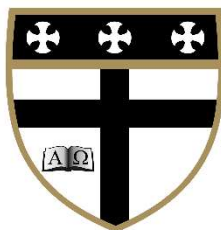


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A HISTORY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

“Old Testament Foundations of the Gospel of Matthew”¹

PART SIX

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 SIX

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Subject Fifty-One: Prophecy and Parable of the Stone

Gospel of Matthew:

“And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.”⁹

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE:

Book of Isaiah:

“And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.”¹⁰

Book of Zechariah:

“An in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.”¹¹

Book of Daniel:

“Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them:

⁹ Matthew 21:44

¹⁰ Isaiah 8:14

¹¹ Zechariah 12:3

and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.”¹²

Daniel 2:44 - “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.”

¹² Daniel 2:34-35

Subject Fifty-Two: Duty to Marry A Brother's Widow

Gospel of Matthew:

“[S]aying, ‘Teacher, Moses said, ‘If a man dies having no children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.’”¹³

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE:

Book of Deuteronomy:

“If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her.”¹⁴

¹³ Matthew 22:24

¹⁴ Deuteronomy 25:5

Subject Fifty-Three: God of the Patriarchs

Gospel of Matthew:

“I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”? He is not God of the dead, but of the living.”¹⁵

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE:

Book of Exodus:

“Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Matthew 22:32

¹⁶ Exodus 3:6

Subject Fifty-Four: Duty to Love

Gospel of Matthew:

“And he said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’”¹⁷

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE:

Book of Deuteronomy:

“And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”¹⁸

¹⁷ Matthew 22:37

¹⁸ Deuteronomy 6:5

Subject Fifty-Five: Duty to Love (Neighbor)

Gospel of Matthew:

“And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”¹⁹

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE:

Book of Leviticus:

“Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.”²⁰

¹⁹ Matthew 22:39

²⁰ Leviticus 19:18

Subject Fifty-Six: Enemies Made a Footstool

Gospel of Matthew:

“The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet’?”²¹

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE:

Book of Psalms:

“The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”²²

²¹ Matthew 22:44

²² Psalm 110:1

Subject Fifty-Seven: Blood of Martyrs Abel and Zechariah

Gospel of Matthew:

“So that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.”²³

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE:

Book of Genesis:

“And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.”²⁴

Book of 2 Chronicles:

“And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoida the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? Because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the LORD. Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehhoida his father had done to him, but slew his son. And when he died, he said, The LORD look upon it, and require it.”²⁵

²³ Matthew 23:35

²⁴ Genesis 4:8

²⁵ 2 Chronicles 24:20-22

Subject Fifty-Eight: House of Judah is left Desolate

Gospel of Matthew:

“See, your house is left to you desolate.”²⁶

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE:

Book of Psalms:

“Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in their tents.”²⁷

Book of Jeremiah:

“I have forsaken mine house, I have left mine heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies.”²⁸

“But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation.”²⁹

²⁶ Matthew 23:38

²⁷ Psalm 69:25

²⁸ Jeremiah 12:7

²⁹ Jeremiah 22:5

Subject Fifty-Nine: He who Comes in Lord's Name

Gospel of Matthew:

“For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say,
‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”³⁰

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE:

Book of Psalms:

“Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we
have blessed you out of the house of the LORD.”³¹

³⁰ Matthew 23:39

³¹ Psalm 118:26

Subject Sixty: Prophecy of Daniel on Desolation

Gospel of Matthew:

“So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)....”³²

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE:

Book of Daniel:

“Then I heard one said speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?”³³

“And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”³⁴

“And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.”³⁵

³² Matthew 24:15

³³ Daniel 8:13

³⁴ Daniel 9:27

³⁵ Daniel 11:31

Subject Sixty-One: Prophecy on Great Tribulation

Gospel of Matthew:

“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.”³⁶

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE:

Book of Jeremiah:

“For thus saith the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask you now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? Wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.”³⁷

³⁶ Matthew 24:21

³⁷ Jeremiah 30:5-7

Subject Sixty-Two: Prophecy on Great Tribulation

Gospel of Matthew:

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”³⁸

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE:

Book of Isaiah:

“Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.”³⁹

Book of Joel:

“The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining....”⁴⁰

“The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.”⁴¹

³⁸ Matthew 24:29

³⁹ Isaiah 13:9-10

⁴⁰ Joel 2:10

⁴¹ Joel 3:15

Book of Ezekiel:

“And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light.”⁴²

⁴² Ezekiel 32:7

CONCLUSION

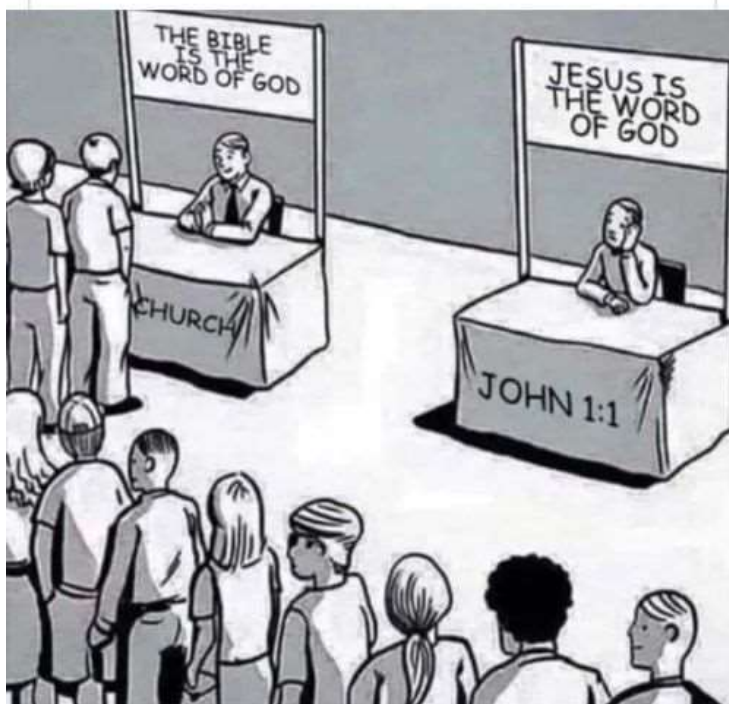
The Gospel of Matthew explains that the Word of God, which was spoken in the Old Testament, was repeatedly carried out and (or) referenced by Christ throughout His ministry, in a manner that demonstrates that He was both the long-awaited Messiah and the *Logos* of God.



Jacob M. Wright

26m · 🌐

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



-- END OF PART SIX --

