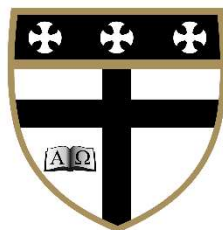


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A HISTORY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

“Old Testament Foundations of the Gospel of Matthew”¹

PART SEVEN

by

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“Old Testament Foundations of the Gospel of Matthew”



Introduction²

We began this series with a discussion of Christ as the manifestation of the *Logos* of God³ -- as the very essence of truth itself.⁴ We analyzed the essence of Christ’s law of love, which is *agape*.⁵

We then analyzed the books of the First and Second Maccabees, or the histories of the Jewish wars of the two centuries immediately before the birth of Christ. That history included the rise and fall of the Jewish Hasmonean dynasty (140 – 37 BC) and the political climate of the Roman province of ancient Judea at the time of Christ’s birth, when King Herod the Great reigned.

For, indeed, “[f]orces of the Roman Republic conquered the Hasmonean kingdom in 63 BCE and made it into a client state; Herod the Great displaced the last reigning Hasmonean client-ruler in 37 BCE.” And King Herod had ruthlessly ended the Jewish Hasmonean dynasty, and any chances of reestablishing that Hasmonean dynasty, when he ruthlessly executed all of the surviving male members of the Hasmonean family:

² This paper is dedicated to the **Rev. John Wesley (1703 – 1791)**, Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford and principal founder of the Methodist Movement and the Methodist Church, and who once proclaimed: “The gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness.”

³ See, e.g., Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 2007), p. 309 (“For Christians, the Messiah was the historical Jesus, who was also identified with the Logos of Greek philosophy....”); and p. 289 (“It was this intellectual element in Plato’s religion that led Christians—notably the author of Saint John’s Gospel—to identify Christ with the Logos. Logos should be translated ‘reason’ in this connection.”).

⁴ See, also, John 17:17 (“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”) See, also, ‘St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), p. 645 (“For by consulting the Gospel we learn that Christ is Truth.”); Saint Augustine, *Confessions* (New York, N.Y.: Barnes & Nobles Classics, 2007), p. 48 (“Your law is the truth and you are truth.”)

⁵ The fundamental “Law of Christ,” to wit, is to “love ye one another” (John 15:12); to do justice and judgment (Genesis 18:18-19; Proverbs 21: 1-3); to judge not according to appearance but to judge righteous judgments (John 7:24); to do justice, judgment, and equity (Proverbs 1:2-3); and “whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them” (Matthew 7:12). See, also, Robert F. Cochran and Zachary R. Calo, *Agape, Justice and Law: How might Christian Love Shape Law?* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

The fate of the remaining male members of the family under Herod was not a happy one. Aristobulus III, grandson of Aristobulus II through his elder son Alexander, was briefly made high priest, but was soon executed (36 BCE) due to Herod's jealousy. His sister Mariamne was married to Herod, but also fell victim to his jealousy. Her sons by Herod, Aristobulus IV and Alexander, were in their adulthood [and was] also executed by their father.

Hyrcanus II had been held by the Parthians since 40 BCE. For four years, until 36 BCE, he lived amid the Babylonian Jews, who paid him every mark of respect. In that year Herod, who feared that Hyrcanus might induce the Parthians to help him regain the throne, invited him to return to Jerusalem. The Babylonian Jews warned him in vain. Herod received him with every mark of respect, assigning him the first place at his table and the presidency of the state council, while awaiting an opportunity to get rid of him. As the last remaining Hasmonean, Hyrcanus was too dangerous a rival for Herod. In the year 30 BCE, charged with plotting with the King of Arabia, Hyrcanus was condemned and executed.⁶

King Herod's ethnicity is a historical enigma, but he was by no means a legitimate Jewish heir to the throne of King David. Herod the Great was an Idumean (i.e., Edomite) and a half-Jew.

Herod was born around 72 BCE in Idumea, south of Judea. He was the second son of Antipater the Idumaeon, a high-ranking official under ethnarch Hyrcanus II, and Cypros, a Nabatean Arab princess from Petra (in present-day Jordan). Herod's father was by descent an Edomite with a Jewish mother; his ancestors had converted to Judaism. Herod was raised as a Jew. Strabo, a contemporary of Herod, held that the Idumaeans, whom he identified as of Nabataean origin, constituted the majority of the population of western Judea, where they commingled with the Judaeans and adopted their customs.... Thus Herod's ethnic background was Arab on both sides of his family....

While Herod publicly identified himself as a Jew and was

⁶ "The Hasmonean Dynasty," Wikipedia (online encyclopedia)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hasmonean_dynasty

considered as such by some, this religious identification was undermined by the decadent lifestyle of the Herodians, which would have earned them the antipathy of observant Jews. Herod later executed several members of his own family, including his wife Mariamne I....

Herod was granted the title of 'King of Judea' by the Roman Senate. As such, he was a vassal of the Roman Empire, expected to support the interests of his Roman patrons.⁷

This set of circumstances led to legitimate questions about Herod's legitimacy as heir to the throne of David, and hence Herod's insecurities led to his repression of Jewish opposition. Herod's Temple elite were purged, and only his loyal priests and chief priests were installed. This was the nature of the danger and of the political repression in ancient Judea when Jesus of Nazareth was born.

Here, we continue that general analysis with the Gospel of Matthew, who radically explains why he believes Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the long-awaited Messiah whom the prophets had spoken about.

The Thomas Nelson KJV version (2017) of The Holy Bible provide the following introductory note to the Gospel of Matthew:

Matthew is the gospel written by a Jew to Jews about a Jew. Matthew is the writer, his countrymen are the readers, and Jesus Christ is the subject. Matthew's design is to present Jesus as the King of the Jews, the long-awaited Messiah. Through a carefully selected series of Old Testament quotations, Matthew documents Jesus Christ's claim to be the Messiah. His genealogy, baptism, messages, and miracles all point to the same inescapable conclusion: Christ is King. Even in His death, seeming defeat is turned to victory by the Resurrection, and the message again echoes forth: the King of the Jews lives.

Hence, Jesus' arrival upon the historical scene when Judea was a client-state of the Roman empire and when King Herod reigned there, was a political threat to the status quo. The first chapter in the Gospel of

⁷ "Herod the Great," Wikipedia (online encyclopedia) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herod_the_Great.

Matthew describes Jesus' royal lineage; and the second chapter describes King Herod's attempts to assassinate Jesus when he was yet still only a child. Ultimately, Jesus' claim to be a king-- the King of the Jews-- would lead to his crucifixion.

In this paper, we shall look at how **Jesus of Nazareth paid great homage to the Old Testament**-- he quoted from it, he relied upon it as the foundation for his arguments with the Scribes and Pharisees, and he endeavored to exemplify (i.e., fulfill) the Old Testament. "Think not," said Jesus, "that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." (Matthew 5:17).

Jesus is thus trying to re-establish Israel-- i.e., the restored Israel spoken of in the several books of the Hebrew prophets-- under repressive political and social conditions. His people are subjugated and persecuted by the Roman and Jewish elites. For this reason, Jesus had to re-establish his restored kingdom of Israel under adverse conditions, as an underground society that was eventually condemned as a subversive movement.

Significantly, Jesus of Nazareth was an orthodox Jew who lived among Jews and honored Jewish law, custom, and tradition-- especially the prophetic tradition of the Hebrew prophets who lived before, during, and after the Babylonian captivity.

The Gospel of Matthew demonstrates how Jesus both honored and fulfilled the Law of the Old Testament. Christ did not change the moral essence or the moral laws of the Mosaic law, but He did change the methods and the means whereby the Mosaic Covenant could be ratified and executed.

Christ made the Levitical priesthood obsolete. Most of Christ's apostles were not Levites and, therefore, were not eligible for the Levitical priesthood. Christ himself was not a Levite, and therefore, according to Jewish law, He was not eligible for the Levitical priesthood.

Nevertheless, Christ was proclaimed to be a High Priest. (Hebrews 5:1-14). His priesthood was "after the order of Melchisedec." (Hebrews 5:6, 10). "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God." (Genesis 14:18).

And so Christ was, like Melchizedek, both a king and a priest. But not only was Christ both a priest and a king, but the Book of

Revelation informs us that Christ also “made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.” (Revelation 1:6). And before the Levitical priesthood was instituted in Exodus 32, the entire nation of Israel was so designated as “a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.” (Exodus 19:6). The Apostle Peter used this same description to describe the Church of Jesus Christ, to wit: “[b]ut ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people....” (1 Peter 2:9).

From this we may deduce the correctness of Martin Luther’s doctrine on the “Priesthood of All Believers,” and of John Calvin’s conceptualization of the “Presbyterian” forms of both ecclesiastical and civil polity-- i.e., the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and democracy. (See, e.g., Acts 6:6; 1 Timothy 4:14; and 2 Timothy 1:6, describing “the presbytery,” “laying on of hands,” etc., by a counsel of elders).

Christ’s restored Israel would be a nation of priests (or a nation of elders or presbyters (i.e., holy men and holy women)).

Christ’s Church thus emerged from the Jewish Synagogue system, which included Israelites or Jews who were not Levites. The leaders of the synagogues were “elders” or “presbyters” – not Levitical priests. In some instances, Levites and priests took part in Synagogue rituals and prayers, and this was especially true after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 A.D. But the Jewish synagogues were created to fill the void left by the corruption of the Temple elites and the Jewish monarchy. The synagogue system permitted only ten (10) Jewish laymen to found a lawfully consecrated synagogue, which was a house of prayer as well as a local community center, school, and public square.

The synagogue was never designed to replace the Temple or the Jewish monarchy-- it was founded to keep alive the sacred faith and to carry the torch of truth, until the arrival of the Messiah, who would gather together the restored Israel. To a great extent, this is still the role and function of the modern-day Jewish synagogue.

Political State of Israel <----> Jewish Synagogue

The Jewish synagogue existed to in order to bolster the Kingdom of Judah. During the Babylonian captivity, the Jewish diaspora was sustained by the Jewish synagogue, which sought the long-awaited

Messiah and the restoration of Israel. The Jewish synagogue did not conceptualize itself as the replacement of the political nation-state of Israel, but it was only the source of cultural preservation, pedagogy, and local community service.

Christ's new groups were organized within those same Jewish synagogues. The Gospel of Matthew use the same word for "synagogue" that is used for "church." (Matthew 18:17-20).

"Originally the Greek word for 'synagogue,' *synagógē*, had the same meaning as *ecclesiá*, namely, an assembly or congregation. This is seen from the way the verbal root *synágo* was used. A typical instance is that recorded at Matthew 18:20: 'Where there are two or three met together [*synágo*] in my name, there I am in their midst.' That is why "ecclesia" and "synagogue" are used interchangeably in the Septuagint Bible translation."⁸

The Christian synagogues were also called churches, their relationship to government and civil polity remaining the same-- to improve, to teach, and to baptize all nations. (Matthew 28: 19-20).

Christian Civil Polity <----> Roman/ Anglican Churches

The essential structure of the Western Church adopted this conceptualization of civil polity-- i.e., the Christian civil polity. Even today, the kingdom of Great Britain is still organized around this principle.

When the 16th and 17th-century Protestant Reformations were wrought, they did not dislodge the fundamental principle that the secular civil polity was governed by divine Providence. Following the Pauline doctrine in Roman 13, those Protestants insisted that the secular civil magistrate was a vicegerent of God, and that the civil polity existed to establish true justice, or else it could not legitimately claim authority over rightful and lawful civil power.

Secular Civil Polity <----> Protestant Churches

This conception of secular civil polity is fundamentally Christian,

⁸ "The Synagogue—Precursor of the Local Christian Assembly," <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1961488>

found in the Old Testament and reinforced through Christ's sayings and parables in the New Testament.

The Old Testament clearly establishes Divine Providence. (Psalm 22:28, "For the kingdom is the LORD's: and he is the governor among nations.")

In the New Testament, Christ does not abrogate that divine Providence but instead He arrogates that same divine Providence to himself. (Matthew 28: 18, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth").

And so, the kingdom of Christ upon earth (i.e., the church) was instituted to teach, inter alia, the divine Providence of God over all nations.

The Gospel of Matthew demonstrates that Christ's teachings retain fidelity to the Old Testament Scripture.

Through his words and deeds, Christ explains the true meaning of the Old Testament. His miracles only reinforced and proved that He possessed the divine authority for carrying out his ministry.

Christ was a Jewish rabbi. As such, Christ was a master interpreter of Mosaic or Jewish law and Sacred Scripture. The Gospel of Matthew demonstrates that Christ maintained fidelity to the Old Testament law and Scripture.

This paper discusses the Old Testament Scriptures which Christ either explicitly cited and discussed during his ministry or actually fulfilled through his many deeds.

“Old Testament Foundations of the Gospel of Matthew”

PART SEVEN

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Subject Sixty-One: Word of God is Eternal

Gospel of Matthew:

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”⁹

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE

Book of Isaiah:

“And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.”¹⁰

⁹ Matthew 24:35

¹⁰ Isaiah 51:16

Subject Sixty-Two: Symbolism of Noah

Gospel of Matthew:

“For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.”¹¹

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE

Book of Genesis:

“For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.”¹²

¹¹ Matthew 24:37

¹² Genesis 7:4

Subject Sixty-Three: Separation of Evil from Good

Gospel of Matthew:

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”¹³

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE

Book of Psalms:

“Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping.”¹⁴

¹³ Matthew 25:41

¹⁴ Psalm 6:8

Subject Sixty-Four: Foresaking the Son of Man

Gospel of Matthew:

“The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.”¹⁵

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE

Book of Psalms:

“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?... For the kingdom is the LORD’s: and he is the governor among the nations.... They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Matthew 26:24

¹⁶ Psalm 22:1-31

Subject Sixty-Five: Strike the Shepherd and Scatter the Flock

Gospel of Matthew:

“Then Jesus said to them, ‘You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’”¹⁷

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE

Book of Zechariah:

“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherded, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.”¹⁸

¹⁷ Matthew 26:31

¹⁸ Zechariah 13:7

Subject Sixty-Six: False Witnesses Against Christ

Gospel of Matthew:

“...but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward...”¹⁹

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE

Book of Psalms:

“False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not.”²⁰

¹⁹ Matthew 26:60

²⁰ Psalm 35:11

Subject Sixty-Seven: Assaulting the Messiah

Gospel of Matthew:

“Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him....”²¹

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE

Book of Isaiah:

“I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.”²²

²¹ Matthew 26:67

²² Isaiah 50:6

Subject Sixty-Eight: Thirty Pieces of Silver

Gospel of Matthew:

“Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, ‘And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel, and they gave them for the potter’s field, as the Lord directed me.’” [Matthew meant “Zechariah,” not “Jeremiah”]²³

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE

Book of Zechariah:

“And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.”²⁴

²³ Matthew 27:9-10

²⁴ Zechariah 11:13

Subject Sixty-Nine: Division of the Garments

Gospel of Matthew:

“And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots.”²⁵

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE

Book of Psalms:

“They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.”²⁶

²⁵ Matthew 27:35

²⁶ Psalm 22:18

Subject Seventy: Scorning Christ on the Cross

Gospel of Matthew:

“He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him.
For he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”²⁷

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE

Book of Psalms:

“All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip,
they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he
would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in
him.”²⁸

²⁷ Matthew 27:43

²⁸ Psalm 22:7-9

Subject Seventy-One: “My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me”

Gospel of Matthew:

“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’”²⁹

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE

Book of Psalms:

“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?”³⁰

²⁹ Matthew 27:46

³⁰ Psalm 22:1

Subject Seventy-Two: All Power and Dominion

Gospel of Matthew:

“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me’...”³¹

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE

Book of Daniel:

“And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”³²

³¹ Matthew 28:18

³² Daniel 7:14

CONCLUSION

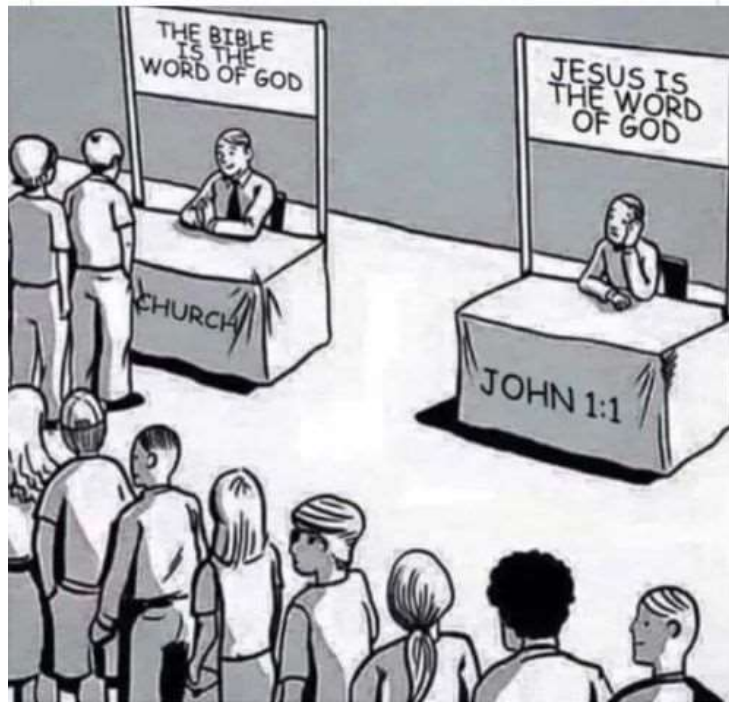
The Gospel of Matthew explains that the Word of God, which was spoken in the Old Testament, was repeatedly carried out and (or) referenced by Christ throughout His ministry, in a manner that demonstrates that He was both the long-awaited Messiah and the *Logos* of God.



Jacob M. Wright

26m · 🌐

The main problem with Christianity today is using the Bible to dismiss Jesus.



THE END OF SERIES (PART VII)

EPILOGUE

Reformed Theology regarding the nexus between the Old and New Testaments is perhaps best explained by Saint Augustine of Hippo who once observed that the “New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New.”

This certainly implies that the Old and New Testament constitute one undivided law code, or divine mandate. Does the Law of Moses proscribe or prescribe certain conduct? Has the New Testament (i.e., the Law of Christ) abrogated the Mosaic law?

These questions cannot be easily answered in a short sentence with respect to particulars; but, in general, Christ never intended to abrogate the central moral objectives of the Law of Moses, but rather he sought to reaffirm those objectives through the institution of a New Covenant (**Jeremiah 31: 31-34**), whereby the Holy Spirit, poured out upon the individual soul, regenerates it, and inspires it to live virtuously.

The Law of Moses, then, will no longer operate as a “schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.” (**Galations 3: 24-27**). After the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon the individual soul, and faith in Christ has come, “we are no longer under a schoolmaster,” which is the Law of Moses, because faith then enables us to fulfill, or to carry out, the moral objectives of that law-- hence, the New Covenant.

The Gospel of Matthew, then, clearly demonstrates how Christ had no intention of abrogating any of the moral objectives of the Law of Moses, stating “[t]hink not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.” (**Matthew 5:17**).

In this paper, we have reviewed seventy-two (72) verses within the Gospel of Matthew, comparing them to various verses of Scripture within the Old Testament, and which plainly demonstrate that Jesus of Nazareth was poignantly aware that his words and deeds were fulfilling the prophetic mandates in the Old Testament. The letter and spirit of the laws of the Old Testament are thus fulfilled in the New Testament.

-- THE END --

