

The Gospel of the Kingdom and the People of God: How Jesus' words and deeds set his movement apart from the Judaisms of his time

Dustin Smith – 2010 Theological Conference

The past few decades have been an exciting time in the field of Gospel studies. Scholars have seen the necessity to take seriously the Jewish context when examining the words and deeds of Jesus. Fresh reconstructions of the world which Jesus lived and breathed have allowed diligent Bible students to have their preconceived notions shaken and perhaps completely reworked. The recent influx of works published on the life of Jesus gives a strong indication that the debate will continue to yield healthy fruit as well as encourage further discussion.

Yet, there are still some who wish to ignore the Jewish world that Jesus lived in. They feel that by taking the plunge into the texts available for background studies, they are potentially getting on a train which rides at uncomfortable speeds. Everyone recognizes that personal views are difficult to change and that a fair amount of time is generally needed for one to come to terms with new evidence. However, historians have to be taken seriously in any reconstruction of the life and deeds of Jesus. Otherwise, the charge of anachronism becomes a fair and needed penalty flag which needs to be tossed into the field of play.¹

For the last century, the fact that the historical Jesus taught primarily on the subject of the kingdom of God has been more or less a consensus among scholars. What has not been agreed on can be summed up in two questions: exactly *what was it* that Jesus thought the kingdom of God actually was, and what emphasis did he give to the both the 'already' as well as the 'not yet' aspects of this kingdom? Although this seems to continue to miss the recognition of some scholars, the Synoptics are quite clear in attesting to the fact that Jesus labeled his saving gospel message with "the kingdom of God." The continuing ignorance of this rather simple truth combined with the fact that some still refuse to engage with the Jewish worldview can only result in further anachronistic readings of the Gospels.

What seems to be the most obvious approach is, as the data allows, to set Jesus within the context of Second Temple Judaism in the early first century C.E. Only then will his words and deeds be given the sufficient amount of light needed to bring about historically plausible interpretations. What I aim to accomplish is to show in particular how Jesus' teachings set him apart from other Jewish systems of his time. While rival Jewish sects each had their own interpretations on how the people of the one true God are to live and act, Jesus took a different approach. His approach was to call to repentance all he came into contact with through the instrument of his gospel of the kingdom. Those who accepted this call would follow this Jewish prophet named Jesus, who seemed at many times to be personally upstaging the Jewish temple and radically reinterpreting Torah. It is the debates and interchanges between the Jesus movement and the rival Jewish sects about how to be the true people of God which bring about the controversies found in the Synoptics. Therefore, I propose that the best way to make sense of most of the dialogues, teachings, parables, and interchanges found in the Synoptics is to place them firmly within the discourse of Second Temple Jewish sectarian self-understandings. At that point, it will be clear that Jesus used his gospel of the kingdom not only to redefine the people of God, but also to bring them into a new covenant relationship with the one true God through his Messiah.

Israel's Second Temple Context

The story of Israel within the Second Temple period was one characterized by struggle and heartbreak. Ever since the destruction of the temple in 586 BCE, those who looked to Jerusalem for their reason for

¹ Note the keen warning by N.T. Wright, "we cannot bypass the attempt to understand ancient Judaism as a whole if we are to make any sense of the new movement which was conceived, born and initially nurtured in its midst during the first century AD." *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992) 147.

existence were faced with the growing tension between the faith they professed and the facts they perceived. The exile had not only taken them away from their promised land, it also brought into question the pre-exilic faithfulness of Yahweh. When Babylon was ultimately destroyed, Israel was not set free. The Persians, who acted generously towards the Jews, were nonetheless still rulers over them. Alexander soon after painted the canvas with everything Greek and imposed that culture on the land's inhabitants. The two subsequent rulers of Egypt and Syria continued to facilitate the Greek world. The daily pressure which now faced the children of Israel was whether or not to assimilate into this alien world not endorsed by their covenant God.

During the Syrian period the question of Jewish identity was constantly brought to the table. It was during this time which an event became significantly determinative for the self-understanding of Jews. The Syrian overlord Antiochus Epiphanes, in an attempt to impose Greek culture in Judea, forbade circumcision. A group of the Jews, conforming to the pressure of assimilation, actually had surgical procedures which removed circumcision.² Antiochus took over the temple on December 25, 167 BCE. His goal was that in desecrating the holy place, the Jews would no longer consider it as the place where their identity as a unique people was bound up. Subsequently, he established worship of himself in the temple.

The Jews responded in various ways to this challenge to their national identity. Some refused to submit and died the death of a martyr because of their convictions. Others escaped and believed that God would soon act in vindication to save his faithful people. Tensions arose with the combination of belief and hope, and ultimately escalated to the point where Judas Maccabaeus organized a guerilla revolt. Against all odds, this rag-tag bunch of beaten and battered Jews rose up and ultimately drove out Antiochus from their land. Three years after its desecration, Judas cleansed and rededicated the temple. In the establishing of Hanukkah, many Jews believed that God had worked through his people to vindicate his name, land, Torah, and children.

Yet the same confusion arose after the destruction of Babylon. Why was it, that after the people of God had been delivered from evil, the new regime had not improved at all? The recently established Hasmonean dynasty was heavily criticized for its continual compromise with Hellenism. Various groups of Jews, although by no means all of them, complained that these new priest-kings were no different than Antiochus.³ Some opposed this regime with violence while others stayed put and merely grumbled. Many groups took their call to be a 'holy people' as indication that they needed to remain separate from anything associated with Hellenism.⁴ One group in particular left for the desert and established the community at Qumran in which the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. Each group felt that their own beliefs and practices were the true and legitimate way of being the people of God in a time when they did not have complete control of their land. It was this pluralistic response to the ambiguities of the second century B.C.E. which created the diverse Judaism known by both Jesus and Paul.

Not much later the Romans came to take the land for themselves. Events such as Pompey's entering into the Holy of Holies, the establishment of the half-breed Jew Herod as king, and the oppression of taxes resulted historically into two side effects. First, there was a renewed enthusiasm for liberation and violent revolt. Many felt that if the Romans were oppressing God's holy people, ruling in God's holy land, and mocking God's holy temple, they had a right to purge this impurity by whatever means necessary. The second side effect was the

² On the removal of the marks of circumcision, see 1 Macc. 1:11-15; 2 Macc. 4:11-17; *Jos. Ant.* 12:241; *Testament of Moses* 8:3. Tacitus notes that: 'They adopted circumcision to distinguish themselves from other peoples by this difference' –*Hist.* 5.5.2.

³ The books of *Jubilees* and the *Psalms of Solomon* seem to both be written by Jews who saw the Hasmonean rulers as compromisers of the true faith of Israel.

⁴ 'Separate yourself from the Gentiles, and do not eat with them, and do not perform deeds like theirs. And do not become associates of theirs. Because their deeds are defiled, and all their ways are contaminated, and despicable, and abominable.' –*Jub.* 22:16; 'In his wisdom the legislator...surrounded us with unbroken palisades and iron walls to prevent our mixing with any of the other people in any matter...So, to prevent our being perverted by contact with others or by mixing with bad influences, he hedged us in on all sides with strict observances connected with meat and drink and touch and hearing and sight, after the manner of the Law.' –*Ep. Aristeeas* 139, 142; '...a people, which shall dwell alone, not reckoned among the nations...because in virtue of the distinction of their peculiar customs they do not mix with others to depart from the ways of their fathers.' –*Philo, Moses* 1.278.

numerous responses to the paganism in their midst, placing themselves on various spots in the scale of conservative to liberals. It is important to understand that each of these Jewish sects held different beliefs about how the people of God are to be living under Roman rule. They would look across at the opposing sects and see them as in some sense misunderstanding how Israel was to be defined during this time. It was the *self-identity of the people of God* which was at stake in the minds of the various sects.⁵

It becomes quite clear in the reading of the Synoptics that Jesus gathered a movement around himself which was in opposition to the other Jewish sects of his time. Jesus was accused constantly of not living up to the standards of certain groups. He was also verbally cursed for associating himself with what many groups considered to be the worst of the self-proclaimed Jews of all. Therefore, in order to understand the ministry of Jesus, why he did what he did, and why he spoke the things he said, it is vitally important that we contrast his movement with the opposing Jewish sects of his day.⁶ Only then will the real edges of Jesus' words and actions be seen as those who witnessed them.

Sadducees

The sect of the Sadducees is a difficult group to obtain anything historically certain from. This is to the fact that none of their writings, if they wrote anything at all, have survived. Therefore, we are left with only what the writers of the New Testament, Josephus, pseudopigrapha, and the rabbinic works have to say about them. Most scholars agree that their name is derived from Zadok, the high priest serving in the time of David and Solomon. Most also think that their conception as an official Jewish sect was during the Maccabean period. Because there is little to no mention of the Sadducees after the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E., it is thought that their sect dissolved into the rest of Judaism. This is primarily due to the fact that once the priesthood had no temple to associate with the Sadducees ultimately lost all of their power and influence over the people.

The Sadducees certainly saw themselves as the religious conservatives. Josephus states that they rejected the oral tradition of the elders (i.e. Pharisees) and that they observe nothing apart from the Law of Moses.⁷ Perhaps they saw them as optional commands, but certainly not binding on the Jewish people (as the Pharisees held to). Primarily, Josephus is trying to say that they rejected the oral traditions which the Pharisees observed, but the possibility that the Sadducees only accepted the books found in the Pentateuch as authoritative cannot be ruled out. This would explain a few other things which we know about their beliefs.

First of all, both Josephus⁸ and Matthew⁹ record the fact that they did not hold to a belief in the resurrection. The most explicit resurrection passage in the Hebrew Bible would be Dan. 12:2. Yet, when Jesus is debating them on the subject of resurrection from the dead, he does not choose to cite that passage, but rather one from the Pentateuch (Exo. 3:6). Resurrection also carried a metaphoric meaning of the reversal of

⁵ The word 'Judaism' (Gk. *Ioudaismos*) first shows up in the writings of this time (2 Macc. 2:21; 8:1; 14:38). Each of these instances describes the faithfulness and zeal to 'Judaism' shown by the heroes of the Maccabean resistance. The implication is quite strong: this word was specifically coined in opposition to 'Hellenism' precisely because it expressed the reaffirmation of covenant faith of the 'Jews' in their opposition to the 'hellenizing' influences.

⁶ Although Josephus speaks of four 'sects' (*Ant.* 13.171), this study will only focus on three: the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the Essenes. He also lists the Zealots as a sect, but many have argued that Josephus is trying to exonerate the Pharisees, who had strong revolutionary tendencies, from any guilt associated with the Jewish War. James Dunn argues that another group, the 'people of the land' should be considered as another Jewish group worthy of consideration (he cites Ezra 10:2, 11; Neh. 10:30-31; cf. Jer. 39:10; John 7:49). See further in his *The Parting of the Ways – Between Christianity and Judaism and their significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 1991) 18.

⁷ *Ant.* 13.297; 18.17.

⁸ *War* 2.165; *Ant.* 18.16.

⁹ Matt. 22:23-33.

the ruling order, which the highly seated Sadducees would not particularly look forward to.¹⁰ We also should not assume that their lack of a belief in resurrection meant that they carried on immoral lives. We have no record of their opponents accusing them of this in any of our extant sources. Rather, there is an abundance of evidence that the debate over ritual purity was one of the most heated between the Sadducees and the Pharisees.

In the Mishnah we can see many examples where the arguments of both sides of various purity disputes are recorded.¹¹ They debated over whether or not Scripture renders one's hands unclean.¹² They also argued over which types and uses of water are unclean.¹³ The setting of the sun as a marker of when one is rendered clean was also in dispute.¹⁴ Even the state of the cleanliness of the Sadducean women was debated.¹⁵ The Essenes even argued with the Sadducees about whether or not one became unclean when they entered into a cave used to store dead bodies.¹⁶ Further rabbinic evidence found in the Tosefta further indicates that is essentially was the issue of purity which separated the Sadducees and the Pharisees in ritual practice.¹⁷

Both Josephus and the New Testament both record the fact that the Sadducees also denied belief in angels. Since the developed angelology is not found until the later prophets and the writings of the pseudepigrapha, the Sadducees probably saw it as an expansion of what was recorded in the Pentateuch. They also did not ascribe to the belief in fate/predestination. I agree with the observation of N.T. Wright who speculates that this was an easy position to take for those happily enjoying privileged seats of power.¹⁸ Josephus states that while they did not have the influence over the masses, they did have a lot of pull with the wealthy elite.¹⁹ This again connects them with the Jewish temple, where most of the money in Jerusalem would have been stored. The book of Acts associates the Sadducees with the high priests and Josephus indicates that one of their followers, Ananus, was himself a high priest. Acts 23:6 similarly states that some Sadducees held office on the Sanhedrin.

A couple of cautionary notes should be stated about some possible misunderstandings concerning the Sadducees. Many of them were wealthy aristocrats, living luxuriously on large pieces of land, but by no means all of them. It is historically certain that the Romans chose to elevate the statuses of local wealthy landowners, and the Sadducees would have been included. Some of the Sadducees were priests, but not every member was.²⁰ Many were associated with the Temple cult and the purity involved with its daily operations. Since the Jewish temple represented the political and economical powerbase of the Jews, the Sadducees positioned there certainly held chief positions. They did not seem to be a large sect as far as numbers go, but they were certainly prominent enough for their debates and beliefs to be recorded by their opponents.²¹

¹⁰ See 2 Macc. 7.4, 9-10 where the martyrs tell their oppressors that they will return in resurrection to regain the hands which they lost. This passage shows that Dan. 12:2 has grown to mean that resurrection will vindicate those who suffered faithfully for the covenant God and punish those who were their persecutors.

¹¹ Albeit the argument's of the Sadducees are told from the perspective of the surviving Pharisees. The fact remains that there was a dispute and the primary matter of argument was issues of ritual purity.

¹² *m. Yad.* 4.6.

¹³ *m. Yad.* 4.7.

¹⁴ *m. Para.* 3.7.

¹⁵ *m. Nid.* 4.2.

¹⁶ The Essenes thought that purity was contaminated by entering into a cave like one of these, which is why they chose to bury their dead in graveyards. Archeologists note that these graveyards were clearly marked in order to alert the wondering Essenes as to the perceived threat of impurity associated with the dead. I am thankful for this tip which came personally from Jodi Magness, one of the world's leading experts on Qumran archaeology.

¹⁷ See the citations in 'Sadducees', *ABD* 5:893.

¹⁸ N.T. Wright, *New Testament and the People of God*, 211. He cites *Jos. War* 2.164f, and *Ant.* 13.173 as evidence.

¹⁹ *Ant.* 18.17.

²⁰ Josephus states that there were at least twenty thousand priests (*Apion* 2.108), although no reference to how many of them were actually Sadducees.

²¹ They were known for being impolite and rude in their exchanges (*War* 2.166; cf. *Ant.* 20.199).

Pharisees

The sources for discerning the beliefs and worldviews of the Pharisees need to be treated with extreme care for two reasons. First, anything written from the perspective of a polemical opponent is sure to be exaggerated. Second, the false caricature that Pharisees were ‘professional legalists’ which has saturated biblical studies for centuries has yet to be completely abandoned, although significant progress on this front has been made in the last thirty years.²² In dealing with the sources, Josephus needs to be read with caution. Time and time again he wishes to exonerate the Pharisees from any perception of wrongdoing as he tries to frame them in attractive presentations towards his Roman readers. The Essenes, on the other side of the coin, accuse the Pharisees of being ‘those who seek smooth things.’²³ We actually have some firsthand writings of Pharisees during the time of the second temple period, such as the letters of Paul and I would argue, with some scholars, the *Psalms of Solomon*. Josephus was a former Pharisee, but was removed from command during the Jewish wars. The rabbinical evidence should not be given much weight, since the entire nature of Judaism changed with the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E. and the expulsion of the Jews from Jerusalem in 135.

The Pharisees got their name from the Hebrew *perushim*, which means “the separated ones.”²⁴ Apparently they were known for their strict concern for ritual purity, although they took a different route than the Sadducees in keeping this. In hoping to avoid any of the deuteronomic curses for failure to be the holy people God called them to be, they strove to remain pure at all costs. Faced with constant social, political, and cultural temptation to compromise towards a life of Hellenism, the Pharisees concentrated on personal holiness and intensified ritual purity.²⁵ This is why they developed the oral law,²⁶ a set of interpretations of Torah which eventually were written down in the Mishnah. This set of intensified Torah interpretations were recommended to local Jews as a matter of faithful piety. Josephus states that the Pharisees were concerned to

²² James Dunn argues, “Older treatments of them are generally unreliable, partly because of a Christian bias which saw them as chief representatives of a legalism which served, by way of contrast, to highlight the gracious character of the Christian message.” *Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making, vol. 1* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) 266.

²³ See 4QpNah 1.7; 2.2, 8; 3.3, 7.

²⁴ “For the Pharisees must have had their name from a separation, which the bulk of the nation did *not* undergo with them; in other words, from a *separation made by them, in consequence of their stricter view of the notion of uncleanness, not only from the uncleanness of the heathen, but also from that with which, according to their view, a great portion of the people were affected*. It was in this sense that they were called the separated or the separating, and they might have been called so from either praise or blame.” Emil Schurer, *A History of the Jewish People in the time of Jesus Christ, 2nd Division, vol. 2* (Hendrickson, 2008) 20.

²⁵ To get a feel for the extent of their views on purity and sacred space, consider the tractate *m.Kelim* which discusses Herod’s Temple: ‘There are ten degrees of holiness. The land of Israel is holier than any other land...The walled cities (of the land of Israel) are still more holy, in that they must send forth the lepers from their midst...Within the wall (of Jerusalem) is still more holy, for there (only) they may eat the lesser holy things and the Second Tithe. The Temple Mount is still more holy, for no man that has a flux, no menstruant, and no woman after childbirth may enter therein. The Rampart is still more holy, for no Gentiles and none that have contracted uncleanness from a corpse may enter therein...The Court of Women is still more holy, for none that had immersed himself the same day (because of uncleanness) may enter therein...The Court of the Israelites is still more holy, for none whose atonement is yet incomplete may enter therein...The Court of the Priests is still more holy, for Israelites may not enter therein save only when they must perform the laying on of hands, slaughtering and waving. Between the Porch and the Alter is still more holy, for none that has a blemish or whose hair is unloosed may enter there. The Sanctuary is still more holy, for none may enter therein with hands and feet unwashed. The Holy of Holies is still more holy, for none may enter therein save only the High Priest at the time of the service.’ –*m.Kelim* 1.5-9.

²⁶ Discussed by Josephus in *Ant.* 13.10.6. It should also be noted that the concern expressed in these oral rulings is wholly admirable. They sprang from the recognition that the Torah derived from and referred primarily to a different age and to different situations (then more nomadic, now more urban; then with a view of an independent state, no longer a sovereign nation).

keep the Torah with ‘meticulous accuracy and precision’ (Gk. *akribeia*).²⁷ In their reasoning, those who were the true people of God were recognized by the boundary markers of covenant faithfulness, which included circumcision, food/purity laws, and festival observance.²⁸ As the *Psalms of Solomon* argue, these identity-marking works not only separated the faithful from the nations, but also the righteous from the faithless Jews.²⁹ This correctly explains the thought process behind how Saul the Pharisee could stone Stephen and persecute the early church, for he saw them as a compromise to the sacred purity of what it meant to be Israel.³⁰

It seems that the focus of the Pharisees was to purify Israel by summoning her to return to her true ancestral traditions. This was accomplished by various means. First of all, they held a considerable amount of influence over the common people, and were able to persuade them to interpret Torah along their lines of thought. Secondly, like various examples in the past of heroes of ‘zeal’ for God, such as Phinehas, Elijah, and Mattathias, they were convinced that violent persecution was what God desired for those who forsook the covenant stipulations.³¹ As far as they were concerned, Israel’s very identity as a holy people was always at stake in these disputes. Remembering how faithlessness led to the destruction of the temple by Babylon and the desecration of the second temple under Antiochus, they strived to maintain themselves within the bubble of purity which would keep them separate from the evil outside.

Since Paul left us with his autobiographical accounts of what life was like as a zealous Pharisee, these records should be taken seriously. In Gal. 1:13-14 Paul describes his former conduct in Judaism, where he attempted to persecute the church of God. The motive behind his actions is revealed as being extremely zealous for the traditions of his fathers. He saw himself, in living according to this pattern, as advancing in Judaism higher than many of his contemporaries. The key word here is his ‘zealous’ attitude towards Torah, the same zeal used to identify the heroes of old who used violence to defend Israel from the threat of ritual impurity.³² This can only mean that Paul’s pre-Christian attitude was one of violent zeal which at times was used to exclude the perceived faithless from the covenant community. Where the significant change lies is the fact that Paul’s ‘conversion’ moved him *away from this exclusive mindset* to a more *inclusive attitude* as the Apostle to the Gentiles of all people! In order not to miss the point, it must be stated plainly that Paul’s motivation for extreme faithfulness was for purity reasons, not for a supposed legalistic “earning my salvation

²⁷ *War* 1.110; 2.162; *Ant.* 17.41; *Life* 191. See also the New Testament usage of *akribeia* in Acts 22:3; 26:5. See also the comments in E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 275 and n.28; James Dunn, *Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making vol. 1*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) 269.

²⁸ Each of these cultural markers was threatened during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes. What was at stake was nothing less than the unique identity as a separate people. For the Maccabean martyrs to refuse to submit to the pagan rulers and insisting on not eating pork showed that they saw their purity laws as a means symbolically enacting a resistance against pagan assimilation.

²⁹ The *Psalms of Solomon* were written by those who considered themselves to be ‘righteous/devout’ (3.3-7; 4.1, 8; 9.3, 10.6; 13.6-12; 15.6-7). Their opponents were ‘sinners’ – that is, not just Gentiles or the obviously wicked people, but their factional opponents. I think that their opponents included the Hasmonean Sadducees, since they are described as those who had usurped the priesthood and defiled the sanctuary (1.8; 2.3; 4.8; 7.2; 8.12-13; 15.5-8, 23). In other words, here we have the righties (Pharisees?) condemning other Jews as ‘sinners’

³⁰ Some have thought that the Pharisees were not involved in political revolution based entirely on a saying in Josephus. It should be obvious that he is trying to push the blame as far away from the Pharisees as possible (his autobiography in his *Life* tells the real story). N.T. Wright argues thirteen points for seeing that the Pharisees were indeed involved in revolutionary tactics which he deems as historically certain. See *The New Testament and the People of God*, 190-4.

³¹ Phinehas, perhaps the most famous example of zeal, slew both the Midianite woman and the Israelite who brought her into his tent (Num. 6-13, 15). Elijah’s ‘zeal for the Lord’ was most fully expressed in his victory over (and executions of) the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs. 18:40; 19:1, 10, 14; Sir. 48:2-3; 1 Macc. 2:58). Mattathias was the catalyst which sparked the revolt against the Syrians. His own words speak of his zeal like that of Phinehas (1 Macc. 2:23-27, 51-60; Jos. *Ant.* 12.271. God is described as a ‘zealot’ in the LXX.

³² Dunn comments: “zeal for the law expressed in defense of Israel’s covenant distinctiveness by the sword...he wanted to draw a tighter, stricter line round the ‘righteous’, to mark them off even more clearly from the Gentile ‘sinner’. *Partings*, 121.

by my good works” agenda. Paul’s conversion, in light of this evidence, was from the sect of the Pharisees to the sect of the Jesus movement.

The account found in Phil. 3:4-6 is even more striking. Following the pattern of the human Jesus giving up his privileges for the sake of others, Paul tells of his own ‘kenosis.’ He claims that he had the right to put confidence in the *sarx*, which is best understood as his ethnic identity as a Jew.³³ Why could he do such a thing? He goes on to list the reasons why. First of all, he was circumcised on the eighth day. Then he follows with his being born of the tribe of Benjamin. Many readers have missed the subtlety here, where Paul seemingly goes backwards in order of time. Why does he do this, placing circumcision before his actual birth? It is because physical circumcision was understood in the Greco-Roman world as the key identity badge for the people of God.³⁴ To Paul as a Pharisee, this was more important than his particular tribe, although Benjamin was one of the two tribes who remained loyal after the kingdom divided in the reign of Jeroboam. When it came to Torah, his response was that he was a Pharisee, a designation which set him apart from seemingly less-strict sects of Judaism. He again brings up his zeal and explains it in the same terminology that he did in Galatians, that of violent persecution of the group which challenged the Pharisee’s way of life. When it came to covenant faithfulness, Paul claims to be blameless.³⁵ Anthony Saldarini is quite right when he describes this behavior as “not referring to a highly complex doctrine of work righteousness vs. grace righteousness, but simply saying that he lives a good life according to Pharisaic standards.”³⁶

In contrast from the Sadducees whose power was bound up in the temple, the Pharisees had very little power conferred on them in the first century C.E.³⁷ Under the Hasmonean era they exercised considerable power, but that seemed to change during the time of Jesus and Paul. The Pharisees strove to influence the public with their teachings and traditions. Yet the effect of their ‘tightening of the rope’ appeared actually to exclude many Jews who were considered not to be keeping up with the righteous standards of the covenant charter. Tax collectors, prostitutes, and the ‘sinners’ were among those who were considered ritually unclean and therefore outside of the covenant community defined by the Pharisaic oral law. Since these particular disputes, as recorded in the New Testament, dealt with issues like washings, specific Sabbath observance, and food laws it indicates that the Pharisees understood the matters to be of ethnic-identifying importance. This is critical to understanding the reasons behind many of the confrontations between Jesus and the Pharisees.

Essenes

In a rather ironic way, the Jewish sect which is not spoken about within the New Testament happens to be the one which we know the most about. The discovery of the scrolls in the 1940s has since then opened up the world of ancient Judaism with new information as well as new questions. There is now a scholarly consensus that Qumran housed an Essene community which produced most, if not all, of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

³³ “He has every reason to have confidence in his Jewish birth and heritage.” ‘Pharisees.’ *ABD* 5:294. “Not in human strength or worldly achievement, but in the advantages about to be listed. The confidence was confidence (or pride) in status, status as a member of the covenant people Israel, the physical descendants (‘in the flesh’) of Abraham, and as heirs of the covenant promises made to and through Abraham (as confirmed by circumcision ‘in the flesh’).” Dunn, James, *The New Perspective on Paul, revised ed.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 474.

³⁴ Particularly Petronius, *Satyricon* 102.14; *Fragmenta* 37; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5.2; Juvenal, *Sat.* 14.99. The fact that the Jews are labeled within the New Testament as the ‘circumcision’ (Gk. *peritome*) only reinforces the point.

³⁵ The Gk. *amemptos* is a quality Paul desires to be characterized by believers in Phil. 2:15 and 1 Thes. 3:13.

³⁶ ‘Pharisees.’ *ABD* 5:294.

³⁷ Josephus tells us that the Pharisees ruled Salome as she ruled Israel (*War* 1.112) and that this led to a number of protests (*Ant.* 13.416).

Comments from both Philo³⁸ and Josephus³⁹ indicate that this was not the only group of Essenes in existence, but it seems to be the only group whose writings survived for us to study.⁴⁰

The community at Qumran is the best example of a “sect” in the modern understanding of the term. Their theology which is recorded in their writings establishes them as a sectarian Jewish group. Their origin is best placed in the Hasmonean period as a response to the growing acceptance of Hellenism among the priestly aristocracy. Many of their works indicate that they saw themselves as a counter-temple movement (hence their withdrawal into the wilderness). Their insistence on purity has led some scholars to think that the founders of the Qumran community were initially priests. They focused on interpreting Scripture in dynamic ways, known to us as the *peshet* method.

As was indicated before, the number of writings left by the Essenes puts the historian in a good place when it comes to reconstructing their beliefs and practices. They saw God as a God of grace and mercy, using similar language found in the Hebrew Bible.⁴¹ This God had called this community into covenant with him and designated them as the elect.⁴² The Essenes saw their response to God’s covenant initiative as one of free choice, using language such as “freely volunteer,” “submit freely,” etc.⁴³ They show legitimate sorrow for their sins by freely confessing them and admitting their guilt.⁴⁴ They even interpret the nature of covenant obedience with Shema language:

They shall enroll him with the covenant oath which Moses established with Israel, the covenant to rev[ert to] the Torah of Moses with the whole heart [and with the whole] soul...when he has imposed upon himself to return to the Torah of Moses with all his heart and all his soul.⁴⁵

The label “prideful” or “self-righteous” can hardly be a fair claim upon members of this sect, especially when they frequently speak of God’s own righteousness as the means of bringing forgiveness, atonement, salvation, and deliverance.⁴⁶

The Essenes could quite easily be classified as the most sectarian group of Jews known to us within the second temple period. They considered only themselves as the true “congregation of Israel.”⁴⁷ God was depicted by the Qumran community as “hating” those who rejected his precepts (as interpreted by the sect).⁴⁸ Their covenant identity was bound together in their *specific* interpretations of purity rules,⁴⁹ Sabbath stipulations,⁵⁰ and calendar designations.⁵¹ These boundary markers are labeled “works of the Law,” a phrase which precedes the usage of Paul’s letters to the Galatians and Romans.⁵² The observance of these works, quite specifically, gave the Essenes the understanding that they “have segregated ourselves from the rest of the people in order for us to avoid mingling in these affairs and associating with them in these things.”⁵³

³⁸ *Prob.* 76.

³⁹ *War* 2.124.

⁴⁰ The most comprehensive collection of the scrolls set alongside the Hebrew/Aramaic is F. Garcia Martinez, and E.J.C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition, 2 vols.* (Brill/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

⁴¹ 1QS 1.22; 4.4; 11.12-13; 1QH 5[13].23.

⁴² 1QM 10.9-10; 13.7-9.

⁴³ 1QS 1.7, 11; 5.21.

⁴⁴ 1QH 9[1].21-3; 12[4].29, 34-6.

⁴⁵ CD 15.8-10, 12-13.

⁴⁶ 1QH 4.17; 7.17; 12.7; 19.30-32; 1QM 11.3-5; 14.4-5; 18.7-8; 1QS 1.21-22; 3.10-12; 10.23; 11.2, 3, 5, 11-12, 14; CD 1.4-8, 17-20; 3.13-20; 6.2; 7.4-6; 8.1-2; 19.26-28.

⁴⁷ 1QSa 1.1; 1QS 2.22; 5.5, 22.

⁴⁸ CD 19.31-34.

⁴⁹ CD 10.10-13; 12.1-23.

⁵⁰ CD 10.14-11.23.

⁵¹ 4QMMT A.1-5.

⁵² 4QMMT A.113.

⁵³ 4QMMT A.92-3.

Those Jews who have rejected the Essene's way of life were cursed with considerable vernacular. Those associated with the corrupt temple are labeled as "sons of the pit"⁵⁴ while the one in charge is often designated as the Wicked Priest.⁵⁵ False Jews are called "traitors,"⁵⁶ "sons of destruction,"⁵⁷ and most harshly, the "sons of Belial."⁵⁸ In fact, those who refuse to join the community are not included with the community's definition of the "upright."⁵⁹

Since the community was conceived by former priest, it can be expected that the purity regulations would be quite strict, and that is in fact the case.⁶⁰ The document entitled The Rule of the Congregation actually lists who cannot be admitted into the midst of the congregation, including those defiled in flesh, paralyzed in the feet or hands, the lame, blind, deaf, mute, or visibly blemished in the flesh.⁶¹ If someone in the community voluntarily became impure, there was a threat of expulsion from the camp.⁶² If one went so far as to use the pronunciation of the name of God, then they were to be excluded as well.⁶³

Something that makes the Essenes stand out from among their Jewish contemporaries is their devotion to a single leader. Throughout their writings there is mention of the Teacher of Righteousness, a prophet like figure who was thought to have been given Danielic abilities to interpret the Scriptures. To demonstrate the significance of the role which the Essenes gave to this teacher, a look at the Habakkuk pesher is needed:

(Quote from Hab. 2:4) and not be pleased at the judgment...but the righteous (man) by his fidelity shall live. Its interpretation denotes all those who obey the Torah in the house of Judah whom God will rescue from the midst of the house of the judgment because of their suffering and their faith/fidelity to the Teacher of Righteousness.⁶⁴

What is so fascinating here is how the Qumran community is reading Hab. 2:4 within their own context. The Habakkuk Pesher shows that they saw true covenant faithfulness as loyalty/faith to/in the leader, the Teacher of Righteousness.⁶⁵ This makes the Jesus movement in the first century C.E. not as different as scholars once supposed. Both groups define themselves as the true Israel by their faith/fidelity in their leader. I'll have more to say on this later.

The Essenes, like the Pharisees, believed in the future resurrection into the world to come⁶⁶ where the righteous would share in the glory of Adam.⁶⁷ When the time came for the final apocalyptic intervention by God, the Essenes believed that they would actually fight in the decisive battle.⁶⁸ It seems that they saw the purity expectations of the priestly clan in Jerusalem as heavily compromised with the spirit of Hellenism and

⁵⁴ CD 6.14-18.

⁵⁵ 1QpHab 8.8-9.

⁵⁶ 1QPHab 2.1-4; 5.3-8.

⁵⁷ 1QH 13[5].25.

⁵⁸ 1QH 13[5] 26.

⁵⁹ 1QS 3.1.

⁶⁰ 11Q Temple 47.

⁶¹ 1QSa 2.3-10. See also a shorter list in CD 15.15-16.

⁶² 1QS 7.26-7.

⁶³ 1QS 6.27-7.1.

⁶⁴ 1QpHab 7.16-8.3, my translation.

⁶⁵ Wise, Abegg, and Cook offer commentary which is worth considering: "The writer here contemplates the final judgment. How may one escape the wrath to come? By obedience to the Law and loyalty to the Teacher. It is not clear if the Teacher here mentioned is the founder of the sect, or a Teacher who will appear later. The sect appeared to believe in both a present and future Teacher of Righteousness. Whether they were one and the same is still debated." Wise, Abegg Jr., Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation – Translated and with Commentary* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996) 119.

⁶⁶ 1QH 14.8, 34; 19.12-13; 4Q385; 4Q386, 4Q521.

⁶⁷ CD 3:20; 1QS 4.23; 1QH 4[17].15.

⁶⁸ The cache of weapons unearthed by archeologists digging in Qumran give us this indication.

wrote them off as impure Jews. The Pharisees, I argue, are those who seek smooth things.⁶⁹ This must be a verbal polemic against their oral laws (which the Essenes seemed to reject) or attempts to flatter the people. As I argued earlier, the Essenes saw the purity regulations of the Sadducees concerning the dead as not going far enough. In short, the community at Qumran saw humanity fitting into two groups: the righteous Essenes and everyone else.

Summary of the prominent Jewish sects

What can be said by way of summing up the various options available to Jews who were seeking direction on how to be faithful in the midst of Roman rule? First of all, they were all, in their various ways, deeply concerned with ritual purity. They disagreed on how strict and in what ways should issues of purity be applied. But they all equally asserted that maintaining purity was a badge of identity for those who claim to be the faithful people of God. Those who were considered unclean were subsequently marginalized and thought to be beyond the pale. This sense of factional polemic was also commonplace with each group. Those who did not fit their own standards were criticized, mocked, cursed, and treated with contempt. From the standpoint of the various sects, they saw this matter of separation from others as obedience to the covenant God, despite the seemingly unloving gesture which it entailed. To them, the importance of adherence to ritual purity as a marker identifying the righteous was more important than the personal value of others.

What is interesting is how each group dealt with the Roman overlords and their accompanying rule. The Sadducees, who actually prospered because of the Romans, took the liberal attitude. In fact, it was for this reason that they denied resurrection because that doctrine would mean that their power privilege would one day be overturned. The Pharisees, despite the attempts of Josephus to hide this, were prone to violence against Rome when the opportunity presented itself. They saw the Romans as blasphemous to a holy God and the righteous zeal of heroes past drove many Pharisees to rebellion and revolution. The Essenes, who thought that the temple was corrupt, felt that they had to get as far away from it as possible. They focused on extreme forms of purity, so that when the apocalyptic battle arrived, they would be ready to take up arms against the pagans as well as the compromising Jews.

Although the point has been made, it does not yet seem to have made its full effect yet. None of these groups, from any of their writings, can be accused of holding legalistic attitudes in regards to the Torah. They never saw their works as earning salvation with God.⁷⁰ On the contrary, God elected them as the chosen people as an act of covenant grace, as it continually repeated in the literature.⁷¹ Within the covenant, God atoned for their sins and provided blessings to the righteous. They saw their obedience as *their faithful response* to God's election, not as a way of earning his favor. Any labels of self-righteousness or beliefs in works-salvation for Jews of this period are historically anachronistic.

Enter Jesus

Against this historical backdrop Jesus must be firmly placed. In order for his words and deeds to make sense, they have to be allowed to resonate within the pluralistic Judaism of his time. Attempts to understand Jesus by *removing him* from his Jewish context will suffer the fate of changing the meaning of his ministry. One

⁶⁹ Saldarini thinks that the phrase encompasses a broad coalition of groups with included the Pharisees. He argues that the Essenes used the term against those who were too accommodating with changes to Jewish culture and society. See his comments in *ABD* 5:301.

⁷⁰ Again, note how the *only extant source for the phrase "works of the Law"* found in 4QMMT deals with the identifying markers which demonstrated that the people were faithfully living within the covenant stipulations.

⁷¹ "...He chose Israel that they might be a people for himself." –*Jub.* 15.31. "For you chose the descendants of Abraham above all the nations, and you put your name upon us, Lord, and it will not cease forever." –*Pss. Sol.* 9.9. The thought of Israel as *God's inheritance* can be traced throughout many strands of Jewish literature. See *Deut.* 32:9; *1 Kgs.* 8:51, 53; *2 Kgs.* 21:14; *Ps.* 33:12; 74:2; *Isa.* 63:17; *Jer.* 10:16; *Micah* 7:18; *Judith* 13:5; *Sir.* 24:8, 12; *Jub.* 1.19-21; 22.9-10, 15; 33.20; *3 Macc.* 6.3; *2 Bar.* 5.1; *Ps. Philo* 12.9; 21.10; 27.7; 28.2; 39.7; 49.6.

must remember that the Gospel writers were not operating within a historical vacuum. Their readers understood the surrounding culture and religious climate because they lived, breathed, and walked it daily.

It is clear that the rivaling Jewish sects claimed, in their own ways, both implicitly and explicitly, to be the true outworking of the people of God. Each group also saw those particular Jews who were on the 'outside' as compromisers to the faith and thereby outside of the covenant. This point is a good place to start plugging in the Jesus of history.

His means of summons

How did Jesus establish himself as a different sect from the other Judaisms of his time?⁷² The data in the Gospels indicates a combination of: (1) a call to repentance, (2) belief in the gospel of the kingdom of God, and (3) faith/fidelity to the leader. Each of these important aspects needs to be unpacked further.

Since repentance is the appropriate response to the announcement of the gospel, it will be treated afterwards. It is almost universally recognized that Jesus was a fulltime preacher of the imminent kingdom of God.⁷³ What seems to be missed in these discussions is the fact that Jesus labeled *his saving gospel message* with this coming kingdom.⁷⁴ This is significant for our study, for if the gospel message is supposed to bring about personal salvation, and if Jesus differed with the various Jewish sects on what constitutes the people of God, then it should go to show that Jesus' message about the kingdom was the means of summoning Israel to *his understanding* of what truly defines the people of God. This subject will be developed further in a later section.

The proclamation found within the Synoptics is always "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand."⁷⁵ This is found on the lips of Jesus, John the Baptist, and was the message which the Twelve were sent to preach. The noun *metanoia* occurs 8 times within the Synoptics while the verb *metanoeo* shows up on 16 occasions. While the basic meaning surely indicates a summons to turn (or return), which implies a changing of thoughts and perspective, there is evidence that something else is hidden under the surface. If Jesus understood 'repentance' to denote what Israel needed to do to come clean and return to God, then the 'giving up of their nationalistic ideals and pride' certainly was intended.⁷⁶

Josephus, writing his autobiography in the 60s C.E., sheds much light on the meaning of repentance and how it was used in Galilee. He tells of a time when he was charged to break up a factional group lead by a zealot named Jesus.⁷⁷ Josephus captures him, pulls him aside, and said to him:

that I was not ignorant of the plot which he had contrived against me...; I would, nevertheless, condone his actions if he would show repentance and prove his loyalty to me. All this he promised...⁷⁸

Josephus asked the zealot to 'show repentance and prove his loyalty to me.' The Greek here could have easily been rendered '*repent and believe in me*'.⁷⁹ Clearly, 'repentance' held a meaning which went much further than something personal, religious, and inward. It clearly carried the understanding of the leaving behind of a lifestyle of revolutionary ideals and beliefs in favor of faithfulness to the new leader. Therefore, when Jesus asked for repentance and belief, it would make perfect sense that his summons was a call for Israel to abandon their ways of being the people of God in favor of the new direction which he offered.

⁷² The fact that the Jesus movement was considered a sect is attested in the book of Acts, where the word ἀίρεσις is used of them (cf. 24:5, 14; 28:22). It is used of the Sadducees in 5:17 and of the Pharisees in 15:5 and 26:5.

⁷³ I use the word "almost" because most churches today seem to be unaware of this rather simple fact.

⁷⁴ Cf. Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 13:19; 24:14; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 16:16.

⁷⁵ Matt. 3:3; 4:17; 10:17; Mark 1:15; Luke 10:9, 11.

⁷⁶ Wright describes this summons as a call to "abandon revolutionary zeal." See *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996) 250.

⁷⁷ Josephus has twenty one different people in his works with this name.

⁷⁸ Jos. *Life* 110. Translation by H. St. J. Thackeray in the Loeb collection.

⁷⁹ *metanoesein kai pistos emoi genesesthai*.

'Belief,' along the same lines, included the notions of *fidelity* and *trust in the new leader*.⁸⁰ For the Pharisees, this would mean leaving behind their loyalties to their beloved Rabbis. The Essenes in turn would have to give up their devotion to the Teacher of Righteousness and turn to a life of faithfulness in and towards Jesus. Lifestyles, hopes, ambitions, and zealous ideals would all have to be thrown out while the new sect sought to redefine them. This, I believe, is critical to understand what the Jesus movement was up to, how they operated, and how they were perceived among the other sects of Judaism.

If Jesus was summoning Israel to give up their way of living as the people of God, then it is clear that he was offering a controversial redefinition as well as a critique. All three Synoptics record Jesus appointing twelve disciples around him, indicating his redrawing of the lines as to what the *true* Israel looked like.⁸¹ Anyone from the outside looking in would get the clear impression that Jesus was reorganizing the twelve tribes under his leadership. It is not a surprise then that the Gospels indicate many occasions where Jesus summons his hearers to give up their way of being Israel and to follow Jesus' alternative instead.⁸² Each of the Synoptics also makes clear that it was the gospel of the kingdom of God which was the vessel that Jesus used to gather his hearers to himself. It is to this point where we must turn.

The gospel of the kingdom as the leading boundary marker within Jesus' sect

As we have already seen, each of the leading Jewish sects had various markers which define their group over and against all other ways of being the people of God. For the Pharisees, this primarily concluded adherence to the Oral Law. The Sadducees saw their close connection with the Jewish Temple as their defining feature. The Essenes at Qumran rejected both of these things and saw the purity regulations as identified by the Teacher of Righteousness as a key marker of those who are the true Israel. If the Jesus group was to be identified as a sect within Judaism, then it would make sense that they too would have markers which defined them against the others. An almost casual reading of the Synoptics easily reveals that this marker is the gospel of the kingdom, as the evidence will soon indicate.

Despite the various Jewish icons of importance within the Second Temple period, such as Torah, the land, the Temple, monotheism, or election, Jesus commands that his followers should continually seek the kingdom of God first and foremost.⁸³ When the question of honoring father and mother comes up in the question whether or not one of Jesus' hearers should bury his dead relative, Jesus radically places the proclamation of the kingdom of God gospel above the fifth commandment.⁸⁴ He even goes so far as to say that if someone does not accept his kingdom message like a child, then they will certainly never⁸⁵ enter into it!⁸⁶

For those who had eyes to see and ears to hear, Jesus repeatedly taught in parables. All three of the Synoptic Gospels list the parable of the Sower at the head of their list. Yet, it is what this parable follows which is most striking. In Mark 3:31-35 Jesus' mother and brothers are said to be on the outside looking to speak to him. When Jesus hears that they are there, he takes the opportunity to make a point of who really is 'in' and who is 'out.' He goes on and states that those who do the will of God are his brothers, sisters and mother. Since one's identity and social status was so closely related to their family, this redefinition was quite radical to Jesus' hearers.

⁸⁰ Wright cites Jos. *Life* 17; 262; and 370f to argue that 'repentance' carried the meanings of laying down one's arms/deserting one group for another. See his *Jesus*, 251.

⁸¹ The reorganization of 'Israel' is clearly what is implied in Matt. 19:28, Luke 22:29-30.

⁸² Cf. the call of Peter, Andrew, James, and John in Matt. 4:18-22; the call of Matthew from his tax collector booth in Matt. 9:9; the so-called "rich, young ruler" in Matt. 19:16-26; etc.

⁸³ Matt. 6:33.

⁸⁴ Luke 9:60.

⁸⁵ All three Synoptics use a double negative in the Greek (οὐ μὴ) to drive home the point.

⁸⁶ Luke 18:17 and pars.

From here, the narrative extends to the telling and explanation of the parable of the Sower. Note carefully how Jesus' words closely relate and shed light on his previous redefinition of the family:

And he continually said to them, "To you the mysteries of the kingdom of God have been given, but to those on the outside everything comes in parables, so that while seeing, they may not see and not perceive, and while hearing, they may not hear and not understand, otherwise they might return and be forgiven."⁸⁷

What Jesus has carefully done here is to do two critical things. First of all, he has defined, according to his Jewish movement, what constitutes the 'in' group and the 'out' group. Those who are 'in' are the ones who see, hear, and understand the kingdom of God (via the spoken word which the entire parable is based around). Those who are on the outside are those who either don't understand the message or who fail to accept it. The second thing that Jesus does with this parable is to raise the value of acceptance of the gospel of the kingdom over and above family relations, an action which had a severe potential for public shame. All in all, Jesus is saying and doing things which indicate that his sect is to be understood and recognized as those who have believed the gospel of the kingdom, and through it, have placed their loyalty in the Jesus the leader.

Matthew is the only Gospel to record the parable of the Tares and the Wheat.⁸⁸ This parable consists in both good seed as well as the bad tares planted together in a field which will be separated at the time of the harvest. The interpretation gives Jesus' hearers a good look at how he views the world. The good seed are the sons of the kingdom while the tares are the sons of the evil one. This language is quite similar to that which was observed in the Dead Sea Scrolls, denoting the Essenes and everyone else. Now Jesus takes up similar language to distinguish those who have accepted his kingdom gospel and those who have not.⁸⁹ Again, Jesus is clearly defining his Jewish sect as those who have taken on board his gospel of the kingdom of God as a key governing boundary marker.

There are various other sayings in the Gospels which can be explored. The Sermon on the Mount has Jesus commanding his disciples to 'enter through the narrow gate.'⁹⁰ This gate is further defined as the act of taking the teachings of Jesus and performing them. Each of the rival Jewish sects would each agree that the gate is narrow, but Jesus defines the entry conditions as fidelity to his commands, which obviously include adherence to his kingdom of God gospel. Mark records a saying in which Jesus declares that the way to save one's life is to lose it for his sake and for the sake of the gospel (of the kingdom). Again, the theme of a gospel which draws people unto faith in the leader is spoken loud and clear.

Redefinition of purity concerns

Each of the various sects within Judaism understood purity to be a significant factor in defining who the people of God really are compared to those outside of the covenant. The reasons behind these beliefs were simple: Israel's past failures to take seriously the call to be a set-apart people for God resulted in covenant punishments, exile, the destruction of the Temple, and the terror of Antiochus Epiphanes. The response made by most of the Jewish sects was to tighten the circle which defined who was pure and who was defiled. Instead of using their election to be a light to the world, their tactics forced them to look at only what made them distinct from their contemporaries. Those who were considered impure, such as the prostitutes, tax collectors, crippled, lame, and the sinners, were marginalized from society and treated as outcasts. It is interesting to see that Jesus spent most of his time with these groups of people and worked to bring them back into covenant relationship with God.

⁸⁷ Mark 4:11-12.

⁸⁸ Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43.

⁸⁹ Ladd makes a similar observation: "Here society is divided into two antithetical classes: those who hear and receive the word of the Kingdom and those who either do not know it or reject it." See George Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 51.

⁹⁰ Matt. 7:13-14.

In doing this, Jesus had to gather them unto himself in ways which threatened the systems of purity which the various sects adhered to. This historically makes the most sense as to the reason for many of the controversies and arguments which Jesus had with his contemporaries. Take for example Mark 1:40-41 where an impure leper comes to Jesus and asks to be healed. Jesus completely disregards purity concerns and touches the man, healing him immediately of his leprosy. According to the Torah, touching an unclean man would make you unclean as well. Jesus, on the other hand, shows no concern for this and continues on as if there was no problem. Soon thereafter Jesus is criticized for having table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners.⁹¹ Ancient people understood table fellowship to be a way of identifying what group you were a part of, as well as associating with that particular group's purity.⁹² Therefore, the scribes and Pharisees saw the miracle-working prophet Jesus seemingly wanting to be identified among the outcasts of Jewish society. Wondering why Jesus would want to associate with those who almost everyone considered to be outside of the covenant, they ask his disciples why he is acting this way. Jesus responds by taking the language of the 'righteous' and the 'sinner' found throughout Jewish sectarian writings and uses it to explain his ministry. All of those on the outside looking in would see Jesus completely disregarding contemporary purity regulations.

Jesus' healing ministry continually shows his lack of consideration for the various purity rules of his day. Mark 5:1-20 contains the account of the Gerasene Demoniac in which purity flags are raised over and over again to the careful reader. First of all, Jesus travels into the unclean Gentile region of the Gerasenes. He meets a man with an unclean spirit, who lived among the dead which many considered to be ritually defiling. After an exchange, Jesus sends the demons into the unclean herd of swine. It seems that Jesus was willing to be perceived as one who has taken upon himself the impurities in order to bring someone from the ranks of the outcasts back into right covenant relationship with God. Following this incident is another string of healing miracles. One in particular has a woman who is suffering from a hemorrhage who seeks to be made well by Jesus.⁹³ Not only did her excessive blood make her ritually impure, but it most likely isolated her socially from most of her family and friends. She reaches out and touches Jesus, which most would think would contaminate him with her uncleanness. Instead Jesus remains unconcerned and heals her with power leaving his body.

Seemingly unbothered by what others may think of his current state of uncleanness, Jesus immediately enters into the house of a synagogue official in 5:38. He takes the hand of the dead child and raises her back to life. Conservative Jews of his day would understand the act of having contact with the dead as defiling oneself. Jesus sees the value of human life as more important than the purity concerns. It did not take long before the Pharisees and the scribes took notice of the seemingly abandonment of any concern for ritual purity in Jesus' sect.⁹⁴ The disciples are called out for not adhering to the Oral Law's stance on the washing of hands. Jesus rebukes the Pharisees and argues that their outward observances of purity regulations mean little if inwardly they were defiled in their hearts. The Pharisees, who saw themselves as the strict interpreters of Torah, were certainly shocked to be accused of neglecting the commandments of God! Jesus apparently is concerned about purity, but it is the purity of the heart which received the emphasis from him. The disciples, puzzled about Jesus' response, ask him what all he meant by it. Jesus states that it is the things which proceed out of a person which end up defiling them. Mark adds a parenthetical note that this means that Jesus declared all foods to be clean, which is shocking considering that food laws were considered to be a significant boundary markers which separated the Jews from the pagan nations. It is not a mistake that Mark follows this

⁹¹ Mark 2:15-17.

⁹² Dunn comments that "Table fellowship would most probably be one of the elements of Pharisaic halakoth which functioned as an identity marker and boundary, marking them out and marking them off as 'separated' from others. *Partings*, 110-1.

⁹³ Mark 5:25-29.

⁹⁴ Mark 7:1-23.

account with Jesus heading into the unclean nation of Tyre and engages with the Syrophoenecian woman, both matters of contemporary disregard for purity.⁹⁵

Luke records an account where Jesus is invited to dine at the home of one of the leaders of the Pharisees.⁹⁶ After an extended parable on humility, Jesus turns to the host and tells him that he should not refrain from extending table fellowship to the poor, crippled, lame, or blind. This is significant because most Jews saw these groups of people as ritually unclean and therefore social outcasts. If they were to be seen dining with the pure Pharisees, then the Pharisees would cease to be understood as a ritually clean sect. Jesus, knowing what was at stake, cuts to the heart of the matter, ignoring the social implications of his suggestion, and places the Pharisees in an awkward position. This may be what Jesus is referring to when he tells his disciples that unless their covenant faithfulness⁹⁷ exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, then they will not enter the kingdom.⁹⁸

This understanding of loving one's own group and shunning (or essentially 'hating') anyone else is quite common among the thinking of various Jewish groups of Jesus' day.⁹⁹ Clearly the actions and words of Jesus indicate that he disagrees with this mode of thinking. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus rejects this sort of teaching by stating that one's enemies should be loved and prayed for so that in this way (Gk. ὅπως) you may be sons of the Father.¹⁰⁰ Here Jesus defines the true children of God as those who love their enemies, something difficult to hear for the more factious of the Jewish sects. His ministry showed that the way most were separating from others based on purity regulations was contrary to the will and heart of the Father in heaven. Outward purity was not to supersede inward purity, for 'the tree is known by its fruit.'¹⁰¹

If one understands that the healing of one of the ritually unclean outcasts resulted in their rejoining the covenant community, then this gives quite a bit more emphasis to the multiple healings Jesus performed. Luke is well-known for using salvation language of those who are made well upon their encounter with Jesus.¹⁰² The point cannot be overemphasized. If Jesus healed those who were considered outside because of their sicknesses, then healing was nothing less than salvation for them. Therefore, when summary statements are given about what Jesus went around doing in his ministry, such as Matt. 4:23; 9:35; etc., the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom *should not be so quickly seen as something with different results* than the healing of various diseases and sicknesses. Both bring the recipients to faithful obedience to Jesus. Because of this, the significance of the healing those deemed by society as impure and unclean should not be missed or belittled.

Since purity was so much at the heart of Jewish piety, anyone going around with such a cavalier attitude regarding purity (especially one who was gaining popularity), would have very well been perceived as a threat. It is not hard to see why Jesus created so many enemies with his words and deeds during such a short time of ministry.

Redefinition of the value of Torah and the value of humankind

Some evidence has already been seen to indicate that Jesus saw a problem with the misuse of the purity regulations. If too much emphasis was given to maintaining the ritual cleanliness of oneself or their sect, then

⁹⁵ Mark 7:24-30.

⁹⁶ Luke 14:1-15.

⁹⁷ Personal righteousness was understood as the response to God's faithfulness to the covenant, thereby denoting the individual's own faithful obedience to God as defined by Torah.

⁹⁸ Matt. 5:20.

⁹⁹ 'The compassion of human beings is for their *neighbors*, but the compassion of the Lord is for *every living thing*. He rebukes and trains and teaches them, and turns them back, as a shepherd his flock.' -Sirach 18:13; '...in order to *love* all the sons of light, each according to his lot in God's plan, and to *detest* all the sons of darkness.' -1QS 1.9-10.

¹⁰⁰ Matt. 5:43-47.

¹⁰¹ Matt. 12:33.

¹⁰² Luke 8:36, 48, 50; 17:19; 18:42. See also Matt. 9:21, 22; Mark 5:23; 28, 34; 6:56; 10:52. English translations rarely bring this significant point out.

the risk of devaluing those who don't make the cut is always present. On multiple occasions, Jesus seems to be critiquing this way of thinking and offering what he felt was what God had intended. Take for example what is recorded in Matt. 12:1-8. Jesus and his disciples were walking through the grain fields and picked some to fulfill their hunger. The Pharisees, looking to uphold the strictest level of Torah, saw their action as Sabbath-breaking 'work.' They rebuke Jesus for what his allowing his disciples to do. Jesus sees this as one of the key distortions of Torah, that of lifting ritual observances over the basic needs of mankind. Jesus cites the example from the Scriptures where David entered into the house of God and ate the showbread which was reserved for the priests alone. He also recalls the discrepancy in Torah which allows the priests, who have daily duties, to work on the Sabbath and be innocent.¹⁰³ The priests are doing the work of God and are allowed to place their work over the Sabbath, not the other way around. Jesus, being greater than the Temple, explicitly claims this exemption for himself.

Another account where Jesus repositions the needs of man over Torah observance is found in Mark 3:1-6. On the Sabbath, Jesus gets ready to heal a man with a withered hand. The Pharisees, *knowing* that deliberate transgression of the Sabbath demands stoning, wait to see what he will do.¹⁰⁴ Jesus again confronts their misuse of Torah which places ritual observance above the obvious needs of the deformed man. He asks them if it is lawful to save a life on the Sabbath. The Essenes clearly thought that it was not lawful:

If (your beast) falls into a well or a pit, he is not to take it out on the Sabbath...Any living person who stumbles into a place with water or into a lake nobody should take him out, neither with a ladder or rope or a vessel.¹⁰⁵

Jesus goes on to heal the man. Clearly his health is placed higher in value than a strict position on Sabbath observance. Matt. 25:31-46 speaks of a final apocalyptic judgment at the hands of Jesus. He returns to take the throne of David, gathers the world for universal judgment, and selects those who are worthy of entering into the kingdom of God. Yet, their qualifications are quite different than what most contemporary Jews would have expected. Jesus does not see how 'Jewish' one was, or if they upheld their racial identity markers faithfully. Rather, he judges based on whether or not they acted in accordance to their vocation; being the light to the world. Did they help those who were hungry, thirsty, naked, and poor? Too often this passage is looked at in a strictly narrow way looking for ethics only. Yet, it is the response which those being judged have which gives the real issue away: "Lord, when did we see you hungry...thirsty...a stranger...naked...sick, or in prison?" Their reaction is still based on a system which only associates with one's own associates, and excludes those who are considered 'outside of the covenant.' Jesus makes it quite clear that on the Day of Judgment, final justification will be based *not on one's pride of race or sectarian understandings, but rather on how Torah was lived out to bless one's neighbor.* Here again, we see Jesus raise the value of man over the value of Torah observance. One could easily go from here to the parable of the Good Samaritan, where Jesus interprets the Shema as a summons to love one's neighbor *regardless* of current sectarian understandings of who is 'in' and who is 'out.' A further explanation of this parable will be given later.

Torah, it seems, was never meant to be kept inside, but rather to be shown out like light extending from a lighthouse. Keeping it only for those associated with the exclusive sect was never what Torah intended. Much more could be said and elaborated on this one point, but it is not the focus of this study. How Jesus challenged the system of who was 'in' and who was 'out' is our next area of attention which we must turn to.

Redefining who is 'in' and who is 'out'

Quite a lot of material in the Synoptic Gospels is devoted to Jesus' teachings, arguments, or reactions against the subject of who is 'in' and who is 'out.' This was not just something he was concerned with. On the contrary, many Jews of his day were asking the very same questions and coming up with some very narrow

¹⁰³ Other Jews recognized this loophole: "Temple service takes precedence over the Sabbath" –*b.Sabb.* 132b. See also *m.Pesah* 6.1-2 and *m.Erub.* 10.11-5.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Exo. 31:14-15; Num. 15:32-36. I owe this point to Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8, AB 27*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000) 248.

¹⁰⁵ CD 11.13-14, 16-17, my translation.

answers.¹⁰⁶ Israel understood that those who are among the righteous in the present will be vindicated and rewarded at the final judgment. Therefore, knowing who was currently 'in' and 'out' was an important topic of discussion within the various sects. Therefore, it would make sense if Jesus had a thing or two to say on his opinion of the subject.

The parables actually reveal a great deal of information on how Jesus interacted with various strands of thought on who is 'in' and who is 'out.' After Jesus quotes the Shema to the lawyer, the question arises as to what actually defines a 'neighbor.' Most Jews would think that their neighbor refers to those who are within the covenant. By implication, this means that those who are deemed outside of the covenant, especially the unclean, were not neighbors and therefore not under the obligation of love. Jesus responds with the parable of the Good Samaritan, a parable in which the social/purity issues are often missed or ignored for the simplified sermon on love. A man is beaten up and left for dead on the side of the road. Both a priest and a Levite see the man and adhere to their convictions of separation from the unclean. They were both Temple officials who were not allowed to approach dead people, which they feared that the man was. Jesus here is not trying to point out the fact that these two examples were unloving, rather he was showing that their understanding of what it means to be pure actually was taking precedence over the great Shema!

Along comes the lowly Samaritan, who is by far the most unclean character in the story. He, of all the examples, actually loves his neighbor, the Jew. At the end of the parable, Jesus concludes by directing attention to the fact that this impure Samaritan was the only one who truly followed the implications of the Shema. And since Samaritans were considered by most Jews to be the ones who moved away from loyal Torah observance, the sting of the argument is that the two Temple officials turned out to be the disobedient ones. What must be noted from this parable is the fact that Jesus is teaching against the understanding that one's 'neighbor' can be narrowly defined according to who they thought was within the 'in' group of faithful Jews. The ethic of love is important, but it is not the primary application of this parable.

An important string of parables is found later in Luke chs. 15 and 16 which address the same subject of who is 'in' and who is 'out.' These parables are prefaced by a comment that the sinners would associated with Jesus and his teachings. The scribes and Pharisees, understanding that one's identity in the ancient world was bound closely together with who you associate and eat with, concluded that Jesus was taking on the status of a 'sinner.' Jesus responds with four consecutive parables which answer why he is having table fellowship with those considered to be outside of the covenant. The man who has one hundred sheep goes after the one who strays. When it is found, his rejoicing is compared to the rejoicing which occurs in heaven. He throws a party and invites all his friends to celebrate. This one sheep has repented (at the announcement of the gospel of the kingdom) and therefore is among the 'inside' group of Jesus followers. The following parable of the lost coin reemphasizes the point previously made. After the woman finds the coin, she calls her neighbors and friends in celebration. This act of rejoicing echoes the same noise which is heard from heaven. The reason for the celebration is the fact that the sinner repented, and is now a part of Jesus' true covenant people.

The next parable is often wrongly titled the Prodigal Son, a title which really misses the point that there are two equally important sons discussed. The first son leaves the father and squanders¹⁰⁷ his inheritance. He runs off to a far country and ultimately hits rock bottom. He comes to his senses, cries out in humility, and repents. The father accepts him as a full member of his family and gives him the best robe, a ring, and calls for a feast. The return of this son in repentance demands a celebration, similar to that which was seen in the previous two parables. The father gives the title of "the son of mine" to the newly found prodigal.

¹⁰⁶ Consider these examples: 'These are they who have no share in the world to come: who say there is no resurrection of the dead... the Epicureans...he who reads the external books...he who pronounces the Name with its proper letters...Jeroboam, Ahab, Ahaz, and Manasseh...the generation of the flood...the generation of the Tower of Babel...the men of Sodom...the spies...the generation of the wilderness...Korah and his company...the Ten Tribes.'" -*m.Sanh.* 10:1-3; "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?" - Luke 13:23; "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" - Luke 18:18.

¹⁰⁷ The issue of 'squandering' is also picked up in Jesus' next parable in Luke 16:1-13.

The second son speaks the words of complaint found upon the lips of the scribes and Pharisees. They grumble at the fact that the son who was once lost and who came back is being treated like a legitimate son. Jesus' hearers would have understood the father of the parable to be God and the son to be the ideal Jew. The dispute clearly becomes one of who has the right to be called a son of the father, or more sharply, do these sinners have the right to claim heirs of the sonship of Israel? "This son of mine" is further described by the father as "this brother of yours" in 15:32. Jesus is trying to show that the prodigal 'sinner' who repents and shares table fellowship with himself is currently being recognized by the Father as a legitimate son, and that the Pharisees and scribes are invited to share in Jesus' party if they would recognize this son as well. If they choose to recognize him, then they would have to agree and submit to Jesus' repentance, gospel of the kingdom, and way of being Israel. The parable, therefore, is not primarily concerned with the mercy of God, as is so often implied. It better describes the false attitudes towards the repentant son by those who wish to claim the title for themselves. Jesus states that the repentant prodigal is recognized by God as a son, and the rest are summoned to follow suit. The matter is about *who is in according to Jesus*, with the secondary application on the grace of God.

Another parable, found in only Matthew, also speaks of two sons.¹⁰⁸ Both sons were commanded by their father to go work in the vineyard.¹⁰⁹ One said that he wouldn't, but later repented and obeyed. The second son initially agreed to go work, but ultimately didn't do it. Jesus asks the chief priests and the elders who did the will of his father and they reply with the first. Then Jesus, drawing the comparison to the tax collectors and prostitutes who had accepted his gospel and repented, stated that they were getting into the kingdom of God before the priests and elders. Jesus' overall point is to state that those who were once outcasts of society, labeled as unclean and lost, are entering into God's reign because they repented and did the will of their Father. The other son, who refuses to do the true work of the vineyard, can only claim to be faithless to their vocation.

In Jesus' typical fashion of contrasting two ways of being Israel, he gives the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican.¹¹⁰ These two men entered into the Temple to pray. The Pharisee prayed to God, thanking him that he was not like "other people," including the swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even this tax collector next to him. From the Pharisee's perspective, all of those listed were outside of the covenant.

Jesus is quite clearly attempting to redefine what the true Israel of God looks like. Yet he seems to understand himself as a faithful Jew, bringing out the intended meaning of Torah while at the same time denouncing rival interpretations as misleading and dangerous. The Sermon on the Mount records Jesus saying that he was not commissioned to abolish Torah, but rather to fulfill it. What is meant by this is that Jesus is attempting to bring the perspective back into focus of what Torah always wanted, that of a nation of faithful people through whom God was going to bless the world.¹¹¹ Israel, in her present condition, was failing at this vocation because she was tightening the boundaries of who was real the people of this light and in doing so fell short of extending their light to the nations. It is not surprising that Jesus is depicted as welcoming non-Jews because of their faith, like the Centurion,¹¹² or the Syrophenecian woman,¹¹³ or the Samaritan woman at the well.¹¹⁴ Even his parable of the Mustard Seed¹¹⁵ ends with the birds of the air, which were interpreted

¹⁰⁸ Matt. 21:28-32.

¹⁰⁹ The vineyard was a typical Jewish reference for the land of Israel. See Isa. 5:1-10 and the various references in the Jesus' parables.

¹¹⁰ Luke 18:9-14.

¹¹¹ Cf. Gen 12:3; Isa. 42:6; 49:3, 6 where the nation is given the commission of being the light to the nations. Jesus gives this vocation to his disciples in Matt. 5:14 and embodies it in John 8:12.

¹¹² Matt. 8:10-12.

¹¹³ Mark 7:26.

¹¹⁴ John 4:7ff.

¹¹⁵ Matt. 13:31-32.

by Jews of his day as the Gentiles,¹¹⁶ will one day nest under the large tree. Unlike Jesus' contemporaries, he had no problem extending God's grace outside of the Jewish race.

Another interesting passage seems to indicate that Jesus had redefined contemporary views of what constituted the unclean. In Mark 9:43-47 Jesus gives a strong exhortation to his disciples about not letting stumbling blocks in their lives keep them from entering into the kingdom of God. In typical midrashic fashion Jesus exaggerates and personifies the hand, foot, and eye to show that the things that you do, where you go, and what you look at could all be hindrances to inheriting life in the age to come. He urges his hearers to cut these things off, for he says that it is better to enter into life "crippled, lame, or with one eye" than to be cast into hell. What is astonishing here is that Jesus indicates that these forms of disabilities, which many Jews considered criteria of the ritually unclean, were to be the things which *would actually allow entrance* into the kingdom of God!

Jesus was not a respecter of persons, especially the little guys. The story of Zaccheus, which is a children's Sunday school favorite, generally is told in a way which misses the most striking aspects of the account. He was a chief tax collector, probably having ownership over several under him. Tax collectors made their living by extracting more money than needed from the people. Since the Torah stated that anything wrongfully taken was to be paid back four-fold and most tax collectors didn't keep track of how much they gained, most Jews considered them 'beyond the pale' as far as righteousness is concerned. Jesus calls out to this man and wishes to dine with him. Outsiders looking in would see Jesus associating with this chief 'sinner' as detrimental to his own status and honor. Yet, as Jesus enters the house, Zaccheus' status is changed from a chief tax collector to a child of Abraham. Again, those who surround themselves around Jesus through repentance and faithfulness are transferred from the 'outside' group into Jesus' Jewish sect.

Conclusions and applications

The Jewish people during the time of Jesus were divided into various factions. These groups struggled to find the balance between living under Roman rule and maintaining their faithfulness to the God of Israel. The Pharisees and the Essenes seemed to take positions on the far right while the Sadducees held more of a compromising position. Each of these groups mocked, attacked, and cursed the rival factions who lived differently. These groups included the tax collectors, sinners, prostitutes, and all of those ritually unclean due to illness and physical deformity.

God had given Israel a vocation. Their job was to be the light to the nations. Along comes this Galilean named Jesus who felt that Israel had forgotten her sacred vocation. Instead of extending God's light to the world, the various factions were tightening their boundary markers of identity which had the effect of *excluding* people from the covenant community. The Jews were guilty of their pride of race and misunderstood God's summon to holiness as a charter to push any perception of evil and impurity outside of the camp. James Dunn puts it nicely:

It was not the law or law as a principle which Jesus called into question. *It was the law understood in a factional or sectarian way* – interpreted in narrowing terms so that those who could not accept, or who would not conform, or who challenged that interpretation, were *ipso facto* categorized as 'sinners', even though they were Jews themselves and willing or indeed eager to live within the covenant as they understood it.¹¹⁷

My proposition all along has been that the life, teachings, deeds, and words of Jesus *must be seen* against its proper Jewish historical backdrop. Jesus' teaching and preached aimed to redefine the people of God. He called into question their internal boundaries and various attempts at self-definition in terms of Torah. He summoned his hearers to repent not only from their personal sins, but also from their failure to live up to their God-given vocation. His gospel of the coming kingdom set the stage for a new way of being Israel and a

¹¹⁶ 1 Enoch 90:2-3, 18-19, 30.

¹¹⁷ Dunn, *Partings*, 113.

renewed emphasis on how God was restoring the fallen creation; first through the ministry and sacrifice of his son and secondly with the return of the Messiah to consummate God's reign over the world.

Those who repented and accepted Jesus' message subsequently gave up their devotion to their previously cherished Jewish boundary markers, such as the Oral Law, devotion to the physical Temple in Jerusalem,¹¹⁸ or perhaps allegiance to the Teacher of Righteousness. They placed their faithfulness in Jesus and chose to imitate his life as well as his teachings. Jesus spent his ministry redefining who the true people of God were through the preaching of the gospel, healing the sick, dining in table fellowship, and the telling of parables. He identified his disciples as the 'sons of the kingdom of God.' Those who joined his community continued to herald the kingdom of God in their preaching, evangelism, and in their churches. Thus, the light of the gospel, which brought salvation to those who held it fast, was brought back into alignment with the will of God.

If this historical reconstruction stands, then various applications become apparent. First of all, if Jesus' sect was really marked as different from its predecessors by the message of the kingdom and fidelity to Jesus' way of being Israel, then this emphasis of distinction should be maintained within Christian communities today. This point cannot be overemphasized, especially in light of the fact that most Christians cannot intelligently convey what exactly the kingdom of God is. If Jesus distinguished the 'in' group from those on the 'outside' by acceptance and understanding of his gospel of the kingdom, then those who claim to be continuing in his teachings need to do the same. Christian churches have a long way to go if this distinction is to be taken seriously in the twenty-first century.

Secondly, Jesus repeatedly taught that the religious groups of his day which only looked inwardly instead of outwardly were failing fundamentally in their God-given vocation to be the light to the world. He saw how Jewish halakhah, when emphasized out of proportion, was liable to raise the words of Torah over the value of their neighbor. Jesus saw this as a distortion of the original purpose of Torah and thus a distortion of the will of God. Therefore, Jesus' teachings were intended to bring out the intended meaning of Torah, not to discard it. Racial markers, such as food laws, Sabbath observance, purity regulations, and even circumcision were downplayed in favor of faithfulness to himself and to his kingdom agenda.¹¹⁹ Modern day Christian communities need to compare their pietistic efforts with Jesus' and see if there are any adjustments which need to be made.

A final call to Bible students is more of a historical one. A study such as this one shows the need and necessity to take seriously the Jewish sources as critical background. Jesus and his disciples were situated in their culture just as we are today. If one removes Jesus, his words, deeds, and teaching from their Second Temple Jewish context, then their meaning is diminished and lost. If one is to understand and take seriously Jesus as a historical figure, placing him within Judaism is a fundamental requirement. The long held caricature of the Judaism which both Jesus and Paul interacted with was full of a legalistic salvation by works has been seen to be an anachronistic construction. Those who continue this unhistorical depiction will distort the messages of both the Gospels as well as the epistles of Paul. Bible students need to understand that when they engage in the art of biblical interpretation that *they are doing history*. Some are doing it well and some are doing it poorly. But they are doing history, whether they know it or not.

All in all, this study is meant to spur fruitful discussion, critical engagement with the texts (both Jewish and Christian), and further study of the Jew from Galilee whose words and deeds have shaped us to be the believers we are today.

¹¹⁸ A lot more could be said here, especially how Jesus took over the role and functions of the Temple and put them on himself. Further study could be placed on how the church which emerged after the ascension saw itself as the true Temple of God.

¹¹⁹ This is exactly the same point the Apostle Paul made when he said that justification comes through faith and not through the 'works of Torah.'