



Reconnecting Jesus to His Jewish Culture and Impacting Our Lives in 2021

By Jim Myers

This article is written specifically to people with Christian Biblical Heritages. In the last newsletter, I began with the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12). I pointed out that virtually every major faith or philosophy around the world has some version of the first line of it.

*In everything, **do** unto **others** what you would have them do to you.
For this sums up the Torah and the Prophets.*

The second line links it to specific groups of people – *those whose Scriptures include the Torah and the Prophets*. Two of those groups are *Judaism and Christianity*. The *Torah and the Prophets* are books that are in modern *Jewish Tanakhs and Christian Bibles*.

*Almost all of the teachings of the Jewish Jesus are
linked to portions of the Torah and the Prophets.*

His followers and other Jewish members of the crowds hearing him were familiar the words of the *Torah and the Prophets*. Very few Christians today know the words of Jesus are linked to those books or understand how they were viewed and interpreted in the Jewish culture of Jesus and the apostles he personally chose. I will demonstrate the importance of seeing the words of Jesus through the eyes of his Jewish culture. In his parable about the Great Day of Judgment he said:

The King will say to **the nations on the left**: “Depart **you cursed** into the **everlasting fire** . . . because of **the ways you treated the least members of your nation** -- *you did not give the hungry food; you did not give the thirsty drink; you did not take in the homeless; you did not clothe those needing clothes; you did not visit the sick or go to those in prison.*”

Do you think **the penalty** those nations received **matched the actions they failed to do?**

Americans view those acts as subjective acts of charity. People that do not do acts of charity are not punished as criminals in American courts. However, in the parable Jesus taught about the Great Day of Judgment (Matthew 25:31-46), all of the nations of the earth will be judged by God's designated judge and king – *the Son of Man*.

Since the Great Day of Judgment hasn't happened yet, now America would then be in one of the two groups being judged.

It's very important to understand why the penalty in parable was so severe and the crime they committed. We must place the words of Jesus in "*the cultural context of his time period*" – *and view them in light of the Torah and the Prophets*. But first let's review the famous parable in Matthew 25:31-36.

³¹ When the **Son of Man** comes in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then **he will sit on the throne** of his glory. ³² All the **nations will be gathered** before him, and he will separate them one from another, as a **shepherd divides his sheep** from the goats. ³³ And he will set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Make sure to note the points listed below.

- The **Son of Man** is sitting on a throne – **he is a king!**
- **All the nations of the earth** are gathered before the king.
- The king is viewed as a **shepherd** and the nations as a **flock**.
- The king separates the nations into "**two groups**."

Now hang on to that picture as we continue with Matthew 25.

³⁴ Then the **King** will say to **the (nations)** on his right hand, 'Come, you **blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:**

Let's go over the key points again.

- *He said they are blessed of his father.*
- *A kingdom has been prepared for them since the time of creation.*
- *They have inherited it!*

Now let's return to the parable of Jesus again. Remember the King is speaking to the nations in the group on the right.

³⁵ for I was hungry and **you gave me** food; I was thirsty and **you gave me** drink; I was a stranger and **you took me** in; ³⁶ I was naked and **you clothed me**; I was sick and **you visited me**; I was in prison and **you came to me**.

Apparently, members of the righteous nations were confused by what the King said. They did not remember doing those things to him. We need to remember that Jesus is the one telling the parable and we must stay on our toes and watch for changes in the story he initiates. Jesus gives "**a new name**" to the nations in the group on the right.

³⁷ Then **the righteous (nations)** asked him, 'Master, when did we see **you** hungry and feed **you**, or thirsty and give **you** drink? ³⁸ When did we see **you** a stranger and take **you** in, or naked and clothe **you**? ³⁹ Or when did we see **you** sick, or in prison, and come to **you**?'

Pay close attention the answer of the King.

⁴⁰ "*Amen! When you did it to one of the least of these my brothers (in your nations), you did it to me!*"

Let's note the key points again.

- *The "least of these my brothers" is a reference to Genesis 1:27 -- "all people are created in the image of God."*
- *Every person is the brother or sister of the "least members of their nation."*
- *Every person in the nation is the brother or sister of the King.*

Now let's return to the parable again.

⁴¹ And he will also said to **the (nations)** on the left hand, 'Depart from me, **you cursed**, into the **everlasting fire** . . . ⁴² for I was hungry and you gave me **no food**; I was thirsty and you gave me **no drink**; ⁴³ I was a stranger and you **did not take me** in, naked and you **did not clothe me**, sick and in prison and you **did not visit me**.'

The King judged the nations on the left by the same standard as the nations on the right. And, like the nations on the right, the members of the nation on the left were confused -- *and they asked him the same question.*

⁴⁴ ‘Master, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’

Pay close attention the King’s answer.

⁴⁵ “Amen! In as much as you **did not** do *it* to one of the least of these, you **did not** do *it* to me.”

Jesus ends the parable with these words.

⁴⁶ And **the members of the cursed nations** will go away into everlasting punishment, but the **righteous (nations)** into eternal life.”

The Isaiah Scroll, especially **chapters 55 through 61** were “**required hearing for the followers of the Jesus of history.**” The parable of the *Great Day of Judgment* is based on *Isaiah 58*; that is where we will learn *why the penalties of the parable were so severe.*

¹ *Call with a full throat, do not spare, like a shofar raise your voice, and show My people their rebellion and the house of Jacob their sins.*

God gave Isaiah a message for “**My people / the House of Jacob** (*the people of Israel*).” Isaiah’s job is show God’s people “**their rebellion / their sins.**” Pay close attention to “**what they did that caused God to view them as rebels and sinners.**”

² *Yet they seek Me day by day and knowledge of My ways they desire, like a nation that has done righteousness, and the justice of their God they did not forsake.*

Make sure you understand two things about those people:

*The **rebels** and **sinners** sought God every day.
The **rebels** and **sinners** sought knowledge of God’s ways.*

The rebels and sinners were very religious people! So, what were their crimes?

*It was **how they approached God!**
They approached God **like a nation that has done righteousness.**
They approached God **like a nation that did not forsake justice.***

Now let’s return to Isaiah 58:

^{2b} *They desire to draw near to God. “Why have we fasted, and You did not see.*

³ *Why have we afflicted our soul and You do not know?"*

They accuse God of being "**the one who is at fault**" and "**keeping them from being able to draw near him!**" They had done their part -- **religious rituals** (**prayers** and **fasting**). They did what they thought was important to God. Now God makes it clear that "**what they thought He wanted was completely wrong!!!**"

⁴ *But you fast for strife and debate, to strike with the fist of wickedness. You will not fast as you do this day, to make your voice heard on high* ⁵ *Is this an acceptable day to Yahweh?*

In other words, it's not your religious rituals that God wants – **He wants a nation that does righteousness and does not forsake justice.** Before you can understand what righteousness and justice means to God, you need to know that both Isaiah and Jesus spoke Hebrew -- "**acts of righteousness**" are "**acts of TZEDAQAH.**" "**Justice**" comes from two Hebrew words, one of which is "**TZEDEQ.**" Notice both words above are linked to the root – **TZDQ.** What kind of nations can approach God?

*Nations that "**do acts that are just**" and do not "**forsake justice.**"*

The purpose of "doing acts that are just" is now explained by Isaiah.

⁶ **Loose** the **bonds of injustice**, **undo** the **thongs of the yoke**, **let the oppressed go free**, and **break every yoke.**

God wants the nation to "**loose the bonds of injustice**" and "**undo the thongs of the yoke that have bound the nation's people.**" In order to do that, they must "**let those who are bound go free**" by "**breaking every yoke.**" Next Isaiah reveals "**how to free the people from bonds of injustice.**"

⁷ *Share your bread with the hungry, bring the outcast poor to your house, you cover those in need of clothes, do not hide from your own flesh!*

Who are **the oppressed people of the nation of Israel?**

- *Hungry people that have no food.*
- *Homeless people that have no shelter.*
- *Exposed people who need clothes.*
- *People who are relatives of the religious rebels and sinners.*

Those are crimes of “injustice,” which are very serious crimes in the eyes of God. In order to understand why, we must go to the first story in Genesis and understand it, because it laid the foundation for the words of Isaiah and Jesus.

The Creator measures all acts of creation by the **TOV Standard**. TOV is translated “**good**.” For acts to be “**good**” (TOV) they must **protect and preserve lives, make lives more functional, and/or increase the quality of life.**”

This story wasn’t for only the nation of Israel. It was given to all people of the earth before any nation, including Israel existed. It is a universal standard of God.

When God’s blessed human in Genesis 1:28 He endowed and empowered them to have functions relative to all of creation and to each other as **God’s Co-Shepherds**. They are to exercise power like a shepherd exercises power over a flock – *protecting and caring for each animal, keeping all of the animals functional, and creating a good quality of life for the animals related to their age, health, gender, special needs, etc.*

The first story also taught another very important lesson about humans. Being created in “**the image of God**” means the “**Spirit of God is with every person**,” but each individual also has an “**Earth soul**” – *with earthly appetites, desires and longings related to things of the earth that are required for survival.*

Humans **have the potential of doing good acts like the Creator if they use the TOV Standard**. But at the other extreme of the human spectrum potentials, **they have the potential of doing acts to others like wild predatory animals if they aren’t taught and mentored on how to exercise impulse control and self-discipline.**

These are also universal principles for all people, not just Israel. Another principle comes from the story of Cain and Abel, the twin sons of Adam and Eve. Cain and Abel brought their offerings to God and God ignored Cain’s offerings and even Cain himself. The rebels and sinners in Isaiah were in the same place as Cain. Cain “**exceedingly burned with anger**” and God did not ignore that! Cain wanted “**to be accepted**” and **God told him exactly what he needed to do to be accepted.**

If you **do what is TOV**, you will be accepted! If you **do not do what is TOV**, sin lies at the door! **Sin’s desire is for you, but you can rule over it.**”

Cain didn’t do what was TOV, he acted like a wild predatory animal and killed his brother Abel. Cain’s penalty was exile -- *being driven from his homeland.*

After Adam and Eve lost both sons something happened that changed them. They had another son and named him "Seth." Many generations later, a descendant of Seth named Noah was living at a time when all humans alive lived like wild predatory animals doing violent acts to each other.

Noah was a man that did acts of **TZEDAQAH (acts that were TOV)**. God gave Noah instructions for how to save representatives of all living creatures, including his family. **Noah and his family had to build it.** God didn't do it for them. *God had also given instructions for Adam and Cain, and He didn't do those things for them, either.*

Now let's return to Isaiah 58. Once again, God is giving humans instructions. He gave them instructions on how to be accepted like He gave Cain – **do acts of TOV.** He told them to be like Noah – **do acts of TZEDAQAH.** And next He tells them how they will be saved if they follow His instructions.

⁸ **Then** (after you do **acts of TZEDAQAH**) **your light shall break forth** like the morning, your healing shall spring forth speedily, your **acts of TZEDAQAH** shall go before you. The glory of **God shall gather you.**

⁹ **Then** you shall call, and **God will answer,** you shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.' **If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking unjust things** ¹⁰ and **if you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul.**

Then your light shall dawn in the darkness; your darkness shall be like noonday.

Now, do you understand why the penalty for those nations in the group on the left were so severe? They were sent away into everlasting punishment, which meant they will be annihilated like the people in the flood. It does not mean they were sent to Hell, but they could be in She'ol. By the way those in the group were not sent to Heaven, they were part of the "cleansed Earth." *But that's a subject for a future newsletter.*

DO P.A.C.K.S. & Examine Your Belief Systems"

My message to people with Christian Biblical Heritages like me is – *no matter what religious institutions you belong to or do not belong to, what your beliefs about God or Jesus are, or even whether you believe God or Jesus even existed – **do P.A.C.K.S. and Examine Your Belief Systems.** P.A.C.K.S. stands for "**Planned Acts of Creativity, Kindness and Shepherding.**" They are a way to incorporate *TOV Standard Principles and Values into 21st century lives.**

- For people with Christian Biblical Heritages, **P.A.C.K.S.** fulfill the teachings of Jesus.
- For others, **P.A.C.K.S.** provide shared standards, values and principles options.
- For ministers, **P.A.C.K.S.** can be taught without correcting belief systems first.

I do not have room to provide more details here, but you can go to our website (address at bottom of page) and click on the **P.A.C.K.S. Page** to get that information now. **BHC**

January Memorials

<p><i>In Loving Memory</i></p> <p>JULIE FALLIN KELSOE</p> <p>January 12, 1960 January 19, 1990</p> <p><i>May you dwell under His wings in complete SHALOM forever!</i></p>	<p><i>In Loving Memory</i></p> <p>AMOS DANIEL HAZELWOOD</p> <p>September 23, 1908 January 25, 1969</p> <p><i>May you dwell under His wings in complete SHALOM forever!</i></p>
<p><i>In Loving Memory</i></p> <p>HOMER MELTON (DOC) PITNER</p> <p>October 7, 1914 January 10, 1971</p> <p><i>May you dwell under His wings in complete SHALOM forever!</i></p>	<p><i>In Loving Memory</i></p> <p>GLADYS GERALDINE MYERS</p> <p>October 1, 1916 January 29, 2009</p> <p><i>May you dwell under His wings in complete SHALOM forever!</i></p>

In Their Remembrance

*May their memories inspire us to seek those qualities of mind and heart,
which they shared when we walked life's journey together.
May we help to bring closer to fulfillment their highest ideals and noblest strivings.
May their memories deepen our loyalty to those things which we valued and shared -
faith, love, peace and devotion. As long as we live, they too will live;
for they are now a part of us, as we remember them.*

(Inspired from prayers found in Yitzhor Reflections - The New Mahzor – The Prayer Book Press)

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