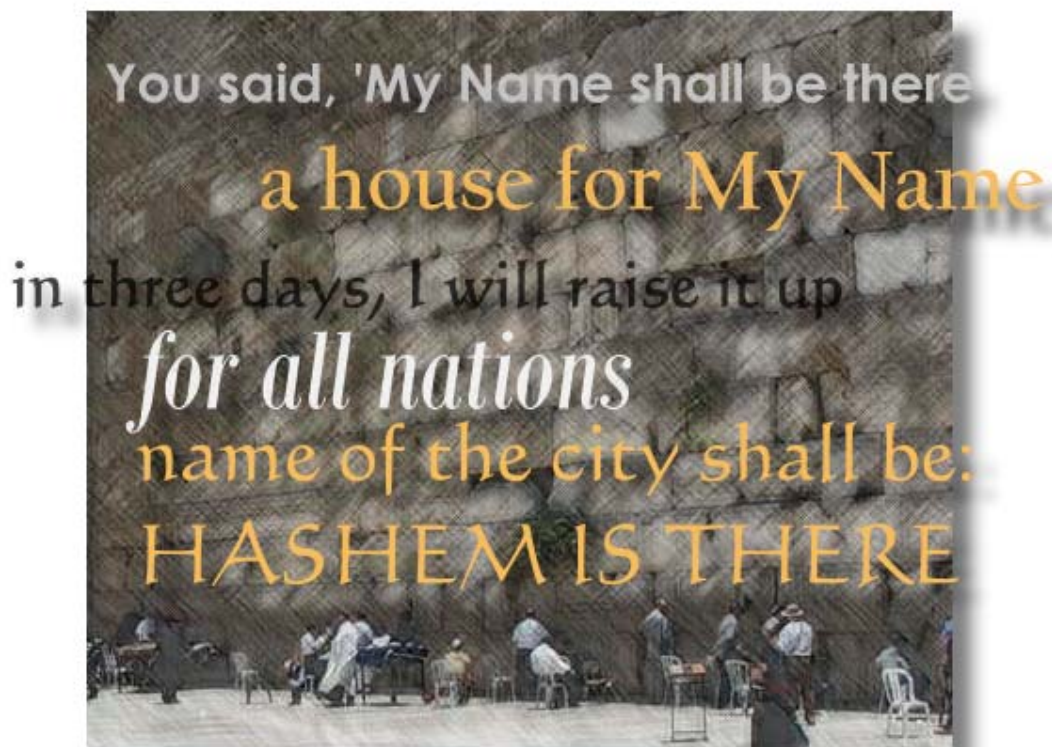


# Mattityahu Levi

## Matthew's Account

### Part Three



Sh'ma! Chazak! Bible Studies

Mattityahu Levi  
Matthew's Account  
Part Three

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# Mattityahu Levi

## Matthew's Account

### Part Three

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## Table of Contents

Dedication.....	4
Study Overview.....	5
What We Previously Learned.....	8
Lesson One – Chapter Twenty.....	11
Lesson Two – Chapter Twenty-one.....	19
Lesson Three – Chapter Twenty-two.....	25
Lesson Four – Chapter Twenty-three.....	29
Lesson Five – Chapter Twenty-four.....	35
Lesson Six – Chapter Twenty-five.....	41
Lesson Seven – Chapter Twenty-six.....	45
Lesson Eight – Chapter Twenty-seven.....	49
Lesson Nine – Chapter Twenty-eight.....	55
Appendix – Prophecies Fulfilled in Yeshua.....	61
Appendix – Miracles of Yeshua.....	63
Glossary and Pronunciation Guide.....	65
Bibliography and Reading List.....	67

## Dedication

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To my wise, virtuous, and beautiful wife, Janet.  
You have taught me much about Torah by your gentleness and patience.  
You reflect the Master's grace and love.  
May we ever have shalom.

*Rick*  
*July 2004*

## Study Overview

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Beloved, we are continuing our study of the book of Matthew together. Remember that our goal is to see it through the writer's eyes. We are continuing to try to recapture the historical context; the language; and the theology of the time when Mattityahu Levi wrote the book of Matthew.

### ***Contextual and Analytical Format***

We will continue studying a chapter of the book of Matthew in each lesson. If you did not do *Mattityahu Part One*, or *Part Two* you need to know that most lessons will have a historical context section to set the stage for our study. The historical context will use archeological data, historical documents, and extra-Biblical texts to help us establish the frame for each lesson.

After setting the context, we will then dig into the text and examine it, examine it, and then reexamine it. We will look at original languages and many cross-references. We will try to analyze the book of Matthew and establish its purpose, and discover why it truly does belong at the head of the Apostolic Scriptures. Don't be afraid or intimidated by any of this – we are all learning together. None of His first *talmidim* [disciples] were scholars – but He taught them unsearchable truths – and so it has been with all of His disciples. The requisite is simply to follow Him.

We will not use archeological data, or other extra-Biblical sources to establish authority – that can only come through Scripture. Rather, we will simply use them help us to gain context for what we are reading. As well, the use of an extra-Biblical text **will not be an endorsement** of these texts, because many historical sources do not have the same view of Scripture that we do.

Likewise, we will never diminish the simplicity of the text. We know that God is not the author of confusion; but rather, He speaks and His people hear His voice – in whatever language they need.

## **Word and Language Conventions**

We will strive toward making Biblical things more clear, but also to be more correctly understood. Because of that, we will use certain word and language conventions. Sometimes a word will be used in this study that is unfamiliar to the average reader, in which case it will be explained or footnoted. A glossary is also included at the back of the workbook.

Sometimes a word that has lost its meaning or original idea in English will be systematically replaced in this study with a different word. This is not meant to confuse, but rather to bring renewed emphasis on original meaning. Following are some common words and names, how they will be represented in this study, and the reasoning behind this usage.

- ⌘ **Name of God:** The use of circumlocution (using a substitute for God's holy Name) is encouraged. We will use the generalized word "God" in place of His most holy Name, this is similar to using "LORD, "ADONAI", or "HaShem" in place of the Tetragrammaton (four letter Name of God).
- ⌘ **Name of Yeshua:** We will use the Hebrew Name "Yeshua." The Etymology of this Name in English is convoluted – making excursions from Greek to Latin and even to German – in addition, for some the English name reminds of the horrific persecution that was wickedly done "in the name of 'Yeshua's" to those of Jewish descent And of course, we know His first disciples called Him by His Hebrew Name "Yeshua."
- ⌘ **Law, Pentateuch:** We will use the Hebrew word "Torah." As well, the word "Torah" can apply to any portion of Scripture, but it will normally focus upon the first five books of the Bible. Although many believers can read the word "Law" and reflect upon the beauty spoken of God's Law in the Psalms; a significant portion of believers of the past fifty years have been taught profound bias against God's Law. Hence, the use of the word "Torah" although not removed of some bias itself, helps to minimize those preconceptions. The word "Torah" is the word used over 200 times in the Hebrew Scriptures and is incorrectly translated "Law" in modern English usage. It is more correctly seen as "Instruction" – coming from the root verb *yarah* which is closer to "shoot", "direct", "point out", or "aim."
- ⌘ **Disciples:** We will use word "*talmidim*." For most believers, this has fairly positive implications – but we are not very good at personalizing this in our thinking and actions. The "Twelve Disciples" often replaces this in our minds. For this reason, the words "*talmidim*" [disciples, plural] and "*talmid*" [disciple, singular] will be used.
- ⌘ **Christ, Messiah:** We will use the English transliteration "Messiah." The Greek language takes the Hebrew word "*mashiach*" [messiah] and translates it into the Greek word "*christos*." English, then borrows and transliterates both the Hebrew and the Greek. Hence, there are two options that translators have in rendering "Anointed One" – the Greek word "*Christos*" and the Hebrew word "*Mashiach*." Although "Christ" is the more common English word, it is often treated by believers as a type of surname of Yeshua, rather than the significant title that it is. It is a title that should always draw us back to the Promise of a Redeemer, Priest, and King given to the Ancients. Using "Messiah" aids in that reminder.

- ⌘ **Old Testament, Hebrew Scriptures:** We will use the acronym “TaNaKh” (Torah, Nevi'im, K'tuvim = Torah, Prophets, Writings), The implication in “old” is that it is something that has been done away with – which the “New Testament” says has not been done. This was the Scripture of First Century believers as well.
- ⌘ **New Testament, Greek Scriptures:** We will use the term “Apostolic Scriptures”. Clearly, it is not “new” nor is it a “testament”. God spoke through His Holy Spirit and men were moved to write. By using terms like “New” and “Old Testament”, we may begin to place more validity on the “new” – which is contrary to the very teaching found in the “New Testament”.

My prayer for you and I as we begin this study is that we will hear our Master speak, and upon hearing Him, we will obey. He is calling us beloved, let's go up the mountain and sit at His feet as His *talmidim* – and let us hear as He opens His mouth and teaches us... again.

Many nations shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.'  
For out of Zion the Torah shall go forth, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

*Micah 4:2*

## What We Previously Learned

Whether you are just beginning this study now, or have completed Part One or Part Two, it is important for us to go over what we learned in Part One. The “Gospel” accounts are so detailed and so full of information we can sometimes be overwhelmed with the details – and miss the big picture. The big picture in Matthew can be summed up with the “Gospel message” (Kingdom message). It is repeated throughout the book, and it is the frame into which everything else must be placed. The “Gospel” message is this:

*“Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”*

We have seen that one phrase, beginning with John the Baptizer – then with Yeshua – then with the disciples sent out, carried with it a powerful message (paraphrased):

*“Return to God’s ways, because the King is here.”*

We saw that this consistent message was not always heeded – and that the mission of John, Yeshua, and His disciples was not always evident to those around them. We saw that the Kingdom message was first only given to Israel.

### **Chapter One**

We saw the genealogy of Yeshua, and His birth. The focus was His miraculous birth as the Promised One – the Messiah. We saw that as the “Son of David”, He was to be known as King Messiah. We saw that as “Immanuel” [“God with us”], Yeshua’s reign as King Messiah was to be seen as a return of the Throne of Israel (and the world) to God.

### **Chapter Two**

We saw the continued presentation of Yeshua as “Prophet, Priest, and King”. Allusions to Moses, King David, and the Tabernacle priests were clearly seen.

### **Chapter Three**

We saw the “baptism” of Yeshua. We saw that *t’vilah* [immersion] was not something new, but something very much a part of their lives in the First Century. We saw that *t’vilah* [immersion] represents a “change in status”. Our introduction to it showed a direct connection to repentance, and the Kingdom message.

### **Chapter Four**

The temptation of Yeshua was seen as an attack upon the Person of God – and repeated offers of shortcuts to the mission of Messiah. Yeshua answered each temptation with quotes from Torah. Each time, using the phrase, “it is written”.

### **Chapter Five**

We saw that Yeshua began His ministry by choosing *talmidim* [disciples] – and then as every good master does, He taught them about Torah. This “sermon on the mount” was focused not on how one “gets into” the Kingdom of God – but upon how Kingdom people look, and how they



live. Yeshua made it clear to His *talmidim* [disciples] that He was not abolishing the Torah and the Prophets – but rather making them stand by His teaching. We saw that Yeshua took common sayings of others – and compared and contrasted them to what Torah truly said and meant. We saw that the correct view of Torah was as not a list of rules and regulations – but instructions regarding relationships: relationships with God, and with each other.

### **Chapter Six**

We saw that in Yeshua's continuation of the “sermon on the mount”, He focused upon the externals of religion. His focus was to show that Kingdom people were not only to be visibly righteous in their lives, but that such living came from hearts that had been turned back to God – and were seeking His Kingdom.

### **Chapter Seven**

We saw that fruit is an important element for Kingdom people. We saw first that we were not to judge without using God's judgment and mercy – and that to turn a blind eye to our neighbor's sin was not love at all. We also saw that it is by actions (fruit) that the true character of a person is revealed. We were told that the Kingdom was made up of the wise – the ones who hear Yeshua's words and do them. We saw that Yeshua did not make “new law” – but that He reminded His *talmidim* to obey God's Torah.

### **Chapter Eight**

In the miracles of chapter eight and nine, we saw that they were not simply signs and wonders, but specifically chosen for what they meant. We saw the repeated picture of Yeshua reaching into the world of people who were *tamei* [unclean] by God's standards – and because of that separated from the public fellowship with God at the Temple. We saw this as a powerful image of His overall mission – to take that which was separated from God and others, bringing it not only into relationship, but into nearness to God Himself.

### **Chapter Nine**

We saw Yeshua healing and forgiving sin. This action was seen as a claim to Deity, and so it became a division between Yeshua and some of the religious leaders of the day. We saw that Yeshua had not chosen the wise and learned men to be His *talmidim* [disciples], not the scholars – and He did not make them scholars. Because they had been with Him, they would be shown to be the wisest of men.

### **Chapter Ten**

Yeshua intended His *talmidim* [disciples] to be imitators of Him. To speak what He spoke. To act like He acted. To pray like He prayed. He expected them to preach His Kingdom message the same as He did. We saw that He sent them out to do just that – but only to the people of Israel. He sent them in groups of two to act as witnesses either to the acceptance, or rejection of Yeshua's Kingdom message. To either turn to God's ways and see the Kingdom – or to reject God's rule in their lives. The choice was offered – the *talmidim* were sent to be witnesses of their decisions.

### **Chapter Eleven**

We were reminded that John the Baptizer was forerunner of Yeshua. We saw that He came in the mold of Elijah, who was promised to return before Messiah, and to turn the people back to the Torah of God. We were reminded of the Kingdom message (“Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!”) and how it fit with the prophecies of the return of Elijah from Malachi. We saw that Yeshua's said His way was easy and His burden light.

### **Chapter Twelve**

Yeshua challenged the religious authorities of His day with the difference between tradition and God's commands. We learned that some of the religious authorities were more concerned with their own influence and power than they were about God's Word. Sabbath was an issue that had been perverted in many ways from what God intended. Yeshua set the Sabbath back where it belongs. We saw that Yeshua continued to conceal His identity as Messiah.

### **Chapter Thirteen**

This is the chapter of the Kingdom parables. We saw that parables are simply stories to illustrate a single point in order to cause the hearer to make a decision. The Kingdom parables taught us that the Kingdom of God was a relationship with the King.

### **Chapter Fourteen**

The miracle of the "Feeding of the 5,000" carried important symbolism in the use of the numbers, five barley loaves, 2 fish, 12 baskets remaining. We saw the "walking on water" miracle as a direct revelation of the Deity of Yeshua. The bottom of the sea was seen as the realm of demons – Yeshua walked over this, showing His uncontested authority. The *talmidim* worship Him after this.

### **Chapter Fifteen**

We saw Yeshua once again challenging some of the religious authorities on their traditions. Yeshua did not negate, or abolish Torah – He reestablished it as the only standard, which supersedes man's traditions and doctrines. Like the miracle of the "Feeding of the 5,000" – the miracle of the "Feeding of the 4,000" carries with it great symbolism. Between the two we can see Yeshua's ministry first coming to the 12 Tribes of Israel, and then expanding out to the nations. We saw a hint of this as well in the healing of the Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter.

### **Chapter Sixteen**

We saw the confession of Peter that Yeshua was the Messiah. We saw that Yeshua confirms this and yet still tells His *talmidim* to tell no one else.

### **Chapter Seventeen**

As a confirmation to what Peter had proclaimed regarding Yeshua's Messiahship, God gives the witness of Moses and Elijah in the "Mount of Transfiguration" experience. Then God spoke and the three *talmidim* who were there heard the Voice of God declaring Who Yeshua is.

### **Chapter Eighteen**

Yeshua outlined how we are to deal with brothers who wrong us. He gave provisions for legal action – within the assembly of believers only – and then He showed how forgiveness is a requirement in order to receive forgiveness.

### **Chapter Nineteen**

The challenge of siding with either *Bet Shammai*, or *Bet Hillel* on the issue of divorce was met head-on by Yeshua – *Bet Yeshua* would take a complete different tack – as God and Torah always taught – no divorce. We saw that the "Rich Young Ruler" knew he was lacking something in his life. He had "kept the commandments" – and yet had not sought a relationship with the One who spoke those commandments. Yeshua gave him the key to life: obey and follow Him.

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## Lesson One – Chapter Twenty

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### As You Begin

- ⌘ Beloved, as we begin this third part to our study of Matthew, spend some time speaking and listening to God in prayer. We have seen so much, and experienced so much that might be foreign to our understanding, we do not want to miss the point of it all. Tell your Heavenly Father, your *Abba* how much you want to receive what He wants to reveal in this book. Then choose to listen and obey.
- ⌘ Read chapter twenty.
- ⌘ Add any miracles in chapter twenty to the chart in the Appendix titled, “Miracles of Yeshua.” You can transfer those pages from your previous Matthew workbook, or you can simply start over.
- ⌘ Find any references in chapter twenty to the word “Kingdom”. Mark them in your Bible with a blue pencil.

### Historical Context

#### ***The Sh’losh Regalim – Three Pilgrimages***

Deuteronomy 16 tells us that every male should go up to the Tabernacle/Temple in three *regalim* [pilgrimages] each year. It is significant that we see Yeshua in the Temple during these *regalim*. The three pilgrimages are a part of the *Moedim* [Appointments] detailed in Leviticus 23, and which speak prophetically of the ministry and work of Messiah. The three pilgrimage festivals each year are *Pesach* [Passover, also known as Unleavened Bread], *Shavuot* [Weeks, Pentecost], and *Sukkot* [Tabernacles].

Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. Every man *shall give* as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you.<sup>1</sup>

So it is no surprise that in Matthew 20:17-19, Yeshua sets His face toward Jerusalem as Passover approaches. This is likely His twentieth Passover in Jerusalem. He is faithful to the teaching of Torah – and He truly has an appointment for our eternal destiny on this pilgrimage.

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<sup>1</sup> *The New King James Version*, Dt 16:16-17. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996, c1982.

## Analyzing Chapter Twenty

### **Parable of “The Vineyard Workers”**

Remember from our study of parables in Matthew Part Two that Yeshua's parables are always to be understood as simple “stories” in order to point to a singular point which in turn demands a decision. Great confusion and error has come from allegorical interpretation of the parable of the vineyard workers found in Matthew 20:1-16.

Remember as well that Yeshua's point in His parables is usually a simple one – even though the point was often missed by the hearers. So it is with the parable of the vineyard workers, as we will see. Before digging into this parable, let's review some particulars of Hebraic parables.

The purpose for the Hebraic parable as a teaching tool was not exactly the same as the “sermon illustration” that many are familiar with today – although similar. The parable [*mashal*] was used by rabbis and teachers to explain a point in a short and succinct way. This gave a teacher's *talmidim* [disciples] an easier way to memorize and pass a complex teaching on to subsequent generations of students.

A *mashal* [parable] was often paired with another *mashal* to make the point more clear. Here is an important distinction in the Hebraic *mashal* – it was not used as an allegory for something, where every detail of the story could be construed to have a hidden meaning; constructing an “alternate reality”. There was usually one or two points to make in the story – and that is all.

By pairing a *mashal* with another, it made it easier to get the common point. This one thing to remember regarding Yeshua's use of parables is very important. Although it is true that every word of Scripture has meaning, to use Yeshua's parables to teach hidden allegories is a destructive misunderstanding of Hebraic parables.

Although we often see in the Gospel accounts, the disciples scratching their heads about the meaning of a parable, that is not to mean that the meanings of Yeshua's parables are complex. They are not. Remember, parables were used to teach complex things in simple language. Instead, the problem was that Yeshua's parables had messages that were too simple and more importantly, too challenging. Hence, the average hearer then (or reader now) wanted to hear something more “deep”.

Beloved, Yeshua's Kingdom message was a message that required a **decision**. His parables, likewise, required a **decision** – because of that, the unrepentant hearer was deaf to their message. The same is true today for those who look beyond the sharp and concise teaching in His parables.

The rabbinic introduction to a parable usually began with the phrase, “to what can this be compared? It can be compared to ...” We see a “similitude” nature (e.g. “this is like this”) in Hebraic parables. This is the way we should view a parable. He often used two parables (called “couplets”) so that the relationships are more obvious, and the main point more clear.

To summarize this approach to reading and correctly interpreting Hebraic parables:

- ⌘ The parable is a description of a reality using **word pictures**.
- ⌘ There are often **multiple points of relationship** between the word pictures and the reality. These act like feathers on an arrow – directing it to make **a single point**.
- ⌘ The word pictures and the reality are **not the same thing**.
- ⌘ Once the “arrow” of the parable arrives at the target, making a single point – it requires a response, **a decision**, from the hearer.

Now let's look at the details regarding the “Parable of the Vineyard Workers” found in Matthew 20:1-16.

Sadly, many people begin their analysis of this parable in verse one of chapter twenty. Sadly, because the chapter breaks are not inspired, they are man-made. To discover an important context for Yeshua's telling of this parable we need to go back and read Matthew 19:30. Write the verse out in the space that follows:

Now read Matthew 20:16. Sandwiched between these two similar statements, we find the single parable of the vineyard workers. Since there is no second “paired” parable to help us discover the points of comparison, it is very important to keep the context of “first shall be last, and last shall be first” in mind while reading this parable. Yeshua uses the “vineyard” setting for many of His parabolic teachings. It is very important to keep in mind the language of the vineyard. The definition is found in the TaNaKh. Specifically in Isaiah 5. In Isaiah 5:7 we are given the key to all of the “vineyard” parables: “For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts *is* the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant plant...”

Fill out the chart that follows.

<b>Parable of the Vineyard Workers</b>		
<b>Reference</b>	<b>Points of comparison</b>	<b>Singular point</b>
Matt 20:1-16	<p><b>The Landowner =</b></p> <p><b>Full-day laborers =</b></p> <p><b>Late-in-the-day laborers =</b></p> <p><b>The wages =</b></p>	

## ***Called and Chosen***

Beloved, there are whole “theologies” built upon varying views of what Yeshua’s meant in the last part of verse 16, where He said, “For many are called, but few chosen.” Remember, this is part of His main point in telling the parable of the vineyard workers. Reading Scripture in the Hebraic way that it was written does not point to “theologies” but living in obedience. So how are we to treat this phrase – what should our reaction be to it?

The Greek word for “called” is the adjective *kletos* (pronounced ***klay-tos***). It comes from the root word which means to literally “call” or to “speak”. The Hebrew word that this correlates to is the word *mikra* (pronounced: ***mee-kraw***), which in turn comes from the root which means to “call” or “summon”. In the Hebrew Scriptures, this word is used most often to refer to the assembling of a group in order to hear instructions etc. Comment on the use of the word *kletos* [called] in the passages that follow. Matthew 20:16 is the first usage in the Apostolic Scriptures, and for reading clarity you can add the word “the” in front of most of the instances found in Scripture.

Matthew 22:14 (read the context of this in verses 1-14, but do not spend too much time on it, as we will be looking at this passage later):

Romans 1:1:

Romans 1:6-7:

Romans 8:28:

1Corinthians 1:24:

Revelation 17:14 (note: this passage also contains our other word “chosen” [*eklektos*):

Before we go any further, understand that being “called” is often contrasted with “chosen” as we saw in Matthew 20:16 and 22:14. Since it assumed from these two instances that “chosen” is

better, it makes being “called” seem like the lesser. From the other passages you read, does this word indicate something “less desirable”?

Now the second word that sends people into “theology mode” is the word “chosen”. In Matthew 20:16 that word is the adjective *eklektos* (pronounced *ek-lek-tos*). It comes from two other words, *ek* [“out”, or “from”] and *lego* [“call” or “command”]. Wait, there is that sense of being “spoken to” just as in the word we looked at for being “called”. What are we to make of these two words being used apparently in a contrasting way? This is the stuff of “theological” debate, and is best left there. Let’s try and make this exercise practical – remember, Yeshua was teaching in order for the hearers (including you and me) to make a decision – not so that they could get their “theology” right. It is not that there isn’t a right and wrong theology – it is simply best to always treat such teachings as personal, and practical.

The Hebrew equivalent for the word *eklektos* [chosen] is *mibchar* (pronounced: *meeb-khawr*). It means, “choice” or “best”. It comes from a root verb which simply means “selected”.

Comment on the following passages where the word *eklektos* [chosen] is used. Note that once again, the first usage of this word in the Apostolic Scriptures is found in Matthew 20:16.

Matthew 22:14:

Matthew 24:22 (KJV = “elect”):

Matthew 24:24 (KJV = “elect”):

Matthew 24:31 (KJV = “elect”):

Romans 8:33-34 (KJV = “elect”):

1Peter 1:2 (KJV = “elect”):

1Peter 2:9-10:

Now, it is decision time. 1Peter 2:9-10 may be giving us the clearest picture of what Yeshua was focusing on in using the two words “called” and “chosen” – because in this verse, the adjective “chosen” is used along with the root for the adjective “called” is used – the verb “called”. Read 1Peter 2:9-10 and answer the following questions:

Considering “cause and effect” (i.e. what action comes first, having what effect), which comes first: “proclaim the praises of Him” or the “Him Who has called out of darkness into His marvelous light”?

What then is the result (i.e. the effect) of this first action?

Would you agree that being “called out of darkness into His marvelous light” is described by the process outlined in verse 10 (namely, “were not a people, but now are a people...”)?

Beloved, can you see that descriptive phrase “chosen generation, royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people” is a description of those who have:

- Been called by God, out of darkness into His light.
- In order that they might proclaim His praises.

As you can see, there are some actions that God has taken, and some subsequent effective actions that we take. In other words, “what is God’s responsibility, and what is ours?” Read 1Peter 2:11-12 and list (for a start) some things that are seen as “proclaiming the praise of Him”.



Summarize what you have learned about being “called” and being “chosen”. Focus upon what your responsibility is in being “called” and “chosen”.

How does Matthew 20:20-28 relate to the message of Matthew 19:30 – 20:16?

### ***Tell Us Plainly!***

Matthew 20:17-19 tells us that Yeshua plainly outlined the events of the coming week to His twelve *talmidim* [disciples]. Try to put yourself in the sandals of those *talmidim*. Not knowing what we know follows this passage, comment on how Yeshua's statement in these verses must have sounded to men who now knew clearly that He was King Messiah, and at least in some way Divine (they may not have completely understood this yet).

### **As You Finish**

- x Beloved, these words of Yeshua are troubling at times. “Called” or “Chosen”? His parables in these last chapters are also quite difficult. There is a reason why we often gloss over these chapters. It is because as Yeshua begins to close His earthly time of ministry, He is drawing us ever closer to the point of decision. And the ongoing points of decision.

Remember, the responsibility we bear as followers – it is to truly discover what our Master wants and to give to Him without hesitation. What has God spoken to you this week regarding your lifestyle, and the parable of the Vineyard Workers?



## Lesson Two – Chapter Twenty-one

### As You Begin

- x Beloved, we read in John 4:23 that God is seeking for true worshipers. “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.” As you begin this lesson, go to your *Abba* in prayer and confess to Him that you do not know Him except by His revelation of Himself to you. Ask Him to reveal Himself to you this week. Tell Him you want to see the King.
- x Read chapter twenty-one.
- x Read chapter twenty-one again and look for any occurrences of a phrase that indicates something was a fulfillment to prophecy. Mark them in your Bible with a green colored pencil – and then add it to the chart in the Appendix titled, “Prophecies Fulfilled in Yeshua.”
- x Find any references in chapter twenty-one to the word “Kingdom”. Mark them in your Bible with a blue pencil.
- x Add any miracles in chapter twenty-one to the chart in the Appendix titled, “Miracles of Yeshua.”

### Historical Context

#### ***Riding on a Donkey***

We imagine that a King should always enter His Kingdom on the back of a grand stallion. This is imagery that is certainly found in Scripture, but in Matthew 21, we see Yeshua riding into Jerusalem on the back of a lowly donkey. The donkey was a common mode of transportation in First Century Israel. There is nothing that stands out in seeing a man riding a donkey. Unless that man was rumored to be the Messiah. The picture of the king, riding upon a donkey as he enters Jerusalem was the picture not of a conqueror, but a King coming into His Kingdom. Zechariah 9:9 was seen in the earliest times as referring to Messiah.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.<sup>1</sup>

Yeshua had plainly told His *talmidim* that He was Messiah – but He had cautioned them to not tell anyone. It appears that now within four days of His betrayal and crucifixion, He is openly drawing the picture for the multitudes – an open declaration that He was Messiah. Yes, Jerusalem, and Zion should rejoice at the sight of the King entering His city, and many did.

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<sup>1</sup> *The New King James Version*, Zech 9:9. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996, c1982.

## Analyzing Chapter Twenty-one

### ***Hallel – Enter the King***

Matthew 21:1-12 is usually titled, “The Triumphal Entry”, and describes Yeshua's entrance into Jerusalem at the beginning of the week of Passover. It is impossible to overestimate the Messianic implications of these verses. Usually this account is weighed opposite the crucifixion in the modern interpretation of this passage. It is usually cast as an irony – the “acceptance” of Kingship of Yeshua in Matthew 21 against the rejection of Yeshua's Kingship in Matthew 27. This view may cloud the significance of Matthew 21:1-12. This passage has several prophetic implications. Let's look deeper into this.

Matthew 21:5 quotes a passage from Zechariah. The book of Zechariah is a book that is full of prophecies regarding the reign of King Messiah. If we were reading the book of Matthew without any knowledge of the later events in Matthew 27 (the crucifixion etc.) we might see Yeshua entering Jerusalem riding the foal of a donkey in an entirely different way. That would be good. Read Zechariah 9:9-17 and answer the following questions.

When the “daughter of Zion” and the “daughter of Jerusalem” saw their King riding on the foal of a donkey – they were to rejoice. Why?

In verse 10, what will be the state of Land, and the whole earth as a result of the coming of Israel's King?

In verses 11 and 12, what was it that Israel could expect, and why?

Do verses 13-17 sound like a “spiritual” deliverance or a “physical” one?

Beloved, if you had been there, like His *talmidim*, what would you have thought was about to occur? As you answer, keep in mind that God's promises are sure, and will come to pass – your understanding of this today, should be no less sure than what the *talmidim* must have considered.

What does “Hosanna” mean? This is a transliteration of the Hebrew phrase “*hoshiah na*” from Psalms 118:25, which means, “save now”. *Hoshiah* shares the same root as Yeshua's own name, *Yeshua*. In Matthew 21:9, the multitude was singing this. This is part of the “*Hallel*” a traditional passage during the Passover. Traditionally, Psalms 113 through 118 are sung during this time. Read Psalms 118:19-29 and comment on how it relates to what you saw in Zechariah 9.

In Matthew 21:9 the multitudes called Yeshua the “Son of David”. We have seen that phrase used repeatedly in Matthew. We most recently saw it in 20:30-31 where the two blind men asked for sight. What were the people calling Him when they called Him “Son of David”?

How does being “Son of David” relate to what they called Him in 21:11?

In Matthew 20:14-15, why were the “chief priests” etc. upset? What did they think “Son of David” meant?

Yeshua answered their objections with a quote from Psalms 8. Read Matthew 21:16 and then read Psalms 8:1-6. Comment what you think Yeshua was alluding to (using *remez*<sup>2</sup>) in His answer.

### ***Cleansing the “House of Prayer” – For All Peoples***

In Matthew 21:12-13, we read about the familiar “cleansing of the Temple” by Yeshua. Often, in our anachronistic way of transmitting our current situation into this reading we can misapply what is being taught here. It is important to understand that the Tabernacle/Temple of ancient Israel has no modern equivalent. So when Yeshua called it a “house of prayer” we should not permit that reference to apply to our modern “church buildings” – because if we do, we will miss what is being said here. Yeshua was quoting Isaiah 56:7. We read this passage when studied

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<sup>2</sup> *Remez* is the ancient interpretative method that uses recognizable words or phrases from a Scripture passage to expand a teaching.

Matthew 19. This passage in Isaiah is prophetic about a yet future time. Read Isaiah 56:1-8 and answer the following questions.

Who is blessed in verse 2, and why?

How are the “son of a foreigner who has joined himself the LORD” and the “eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths” to be blessed in verses 3-5?

In verse 7, there is a promise to make “them” joyful in God’s “House of Prayer” – describe “them” from verse 6.

In verse 8 when Yeshua said, “My House shall be a house of prayer for all nations [peoples]” the word for “nations” or “peoples” is the plural word “*amim*”. If you are of a genetic heritage that is Gentile, these words have special significance for you. Beloved, when Yeshua quoted from this passage, He was again alluding to the promise made to Abram – that the families of the earth would be blessed in his Seed. Read Ephesians 2:11-22 and rewrite it as a prayer of thanksgiving for what He has done – in attaching us to Him – and in tearing down that man-made wall that kept us out of fellowship with Him in His House. I’ll start it for you:

*Abba Father, I thank You for your work on my behalf. I was once considered a “Gentile” and as such I was separated from the promises you made to Abraham and Israel. I had no hope, and was I was without You... but now...*

### ***Vineyard Pictures***

If you are reading about vineyards, it is important to remember the key to “vineyard” language is found in Isaiah 5:7 where we are given the key to all of the “vineyard” parables: “For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts *is* the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant plant...”

Fill out the chart that follows which refers to the parable of the “Vineyard and the Two Sons”.

<b>Parable of the Vineyard and Two Sons</b>		
<b>Reference</b>	<b>Points of comparison</b>	<b>Singular point</b>
Matt 21:28-31	<p><b>The Man with 2 sons =</b></p> <p><b>The Vineyard =</b></p> <p><b>The son who worked =</b></p> <p><b>The son who didn't work =</b></p>	

Fill out the chart that follows which refers to the parable of the “Landowner and the Wicked Vinedressers”.

<b>Parable of the Landowner and the Wicked Vinedressers</b>		
<b>Reference</b>	<b>Points of comparison</b>	<b>Singular point</b>
<p>Matt 21:33-40</p> <p>Xref: Isaiah 5:1-7</p>	<p><b>The Landowner =</b></p> <p><b>The Vineyard =</b></p> <p><b>The fruit =</b></p> <p><b>The wicked vinedressers =</b></p> <p><b>The Landowner's servants =</b></p> <p><b>The Landowner's Son =</b></p> <p><b>The new vinedressers =</b></p>	

## As You Finish

- ✘ Beloved, what kind of son or daughter are you? Are you like the first, who resists the command of the Father, but in the end obeys – or are you more like the second who agrees to obey, but never gets around to it? If you are like the first, that is good, but chose to be like an unnamed third son – one who answers “Yes, Lord” and then immediately obeys.
- ✘ Spend some time today praying for the people of Israel – the Vineyard of God. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem and ask God to give you the burden, and the tears of our Master as He wept over her. May her King return soon and in our day. Amen.



## Lesson Three – Chapter Twenty-two

### As You Begin

- x Have you ever had a dream where you were not prepared for something? Maybe you had the wrong clothes on for an important event – or worse yet, none at all. When you awoke, wasn't it a disconcerting thing? How awful to not be prepared for the Judgment Day! This is a week for meditating on how to be prepared.
- x Read chapter twenty-two.
- x Read chapter twenty-two again and look for any occurrences of a phrase that indicates something was a fulfillment to prophecy. Mark them in your Bible with a green colored pencil – and then add it to the chart in the Appendix titled, "Prophecies Fulfilled in Yeshua."
- x Find any references in chapter twenty-two to the word "Kingdom". Mark them in your Bible with a blue pencil.

### Historical Context

#### ***Examine the Lamb***

We are told in Exodus 12 that on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the first month (*Aviv, Nisan*) that the people were to chose a lamb without blemish. The lamb was to be slain on the 14<sup>th</sup> of the month as the "Passover" lamb. Why keep it for 4 days? To make sure it did not have any flaws or blemishes. It was the duty of the authorities to examine the teachings and life of a man. What some in the First Century did not know is that they were inspecting the ultimate "Passover Lamb". How sad that their questions many times were intended to trap Him rather than to serve the purpose of validating His spotlessness. But as Scripture records, Pilate declared Him spotless.

#### ***The Roman Tax and Inscription***

Matthew 22:22 contains the often quoted, "Give unto Caesar..." quote. Yeshua's sharp wit is evident even in the English. All the more so with the stage being set by the historical context.

We are told in 22:15-16, that it is the Pharisees and Herodians who are asking Yeshua about paying taxes. The combination of the Pharisees and the Herodians is most telling. With regard to purity and political ideology they were polar opposites. When asked about paying taxes to Caesar, Yeshua asks for them to produce a coin. Being in the Temple, no doubt it was the Herodians that produced the coin. Carrying a Roman coin into the Temple courtyard with its image upon it, would have been considered very improper by a Pharisee.



We are told there is an image of Caesar and an inscription on the coin, described as a “denarius”. The denarius of this time would have been one with the image of Tiberius on it. The inscription reveals the irony of Yeshua's answer to their challenge. The inscription said, “*Augustus Ti(berius) Caesar Divi Aug(usti) F(ilius)* [‘Augustus Tiberius, son of the Divine Augustus’]”.

Yeshua, the truly Divine and humble Son of the Almighty is contrasted to a mere man who claims divinity and seeks to idolize Himself.

Of course Yeshua's answer does not stop with the suggestion that things with Caesar's name and image on them should be given to him (with the implication of paying taxes), but continues that those things which are God's should be given to God. God's image is not carved or cast unto wood or metal – it is “drawn upon” man. Most specifically upon the One true King standing there before them that day: Yeshua.

## Analyzing Chapter Twenty-two

### ***Wedding Feast Parable***

At the end of chapter 22, Yeshua's authority was being questioned by the “chief priests and the elders”. Yeshua's answered their questions by telling them the parable of the “Landowner and the Wicked Vinedressers”. Then chapter 21 ends. Chapter 22 begins with another of Yeshua's “Kingdom parables”: the parable of the “Wedding Feast”. To get the context of this, read Matthew 21:23-22:14.

Fill out the chart that follows which refers to the parable of the “Wedding Feast”.

<b>Parable of the Wedding Feast</b>		
<b>Reference</b>	<b>Points of comparison</b>	<b>Singular point</b>
Matt 22:1-14	<p><b>The King =</b></p> <p><b>The King's Son =</b></p> <p><b>The feast =</b></p> <p><b>The servants/messengers =</b></p> <p><b>Those not willing to come =</b></p> <p><b>Those invited from the highways =</b></p> <p><b>The one not wearing wedding garments =</b></p> <p><b>Those dressed in wedding garments =</b></p>	

## ***The Greatest Commandment***

The Pharisees no doubt enjoyed Yeshua's answer to the Sadducees question regarding the resurrection of the dead (Matthew 22:23-33); so it was likely a “friendly” question that was intended to find common ground when one of them asked Him the question about the greatest of the commandments. We have seen before that Yeshua has much in common with the Pharisee's understanding of Scripture. Yeshua's answer to their question did not disappoint them. The answer He gave was consistent with how they had understood *Torah*. Read Matthew 22:34-40 and answer the following questions:

What was the “lawyer's” question?

What commandment did Yeshua respond with? What did He call this commandment?

What commandment did Yeshua mention next – what did He call this commandment?

In verse 40, how many commandments did Yeshua refer to, and what is the purpose/effect of these commandments?

Beloved, Yeshua did not simply “sum up” and then replace all of Torah with these two commandments. In fact, these commandments are from Torah. Most importantly, these two commandments are not simply a summation of all the others – Yeshua said that Torah and the Prophets “hang” upon these commandments. In other words, these two commandments support all the others. Let's look at these two commandments in Torah.

Deuteronomy 6:5 is called the “*Lahavra*” [“you shall love”] – and it is a part of the ancient prayer called the “*Sh'ma*” because the prayer begins in Deuteronomy 6:4, with “Hear O Israel...” [*Sh'ma Yisra'el...*]. This was, and is, one of the major tenants of Judaism. The significance of the commandment to “love the LORD your God” was understood long before Yeshua was tested that Passover week. Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and list some things that flow from loving God.

The “second commandment” that Yeshua referred to in Matthew 22:39 was to “love your neighbor as yourself.” This is from Leviticus 19:17-18. Read Leviticus 19:17-18 and list a few things that indicate love for your neighbor.

### ***Is Messiah God?***

We have seen so far in Matthew that Yeshua had not spoken very openly about His identity as Messiah. We see now in this final week some rather startling revelations. The account in Matthew 22:41-46 is about Yeshua revealing something about Messiah that was not at the forefront of many minds. He posed a question – and then with the riddle He made a rather startling revelation about Messiah (at least it would have been startling in their minds, had they understood Him).

Yeshua, by questioning the Pharisees, got them to plainly state that Messiah was to be the “Son of David”. Then He asked them a “riddle” – how then does David call Him (Messiah) “Lord”. In other words, He wanted them to explain how a Descendant of David would be Master over David. In a Semitic culture, this was unthinkable. Read and comment on Psalms 110:1-4. Specifically identify Who “The LORD” is and Who “my Lord” is if you can, based upon what Yeshua said in Matthew 22:44.

### **As You Finish**

- ✘ Beloved, have you rejected the commandments of God? Do you understand that just as the two “hanger commandments” (those on which all the others hang) include the verb “love” – all of God’s commandments are a test of love. Do you love Him?
- ✘ Read 1John 4:16-5:3 and meditate on God’s love for us, our love for Him, and for our brothers and sisters.

## Lesson Four – Chapter Twenty-three

### As You Begin

- ✘ James chapter three tells us about the destructive power of the tongue. Beloved, our disgust and disdain for some people is evident in our speech sometimes. Most of us at one time or another have thought about the Pharisees in a disdainful way. Especially regarding their hypocrisy. Or maybe we have even criticized others by calling them “Pharisees”. This lesson is not about pointing fingers. Only the perfect Lamb of God can speak in such a way of others because He was without spot, and His judgment is always right. Go to your Heavenly Father in prayer and ask Him to speak to you this week... as if the words of rebuke in this chapter were meant for you.
- ✘ Read chapter twenty-three.
- ✘ Find any references in chapter twenty-three to the word “Kingdom”. Mark them in your Bible with a blue pencil.

### Historical Context

#### **Moses Seat**

Then Yeshua spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, *that* observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.”<sup>1</sup>

Yeshua's words in Matthew 23:1-3 have been used by many for “church politics” – from the establishment of a so-called “Papal authority” to other cult-like leaderships. In fact, a careful reading reveals that Yeshua was doing the opposite here. He was taking away the discretionary “authority” not only of the scribes and Pharisees, but any others who seek to usurp the clear teaching of Scripture.

The key phrase of course is “Moses’ seat”. Numbers 12:1-8 tells us what was so “special” about Moses – not that he ruled with some authority, but that he was humble, and God spoke face to face with him. In other words, Moses’ words are God’s words. The “Law of Moses” is the Torah of God.

Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman. So they said, “Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?” And the LORD heard it. (Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.) Suddenly the LORD said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, “Come out, you three, to the tabernacle of meeting!”

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<sup>1</sup>The New King James Version, Mt 23:1. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996, c1982.

So the three came out. Then the LORD came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward. Then He said, “Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; he is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?”<sup>2</sup>

To “sit in Moses’ seat” is not to be able to create “law” out of whole cloth, but rather to teach the very words of Torah. This is why Yeshua exhorts His followers to do as the Pharisees do, and not as they say. The hypocrisy of some Pharisees is what is being addressed here. In the way that the Pharisees had correctly taught the Torah – they should be followed. *Shem Tov’s* Hebrew version of Matthew which is based upon ancient and possibly an independent manuscript tells this in a more clear way,

“The Pharisees and sages sit upon the seat of Moses. Therefore, all that **he** says to you, diligently do, but according to **their** reforms and **their** precedents do not do, because they talk but do not do.”<sup>3</sup> (*emphasis added*)

## Analyzing Chapter Twenty-three

### **Moses’ Seat**

Then Yeshua spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: ‘The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, *that* observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.’<sup>4</sup>

Did Yeshua just command His *talmidim* to obey all of the Pharisees’ traditions? The answer is “no”. Certainly, there were many good traditions in what the Pharisees did; but remember that the key to understanding this statement by Yeshua is the phrase, “Moses’ seat”. This is the seat of judgment, the seat of applying God’s instructions, His Torah. Instead of Pharisee tradition, Yeshua’s was telling His own *talmidim* that just because some of the so-called “righteous” Pharisees were hypocrites, did not mean that the Torah that they supposedly revered should also be despised. Instead, obedience to God did not depend upon how well others were doing it – it only depended upon the individual decision to obey.

Nothing has changed in our day. Men and women today use other’s so-called hypocrisy to disregard God’s way.

Read Matthew 15:1-6 again and comment on how it relates to Matthew 23:1-3:

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, Num 12:1-8

<sup>3</sup> *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, 1995 (Matt 23:2). Macon Georgia: Mercer University Press. Translation: Nehemiah Gordon

<sup>4</sup> *The New King James Version*. 1996, c1982 (Mt 23:1-4). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Yeshua went on in explaining what was wrong with some of the Pharisees in Matthew 23:4-5:

For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.<sup>5</sup>

This is no doubt what Peter was speaking of in Acts 15:10 where he described some of the Pharisees' traditions as, "a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear."<sup>6</sup>

### ***Eight Woes***

As we have previously seen, the Pharisees were theologically closest to Yeshua. The Pharisees at various time actually had tried to protect Yeshua from the Temple authorities. So it is for those closest that Yeshua's reserves His harshest words. To much is given, much is required, beloved. One thing we should keep in mind as we read these "woes" is that He was not addressing all Pharisees, or all Scribes. Write in the space below **exactly** who Yeshua was addressing (from Matthew 23:13)

#### **Woe #1 – 23:13**

What brought the first woe?

The Greek word for "shut up" is *kleio*. It is the same word used in Revelation 3:7. Comment on how Revelation 3:7-9 and Isaiah 22:22-25 relate to this verse.

#### **Woe #2 – 23:14**

What brought the second woe?

Comment on how Exodus 22:22-24 and James 1:27 relate to this verse.

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid* (Mt 23:4-6).

<sup>6</sup> In this case, the issue was the Pharisaic tradition that said one could not be considered a part of the community of believers without going through ritual conversion to Judaism which included, ceremonial circumcision and ritual immersion.

**Woe #3 – 23:15**

What brought the third woe?

Comment on how Hosea 6:6-7 relates to this verse.

**Woe #4 – 23:16**

What brought the fourth woe?

Comment on how James 5:12 and Deuteronomy 23:21-23 relate to this verse.

**Woe #5 – 23:23**

What brought the fifth woe?

Mint, anise, and cumin are wild plants. Because they are not cultivated, Torah does not require that they be tithed. The Pharisees were going “above and beyond” – which accounts for nothing compared to what God has specifically commanded. In verse 23, what are the “weightier matters of the Torah”?

How does Deuteronomy 27:19 relate to this verse?



**Woe# 6 – 23:25**

What brought the sixth woe?

How does Leviticus 6:1-4 relate to this verse?

**Woe #7 – 23:27-28**

What brought the seventh woe?

In verse 28 Yeshua said that they were full of lawlessness [*anomia* = or “Torah-lessness”]. How is that possible, if they were so “obedient” to Torah – what kind of “righteousness” did they have? Read Deuteronomy 6:23-24 and comment.

**Woe #8 – 23:29-30**

What brought the eighth woe?

Read and comment on Jeremiah 2:28-35. Things were much the same in some people's lives in the First Century – they thought that they were innocent, and yet blood was on their hands.

***Baruch Habá b'Shem ADONAI!***

“Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the LORD!” This is what the disciples had cried out as Yeshua had ridden into Jerusalem just days earlier. At the end of chapter 23, Yeshua made the statement that Jerusalem would see Him no more, until they say, “Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the LORD.” Read and comment on Hosea 5:15-6:2 might relate to Matthew 23:38-39.

**As You Finish**

- ⌘ Beloved, do you believe that there are consequences for our callousness and disobedience? Has God spoken to you this week about how some of these issues apply to you? We do not fear the “woes” of God that may be bound up in wrath, but our recognition of sin in our lives should still be met with immediate repentance.
- ⌘ Modern Rabbinic Judaism is the descendant of Pharisaic Judaism. In Yeshua's rebuke, He did not address all Pharisees, so let us use this opportunity to change our attitude about the Pharisees in general – and their descendants today. Spend some time today praying for our Jewish brothers and sisters – for their safety throughout the world. Pray that they will soon see Messiah, and that God will bring our King back soon to reign over all of us, in His holy city Jerusalem. Soon, and in our day. Amen.

## Lesson Five – Chapter Twenty-four

### As You Begin

- x What is seen as prophecy can cause some to become excited, and some to become fearful. Beloved, we do not want change – and prophecy is always about change. Yeshua's teaching in chapter twenty-four can be frightening if we consider ourselves the generation it was spoken to. This is an important issue because Scripture encourages us always to consider its message for us personally. This is not a passage for time past, or time future; it is for us in some measure. Go to *Abba* and ask Him to speak to you personally this week. If you are one of His *talmidim*, this was meant for you.
- x Read chapter twenty-four.
- x Find any references in chapter twenty-four to the word “Kingdom”. Mark them in your Bible with a blue pencil.

### Historical Context

#### ***Birth Pangs of Messiah***

Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”<sup>1</sup>

Yeshua had been teaching in the Temple. Luke chapter 21 records that He had been prophesying about the destruction of the Temple which would occur forty years from that date. Matthew 24:3 tells us that the *talmidim* came to Yeshua privately on the Mount of Olives later and wanted to get further insight into what He had said publicly. In this private discourse, which is commonly referred to as the “Olivet Discourse”, He gives a more personalized teaching about the times that were coming. The similarities to the Luke 21 account cause many to miss the differences. It appears that Matthew 24 is directed to the followers of Yeshua, whereas the Luke 21 passage was addressed more broadly. The Matthew 24 account was a specific answer to the two questions that the *talmidim* posed:

- When these things will be (destruction of the Temple in verse 2)?
- The sign of His coming, and the End of the Age?

Yeshua's answer in Matthew 24 focuses upon the last question.

The “Olivet Discourse” remind us that sages of Israel had long associated the time of the coming of Messiah with a time of trouble – thus described as the “birth pangs of Messiah”. Yeshua's use of the phrase, “the beginning of sorrows” in verse 8 conveys this.

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<sup>1</sup> *The New King James Version*, Mt 24:3. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996, c1982.

In the verses that follow, Yeshua seems to describe the history of the centuries that followed. An interesting juxtaposition of verse 12 and verse 20 have troubled many over the centuries when trying to read Yeshua's words literally.

And because lawlessness [*anomia* = Torah-lessness] will abound, the love of many will grow cold.<sup>2</sup>

And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.<sup>3</sup>

If “Lawlessness” (Torah-lessness) abounds, why should the followers of Yeshua worry about fleeing on the Sabbath? Could it be that in verse 12 Yeshua is prophesying of the historical abandonment of the Torah by the traditional “Christian church” – yet, Yeshua instructs His followers to pray that their flight from the Abomination of Desolation not occur on the Sabbath. Its implications are more evident when we read verse 14 – which lies between the “abounding Torah-lessness”, and an apparent return to Sabbath observance – a reminder of the Kingdom message: “Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand!”

And this gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.<sup>4</sup>

## Analyzing Chapter Twenty-four

### ***Days of Trouble, Day of the Lord***

Try and place yourself back in the First Century as Yeshua is speaking to *talmidim* on the Mount of Olives. He is speaking to you and the other *talmidim* privately. Earlier in the week, you had come with Him to Jerusalem for the Passover. The whole city was a buzz over Yeshua possibly being the Messiah. Now, He is telling you and the other *talmidim* about days of trouble ahead. He has spoken of His death before – but now He is talking about dark days ahead for you...

First, He warns of false “messiahs”. *But Master, we know you are the Messiah*, you think to yourself. Then He talks about wars and great tribulation. When He mentions the “Son of Man” coming, again you wonder, *what is He talking about – where is He going that He will need to come back?*

Of course in a matter of days, you will think that you are seeing the beginning of the end – fearing for your life. But as the years go by, you may begin to wonder, what it was that He had taught up there on the mountain. Surely, you would have seen your fellow *talmidim* suffer persecution and martyrdom, but still the great end – that great day when the sun would darken – did not come. That would be the sign of the return of Yeshua, as King Messiah to reign.

And then in 70 CE, you would have seen the armies of Rome surround Jerusalem and you would have remembered the Master's words – and taken your family and fled. But after more years, you would have wondered, *where was His coming – when was the sky darkened?*

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, Mt 24:12

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, Mt 24:20

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, Mt 24:14

Beloved, if you place yourself back in that time, you can better understand that after a hundred years or so, the believers in Yeshua would have begun to create complex and allegorical explanations regarding Yeshua's Olivet Discourse – because it just couldn't be literal in their minds. After all, 70 CE saw the destruction of the Holy Temple, just as Yeshua had predicted in Matthew 24. And later in 135 CE, all the remainder of Israel was forced from the Land of Israel into the nations. Still He had not come back.

Yeshua said that the time of the coming of the Son of Man would be like the days of Noah. Read Matthew 24:36-44 and then read Genesis 6:5-7:5 and then answer the following questions.

Did Noah know of the coming calamity of the flood? How?

Who else do you think knew?

For many years Noah built the Ark that God commanded Him to build. Does it appear that it had any effect on the lives of the people around him?

In the end, who was surprised, and why?

Yeshua said in Matthew 24:29, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light...”

Let's look deeper into this event. Fast forward about 54 days from the Olivet Discourse, to the time of *Shavuot* (the Feast of Pentecost). It would be then that Peter would stand up and declare with power that Yeshua was the living Messiah – and point to this day when “the sun gets dark”. Read and comment on Acts 2:1-24:

Peter quoted from Joel for this *Shavuot* sermon. Read and comment on the following passages and how they correspond to Matthew 24, regarding the “Day of the Lord”.

Joel 2:1-18:

Joel 2:28-3:3

Zechariah 14:1-21:

Do you think the “Day of the Lord” has already come? Use Scripture in your answer. Remember, avoid the temptation to “allegorize” Yeshua's words.

### ***The Kingdom Message to the Nations?***

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.<sup>5</sup>

We've had hints of it – but they were only hints. In fact, we saw in Matthew 10 that Yeshua told His *talmidim* to not go to Samaria or the other nations with the good news of the Kingdom. But now, in Matthew 24:14, Yeshua mentions the Gospel and the nations in the same breath. Earlier in Matthew, Yeshua made the point that there would be Gentiles sitting at the table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the World to Come – but this is the closest He has come to saying outright that the Kingdom message would be “good news” to the nations – that they too might participate in the commonwealth, the Kingdom of Messiah. This most certainly did not sink in right away to those who heard Him say it on the mountain. The full realization of this would come years later. For now, if you are *goy* [one from the nations], be glad that the Kingdom is something that *goyim* [nations] will be part of in some way... We'll come back to this in coming weeks.

This was a mystery to the *talmidim*, but it shouldn't have been. Read and comment on the following passages:

Isaiah 42:6 (the word “Gentiles” or “Nations” is the Hebrew word *goyim*):

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<sup>5</sup>*Ibid* (Mt 24:14)

Isaiah 49:6:

Note: We have saved the two parables in chapter twenty-four for our study next week.

### As You Finish

- ⌘ *Baruch b'Shem ADONAI!* [Blessed be the Name of the LORD!] The Kingdom message remains the same today, "Repent, the Kingdom of God is at hand!" The message to return to God and return to His ways. To walk as Yeshua walked... to live in faith, in obedience to our Master. When His message is proclaimed to all nations, then we can expect the return of the King, our Messiah!
  
- ⌘ Are you looking for the return of our King? Are you living like it?





## Lesson Six – Chapter Twenty-five

### As You Begin

- ✘ Many of us like a good riddle. Others want everything plain and simple. Yeshua's parables offer something for everyone. Ask your Heavenly Father to open your eyes this week as you study, that you will see these Kingdom parables in the simple way they were intended.
- ✘ Read chapter twenty-five.
- ✘ Find any references in chapter twenty-five to the word “Kingdom”. Mark them in your Bible with a blue pencil.

### Analyzing Chapter Twenty-five

#### ***The Parables of Messiah's Return***

In Matthew 24 and 25, there are four parables dealing with the return of Messiah. Additionally, there is another teaching at the end of Matthew 25 which uses parabolic language, although not truly a parable. In studying parables, remember that the incorrect use of parables is to create allegories. Remember, a parable is used to make a single point. Many “end-times” teachings are incorrectly supported by the misuse of these parables. These parables should be treated as a single teaching time – and should in some way reflect upon one another to provide balance.

Let's get started. Remember, do not stress over these, simply do your best to look for what Yeshua says a parable means – or how He may hint at how we see the various characters.

<b>Parable of the Thief in the Night</b>		
Reference	Points of comparison	Singular point
Matt 24:42-44	<p><b>The Master of the house =</b></p> <p><b>The Thief =</b></p> <p><b>The hour the Thief would come =</b></p>	

<b>Parable of the Faithful and Unfaithful Servants</b>		
<b>Reference</b>	<b>Points of comparison</b>	<b>Singular point</b>
Matt 24:45-51	<p><b>The Master of the house =</b></p> <p><b>The faithful and wise servant =</b></p> <p><b>The evil servant =</b></p> <p><b>Reward for the faithful servant =</b></p> <p><b>Reward for the Evil Servant =</b></p>	

<b>Parable of the Ten Virgins</b>		
<b>Reference</b>	<b>Points of comparison</b>	<b>Singular point</b>
Matt 25:1-13	<p><b>The Bridegroom =</b></p> <p><b>The wedding feast =</b></p> <p><b>Lamp oil =</b></p> <p><b>Five wise virgins =</b></p> <p><b>Five foolish virgins =</b></p>	

<b>Parable of the Talents</b>		
<b>Reference</b>	<b>Points of comparison</b>	<b>Singular point</b>
Matt 25:14-30	<p><b>The Master traveling =</b></p> <p><b>The talents =</b></p> <p><b>The servant with five talents =</b></p> <p><b>The servant with two talents =</b></p> <p><b>The servant with one talent =</b></p> <p><b>The reward =</b></p> <p><b>The punishment =</b></p>	

Matthew 25:31-46 deals with an additional picture which uses some of the same parabolic language: the “Sheep and Goats”. Read this passage and summarize what Yeshua is saying here. Try and relate it back to the four parables of Matthew 24 and 25.

### As You Finish

- ✘ Meditate on the things that you have studied this week.
- ✘ The reading and study was shorter this week because the subject matter can often be daunting to people. The parables even though simple and pointed still cause confusion in some. Go to the Lord in prayer and thank Him for His revelation.



## Lesson Seven – Chapter Twenty-six

### As You Begin

- ✧ I remember as a child how difficult it was to wait for good things. But it seems that when good things were happening, time moved too quickly – and when something good was yet to come at a future date, time moved far too slowly. Whether it was the anticipation of a birthday, or the beginning of Summer – the anticipation was almost too much to bear at times. Beloved, when we look at God's calendar we should be like children who cannot wait for the next event. We have appointments with the King. They are practice for eternity, and they speak of our King Messiah's redemptive work on our behalf. Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD – it is time for a Feast!
- ✧ Read chapter twenty-six.
- ✧ Read chapter twenty-six again and look for any occurrences of a phrase that indicates something was a fulfillment to prophecy. Mark them in your Bible with a green colored pencil – and then add it to the chart in the Appendix titled, "Prophecies Fulfilled in Yeshua."
- ✧ Find any references in chapter twenty-six to the word "Kingdom". Mark them in your Bible with a blue pencil.

### Historical Context

#### ***God's Appointed Times***

People are often pleasantly surprised to discover that the so-called "Last Supper" was in fact a Passover Seder<sup>1</sup>. Newcomers to this knowledge are fascinated with the imagery. Our understanding of the entire event that evening, and the events of the next day (the crucifixion) depend greatly upon the context of Passover.

The "Feasts of the LORD" are primarily found in Leviticus chapter 23. Leviticus 23 contains all eight of God's *Moed* (plural: *Moedim*), or "appointed times". Listed first is the weekly Sabbath [*shabbat*] because it serves as the foundation for the rest of these holy days. Found within each *Moed* are "Sabbaths" – so we find the building blocks of the *Moedim* to be the picture of the weekly Sabbath.

We have seen in Matthew the references to the various *Moedim*. In the Gospel of John we see that the entire setting of the book is around these "appointments". John includes *Hanukkah* in chapter 10, which is not listed in Leviticus 23. Isn't it interesting, that the very "Jewish" celebration of *Hanukkah* is not mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, but in the Apostolic Scriptures – and it is the Jewish Messiah, and our Master that is found going to the "Feast of the Dedication" [in Hebrew "*Hanukkah*"] in the winter.

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<sup>1</sup> Seder means "order" and refers to the traditional Jewish meal on the evening of Passover.

As we saw in lesson one, during the First Century while the Second Temple still stood, there was a significant emphasis upon what are called the *Chag Regalim* [pilgrimage feasts]. These were the three *Moedim* listed in Leviticus 23 where God not only told His people to observe a set time and date, but also a set place (“where He placed His Name”). The *Chag Regalim* had a set location for their celebration unlike the other *Moed* listed in Leviticus 23, and the location was where God had placed His Name – the Temple. These three *Moedim* were to be celebrated by all males in Jerusalem at the Temple, unless there were extenuating circumstances. This command is detailed in Deuteronomy 16:16-17, where it says:

“Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. Every man *shall give* as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you.<sup>1</sup>

The Gospels record Yeshua's compliance with this command. We also see Yeshua's *talmidim* kept the *Chag Regalim* [the three pilgrimage feasts] after the Resurrection, in addition to all the *Moedim*. Examples of this are found in Acts 2:1; Acts 20:16 (*Shavuot*, or “Weeks”, “Pentecost”); 1Corinthians 5:7 (*Pesach*, or “Passover”).

The *Chag Regalim* had a profound effect upon religious and social life in First Century Israel. They were the focal points of the calendar. So we see the timing of Yeshua's suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection around the time of “Unleavened Bread” (also known as “Passover”) carries great significance in typology, prophecy fulfillment, and also in the collective social experience of First Century Judaism.

On every Passover the ancient city of Jerusalem was center stage.

## Analyzing Chapter Twenty-six

### **Passover Seder**

Passover is the first of the seven Scripturally-mandated “feasts”. The word “feast” does not apply best – but rather the Hebrew word *Moed*, which means “appointment”. The *Moedim* [plural, “appointments”] are God-created times and places<sup>3</sup> for God’s people to meet with Him. All the *Moedim* follow *Pesach* [Passover] and flow from it. The *Moedim* are part of a biblical calendar that is still in use today. When we consider that all of the *Moedim* have a prophetic significance with regard to Messiah, we would do well to pay attention to these appointments with God and to recognize their holy significance.

Let’s look at Passover, what it meant to those living in the time of the Deliverance from Egypt, and what how it pointed to Yeshua the Messiah.

<sup>2</sup> *The New King James Version*, Dt 16:16-17. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996, c1982.

<sup>3</sup> Since the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE, the biblical mandate of where to celebrate Passover has been impossible; but as Ezekiel 45:21 points out, there will one day be a Temple again, and all of God’s people will celebrate Passover in the mandated place – the Temple.

Read Exodus 12:1-36 and then answer the following questions:

What purpose did the Passover Lamb serve?

What is the relationship to the “Feast of Unleavened Bread” and the “Passover” meal? How long was “Unleavened Bread” to be eaten?

The people were told to do this in Egypt. Was this a one-time occurrence of this feast? How long did God say to do this?

What was the ultimate purpose did the blood of the Passover lamb in this passage (reference: Leviticus 17:11)?

What purpose did God mention in “memorializing” this feast?

Read verse 38. Who is the “mixed multitude”? Do you think it is possible that there were non-Israelites who also experienced the Passover, and deliverance from Egypt?

As we have seen, the blood of the Passover lamb served in an immediate role by securing the Israelites' and the “mixed-multitude's” freedom. It was the tool of deliverance. We also saw that Passover and “Unleavened Bread” were to then be memorialized and celebrated each year at the same time. Let's look at the next passage that deals with Passover.

Read and comment on all the *Moedim* [appointed times] listed in Leviticus 23. There are eight if you count the weekly Sabbath. List them along with their biblical date.

Read Leviticus 23:1-2 again. What are the *Moedim* called again? Are these “Jewish feasts”?

Deuteronomy 16:16 tells us why Yeshua was in Jerusalem for Passover. Read and comment on this passage.

Beloved, we need to see this event correctly as it is portrayed in Matthew 26. Understanding the biblical background of this Seder, was Yeshua instituting something new for His followers? Why did Yeshua have a Passover Seder in Jerusalem? What was the purpose of Him having this meal with His *talmidim*? Comment on the parallels to the events in Egypt, and the command to memorialize this annual *Moed*.

### ***The King Coming In His Kingdom***

Go back to Matthew 26:29 and mark it in your Bible in some way to indicate that this is the last usage of the word “Kingdom” in the book of Matthew. Read Numbers 6:1-8 and comment on any possible connection if any to Matthew 26:29.

### **As You Finish**

- x Have you ever experienced a Passover Seder? If not, you have missed a beautiful expression of our Master, Who is our Passover Lamb. Determine to spend next Passover at home or at someone else's home celebrating Passover as your Master did and will do again!



## Lesson Eight – Chapter Twenty-seven

### As You Begin

- ✘ All the talk of “Kingdom” appears finished now as we begin the closing chapters of Matthew. Or has it? The word “Kingdom” is not used again, but we certainly see the King. This chapter is a difficult for us who love the Master because we know that this tremendous act of covenant love on His part cost Him so greatly. As you read and reflect this week, whisper your devotion and love to your Master. Reflect upon how deserving of honor and love He is – especially considering that sign that hung above Him as He suffered, “This is Yeshua, the King of the Jews”
- ✘ Read chapter twenty-seven.
- ✘ Read chapter twenty-seven again and look for any occurrences of a phrase that indicates something was a fulfillment to prophecy. Mark them in your Bible with a green colored pencil – and then add it to the chart in the Appendix titled, “Prophecies Fulfilled in Yeshua.”

### Historical Context

#### **Barabbas or Son of God**

Therefore, when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Yeshua who is called Messiah?”<sup>1</sup>

So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Yeshua, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, “Truly this was the Son of God!”<sup>2</sup>

Mattityahu’s telling of the horror of the crucifixion and the violence of that historical day has these two verses as bookends. Situated between the bookends of verse 17 and 54 is verse 37, which simply says,

And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him:  
THIS IS YESHUA THE KING OF THE JEWS.<sup>3</sup>

There is tremendous irony to be found within these references. The criminal that our English Bible calls “Barabbas” was a man named “*Yeshua bar Abba*” [“salvation, son of father”]. “*Bar*” is the Aramaic word for “son” (the Hebrew equivalent is “*ben*”). “*Abbas*” is a Greek transliteration of the Aramaic and Hebrew “*abba*” which means “father”. Hence, we have the surname of this most famous criminal cast ironically against Yeshua, the Messiah and the only Son of the Father. The agitators are thus given a choice by Pilate: “*Yeshua bar Abba*” [Barabbas] or “*Yeshua HaMashiach*” [Yeshua the Messiah]. The choice of two “*Yeshuas*”, both “sons” of

<sup>1</sup> *The New King James Version*, Mt 27:17. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996, c1982.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, Mt 27:54

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, Mt 27:37

someone named “*Abba*”. The ultimate switch – the innocent replaces the guilty. This irony is a repeat of the millions of sacrifices that had been offered in Jerusalem over the millennia. The “type” was set and God’s plan was now revealed. The Redeemer had truly come in the form and the the place of the redeemed.

The sacrificial picture was not enough however – in the midst of it we are reminded by Mattityahu that this One taking the place of “Barabbas” was also the One throughout the previous chapters being shown to be King Messiah. It is as if the Matthew account is wanting to keep reminding us that Yeshua was still the King – and the Kingdom had come. The suffering of the Cross carried with it the Kingdom message – with the ultimate invitation: *Repent, the Kingdom has come and here is the King – and look to Him as the door to His Kingdom!*

## Analyzing Chapter Twenty-seven

Now Yeshua stood before the governor. And the governor asked Him, saying, ‘Are You the King of the Jews?’ Yeshua said to him, “*It is as you say.*’

Matthew 27:9

### ***The King Revealed***

Beloved, for the past twenty-six lessons we have seen the focus of Matthew’s account to be the revelation of the Kingdom message, “Repent, the Kingdom of God is at hand”. It is not accidental that in chapter 27, Mattityahu wants to frame the trial and crucifixion of Yeshua in relation to His Kingship. As we know, the way that he does it is highly ironic, and can easily be misconstrued by those who tend toward “Replacement Theology”. As we study, we must ask ourselves, “Did the ‘Jews’ reject Yeshua as their King?” The answer is of course, “yes” and “no”. When we read in Acts 21:20 about the great number of “Jews” who believed that Yeshua was Messiah and King, then we know that before 70 CE, the sect within Judaism known as “the Way” was a significant representation of the Jews in the world. Alas, there was a rejection of sorts by Israel of their King – but the results of that rejection are not always clearly seen when separated by 1,800 years of anti-Semitic strains in some traditional “Christian” theology. Let’s look deeper into this picture of King Messiah, and His rejection – and triumph on that Passover day so many years ago. Remember as we do this, the focus of what this time of the *Moedim* [God’s Appointed Times] focused upon: Passover was about **deliverance**...

Read 1Samuel 8:4-8 and answer the following questions:

In verse 5, what did the people want a king for – and more importantly, what did they want their king to be like?

When the people asked for a “king... like all the nations” Who were they rejecting as King?

Is there a correlation in this passage to the Kingdom message, “Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand?” Hint: focus on verse 8.

From history, we know that the pagan kings that surrounded Israel treated their kings as deities. When the people wanted a “king... like all the nations” – they were asking for a god-man to rule over them. In their wickedness and rejection of God as King, there is a hint at God’s plan.

Enter David. The so-called “Davidic Covenant” is not separate from the “Abrahamic Covenant” – but a further revelation of it. We see within it that God plans to bless the nations through Abraham’s Seed, and to rule over Israel and the nations as King through David’s Seed. Read and comment on how Yeshua culminates the promises given in Genesis 12:1-3 and 2Samuel 7:8-13:

Let’s read about the “coronation” of the great King Messiah:

Matthew 27:11:

Matthew 27:27-29:

Matthew 27:35-37:

Matthew 27:39-43:

Matthew 27:54:

If you had lived in those days and been a *talmid* of Yeshua [Yeshua], you might have asked yourself that day, “*Why? I know He is the King – so why this?*” Beloved, we know that it is

because of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenant(s). We know that it is because of the Promise to Eve after our fall in the Garden. We know that in this one complete act (the crucifixion and resurrection), the King, the Messiah delivered His people – and established His reign as King over all the earth! But what of the rejection? Beloved, that is where we often misunderstand, and where wicked men who have called themselves followers of Yeshua have persecuted His people the Jews and completely missed the point of the “rejection”. Read the following passages, and comment on how they relate to both the “rejection” and to the promise to David and Abraham.

Romans 11:1-2:

Romans 11:8-12:

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (who is the covenant with?):

Jeremiah 31:37-40:

Jeremiah 5:18:

Romans 11:24-36:

***In the Mountain of the LORD, He will Provide a Lamb***

Genesis 22 and the account of the sacrifice of Isaac is called the “*Akedah*” [binding]. It is seen as the “testing” of Abraham by many, but to miss the typology of this account is to miss a foundational teaching of Scripture which distills the concepts of “substitutionary sacrifice”; “the proof of love”; “the provision of God”; and “resurrection from the dead” into a single account. Read Genesis 22:1-18 and Hebrews 11:17-19 and write down the relationship of these passages to the Matthew 27 account of the crucifixion of Yeshua on the “mountains of *Moriah*”. Feel free to cite other passages in your comments.

**As You Finish**

- x We will never understand, even for all eternity, the height, breadth, width, and depth of His love born out on the mountains of *Moriah* for us. Spend some time in reflection and prayer of thanksgiving for what He has shown you this week.



## Lesson Nine – Chapter Twenty-eight

### As You Begin

- x Are you of Jewish ancestry, or are you a Gentile by birth? Do you worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? If you are a Gentile and if you had lived in the First Century, you would not have been permitted into the Temple proper. You would have been consigned to the “court of the Gentiles”. No access would be given for making sacrifices, or eating the Passover, or participating in any of the Temple activities. This is never what God intended. The wall that separated the “court of the Gentiles” from the Temple proper was never intended to be there. That wall was man-inspired, and man-made – a wall to keep you out. God had other plans. You were included in His plans, and His wisdom is incalculable, and His will irresistible. Chapter twenty-eight provides a glimpse into His ageless plan – the mystery of the Gospel.
  
- x Read chapter twenty-eight.

### Historical Context

#### ***Converts or Talmidim?***

Matthew chapter 28 has likely the most often quoted passage in all the Gospels. The traditional evangelical church has taken what is commonly referred to as the “Great Commission” as marching orders for sending believers to convert the world to “Christianity”. In the century before the Matthew 28 incident, there was already such a “mission organization”: Pharisaic Judaism.

In Yeshua's stinging rebuke of many in the Pharisee sect, He says,

‘Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.’<sup>1</sup>

The seeking of “proselytes” was the seeking to turn Gentiles into Jews. Judaism did not distinguish between “ethnic Jew” or “religious Jew”. To be an ethnic descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was to be a member of the religion of the Scriptures. The converse was also true – to be a believer of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was to be attached to Israel. Notable former Gentiles reckoned as Israelites were Rahab and Ruth among others.

Because the pervasive idolatry of the nations around Israel, in the several centuries before Yeshua's ministry, Judaism had formalized a ritual of “conversion” – whereby if a Gentile wanted to be a full member of the community of faith they could be considered an Israelite. In our minds we might see this as a conversion to become a member of the religion of “Judaism” – but that was not its intent. The ritual of becoming a proselyte was something that was said to completely transform the person – so that they became an ethnic Jew as well.

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<sup>1</sup> *The New King James Version*, Mt 23.15. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996, c1982.

In the initial instructions regarding proselytes we can see great wisdom, with an emphasis upon the Biblical mandates of mercy and justice:

Our Rabbis taught: If at the present time a man desires to become a proselyte, he is to be addressed as follows: 'What reason have you for desiring to become a proselyte; do you not know that Israel at the present time is persecuted and oppressed, despised, harassed and overcome by afflictions'? If he replies, 'I know and yet am unworthy', he is accepted forthwith, and is given instruction in some of the minor and some of the major commandments. He is informed of the sin [of the neglect of the commandments] of 'the Gleanings', 'the Forgotten Sheaf', 'the Corner' and the 'Poor Man's Tithe'.<sup>2</sup>

The Biblical instructions for a stranger or sojourner [*ger* = stranger] to worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were quite simply to follow and obey God. We see the “mixed multitude” coming out of Egypt along with the physical descendants of Jacob. Those were the very people of whom God is speaking in Numbers:

‘And if a stranger dwells with you, or whoever is among you throughout your generations, and would present an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD, just as you do, so shall he do. One ordinance shall be for you of the assembly and for the stranger who dwells with you, an ordinance forever throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the stranger be before the LORD. One Torah and one custom shall be for you and for the stranger who dwells with you.’<sup>3</sup>

The Pharisees had formalized a ritual (which added to Torah) with regard to how a Gentile [*ger* = stranger] could become a member of the commonwealth of Israel. This is what Yeshua was speaking of in Matthew 23. The formal ritual of the proselyte is referenced in the Apostolic Scriptures far more often than the English reader may understand<sup>4</sup>. The shorthand for this ritual was simply “circumcision”. There is no prescription in the Torah for this process for the proselyte. Regardless, the rabbis had established the following ritual in the presence of a *Bet Din* [“House of Judgment” - a ruling council; in this case a minimum three-member council]:

- Undergo the physical act of circumcision
- Make a sacrifice
- Agree to abide by the instructions of the Covenant (Torah)
- Undergo *t’villah* [immersion] in a *mikveh* [ritual bath]. Today they simply call this process “*mikveh*”.

Even though Torah had not commanded this tradition, they do not lack a sense of logic. The act of circumcision was commanded by God, as well as an acknowledgment to obey Torah. The *mikveh* [ritual bath] of course symbolized a change in status. The *Bavli* goes on to explain following the *mikveh*,

...When he comes up after his [*mikveh*] he is deemed to be an Israelite in all respects.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Talmud Bavli, Yebamoth 47a*, Soncino Edition

<sup>3</sup> *The New King James Version*, Num 15:14-16. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996, c1982.

<sup>4</sup> There is much confusion in understanding many passages because of a lack of familiarity with the rabbinic ritual act of circumcision and how it differed from the command to circumcision found in Torah. Reference: Acts 15:4-6; Galatians 5:1-6; 1Corinthians 7:19

<sup>5</sup> *Talmud Bavli, Yebamoth 47b*, Soncino Edition



The immersion in a *mikveh* was seen as the final act – the death of the “old man” and the rebirth of a “new man” – to be “born again” – not only as a worshipper of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but as a very descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In essence, to be a proselyte was to “become a Jew”. This is important to note because ancient Judaism believed that “all Israel” would have a “part in the world to come” – and that only Israel would have “part in the world to come”. Apart from Israel, there was no salvation. If a Gentile wanted to “be saved” he must become “a Jew”. And once he was “born again” as a Jew, he had a new family, an new history, a new life. Everything about him was new.

When the Second Temple was renovated by Herod, it included a never-before-seen piece of architecture. The Tabernacle in the wilderness did not have it. King Solomon's Temple did not have it. The yet future Temple mentioned at the end of Ezekiel will not have it. The Second Temple had a huge court outside of the Temple proper called the “court of the Gentiles”. This court was not for proselytes, who were considered Jews. This was a place for those people who wanted to worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and yet had not given themselves to the rabbinic ritual of conversion to Judaism. Josephus records that the size of this court was much larger than the actual inner court where all natural and proselyte Jews were permitted. Between these two courts was a wall. A wall that kept out those who were seeking to worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That physical wall represented a ceremonial wall – the dogma and customs of the ritual act of proselytism. The sign on the outside of this wall of division said it all, “No foreigner is to enter... whoever is caught will have himself to blame for his death”.

The First Century practice of proselytism can give us great insights into many of issues in Paul's epistles and in the book of Acts. Additionally, they give us a glimpse of what is occurring in Matthew 28, when Yeshua sends His *talmidim* out make *talmidim* of **all the nations**.

Like the understanding of the First Century, attaching oneself to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was not simply a “conversion” to a new religion – it was a complete change of identity. It was more than associating with a new group of congregants or church members – it was a change in very heritage and family history. It was more than a change in status is symbolized in “baptism” [immersion, the *mikveh*]... it was to be born again from above. It was more than “conversion” – it was to be discipled to follow the Master.

But unlike the rabbinic ritual of the proselyte, Yeshua was **not** sending His *talmidim* to perform a ritual...

## Analyzing Chapter Twenty-eight

### ***The Kingdom Message – Our Message***

Beloved, we have seen the consistent and persistent focus in Matthew's account – to provide Scriptural proof of Yeshua's Kingship – and to promote the Kingdom message He proclaimed, lived, died for, and rose again for. Remember, it is this: “Repent, the Kingdom of God is at hand!”

We have seen the methodical presentation of fulfilled prophecy and miraculous signs to prove Matthew's assertion that Yeshua is King Messiah.

We have seen the greatest proof of this by Matthew showing us an absolute consistency between Yeshua's life and message and Torah – adhering to God's Word explicitly. We have seen that Yeshua was more than a mortal Redeemer – but that He is *Yod, Hay, Vav, and Hay* [“the Name”, the holy Name of the Almighty] in the flesh – that He is *Im manu El* – “God with us”.

We have seen that He called *talmidim* to Him and taught them – so that they would each call *talmidim* and teach them.

We saw the continual focus of Yeshua's teaching to His *talmidim* was in imitating Him.

So now, in Matthew 28, it is graduation day. Not a day to become “masters” or “rabbis” themselves, but the day where Yeshua tells them – it is time for them to practice what He has taught them.

It is our graduation day as well. Let's study our commencement address, for this is truly just “the beginning”.

Matthew 28:17-20, the so-called “Great Commission” follows the 3 ½ years of instruction; the complete redemption of the crucifixion and resurrection; and a more complete understanding of it all by His *talmidim*. Read and comment on the following related passages – try to relate them to the “Kingdom Message”:

Matthew 28:18, Daniel 7:13-14:

Matthew 28:19; Isaiah 66:18; Micah 4:2; Acts 2:38:

Matthew 28:20; Matthew 5:17-19; Exodus 33:12-19:

### ***The Mystery of the Gospel Message***

Beloved, remember how John the Baptizer only brought the Kingdom message to those of Israel?

Remember that Yeshua preached the same message, but only to “the lost sheep of Israel?”

Remember, how He sent His *talmidim* out in chapter 10 to only Israel? If Matthew ended in chapter 27, we would miss the climax – because the climax of the book is found here in chapter 28 – where the Kingdom message was now being sent to the nations.

The wall that kept Gentiles from worshipping the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would still be standing for forty more years... but the *talmidim* of Yeshua now had their instructions – go to the nations with this Kingdom message. The man-made rules of the proselyte were not God's instructions. It was time to take the message to all who would believe.

Read Ephesians chapters 2 and answer the following questions:

In verses 1-3 and then 11-12, how does Paul describe the recipients of the Epistle? (remember, the word “uncircumcision” is not referring to men who are not circumcised, but men who had not gone through the man-made ritual of the proselyte.)

Verses 14 and 15 mention a “middle wall of separation” – remember the wall keeping out the Gentiles? The physical wall represented the laws of commandments and ordinances that were man-made interpretations of what God said concerning acceptable worship. The word “ordinances” in verse 15 is the word “*dogma*”. It is always a man-made rule.

In verses 13-22, list what Yeshua has done for you. Relate it back to what you were previously, and relate it to how the Gentiles were kept out of the Temple.

Beloved, whether you are Jewish or Gentile, these truths are so important to understand. We have all been placed into the commonwealth of Israel, into God's redeemed community by faith, not by ethnicity, or by a human ritual. Read Ephesians 3:1-12 and comment on how the "Mystery of the Gospel" relates to the Gospel message itself – the Kingdom message: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!"

### As You Finish

- x Have you been grafted in to God's household? Have you been attached to the root – and benefited from it? If so, remember, you are not the root – you are the branches. Thank God today for grafting you in. Thank Him for the root. Thank Him that His Kingdom message was brought to you – and that now you too can follow the King!
- x Beloved, you have done well. We have learned so much together. Maybe we have seen Yeshua in some new light – and our love for Him has grown. Remember, it is not what we think that matters – not what we consider to be true – rather, it is what we do with those truths.

My heart cry as I write these last lines in this study is that we would all renew our devotion to our Master. That we would determine to be the *talmidim* that He is worthy of. That we will strive to emulate Him in word and deed.

And as we close this book, as Israel has done for millennia, let us say together,

***Chazak! Chazak! v'Nitchazeik!***

[Be Strong! Be Strong! And may we strengthen one another!]

## Appendix – Prophecies Fulfilled in Yeshua

Ref	What fulfilled	How fulfilled	How relates to Messiah
1:20-23	<i>virgin with child, bear a Son, Immanuel – God with us</i>	Mary, virgin, a Son, call Him "Yeshua" – saves His people from sins	Messiah is Savior

Ref	What fulfilled	How fulfilled	How relates to Messiah

## Appendix – Miracles of Yeshua

Ref	Miracle	How healed	Reactions of others

Ref	Miracle	How healed	Reactions of others



## Glossary and Pronunciation Guide

Adonai ( <i>awd-o-neye</i> )	Hebrew: "Lord, master". Also used in place of the Tetragrammaton
Apostolic Scriptures	Scriptures written in the First Century. "New Testament"
Bavli	Babylonian Talmud
Chanan ( <i>khaw-nawn</i> )	Hebrew: "grace"
Chesed ( <i>khe-sed</i> )	Hebrew: "mercy"
Circumlocution	The use of other words or names to avoid vainly using God's holy Name
Dead Sea Scrolls	Found in 1947 in Qumran, most dating to First Century or earlier
Didache	Early document of the Apostles
Essenes	Austere sect of Judaism in the First Century
HaShem ( <i>ha-shem</i> )	Hebrew: "The Name" – used as a circumlocution for God's holy Name
Hellenization	The practice of replacing a culture, with the Greek culture and language
Kanaf ( <i>kaw-nawf</i> )	Hebrew: "wing". This is the garment also known as a <i>talit</i> .
Kinneret ( <i>keen-er-et</i> )	Hebrew: "Sea of Galilee"
Levi ( <i>lev-ee</i> )	Hebrew: of the tribe of Levi. Matthew's surname.
Mashiach ( <i>maw-shee-awkh</i> )	Hebrew: "Messiah, Anointed One"
Mattityahu ( <i>maw-teet-yaw-hu</i> )	Hebrew: "Matthew" – means "Gift from God"
Mishnah	Oral Torah edited and written
Natzeret ( <i>nawt-zer-et</i> )	Hebrew: "Nazareth"
Navi ( <i>naw-vee</i> )	Hebrew: "prophet"
Navi'im ( <i>naw-vee-eem</i> )	Hebrew: plural, "prophets"
Pharisees	Conservative sect of Judaism
Pseudographia	Writings from the Inter-testament times written under assumed names
Remez	Ancient teaching method which uses allusion.
Sadducees	Temple-centered sect of Judaism
Sage	An ancient Hebrew scholar
Septuagint	Greek version of the "Old Testament" circa 270 BCE
T'shuvah ( <i>teh-shoov-aw</i> )	Hebrew: "repentance"
Talit ( <i>tawl-eet</i> )	Hebrew: "prayer shawl, or outer garment" – had <i>tzit-tzit</i> at corners
Talmid ( <i>tawl-meed</i> )	Hebrew: "disciple"
Talmidim ( <i>tawl-mee-deem</i> )	Hebrew: plural, "disciples"
Talmud ( <i>tawl-mood</i> )	Hebrew: "teaching" – a sort of commentary on Torah
TaNaKh ( <i>tawn-awkh</i> )	Acronym for <b>T</b> orah, <b>N</b> evi'im, <b>K</b> 'tuvim – "Old Testament"
Targums	Aramaic commentaries of Torah
Techelet ( <i>te-khel-et</i> )	Hebrew: "blue" – this is the blue thread in the <i>tzit-tzit</i> .
Tetragrammaton	The four letter Name of God. Not normally pronounced.
Torah ( <i>tow-raw</i> )	Hebrew: "instruction". First five books of the Bible. All Scripture.
Tzit-tzit ( <i>tseet-tseet</i> )	Hebrew: "tassels" – tied on the corners of a garment
Yeshua ( <i>yeh-shoo-aw</i> )	Hebrew: "Yeshua" = "Salvation"
Yochanan ( <i>yo-khawn-awn</i> )	Hebrew: "John"
Yoshia ( <i>yo-shee-aw</i> )	Hebrew: "save"



## Bibliography and Reading List

There is an abundance of good sources for this type of historical study of Apostolic Scripture. Listed are some sources used for this study.

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