

The Gospel According to

SAINT MATTHEW

SAINT MARK

SAINT LUKE

SAINT JOHN

CHAPTER 4, VERSE 17	CHAPTER 1, VERSES 14-15	CHAPTER 4, VERSES 14-15	CHAPTER 4, VERSE 45
<p>4:17 - From that time¹ Jesus began² to preach³, and to say, Repent⁴: for the kingdom of heaven⁵ is at hand⁶.</p>	<p>1:14 - Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching³ the gospel⁷ of the kingdom of God⁸,</p> <p>1:15 - And saying, The time¹ is fulfilled⁹, and the kingdom of God⁸ is at hand⁶: repent⁴ ye, and believe¹⁰ the gospel⁷.</p>	<p>4:14 - And Jesus returned¹¹ in the power of the Spirit¹² into Galilee: and there went out¹³ a fame¹⁴ of him through all¹⁵ the region round about¹⁶.</p> <p>4:15 - And he taught¹⁷ in their synagogues¹⁸, being glorified¹⁹ of all.</p>	<p>4:45 - Then when he was come into Galilee, the Galilæans²⁰ received him²¹, having seen all the things²² that he did²³ at Jerusalem²⁴ at the feast²⁵: for they also went unto²⁶ the feast²⁵.</p>

CHRONOLOGY: December 27CE

LOCATION: The Province of Galilee

COMMENTARY: Jesus has returned to Galilee from Judæa. He left Galilee in late March/early April 27CE. He has been gone for about 9 months. He left prior to the start of His mortal ministry. His ministry officially started at Passover on April 7, 27CE. The Galilæans had not witnessed Jesus in the role He took during His ministry. Those Galilæans who attended Passover witness Him wield the power of heaven. He performed miracles and taught precepts in way that penetrated the human heart. For 9 months the Galilæans must have talked about his mighty works. Jesus now returns to their midst and He returned under the direction and power of the spirit. He taught them in their synagogues. He expounded the scriptures before them. His fame grew throughout the land. Even so, Jesus did not alter His message or His practice. He taught the first principles and ordinances of the gospel. The 4th Article of Faith states, **"We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost."** These are the gateway principles and ordinances to ALL the principles and ordinances of salvation. The message of Jesus was to come and follow Him by repentance and faith, and then through the covenant of baptism. These basic steps brought the follower the greatest new ever heralded upon the earth. We can overcome our sins and fails. We can, through the atonement of Jesus Christ, return to our Father in Heaven.

FOOTNOTES:

1- **time** – The word "time", as used in the passage in Matthew, is translated from the Greek word "τότε" or "tote". The word means then or at that time. The Codex Sinaiticus translates Matthew 4:17 exactly the same as the King James version of the Bible. The word "time", as used in the passage in Mark, is translated from the Greek word καιρός" or "kairos". The Marcan term means due measure, or a measure of time whether large or small. **"Kairos can mean either 'decisive moment' or 'span of time'. Because of the combination with pleroun, 'to fulfill', which implies linearity, the meaning 'span of time' is to be preferred in the present instance."** (Mark 1-8: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 172).

In Matthew, the word "time" refers to the beginning of Jesus' ministry. In Matthew's account, there are no recorded events between Jesus' baptism and this point in the ministry. Matthew is illustrating that from this point forward the ministry of Jesus Christ begins.

Mark uses the term "time" in a different way. The time is fulfilled. In other words, the prophecies from the beginning of the world all pointed to the time that the Messiah would come to the earth in the flesh. That time has been fulfilled. Marcus wrote, **"The kairos, the old evil age of Satan's dominion, is now fulfilled, i.e. at an end."** (Mark 1-8: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 175). Jesus has come to earth, and with Him comes the kingdom of God.

2- **began** – The word "began" is translated from the Greek word "ἀρχομαι" or "archomai". The word means to be the first to do anything, to begin, to be chief, leader, ruler, or to make a beginning. Jesus was starting His mortal ministry.

3- **preach** – The word "preach" is translated from the Greek word "κηρύσσω" or "keryssō". The word means to be a herald, or officiate as a herald. It also means to publish, or proclaim openly. **"Properly, the verb is used to mean the proclamation of important news by means of a herald, whose office and person in classical times were inviolate."** (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 39).

"The word preach has come down in the world; it is all too unfortunately connected in the minds of many people with boredom.



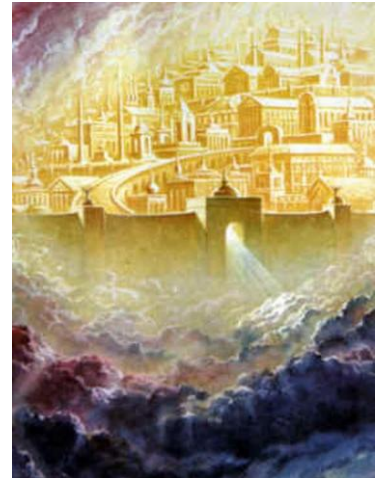
The word in Greek is *kerusein* (Greek #2784), which is the word for a herald's proclamation from a king. *Kerux* (Greek #2783) is the Greek word for herald, and the herald was the man who brought a message direct from the king. This word tells us of certain characteristics of the preaching of Jesus and these are characteristics which should be in all preaching. (i) The herald had in his voice a note of certainty. There was no doubt about his message; he did not come with perhaps and maybes and probablys; he came with a definite message. Goethe had it: "Tell me of your certainties: I have doubts enough of my own." Preaching is the proclamation of certainties, and a man cannot make others sure of that about which he himself is in doubt. (ii) The herald had in his voice the note of authority. He was speaking for the king; he was laying down and announcing the king's law, the king's command, and the king's decision. As was said of a great preacher, "He did not cloudily guess; he knew." Preaching, as it has been put, is the application of prophetic authority to the present situation. (iii) The herald's message came from a source beyond himself; it came from the king. Preaching speaks from a source beyond the preacher. It is not the expression of one man's personal opinions; it is the voice of God transmitted through one man to the people. It was with the voice of God that Jesus spoke to men." (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 1, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, pages 69-70).

From this point, we understand Jesus' ministry to focus on preaching. He was a herald from Heaven, so to speak. Sent by His Father, He came with a vital message of the "Good News". "Jesus preached the gospel; and unless and until this dawns upon us, we will not and cannot understand his ministry among men. Jesus preached the gospel - nothing more and nothing less." (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector's Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 5).

- 4- **Repent** – The word "Repent" is translated from the Greek word "μετανοέω" or "metanoëō". The Greek word means to change one's mind for better, or to heartily amend with abhorrence one's past sins. The King James version of Mark uses the term "Repent ye", while the Codex Sinaiticus omits the word "ye". (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Mark, Chapter 1, Verse 15, page 69). **"Some authorities omit Repent. Whether the omission belongs to the original tradition or not, Jesus begins his ministry with substantially the same message as the Baptist."** (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 39). John's message was to repent and be baptized. Basically, John taught the first principles and ordinances of the gospel. He taught faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, and the He directed all men to come unto Jesus, who had the authority to baptize with fire and bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost. These are the gateway steps to all the ordinances of salvation.

Repentance is not just the giving up of sinful practices, it is a change in desires. It is no longer having the propensity to commit sin. **"The message of Jesus consisted of a command which was the consequence of a new situation. 'Repent!' he said. 'Turn from your own ways, and turn to God. Lift your eyes from earth and look to heaven. Reverse your direction, and stop walking away from God and begin walking towards God.' That command had become urgently necessary because the reign of God was about to begin. Eternity had invaded time; God had invaded earth in Jesus Christ, and therefore it was of paramount importance that a man should choose the right side and the right direction."** (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 1, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 70).

- 5- **kingdom of heaven** – The word "kingdom" is translated from the Greek word "βασιλεία" or "basileia". The Greek word means royal power, dominion, or rule. It can also be used for a kingdom, or a territory subject to the rule of a king. The word "heaven" is translated from the Greek word "οὐρανός" or "ouranos". The Greek word means the vaulted expanse of the sky with all things visible in it, the universe, or the world. It is often used to reference the place where God dwells. We know that the place that God dwells is called celestial. **"Such is the gospel, the gospel of the kingdom of God, the gospel which admits men to the kingdom of God on earth - which is the church - and to the kingdom of God in heaven - which is the celestial kingdom."** (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector's Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 5).



Jesus brought the kingdom of heaven to earth by restoring the truths of heaven lost by the apostate Jewish religion, and restoring the fullness of His church to the earth. He brought back the Melchizedek Priesthood, and saving ordinances. Consequently, Jesus opened the way for us to return to the literal kingdom of heaven, and live again with our Father in Heaven in the celestial realm.

- 6- **at hand** – The word "hand" is translated from the Greek word "ἐγγίζω" or "eggizō". The Greek word means to bring near or to join one thing to another. The LDS authorized edition of the King James version of the Bible has an explanatory footnote that translates the Greek "is at hand" as "has arrived". The hands symbolizes divine power, divine protection, God, and good luck. It also symbolizes power to act, and to be acted upon. (Encyclopedia of Traditional Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, page 70). **"the original meaning of this clause was that the dominion of God had arrived."** (Mark 1-8: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 172).

Jesus established His church or kingdom on earth. This is fulfillment of a prophecy found in the Book of Isaiah. Isaiah foretold, **"Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed."** (Isaiah 56:1). Jesus was the arrival of that salvation, and the righteousness spoken of by the prophet. The kingdom of God was at hand in that it was standing before them.

- 7- **the gospel** – The word "gospel" is translated from the Greek word "εὐαγγέλιον" or "euaggelion". It means a reward for good tidings, or good news. **"The good news of God. Gk to euangelion tou theou, the reading of ἄ, B, L, etc. Many texts, however, insert tēs basileias ('of the dominion') after euangelion, thus making Jesus into a preacher of the good news of the dominion of God. But as Metzger points out, 'the good news of God' is the harder reading, and it was probably expanded by later scribes 'in order to bring the unusual Marken phrase into conformity with the much more frequently used expression' i.e. 'the dominion of God.'"** (Mark 1-8: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 172).

Jesus was heralding the "good news". Scholars, though they claim to understand the term "gospel" or "good news", often fail to fully comprehend its meaning. Barclay attempts to define the good news as follows: **"There is the good news. It was preeminently good news that Jesus came to bring to men. If we follow the word 'euaggelion' (Greek #2098), good news, gospel through the New Testament we can see at least something of its content.**

- (a) It is good news of truth (Galatians 2:5; Colossians 1:5). Until Jesus came, men could only guess and grope after God. 'O that I knew where I might find him,' cried Job (Job 23:3). Marcus Aurelius said that the soul can see but dimly, and the word he uses is the Greek word for seeing things through water. But with the coming of Jesus men see clearly what God is like. No longer do they need to guess and grope; they know.
- (b) It is good news of hope (Colossians 1:23). The ancient world was a pessimistic world. Seneca talked of 'our helplessness in necessary things.' In their struggle for goodness men were defeated. The coming of Jesus brings hope to the hopeless heart.
- (c) It is good news of peace (Ephesians 6:15). The penalty of being a man is to have a split personality. In human nature the beast and the angel are strangely intermingled. It is told that once Schopenhauer, the gloomy philosopher, was found wandering. He was asked, 'Who are you?' 'I wish you could tell me,' he answered. Robert Burns said of himself, 'My life reminded me of a ruined temple. What strength, what proportion in some parts! What unsightly gaps, what prostrate ruins in others!' Man's trouble has always been that he is haunted

both by sin and by goodness. The coming of Jesus unifies that disintegrated personality into one. He finds victory over his warring self by being conquered by Jesus Christ.

- (d) It is good news of God's promise (Ephesians 3:6). It is true to say that men had always thought rather of a God of threats than a God of promises. All non-Christian religions think of a demanding God; only Christianity tells of a God who is more ready to give than we are to ask.
- (e) It is good news of immortality (2 Timothy 1:10). To the pagan, life was the road to death; man was characteristically a dying man; but Jesus came with the good news that we are on the way to life rather than death.
- (f) It is good news of salvation (Ephesians 1:13). That salvation is not merely a negative thing; it is also positive. It is not simply liberation from penalty and escape from past sin; it is the power to live life victoriously and to conquer sin. The message of Jesus is good news indeed." (The Gospel of Mark, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, pages 24-26).

Barclay is not incorrect in his descriptions, he just fails to recognize the full extent of the good news that Jesus brought. Elder McConkie, an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, cover the definition concisely. He wrote, "The gospel is the plan of salvation, the plan ordained and established by the Father to enable his spirit children to advance and progress and become like him. It is all of the laws, truths, rites, ordinances, and performances by conformity to which men can save themselves with eternal exaltation in the mansions on high. It is the system that enables the sons of God to become gods. 'It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.' (Romans 1:16)." (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector's Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 5). Jesus Christ is central to Father's plan. Every aspect of the plan is contingent upon, and made possible by the great and infinite atonement of Jesus Christ.

The good news is we can overcome all the obstacles of mortality, through the atonement of Jesus Christ, and receive all the blessings and promises associated with Father's plan. Though I am spiritually lost, I can be redeemed from the consequences inherently associated with my disobedient behavior. This is the best news ever. It means I can return to my Father in Heaven. It means that I can be together with my family, and enjoy eternal progression.

- 8 - **kingdom of God** – The word "kingdom" is translated from the Greek word "βασιλεία" or "basileia". The Greek word means royal power, dominion, or rule. It can also be used for a kingdom, or a territory subject to the rule of a king. The word "God" its translated from the Greek word "θεός" or "theos". It is a general name for deity or divinity. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the phrase "the gospel of the kingdom of God" as "the gospel of God", omitting the words "the kingdom of". (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Mark, Chapter 1, Verse 14, page 69). **"This is the first Markan reference to he basileia tou theou, a phrase that the King James translators rendered as 'the kingdom of God', but that most modern scholars have recognized is not so much the place where God rules as the fact that he rules or the power by which he manifests his sovereignty; hence the translation 'dominion of God'. This is the basic nuance of the Hebrew and Aramaic expression 'dominion of heaven'."** (Mark 1-8: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joel Marcus, page 172).



The Church of Jesus Christ, whether in the old world or in today's society, represents the kingdom of God on earth. Whenever the kingdom of God is organized among mortal man, it follows a distinct pattern. The Lord invites all to come unto Him. All are invited into the Kingdom. The Lord commanded us in the latter days saying, **"Yea, open your mouths and they shall be filled, saying: Repent, repent, and prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;"** (Doctrine and Covenants 33:10). We gain entrance into the Kingdom of God by the first principle and ordinances of the gospel. Repentance is fundamental to this process.

- 9 - **fulfilled** – The word "fulfill" is translated from the Greek word "πληρῶω" or "plērōō". It means to make full, to fill up, to render full, or to complete. **"But Jesus came among men to atone for the sins of the world, to make salvation available through the shedding of his blood, and to teach those gospel laws by obedience to which all men can be saved in the kingdom of God. Jesus preached the gospel; so it is written, and so it is."** (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector's Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 5). Jesus is the fulfillment of all the promises and prophecies associated with Father's plan for our salvation.
- 10 - **believe** – The word "believe" is translated from the Greek word "πιστεύω" or "pisteuō". It means to think to be true, to be persuaded of, to credit, or to place confidence in. **"There is the word believe. 'Believe,' says Jesus, 'in the good news.' To believe in the good news simply means to take Jesus at his word, to believe that God is the kind of God that Jesus has told us about, to believe that God so loves the world that he will make any sacrifice to bring us back to himself, to believe that what sounds too good to be true is really true."** (The Gospel of Mark, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 26).

The wording in Mark leads me to wonder if the original translation was supposed to be "faith" rather than believe. A general belief is not sufficient to bring upon us the powers of salvation. We must have faith. Unlike belief, faith is associated with spiritual confirmation. It is spiritual knowledge. Such knowledge is required to draw upon the blessings of the atonement, and heavenly power. No man can be saved without faith. Faith is a fundamental requirement for exaltation.

- 11 - **returned** – The word "returned" is translated from the Greek word "ὑποστρέφω" or "hypostrophō". The word means to turn back, to turn around, or to return. Nearly 10 months prior, Jesus had left Galilee for Judaea. He left for the Passover, but consequently ministered among the people of southern Judaea for 9 months. He was now returning to Galilee.
- 12 - **power of the spirit** – The word "power" is translated from the Greek word "δύναμις" or "dynamis". It means power in strength, morality, ability, resources, or influence. The word "spirit" is translated from the Greek word "πνεῦμα" or "pneuma". It is used to refer to the third member of the Godhead, the Holy Ghost. It can also be used to refer to any spiritual body that animates a mortal body. It is also used for the wind or breath, hence the Biblical term the breath of life, is better translated the spirit of life.

It stands to reason that Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the spirit. The gospel can only be properly taught by the spirit. Without the spirit, a person can gain a belief, but not faith. As stated previously, the difference between a belief and faith is spiritual confirmation. Spiritual confirmation comes as the teacher and the student enjoy the power of the spirit. The Doctrine and Covenants teaches, "And again, he that receiveth the word of truth, doth he receive it by the Spirit of truth or some other way? If it be some other way it is not of God. Therefore, why is it that ye cannot understand and know, that he that receiveth the word by the Spirit of truth receiveth it as it is preached by the Spirit of truth? Wherefore, he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together. And that which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness. That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day." (Doctrine and Covenants 50:19-24). Jesus came as one who had grown in light and knowledge, receiving more as He obeyed to the laws of heaven until He taught with great power and authority as in accompanied by the spirit.

- 13- **there went out** – The phrase "there went out" is translated from the Greek word "ἐξέρχομαι" or "exerchomai". It means to go or come forth of, or to leave a place. The Codex Sinaiticus omits the entire phrase "there went out". (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 4, Verse 14, page 113).
- 14- **a fame** – The word "fame" is translated from the Greek word "φῆμη" or "phēmē". It means a fame or a report. "This time 'a fame of him' will spread 'through all the regions round about'; and as he teaches in their synagogues, he will be 'glorified of all who believed on his name'. Whereas he was once without honor in his own country, now, for a season at least, many will flock to him, and all will know of the wonderful works he is doing." (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector's Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 4).

Jesus had visited Jerusalem during the Passover in April of 27CE. While there, He cleared the Temple. He performed miracles and preached to the people. Afterwards, He traveled southern Judaea and performed miracles and preached as well. Since the Passover was a gathering of Jews to the Temple in Jerusalem from near and far, it stands to reason that there were thousands of Galileans from every city and village throughout Galilee present at the Passover. They would have seen, and heard the Savior in action. Whether they were believers, or not, they must have walked away with a profound impression. Surely, they came home to Galilee and told the story of the Man they saw at the Passover. Jesus' renown would have spread in conversation between women at the market, men working in the fields, and various other places where people gathered. You can almost envision the discussions as people spoke in amazement and then speculated as to who He was.

- 15- **through all** – The word "all" is translated from the Greek word "ὅλος" or "holos". It means all, whole or complete. The Codex Sinaiticus replaces the phrase "through all" with "went forth through". (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 4, Verse 14, page 113). Since visitors to the Jewish Passover came from every corner of Judaea and even further, it stands to reason that the Jews who saw and heard Jesus at the Passover of 27CE would have returned throughout all the land. His fame would have quickly spread.
- 16- **the region round about** – The phrase "the region round about" is translated from a single Greek word; "περίχωρος" or "perichōros". It means lying round about, neighboring, or the region round about. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the phrase "the region round about" as "the surrounding country". (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 4, Verse 14, page 113). Jews were obviously highly concentrated in Judaea and Galilee, but they also lived in Syria, Egypt, Decapolis, Phoenicia, and other even more distant lands. Since the Jews came to the Passover in 27CE from all the regions near and far from Jerusalem, it stands to reason that the acts and teachings they experienced would return to their homes. The miracles and teachings of Jesus spread quickly because of the diverse population that came to Jerusalem for Passover.
- 17- **taught** – The word "taught" its translated from the Greek word "διδάσκω" or "didaskō". It means to teach, to impart instruction, instill doctrine into one, or deliver didactic discourses. Teaching in the synagogue followed the readings of the words of the Prophets. Only men of great understanding and experience were allowed to expound on the words of the prophets. That Jesus taught in the Jewish Synagogues is an indication that the people and the leaders of the synagogues saw Jesus as a master teacher. They considered Him a Rabbi. The expounding on the words of the prophets was an opportunity to add commentary and clarity to scripture. As one might imagine, Jesus words would have added incredible depth and understanding, beyond what the people heard from their own Rabbis.

- 18- **synagogues** – The word "synagogue" its translated from the Greek word "συναγωγή" or "synagōgē". Translated literally, it means a bringing together, a gathering of fruits, or an assembling of men. It is used by the Jews to refer an assembly of Jews formally gathered together to offer prayers and listen to the reading and expositions of the scriptures. Assemblies of that sort were held every Sabbath and each feast day, and additionally on the second and fifth days of every week. The term was later transferred to an assembly of Christians, formally gathered together for religious purposes.

The word "synagogue" is used in general terms to refer to a gathering to worship, or in specific terms referring to a Jewish religious building constructed under a pattern fitting to the prescribed worship. It is a difficult word to pin down because of its many uses, and other Greek words which share similar meaning. Barclay explains, "The word 'synagogue' is, of course, of Greek derivation, and means 'gathering together'—for religious purposes. The corresponding Rabbinical terms, 'chenisah,' 'cheneseth,' etc., 'zibbur,' 'vaad,' and 'kahal,' may be generally characterised as equivalents. But it is interesting to notice, that both the Old Testament and the Rabbis have shades of distinction, well known in modern theological discussions. To begin with the former. Two terms are used for Israel as a congregation: 'edah' and 'kahal'; of which the former seems to refer to Israel chiefly in their outward organisation as a congregation— what moderns would call the visible Church—while 'kahal' rather indicates their inner or spiritual connection. Even the LXX seem to have seen this distinction. The word 'edah' occurs one hundred and thirty times, and is always rendered in the LXX by 'synagogue,' never by 'ecclesia' (church); while 'kahal' is translated in seventy places by 'ecclesia,' and only in thirty-seven by 'synagogue.' Similarly, the Mishnah employs the term 'kahal' only to denote Israel as a whole; while the term 'zibbur,' for example, is used alike for churches and for the Church—that is, for individual congregations, and for Israel as a whole." (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, pages 140-141).



FIRST CENTURY SYNAGOGUE
in nazareth

Even the LXX seem to have seen this distinction. The word 'edah' occurs one hundred and thirty times, and is always rendered in the LXX by 'synagogue,' never by 'ecclesia' (church); while 'kahal' is translated in seventy places by 'ecclesia,' and only in thirty-seven by 'synagogue.' Similarly, the Mishnah employs the term 'kahal' only to denote Israel as a whole; while the term 'zibbur,' for example, is used alike for churches and for the Church—that is, for individual congregations, and for Israel as a whole." (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, pages 140-141).

To better understand the Jewish synagogue, we will take a look at its [Origin, Purpose, Construction, Locations, Interior Furnishings, Worship, Women, and Leadership.](#)

ORIGINS:

The worship of God by the early Israelites appears to be temple centered. Even prior to Moses' Tabernacle, the patriarchs worshiped on high spots, which were considered temples. Abraham took his son Isaac to sacrifice on Mount Moriah. He built an altar there, and the place became a holy site. Jacob wrestled with God atop Mount Bethel. The word wrestle is translated from a word that might better be translated as embraced. There Jacob made sacred covenants and was taught from on high. Once the Tabernacle was built, the Israelites focused their worship within the confines of that holy structure. Temples have been central to the worship of God by His covenant children.

There is no clear evidence that the Jews worshiped in synagogues or similar structures until well after 600 BCE. That does not mean that such structures did not exist, only that we have no record of them. Likewise, we assume that much of the gospel teaching and worship took place in the home, but there is little evidence to confirm this. The synagogue only became predominate when the Temple was taken away from the covenant people. **"The origin of the Jewish synagogue is usually traced to the Babylonian Captivity, when Jews separated from their homeland and the Temple and, anxious to preserve their religious traditions, congregated on the Sabbath for prayer, reading of the Torah, and instruction. On their return to Palestine, and even after the rebuilding of the Temple, the custom of meetings continued in local communities and even in Jerusalem itself. 'Synagogue' came to denote not only the congregation, but even the place of Jewish religious assembly. The Theodotus inscription from Jerusalem expresses the purpose of the synagogue: 'for the reading of the Law and the teaching of the commandments'... Possibly ordinary houses were used for such assemblies at first, for though they are mentioned as early as the second century B.C. in Palestinian inscriptions, archeological remains of them all date from later Christian times."** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, pages 523-524).

What we do know, is that by the time of Jesus Christ synagogues were numerous and that even with the rebuilding of the Temple, they were a vital part of Jewish worship. One gets the feeling that Synagogues dotted the land. Edersheim explains, **"But one almost feels as if, on such a subject, one could understand, if not condone, the manifest exaggerations of the Rabbis. Indeed, there are indications that they scarcely expected their statements to be taken literally. Thus, when the number of its synagogues is mentioned as 460 or 480, it is explained that the latter number is the numerical equivalent of the word "full" in Isaiah 1:21 ("it was full of judgment")."** (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, page 48). The synagogue was a vital part of Jewish life, and the center of daily worship. Though the Temple was central to the religion, normal, everyday people found that the synagogue was where they could best access worship and study. This probably started when the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE, and continued after Zerubbabel rebuilt the Temple in 516 BCE. By this time, the synagogue had become an intricate part of Jewish culture and worship. If it didn't exist prior to the Babylonian exile, it surely remained a part of their society afterwards.

Hereafter, we will take a look at different aspects of the ancient Jewish Synagogue for the purpose of understanding the culture and people at the time of Jesus. We will start with the synagogues purpose;

PURPOSE:

The synagogue may have been a pseudo-substitute for the Temple, when there was no Temple to be found, but it never truly replaced the Temple. Without the temple, sacrifices could not be made. Synagogues never performed that function. So, the question must be asked; what was the function of the synagogue and how did it differ from the Temple.

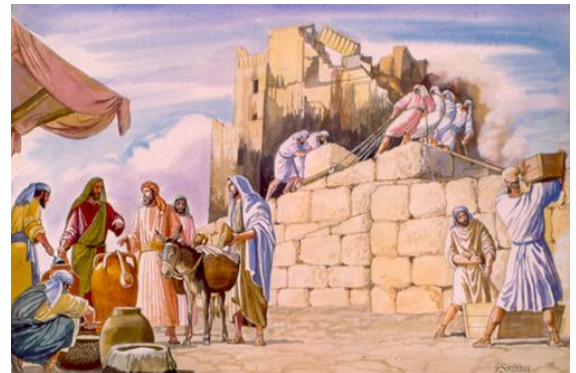
The primary function of the synagogue was to provide instruction in the laws of God. **"Jews were generally well educated in the Bible, and this is attributable to the practice of attending the synagogue, where the scripture was read and expounded."** (Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE-66 CE, E.P. Sanders, page 197). This is significant, because without a uniform method of teaching and instructing, societies tend to stray from their belief systems. Synagogues helped maintain the Jewish identity which was under significant attack by Hellenization. While the culture of the Greeks and Romans were building bathhouses, and encouraging riotous living, the Jews were busy studying in their synagogues. Those that neglected such practices, or failed to adhere to what they learned and generally became Hellenized. **"We noted that Philo wrote that Jews spent the sabbath studying their 'Philosophy' (Creation 128). He described sabbath study as taking place in specially designated buildings: they assembled 'in the same place on these seventh days', sitting together and hearing the laws read and expounded 'so that none should be ignorant of them'. A priest or an elder read and commented on the law, and most people sat silent 'except when it is the practice to add something to signify approval of what is read'. The session continued until late afternoon."** (Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE-66 CE, E.P. Sanders, page 199).



Interestingly, the gathering and study in the synagogue was not necessarily considered worship. That may depend on your definition of worship, but the Jews believed that true worship took place at the Temple. **"The leading object of the synagogue was not worship, but instruction. The temple was 'the house of prayer'. The synagogue was never called by that name. Reading and expounding the law was the great business of the synagogue."** (Manners and Customs of the Bible, James M. Freeman, page 335). It is therefore of no surprise that the synagogues also served as schools. Jewish children attended synagogue, where they learned to read and write. Their "books" of instruction; however, were the scrolls of the law. They learned to read and write with the primary goal of understanding the word of God. **"We are here speaking only of primary or elementary schools, such as even in the time of our Lord were attached to every synagogue in the land."** (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, page 75).

There seems to be some confusion regarding another purpose of the Synagogue. The Synagogue served as a house of prayer. Jewish saints gathered to study together and offer community prayers. That being said, the Temple was often called "the house of prayer". Only in the Temple could the true order of prayer be

conducted. This involved a sacrifice, the coals of the burnt offering were presented upon the golden altar. Incense was placed on the red hot coals, and the smoke represented the prayers of the saints rising to heaven. The priest would then offer a prayer before the altar of the Temple. This could only be done in the sacred confines of the Temple. Even so, synagogues were lesser houses of prayer. **"We may infer from Philo's usage that in the Diaspora the standard name for a synagogue was 'house of prayer', though he also used 'schools' in describing their function, and he knew that some people called them 'synagogues'. These were not different institutions. Philo assigns to them all the very same role: they were buildings where on the sabbath Jews gathered to study."** (Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE-66 CE, E.P. Sanders, page 199). An intricate



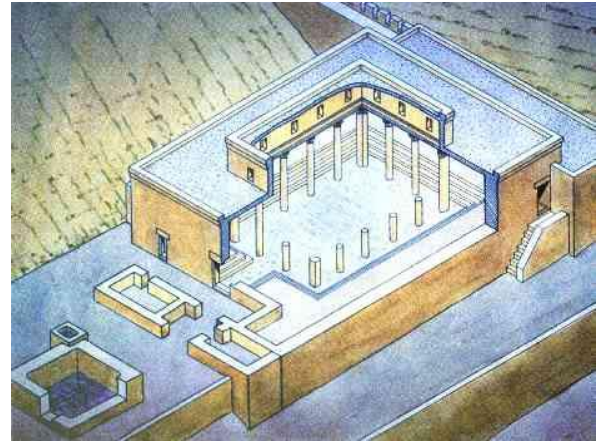
THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM BY ZERUBBABEL

part of Jewish study was prayer. They prayed before study, and they prayed at the close of study. They also recited pre-written benedictions. It would be hard to disregard the synagogue as a house of prayer.

Finally, the Synagogue served as place of public gathering, a town hall if you will. Communities often gathered there to make significant decisions regarding interior and exterior problems they were facing. Josephus give us a great example of this function of the Synagogue. Sanders recorded, **"Josephus discusses the 'house of prayer' in Tiberias as a place that would accommodate large crowds (Life 277,280, 290-303). That is where the populace met to discuss the revolt."** (Judaism: Practice and Belief 63BCE-66CE, E.P. Sanders, page 199).

CONSTRUCTION:

Describing the construction of a synagogue would be like describing the construction of a modern day Christian church; they come in a variety of different constructions, forms, sizes, and appearances. It would be impossible to give a description of a synagogue that would fit them all. **"Synagogue architecture has been extremely diverse, usually reflecting the popular styles of the dominant culture in which the Jews live. Sometimes these structures have been extraordinarily ornate, rivaling Christian cathedrals or grand mosques; in other times and places, they have been quite simple. Medieval synagogues usually had unpretentious exteriors in accordance with Christian law."** (Encyclopedia of Traditional Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, page 167). That being said, we can provide a description of commonalities between synagogues, and give an example of an excavated synagogue, all from the time of Jesus.



Ancient Synagogues were required to be built on the highest point within a town, village or city. It was a great symbol that the synagogue represented the way to heaven. Being higher up, it was closer to God. They were to rise up above the homes and businesses. Of course, the only exception to this would be in Jerusalem, where the Temple would rise above all. The origins of our Christian steeples comes from this Jewish tradition or requirement. The Jews, on occasion, found themselves with a need to build a synagogue, but discovered that the high ground had already been taken. They would proceed with the construction, and then erect a pole onto the synagogue that extended higher than the surrounding structures. It therefore elevated the synagogue above them all. Edersheim wrote, **"If it had not, like our churches, its spire, pointing men, as it were, heavenward, the highest ground in the place was at least selected for it, to symbolise that its engagements overtopped all things else, and in remembrance of the prophetic saying, that the Lord's house should 'be established in the top of the mountains,' and 'exalted above the hills' (Isaiah 2:2). If such a situation could not be secured, it was sought to place it 'in the corners of streets,' or at the entrance to the chief squares, according to what was regarded as a significant direction in Proverbs 1:21. Possibly our Lord may have had this also in view when He spoke of those who loved 'to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets' (Matt 6:5), it being a very common practice at the time to offer prayer on entering a synagogue. But if no prominent site could be obtained, a pole should at least be attached to the roof, to reach up beyond the highest house. A city whose synagogue was lower than the other dwellings was regarded as in danger of destruction."** (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, page 142).

There seems to be no building requirements for a Synagogue. They were typically built of stone. They were quite often a large one room structure with columns to support the spanned roof, though there are plenty examples of multi-roomed synagogues. They often had an opening in the roof and windows for natural lighting, but not always. They often had stone steps placed into the floors to serve as seating, but the floor itself could be earthen in the smaller, poorer synagogues. Some synagogues used wooden benches for seating, or those in attendance just sat on the floors. Freeman wrote, **"There were no fixed proportions in the building, as there were in the tabernacle and in the temple. When a synagogue was to be built the highest ground that could be found in the vicinity was selected for the size and, if possible, the top was erected above the roofs of surrounding buildings. Where this could not be done a tall pole was placed on the summit in order to make the building conspicuous. Synagogues were often built without roofs. They were also constructed that the worshipers, as they entered and prayed, faced Jerusalem."** (Manners and Customs of the Bible, James M. Freeman, pages 334-335). This practice of facing the synagogue towards Jerusalem ended when they started to require that the room housing the scrolls of the law be built facing

Jerusalem. From that point on, those praying simply faced the law, and the law faced Jerusalem. The synagogue could therefore face anywhere the people wanted.



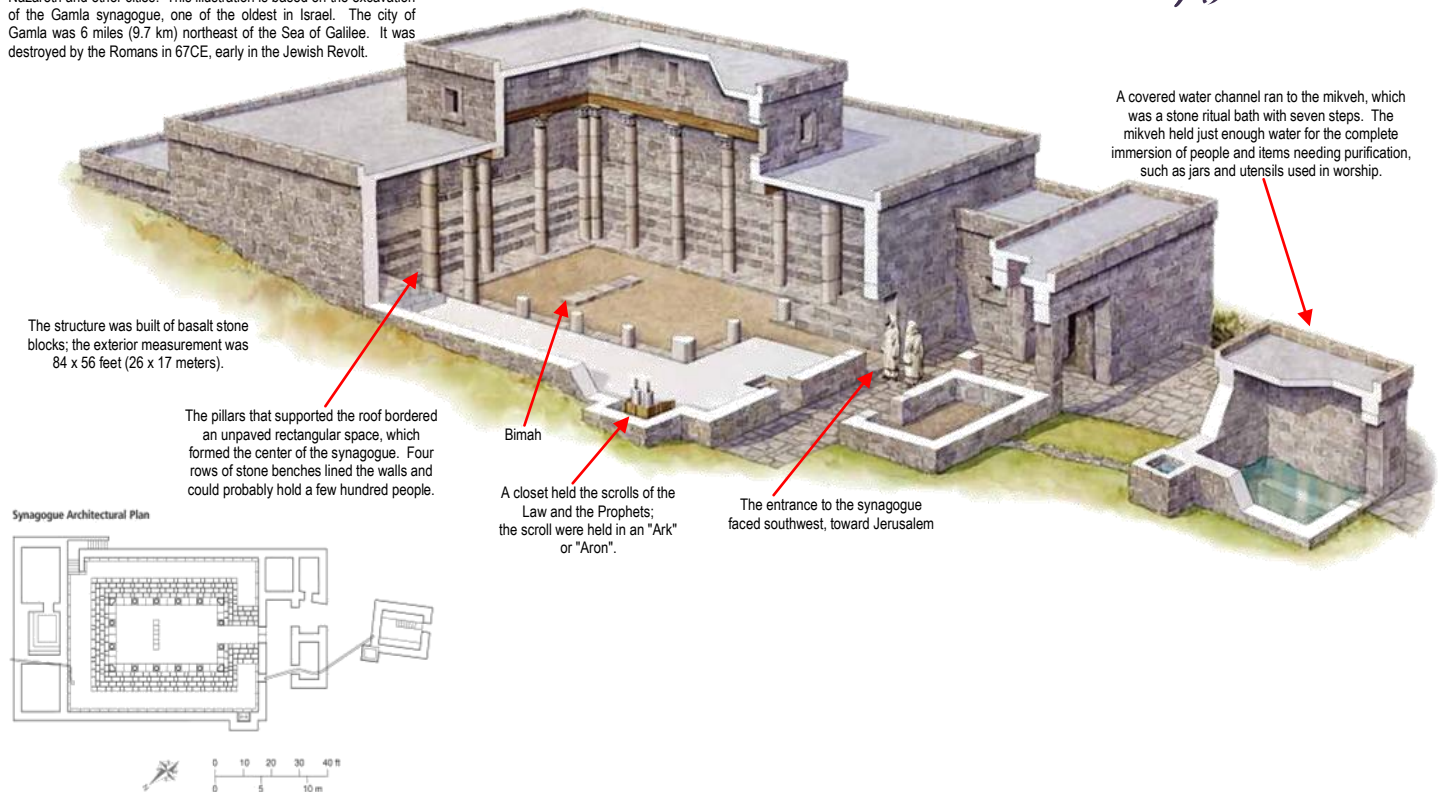
Some, more elaborate synagogues, had galleries, balconies, and second stories. Again, synagogues varied by time period, location, culture and wealth. Jeremias wrote, **"The Mesopotamian synagogue of Dura-Europos, discovered in 1932, dates back to AD 245, and had no gallery. According to G. H. Kraeling (Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research 54, April 1934, 19) this is a type of synagogue older than those in Galilee which were built between the third and the seventh century.—G. Watzinger, Denkmaler Paldstinas I I, Leipzig 1935, 108, dates back to Hellenistic times the type of synagogue with galleries. He bases this on the description in the Talmud of the great synagogue of Alexandria as 'Diplostoon', a term which Watzinger says means 'in two stories, i.e. with galleries over the aisles'. But, as the same passage of the Talmud shows (T. Sukk. iv.6, 198) the word diplostoon means 'a double colonnade', intending to show the synagogue as a building with five aisles, two rows of columns on each side."** (Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period, Joachim Jeremias, page 374).

In later times, the Rabbis decided that all synagogues were required to have windows. "The interior, however, has been subjected to more rabbinic regulation. Based upon Daniel's practice of praying by windows facing Jerusalem, the rabbis ruled that a synagogue must have windows. (Twelve are recommended, symbolic of the Twelve Tribes). The Zohar declares that a synagogue should have great light. Rashi proposed that worshipers should see the sky, which inspires reverence." (Encyclopedia of Traditional Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, page 167).

The best example of a synagogue from the time of Jesus was found in the archeological remains of a synagogue in the city of Gamla. Gamla is about 18 miles, or a one day journey, from Capernaum. Capernaum sits on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, and Gamla sits 18 miles east, and just slightly north. Archeologists have studied the Gamla synagogue in such detail that recreations have been made possible. Sanders wrote, "An illuminating and convincing reconstruction of the Gamla synagogue has been offered by Zvi ma'oz. The building was about 16 x 20 metres overall. Columns divided the interior into a central nave and tiered aisles that ran around all four sides. The nave was 9.0 x 13.40 metres (30 ft x 44). There were four tiers, each one consisting of a row of stone benches, with areas from walking at the foot of the bottom row and above the top row. The top row of benches, if laid end to end, would be about 50 metres long and would seat about one hundred people. The lower rows would seat fewer; together the four rows would seat approximately three hundred people. Though the benches and walkways were stone, as were the columns, the floor of the nave was earthen. Ma'oz points out that in Palestine the main rooms in houses and other buildings were earthen and were covered with rugs; the same was probably true of the central floor of the synagogue. This floor plan, with a public area built of stone for heavy traffic, and with seats on all sides, facing the centre, which was covered with rugs, indicates that only a few people used the central area. The arrangement would 'allow free discussion among the seated public and enable them to hear speeches delivered from the center of the hall and the lowest tier of seats'. In a synagogue of this construction, 'the most important element was the congregation, which assembled to worship, listen to the scriptural readings, and participate in instruction and prayer.'" (Judaism: Practice and Belief 63BCE-66CE, E.P. Sanders, page 200).

In cities other than Jerusalem, the synagogue was the center of Jewish worship during the time of Christ. Synagogues were located in most of the leading towns of Israel. Although very little remains of the synagogue at Nazareth, extensive archeological evidence exists for a typical Jewish Synagogue in the town of Gamla, which would have had much in common with the synagogue Jesus visited in Nazareth and other cities. This illustration is based on the excavation of the Gamla synagogue, one of the oldest in Israel. The city of Gamla was 6 miles (9.7 km) northeast of the Sea of Galilee. It was destroyed by the Romans in 67CE, early in the Jewish Revolt.

a Jewish synagogue at the time of Jesus



LOCATION:

Synagogues were created in every town, city, village or rural area which could establish a group, or quorum, of 10 adult men, willing to attend. This was the requirement for a synagogue. Edersheim wrote, "A township might be either "great," if it had its synagogue, or small, if it wanted such; this being dependent on the residence of at least ten men, who could always be reckoned upon to form a quorum for the worship of the synagogue (the so-called Batlanin²⁹); for service could not be celebrated with any less number of males. The villages had no synagogue; but their inhabitants were supposed to go to the nearest township for market on the Monday and Thursday of every week, when service was held for them, and the local Sanhedrim also sat (Megill. i. 1-3)." (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, page 50).

The synagogue was more dependent on the number of worshipers than it was on physical building. In fact, a synagogue could be established on a hill top, or a private home. There have even been times when a synagogue was established at the city gates or in the streets. Of course, a building was always more desirable for proper worship. Abrahams wrote, "So, too, with the first prayer-meetings in the 'provinces'. The meetings were probably held in the open air; and that this was the most primitive form is shown by the fact that the assemblies on occasions of national stress, even in the last decades of the existence of the temple, were held in the public thoroughfares. By the first century A.D. Synagogue buildings were plentiful both in the capital and the provinces. They probably came into being under the favorable rule of Simon. It must always, however, be remembered that Synagogue buildings in various parts of Palestine are possibly referred to in Psalms lxxiv. 8, usually assigned to the early years of the Maccabean age." (Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels, First series, Cambridge, I. Abrahams, page 2).

Once a community established the fact that it had the required number of male worshipers to create a synagogue, they looked for a proper location. The location, ideally, was the highest ground in the city, or village. It should be a choice parcel of land, and predominate to everyone's view. The synagogue was built, early on, facing Jerusalem. As the city grew, additional synagogues were built to accommodate the population, again requiring at least 10 male worshipers per synagogue. Large cities were known to have many synagogues. Jerusalem is reported to of had 480 synagogues. **"The Rabbis have it that, at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, that city had not fewer than 480, or at least 460, synagogues. Unless the number 480 was fixed upon simply as the multiple of symbolical numbers (4 x 10 x 12), or with a kindred mystical purpose in view, it would, of course, be a gross exaggeration. But, as a stranger entered a town or village, it could never be difficult to find out the synagogue."** (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, page 142). Even so, we can safely say that Jerusalem had many synagogues. They were built so that the people had easy access to them.

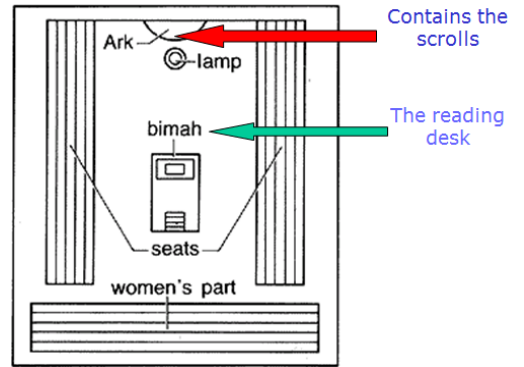
INTERIOR FURNISHINGS:

The interior of the synagogue seems to have more requirements than the exterior. The exterior had few requirements for its appearance. It was required to sit higher than surrounding structures. It had to face Jerusalem, at least for a time. It also had to have windows at some point. Otherwise, they took on many different looks. The interior, however, needed the following elements to serve as a synagogue;

1. A pulpit, or designated reading stand, for the reading of the law and the words of the prophets was found in every synagogue. Most pulpits were large to accommodate the scrolls which would be opened and rolled out upon them. They were often ornate, with carvings usually associated from the Temple. The pulpit was called "migdal" in Hebrew, which meant tower. The reading of the law from the pulpit is often associated with the Old Testament passage in Ezekiel that make reference to the watchmen on the towers. To the left is an excavated pulpit from a synagogue in Israel during the time of Jesus.



Most pulpits were large to accommodate the scrolls which would be opened and rolled out upon them. They were often ornate, with carvings usually associated from the Temple. The pulpit was called "migdal" in Hebrew, which meant tower. The reading of the law from the pulpit is often associated with the Old Testament passage in Ezekiel that make reference to the watchmen on the towers. To the left is an excavated pulpit from a synagogue in Israel during the time of Jesus.



2. A special chair, sometimes referred to as a throne, for the leader of the synagogue could be found in the ancient synagogues. The chair is referred to as "chisse" or "churseja". It was probably made of wood, more often than not; however, archeologist have unearthed such chairs carved from stone blocks. The chair to the right is called "the Moses Chair", as Moses was considered the great lawgiver and judge in Israel. There was at least one leadership chair in each synagogue, and often two or three. The chairs represented the men presiding in the synagogue. They conducted the meeting and directed the proceeding. Some believe that "the Moses Chair" was a special chair that readers of the words of the prophets sat in after their reading to expound on the words.



3. An elevated platform, or stand, where the leadership sat, was a positioned in the most central location, was yet another required element of the synagogue. This would have been the center stage, if you will, for the proceedings of the services. The platform was called a "biham" or "bima". Sometimes the bima was nothing more than a slightly elevated floor created by the addition of a layer of paver stones set on top of the floor. This is probably the case at the time of Jesus. As time progressed, the bima was often elevated higher, and made more elaborate. Pillars were sometimes added, with murals, gold leafing, and intricate wood or stone work. These embellishment often remind me of the adornments often made in Catholic churches. It was elevated to raise the speaker and leaders before the gathered congregation. Even so, it is easy to see the relationship of pride that may be associated with the elevation of the bima and the hearts of those that stood or sat upon it.



As time progressed, the bima was often elevated higher, and made more elaborate. Pillars were sometimes added, with murals, gold leafing, and intricate wood or stone work. These embellishment often remind me of the adornments often made in Catholic churches. It was elevated to raise the speaker and leaders before the gathered congregation. Even so, it is easy to see the relationship of pride that may be associated with the elevation of the bima and the hearts of those that stood or sat upon it.

4. An ark, or vessel, that held the scrolls of the law and the prophets was required for every functioning synagogue. Without the sacred scrolls, the synagogue could not function. **"Although many early synagogues had their entrances oriented toward Jerusalem, this custom was abandoned when the once-portable ark was fixed in the eastern wall. The Rabbis felt that is was better to enter approaching the ark so that one could bow before it as a sign of respect."** (Encyclopedia of Traditional Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, page 167). Apparently, the ark was a fixed near the main entrance to the synagogue. It is not sure where the ark was positioned at the time of Jesus. The Ark or "Aron" is a representation of the Ark of the Covenant that was placed in the Holy of Holies in the Temple. It contained the law as well. The arks symbolized the ship that preserved Noah and his family during the flood. It also represents the ark that Moses was placed in to avoid the death order of Pharaoh. Consequently, the arks in the synagogues were seen as the way of salvation and divine protection. The arks were consequently seen as a representation of the temple, and sometimes referred to as a little temple: "hechal".



5. A reserved space for the ark, considered holy, and normally enclosed by a veil or curtain was essential to a synagogue. **"The Torah scrolls, the holiest objects within the synagogue, are housed in the ark, the aron kodesh, behind the parokhet curtain."** (Encyclopedia of Traditional Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, page 167). The curtain has obvious symbolism to the Temple and the veil that concealed the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies. The veil represented the barrier that stood between man and God. After the great atonement was offered by Jesus Christ, the veil was rent and took on the representation of the flesh of Jesus Christ which was rent for us. Paul taught, **"By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;"** (Hebrews 10:20). This reserved space for the ark, and the addition of a veil, was added at some point after the creation of the synagogue. Originally, the ark was portable and had no permanent resting place in the synagogue. We do not know when this practiced started, or if it had come into effect at the time of Jesus.

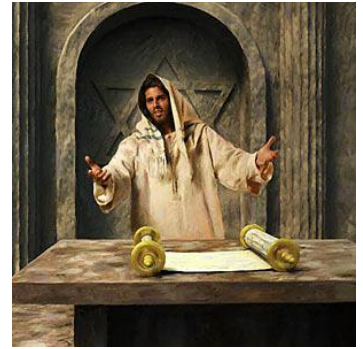


Edersheim describes the interior requirements for the synagogue as follows; "Prayer also was offered standing, although in the Temple the worshippers prostrated themselves, a practice still continued in certain of the most solemn litanies. The pulpit or lectern—"migdal" (tower), 'chisse' and 'churseja' (chair or throne), or 'pergulah' (the Latin 'pergula,' probably elevation)—stood in the middle of the 'bima,' and in front of 'the ark.' The latter, which occupied the innermost place in the synagogue, as already noticed, corresponded to the Most Holy Place in the Temple, and formed the most important part. It was called the 'aron' (ark), the 'tevah,' or

'tevutha' (chest, like that in which Noah and Moses were saved), or the 'hechal' (little temple). In reality, it consisted of a press or chest, in which the rolls of the law were deposited." (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, pages 146-147).

WORSHIP:

Again, it needs to be prefaced that the system of Jewish worship has evolved and changed over time. It has been influenced by time periods, cultures, apostate beliefs, and necessity. It cannot be definitively stated precisely how the Synagogues functioned at the time of Jesus. There are, however, certain evidences provided through the Biblical record, but they are incomplete. The following is a generalization of Jewish worship at the time of Jesus. **"The synagogue was the real centre of religious life in Palestine. There was only one Temple; but the law said that wherever there were ten Jewish families there must be a synagogue; and so in every town and village it was in the synagogue that the people met to worship. There were no sacrifices in the synagogue. The Temple was designed for sacrifice; the synagogue for teaching. But how could Jesus gain an entry into the synagogue and how could he, a layman, the carpenter from Nazareth, deliver his message there?"**



In the synagogue service there were three parts.

- (a) The worship part in which prayer was offered.
- (b) The reading of the scriptures. Seven people from the congregation read. As they read, the ancient Hebrew, which was no longer widely understood, was translated by the Targumist into Aramaic or Greek, in the case of the Law, one verse at a time, in the case of the prophets, three verses at a time.
- (c) The teaching part. In the synagogue there was no professional ministry nor any one person to give the address; the president would invite any distinguished person present to speak and discussion and talk would follow. That is how Jesus got his chance. **The synagogue and its platform were open to him at this stage.**" (The Gospel of Luke, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, pages 45-46).

"Sabbath worship in a synagogue varied from place to place, but generally included the reciting of the 'shema' (confession of faith, Dt. 6:4-9), scripture readings from the Law and Prophets, prayer, thanksgiving, and individual exhortations." (Manners and Customs in the Bible, Victor H. Matthews, page 260). The Jewish form of synagogue worship has many similarities to Christian Church worship today, and was believed to be the origins of such worship. **"Their (the Jews) genius for the organization of public religion appears in the fact the form of communal worship devised by them was adopted by Christianity and Islam, and in its general outline still exists in the Christian and Moslem worlds."** (Introduction to the History of Religions, C. Toy, 1913, page 546).

The Jewish synagogue worship can be broken down into eight main points; Entrance, Prayer, Shema (confession of faith), Reading from the Pentateuch, Reading from the Prophets, Expounding on the words of the Prophets, Singing Hymns, and reciting Benedictions. Below is a brief summary of each of the eight elements found in ancient Jewish synagogue worship;

Entrance:

Entering into the synagogue was the first step to worship. One dressed in appropriate attire, conducive to worship. The Mishnah records, **"4:8 A. He who says, 'I am not going to pass before the ark wearing colored clothes' also in white one should not pass before that ark."** (The Mishnah: A New Translation, Translated by Jacob Neusner, page 322). The worshippers, after the ark was a fixed to the eastern wall, would pass by the ark and bow before it. It is believed that certain scriptures were uttered by the worshippers as they passed the sacred law. Entrance was a time of reverence and respect. It was a time to prepare one's self for worship.

Prayer:

Synagogue worship started and ended with a prayer. Prayers were also offered on an individual basis during the services. Praying in the synagogue was one of the primary functions of the Synagogue itself. The Jews were expected, even required, to honor this rule. **"The Babylon Talmud goes even farther. There we are told (Ber. 6 a), that the prayer which a man addresses to God has only its proper effect if offered in the synagogue; that if an individual, accustomed to frequent every day the synagogue, misses it for once, God will demand an account of him; that if the Eternal finds fewer than ten persons there gathered, His anger is kindled, as it is written in Isaiah 50:2 (Ber. 6 b); that if a person has a synagogue in his own town, and does not enter it for prayer, he is to be called an evil neighbour, and provokes exile alike upon himself and his children, as it is written in Jeremiah 12:4."** (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, page 140).

Some prayers were recited scripture, others were words of the hearts. Apparently, the Jews prayed with their hand raised to the heavens and often prostrated on the ground. Sanders writes, **"Besides praying privately and at the temple, many Jews prayed when they attended their synagogues or houses of prayer. Josephus quotes Agartharchides, a critic of Judaism, as saying that on the sabbath the Jews 'pray with outstretched hands in the temples until the evening'."** (Judaism: Practice and Belief 63BCE-66CE, E.P. Sanders, page 203).

Shema:

The Shema was a declaration of one's beliefs, and an oath, so to speak, to follow them. Abrahams wrote, **"As regards the Synagogue service, it probably opened with an invocation to prayer, must have included the Shema (Deut. vi. 4-9, xi. 13-21; to which was added later numbers xv. 37-41), a doxology and confession of faith, the eighteen benedictions in a primitive form, readings from Pentateuch and Prophets, and certain communal responses."** (Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels, First series, Cambridge, I. Abrahams, page 9). It is unclear as to how the shema was recited. Quite probably, due to its length, it was repeated after someone read it from a scroll. Even so, it would not be surprising that the Jews recited the shema from memory. The full shema is as follows;

THE SHEMA - "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). "Furthermore the Lord spake unto me, saying, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: Let me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under heaven: and I will make of thee a nation mightier and greater than they. So I turned and came down from the mount, and the mount burned with fire:

and the two tables of the covenant were in my two hands. And I looked, and, behold, ye had sinned against the Lord your God, and had made you a molten calf: ye had turned aside quickly out of the way which the Lord had commanded you. And I took the two tables, and cast them out of my two hands, and brake them before your eyes. And I fell down before the Lord, as at the first, forty days and forty nights: I did neither eat bread, nor drink water, because of all your sins which ye sinned, in doing wickedly in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger. For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure, wherewith the Lord was wroth against you to destroy you. But the Lord hearkened unto me at that time also. And the Lord was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him: and I prayed for Aaron also the same time. And I took your sin, the calf which ye had made, and burnt it with fire, and stamped it, and ground it very small, even until it was as small as dust: and I cast the dust thereof into the brook that descended out of the mount." (Deuteronomy 9:13-21). "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue: And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring: That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God. I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the Lord your God." (Numbers 15:37-41).

The shema appears to have been recited often. Maybe several times a day. The practice of placing the shema into a small container called a "Mezuzah" and fastening it to ones front door became common practice. The Jews would kiss the Mezuzah and touch it as they entered their house. Some believe that the shema may have been recited at home. "Public worship commenced on ordinary occasions with the so-called 'Shema,' which was preceded in the morning and evening by two 'benedictions,' and succeeded in the morning by one, and in the evening by two, benedictions; the second being, strictly speaking, an evening prayer. The 'Shema' was a kind of 'belief,' or 'creed,' composed of these three passages of Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:13-21; Numbers 15:37-41. It obtained its name from the initial word 'shema': 'Hear, O Israel,' in Deuteronomy 6:4." (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, page 149).

Reading from the Pentateuch:

The law was read in its entirety during the course of synagogue worship. Such readings were read by the leader of the synagogue or someone he designated. "That the readings from the Law and the Prophets were in the time of Jesus very short is fairly certain. The rule that at least 21 verses were read from the Law and the Prophets was late. In the Massoretic divisions we find Sabbath lessons (Sedarim) which contain seven, eight, and nine verses, and there are many indications that the oldest *haftara* often comprised very few verses." (Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels, First series, Cambridge, I. Abrahams, page 7). The Mishnah, written around the time of Jesus, records, "4:4 A. He who reads in the Torah should read no fewer than three verses." (The Mishnah: A New Translation, Translated by Jacob Neusner, page 322). Even so, there was a plan set forth to get through the entire Pentateuch during a well defined time table. "Sections, called *sedarim*, were established in order to complete the reading of the Pentateuch within a prescribed time. Babylonian Jews divided the Pentateuch into 154 sections and thus completed reading it in three years, whereas Palestinian Jews read it through once every year." (The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, General Editor – Merrill C. Tenney, page 819).

The reader would approach the pulpit, and the scrolls were laid out for the reading. The attendant of the synagogue brought forth the scrolls. Most suppose that the reader was required to stand while reading; however the Mishnah says, "4:1 A. He who reads the Scroll stands or sits." (The Mishnah: A New Translation, Translated by Jacob Neusner, page 321). The reader would then read, aloud, for all who were gathered to hear. The prescribes schedule of reading was followed except during feast days, which had their own prescribed reading. The Mishnah requires the following passages to be read on feast days; "3.5 A. At Passover they read the section, the set feasts [Lev. 23:4ff], in the Torah of the Priests [= Leviticus]. B. At Pentacost, they read, Seven weeks [Dt. 16:9ff.]. C. At the New Year they read, In the seventh month, on the first day of the month [Lev. 23:23ff.]. D. On the Day of Atonement they read, After the Deat [Lev. 16:1ff.]. E. On the first festival day of the Festival [of Tabernacles] they read the section. The set feasts [Lev. 23:33ff.], in the Torah of the Priests. F. And on the other days of the Festival they read about the offering of the Festival [Num. 29:17ff.]. 3.6 A. At Hanukkah [they read] *The princes* [Num. 7:1ff.]. B. At Purim [they read] *And Amalek came* [Ex. 17:8ff.]. C. On the new moons they read, *And on the first days of your months* [Num. 28:11]. D. At the set *maamad* they read the works of Creation [Gen. 1:1ff.]. E. At fasts they read the blessings and curses [Lev. 26, Dt. 28]. F. They do not break off in the reading of the curses, but one person reads all of them. G. On Monday and Thursday and the Sabbath at the afternoon prayer they read according to the set order." (The Mishnah: A New Translation, Translated by Jacob Neusner, page 321).

The readings of the Torah were not expounded upon. They were the law, and stood by themselves.

Reading from the Prophets:

The readings of the prophets included scrolls that contained the writings of Isaiah, Samuel, Daniel, and Jeremiah, just to name a few. These passages were read with the intent of commentary. "...when a preacher was present, he read the prophetic lesson, and in the absence of such a one the children read it, perhaps at greater length. For the Prophetic reading was by nature a sermon, and as the service concluded with a sermon, the Prophetic lesson concluded the service when no preacher was present. It is clear from the narrative in T.B. Beza, 15b, that the homily of the Rabbi was the end of the service, and it follows that the homily was given after the reading from the Prophets. But Schurer holds that as a general rule the discourse followed on the Pentateuchal lesson, and that the Prophetic reading without explanation concluded the service. True it is that the Prophetic lesson was named *haftara*, a word corresponding to *desmissio*, i.e. the people was dismissed with or after the reading from the Prophets. But this surely is quite compatible with a short discourse, and the dismissal of the people might still be described as following the Prophetic lesson. Moreover, it may well be that the term *haftara* refers to the conclusion not of the whole services but of the Scriptural readings, the Prophetic passage being complement of the Pentateuchal section." (Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels, First series, Cambridge, I. Abrahams, page 5). It should be noted that the Samaritans did not accept the writings of the prophets as scripture. Therefore, such writings would not be part of the worship and study.



Expounding on the words of the Prophets:

"Philo describes how one would read from the book, while another, 'one of the more experienced' expounded. In Palestine, too, the only qualification was competence, just as for leading the services experience was a chief requisite. As the discourses grew in length the locale for the sermon seems to have been transferred from Synagogue to School, and the time sometimes changed from the morning to the afternoon and previous evening. But at the earlier period, when the discourse was brief, it must have been spoken in the Synagogue, and immediately after the lesson from the Prophets." (Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels, First series, Cambridge, I. Abrahams, page 2).

"The reading of the prophets was often followed by a sermon or address, with which the service concluded. The preacher was called 'darshan,' and his address a 'derashah' (homily, sermon, from 'darash,' to ask, inquire, or discuss). When the address was a learned theological discussion—especially in academies—it was not delivered to the people directly, but whispered into the ear of an 'amora,' or speaker, who explained to the multitude in popular language the weighty sayings which the Rabbi had briefly communicated to him. A more popular sermon, on the other hand, was called a 'meamar,' literally, a 'speech, or talk.' These addresses would be either Rabbinical expositions of Scripture, or else doctrinal discussions, in which appeal would be made to tradition and to the authority of certain great teachers. For it was laid down as a principle (Eduj. i. 3), that 'everyone is bound to teach in the very language of his teacher'." (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, pages 155-156).

Singing Hymns:

"None the less, the books of the Maccabees prove most clearly that the people were in possession of copies of the Scroll of the law from which they read publically (I Macc, i. 57, iii. 48), were in the habit of gathering for prayer (iii. 44), and above all of singing hymns with such refrains as 'His mercy is good, and endureth for ever'." (Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels, First series, Cambridge, I. Abrahams, pages 1-2).

Reciting Benedictions:

The eighteen benedictions (Shemoneh Ezreh) are also called "The Amidah" or the prayer that is said while standing facing toward Jerusalem, most of which is said silently. The Amidah is used during Sabbath services and holy days as well in the daily service. It might be followed by a priestly blessing or benediction. Such a blessing is offered by a priest with arms stretched to heaven. The Mishnah says, "4:7 A. A priest who has blemishes on his hand should not raise his hands in the priestly benediction." (The Mishnah: A New Translation, Translated by Jacob Neusner, page 322). This is probably a symbolic reference to the fact that priest were required to approach the Lord with clean hands and a pure heart.



The eighteen benedictions have changed, in one degree or another, over the centuries. Below are the eighteen benediction, which may or may not resemble those at the time of Jesus. They will at least give the readers a flavor for the benedictions. They are as follows:

Benediction	Name	Verbiage
Benediction #01	God of History	O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall declare your praise. Blessed art thou, O lord our God and God of our fathers. God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob, the great mighty and revered God, the most high God, who bestows loving kindness, and the Master of all things; who remembers the pious deeds of the patriarchs, and in love will bring a redeemer to their children's children for your Name's sake.
Benediction #02	God of Nature	[During the Ten Days of Repentance say: Remember us unto life, O king, who delights in life, and inscribe us in the book of life, for your own sake, O living God.] O King, Helper, Savior and Shield. Blessed art thou, O Lord, the Shield of Abraham. You, O Lord, are mighty forever, you revive the dead, You are mighty to save. [From the day after Simchat Torah until the Eve of Passover, say: You cause the wind to blow and the rain to fall.] You sustain the living with loving kindness, revive the dead with great mercy, support the falling, heal the sick, free the bound, and keep Your faith to them that sleep in the dust. who is like You, Lord of the mighty acts, and who resembles You, O King, who orders death and restores life, and causes salvation (Yeshua) to spring forth? [During the Ten days of Repentance say: Who is like You, Father of mercy, who in mercy remembers your creatures unto life?] Yes, You are faithful to revive the dead. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who revives the dead.
Benediction #03	God who Sanctifies	Responsive reading: We will sanctify Your Name in the world even as they sanctify it in the highest heavens, as it is written by the hand of Your prophet: And they call to one another and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts: The whole earth is full of His glory. Those over against them say, Blessed... Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place. And in Your Holy Words it is written, saying The Lord shall reign forever, Your God O Zion, unto all generations. Praise Ye the Lord. Unto all generations we will declare Your greatness, and to all eternity we will proclaim Your holiness, and Your praise, O our God, shall not depart from our mouth forever, for You are a great and holy God and King. Blessed art thou, O Lord the holy God. [During the days of Repentance conclude the Blessing: ---the holy King.]
Benediction #04	Prayer of Understanding	You favor man with knowledge, and teach mortals understanding. Favor us with knowledge, understanding and discernment from You. Blessed art thou, O Lord, gracious Giver of knowledge
Benediction #05	Prayer for Repentance	Cause us to return, our Father, unto Your Torah; draw us near, our King, unto Your service, and bring us back in perfect repentance unto Your presence. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who delights in repentance.
Benediction #06	Prayer for Forgiveness	Forgive us, our Father, for we have sinned; pardon us, our King, for we have transgressed; [On Fast Days, Selichoth are inserted here.] for You do pardon and forgive. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who is gracious, and does abundantly forgive.
Benediction #07	Prayer for deliverance from Affliction	Look upon our affliction and plead our cause, and redeem us speedily for Your name's sake; for You are a mighty Redeemer. Blessed art thou, O Lord, the Redeemer of Israel. [On fast days the Reader says "Answer us, O Lord, answer us on this day of the fast of our humiliation, for we are in great trouble. Turn not to our wickedness; conceal not your face from us, and hide not Yourself from our supplication. Be near, we beseech You, unto our cry; let Your loving kindness be a comfort to us; even before we call unto You answer us, according as it is said, And it shall come to pass that, before they call, I will answer; while they are yet speaking, I will hear; for You, O Lord, are He who answers in time of trouble, who delivers and rescues in all times of trouble and distress; the holy King."]
Benediction #08	Prayer for Healing	Heal us, O Lord, and we shall be healed; save us and we shall be saved; for You are our praise. Grant a perfect healing to all our wounds; [You may add a prayer for the sick here] for You, almighty King, are a faithful and merciful Physician. Blessed art thou O Lord, who heals the sick of Your people Israel.
Benediction #09	Prayer from Deliverance from want	Bless this year unto us, O Lord our God, together with every kind of the produce, for our welfare; give [From December 4th until Passover: Dew and rain for] a blessing upon the face of the earth. O satisfy us with your goodness, and bless

		our year like other good years. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who blesses the years.
Benediction #10	Prayer for Reunion of Israel	Sound the great horn for our freedom; raise the ensign to gather our exiles, and gather us from the four corners of the earth. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who gathers the dispersed of Your people Israel.
Benediction #11	Prayer for the righteous reign of God	Restore our judges as in former times, and our counselors as at the beginning; remove from us sorrow and sighing; reign over us, O Lord, You alone, in loving kindness and tender mercy, and clear us in judgment. Blessed art thou, O Lord, the King who loves righteousness and judgment. [During the Ten Days of Repentance say: the King of Judgment.]
Benediction #12	Prayer against Slanderers	And for slanderers let there be no hope, and let all wickedness perish as in a moment; let all Your enemies be speedily cut off, and the dominion of arrogance uproot and crush, cast down and humble speedily in our days. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who breaks the enemies and humbles the arrogant. This addition to the Shemoneh Ezreh brings the count of blessings to 19 instead of the 18, as indicated by its name. The prayer against slanderers was added at Yavneh placing it during the time of the beyt midrash at Babylon, (See Barachoth 33a) This prayer was aimed at "Christians" according to Rabbi Jeffery Cohen, author of Blessed Are You.
Benediction #13	Prayer for the righteous and proselytes	Toward the righteous and the pious, toward the elders of Your people the house of Israel, toward the remnant of their scribes, toward true proselytes, and toward us also may Your tender mercies be stirred, O Lord our God; grant a good reward unto all who faithfully trust in Your Name; set our portion with them for ever, so that we may not be put to shame; for we have trusted in You. Blessed art thou, O Lord the stay and trust of the righteous.
Benediction #14	Prayer for the rebuilding of Jerusalem	And Jerusalem, Your city, return in mercy, and dwell therein as You have spoken; rebuild it soon in our days as an everlasting building, and speedily set up therein the throne of David. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who rebuilds Jerusalem.
Benediction #15	Prayer for the Messianic King	Speedily cause the offspring of David, Your servant, to flourish, and lift up his glory by Your divine help because we wait for Your salvation all the day. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who causes the strength of salvation (Yeshua) to flourish.
Benediction #16	Prayer for the hearing of prayer	Hear our voice, O Lord our God; spare us and have mercy upon us, and accept our prayer in mercy and favor; for You are a God who hears and answers prayers and supplications; from Your presence, O our King, turn us not away empty; [On fast days the Reader says "Answer us, O Lord, answer us on this day of the fast of our humiliation, for we are in great trouble. Turn not to our wickedness; conceal not your face from us, and hide not Yourself from our supplication. Be near, we beseech You, unto our cry; let Your loving kindness be a comfort to us; even before we call unto You answer us, according as it is said, And it shall come to pass that, before they call, I will answer; while they are yet speaking, I will hear; for You, O Lord, are He who answers in time of trouble, who delivers and rescues in all times of trouble and distress; the holy King."] for You hear and answer in mercy to the prayers of Your people Israel. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who hears and answers prayer.
Benediction #17	Prayer for the restoration of Temple service	Accept, O Lord our God, Your people Israel and their prayer; restore the service to the inner sanctuary of Your house; receive in love and favor both the offerings of Israel and their prayer; and may the worship of Your people Israel be ever acceptable unto You. [Add on the New Moon, Feast of unleavened Bread, and Feast of Tabernacles add: Our god and God of our fathers! May our remembrance ascend, come and be accepted before You, with the remembrance of our fathers, of Messiah the son of David Your servant, of Jerusalem Your holy city, and of all Your people the house of Israel, bringing deliverance and well being, grace, loving kindness and mercy, life and peace on this day of (On the following days say: The New Moon. The feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Tabernacles.) Remember us, O Lord our God, thereon for our well-being; be mindful of us for blessing, and save us unto live: by Your promise of salvation and mercy, spare us and be gracious to us; have mercy upon us and save us; for our eyes are bent upon You, because You are a gracious and merciful God and King.] And let our eyes behold Your return in mercy to Zion. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who restores Your divine presence to Zion.
Benediction #18	Thanksgiving for God's unfailing mercies	[While the reader says the following paragraph the congregation recites in an undertone: We give thanks unto You for You are the Lord our God, and the God of our fathers, the God of all flesh, our Creator and the Creator of all things in the beginning. Blessings and thanksgiving be to Your great and holy Name, because You have kept us in life and have preserved us' so may You continue to keep us in life and preserve us. Gather our exiles to Your holy courts to observe Your statutes, to do Your will, and to serve You with a perfect heart; seeing that we give thanks unto You. Blessed be the god to whom thanksgiving is due.] We give thanks unto You for You are the Lord our god and god of our fathers for ever and ever; You are the rock of our lives, the Shield of our salvation through every generation. We will give thanks unto You and declare Your praise for our lives which are committed unto Your hand, and for our souls which are in Your charge, and for Your miracles, which are daily with us, and for Your miracles, which are daily with us, and for Your wonders and Your benefits, which are wrought at all times, evening, morning and noon. You are all good, whose mercies fail not; You are the merciful Being, whose loving kindness never ceases, we have ever hoped in You. [On Chanukah and Purim the following is added: We thank You also for the miracles, for the redemption, for the mighty deeds and saving acts, wrought by You, as well as for the wars which You waged for our fathers in days of old, at this season.]

WOMEN IN THE SYNAGOGUE:

It sounds very chauvinistic in our day and age, but woman held a lower status than men at the time of Jesus. Worship was segregated by gender. In regards to the synagogue, **"Women have traditionally sat in a separate section in the periphery, rear, or upstairs, often separated from the men by a divider called a mehitzah."** (Encyclopedia of Traditional Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, page 167). Women did not read from the scrolls or expound on them. There is evidence that women even had their own entrance. Jeremiah wrote, **"By virtue of Deut. 31:12, women, like men and children, could participate in the synagogue service (b. Hag. 3a Bar., and par.; j. Hag. i.i, 74d.35, e t c.) but barriers of lattice separated the women's section. Later they even went so far as to build a gallery for women with a special entrance. In the liturgical service, women were there simply to listen. To be sure, in older times they do not seem to have been excluded from being called upon to read the Torah, but by Tannaic times it was not customary for them to obey the call to read. Women were forbidden to teach (M. Kidd. i v. i 3). In the house, the wife was not reckoned among the number of persons summoned to pronounce benediction after a meal (M. Ber. vii.2). Finally we must record that a woman had no right to bear witness, because it was concluded from Gen. 18:15 that she was a liar."** (Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period, Joachim Jeremias, page 374).



LEADERSHIP IN THE SYNAGOGUE:

The leadership of the synagogues was not necessarily the logical choice. **"The leadership in the synagogue was not in the hands of priests. Lay officials and a council of elders headed by an "archon" directed synagogue worship, supervised maintenance of the building, and enforced the rules of the congregation. The head of the of the synagogue was also sometimes aided by an attendant or deputy head. It was their responsibility to discipline members who disobeyed some aspect of the law."** (Manners and Customs in the Bible, Victor H. Matthews, page 160). The men of the local community used the democratic process to elect the leadership in their synagogue.

There were generally at least two elected leaders in every synagogue; the Ruler of the Synagogue or "**ro'sh ha-keneseth**" and the Minister/Attendant or "**hazzān**". (The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, General Editor – Merrill C. Tenney, page 818). The Ruler of the Synagogue presided over services and the congregation, while the attendant oversaw the physical structure, repair, and maintenance.

Even though synagogue leadership was elected by the people, the priests and Pharisees were not necessarily out of the picture. Sanders discloses that the scribes, priests and Pharisees were popular with the people. They obviously had the educational or genealogical pedigree one would look for in such a leader. **"When a community was faced with a choice between a layman and a scribe for nomination to the office of elder to a community, of 'ruler of the synagogue', or of judge, it invariably preferred the scribe. This means that a large number of important posts hitherto held by priests and laymen of high rank, had, in the first century AD passed entirely, or predominantly, into the hands of scribes."** (Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period, Joachim Jeremias, page 237).

Sanders is of the belief that the Pharisees basically ran the synagogues. He wrote, **"There were synagogues in every community: they were run by the Pharisees. There were scribes, thousands of them in Palestine, copying scrolls of the Bible and other books, but mostly drawing up legal documents: they were Pharisees or led by Pharisees. There were schools: the teachers were Pharisees; courts: the judges were Pharisees..."** (Judaism: Practice and Belief 63BCE-66CE, E.P. Sanders, page 388). He goes on to say, **"It is almost universally supposed that Pharisees controlled the synagogues."** (Judaism: Practice and Belief 63BCE-66CE, E.P. Sanders, page 398). Control; however, does not mean that a Pharisee sat as the Ruler of each and every Synagogue. **"The issue of the control of synagogues (or of schools or courts) is in part a question of numbers. We do not know the geographical spread of Pharisees, nor of priests and Levites. We can be confident, however, that there were many more priests and Levites than Pharisees. Based on Josephus' figures, the ratio was more than three to one (20,000 clergy, 6000 Pharisees). We may assume that virtually all of these people were literate and thus able to read the scripture and serve the community in various ways. I argued above that the priesthood did not give up its ancient prerogative of teaching, and also that there were enough priests to do the job. We cannot say this of the Pharisees..."** (Judaism: Practice and Belief 63BCE-66CE, E.P. Sanders, page 398). It would appear that there was political power associated with controlling the synagogues. The Pharisees needed such power to control their agenda. The Pharisees undoubtedly influenced the nomination and voting for synagogue rulers. The people wanted someone knowledgeable in Jewish law; which was scripture. This made the scribes and the rabbis ideal choices. **"The highest places are kept for the scribes (Matt. 23.6 and par.), and the Rabbi has precedence in honour over the aged, even over parents. In the synagogue too, he had the seat of honour; he sat with his back to the cupboard containing the Torah, in full view of the people."** (Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period, Joachim Jeremias, page 244). As with most things, we listen to those whom we deem to be wise, experienced, and trustworthy. Those who were perceived to lack these traits would not be viable candidates for leadership within the Jewish synagogue.

A priest, one have a proven genealogical lines to Aaron, had rightful position in the Temple; however, this did not transfer to the Synagogues. It doesn't mean that the people didn't have high respect for them, or that they could not be elected to ruler of the synagogue. It only means that they did not have right to the position by lineage. **"The priests had no official standing or privileges in the synagogue, though they were always honored when present. They were the hereditary officials of the temple, but the officers of the synagogue were elected either by the congregation or by the council."** (Manners and Customs of the Bible, James M. Freeman, page 335).

The Ruler of the Synagogue did not act like a modern day minister, reserving all the preaching to himself. In fact, the Ruler of the Synagogue presided and allowed much of the instruction and expounding on the scriptures to be given by qualified men. **"We recall that according to Philo a priest or elder was responsible for sabbath instruction."** (Judaism: Practice and Belief 63BCE-66CE, E.P. Sanders, page 201). The Ruler might call upon even a layman, should he believe him to be a knowledgeable teacher or Rabbi. Freeman recorded, **"The leader of the congregation might ask any suitable person to address the assembly. Persons who were known as learned men, or as the expounders of religious faith, were allowed to speak."** (Manners and Customs of the Bible, James M. Freeman, page 335).

The synagogue leadership oversaw more than Sabbath instruction. Somewhere in the evolution of the synagogue, it also served as the community school. Children, at an early age, began to attend synagogue. There they studied the law. In order to do so, the children were taught their letters. They learned to read and write with the sole purpose of understanding the Torah. The attendant, not the ruler, served as school master. **"It has already been stated that in general the school was held in the synagogue. Commonly its teacher was the "chazan," or "minister" (Luke 4:20); by which expression we are to understand not a spiritual office, but something like that of a beadle. This officer was salaried by the congregation; nor was he allowed to receive fees from his pupils, lest he should show favour to the rich. The expenses were met by voluntary and charitable contributions; and in case of deficiency the most distinguished Rabbis did not hesitate to go about and collect aid from the wealthy. The number of hours during which the junior classes were kept in school was limited. As the close air of the school-room might prove injurious during the heat of the day, lessons were intermitted between ten a.m. and three p.m."** (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, page 76).



The synagogue served a vital role in the future of each community. A properly functioning synagogue contributed to the raising of educated children. It also helped the community learn and understand the laws of God. A good synagogue resulted in a community with higher morals and ethics. Those villages or communities who failed to organize a synagogue were considered condemned. Edersheim wrote, **"Not a town, nor a village, if it numbered only ten men, who could or would wholly give themselves to divine things, but had one or more synagogues. If it be asked, why the number ten was thus fixed upon as the smallest that could form a congregation, the reply is that, according to Numbers 14:27, the "evil congregation" consisted of the spies who had brought a bad report, and whose number was ten."** (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, page 142).

19 - being glorified – The phrase "being glorified" is translated from the Greek word "δοξάζω" or "doxazō". It means to think, suppose, or to be of the opinion. It can also be used to mean praise, extol, magnify, or celebrate. It can carry the idea of imparting glory to something, cloth it with splendor, or render it excellent. The Codex Sinaiticus translate the phrase "being glorified of all" as "being glorified by all". (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 4, Verse 15, page 113). Jesus reputation was one of awe and praise among the people, at least to start with. **"The passage ends by saying that he was held in high reputation by all. This period of Jesus' ministry has been called the Galilaean springtime. He had come like a breath of the very wind of God. The opposition had not yet crystallized. Men's hearts were hungry for the word of life, and they had not yet realized what a blow he was to strike at the orthodoxy of his time. A man with a message will always command an audience."** (The Gospel of Luke, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 46).

20 - Galilæans – The word "Galilæans" is translated from the Greek word "Γαλιλαῖος" or "Galilaios". It means a native of Galilee. **"The Galilæans themselves were the Highlanders of Palestine. Josephus says of them, 'They were ever fond of innovations and by nature disposed to changes, and delighted in seditions. They were ever ready to follow a leader who would begin an insurrection. They were quick in temper and given to quarrelling.' 'The Galilæans,' it was said, 'have never been destitute of**

courage.' They were ever more anxious for honour than for gain!' (The Gospel of Luke, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 45). The Zealot movement was of Galilæan origin.

The general belief is that Galilæans were a mixed race like the Samaritans. This does ring very true, since the Jews treated the Galilæans like true blood brothers. Recently, archaeological evidence has shown no human occupation of the Galilee during the sixth and seventh centuries BCE, which would be the time period after the Assyrian conquest of the Kingdom of Israel. Unlike Samaria, Galilee was stripped of people and there were no foreign transplants. A few scattered, small settlements began to appear in following centuries, mostly military outposts and a few small farming communities which sent their harvests to the coastal cities. The same conclusions can be drawn from the excavations of major sites as well. So Galilee remains essentially empty for more than half a millennium following the Assyrian invasions.

A sudden change occurred in Galilee about the start of the first century BCE. Over a period of a couple decades, dozens of new villages appear. This indicates that a new, rather large, population came into Galilee. The trend continues for the next half century or so, with many new settlements appearing and then growing larger. The archaeological findings indicate that the new inhabitants to Galilee were transplanted Judeans. The ancient historian Josephus relates how Alexander Jannæus, the King of Israel from 102 to 76 BCE, extended the northern boundary of his Judean-centered country into Galilee during his reign using military means.

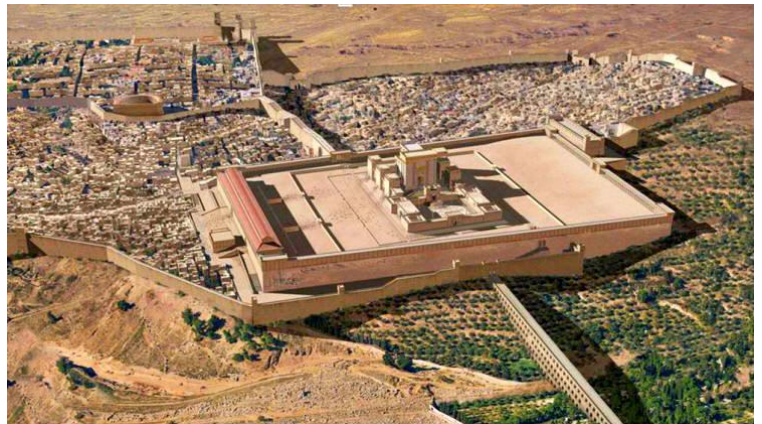
The Galilæans soon developed their own culture. They were still Jewish, but they developed a dialect and unique dress that set them apart. They also develop religious and cultural nuances that set them apart from the Jews in Judæa. Judæan Pharisees, in particular, were less than impressed with Galilean observance of the fine points of Jewish religious observance. While praised for their passionate identification with Judaism and the Jewish people, their ignorance in law and disinterest in study was an almost never ending source of fuel for Judean snobbery. The Jerusalem Talmud records the despair of the great First Century sage, Yohanan ben Zakkai, at having been asked no more than two questions about Jewish law during his 18-year posting in the Galilee: **"O Galilee, O Galilee, in the end you shall be filled with wrongdoers!"** (Shabbat 16:7, 15d). That being said, when the Messiah walked among them, they were generally more receptive to His message than the pious Judæans.

21 - received him— The word "received" is translated from the Greek word "δέχομαι" or "dechomai". It means to take with the hand, to take up, or take hold of. **"Welcomed. The verb dechesthai occurs only here in the Johannine works."** (The Gospel according to John: I-XII, Anchor-Yale Bible, Raymond E. Brown, S.S., page 186).

22 - seen all the things – The word "seen" is translated from the Greek word "ὁρᾶω" or "horaō". It means to see with the eyes, or the mind, to perceive, know, or experience.

23 - he did – The phrase "he did" is translated from the Greek word "ποιέω" or "poieō". It means to make, prepare, produce, construct, form, fashion, or do. **"Presumably this refers to the signs mentioned in ii 23."** (The Gospel according to John: I-XII, Anchor-Yale Bible, Raymond E. Brown, S.S., page 186). We know that Jesus performed miracles and mighty works while at the Passover of 27CE, and during His 9 month ministry in southern Judæa. Even so, we lack the specifics of what "he did".

24 - at Jerusalem – The name "Jerusalem" is translated from the Greek word "Ἱερουσόλυμα" or "Hierosolyma". It means to "set ye double peace". It is a transliteration of the Hebrew word "יְרוּשָׁלַיִם" or "Yēruwshalaim". The Hebrew word, translated literally means "teaching of peace". The Codex Sinaiticus replaces the word "at" with "in". (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, John, Chapter 4, Verse 45, page 171).



Here again, the gospel writer is referencing Jesus' trip to Passover in April of 27CE. All who could make the trip to Jerusalem for Jerusalem were under obligation to do so. At least once in their life, every man was required to make the trip no matter what the distance. Similarly, if you lived near Jerusalem you were required to attend every year. There would have been over a million Jews converging on Jerusalem for Passover.

25 - feast – The word "feast" is translated from the Greek word "ἑορτή" or "heortē". It means a feast day or a festival. The feast spoken of was Passover. Passover started on April 7, 27CE and ended on April 14, 27CE. Jesus and His disciples were at the Passover, and made a significant impact upon it's proceedings. He cleared the money changers, performed miracles, taught the doctrines of heaven, and met with a ranking member of the Sanhedrin; Nicodemus. It was at this feast that the Galilæans saw the things that Jesus did.



26 - they also went unto – The word "went" is translated from the Greek word "ἐρχομαι" or "erchomai". It means to come from one place to another. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the phrase "went unto" as "had come to". (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, John, Chapter 4, Verse 45, page 171).