in the OT, where we see the verb (anah=ענה) and the the related nouns ani=עני, meaning “poor” and anav=ענו, meaning “humble.” There are a number of related threads:

\*God is involved with and allows oppression to take place to his people. The intended outcome of affliction: humility Lord humbles people who needed to be disciplined, so that they would repent (Deut. 8:2, 20; Heb. 12:4-13). It results in absolute dependence on /submission to God (Acts 20:19).

\*Messiah submitted to the oppression of his enemies (Isa. 53:7).

\*This humility which comes through affliction/oppression is lauded and blessed:

experience God as their deliverer (Ps 10:17; 76:9 [H 10])

receiving grace (undeserved favor) from him (Prov 3:34).

\*Isaiah (61:1) writes that it is to such that the anointed of the Lord is to preach the good news of salvation (the parallel here is “the broken hearted”).

**\*They are conscious of divine approval and are confident that in the End Time God will save them** (Ps 76:9 [H 10]; 147:6; 149:4, TWOT).

—*When persecution takes place, it must be because of our affiliation with Yeshua* (“because of righteousness/ because of me”), not because we are punished due to our sin (I Pet. 3:14, 17; 4:15-16, 19).

—It is consistent for us to suffer persecution since we are Yeshua’s disciples. **He was hated “without proper cause,”** which according to the rabbis was the reason why the 2<sup>nd</sup> temple was destroyed (Jn. 15: 25 [Ps. 35:19]; **II Tim. 3:12**).

—The society around us (the world system) hated Yeshua and they “hate” us because we do not belong to it. We follow an opposing set of values & swim against the current of society (Lk. 21:17; **Jn. 14:30; 15:18-19**)

—**Yet, this is not an invitation to be paranoid and presume that every relationship difficulty we run into is due to our being believers.**

—Furthermore, we cannot commit sins/crimes and then blame our suffering on our being believers.

—A healthy perspective is that we are not the only ones. Peter reminded the readers of his letter that there were many other fellow believers who were suffering. The same is true today in China, Muslim countries (death) and in Israel.

—When we suffer persecution, we experience a greater sence of intimacy and fellowship with Yeshua—we are part of the same fraternity of sufferers (Phil. 3:8; I Pet. 4:14).

—When we suffer, especially *persecution, we must grasp the fact that God is sovereign and is at work, accomplishing his purposes.* That was the major reason for the writing of the book of

Revelation.

—We MAY FEEL MARGINALIZED by society, because we hold to values that the rest considers to be that of “losers.”

Yet, because of the presence of the Lord in our lives and the eternal/supernatural perspective we have, we are **confident because we know we have Aba’s smile upon us.**

b. Salt & light (5:13-16)

i. **Our joy in difficult circumstances (suffering/persecution) reflects the Lord’s light in us to a dark world** (5:12-13).

α. The joy is exceptional—not what one would expect under these circumstances

β. The joy is overflowing—“rejoice and be exceedingly glad (aggaliao=ἀγαλλιαω) because of the Presence and empowering of the Spirit (Rom. 14:17; Gal. 5:22; 1Th. 1:6).

γ. Rejoicing in persecution is abnormal/ supernatural (Acts 5:41), because we see things from God’s perspective. We realize that we are in good company.

ii. Our presence (presence of the Holy Spirit in us) in this world, keeps the world from descending into complete chaos and evil.

α. That was the case during Noah’s day (Gen. 6:5).

β. That will be the case during the depth of the depravity in the time of the Tribulation (Rev. 9:20-21; 16:9,11). Even the Egyptians had the good spiritual sense when God poured out his judgment on them to recognize that they need to ask the Lord to give them relief.

γ. That scenario comes about because of the removing of God’s restraining power (II Thess. 2:3-7). “Restraining/holding back” in Greek is katecho= κατέχω, which means “to prevent someone from doing something by restraining or hindering,” (L & N).

δ. We see this in our society, including UK (riots, PM describing a portion of society as “sick,” in Britain, minimal involvement in “religious observance”

iii. “Saltiness” today simply means that salt is needed in order to add taste to food (Matt. 5:13).

α. Here, the emphasis is more on the preservative quality of food. In a culture that did not have other means of preserving food (e.g. refrigeration), salt was the primary means of doing so.

β. “**Salt losing its saltiness**,” means that instead of the salt being pure (chemically, sodium chloride) it is **diluted** with other substances, mostly sand/dirt.

γ. Yeshua’s words about being “thrown out” do not affirm or deny security of the believer.

—Although elsewhere in the Gospels, the phrase “to be thrown out” is often code words for God’s judgment (“thrown into hell,” [Mt. 5:29], “thrown into fire,” [Mt. 6:30], “thrown outside into darkness,” [Mt. 8:12], “thrown into the sea,” [Lk. 17:2]), here it simply means that

**believers who no longer live as believers are useless to society as a preservative agent [“agents of change and redemption,” Blomberg, NAC].**

δ. Earlier (in the beatitudes, 5:3-12), Yeshua laid out a set of values that were clearly countercultural to the society of his day. He knew that part of people’s extreme response to that would be a withdrawal from the corruption of society. Yeshua vigorously opposes that tendency. A major purpose for our existence as believers is to be salt and light in this world. We dare not become ghettos of believers.

iv. What does it mean to be a light (Matt. 5:16) ?

α. By definition, because we are Yeshua’s followers/ belong to him, we shine in darkness (5:14).

—He is the light of the world (Jn. 8:12; 9:5); his Presence in us shines through us [we reflect his light]. One of the traditions of Havdalah (conclusion of the Shabbat) calls for us to place our fingernails in front of the lighted candle—it is a symbol of our need to reflect the Lord’s light.

—Israel was called to be a light to the nations. Messiah, as the ultimate Son of Israel, fulfilled

that role (Isa. 49:6).

β. We cannot/ must not take measures that cause our light to diminish (5:15). Instead, we position ourselves in such a way that Yeshua's light comes through. As the Lord presents opportunities, we seek to be prepared. Yeshua's language is imperative—that is not passive, but requires us to do everything we can so that it shines.

γ. The end result/ purpose is so that people will be drawn to the Lord whom they see in us.

—The focus cannot be on the “pots of clay.” Rather, it is what traditional Judaism calls, kiddush ha-Shem=קדוּשַׁת הַשֵּׁם, “the sanctification of the Lord's name.”

—This is contrast to what Scripture calls causing the Lord's name (reputation) to be profaned/ belittled (e.g. Ezek. 36:21-23).

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δ. Yeshua is explicit in this command (Mt. 5:16)—He requires “good deeds,” (ma’asim tovim=מעשים טובים).

—In Judaism that typically meant charity to the poor.

—However, Yeshua’s instruction for “good deeds” is broader and includes righteous living in general and specifically, following his instructions (his Torah).

—**It is quite possible, in light of 5:17, that Yeshua sees “good deeds” as those which are defined by the Torah.**

UNLIKE OUR SOCIETY TODAY (“what’s right for me, is right”) WITH ITS SUBJECTIVE VIEW OF MORALITY, YESHUA VIEWS “MORALITY” TO BE DEFINED BY GOD’S REVELATION (IN THE TORAH).

—Beginning in 5:21, Yeshua devotes a lot of attention to mitzvot (commandments) spelled out in the Torah.

—The goal is to bring glory to God, not to ourselves (Isa. 42:8).

—Our lives can either profane [chahal=חלל] God’s name (make him look like any other “god”/drag his name/reputation through the mud), or, “sanctify” [kadash=קדש] the Lord’s name (cause his name/reputation to be outstandingly attractive, Ezek. 36:20-23, ).

—God’s supernatural actions in our lives will cause unbelievers to sit up and take notice

**c. Yeshua addresses the place of the Torah and the prophets in the lives of citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven.** Much of the discussion among theologians centers around the place of the Mosaic Law (Torah) in the lives of believers.

i. However, that misses the larger point—Yeshua states that He did not come to abolish “the law [Torah] and the prophets.” This is not only a matter about Torah observance.

ii. By stating “**the Torah and the prophets**,” Yeshua refers to **God’s entire, previous revelation**. In Jewish tradition, “prophets” includes the historical books (“the earlier prophets”). Put together, that is clear that the phrase “the Torah and the prophets” is a code phrase for the entire Tanach (OT)—God’s word/ instruction from Genesis to II Chronicles (Mt. 7:12; 22:40; Lk. 16:16; Rom. 3:21).

iii. His point—“**I am not starting God’s work from scratch**; rather, I am building and completing what went on before.”

iv. He makes it clear when He taught the disciples on the road to Emmaus and in the upper room (Lk. 24:24-27; 44-46).

d. In the later verses (5:18-20), the focus narrows to the Torah (Mosaic Law). However, even then, *it has to be seen within the context of God’s larger moral/ spiritual instruction (torah).*

i. Yeshua **addresses the possible/ likely inclination on people’s part to misread his teaching as being Torah-indifferent**, or even, his taking a Torah-hostile (libertine—do whatever feels “right,” “good”).

ii. The next 4 verses (5:17-20) serve as a line of demarcation (definition) for us in the MJ Movement and how we related to much of the Body of Messiah

α. During much of the Church History, the perspective of theologians has been either Torah-hostile or, Torah-indifferent (e.g. Marcion, 140CE, eliminating the “Jewish Bible” & his cannon was only Luke & Paul’s writing).

β. Most of our movement (Messianic Jewish Movement) is either Torah-friendly or, Torah-obsessive (meaning that the focus is on “Torah observance” and that one is to read the NT

through the lens of the Torah).

iii. The Greek words for “abolish” and “fulfill” have the connotation of:

α. “Abolish” (kataluo=καταλυω) comes from legal language and refers to the abolishing of a contract, to **completely invalidate something which has been in force**, to do away with” (N & L). For example, abolishing slavery)

β. “Fulfill” (pleiro-o=πληροω) has a range of meanings including:

—to bring to fulness, make complete” [i.e. filling a container with liquid to the brim]

— to **give the true or complete meaning/** real significance of something, to relate fully the content of a message.” (L & N)

iv. The Hebrew terms underneath the Greek have a somewhat different connotation/come from language of rabbinic discourse (discussing Halachah).

α. “Abolish” can be translated with two Hebrew words, with very similar meaning:

— batal=בטל, to invalidate, to **rule that a given Halachah** (rabbinic law) **is no longer binding** (e.g. Mk. 7:8-9, 13). — hapher=חפר means “to break, violate, nullify,” (e.g. a vow).

β. “Fulfill” can also be translated with two Hebrew words:

— kayam=קיים means “to **establish,**” [as valid] **a principle of Halachah** [e.g. of “kayam” =Isa. 46:10-11]

— mal’eh=מלא means “to fill completely”

v. **There is a basic misunderstanding among fellow believers about the place of the Torah in our lives:**

α. Since Yeshua fulfilled the Torah, there is no longer a need for us to follow its commands. An example of that mindset is the mistranslation [NIV/ASV/KJV] of Romans 10:4

Messiah is the end [telos=τελος=“completion, goal, end”]of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

β. The Torah’s purpose is strictly “christo-centric”—it’s value lies in the fact that it points the way to Yeshua, (which it does). However, it is not a case of either or. On one hand, Yeshua explained that the Torah and prophets pointed the way to him (Lk. 24:25-27; 45-48). On the other hand, the **Torah served as God’s revelation and instruction for the people who lived pre-Yeshua**. It was definitely good, righteous and holy (Rom. 7:12).

γ. Furthermore, since the OT served as the only Bible for the early believers, when they needed instructions regarding a practical matter (a Messianic Jewish “Halachah”), they turned either to Yeshua’s teaching (transmitted orally) to the Torah itself (e.g. I Cor. 9:9, teaching about the right of evangelists/pastors to be supported by those to whom they minister—that comes from Deut. 25:4).

vi. Where Paul seems to be negative on the Torah, he is not blasting legalism (as Stern in JNTC). He is simply pointed out the reality that the **Torah served both a positive (blessings) and a negative (curses), depending on the people of Israel’s obedience**.

α. In Galatians 3:24-25, some translations (e.g. NASV) render the Torah as a “tutor, who would lead us to Messiah.”

β. The Greek word is paidagogus= παιδαγωγός, which often was viewed more as a disciplinarian who would keep the children in line. That fits the context of ch. 3 where it also states that the Torah was a “prison” to keep people until Messiah came. The point is simply that the **Torah served a purpose of guardianship**, not oppression.

Here, the Torah is presented as being a promoter of sin (3:22).

vii. All of this has to be viewed in context of the entire NT.

- α. Paul does not diminish the value of the Torah because we are commanded to walk by faith/Spirit (**Rom. 3:31; 8:4**).
- β. Back to the Sermon on the Mount, (Mt. 5:17-20), Yeshua sharpens his argument by associating the **duration of the Torah with language like that of the duration of God's relationship to Israel** (5:18; Jer. 31:35-37).
- γ. There is no contradiction with **Heb. 8:13**, where the context is the Older Covenant being phased out. The writer was referring to the phasing out of the sacrificial system and the initiation of a new system—the New Covenant. He did not imply that the Torah, as God's word was abolished.
- δ. The Torah here is viewed as the Word of God (e.g. II Tim. 3:16), which is eternal.
- vii. Yeshua **reinforces his point about the authority of the Torah** by referring to yod= י the smallest letter and a stroke (kotz) which makes the difference between several letters (e.g. י, יו ; יו, יוד).
- α. Yeshua strongly opposes anti-nomianism—an anti-Torah attitude that minimizes the value of the Torah for believers (5:19, e.g. Marcion's deleting anything “Jewish” from his “Bible”).
- β. However, Yeshua is also radically opposed to legalism (both the Pharisaic/rabbinic and Christian varieties).
- γ. Beginning in 5:21, Yeshua begins to expound his view of what living the Torah looks like.