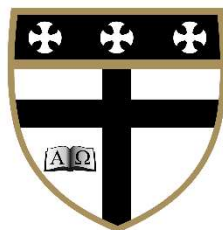


The Whitefield Seminary Papers

“Law & Religion Forum”

Volume 2, Apostolate Paper #26



A HISTORY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

“Old Testament Foundations of the Gospel of Matthew”¹

PART THREE

by

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¹ Roderick O. Ford, *The Apostolate Papers* (unpublished research papers, 2015 to 2022). www.roderickford.org.

“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

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

political threat to the status quo. The first chapter in the Gospel of 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 movement 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 was 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 to rightful and lawful civil power.

Secular Civil Polity <----> Protestant Churches

This conception of secular civil polity is fundamentally Christian, found in the Old Testament and reinforced through Christ's sayings and parables in the New Testament.

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

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 THREE

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Subject Twenty-One: Division Within the Household

Gospel of Matthew:

“For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person’s enemies will be those of his own household.”⁹

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE:

Book of Micah:

“For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against the mother, the daughter in law against the mother in law; a man’s enemies are the men of his own house.”¹⁰

⁹ Matthew 10:35-36

¹⁰ Micah 7:6

Subject Twenty-Two: Prophecy on the Gospel

Gospel of Matthew:

“... the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.”¹¹

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE:

Book of Isaiah:

“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.”¹²

“And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.”¹³

¹¹ Matthew 11:5

¹² Isaiah 35:5

¹³ Isaiah 29:18

Subject Twenty-Three: A Messenger to Prepare the Way

Gospel of Matthew:

“This is he of whom it is written, ‘Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.’”¹⁴

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE:

Book of Malachi:

“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.”¹⁵

¹⁴ Matthew 11:10

¹⁵ Malachi 3:1

Subject Twenty-Four: Second Coming of Elijah

Gospel of Matthew:

“... and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come.”¹⁶

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE:

Book of Malachi:

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD....”¹⁷

¹⁶ Matthew 11:14

¹⁷ Malachi 4:5

Subject Twenty-Five: New Flexible Standards of Jewish Law

Gospel of Matthew:

“He said to them, ‘Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him...’”¹⁸

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE:

Book of Malachi:

“So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Matthew 12:3

¹⁹ 1 Samuel 21:6

Subject Twenty-Six: New Flexible Standards of Jewish Law

Gospel of Matthew:

“Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless?”²⁰

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE:

Book of Numbers:

“And on the sabbath day two lambs of the first year without spot, and two tenth deals of flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, and the drink offering thereof: This is the burnt offering of every sabbath, beside the continual burnt offering, and his drink offering.”²¹

²⁰ Matthew 12:5

²¹ Numbers 28:9,10

Subject Twenty-Seven: Prophecy on Justice and Mercy

Gospel of Matthew:

“And if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless.”²²

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE:

Book of Hosea:

“For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”²³

²² Matthew 12:7

²³ Hosea 6:6

Subject Twenty-Eight: Suffering Servant to Proclaim Justice

Gospel of Matthew:

“Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets; a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory; and in his name the Gentiles will hope.”²⁴

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE:

Book of Isaiah:

“Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he will bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.”²⁵

²⁴ Matthew 12:18-21

²⁵ Isaiah 42:1-4

Subject Twenty-Nine: Jonah in the Belly of the Fish

Gospel of Matthew:

“For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”²⁶

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE:

Book of Jonah:

“Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.”²⁷

²⁶Matthew 12:40

²⁷Jonah 1:17

Subject Thirty: The Queen of Sheba

Gospel of Matthew:

“The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.”²⁸

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCE:

Book of 1 Kings:

“And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions.”²⁹

²⁸ Matthew 12:42

²⁹ 1 Kings 10:1

CONCLUSION

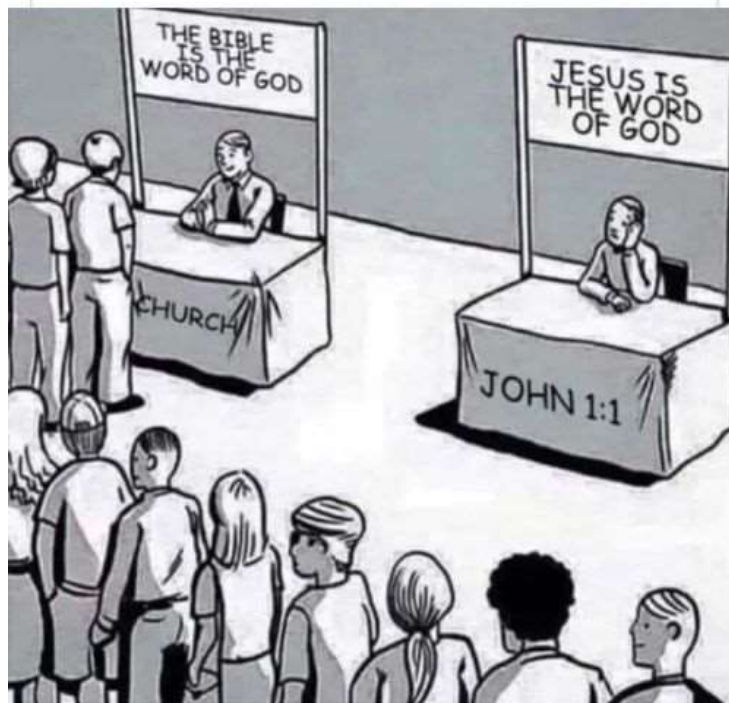
The Gospel of Matthew explains that the Word of God that was spoken in the Old Testament was repeatedly carried out and (or) referenced throughout the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth in such a manner that demonstrates that He was both the long-awaited Messiah and the *Logos* of God.



Jacob M. Wright

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



-- END OF PART THREE --

