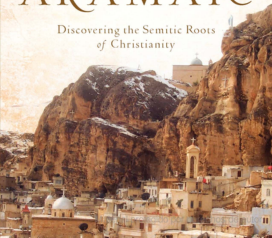


STEPHEN ANDREW MISSICK

THE WORDS OF
JESUS
IN THE ORIGINAL
ARAMAIC

Discovering the Semitic Roots
of Christianity



The Words of Jesus in the Original Aramaic:

**Discovering the Semitic Roots
of Christianity**

By

Stephen Andrew Missick



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The book is dedicated to the memory of the Assyrian and Chaldean Martyrs for Jesus who died during the initial phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom, 2003- 2005.

For Lina Yaziji.

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Foreword



Although Bible scholars have called Aramaic “the Language of Jesus” most Christians have never heard of Aramaic. However, anyone who has read the Bible has been exposed to Aramaic whether he or she knows it or not. “Abba, Father” is Aramaic. Golgotha, the place where Jesus was crucified is Aramaic for “Skull-Place”. Names such as Thomas, Barnabas, Martha, and Magdalene are all Aramaic names. “Maranatha” is a short Aramaic prayer that is left un-translated in the New Testament. Translated from the Aramaic it means, “Our Lord, Come!” After the release of Mel Gibson’s movie “The Passion of the Christ”, which was filmed mostly in Aramaic, more people have been exposed to the Aramaic language than ever before. Aramaic is an important but often over-looked tool in discovering the mind of Christ. This book is an introduction to Aramaic biblical studies and to the last Christians who still speak the ancient Aramaic language, the Assyrians of Mesopotamia.

This book also explores the Aramaic behind Christ's words, such as in the title Christ used for himself, the Son of Man, which is *Barnasha* in Aramaic, and looks at important people in early Aramaic Christianity, such as James the Just and Mary of Magdala.

INTRODUCTION

The Restoration of All Things



“And he shall send Jesus the Messiah, which before was preached unto you, whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” Acts 3:20-21

These Days of Restoration, known as the Days of Elijah, are spoken of elsewhere in Scripture (Matthew 17:11, Malachi 3:5-6). Many believers are yearning for a restoration of pure, unadulterated first century Christianity. These people are longing to look past the centuries that seem to block or dim our vision of the original message of Jesus. They are trying to rediscover Jesus in the light of his language, culture and the original historical context of his coming, or his times. There is a movement across the world of Christians exploring Christ’s identity as a Jew of the

first century. However, in all of this something very important has been overlooked.

The New Testament clearly shows that the primary spoken language of Jesus was Aramaic. Aramaic is similar to Hebrew but it is a distinct language from Hebrew. Aramaic is not Arabic and is not related to the Armenian language. Aram is an ancient word for Syria and Aramaic is the language of the ancient Syrians, Assyrians, Chaldeans and Babylonians. Aramaic has something crucial to offer in rediscovering the pure and authentic message of Jesus the Christ. Sometimes Christians impose Western Culture upon their understanding of Jesus and the Bible. But it should be realized that Jesus preached his revelation in a different cultural context; that of the Semitic culture of the Middle East. The Assyrian Christians of Iraq and Iran, who still speak Aramaic as their native tongue and worship in an ancient Semitic manner, give us an important living link to Christ, the Apostles and the original Church. This book is intended to serve as a primer that introduces seekers to the field of Aramaic studies. I have made repeated journeys to the Middle East and have lived in several Aramaic-speaking villages including Maloula near Damascus and Aramaic villages in the Khabour River Valley in Eastern Syria. While I was serving in the armed forces in the war in Iraq I was tutored in Aramaic by native Assyrian and Chaldean Aramaic-speakers during the time that I was stationed in Baghdad. A more thorough examination of the Aramaic roots of Christianity will be given in a forthcoming volume.

As the Holy Spirit restores the church I believe we will see a return of the church to its Aramaic heritage and this holy language will be maintained as a spoken tongue. “The Words of Jesus in the Original Aramaic” is a detailed Biblical and historical account of the original message preached by Yeshu Meshika, as Jesus is known in his own Aramaic language. From the early days of the Church in Jerusalem, Christianity was an Aramaic movement. The holy Apostles predicted that there would come a great “falling away” and the proof of their prediction is now evident in history. As Christianity spread to other languages and cultures it began to lose contact with its Aramaic origin and eventually it was almost totally forgotten. Aramaic Christianity has been preserved by small and isolated tribes of Assyrian Christians in the Middle East. The Aramaic language is beginning to die away and the Assyrians are in danger of disappearing as a people but as this book is written the ancient Aramaic tradition is still alive. With such evidence in hand, all true believers should seek, as never before, the simplicity found in Christ himself and earnestly content for that original faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Part I

“Of Whom the World Was Not Worthy”



“A Syrian ready to perish was my father...”
(Deuteronomy 26:5).

Ancient Israelites recited this statement every year to remind themselves of their Aramaic origins. “Syrian” here refers to a native Aramaic-speaking person, or an Aramean. The Syrian referred to here is Abraham, but it is also referring to all the patriarchs in an inclusive manner. An alternate translation of this verse is “A wandering Aramean” or “A nomadic Aramean was my father”. The Bible speaks of the patriarchs saying, “They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—the world was not worthy of them” (Hebrews 11:37b-38 NIV). Christians also must

remember their Aramaic roots, because it was by the Aramaic people, now known as the Assyrians, through whom the Gospel message came. In a spiritual sense the Aramaic people are a 'father' to the Christian world (1 Corinthians 4:15). Now, in the international war on terrorism, radical Islamic factions have an agenda to annihilate the Assyrian people. With recent killings of Aramaic people in Iraq, the Assyrians are indeed a people ready to perish. Christians ought to be aware of this and also of the Aramaic background to the Bible, the Gospel and the Church.

CHAPTER ONE

Lost in Translation



“He [Jesus] spoke to his followers and other wayfarers in Aramaic, and except for a few phrases scattered throughout the Gospels, none of his Aramaic sayings have survived. I have wondered for some time how this could be, and wondered even more that Christian scholars have never joined in my wonder. If you believe in the divinity of Jesus, would you not wish to have preserved the actual Aramaic sayings themselves? Were they lost, still to be found in a cave somewhere in Israel?...For some years now. I have asked these questions whenever I have met a New Testament scholar, and I have met only blankness. Yet surely this puzzle matters. Aramaic and Greek are very different languages and the nuances of spirituality and wisdom do not translate readily from one into the other. Any sayings

of Jesus, open or hidden, need to be regarded in this context.” - The New Covenant: Newly Translated From the Greek and Informed by Semitic Sources by Willis Barnstone

So why should anyone study the words of Jesus in Aramaic? First, because it was in this language which these words were originally uttered. Rocco Errico provides a good secondary reason, “It is very difficult, when translating from one language to another, to retain the authentic impact and power of a certain word or thought. We usually lose something through translation. This task is even more challenging when it involves such vastly different cultures as our Western culture and that of the Near or Middle East. For example, this has been, and is still, a problem in translating the Bible from Eastern Semitic tongues (Aramaic and Hebrew) into Western languages.”

The Bible is written in three languages. These languages are Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Four-fifths of the Bible is the Old Testament. The Old Testament section comprises the Bible of the Jewish religion. It is written mostly in Hebrew but contains certain long sections in Aramaic. The New Testament makes up about one-fifth of the Bible. This part of the Bible tells the story of the coming of Jesus and the immediate impact of his message upon the world. The New Testament is written in Greek but contains numerous Aramaic words and phrases. A few Hebrew words are also found in the New Testament but much more Aramaic is used. The Gospel, meaning the story of Jesus, was originally proclaimed in and then

written in Aramaic. It is evident from the text of the New Testament that there were Aramaic sources used in the composition of the New Testament. There is clearly an Aramaic substratum to the Gospels. Sadly, the original Aramaic sources are now lost. However, the Assyrian Christians of Iraq have preserved ancient Aramaic Bibles that are a valuable tool in rediscovering the words of Jesus in Aramaic, the language in which he first spoke them. Jesus the Messiah is the most important person who ever lived in human history. The words of Jesus are the most important words ever spoken and they merit careful study. Greek is a European language that is not at all related to the Semitic Aramaic language that Jesus spoke and is totally foreign to the Hebrew culture that to which he belonged. But what does Semitic mean? Racially it refers to a descendant of Shem, the son of Noah. Linguists have used the term to refer to a group of related languages-the Semitic family of languages. These languages include Aramaic, Hebrew, Arabic, Maltese and various Ethiopian languages. There are also important extinct Semitic languages and peoples such as the Akkadians and the Amorites.

There are also notable cultural differences unique to the Semitic people. Semites are a deeply passionate people. I heard a story of a man from a Semitic culture who in the United States was invited to the funeral of a little girl. He cried and wept so much that the child's parents asked him to leave the funeral! In noting cultural differences these differences don't necessarily make one culture inferior or superior to another but noting differences helps

us to understand the context of words and actions. In noting distinctions it is necessary, sometimes, to speak in generalizations. Also, it must be remembered that cultures themselves change with the passing of years. Consider how different America is today from what it was in the 1950s. To a certain extent Western culture has been influenced by Stoicism. In many circles public displays of emotion are frowned upon. In Stoic ideal it is best to have no emotions. This is not a Biblical concept. In the Psalms we have more dirges, or sad songs, than songs of joy. This is because God wants us to worship him with the full range of emotion. These emotions were given to us by God. The Bible says God is love and love is an emotion (1 John 4:8). God made man in his image and part of this image includes emotions, which are part of God's nature (Genesis 1:27). In the Scriptures God is portrayed as having emotions and why shouldn't he be? In western tradition, instead of being passionate the idea is that it is better to be cerebral. This concept comes from Plato who elevated the mind and spirit above the flesh and matter. This isn't so in the Jewish tradition. God created this world and our bodies as well as our minds and pronounced them "good" (Genesis 1:31). Semites have a greater tendency to give way to the full range of emotions and westerners may seem to them to be in comparison, more cold and detached and striving to control their emotions. This difference between Western culture, and a culture with a more eastern cultural orientation, was depicted in an amusing manner in the film "My Big Fat Greek Wedding". Semites are

more prone to exaggeration. Jesus himself often used the hyperbole. This is inflating things through extremes for example, as can be seen in phrases such as “a camel through the eye of a needle” and “a log in one’s eye” (Mark 10:25, Matthew 7:3). This is a means of illustrating a truth through extremes. Lying, as in a willful attempt at deception, is condemned in scripture (Revelation 22:15). Using the hyperbole is not an attempt to deceive. Semitic culture is also a “God Conscious” culture. The Arabic language, for example, is laced with references to God. If all references to God were taken out of Arabic you couldn’t speak! (This is a hyperbole. It is a truth told in an exaggerated manner.) God is embedded in the Arabic language. Even atheist and agnostic Arabs will use many phrases and figures of speech referring to God. Semitic people use different modes of thinking and different modes of speaking than Westerners do. Semitic languages, such as Aramaic, all full of many distinct similes, metaphors, idioms and other figures of speech.

Religious concepts, such as the idea of reward and retribution in this life and the life to come, are very powerful in the Semitic culture. Semites strongly value humility. Among the Assyrians and Arabs language is seen as an art form. The languages of the Assyrians (Aramaic) and the Arabs (Arabic) are highly honored among them. Much respect is shown to someone with an expansive vocabulary who can artfully use the language. This is seen in long introductions and greetings and their love of negotiating and haggling. (As much as we west-

erners hold it in disdain, haggling has its place. Almost everyone haggles when buying a new car.) In Semitic cultures honor and valor are highly valued. The concept of “face”, which exists in our culture too, (when we say things like “save” or “lose face”), is almost an obsession among Semites. In certain ancient Semitic cultures women had equality with men and so there arose strong women leaders such as Deborah of Israel and Zenobia of Palmyra. In some Islamic cultures women are viewed as susceptible to shameful behavior and are therefore seen as a threat to the honor of the men in their families. Thus many Islamic women live in a very controlled environment. In the past, Semitic people have had a strong devotion to their families, their clan and their tribe. Semites stress the importance of the family and families stay together. While studying the words of Jesus in Aramaic the student must also be mindful of cultural distinctions. Aramaic students must be familiar with the Aramaic language, history, Semitic culture and Aramaic literature. Bible students should be aware of the historical events and circumstances of the Holy Land at the coming of Jesus. Ancient historians give us full accounts of activities of King Herod, Pontius Pilate and many other personalities mentioned in the Bible. Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew books tell us what people believed and how they thought at the coming of the Christ. Two helpful tools for beginners interested in the significance of Biblical languages are How Biblical Languages Work by Peter James Silzer and Thomas John Finley and Biblical Hermeneutics by Walter C. Kaiser and

Moises Silva. I first gained useful knowledge of Aramaic by reading F. F. Bruce's book The Books and the Parchments. This book contains three very helpful chapters on Aramaic which are "The Aramaic language", "The Targums" and "The Syriac Bible". It also contains interesting chapters on Hebrew and Greek and is written for the non-specialist.

Using language and culture together is a powerful tool in illuminating the meaning behind the texts of Scripture. Books such as Song of Our Syrian Guest and A Shepherd Looks at the Twenty-third Psalm illustrate this. We read about shepherds in the Bible but a shepherd from the Middle East or someone who has experience in shepherding may have a deeper understanding of this biblical concept and can deepen our understanding of the word of God by sharing his personal experience with us. I have had the pleasure of meeting Spiro Zodhiates. He has produced many useful study tools in Greek for studying the Greek of the New Testament. Spiro Zodhiates was born in Cyprus and grew up speaking Greek as his native language. An important popularizer of Aramaic was the Assyrian Christian George Mamishisho Lamsa. Lamsa was born in the late 19th century and was raised speaking Aramaic in a community that followed customs largely unchanged since the time of Christ. Lamsa translated the Bible from an ancient Aramaic version and wrote many commentaries. I do not hold to some of his interpretations. As a child Lamsa did indeed grow up speaking Aramaic and lived in a culture that was in many ways similar to that of biblical days and he did come from the Bible lands

before emigrating to the United States of America. While I am not an Assyrian by birth, as a teenager I left America and journeyed to the Middle East alone. I have lived in Cairo, Damascus, and Jerusalem and stayed in Egyptian and Aramaic monasteries in North Africa and in Syria. I have gone on journeys into the desert on camel back. I have lived in Aramaic speaking Christian villages and among the Bedouins with their tents and sheep and goat-herds. (I found it amusing that today some Bedouin tents have satellite.) I have spent years studying the Aramaic language and legacy. I have consulted the best authorities on the Aramaic language. Growing up speaking Aramaic is an asset, but it doesn't necessarily make one a Bible scholar just as growing up speaking English doesn't make one an authority on Shakespeare. Lamsa has made errors. If I present an opinion it is an informed opinion and I strive to be as factual and as accurate as is possible.

To understand the way of salvation and how to live the Christian life, we can rely on our English translations of the Bible as being sufficient. But to understand certain deeper truths and, also, to understand many disputed points, it is necessary to examine the cultural and historical background and the original Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek of the Scriptures to determine what was in the minds of the sacred authors as they wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. To try to understand some of these issues by using our modern Western culture, language and customs as a point of reference is to becloud rather than clarify the issue. Greek is often

seen as an analytical or philosophical language while Hebrew, in contrast, is viewed as a more passionate and colorful language. Cultural concepts and beliefs are contained within languages. Hebrew and Aramaic are very similar and many words are the same in both languages. Hebrew and Aramaic, as related languages, share many cognates. Cognates are words that are similar in sound and meaning. Sometimes English cannot capture all the nuances and different shades of meaning that are found in the original languages, such as Aramaic. That is why it is important to reference the original languages when we study the words of Scripture.

CHAPTER TWO

Aramaic as a Bible Language



Our convoy left the barren wasteland of Kuwait and we entered the fertile region of southern Iraq. As we passed the area where the Tigris and Euphrates are connected I knew we were close to where the Garden of Eden used to be. The Bible says that it was located near the area where the Tigris and Euphrates parted (Genesis 2: 14). We headed north and soon came to the city of Nasiriyah. In ancient times this city was called Ur and was the home of the patriarch, Abraham (Genesis 11:27-28). Outside of Nasiriyah, one of the ancient Ziggurats is still standing. This was one of the Towers of Babel (Genesis 11:4). Secular historians agree with the Biblical account that human civilization began in ancient Iraq and then spread to Egypt, India and elsewhere. Abraham grew up beneath the shadow of the Great Ziggurat of Ur. Many incredible treasures were excavated in Ur of the Chaldees by the famous biblical archeologist

Sir Leonard Woolley in the 1920s. These relics help us to appreciate the advanced culture Abraham came from. I was able to view these treasures at the British Museum when I studied at Oxford under the auspices of my seminary and Regent Park College. While we journeyed across this ancient land I observed the people. They had herds of sheep and camels. They lived in stone and mud houses with straw roofs, and without electricity or modern conveniences. They wore robes, not western garb. I almost felt as if my military vehicle were a time machine and that I had traveled back in time to Bible Times. Abraham would be totally at home in the southern region of Iraq in 2003! With the passing of several millenniums there has been very little change in lifestyle for many of the marsh Arabs of southern Iraq. According to an ancient Jewish tradition, quoted by Frederick E. Greenspahn in An Introduction to Aramaic, Adam and Eve spoke Aramaic in the Garden of Eden. The Mandaeans, the Aramaic followers of St. John the Baptist, still speak and worship in Aramaic in this region. The Bible indicates that Abraham, who came from Ur of the Chaldees in southern Iraq, was Aramaic (Acts 7:4). Every year during the Feast of Weeks, also called Pentecost, Israelites were required to recite a liturgy that reminded them of their Aramaic origins. They referred to Abraham and the Patriarchs by saying; “A Wandering Aramean was my Father...” (Deuteronomy 26:5). In modern Israel there are 10,000 or so Aramaic speaking Jews who came from Kurdistan. They have proudly maintained what they called the “language of their forefather, Abraham.”

Under the name “Nash Didan” they have produced several successful albums of Aramaic music.

The Talmud also blesses Aramaic as a Sacred Tongue, “Let not Aramaic be lightly esteemed by thee, seeing that the Holy One (blessed be he) hath given honor to it in the Law, the Prophets and the Writings” (Palestinian Talmud, Tractate Sota vii, 2). (The Talmuds are collections of Rabbinic Commentary on the Books of Moses. There are two Talmuds, the Palestinian Talmud, which is also called the Jerusalem Talmud, and the Babylonian Talmud. Both are written partially in Aramaic, especially the section called the Gemara. The Talmud were composed centuries after the time of Christ.) The Jews divide the Old Testament Scriptures into three sections, which they give the acronym Tanakh (TNK). T is for Torah and means the Law or ‘Instruction’. This section is also known as the Five Books of Moses or the Pentateuch. N is for Nebieem which means ‘the Prophets’. K stands for Kethubim which means ‘the writings’. Certain portions of all three of these sections are written in Aramaic rather than Hebrew. Thus, in order to read the entire “Hebrew” Bible in the original one must know Aramaic.

In the Torah we find Aramaic in Genesis 31:47. In the Prophets we have Jeremiah 10:11 written in Aramaic, rather than Hebrew, in the original. In the section called the Writings we have some very large Aramaic sections (Daniel 2:4-7:8 and Ezra 4:8-6:18; Ezra 7:12-26). (The order of books in the Christian version of the Old Testament is an older and more logical division than the one currently

used in Judaism, and it is also of Jewish origin. The interesting fact is that in the traditional Jewish division Aramaic is found in each section. The Jews are incorrect to include Daniel in the Writings. It belongs in the Prophets. The Dead Sea Scrolls indicate that the Jews of Christ's day placed Daniel along with the Prophetical books.)

Aramaisms, which means traces of Aramaic influence found in Hebrew or Greek, are found throughout the Old Testament. One example is in the Song of Deborah in Judges 5:11. (The Song of Deborah is very ancient and it seemed very curious to find Aramaic influence in the Hebrew here. The reason is probably because Deborah belonged to a northern tribe whose close neighbors were Aramaic.) Others see Aramaisms in Job and in the Song of Solomon.

In the era of the kings of Judah, Aramaic was the international language of diplomacy and commerce. King Hezekiah's ambassadors requested that the Assyrian envoys negotiate in Aramaic rather than in Hebrew (2 Kings 18:26, Isaiah 35:11). This is because the common people heard the Assyrian's threatening words in their own language and were losing their morale to fight. At this time the educated elite knew Aramaic but the common people spoke only Hebrew. Later, this situation was reversed and was so at the time of Christ. (What we call 'Hebrew' is not called Hebrew in the Old Testament section of the Bible but rather it is called Canaanite and Judean (Isaiah 36:11, Nehemiah 13:24, Isaiah 19:18). This language is called Hebrew in Revelation 16:16. Linguists have identified Hebrew as the Canaanite

language and as the same language spoken by the Phoenicians, Carthaginians and by the armies of the great general Hannibal.)

As English is written in the Latin alphabet, the Hebrew language is written in a form of the Aramaic alphabet. The transition from the earlier ancient Hebrew alphabet to the Hebrew alphabet derived from the Aramaic letters is seen in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The alphabet we call Hebrew today is actually the Square Aramaic Alphabet and was also used by Aramaic speakers in Palmyra and Petra. Only the Samaritans still use the original Hebrew alphabet. This alphabet is sometimes called Paleo-Hebrew. (There are about 700 Samaritans left and they live in Nablus in the Palestinian territories and in Tel Aviv. They also use Aramaic.) Ezra distinguishes between the Hebrew alphabet and the Square Aramaic Alphabet. He says, "The letter was written in Aramaic script and set forth in the Aramaic language" (Ezra 4:7). Some of the Dead Sea Scrolls were written with Paleo-Hebrew letters but the vast majority was written using the Aramaic alphabet. On some scrolls the Aramaic alphabet is used but the Paleo-Hebrew alphabet is retained to write the word Yahweh, the personal name of God. This was a method the Dead Sea Scrolls community used to reverence the name of God. The Modern Aramaic alphabet is almost identical with the alphabet known as Hebrew. The only real difference is that Aramaic is now written in a cursive form.

Many wonder, "Why are certain sections of the Old Testament written in Aramaic rather than

in Hebrew?” In Genesis the Aramaic verse relates to the passage, “May the Lord watch between you and me as we are away from one another”. A covenant was made between Laban the Aramean and his nephew, Jacob. Laban gave the place where this covenant was made the name “Jegar-Shedutha”, meaning, in Aramaic, “Heap of Witness” (witness to the covenant is implied). Jacob named the monument “Galeed”, meaning “Heap of Witness” in Canaanite, the language of his home, the Promised Land. This illustrates also that the language of the Patriarchs was Aramaic. Laban was from Jacob’s and his mother Rebecca’s Aramaic-speaking ancestral homeland.

In Jeremiah we have one verse in Aramaic and it is a prophecy against the gods of other nations. The Lord says in Aramaic, “Thus you shall say to them, ‘The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens’” (Jeremiah 10:11). Jeremiah is prophesying against the gentiles and their false gods. In Ezra we have Ezra the Scribe quoting directly from government archives retaining their original Aramaic. The Persians made Aramaic the official language of their empire and Ezra wrote during this time period. Daniel represents the transition among the Jewish people from Hebrew to Aramaic that took place during the period of exile in Iraq that is called the Babylonian Captivity. This period of exile lasted from 586 BC until 538 BC. During this time period many Jews began to speak Aramaic rather than Hebrew. Of course, Hebrew continued to be spoken in certain circles. By the time of Jesus the educated elite spoke

Hebrew but the common laborers had limited or no knowledge of Hebrew and had to have the scriptures explained to them in Aramaic.

CHAPTER THREE

The Writing on the Wall: Four Words that Changed the World



Most of the Book of Daniel is written in Aramaic rather than Hebrew. This is because the story of Daniel is set in the period in which the Jews were exiled to Babylonia. This was the period in which there was a transition among the Jews from the Hebrew language to the Aramaic language. The exiled Jews were resettled in an Aramaic-speaking region. The Book of Daniel reflects this transition in that it is written partially in Aramaic and partially in Hebrew, reflecting the change of language among many of the common Jewish people. Many of the most beloved stories from Daniel are written in Aramaic. These Aramaic stories include the Dream of King Nebuchadnezzar, The Story of Shadrack, Meshech and Abednego in the Fiery Furnace, The Story of the Writing on the Wall, and of Daniel in the Lion's Den. The story of Daniel in the Lions Den

is written in Aramaic and is preceded by the story of the Writing on the Wall during the feast of King Belshazzar. This king threw a great feast in which he worshiped idols with sacred vessels that were taken from the Temple of the Lord. This blasphemous act incurred the wrath of Almighty God. Suddenly, in the midst of the drunken debauchery an apparition of a hand appeared and the finger of God wrote in Aramaic on the wall of the palace.

During my tour of duty in Gulf War Two I went to the city of Babylon and stood in the very room where this occurred. There are still illegible markings on the wall that tour guides try to pass off as the actual “Writing on the Wall” but I doubt this engraving survived the passing of the centuries. It was awesome to stand in the Throne Room of Kings of Babylon in the very room where these biblical events occurred. It was also the place where Alexander the Great died. The hand of God wrote in Aramaic, and probably in the Square Aramaic Script, four Aramaic words. These words are “Meni, Meni, Teqel Upharsin” (Daniel 6:25). Translated from the Aramaic this means “weigh, measure and divide.” The King didn’t understand what this meant so Daniel the Wise Man was called. Daniel translated it as “You have been weighed in the scales and found lacking and shall be divided.” The interpretation given by Daniel was that because of the sins of Babylon and its king, this empire would fall to the Persians. That very night this prophecy was fulfilled. These Aramaic words were common words and were often heard in the streets and the marketplace. The meaning of the words was

understood but not their interpretation and especially not their prophetic interpretation. The Aramaic section of Daniel is also important for a crucial Aramaic phrase that was often quoted by Jesus. This is the term ‘the Son of Man’ and is found in Daniel 7:13. I will explore the meaning of the Aramaic term, Son of Man, in the section dealing with Aramaic in the words of Jesus.

Part Two

Aramaic As The Language Of Jesus of Nazareth



I have been pursuing Aramaic studies since 1991 and teaching Aramaic since 2002 and I have discovered that Aramaic is a very controversial field of study. The common assumption is that Jesus was primarily a Hebrew speaker. People who study Greek often fall in love with that language and since the New Testament is written in Greek they come to assume that it was the language Jesus spoke. Some Hebraic Christians and students of Greek reject the notion that Jesus spoke Aramaic. I have seen people become angry and very offended at the statement, “Aramaic was the language of Jesus”. The questions regarding languages spoken in the Holy Land at the time of Christ are best dealt with in [Aramaic Sources of Mark’s Gospel](#) by

Maurice Casey. (Casey's work is beneficial and he is a good scholar but I cannot condone all of his conclusions. He has attacked the authenticity of the Gospel of John and I do not agree fully with his understanding of the Aramaic term Barnasha.)

At this point I will begin to look at the evidence that Jesus spoke the Aramaic language. Scholarly consensus is that Aramaic was the language Jesus spoke. This has been determined by careful study of the text of the New Testament, archeological discoveries and other ancient sources, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls. Aramaic archeological discoveries include the Prophecy of Balaam Son of Beor, the Tombstone of King Uzziah the Son of David, the Tel-Dan "House of David" inscription, the Elephantine Papyri, the Caiaphas Ossuary, the Nazareth Inscription, the Bar-Kokba Scrolls, the Cairo Genizeh and the Tomb of Queen Helen of Abidene. It is possible to compose a book entirely of statements by respected biblical scholars that Aramaic was the language of the Holy Land at the time of Jesus. The first I want to cite is the historian Flavius Josephus. Flavius Josephus was a Jewish historian who wrote his monumental The Jewish War and The Antiquities of the Jews during the time that the New Testament was still being written. Josephus was a Jew born in the Holy Land. He wrote The Jewish War in what he called his "ancestral language" and then re-wrote it in Greek. So, what was his ancestral language? Josephus said he wrote initially in his ancestral language for two reasons. The first is, as a Jew from the Holy Land, he did not have a command of the Greek language. He says, "I

have also taken a great deal of pains to obtain the learning of the Greek; although I have so accustomed myself to speak our own tongue, I cannot pronounce Greek with sufficient exactness. For my nation does not encourage those that learn the languages of many nations. On this account, as there have been many who have done their endeavors, with great patience, to obtain this Greek learning, there have yet hardly been two or three that have succeeded therein, who were immediately rewarded for their pains.” This means that very few Jews who lived in the Holy Land could speak Greek, or speak it well. The second reason was that Josephus was hoping that the version of his book written in his native tongue could be read by gentiles and Jews in Assyria, Chaldea and Babylonia, since his native tongue was their native tongue as well. In the first century this region was Aramaic-speaking and the direct descendents of the Assyrians, Chaldeans and Babylonians still speak Aramaic till this day. (The writings of Josephus were preserved in Aramaic by Aramaic Christians who looked upon them as important sacred writings.) This proves that Aramaic was the ancestral language of the common Jew born in the Holy Land during the first century. Also, when Josephus includes a word from his native language in his books we find it is almost always an Aramaic word rather than a Hebrew word.

Many respected modern Bible scholars have determined that Aramaic was the language of Jesus the Messiah. Alan Millard in Discoveries from the Time of Jesus states that, “A Jewish Craftsman’s son brought up in Nazareth, a town on a main road,

could be expected to talk in Aramaic, to use Greek when necessary, and to have more than a reading knowledge of Hebrew.” Joachim Jeremias stated in his New Testament Theology, “The mother-tongue of Jesus was a Galilean version of western Aramaic. We find the nearest linguistic analogies to the sayings of Jesus in the popular Aramaic passages of the Palestinian Talmud and Midrashim which have their home in Galilee...In addition to the sentences and words preserved in the original Aramaic [in the New Testament], there are many passages in which an underlying Aramaic wording can be disclosed. This includes expressions which are idiomatic in Aramaic but alien to both Hebrew and Greek (Aramaisms), and translation mistakes which show up when recourse is had to Aramaic.” Maurice Casey in Aramaic Sources of Mark’s Gospel says, “The Gospel of Mark is written in Greek, though Jesus spoke Aramaic...It follows that the change in language from Aramaic to Greek was part of a cultural shift from a Jewish to a Gentile environment. If therefore we wish to recover the Jesus of history, we must see whether we can reconstruct his sayings, and the earliest accounts of his doings, in their original Aramaic. This should help us to understand him within his own cultural background.” Joseph A. Fitzmyer in The Semitic Background of the New Testament says, “As for the language that Jesus would have used, the evidence seems to point mainly to Aramaic...Jesus used Hebrew on occasion...the consensus of opinion at the moment seems to support Aramaic as the language commonly used by Jesus and his immediate disciples in Palestine.”

Gustaf Dalman in The Words of Jesus: Considered in the Light of Post-Biblical Jewish Writings and the Aramaic Language states that, “From all these considerations must be drawn the conclusion that Jesus grew up speaking the Aramaic tongue, and that He would be obliged to speak Aramaic to His disciples and to the people in order to be understood.” Matthew Black in An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts says, “Jesus must have conversed in the Galilean dialect of Aramaic, and His teaching was probably almost entirely in Aramaic.” According to Biblical archeologist John Romer in Testament: The Bible and History, “Recent linguistic analysis of all four gospels, however, has tied them not to these grand cities of the Empire, but to the verbal culture of Palestine itself. The construction of their Greek texts, the shading and coloring of the writing strongly suggest that much of them had been translated from Palestinian Aramaic, Jesus’ own language.” Bart Ehrman in Jesus the Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium states, “Jesus was Jewish. Realizing the Jewish-ness of Jesus is critical if we are to make sense of his teachings. For despite the fact that the religion founded in his name quickly came to be filled with non-Jews...it was founded by a Jewish teacher who taught his Jewish followers about the Jewish God who guided the Jewish people by means of the Jewish Law. Jesus kept and discussed Jewish customs like prayer and fasting, he worshiped in Jewish places of worship like the synagogue and the Temple, and he kept Jewish feasts like the Passover...He maintained that God’s will was revealed in the books written by

Moses, especially in “the Law” that was delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai...Most of Jesus’ teachings, in fact, relate in one way or another to his understanding of Jewish Law. This Jewish Law, of course included the Ten Commandments, but it contained much more besides...”About Aramaic Ehrman says, “there are multiple attested traditions that Jesus spoke Aramaic. Sometimes, for example, the Gospels quote his words directly without translating them into Greek (see Mark 5:41, 7:34; John 1:42). ..It is also indicated in the Gospels that Jesus could read the scripture in Hebrew (e.g., Luke 4: 16-20; see also Mark 12: 10, 26), and that he eventually became known as an interpreter of them. He is sometimes, for example, called “rabbi,” that is, “teacher” (see Mark 9:5; John 3:2)...There are no traditions that specifically indicate that Jesus spoke Greek, although some historians have surmised that living in Galilee where Greek was widely known [among non-Jews], he may have learned some. Moreover, some have suspected that he communicated with Pontius Pilate in Greek at his trial...At best we can say that it is at least possible that Jesus was tri-lingual-that he normally spoke Aramaic, that he could at least read the Hebrew Scriptures, and that he may have been able to communicate a bit in Greek. The final point is, in my judgment, the least assured.” Scholarly consensus and data from the New Testament agree that the primary spoken language of Jesus, the language he used when working miraculous cures and teaching the multitudes, was Aramaic.

CHAPTER ONE

“The Joy of the Lord is Your Strength!” Christ’s Use of the Aramaic Version of the Old Testament



The Bible began in the spoken form. Parts of the Bible were passed down orally, perhaps for centuries, before they were written down. The prophets proclaimed their messages aloud and then later wrote them down. The power of many verses is only fully experienced when they are spoken aloud. The reality is that very few people could read and write in ancient times. The few that could were regarded as professionals and were called ‘scribes’. That illiteracy was widespread and that most people were familiar with the scriptures in an oral form is seen in Christ’s statement in the Sermon on the Mount, “You have heard it said...But I say unto you...” (Matthew 5:21). As demonstrated in the books of Ezra and Daniel, at the

time of the Babylonian Captivity many of the Jews' language shifted from Hebrew to Aramaic. As many Jews spoke Aramaic rather than Hebrew, this necessitated an Aramaic version of the Old Testament in order for the people to understand their sacred scriptures. Aramaic versions of the Old Testament are called the Targum. (There are different Targums, such as Targum Jonathon, Targum Onqelos and so on. The Syriac Aramaic version of the Old Testament is called the Pesheeta. It is the official Bible version of Aramaic Christians and it originated as a Targum used by Christian Jews.) Jews consider the Targums as part of the official Rabbinic Bible. Targums represent an important oral tradition. They were passed down by word of mouth for centuries before being written down. Yet we do have Targums that date to the time of Jesus.

In Nehemiah 8:8 Nehemiah describes the beginning of the Aramaic Targums. As the time of Feast of Tabernacles neared Ezra stood behind an elevated pulpit and read the scriptures to those who have returned from exile. Almost the entire nation was dislocated after being defeated by the Babylonians. The Babylonians forced almost every Jew to march from Canaan all the way to Babylon in Iraq, where they lived in captivity for an entire generation before they were allowed to return to their homeland. Ezra the Scribe and Nehemiah the Governor were instrumental in re-establishing the Jews in their native land. The Feast of Tabernacles is an important Biblical Holiday that was celebrated by Jesus Christ (John 7:2). It was an autumn festival in which people lived in tents and

outdoor shelters to remember how their ancestors lived as nomads while Moses led them from slavery in Egypt and to the Promised Land. When Ezra read the law he made sure that the assembly was inclusive. Women were allowed to come and hear the scriptures read with the men. The text specifically mentions that women participated in this event (Nehemiah 8:2). First, Ezra read the Hebrew text, and then he orally translated it into Aramaic. A translation or paraphrase of the Bible into Aramaic is called a Targum. Nehemiah 8:8 states that Ezra first read the passage of the scripture then he gave the sense and explained it. Scholars believe this explanation was given in the Aramaic language. According to both the traditional Jewish understanding and the current scholarly interpretation of this passage, the event chronicled in this passage is the beginning of the Aramaic Targum version of scriptures. For many of those present this was the first time they could hear and understand the scriptures in their own language. The crowd began to weep on hearing the scriptures. They were weeping perhaps for two reasons. First, tears of joy for being able to hear the word of God. Secondly, tears due to conviction of sin from the hearing of God's Law. Ezra comforted the populace and reminded them, "Weep not, for the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10). Later they had a party and celebrated with great mirth and festivities the wonderful experience of being able to hear and understand the word of God in their own language, Aramaic.

The Aramaic Targums are important because they originated from the time of Christ, and in that they

are paraphrases or interpretive translations rather than literal word-for-word translations, some of their interpretations reflect understandings of the Bible current with his era. Bible translators often refer to the Targums to clarify where it seems obscure in the original Hebrews texts.

A meturgeman is someone who renders the Bible orally into Aramaic. Jesus acted as a meturgeman on the cross. Certain scholars surmise that Jesus may have recited Psalm 22 in Aramaic in its entirety from the cross.

The Targums played a central part of the worship ritual in the synagogue at the time of Christ. When Jews worshipped in their synagogues at the time of Christ they first opened in Hebrew with the Shema. This is the statement, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord, your God, the Lord is One Lord." This was followed by Berokoth, or 'Blessings'. This was followed by what is called the Tephillah, which is also known as the Eighteen Benedictions or as the Shemoneh Esreh. After this prayer came the reading of Scriptures, first in Hebrew then followed by the Aramaic explanation, which is the Targum. Then a sermon was given in Aramaic and the homily was closed with the ancient Aramaic prayer known as the Kaddish. This is the form of synagogue worship with which Jesus was familiar. This is how synagogue worship is described in Rabbinical sources such as the Talmud and has been carefully researched by recognized authorities such as Joachim Jeremias and Martin McNamara.

It isn't just speculation that the Targums may have some bearing in New Testament interpreta-

tion. The New Testament actually quotes from the Targums. Jesus himself, and also Paul, quotes from Targumic renderings. In Mark 4:12 Jesus quotes the Targum of Isaiah 6:9-10. The reading is, “they may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand; so that they may not turn again and be forgiven.” (In this passage it is stated that Jesus deliberately made his teachings obscure when he used parables. This was so that only those who were earnestly seeking after the truth would catch his meaning. Jesus, in his teaching, reminds us that many are called but few are chosen.) F.F. Bruce notes in The Books and the Parchments, “The closing words of the quotation in Mark (‘and it should be forgiven them’) appear neither the Masoretic Hebrew nor in the Greek Septuagint, but they are exactly the words used in the Targum of Jonathon....the Targums of Onqelos and Jonathan contain material much earlier than the dates at which they were published.” (The Masoretic version is the traditional Hebrew version of the Old Testament that has come down to us. The Masorites were Hebrew scribes from the Middle East who transmitted the Bible. The scribal notes of the Masorites are in Aramaic. The Septuagint is the Greek version of the Old Testament. It was probably commissioned by the renown Ptolemy Dynasty of Pharaohs in order to be included in the famous library of Alexandria. It is often quoted from in the Greek New Testament.) At times, the Targums give different and alternate readings than what we find in our standard Old Testament. Sometimes the New Testament quotes from these alternate render-

ings found in the Aramaic Targums rather than the exact wording we have in the Hebrew Version of the Bible. Bruce Chilton notes in *A Galilean Rabbi and His Bible*, “In some cases, the agreement [with the Targums in New Testament quotations of the Old Testament] is so close, and so unlike the rendering of other ancient versions of the Old Testament, that it is best explained as the influence of Targumic tradition at some stage in the development of the New Testament.” McNamara cites Luke 6: 36; “Become merciful just as you Father is merciful,” and describes its relationship to the rendering of Leviticus 22:28 in Targum Pseudo-Jonathon: “My people, children of Israel, as our Father is merciful in heaven, so shall you be merciful on earth.” The most logical explanation of this is that Jesus was familiar with this Targumic rendering and quoted it. Later this traditional Aramaic understanding was written down in the Pseudo-Jonathon Targum. In another passage, quoted below, Jesus also quotes a Targum reading about the Gehenna of fire, or hell.

Jesus in his teachings often warned of Gehenna fire. Gehenna is an Aramaic word that came from the Hebrew place-name, ‘Gey Hennom,’ that became a euphemism for the eternal fires of hell. Jesus agrees with the Targumic interpretation and identifies Isaiah’s prophecy as a description of hell. In Mark 9:44 and 48 Jesus refers to Isaiah 66:24 as referring to Gehenna. In this instance Jesus is quoting from the Aramaic Targum. Since the common people spoke Aramaic and not Hebrew, it was necessary to have versions of the Bible in the vernacular so the

people could understand it. Jesus here quotes from the Targum of Isaiah and states that Isaiah is referring to hell. Ancient Jewish literature, such as the Book of Enoch, describes hell as do some of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Jesus describes a burning hell, Gehenna fire, and Jacob his brother (known as Saint James the Just) also refers to the “fire of Gehenna” (James 3:6). Isaiah’s prophecy states, “And they shall go forth and look upon the corpses of the men who have transgressed against me, for their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched. They shall be abhorrence to all flesh” (Isaiah 66:24). Targums contained interpretations and explanations that were inserted into the text. Later, when the Targums were written down these expansions were included in them. This is very important because it tells us how the scriptures were understood or interpreted during the time of Jesus. In the Targum of Genesis 3:24, we have a description of the common understanding of Gehenna from the time of Christ. This is found both in Targum Neophyti and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. It states, “He established the Garden of Eden for the righteous, that they might take delight in the fruit of the tree, for having during their lives cherished the instruction of the Law in this word and fulfilled the precepts. For the wicked he established Gehenna, which is like a sharp two-edged sword. Within it he established sparks of fire and burning coals with which to judge the wicked, who during their lives rebelled against the instruction of the Law.”

Jesus’ actions in his cleansing of the Temple show a familiarity with the Aramaic Targum of

Zechariah 14:21 which states, “And there shall no longer be merchants [or ‘traders’] in the house of the LORD of hosts on that day.” This is from the Aramaic Targum. The Hebrew says there shall not be a Canaanite in the House of the Lord. This is a scriptural background for Jesus’ purifying the temple and it is also significant that it is found in Deutero-Zechariah. Joachim Jeremias notes in his New Testament Theology that Jesus was operating in his understanding of the prophecy of Zechariah from the Targums when he cleansed the Temple. (Jesus went to worship in the Temple and was incensed to find the courtyard that was set aside for gentiles to worship in was transformed into a huge market. This market was a money-exchange and was also being used for the selling of animals for sacrifices. The family of the high priest set this up in order to monopolize in these trades and they were charging exorbitant rates. Jesus saw this as extortion and theft. Jesus made a whip and overturned all the money-changers tables and released at the animals and cleared all merchants and animals out of this court of the temple. Jesus stopped anyone carrying goods from passing through this court of the temple.) The fulfillment of this prophecy is found in Mark 11:15-18 and John 2:13-22. Deutero-Zechariah, or the second part of Zechariah, which is Zechariah 9-14, contains many prophecies of the Passion. Bruce Chilton in Rabbi Jesus and Robert Graves in King Jesus use the prophecies of the second part of Zechariah to understand the Passion. Their interpretations may be slightly in error, but Jesus and the

writers of the Gospels definitely had the prophecies of Zechariah in mind during the events of the Passion.

St. Paul also quotes from the Targum. New Testament quotations of Old Testament passages usually are from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Some quotations match the Hebrew text, others the Aramaic Targums. In Romans 10:7 St. Paul quotes from a Targum rendering found in Targum Neofiti, being a paraphrase of Deuteronomy 30:13. “But the righteousness that comes from faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down) or ‘Who will descend into the Abyss (that is to bring Christ up from the dead).” But what does it say? “The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith we proclaim); because if you confess with your lips, “Jesus is Lord”, and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (The Hebrew says ‘sea’ and the Aramaic Targums have ‘Abyss’). The Harper Collins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version notes, “Abyss agrees with an Aramaic paraphrase of Deuteronomy 30:13 (see Targum Neofiti 1) and suggests Christ’s resurrection from the subterranean realm of the dead. Hebrew and Greek (Septuagint) texts of Deuteronomy instead refer to crossing the sea.” Paul also quotes the Aramaic Targum of Psalm 68:18 in Ephesians 4:8, “But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it says, ‘When he ascended on high, he made captivity captive; he gave gifts to his people’. When it says “He ascended”

what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.” Paul’s quote does not match the Hebrew or the Greek Septuagint Old Testament. It does follow the Aramaic Targum and the Aramaic Pesheeta (which is a type of Targum). (In this verse in the Hebrew the gifts are given to God. The Aramaic has the gifts given by God. As a Rabbi, Paul was familiar with the Targum. Paul chose to follow the Targum here rather than the literal Hebrew version because this rendering communicated the point that he wished to convey and he did so under the authority and by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is not a contradiction but rather Paul choosing to give an alternate reading from the Aramaic Targum.)

John the Revelator often refers to Targums of Deuteronomy 31-32 especially in the Song of Moses (Rev. 15: 1-5) which follows Targum Onkelos. The Song of Moses runs through the entire book of Revelation. Hugh Schonfield notes in The Original New Testament that the version of the Song of Moses found in Revelation is that of the Aramaic Targum, in which the Song of Moses is interpreted in an eschatological manner. (Eschatology refers to the study of prophecies about the End of Days.) This is illustrated by the following parallel passages found in Revelation and the Targum of the Song of Moses.

Revelation 1:4 (Deuteronomy 32:39) *He who is, who was and who is to come, the almighty.*

Revelation 2:11 (Deuteronomy 33:6) *Believers shall not be hurt by the second death after the resurrection of judgment.* Aramaic Targum scholars Bruce Chilton and Martin McNamara also note that the enigmatic phrase, “the second death,” which appears in Revelation 20:6, 4 is paralleled in Targum Onqelos (Deuteronomy 33:6) and Jonathan (Isaiah 65:15).

Revelation 6:10 (Deuteronomy 32:43) *God is the avenger to the adversaries of his people.*

Revelation 8:6, Revelation 9:7 (Deuteronomy 32:23-27) *“For these things they sound alarm in every place for blasting, mildew, locusts, evil beasts and the sword.”* All four beasts of Daniel 7 are combined in the sufferings of the Jews in the End of Days.

The Song of Moses found in the Book of Revelation has been a curiosity to many. John refers to a Song of Moses and quotes from it, but no such Song of Moses is found in the Old Testament. However when we look at the version of the Song of Moses from Deuteronomy as found in the Aramaic Targums we find that this is the version that John quotes from in Revelation 15:3-5 (Deuteronomy 32, Exodus 15:1-18, Exodus 15:11, Psalm 86: 8-10, Psalm 90.) This quotation follows Targum Onkelos rendering of Deuteronomy 32:4 *“Ascribe ye greatness unto our God, the mighty one whose ways are perfect, for all his ways are justice... just and true is he’.* The similarity with John’s version is very clear when they are compared. In the Book of Revelation John wrote, “And they sang the Song of

Moses, the servant of God and the Song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and marvelous are Thy Works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are thy ways, Thou King of the Saints! Who will not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy Name? For thou are holy, for all nations shall come and worship before thee, For thy judgments are made manifest.”

Revelation 19:2 (Palestinian Targum Deuteronomy 32:41) *“Rejoice ye nations, and ye people of the house of Israel; for he hath avenged the blood of his servants which was shed”*

Targums are expanded interpretive translations, or paraphrases, rather than direct word-for-word translations. The use of the Aramaic Targums in the New Testament illustrates the prevalence of Aramaic at the time of Jesus. The Targums help us to understand how the Scriptures were understood and interpreted at the time of Jesus. Jesus himself used renderings from the Scriptures from the Targums at times. Bible translators often refer to the Targums for additional clarity when translating certain passages where the Hebrew seems obscure. The best Bible study materials using the Aramaic Targums as a resource are by Father Martin McNamara. Bruce Chilton in his books uses the Targums to understand the mind of Christ but some of his conclusions are unorthodox and incorrect. The best work on the Targums remains Targum and Testament; Aramaic Paraphrases of the Holy Bible: A Light on the New Testament by Martin McNamara.

CHAPTER TWO

Aramaic, Enoch and the Dead Sea Scrolls



Aramaic Targums were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, particularly a Targum of Leviticus and a Targum of the Book of Job. (The Dead Sea Scrolls are the remains of a library that dates from the time of Christ. These scrolls were found at Qumran near the Dead Sea by Bedouin Arabs in 1948.) While the majority of the scrolls are in Hebrew, one sixth of the scrolls are in Aramaic. Hebrew at the time was a prestige language that was spoken in certain circles but Aramaic was the language of the people. Almost all the scrolls are in Hebrew and Aramaic but very few are written in Greek. Tobit, the Genesis Apocryphon and the Book of Enoch are important Dead Sea Scrolls written in the Aramaic language. Enoch tells the story of Enoch of the Seventh Generation from Adam and his prophecies. According to the Scriptures Enoch walked with God and “was not for God took him”

(Genesis 5:24, Hebrews 11:5-6). This “lost book of the Bible” was quoted from in the Epistle of Jude, the Brother of Jesus. This quotation reads, “Behold the Lord comes with thousands of his Holy Ones, to execute judgment upon them and convict them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed and all the harsh things ungodly sinners have spoken against him” (Jude 14-15). The Book of Enoch was considered part of the Bible by the Dead Sea Scrolls Community. (The Book of Enoch, while it may contain some truth, cannot carry the authority of scripture in the form that it has come down to us. This fact does not minimize its importance.) Although Enoch exists only in fragments among the Dead Sea Scrolls it was preserved in its entirety by the church in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Church was founded in 340 AD. Later, Ethiopia was cut off from the rest of the Christian world due to the Islamic Conquests. The Ethiopians are a Semitic people and have preserved other writings that were later found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, such as the Book of Jubilees. The Book of Enoch tells the story of the corruption of the world before the flood of Noah and it contains prophecies of the end-times and, like the Book of Daniel, speaks of the coming of the “Son of Man.” These writings help us to understand the thinking of people at the time of Christ. They give us insight into their culture and history and show us that Aramaic was an important language that they used.

The Dead Sea Scrolls showed that there had been in the ancient past a connection between the community that produced these scrolls and the early Aramaic

Christians. The Syriac Pesheeta Aramaic Bible used by Aramaic Christians has 155 Psalms. The Book of Psalms has 150 Psalms. No one knew where the extra Psalms in the Pesheeta Bible came from they were assumed to be rather late additions to the Aramaic Bible and of a fraudulent origin. However, when the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered these extra Psalms from the Syriac Bible were found to have been used by Jews in the Holy Land at the time of Jesus. An example of one of these “Syriac Psalms” found among the Dead Sea Scrolls is Psalm 155.

O Lord, I have called to you, listen to me.
I spread forth my palms to our holy dwelling;
Incline your ear and grant me my petition,
And do not withhold my request from me.
Build up my soul and do not cast it down,
And do not abandon it in the presence of the
wicked...

How did these lost Psalms end up in the Bible of the Aramaic Christians? It is probably because Aramaic Jewish Christians, including apostles of the Lord Jesus and his relatives, traveled to Assyria and Babylon and founded the ancient Assyrian Church of the East. On the other hand, in the Middle Ages, Mar Timotheus the Great, Patriarch of the ‘Nestorian’ Assyrian Church of the East knew of ancient scrolls found in caves in the region of the Dead Sea and hoped to consult them to clarify a verse of scripture he was struggling with in his Bible studies.

The Bible states that the Gospel message was preached to the Jew first and then to the gentile. Since Babylonia had a large Jewish community and was Aramaic-speaking it is only natural that it was one of the first regions in which the good news of Jesus was preached. The 10 northern tribes of Israel were defeated and taken into exile by the Assyrians to the land of Mesopotamia. Asahel Grant, an explorer in the 19th century believed that Assyrian Christians, the modern Aramaic speakers, are actually the 10 lost tribes of Israel. There are still Aramaic Jews, descendents of those Israelites who lived among Assyrian Christians until the establishment of the State of Israel. There may be some truth to Mr. Grant's theories but the modern Assyrians consider themselves to be the direct descendents of the ancient Assyrians, Chaldeans and Babylonians and to a great extent doubtlessly are. Many Bible scholars do believe that the Lost Tribes of Israel mixed with the Assyrians and became assimilated with the Assyrians. Later, the Kingdom of Judah was defeated by the Babylonians and also taken in exile to Mesopotamia. There has been a Jewish presence in this area ever since. Ezra and Nehemiah took many of the exiles back to Canaan, but some chose to remain in Babylonia. The Biblical story of Esther concerns these Jews who chose to remain in Babylon and Persia. Josephus records that the royal household of the Aramaic kingdom of Adiabene converted to Judaism thus making Mesopotamia a fertile mission field for the works of the Apostles. Later this Jewish community produced the Babylonian Talmud and

the Masoretic Text of the Old Testament (which was produced in Babylon and Tiberius circa 900 AD). Until the 1100s they were ruled over by a king of Davidic descent who was called the Resch-Glutha. H.V. Horton mentions in Through the Lands of the Bible,

At the head of the Jewish Community in Babylon lived a shadowy king of the Jews, a prince of the House of David, whose title was “Prince of the Captivity”-the Resch-Glutha. This potentate kept his own body-guard, his ministers, and his court officials. And appeared in public clothed in gold tissue and accompanied by the officers of his guard. He was famous for his hospitality and the splendor of his entertainments. When Babylon died, Seleucia inherited her fame and from Seleucia, it passed to Baghdad. Here in the time of the Caliphs the Prince of the Captivity still held his court. And he, in whom we see the last reflection Solomon’s glory, was still reigning over Babylonian Jewry in the twelfth century A.D.

This Aramaic speaking Jewish community and the Aramaic Christian community influenced each other and borrowed from each other. The vowel points in Hebrew and Modern Aramaic are similar and, having the same origins, they are an example of the cultural exchange between the two communities. Aramaic Christians have also preserved for us the ancient

Aramaic “Odes of Solomon”, which some scholars see as a hymnal of early Aramaic speaking Jewish Christians and this hymn book has been dated to 70 AD by some scholars.

(The Syriac Aramaic Pesheeta Bible is the ancient Aramaic version of the Bible used by Assyrian Christians in the Middle East. The Old Testament of the Pesheeta is based on Hebrew scrolls far older than the traditional Masoretic Hebrew text. The Syriac Pesheeta New Testament belongs to the same textual family as the Traditional Greek Text (also known as the Majority Text, the Byzantine Text or Textus Receptus) and the Latin Vulgate. Thus it is similar to the text used by the translators of the King James Version of the Bible. The translators of the King James Version proudly stated that they did consult the Aramaic version of the Bible, but they didn't translate directly from it. This is noted in the original introduction to the King James Bible that is entitled “The Translators to the Readers”. There are several English translations from the Aramaic version of the Bible currently available.)

CHAPTER THREE

Aramaic in the Words of Jesus



Although the Gospels, and the rest of the New Testament, are written in Greek, Aramaic is scattered throughout the Greek text. This clearly shows that there is an Aramaic substratum to the gospel and that Jesus taught in Aramaic rather than in Greek. Jesus is at times quoted directly speaking word-for-word in Aramaic. On occasion, Jesus' words are quoted in the original Aramaic and the words are transliterated. This means that sometimes the New Testament uses Greek letters to spell out Aramaic words. The following are examples of Aramaic spoken by Jesus found in the New Testament.

The Name of Jesus

Jesus in Aramaic is Yeshu. It is not Yahshua but is derived from an Aramaic form of the Hebrew name Yehushua. (People who use this form, Yahshua,

belong to the Sacred Name Movement. This radical movement believes that unless a man calls upon God by the name 'Yahweh' he shall be damned to hell. While the name of the Lord is Yahweh this form of the name of God is not used in the New Testament and cannot be shown to be used by Jesus. At the time of Jesus, Jews, out of reverence, did not utter the sacred name. In fact, according to the Dead Sea Scrolls, if someone did utter the name 'Yahweh,' even by accident, that person would be permanently banished from the community. According to the Aramaic scholar Joachim Jeremias, Christ himself used what he refers to as the Divine Passive, meaning speaking of God by means of circumlocutions. Jeremias found the Divine Passive in about 100 places in the sayings of Jesus Christ. This method of speaking preferred by Jesus, which is called 'the Divine Passive', involves reverencing the Sacred Name of God by not uttering it and by reverently referring to God in an indirect manner. Illustrating this Jeremias offered this reconstruction of a statement of Christ as it was given originally in the Aramaic. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn, for there is One who will comfort them" (Matthew 5:4). If the practice of Christ himself was to reverence the Divine Name in such a manner this demonstrates the fallacy of the Sacred Name Movement. Besides that, we are not certain of the exact pronunciation of the name of the Lord. Since the Jews refrained from speaking the name of the Lord, the pronunciation of this name was forgotten. It could have been pronounced Yahu, Yahowah, or Yahwah. I do not see the logic in using

the proper pronunciation of the Divine Name as a means to exclude people and to stir up controversy when the exact pronunciation of it is unknown. I believe we are free to speak the name of the Lord as the Hebrews did in the Old Testament period but this shouldn't be used to exclude people or viewed as necessary in to do in order to be saved. That Jesus means 'Salvation' and not "Yah's Salvation" is seen in the New Testament in Matthew 1:21.)

The Aramaic form of Yehushua is Yeshua. This name is derived from the normal Hebrew word for "salvation" which is yoshua. Jesus' name does not contain the divine name of God, "Yahweh". In Aramaic, including Modern Aramaic, Jesus is Yeshu. In Hebrew Jesus was called "Yeshu" until recently. A friend of mine who had lived in Israel told me that over twenty years ago when she lived in Israel Jesus was called "Yeshu" in Hebrew but when she went back recently the pronunciation had been changed to "Yeshua". This is probably due to the efforts of Christian missionaries to evangelize Jews. The correct pronunciation has been altered and the name of Jesus is now mispronounced as 'Yeshua'. Yeshua is a valid alternate pronunciation but in Galilean Aramaic this name was pronounced 'Yeshu' and in the Bible Jesus is called a Galilean and therefore must have gone by the Galilean pronunciation. The Assyrians call Jesus Yeshu in Aramaic but sometimes they pronounce it as 'Ishu'. Aramaic speaking Christians maintained the correct pronunciation of the name of Jesus. As Jesus is a common name among Spanish speakers, Yeshu is a common name among Aramaic speakers.

Yeshua is a form of the name Joshua as in Joshua the Son of Nun who led the army of Israel under Moses and led the Israelites after the death of Moses. Ron Miller in The Hidden Gospel of Matthew notes that “His full name was Jehoshua ben Yosef; Joshua the son of Joseph. But Jehoshua was commonly shortened to Jeshua or Jeshu. When the gospels were written in Greek, there was a problem. Greek has no *sh* sound. So *Iesous* was the closest approximation to *Jeshu*. Furthermore, it was not common in Greek to end a name in a vowel, and the word Jesus was arrived at.” Mr. Miller is slightly incorrect. In Aramaic the pronunciation would have been “Yeshu Bar Yosef”. The form ‘Jesus’ as an equivalent for ‘Joshua’ was settled on about 250 years before the birth of Jesus when the Old Testament was translated into Greek as the Septuagint translation. In the New Testament Joshua the Son of Nun is also called ‘Jesus’ (Hebrew 4:8 KJV). ‘Jesus’ was a very common name in the first century. Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian who wrote during the same era the New Testament was being composed, mentions several people who lived at the time of Christ who were also named Jesus. Another example is seen in the Catholic Bible, which includes the book of Jesus Sirach. (There is symbolic significance in the name Joshua. Moses gave the law but it was Joshua that brought the people into the land of promise, which symbolizes the Kingdom of God.) Ron Miller does give the proper etymology of the form ‘Jesus’. Jesus is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word ‘Joshua’. The name Jesus is not a pagan name and it does not refer to Zeus or any other

pagan deity. The Aramaic form, Yeshua, is actually found in the Old Testament in Zechariah 3:1. The Aramaic form is Yeshua and not Yehoshua. Jeremiah made a prophecy that if the Jews did not repent they would be banished to Babylon for seventy years. His prophecy was fulfilled. When the Jews returned from Babylon many spoke Aramaic and used Aramaic forms of Hebrew names, such as Yeshua. Later, the Jews transformed the Aramaic name for Jesus Christ into a curse. The Jews transformed Yeshu into a Hebrew acronym, “May His Name Be Accursed” (Yeshu-Yemach *SHemo Uezichro*—“May his name and memory be obliterated”). Jesus, or Joshua, is actually a form of the Hebrew names Hosea and Isaiah. Even the Hebrew word ‘Hosanna!’ is a form of the word Joshua or ‘Salvation’. Michael Fixler noted, “Hosanna, the Hebrew ‘save now’ is a prayer converted to a cry of praise. The word itself is of the same root as ‘messiah’ and close in form to Hoshua or Joshua, the Hebrew forms of the name Jesus. Hence, in a symbolic play of words, it could here also signify something like ‘Behold Jesus, Behold the Messiah!’” I have studied Hebrew in seminary. Cultists who attempt to make a divisive issue over the exact pronunciation of the name of the Lord are actually mispronouncing it themselves and are spreading falsehood and error. What matters isn’t exactly how to pronounce “Jesus” in Aramaic or Hebrew, but rather knowing him in your heart and living a life that glorifies him.

Raca

In Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, Jesus warns his disciples that he who calls his brother “Raca” is in danger of judgment (Matthew 5:22). According to ancient tradition the Gospel of Matthew was originally written in Aramaic. Whoever translated it from Aramaic into Greek didn’t know what the Aramaic word “Raca” meant so he left the word in the original Aramaic; therefore, here we have an Aramaic word embedded in the Greek text and left unexplained and untranslated. The Holman Christian Standard Bible translated the word as ‘moron’ and notes in the footnotes, “Literally, Raca, an Aramaic term of abuse similar to ‘airhead’.” Literally in Aramaic it refers to ‘empty’ and so this translation does capture its original meaning. Jesus’ words here show us that we should guard our tongue and remember that the words we speak can do harm. Harming others by our words displeases God and can bring his judgment against us.

Mammon

Christ’s word for the “deceitfulness of riches” in Aramaic is Mammon. Mammon is greed personalized. This Aramaic word is also left un-translated in our Bibles. This has become an Aramaic loan-word even in our language. To find out Jesus’ teachings we must do two things. First, explore the scriptures and, second, look at the meaning of the Aramaic term, in this case the word Mammon. This is partic-

ularly important. Attention is called to this word in that it is an Aramaic word that is left un-translated both in the original Greek and in our English translation. With “mammon” we have what is called by scholars the *Ipissimo Vox*, or *Ipissimo Verbo*, the actual words of Jesus as he spoke them in his original Aramaic. Mammon is the Aramaic word for “riches” or “wealth”. It is pronounced Mamona. Jesus spoke of the “mammon of unrighteousness”. In Aramaic it is wealth personified as in an evil false god. In the Greek of the New Testament the equivalent Greek word is Plutos, from Pluto, the God of the wealth and the dead. The Harper Collins Study Bible NRSV notes, “the retention of the Aramaic word mammon contributes to the personification of wealth as an evil master.” Jesus tells us that you cannot serve God and Mammon (Matthew 6:24, Luke 16: 13). Jesus warns us about he that “layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God” (Luke 12:21). Jesus reminds us that it is difficult for the rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God (Matthew 19:23, 24, Luke 6:24). It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. There was no gate in Jerusalem called the Needle’s Eye, contrary to a popular myth. (Some people have spread the false teaching that there was a gate in Jerusalem called the ‘Needle’s Eye’. They taught that to get a camel through the Needles Eye gate it was necessary to unload that camel then bring it through the gate and then reload it on the other side. This simply isn’t true.) George Lamsa said the Aramaic should be translated rope rather than camel.

In his version it would thus read, “It is easier for a rope to go through an eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.” But, either way, it isn’t going through! I checked the Aramaic and found Lamsa to be incorrect. However, Jesus said what is impossible with man is possible for God (Mark 10:27).

Jesus condemned the rich who flaunted their wealth in their offerings (Luke 21:1, Mark 12:41). Jesus told us the parable of the rich fool in Luke Chapter 12. Life is very short and passes away like a shadow. The Rich Inquirer went away sorrowful because he loved mammon more than God (Mark 10:25). But with God all things are possible. Jesus did have rich disciples; Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, Joseph Barnabas and John the Priest. He asked John the Priest to look after his mother as he was dying on the cross.

In the incident of the cleansing of the temple in John 2:13-22 Jesus says, “Take these THINGS from here! Do not make my Father’s house a house of MERCHANDISE!” The court where this was being done at was the court of the gentile, where Yahweh’s house was to be a “house of prayer for all nations” instead they had made it to a market, or a “den of thieves”. The chief priests were making people change coins and purchase animals for sacrifice within the temple precincts. Part of the reason was so the priests could fix the prices. In the Parable of the Sower it is the deceitfulness of riches that as weeds choke the seed and makes it unfruitful (Matthew 13:22, Mark 4:19). In the Parable of the Sower, the

weeds, representing mammon, choke the growth of the seed. In Matthew 13: 21 Jesus explains, “Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches [mammon] choke the word and it becomes unfruitful.” Jesus warned his followers of the dangers of wealth to the soul and these warnings are found throughout the New Testament. Many preachers are preaching a “Prosperity Gospel” in which God wants his followers to “name it and claim it” and be rich and materialistic. This is an example of how we have strayed away from the teachings of Jesus Christ and why it is necessary to return to the Aramaic source.

Talitha Cumi

When Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus, the leader of the synagogue, to life from death he uttered the Aramaic words “Talitha, Cumi.” These words are accurately translated in the Greek to mean, “Little girl, Get up!” (Mark 5:41). In Aramaic ‘Talya’ means ‘little boy’ and ‘Talitha’ means ‘little girl’. ‘Qum’ in Aramaic means ‘to arise’. It is important to note that even the household of a prominent religious leader, like Jairus, was Aramaic speaking and that Jesus shared this Aramaic language with them. The Aramaic word Talitha, meaning ‘little girl,’ has no relation to the Hebrew word for a prayer scarf, ‘Tallit’. This passage does not refer to prayer shawls, which are called in Hebrew, the tallit. While Jesus wore the tassels as ordered by the law, I have seen

no evidence that the Jews of the first century used the tallit, or prayer shawl, or used them to cover their head in prayer (Matthew 9:20, Numbers 15:37-41). In fact, Paul the Apostle states that no such custom existed in the Jewish Christian community (1 Corinthians 11:16). While we need to view Jesus in his authentic Jewish cultural context we should be careful not to impose certain Jewish practices, some of which developed in the Middle Ages, upon his time. (Another example of a tradition that developed in the Middle Ages among Jews are the curls Jewish men wear in front of their ears. Jewish men had no such custom in Bible times.) When the mode of dress evolved, Jews adopted the use of the tallit to maintain the requirement to wear tassels. While Jesus did wear the tassels there is no evidence that he or the early Jewish church used the tallit and in fact Paul says that they did not use such head coverings.

Ephphatha

Jesus was more than a great teacher. He was also a healer and an exorcist. Mark 7:34 has Jesus uttering Aramaic words when he worked his miraculous cures. Ephphatha means “Be Opened.” He spoke these words when he healed a deaf mute. It is interesting to note that when he worked this cure he used his spit to anoint the man’s ears and tongue. He used spit while performing other cures including giving sight to the blind (Mark 8:22, John 9:6-7). This should remind us that part of the mission of the church is to heal the sick. Matthew interprets Isaiah

53 to refer to Jesus suffering on the cross to bringing physical healing to the sick (Matthew 8:17). Jesus commanded his disciples to work miraculous cures when he sent them out to minister and also at the Great Commission when he ascended to heaven (Matthew 10:8, Mark 16: 18). The power of the Holy Spirit to heal the sick is still available to those who seek it in simple child-like faith. While we must not try to force God's hand Christians should pray for the sick that God heal them and believe that he will and that he can. This was part of the ministry of Christ, the Apostles and is part of the ministry of the church today.

Eloi, Eloi Lama Sabachtani

The name of God in Aramaic is usually Alaha, a word related to the Hebrew 'Elohiem' and the Arabic 'Allah'. (Although Arabic and Maltese Christians refer to God as 'Allah' the Islamic conception of God is not the same as the God revealed through the Bible or through the teachings of Jesus the Messiah. Islam teaches that "Allah has no Son" and that it is improper to address Allah as Father, but the Fatherhood of God is a central tenet in the philosophy of Jesus. For those interested in the Islamic religion I recommend the books Sword of the Prophet; Islam: History, Theology, Impact on the World by Serge Trifkovic and How Islam Plans to Change the World by William Wagner.) Jesus calls on his heavenly Father on the cross as 'Alahi', meaning "My God". In Aramaic God is also called Mar Yah, meaning

Lord. The form of God in Aramaic that Jesus used is also used in Daniel in the Old Testament and it is Al-aw or Alaha. So in Aramaic God is called Alaha, meaning 'God' and Maryah, meaning Lord, referring to Yahwah or to the name Yahweh or Jehovah.

In the Bible, in the Gospel of Mark, we find Jesus Christ on the cross of Golgotha suffering for the sins of all the world. *“And at the ninth hour (three o’clock) Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachtani?” Which, translated (from the Aramaic), is, “My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34) (If Jesus had been speaking Hebrew he would have said, “Eli, Eli, lama azabtani.” Jesus was not speaking Hebrew but Aramaic, the sister language of Hebrew.)* Jesus spoke these words shortly before he died. Many have been confused at the meaning of these words. Some people believe that Jesus cried these words in despair as he neared death and realized that his messianic hope was false. Many Christians understand this to mean that God the Father looked away from Christ because, “he who knew no sin became sin on our behalf”- (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus was quoting Psalm 22 from the cross. The word’s, “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?,” are found in Psalm 22:1. This prophetic Psalm was written nearly 1,000 years before the birth of our Lord. It perfectly describes everything Christ endured on our behalf upon the cross.

When comparing Psalm 22 with the story of Jesus’ crucifixion amazing parallels appear:

Jesus is mocked for his trust in God

Psalm 22:6-8 and Mark 15:29-32

Jesus suffers thirst

Psalm 22:15 and John 19:28-29

Jesus' hands and feet are pierced

Psalm 22:16 and Luke 23:33

(In this passage we must also note John 19:37 and Zechariah 12:10. There was a controversy concerning Psalm 22:16. The Hebrew Masoretic text reads “Like a lion are my hands and my feet”. Jews accused Christians of altering the text. In Christian versions the verse reads “They have pierced my hands and feet” but Jewish versions of this verse instead had “Like a lion, my hands and feet”. This reading really doesn’t make any sense. Christians and Jews debated this passage for over a thousand years. Who changed it, did the Christians or did the Jews, and what did the original actually say? Since the original manuscripts of the Bible have disappeared it was difficult to know for certain. Finally, in 1948 a version of the Bible was discovered that predated both Christianity and Judaism. The religion we know as Judaism was founded after the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD. The true culprits who altered the text were exposed by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Here the original reading of “They have pierced my hands and my feet” has been preserved. See Martin Abegg Jr, Peter Finch & Eugene Ulrich The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible: the Oldest Known Bible Translated for the First Time into English (Harper, San Francisco, 1999) p. 518-

519. So it was the Christians who preserved the original reading of this passage of scripture.)

Roman soldiers took Christ's clothes, divided them up and gambled for them
Psalm 22:18 and Matthew 27:35

This illustrates the prophetic significance of Psalm 22 and shows us why Jesus was quoting this verse in Aramaic from the cross.

Many people wonder why it was necessary for Jesus to die. The answer to this question is found in a prophecy written 700 years before the time of Christ.

Isaiah wrote about Jesus in Isaiah 53:3-12.

“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and by his stripes we are healed.”

Jesus took the punishment for our sins that we deserve upon himself when he died on the cross. He made a way for everyone to be saved by trusting in him. This atonement is further explained in the Book of Hebrews, “But we see Jesus,...for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that he, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone... Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He himself likewise shared in the same,

that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:9, 14-15). He proved that he accomplished this by his resurrection from the dead on the third day after his suffering. Jesus quoted this Psalm from the cross. Some scholars believe that he quoted it in its entirety from the cross.

What does “Why hast thou forsaken me?” mean? Did God forsake Jesus?

George Lamsa reread it and retranslated it as “My God, My God! For this I was spared!” Lamsa denied that this Psalm was quoted by Jesus at his crucifixion and denied that this Psalm had any prophetic significance. Lamsa obviously denies that Jesus said anything about God forsaking him at all. According to Lamsa, Psalm 22 is a Song of Complaint or a Song of Distress in which King David is crying out to God in sorrow and thus has nothing at all to do with Jesus. Is Lamsa right? Is Psalm 22 a prophetic psalm or not? Two important things show that Lamsa is wrong. First, he has no manuscript authority for his claim. Second, the authors of the New Testament contradict his claim. His translation of “My God, My God for this I was kept” or “for this I was spared” doesn’t even make sense. Lamsa’s retranslation is in error and the traditional reading is correct and accurately translates the Aramaic. (Originally Aramaic didn’t have written vowels. Aramaic vowels are extra marks dots and dashes added above and below the letters. Lamsa

changes the word by altering the vowels.) Lamsa also is in disagreement with how the sacred authors of the New Testament interpret this passage. According to Saint John the Beloved Disciple, Evangelist and Follower of Jesus Christ, Psalm 22 is a Messianic prophecy. When the Romans were casting lots over the garments of Jesus John 19:23-24 says this happened in fulfillment of Psalm 22:18. In Matthew 27: 35 Saint Matthew says the same thing. Two apostles of Jesus say that Psalm 22 is a messianic prophecy. I think we should defer to the interpretation of these holy apostles who knew Jesus and were chosen by him and reject this new rewording by George Lamsa. The prophecies state that the enemies of God's servant would "shake their heads" and say "he trusted in God, let God deliver him". The prophecy is found in Psalm 22:7-8 and its fulfillment is noted in Matthew 27: 30-43. The point is not the being forsaken of God, but the fulfillment of prophecy. It is important that Jesus felt these human feelings. This shows us how Jesus identified with us as human beings. Jesus felt the sadness and despair we all experience. Jesus fully identified with the human experience when he became incarnate as a man.

Korban

When Jesus denounced the false practices of the Pharisees he condemned their practice of the Korban (Mark 7:1-23). Korban refers to an "offering" and is still used to refer to such in modern Aramaic. Jesus was concerned that his followers obey the spirit of

the law and not be lost in the letter of the law. He also warned them for violating scripture by putting tradition, in this case Jewish tradition, over what the Bible actually said. The High Priests of the Temple were teaching that Jews could be released from their obligation to support their parents in their old age if money that was to have gone to the support of their parents was instead given as a gift to the High Priests. Jesus rebuked this practice as a breaking of the Ten Commandments and as elevating Man's tradition over the Word of God. Jesus obeyed the Bible and did observe the Biblical Feasts as is shown by the Gospel of John. Jesus worshiped in the Temple and even observed Hannakuh. Jesus, however, while sharing certain beliefs with the Pharisees, did not adopt their practices especially when he viewed them as at variance with scripture.

Gehenna

Let us look at this word "Gehenna" and understand its meaning by tracing its etymology. The Aramaic word Gehenna comes from the Hebrew word Gey Hinnom, and this means, the Valley of Hinnom. The Pictorial Bible Dictionary states that Gehenna is a transliteration of the Aramaic form of the Hebrew "Gey Ben Hinnom", which means Valley of the Sons of Hinnom. According to the Revell Bible Dictionary, "This valley ran southwest of Jerusalem, where there was a tophet, a site for child sacrifice (2 Chron 28:3, Jeremiah 7:31, 32:35). Jeremiah declared that when God judged Judah, the

Valley of Ben Hinnom would be filled with bodies left unburied, associating the place with judgment (Jeremiah 7:30-33; 19: 1-13). Later, the valley was used as a place to burn refuse and the bodies of criminals and animals.” Unger’s Bible Dictionary says that Gehenna served as “a receptacle of all sorts of putrefying matter and all that defiled the city, and so became the representative or image of the place of everlasting punishment, especially on account of its ever-burning fires; and to this fact the words of Christ refer when he says the ‘fire is not quenched.’” The Pictorial Bible Dictionary states, “After the Old Testament period, Jewish apocalyptic writers began to call the Valley of Hinnom the entrance to Hell, and later Hell itself. So, by New Testament times Gehenna became a synonym for ‘hell’. Terms parallel to Gehenna include “furnace of fire” (Matthew 13: 42, 50); “Lake of Fire” (Revelation 19:20; 20:10, 14-15) “eternal fire” (Jude 7). And “cast down into hell” (2 Peter 2:4). The Greek word used in this passage is Tartarus, and it is used only here. In Greek Tartarus is the place of punishment for the wicked dead.”

Gehenna is described in the Bible as eternal punishment. Unger states, “Gehenna is identical in meaning with the “lake of fire” (Revelation 19:20; 20:10, 14, 15). Moreover, the “second death” and the “lake of fire” are identical terms (Rev. 20:14). These latter Scriptural expressions describe the eternal state of the wicked as forever separated from God and consigned to the special abode of unrepentant angels and men in the eternal state. The term “second” is employed relating to the preceding physical death of

the wicked in unbelief and rejection of God (John 8: 21-24). That this “second death” (“lake of fire” or Gehenna) is no annihilation is shown clearly by Rev. 19:20 and 20:10. After 1,000 years in the lake of fire, the Beast and False prophet still exist there undestroyed. The words “forever and ever” (“to ages of the ages”) describing the destiny of the lost in Hebrews 1:8; also apply to the duration of the throne of God as eternal in the sense of being unending.”

Jesus agrees with the Targumic interpretation and identifies Isaiah’s prophecy as a description of hell. In Mark 9:44 and 48 Jesus refers to Isaiah 66:24 as referring to Gehenna. In this instance Jesus is quoting from the Aramaic Targum. Since the common people spoke Aramaic and not Hebrew, it was necessary to have versions of the Bible in the vernacular so the people could understand it. Jesus here quotes from the Targum of Isaiah and states that Isaiah is referring to hell. Ancient Jewish literature, such as the Book of Enoch, describe hell as do some of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Jesus describes a burning hell, Gehenna fire, and James his brother refers to the “fire of Gehenna”. Isaiah’s prophecy states, “And they shall go forth and look upon the corpses of the men who have transgressed against me, for their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched. They shall be abhorrence to all flesh.”

Gehenna passages:

Matthew 5:22

Whoever shall say, “You fool!”, shall be in danger of the fire of Gehenna.

Matthew 5:29-30, 18:9 Parallel passages using the Aramaic word Gehenna Mark 9: 43-47

For it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into Gehenna.

Matthew 10:28, the identical passage using the Aramaic Gehenna Luke 12:5

Fear not them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him that is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. (*This is another example of the 'divine passive'.*)

Matthew 23: 15

In this passage Jesus condemns the Pharisees making false converts that are “twofold more the child of Gehenna than yourselves.”

Matthew 23:22

Ye serpents, ye generations of vipers! How can ye escape the damnation of Gehenna?

James 3:6

So is the tongue among our members that it defileth the whole body and setteth fire on the course of nature; and is is set on fire from Gehenna

Robert Jeffress in Hell? Yes! testifies to Jesus’ teachings about Hell.

Jesus taught that hell is an actual place. In the New Testament we find three different Greek words that are all translated “hell” in most English versions of the Bible. The word tartaros is used only in 2 Peter 2:4 to describe the place where a special class of

wicked angels have been sent because of a sin described in Jude 6.

The most commonly used word for hell is Gehenna, used by Jesus eleven times to describe the eternal destiny of those who reject Christ. The word Gehenna refers to the Valley of Hinnom, which was located south of Jerusalem. During the reigns of the wicked kings Ahaz and Manasseh, some Israelites offered their children as burnt offerings to the false god Molech. Later the valley was used as a garbage dump where both refuse and the bodies of executed criminals were burned. One can hardly imagine a more repugnant place to spend an hour, much less an eternity. But according to Jesus, such a place will be the eternal destination of the unrighteous.

The third word translated “hell” is the Greek word Hades, which Jesus employed in this story to describe the location of the unsaved dead as they await the final Great White Throne Judgment described in Revelation 20:11-15. The Bible teaches that at the judgment, all the occupants of Hades will stand before God, and because their names are not found in the Book of Life—the record of all who have trusted in Christ as savior—they will be cast into the lake of fire (Gehenna): “And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” (verse 15).

The Angels that sinned and are confined to hell are the fallen angels mentioned in Genesis 6 and the Book of Enoch. This passage shows that a place of torments is held to exist in the Bible. Moslems and Hindus also believe in the existence of hell.

In the Aramaic the word Sheol is used in place of the Greek word Hades. Sheol in Aramaic was the shadowy realm of departed spirits.

Matthew 11:23 and Luke 10:15

Capernaum will be brought down to Sheol.

Matthew 16:18

The Gates of Sheol cannot prevail against the church.

Revelation 1:18

Jesus the Son of Man now possesses the keys of Sheol and death.

Revelation 6:8

Sheol follows the fourth horseman, Death.

Revelation 20: 13-14

Death and Sheol cast into the Lake of Fire (Gehenna).

In Matthew 13: 49-50 Jesus describes Gehenna as a furnace of fire, "So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the just, and will cast them into the furnace of fire, where there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Jesus taught that a burning hell exists and warned people to escape it. Men and women condemn themselves to hell by their own sins. It is not the will of

God that any should suffer eternal damnation but rather that all should come to experience life in all its fullness and to find eternal life by knowing God as Father, through Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God. Many 'mega-churches' are afraid to preach about hell because it is too controversial, they are afraid to offend people and they desire to be politically correct. I would rather preach the authentic Aramaic message Jesus taught than compromise the Good News. The Bible says that God is not willing that any should perish but that all would come into true life through knowing Jesus (2 Peter 3:9). Jesus said, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him may not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Jesus said that he as the Son of Man, did not come to destroy men but rather to save them (Luke 9:56). Jesus taught that "God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but rather that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:17).

Jesus showed his great love in the terrible price he paid on the cross to save us from Hell in his passion. He also showed us the Love of God in making it possible for us to call upon God as 'Our Father'.

Abba, Father: Christ's Aramaic Concept of the Fatherhood of God

Aramaic was the language of Jesus and the first Christians. Today it is the language of the Assyrian and Chaldean Christians of the Middle East. In

Judaism, Aramaic was, and still is, a language of the Jews (although very few Jews speak Aramaic, only a small tribe of Iraqi Jews do and they number about 10,000 and all live in Israel). One important Aramaic Jewish prayer that was written in the Middle Ages is called the Aktamot. The Aktamot was translated into English and made into a Christian hymn by Rev. F. M. Lehman in 1917.

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill.
And every man a scribe by trade,
To write the love of God above,
Would drain the ocean dry
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.

O Love of God, how rich and pure!
How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure
The saints' and angels' song.

This hymn, which was written in the language of Jesus, conveys an important aspect of Christ's teaching on the unfathomable love of God. It was composed by Rabbi Meir ben Yitzchak in the 11th century in Germany. Translated from the Aramaic it says,

In introduction to the words,
And commencement of my speech,

I begin by taking authorization and permission.
I shall commence with trembling...
His is the eternal strength that could not be
described-
Even if the heavens were parchment,
And the forests quills,
If all the oceans were ink, as well as every gathered
water,
If the earth's inhabitants were scribes
And recorders of initials-
The glory of the Master of Heaven and Ruler of
the Earth.

Robert Graves in The Nazarene Gospel Restored dates this Aramaic hymn back much earlier, all the way back to the time of Christ. This Aramaic prayer tells of the unspeakable love of God- a love shown by Jesus in his doctrine of the Fatherhood of God.

Jesus called his heavenly Father 'Abba'. The first thing we need to do is to define the Aramaic word, Abba. This Aramaic word found its way into Hebrew and is now the Hebrew word for 'Daddy'. The Hebrew word for Father is Avi. In Modern Aramaic the pronunciation of Abba has changed and now it is 'baba'. The Aramaic word "Abba" is found three times in the Greek New Testament. Jesus cries out to "Abba, Father" in the Garden of Gethsemane. Paul uses the Aramaic word 'Abba' twice in his epistles. This is significant because Paul rarely uses Aramaic in his epistles. The only other two Aramaic words he uses is "Maranatha" for "Come, O Lord" and he

refers to Simon by the Aramaic form of his name, “Cephas”, more often than the Greek form “Peter”. This word is significant because it comes from the lips of Jesus Christ himself. St. Paul thought it was significant enough to expand on this word and include it in two of his epistles. In ancient records there is an isolated instance of an adult referring to his father as “Abba”. This does not mean that Abba does not mean ‘Daddy’. My mother called her father ‘daddy’ until his death. (In old Aramaic ‘Abba’ is ‘daddy’ and ‘abhi’ is ‘father’.) Some rabbis used ‘abba’ as a title. Jesus, perhaps partly for this reason, said, “Call no man ‘father’ on earth” (Matthew 23:9). An equivalent to Abba is perhaps “papa” as well as “daddy”. In certain languages the Roman Catholic pope is addressed as papa, which is what the word ‘pope’ is derived from. In the Targums, the Aramaic version of the Old Testament, it is seen that the Jews deliberately avoided using the word Abba to refer to God, probably out of what they saw as reverence.

In The Books and the Parchments F.F. Bruce makes an interesting note about ABBA; Aramaic for “Daddy”:

While Abba is an Aramaic word, it made its way into Hebrew as well...But in addressing God, Jews did not and do not employ this form, the affectionate term for intimate use within the family, but the more formal ‘Abi’, ‘my father’ or Abinu, ‘our father’. Jesus, however, of set purpose used the intimate and affectionate form Abba when addressing

God, and example was followed by the early Christians who used the same Aramaic word. So, Paul in Romans 8:15 and Gal. 4:6 records it as a sign that God has sent the spirit of his son, ‘the spirit of Sonship’ to the hearts of believers of Christ when they pray “Abba, Father.”

So, why did Jews avoid using Abba in reference to God? Joachim Jeremias explained this in his book The Central Message of the New Testament:

The reason why Jewish prayers do not address God as Abba is disclosed when one considers the linguistic background of the word. Originally, abba was a babbling sound. The Talmud says: ‘When a child experiences the taste of wheat (that is, when it is weaned) it learned to say abba and imma’ (that is, Dada and Mama are the first words it utters); and the church fathers Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Theodoret of Cyrus, all three of them born in Antioch of well-to-do parents, but in all probability raised by [Aramaic-speaking] Syrian nurses, tell us our of their own experience that little children used to call their fathers abba.

Abba means Daddy. It seems almost irreverent to address God, who is seen as distant and sanctimonious, in such an intimate and loving way. But this is what Jesus dared to do and what he dares us to do.

That is to have an intimate loving relationship with almighty God.

Christ's teaching of the Fatherhood of God was a radical new message but it did have an Old Testament precedent. God referred to the nation of Israel as his son. Moses said to Pharaoh, "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my Son, even my first-born. And I say unto thee, "Let My son go, that he may serve me" (Exodus 4: 22) There are other important scriptures where God is the father to the nation of Israel.

Yet, O Lord, thou art Our Father,
We are the clay, and thou are our potter (Isaiah 64:8).

A son honors his father,
And a servant his master.
If I am a Father, where is my honor?
If I am a master, where is my fear (Malachi 1:6).

An important passage shows that God in the Old Testament desired to have a relationship with Israel as a Father, but this desire was rejected by Israel and had to wait until the proclamation of the Good News of the Kingdom of God by Jesus Christ.

I thought how I would set you among my sons,
And give you a pleasant land,
A heritage most beautiful of all nations.
And I thought you would call me, My Father,
And would not turn from following me.
Surely, as a faithless wife leaves her husband,

So you have been faithless to me, O house of Israel (Jeremiah 3: 19).

The Davidic King was considered the Son of God in a special way. Of the Son of David God spoke and said, “I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son” (2 Samuel 7:14). This is Messianic in significance and is why Jesus was called Bar-Dawood, the Son of David. (“Son of David” as a Messianic title isn’t found in the Old Testament but is a development from the Aramaic period.) The royal descendant of King David had the right to call God his Father. This special prerogative of the Son of David, the Messiah, is seen also in Psalm 2. But as Joachim Jeremias says, with Jesus’ doctrine of Abba: “We are confronted with something new and unheard of which breaks through the limits of Judaism. Here we see who the historical Jesus was: the man who had the power to address God and Abba and who included sinners and the publicans in the kingdom by authorizing them to repeat this one word, ‘Abba, Dear Father’”.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT GOD’S ETERNAL NATURE IS THAT OF A FATHER. God is about relationships. That is why he desires a relationship with people. God’s eternal triune nature is about a relationship between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 3:14 St. Paul states, “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ from whom all fatherhood in heaven and earth is named.” This is a direct translation from the Greek. Most modern translations, including the King James Version, read “every family” rather

than “all fatherhood”. The original Greek has “all fatherhood”. God as “Our Father” has been an established Christian doctrine but now this central tenet of the Christian faith is being called into question. Even though Fatherhood is no longer politically correct, a disciple of Jesus ought to remain committed to the Aramaic teachings of Jesus and not be moved by such changes in society.

In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed, “Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee. Take away this cup from Me; nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt” (Mark 14: 36). Never in Judaism before Jesus did any rabbi dare to address God as “My Father” as Jesus did. Jesus also instructed his follows to pray to Our Father as he did. The use of the word ‘Abba’ is very important because it is what scholars call “ipissima vox”, the Original Voice, or “ipissima verbo”, the authentic words. There is no doubt that this was the exact word Jesus spoke. And Jesus always prayed to God as Father. How important is this saying of Jesus? No less than 170 times in the Holy Gospels does Jesus call God ‘Father’.

Abba is, however, a mystery, a special revelation that comes only through Jesus Christ. The Messiah said, “All things are delivered unto Me by My Father, and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father, except he Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him” (Matthew 11: 27). Paraphrased from the Aramaic this means, “Only Father and Son truly know each other. And because only a father and a son truly know each other, therefore only a son can reveal to others the

innermost thoughts of his Father.” So, only Jesus can pass on to others the real knowledge of God. This is further shown in John 14: 8:

Phillip said unto him, “Lord, show us the Father and it will suffice.” Jesus said unto him, “Have I been so long a time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Phillip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, ‘Show us the Father’? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself; but the Father dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me...

How important is Christ’s teaching about God as Abba? Joachim Jeremias dares to say that Jesus “goes as far as to say that only he who can repeat this child-like Abba shall enter into the Kingdom of God.” This is why Jesus says “Let the little children come unto me” (Mark 10:14) and “Unless you humble yourselves and become like little children you shall by no means enter into the Kingdom of God” (Matthew 18:3-4) and “Unless a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God” (John 3:3). Repentance means a turning away from sins but for the Christian it is more than that because we believe in salvation by grace through faith and not in a works-based salvation. Joachim Jeremias also says, “Becoming a child again means: to learn to say Abba again. This brings us to the meaning of repentance. Repentance means learning to say Abba again, putting one’s whole

trust in the heavenly Father, returning to the father's house and the Father's arms...repentance of the lost son consists in his finding his way home to his father. In the last resort, repentance is simply trusting in the grace of God."

The Aramaic word "Abba" was used and understood in churches that were founded by Paul, such as those in Galatia, but it was also used in churches not founded by Paul, such as Rome. (The Greek word for Father is Pater.) The two passages in which Paul refers to God as Abba are very significant. The first one is Galatians 4:6:

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, "Abba, Father." Therefore thou art no more a servant but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

What is important here is the agency of the Holy Spirit in adopting us into the family of God. This same theme is picked up in Romans 8: 15:

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh to live according to the flesh, for if ye live according to the flesh ye shall die, but if ye through the flesh do mortify the

deeds of the body ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God. For we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God; and if children then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if so it be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

The greatest difficulty is humiliating ourselves as children. In our human nature we cannot do this, and this is why we must be born again. In both of Paul's Abba passages he notes that it is through the agency of the Holy Spirit that we are empowered to address God as "Abba." Carlo Caretto reminds us of the difficulty of becoming like a child and embracing God as Abba-Daddy.

"If you do not become like little children you shall not enter the Kingdom," and that's not easy for those who have been complicated by sin. To become like children means to increase our feeling for God's fatherhood over us, it means to think and act as little children do to the father they love. He looks after everything, he resolves everything, and

so on. When does a little child ever worry about tomorrow? Never, the father takes care of it...All our plans, even on the road to holiness, are perfectly useless: the real plan is in His hand and we need to go to Him like children seeking love. I want to become little so I can run more swiftly towards the great final fire...no holding back, just trust in the immense mercy of the One who immolated His Son to save a slave.

The importance of the Aramaic concept of Abba is seen in a careful examination of the Greek text of the New Testament. Fatherhood is a universal concept. The idea that Jesus and the writers of the New Testament want to connect with God as Father isn't just the current cultural norms and mores of fatherhood but also the biological act of begetting. Fathers begetting is inherent in being a father no matter what culture you are born into. Frank Stagg in his New Testament Theology notes that, "It was Jesus' function to "bring many sons into glory" (Hebrews 2:10). He could only do this by expiating (overcoming) the sins of the people (2:17). He also identified himself with us as our brother (2:11), having fellowship (*koinonia*) with "blood and flesh, that he could break the power of sin and death for us (2:14f)." The Eternal Son of God, who is eternally begotten of the Father, took upon himself flesh so that we may be born into the family of God (Colossians 1:15). This is done by us being, as Stagg notes, "*Begotten from above*". Stagg says, "Newness of life is described through

the “birth” analogy, but probably the stronger New Testament emphasis is seen in its tracing the new life to a divine begetting. John 3:3 may best be translated; “Except one be begotten from above, he is not able to see the kingdom of God.” The familiar “born again” misses the meaning at two points. The Greek *anōthen* means “from above” not merely again. It is not just another beginning but a new kind of beginning that is required...Man needs more than improvement; a new destiny requires a new origin, and the new origin must be from God. But even “born from above” leaves something to be desired in translation. Probably “begotten from above” is the meaning. The Greek verb *genna*...normally...describes the father function of begetting. In effect John 3:3 may declare: “Except one be begotten of God, he is not able to see the kingdom of God.” This underscores the fact that one enters the new life through an act of God. The act is not coercive, but it is essential and indispensable.” Jesus identifies God as Father through the act of begetting sons and daughters and says we cannot see the kingdom of God unless we are engendered from above by the Father.

Despite what many radicals say, fatherhood is important and families do need fathers. Jesus said that earthly fathers may learn from and apply principles of fatherhood from their heavenly Father (Matthew 7:7-12). John the Baptist preached that although earthly fathers are important, it is far more important to have a spiritual renewal and transformation of the heart and thereby come to know God as Father (Matthew 3:9). It doesn't matter if you are a

Jew or an Arab, black or white, male or female. What matters is being fathered into the Kingdom of God through Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Kingdom of God

In Aramaic the Kingdom of God is *Malkutha D'Alaha*. This Aramaic phrase represents the main thrust of the teaching of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "I confer on you [my disciples], just as my Father has conferred upon me, a Kingdom!" (Luke 22:29). Jesus said, "Do not be afraid little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." (Luke 12:30) Paul of Tarsus said, "For the Kingdom of God is not in word but in Power" (1 Corinthians 4:20). The Gospel Jesus preached is called the "Good News of the Kingdom of God" in the New Testament (Matthew 24:14).

It is obvious that the central theme of the teaching of Jesus Christ was his teaching about the Kingdom of God, which is also called the Kingdom of Heaven. (In the Gospel of Matthew we find it called the Kingdom of Heaven more often. This helps us get more perspective on what Christ was teaching however it must be borne in mind that this form is used in Matthew out of deference to the sacred name of God, which Jews hold in such reverence that they dare not utter it. Matthew's Gospel was written primarily for a Jewish audience.) While the Kingdom of God was the central message in the teaching of Jesus it is rarely preached upon today.

Neither the phrase “the Kingdom of God” nor the phrase “the Kingdom of Heaven” are found in the Old Testament of the Holy Bible. This was a revolutionary new Aramaic teaching of Jesus. Despite the fact that the Kingdom of God isn’t mentioned in the Old Testament it does indeed have an Old Testament background. In the Aramaic Targum the Kingdom of Heaven is often called the Kingdom of Messiah or the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Joachim Jeremias stated that it is difficult for the western mind to grasp what Jesus meant when he taught in Aramaic about the Malkutha, the kingly reign of God. Jeremias states,

One thing is certain: the word malkuta did not have for the oriental the significance that the word ‘kingdom’ does for the westerner. Only in quite isolated instances in the Old Testament does malkuth denote a realm in the spatial sense, a territory; almost always it stands for the government, the authority, the power of a king. But this does not mean that malkut is understood in an abstract way; it is always in a process of being achieved. Thus the reign of God is neither a spatial nor a static concept; it is a dynamic concept. It denotes the reign of God in action, in the first place as opposed to earthly monarchy, but then in contrast to all rule in heaven and on earth. Its chief characteristic is that God is realizing the ideal of the king of righteousness. Constantly longed for, but never fulfilled on earth. From the earliest times, the oriental concept of

kingly righteousness- and indeed that held in Jesus' time- was not primarily one of dispassionate adjudication, but of the protection which the kings extends to the helpless, the weak and the poor, widows and orphans.

Jesus preached the Good News of the Kingdom of God. The focus of Christ's preaching was the Kingdom of God, but it is not ours now. Why not? Jesus said "Seek ye first THE KINGDOM OF GOD and all of his RIGHTEOUSNESS and all these things will be added unto you." Instead of seeking God's Kingdom many are seeking after things of this world. One thing that concerns me is how the church has lost its kingdom focus and consequently, so have many Christians. Now instead of seeking the Kingdom of God Christians are trying to create celebrities and Mega-churches that overwhelm the senses in entertainment and spectacle at the expense of fellowship of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God in the teachings of Jesus is family and community. Jesus demonstrated the Kingdom of God when he washed the disciple's feet. The Son of Man, Jesus said, did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28). Now we have so-called "Pastors" who isolate themselves from their flock. Jesus said the Kingdom of God is showing compassion to the poor, sick, dying and suffering (Matthew 25:31-46). The Kingdom of God is about love in action. Mammon has come into the church. If our Lord came into many of our Mega-churches today we would probably have another cleansing

of the temple! The Lord does see and is displeased (Revelations 3: 1-2). Jesus said that the Kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:21). In Aramaic this means among you. When Christians come together in love and to do the works of Love, such as Mother Teresa of Calcutta did, it is there that the Kingdom of God is manifested. Life is about showing compassion to others. This is the Kingdom.

The Nazorean

Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh hither with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus the Nazorean. Jesus saith unto them, I AM...

As soon then as he had said unto them, I AM, they went backward and fell unto the ground. Then he asked them again, "Whom seek ye?" And they said, Jesus the Nazorean. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he, if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way. John 18:5

The Aramaic word Nazorean is used here, the form that is also found in Matthew 26:71 and not the word Nazarene which is used in Mark's Gospel. In the Bible Jesus is called the Nazarene, meaning 'Man from Nazareth' and Nazorean, which probably has a

different meaning. Both of these words are Aramaic words. Nazoreans may have meant the “observant ones.” Early Christian Jews were called Nazoreans. It may be related to the word Nazarite, but Jesus was not under the Nazarite vows, which forbade the drinking of wine or any product of the vine. (Samson was a Nazarite. A Nazarite was one who took a vow to God not to touch any fruit of the vine, not to cut their hair and to stay ritually clean. See Numbers 6:1-2 and Judges 13.) Nazarene means one from Nazareth. There may be a connection with netzer, the Hebrew word for Branch (Isaiah 4:2, Zechariah 3:8). The Messiah was to have been the Branch of David. Among the Mandaeans, the Aramaic followers of St. John the Baptist, their priestly class is called the Nazoreans and they are the elite and are guardians of sacred knowledge. These priests are feared and thought to possess supernatural powers. When the soldiers used the term “Nazorean” it was probably in this context. Luke seems to define the Aramaic word Nazorean as “a prophet mighty in word and deed” (Luke 24:19). Perhaps, because of this and what they had heard of his wondrous deeds, they fell back in fear afraid of his “magical powers.” “I AM” means “I am he,” but probably was intended by the evangelist as an expression of divinity. (In the Old Testament the name of God, Yahweh, is interpreted as meaning ‘I AM’ in Exodus 3:14. “I Am That I Am” in Hebrew is not ‘Yahweh’, but rather ‘Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh’. While this is different from the Sacred Name of God, Yahweh, it is related to it. “I Am”, while not exactly the same as ‘Yahweh’, is a title of Divinity.) It may

also been out of fear of his pronouncing a form of the divine name and his associating himself with it, and also his awesome spiritual authority and presence, that caused the soldiers to fall back. It is believed that the Sanhedrin initially tried to convict Jesus of sorcery (perhaps viewing him as a Nazorean, a prophet with supernatural powers, but in their view a false prophet), when this failed they condemned him for blasphemy. The “band of men” was a squad of Roman soldiers. The others were Temple Police. The Temple Police were Jewish soldiers who guarded the sacred courts of the temple.

The Son of Man

*The High Priest answered and said to him, “I put you under oath by the living God; Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God!” Jesus answered and said to him, “It is as you say, Nevertheless, I say unto you, hereafter you will see **the Son of Man** sitting at the right hand of the power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.” Matthew 26:63-64*

Jesus calls himself “the Son of Man” (barnasha in Aramaic) 88 times in the New Testament. See Matthew 12:32, Matthew 25:31 Matthew 26:24. Matthew 16:31, Mark 9:31 Luke 18:31, Luke 19:9, Matthew 11:21 John 1:51 and John 26:27. We see that the “Son of Man” title is used in all four gospels and not just the synoptic gospels. (The synoptic Gospels are Matthew, Mark and Luke). It is also found in

the Book of Acts and the Revelation. This title for the Messiah is found in the Aramaic section of the Book of Daniel (Daniel 7:13-1). In Aramaic it means “Person,” “Man,” or “Human being.” It is a common word and is often used even in Modern Aramaic, but it does also have divine significance. Daniel says,

I was watching in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nation, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away and his kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed.

In the Book of Revelation John clearly identifies the Glorified Jesus with this “One like the Son of Man” from the Book of Daniel (Revelation 1:13). Stephen, the first Christian martyr, called on Jesus as the Son of Man at his martyrdom (Acts 7:56).

The concept of the Son of Man is further explored in the Book of Enoch. Both Enoch and Daniel are Aramaic and both speak of the coming of the Barnasha-the Son of Man. Enoch was recognized as canonical by the original church (Jude 14-15) and used by the early Church Fathers as scriptures (Barnabas, Clement, Justin Martyr, Ireneas and Tertullian). Scholars have determined that the Book of Enoch was held by the Jews of Jesus’ day to be

canonical. According to The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible: The Oldest Known Bible Translated for the First Time into English, “of all the non-biblical books found in caves adjacent to the Dead Sea, the one that offers the most promise of having been considered authoritative to the Jewish community at Qumran is ... Enoch. That some considered this writing to be the word of God is without question... The Caves at Qumran have produced 20 manuscripts of Enoch, as many as the book of Genesis—all of them in Aramaic.” St. Augustine repudiated the Book of Enoch, and under his direction the book was suppressed. The Jews of the time of Christ were familiar with the book of Enoch and its messianic figure called the Son of Man in chapters 37-71. Jesus calls himself the Son of Man over 88 times in scripture. When Jesus called himself the Son of Man he was referring to the prophecies of the Son of Man in Enoch and Daniel and he was claiming to be the pre-existent divine Messiah. Jesus often said, “Him that hath ears let him hear” (Mark 4:11, Revelations 3:6). This is an Aramaic figure of speech that means, “let he who can catch my meaning, do so”. His listeners who knew the book of Enoch and Daniel caught his meaning. Here is an example of one of the prophecies concerning the Son of Man found in the Book of Enoch.

At that hour, that Son of Man was given a name, in the presence of the Lord of the Spirits, the Before-time, even before the creation of the sun and the moon, before the creation of the stars, he was given a name in

the presence of the Lord of the Spirits. He will become a staff for the righteous ones in order that they may lean on him and not fall. He is the light of the gentiles and he will become the hope of those who are sick in their hearts. All those who dwell upon the earth shall fall and worship before him; they shall glorify, bless, and sing the name of the Lord of the Spirits. For this purpose he became the Chosen One; he was concealed in the presence of (the Lord of Spirits) prior to the creation of the world, and for eternity. And he has revealed the preserved portion of the righteous because they have hated and despised this world of oppression (together with) all its ways of life and habits in the name of the Lord of Spirits; and because they will be saved in his name and it is his good pleasure that they have life. In those days, the kings of the earth and the mighty...shall fall on their faces; and they shall not rise up (again), nor anyone (be found) who will take them with his hands and raise them up. For they have denied the Lord of the Spirits and his Messiah.

Enoch was removed from the canon by the Jews because it was too Messianic and by the Christians partly because it was too Jewish. As Dr. Francis Potter noted, "when the official canons and doctrines of Jew and Christian were established, in a period when each side hated the other bitterly, as the

contemporary literatures of both show historically, the neither side wanted any evidence which would reveal that the... Book of Enoch was the missing link between Judaism and Christianity.” The Semitic Judeo-Christians of Ethiopia preserved the Book of Enoch. It has survived due to Ethiopia’s isolation from the rest of the Christian world. In Ethiopia it is given canonical status by the Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox churches. The book of Enoch is valuable, but contains later additions to the text and is thus comparable in value to the Book of Maccabees. Enoch, in the form it has come down to us cannot be given canonical status. (The Book of Enoch is comparable to the Greek book of Esther, which contains later additions to the text. We have the original Esther but only an expanded edition of Enoch, the original is lost.)

Lee Strobel also explores concept of the Son of Man in The Case for Christ, “Son of Man is often thought to indicate the humanity of Jesus, just as the reflex expression Son of God indicates his divinity. In fact, just the opposite is true. The Son of Man is the divine figure in the Old Testament who would come at the end of the world to judge mankind and rule forever. Thus, the claim to be the Son of Man would be in effect a claim to divinity.”

In John’s Gospel Jesus teaches that he, as the Son of Man, must be “lifted up” and thus draw all men unto himself (John 3:14-15, John 12: 32-34). This demonstrates the centrality of the crucifixion. Paul also explores the theology of the Son of Man but he uses the term ‘Second Adam’ which comes from the

Jewish theology of the Son of Man, called the Adam Kodman. This is more fully dealt with in my booklet Barnasha: Jesus the Son of Man.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Use of Aramaic Elsewhere in the Gospels and the New Testament



If I lived in a region where Spanish was spoken and many of my friends had Spanish names or nick-names in Spanish that I myself had given them, such as Pedro, Javier, Jose, Juan and Diego, it would be an indication that I may be a native Spanish speaker. While many of the disciples have Aramaic names, and Christ gave out many Aramaic nick-names to his apostles, many still fail to see a connection between Jesus and the Aramaic language.

Cephas:

This is Kaipha, Aramaic for ‘rock’ and is used in the Gospel of John and in the writings of Paul. We know him by the Greek form of his name “Peter.” But we know that Simon Bar Jonah went by the Aramaic

form Kaipha rather than the Greek form Petros because Paul frequently calls him Cephas and rarely refers to him as Peter. Cephas verses are John 1:42, 1 Corinthians 1:12, 3:22, 9:5 and 15:5 and Galatians 1:18, 2:9, 2:11 and 2:14. Why “Cephas”? He himself explores the meaning in of his Aramaic name in 1 Peter 2:1-10. The word ‘Kaipha’ is still used for ‘a stone or a rock’ in Modern Aramaic.

Boanerges:

This means ‘Sons of Thunder’ and is the nick-name Jesus gave to James (literally Jacob) and John (literally Johannan) the Sons of Zebedee. Jacob and John, the sons of Zebedee, were called by Jesus “the Sons of Thunder” or Boanerges in Aramaic, due to their tempestuous character which is illustrated in Bible stories (Mark 3:17). In Luke 9: 54 they want to call down fire like Elijah the Prophet and destroy the Samaritans but Jesus refuses to allow this, saying, “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of; for the Son of Man came not to destroy men’s lives but to save them.” In Mark 10:35 they requested prominence in Christ’s coming kingdom. Jesus reminded them of the cost of being disciples and taught them to be servant leaders.

Thaddeus:

This means breast, or more specifically ‘nipple’. His other name ‘Lebbeus’ is Aramaic for ‘heart’.

Simon Cannanean;

This Simon was formally an insurgent belonging to the revolutionary ‘Zealot’ party. Canaanean is Aramaic for Zealot. A modern translation would be Simon the Terrorist (Mark 3:18).

Thomas:

Thomas is Aramaic for “the Twin”, Didymous is the Greek form (John 20: 24, John 21:2). Judah was a carpenter from Galilee, a near relative of Jesus and according to ancient Aramaic manuscripts he was called Thomas, or The Twin, due to his strong physical resemblance to Jesus. In John 21:2, the only list of the names of the apostles in the Gospel of John, Thomas is given prominence among the apostles and is second only to Peter. Thomas was a missionary evangelist who traveled further than Paul. There are several writings attributed to Thomas, a gospel, the acts of Thomas and other works. Thomas founded Christianity in Iraq, Iran and India.

The use of these Aramaic names and nick-names is a clear indication that Jesus was a native Aramaic speaker. Other Aramaic names include Martha (Lady) in Luke 10:41, Magdala (Tower), Barnabbas (Son of Encouragement), Barabbas (Son of the Father), Tabitha (Gazelle) in Acts 9:36, Barsabas in Acts 1:23, and Silas in Acts 15:22. Lazarus is an Aramaic form of the name Eliazer (Luke 16:20). Joseph the Cypriot was a Levite and probably was among the seventy apostles (Luke 10:1). Jesus may have given him the nick-name, Barnabas, which means “Son of

Encouragement” or “the Encourager” (Acts 4:36). Barnabas was probably originally Bar-Nebadah or Bar-Nadabas in Aramaic, signifying Helpful or Supporter. Nedabah means “to give readily” or “freely”. The Greek word used to translate Barnabas is Paraklesios which is related to the word Paraclete, which is used for the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John. Others believe Barnabas comes from Nebuah meaning “prophecy” or “exhortation”. Barnabas is introduced in Acts 4: 36-37. The Book of Acts of the Apostles notes that many Levitical priests and those who were zealous for the Law (Acts 6:7, 21:20) became obedient and zealous disciples of Jesus.

BAR is Aramaic for “son of”. Ben is the Hebrew equivalent. If someone has the word ‘Bar’ in their name, such as in Bartholomew, they have an Aramaic name. If someone uses the Hebrew word for ‘son of’, Ben, in their name, such as in the name Ben-Hur, they have a Hebrew name. Barsabas, Bartholomew, Barnabas, Bar-Jonah, Bartimeus and Barjesus are all Aramaic names. Barabbas is Aramaic for “son of the father”. Pilate gave the masses a choice Yeshua Barabbas (Jesus Barabbas) or Yeshua Mashikha (Jesus the Messiah) in Matthew 27:17 as can be seen in the New English Bible.

In the New Testament places are also given Aramaic names. Jesus prayed at Gethsemane, meaning “Wine Press for Oils” or “Olive Oil Press” (Matthew 26:36). Jesus was crucified at Golgotha, which in Aramaic means the Place of the Skull. This is the place where the Creator was murdered by his creation. In Latin it is Calvary (John 19:17). Jesus

stood before Pilate at Gabbatha, Aramaic for the Stone Pavement. This is the place where the great judge of all the earth was condemned to death in a sham trial. The Gabbatha can be seen in Jerusalem today, the very stones on which Jesus stood are still there (John 19:13). Judas Iscariot committed suicide at Akel Dema, the Field of Blood, that was bought with Judas's blood money and the very place he spilled his own blood in suicide (Acts 1:19).

Names of sects and factions in the New Testament or of the New Testament era are also Aramaic. The word Pharisee comes from the Aramaic for the 'Separated Ones'. The Essenes, believed to be the community that produced the Dead Sea Scrolls, derived their name from the Aramaic Chasya, meaning "the Devout".

The New Testament also refers to the Galilean Aramaic dialect that was distinctive and easily recognizable. Galileans had a distinctive accent to their Aramaic Matthew 26:73 Peter is told, "Why, you must be a Galilean, your accent gives you away!" The deep country accent of Galilean Aramaic was often mocked by the sophisticated city-slickers of Jerusalem. In *Jesus: The Evidence* by Ian Wilson it is noted that, "It is known that the Galileans caused great amusement to the snobbish southerners by their characteristic sloppiness in pronouncing Aramaic. The Talmud describes the ridiculing of a Galilean in the Jerusalem market place for trying to buy what he called "amar". He was chided, "You stupid Galilean, do you want something to ride on? [khamar: a donkey] Or something to drink? [hamar: wine] Or

some clothing? [amar: wool] Or something for a sacrifice? [immar: a lamb].”

CHAPTER FIVE

Aramaic in the Lord's Prayer



It has been confirmed by scholars that Jesus composed his famous prayer in Aramaic and not in Hebrew, Greek or Latin. To understand the Lord's Prayer properly we must study it in Aramaic. Very few people have attempted to understand the Lord's Prayer by studying it in the original Aramaic. The best work available in which this is done is by Joachim Jeremias and is entitled The Prayers of Jesus. How do we know that the Lord's Prayer was composed in Aramaic and not in Hebrew or Greek? Sebastian Brock notes, "A further important pointer to Aramaic is provided by the two different versions of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-15 and Luke 11:2-4: while Matthew has 'and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors' (verse 12), Luke has 'and forgive us our sins and we forgive everyone who is indebted to us' (verse 4). In Aramaic, but not in Hebrew of this period, the words for 'debt', 'debtor', are frequently

used in the sense of ‘sin’, ‘sinner’; in Matthew we have a literal translation of the underlying Aramaic words, while in Luke, in the first half of the verse, there is a more idiomatic rendering.” So it is either “sins” or “debts” and not “trespasses” as it is often incorrectly recited. Since Jesus spoke these divine words it is important that we recite them correctly and not tamper with or alter the words spoken by God as many have done. Why was it changed to ‘trespasses’? Perhaps it is because many people don’t want to deal with the reality or the gravity of their sins. The idea of being indebted and being obligated to forgive debts owed is also uncomfortable and challenging. Believers need to take the teachings of Jesus very seriously and once we know better it is important to quote Jesus accurately and pray in the manner he instructed us to and not in some version altered by men who think they know better than God incarnate. Perhaps these men thought by changing God’s words they could make them more palatable to the masses. However, in doing this they divest the words of their power and incur the wrath of Almighty God.

Joachim Jeremias also noted the Aramaic origins of the Lord’s Prayer in The Prayers of Jesus. He states, “It is true that the Kaddish which served to round off the synagogue service is in Aramaic [rather than Hebrew]. But this is an exception due to the fact that the Kaddish is the prayer which the preacher ended his sermon, which was delivered in Aramaic. In contrast with the [Hebrew prayers] Shema and Tephilla, the Lord’s Prayer is an Aramaic prayer. This is shown by the words hophilema/hophilien which are typical

Aramaisms, and by the way in which the first two petitions directly echo the Kaddish. Moreover the invocation of God as “Abba”, coined by Jesus, is also Aramaic, as is the cry from the cross (Mark 15:34). Thus Jesus not only prayed in his native tongue in his private prayers, he also gave his disciples a formal prayer couched in the vernacular when he taught them the Lord’s Prayer. In so doing, he removes the prayer from the liturgical sphere of sacred language and places it right in the midst of everyday life.”

Some people argue that the “Our Father” should not be called the Lord’s Prayer. These people believe it is more appropriate to call it the Disciples Prayer, since it was to be the prayer to be prayed by the apostles, or the Model Prayer, since it serves as a model for us to structure our prayers after. It has also been called ‘Jesus’ Blueprint for Prayer’. It is said the actual Lord’s Prayer is Christ’s ‘High Priestly Prayer’ found in the Gospel of John (John 17). There may be some point to these objections, but the “Our Father” as the Lord’s Prayer has passed into general usage and it is the central prayer composed by the Lord Jesus the Messiah for his followers.

The Lord’s Prayer contains the essence of the entire teachings of Jesus, his Good News, or Joyful Message, that he preached wherever he traveled in the Holy Land. It also contains the basic message of the Torah and the Prophets.

The Kaddish is an ancient Jewish Aramaic prayer that was prayed by Jesus and the apostles. For this reason and because of its striking similarity to the

Lord's Prayer, it warrants further study. Here is an English translation of this prayer.

Magnified and sanctified be His great Name in the world which he created according to his will. May he establish His kingdom during your life and during your days, and during the life of all the house of Israel. Speedily and in the near future, and say Amen. May His great Name be blessed forever and ever, Blessed, praised, extolled and honored, adored and lauded be the Name of the Holy One, blessed be He; Who is beyond all blessings and hymns, praises and songs that are uttered in the world; and say Amen. May there be abundant peace from heaven, and life for us and for all Israel; and say May He who maketh peace in the heavens, make peace for us and for all Israel; and say Amen.

Notice how like the Lord's Prayer this prayer is. First, it sanctifies God's Name and then it prays for the Kingdom to come. This Aramaic Prayer, the Kaddish, is now used by Jews as a prayer for periods of mourning, such as at the death of a loved one. The Kaddish was prayed by Jesus, but not as the 'mourners kaddish'. The Jews began using it as a mourner's prayer during the Middle Ages. This was not its original use. The idea behind this innovation was to remind the people to glorify God even in the midst of intense sadness and loss. Jews still use

many Aramaic prayers. Kaddish is one of the most popular.

The following is the Lord's Prayer in Aramaic as it has come down to us among the Aramaic Christians:

*Abwoon D'Washmaya,
nethqadash shmok. Te-the malkuthakh,
Nehweh tzabyanock, Aykana
D'washmaya aup-bara, Hawlan lakhma
D'sunkqanan yawmana, Washboqlan
Hawbain, Aykana dop hanan
shwaqen L'hayoben, Wa la tahlan
l'nesyioneh, ella passen min Bisha.
Mettal D'laikhey hi malkuthakh, Wa Keiyeh,
wa tishbooktha, al alam almeen. Amen.*

Modern Bible scholars, realizing that the Lord's Prayer was originally spoken in Aramaic, have used ancient resources, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, to reconstruct this prayer in the original language. The following reconstruction is found in The Hidden Pearl by Sebastian Brock.

*Abuna (or Abunan) d-bi-shmayya
Yithqaddash shmakh
Tethe malkuthakh
Yith'bed r'uthakh (or sibyonakh)
Ken'al ar'a
Lahmn d-li-mhar (or d-yoma)
Hab lan yoma deen*

*u-shboq lan hobenan (possibly ending with a
-na)
hekh di anahna
shbaqnan li d hayyabin lan
wa la tal elinnan l-nisyon
ella shezeba (or passin) min bisha*

In his book The Prayers of Jesus Joachim Jeremias also reconstructed the Lord's Prayer. His version is as follows:

*Abba
Yithqaddash shmakh
Tethe malkuthakh
Lakhman d limbar
Habh lan yoma dhen
Ushbhoq lan hobbain
Kedish hhaqnan le hayyabhain
Wa la Thalinnan lenisyon*

It should be noted that when Jesus prays, as he did in the garden of Gethsemane and as he teaches his disciples here to do, he addresses God as Father, Daddy in Aramaic. In God's New Covenant: A New Testament Translation by Christian Jew Heinz W. Cassirer the Prayer of Our Lord is translated in the following manner;

Father of ours, you who have your dwelling place in heaven:
May your will be accomplished on earth as it is accomplished in heaven.

Provide us this day with the bread that is
needful to us.

Remit us the debts we have incurred
against you

as we have done to those who owed us
a debt.

And do not bring us to the point of being
put to the final test.

On the contrary, come and rescue us from
the evil one.

The complete Lord's Prayer, with the benediction, is found in the ancient book called the Didache, which dates from 70- 125 AD. Interestingly, after giving the prayer it says to pray it three times a day, in accordance with Jewish custom.

CHAPTER SIX

Jesus the Poet: Christ's Words as Aramaic Poetry



King David was “the sweet psalmist of Israel” (2 Samuel 23:1) but rarely do we think of Jesus “the Son of David” as a poet. But when we examine his words against their Semitic background we see that he clearly was. Jesus has many titles in the Bible, Messiah or Christ, Son of God, Son of Man, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Many scholars are on a “quest for the historical Jesus” and there are many novel ideas of who Jesus was. Some theorize that he was a magician, a revolutionary or an Essene. Many of these sensational new ideas, such as Jesus being the husband of Mary Magdalene, are absurd. One thing that all of these authors have overlooked is Jesus as a poet of the Hebrew tradition. In his proclamations Jesus used Hebrew poetic structures that are found in

the Sacred Scriptures and other ancient Hebrew and Aramaic literature. Many people have read the Bible all of their lives totally ignorant of the poetic structures of many of the texts (especially in the prophets and the psalms). Knowing the structures helps us to read and understand the Bible better. Once the poetic structures are learned it becomes amazing to the reader how often they are used in the text and how obvious they are. Every serious reader of the Bible needs to know how Hebrew poetry works. Everyone who wants to intelligently read the Bible needs to understand certain basic facts about how it is written. One of these basic facts is Hebrew poetry. It isn't only used in certain obscure passages in the Old Testament, it is often used by Jesus the Christ. These are the most important words ever spoken by the person who lived the most important life ever lived.

William Barclay in his translation of the New Testament notes that "Hebrew poetry does not rhyme; it is built up on a series of parallels, and often the series is quite elaborate. A good example is in Matthew 7:24-27, where each one of the first ten lines has its exact parallel in each of the second ten lines. A shorter example is in Matthew 5:45.

If you do that,
You will be like your Father in heaven,
For he makes his sun to rise,
On the bad and on the good alike,
And he sends the rain
On the saint and sinner.

The last four lines have the clear pattern a b a b.” These words of Jesus that are given here are from the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus’ use of such structures gives a link between the Old and New Testaments and places him in his Hebraic culture. Michael Fixler in The Mentor Bible notes that in “certain peculiar characteristics of the Hebrew imagination truth is most truthful when it is doubled or expressed in parallelisms. A Hebrew verse will consist of a phrase that is followed by a parallel, almost synonymous formulation of its meaning, a parallel that enlarges, enriches, completes or in some way modifies the sense by enhancement, and sometimes two such parallelisms will follow the first, of thematic, phrase.” He also notes that “Parallelism probably made memorizing easier” which is probably one of the reasons it was employed by the Messiah and the prophets of the Old Testament.

LaSor, Hubbard and Bush in Old Testament Survey: the Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament devote an entire chapter to Hebrew poetry. They state that Hebrew poetry “appeals more to human imagination and emotion than to reason.” In this Semitic approach, “Poetic imagery compares the Unseen to something the readers have already seen, helping them to know God better. Ultimately, God is known in the incarnate image, the Son. Without denying the value of philosophy, we can say that the biblical approach is superior in many ways to the philosophical. People learn far more through the senses than through speculation.” Jesus’ use of Hebrew poetic structures puts him in his Semitic context.

Certain Bible scholars are trying to divorce Jesus from his Jewish identity and recast him as a pagan philosopher. These people try to paint Jesus as student of Greek thought. They attempt to argue that Jesus was a Cynic (from where we get the word ‘cynical’). This ideology came from Socrates who was condemned for corrupting youth and who freely admitted that his ideas were demonic in origin. (Socrates admitted that he was tormented and oppressed by an evil spiritual being that he called his “Daemon”.) Jesus’ modes of thinking and speaking are Hebrew, not Greek. Greek philosophy has certain false ideas (especially coming from Plato) such as reality isn’t real, only the imaginary world of ideas is real. The importance of the real world to Jesus and not lofty speculation will be dealt with below. (I actually do admire many things about the ancient and Byzantine Greek civilizations.)

Bishop Lowth was the first to categorize Hebrew poetry. He did this in a commentary on the book of Isaiah in 1778. (He was informed by Rabbinic sources.) Adam Potkay defines the structure of Hebrew poetry in the following manner:

The main structural element of Hebrew poetry is parallelism: that is, the juxtaposition of two or more clauses that are related in meaning. The two most common clauses are relations between the clauses that are “synonymy” and “anti-thesis”. But a third can also be found, “synthetic” parallelism.

Synonymous parallelism is the most common type in Hebrew poetry. The two

clauses are different in form, but roughly identical in meaning. For example in Psalm 38:1: *O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.* Or from Psalm 148:1: *Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights.*

Antithetic parallelism occurs when the two clauses show an opposition or contrast of ideas. For example, from Psalm 20: 8: *[The ungodly] are brought down and are fallen; but we are risen, and stand upright.* Or in Psalm 1:6 *For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.*

Synthetic parallelism occurs when the second clause completes the idea begun in the first clause (e.g., “as x, so y”). For example in Psalm 3:4: *I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah.*

There is also cause and effect synthetic parallelism. For example, in Psalm 126: 3: *The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad*

And finally, in synthetic parallelism there is analogous parallelism. For example in Psalm 125:2: *As the mountains are found about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people.*

In 1924 Rev. C. F. Burney, a professor at Oxford, wrote The Poetry of Our Lord: An Examination of the Formal Elements of Hebrew Poetry in the Discourses of Jesus Christ. In this book he carefully describes how Hebrew poetry works and gives examples from the Old Testament and Jewish literature. Later, he demonstrates that many of the sayings of Jesus are poetry of the Hebrew structure. In this book he reconstructs the words of Jesus in the Aramaic language and shows that not only does Jesus use Hebrew poetic structures but when his words are translated back into the original Aramaic they have both rhyme and rhythm. Aramaic is a Semitic language that is closely related to Hebrew. It is the language of Ezra and Daniel as well as the language of important Jewish prayers and the language in which parts of the Talmud are written. So, the poetic forms are Hebrew but the words spoken by Jesus are almost always Aramaic. Why is this? The reason for this was explored in Gustav Dalman's Words of Jesus.

Although Jesus used Aramaic he also at times also spoke in Hebrew. In the Gospel of Luke it clearly shows that Jesus could read Hebrew when he preached at the synagogue in Nazareth. Recent archeological discoveries show that while Aramaic was the common language, Hebrew was also spoken, especially among very devout and literate Jews. In Aramaic Sources of Mark's Gospel Maurice Casey views all of the historical and archeological evidence about the uses of different languages in Palestine of the first century and comes to this conclusion, "There is no doubt that scribes wrote in Hebrew: they did not

have reason to use Aramaic unless it was a popular tongue...In a sense, the prestige language was Hebrew, since this was the language of the Torah...instruction in the halakha [oral law] was given to most Jews in Aramaic, into which the Torah was translated...the Hebrew Bible was completed and most of the Dead Sea scrolls were written, in Hebrew and in Aramaic, because these were the sacred tongue and lingua franca [common language] of the vast majority of Jews in Israel.” (To re-construct the words of Jesus in Aramaic Burney used the Palestinian Talmud and the Targums. Maurice Casey is using only the Aramaic from the Dead Sea Scrolls.) The Poetry of Our Lord includes several pages of the words of Jesus reconstructed in Aramaic.

Willis Barnstone in his introduction to his The New Covenant: Commonly Called the New Testament, Newly Translated from the Greek and Informed by Semitic Sources he notes that he has Yeshua [Jesus] speaking in verse. He states,

With respect to their prosodic form, the sayings [of Yeshua, which means ‘Jesus’], like Psalms, Song of Songs, and most of the words of Isaiah and Jeremiah in the Hebrew Bible, may be read and lineated as poetry, even though the monumentally poetic King James Version cast them in prose...Here in this version, Yeshua’s words are lineated as poetry, just as most of Yeshua’s words, especially in John, are lineated in the French and English editions of the...Jerusalem Bible

(1990). To most of us it is a secret that Yeshua's speech takes the form of poems. This translation will introduce the Jewish messiah... as the great poet of the first century..., who heretofore has been our invisible poet.

Joachim Jeremias notes that "in the synoptic gospels, antithetic parallelism occurs well over a hundred times in the sayings of Jesus." He continues, "the evidence shows that the large number of cases of antithetic parallelism in the sayings of Jesus cannot be attributed to the process of redaction...we have to derive the frequency of this usage from Jesus himself." What Jeremias is saying is that there is so much use of the Hebraic Antithetic Parallelism poetic form in the words of Jesus it must have been the way that he actually spoke and not just the way it was written down in the Bible. A good example of antithetic parallelism in the Old Testament is Proverbs 10:1

A wise son makes a glad father,
But a foolish son is a sorrow to his mother.

Jeremias notes that, "in cases of antithetic parallelism in the Old Testament, the second member serves...to illuminate and deepen the first by an opposed statement...in the sayings of Jesus exactly the opposite is the case; there the stress is almost always on the second half."

Every good tree bringeth forth good fruits,
But the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruits.

Matthew 7:17

If you forgive men their trespasses,
Your heavenly Father also shall forgive you,
But if you forgive not men their trespasses.
Neither shall your Father forgive your
trespasses.

Matthew 6:14-15

He that findeth his life shall lose it;
And he that loseth his life for my sake
shall find it.

Matthew 10:39

Whosoever exalteth himself shall be humbled;
And whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.
Matthew 23:12

Edward Norman in Secularization: Sacred Values in a Godless World commented that Jesus did not address the aesthetic sense of his followers. (Aesthetics is the philosophical search for what is beautiful.) Norman states, “He did not ruminate on the beauty of the Galilean scenery.” This isn’t true; not only did Jesus ruminate on nature, he asks his disciples to do so as well. “Consider the Lilies of the Field” (Matthew 6:28). Hugh Schonfield commented on Jesus’ ruminations of the Galilean scenery.

He became a keen student of life and human character. The man we meet in the Gospels is one who knows the countryside of Galilee

intimately, its flowers and trees, fields and orchards, the activities of the people in work and worship, in their social, political and economic affairs. The things he teaches and the realistic tales he tells to illustrate his teaching are proof of how much he has absorbed. Such a store of information could only have been the outcome of prolonged and acute observation. There had been nothing somnambulistic in his walks abroad. He had deemed it vital to his equipment that he should have firsthand knowledge of the ways of the world.

The beauty of the world around him inspired Jesus. As a poet Jesus found beauty and inspiration in the real world and daily life. This isn't only true in his poetry and his teachings but also his parables. Jeremais also brings this point out although his context is the parables and not the poems of Jesus, "We find no fables on the lips of Jesus; fig tree and vine do not speak in his sayings. Also, in Ethiopian Enoch we read an outline of the history of Israel in the form of a long-winded allegory involving various animals. Jesus indeed regularly uses familiar metaphors, mostly drawn from the Old Testament and familiar to everyone at that time, but he does not construct allegories. His parables take us, rather, into the midst of throbbing, everyday life. Their nearness to life, their simplicity and clarity, the masterly brevity with which they are told, the seriousness of their appeal to the conscience, their loving understanding of the outcasts of religion—all this is without analogy. If we

want to find anything comparable we have to go back a long way: the parable of Nathan (II Sam. 12:1-7), the song of the vineyard (Isa. 5:1-7)".

The word "inspire" means 'to breath into.' Jesus was inspired, of course, by the Holy Spirit. (In Aramaic 'Christ' is Meshika which means anointed with oil. The oil is symbolic of consecration to God and represents the Holy Spirit.)

CHAPTER SEVEN

Rabbouni Jesus, Rabbi, Master and Lord



This Aramaic word, Rabbouni, is used twice in our Greek text of the New Testament. In Mark Jesus is called Rabbouni by Blind Bartimaeus. This passage is found in Mark 10: 46-52. Here the Aramaic name “Bartimaeus” is translated as “the son of Timaeus”. He cries out “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me”. Jesus, as the time of his glorification had arrived, accepted this Messianic title. Jesus asks him, “What wilt thou that I do unto thee?” To which the blind man replied, “Rabbouni, that I might receive my sight.” Jesus restored unto him his vision and Bartimaeus began to follow Jesus. Andrew Murray in With Christ in the School of Prayer presented Bartimaeus as an example of a prayer warrior. He persisted to call out to the Lord despite efforts at people to silence and discourage him. When Jesus called he came to the Lord. In faith he cast away the

mantle of a beggar. Jesus asked him “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?” Jesus asked about the will of Bartimaeus not his wishes. Too often our prayers are not answered because we approach the Lord with idle wishes and not our wills. Jesus taught that God desires to answer our prayers (Luke 11: 5-13).

In John Jesus is called Rabboni by Miriam of Magdala at the Resurrection of our Lord. John 20: 16 says, “Jesus saith unto her, “Mary.” She turned herself and saith unto him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master.” What does this Aramaic word mean? It means “My Master” but it also means “my rabbi” and “my teacher”. The book Rabboni: The Life Story of Jesus by W. Phillip Keller is a retelling of the life of Christ. He correctly begins the story in ‘eternity past’. He states, “Our Lord did not have His beginning at the little hamlet of Bethlehem. His story does not start with a stable. This may be the common concept of Christ but it is not the correct one. He cannot be confined to the limitations of earthly time and space. For before the earth was, He existed.”

In Modern Aramaic the word Rabbi is Rabi. It means “teacher”. School teachers, professors and learned men are called ‘rabi’. Rabboni is the personal form it means “My teacher” and “my master”. Jesus must be our personal lord, master and teacher just as he was to Mary of Magdala as she called out to him.

The Gospels portray Jesus presented as a Jewish Rabbi. We must however concede that Jesus did not have formal rabbinic training (John 7:15). Jesus was self-educated. Jesus is referred to as Rabbi more

often than any other title in the Gospels. That he is a Rabbi is conceded even by his enemies. The Aramaic scholar Bruce Chilton has shown that the formal training as a requirement necessary to be granted the title “Rabbi” had not yet been established at the time of Christ. Jesus was often addressed as Rabbi, meaning ‘master’ or ‘teacher’ and Mari, meaning ‘lord’. Interestingly, the precise form “rabbi” is used more often in John than in any other gospel.

Jesus demonstrated that he was a rabbi by expounding on the scriptures, by being ‘torah-observant’ (for instance in observing Jewish feast days) and by interpreting the Old Testament as a *meturgeman*. Jesus was also a traveling rabbi and a man of the people. He didn’t spend a great time on arcane and largely irrelevant points of doctrines. The Parables of Jesus were practical and dealt with everyday life and the common people. Jesus explained the mysteries of the Kingdom of God in modes familiar to the shepherd, the fisherman and the farmer. Jesus also demonstrated that he is a Rabbi by expounding the scripture. On many occasions Jesus clarified his teachings or challenged his adversaries with the word of God, that is, quotations from the Old Testament (Matthew 12: 3-8, Mark 29: 27-18, John 10: 34-35).

Let us examine the Messiah’s observance of Jewish Feast Days. The Fourth Gospel seems to be structured around signs performed by Jesus but also by Christ’s observance of Jewish Feast Days.

The Festivals of the Lord

The Sabbath (Leviticus 23:3) Jesus ministered on the Sabbath but never broke the Sabbath. Jesus simplified Sabbath observance laws because the Sabbath was made to benefit man and not to be a burden. Jesus said that the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. Jesus' disciples kept the Sabbath as can be seen in the women waiting until the Sabbath was over to visit the tomb. In certain sayings not found in the New Testament Jesus commends Sabbath observance. In Luke 6:5 in Codex Bezae Jesus condemns a man for his flagrant violation of the Sabbath. In the Gospel of Thomas verse 27 Jesus says, "If you do not observe the Sabbath as a Sabbath day you will not see the Father." While these verses are interesting, they are also apocryphal, and thus have no scriptural authority.

Christ's view of the Sabbath is illustrated in the incident in which his disciples were accused of breaking the Sabbath by walking through a field of grain on the Sabbath and taking some of the grain off of the stalks, rubbing it in their hands and eating it (Mark 2:23-27. As hungry travelers they were permitted to take the wheat and eat it (Leviticus 19:9, 23:22, Deuteronomy 24:19, Ruth 2:2) but in legalistic Jewish interpretation their doing so on a Sabbath was harvesting and in rubbing the husks away in their hands they were considered by the legalists to be threshing. Interestingly Jesus here does not deny that their deeds violated the Sabbath. He conceded that to his accusers. Jesus' defense was

that human needs are more important than proper Sabbath observance. The Aramaic word, Barnasha, Son of Man, can mean 'Man', and so 'Man is Lord of the Sabbath' is a possible interpretation. Many Jews, such as the Maccabees, came to a similar theory of Sabbath observance. During the Maccabean revolt some Jews chose to be massacred rather than do the work of warfare on the Sabbath. Judah Maccabee determined that matters of survival are more important than proper Sabbath observance therefore it was allowed to defend oneself on the Sabbath day (1 Maccabees 2: 32-41). Ending human suffering was more important than observing the Rabbis' definition of proper Sabbath observance according to the teachings of Jesus. In the teaching of Christ ending human suffering takes precedence over the Sabbath. Jesus often violated certain traditional modes of Sabbath observance (Mark 3:1-6 and John 5: 16-18). Early Christian Jews observed the Sabbath, but also held fellowship meetings on Sundays, remembering the day they believed was the day Jesus rose again from the dead. This is noted by Eusebius, the early Christian historian. Sunday worship has New Testament precedent. Hebrews 4: 9 literally translated from the Greek says, "There remains a keeping of the Sabbath for the people of God." But we also have Colossians 2:16 which states we should let no one judge us in regards to Sabbaths and feast days. This is clarified in Romans 14: 5-6 that we shouldn't judge anyone whether they chose to keep the biblical feast days or not. Jesus taught that as he was God Incarnate and the

Great High Priest, he was not subject to the Sabbath Law (John 5:17 and John 7:21-24).

Passover (Leviticus 23:5) The Passion of Jesus was connected to the Passover celebration. In the Gospel of John, Jesus is the Passover lamb. In Passover (Pashka in Aramaic and Pesach in Hebrew), Jews remembered their ancestors escape from slavery in Egypt that was led by Moses. According to the Gospel of John, Jesus would go to Jerusalem in order to observe the Passover (John 2:23, John 5:1). Concerning the Passover, Paul says, "Let us keep the feast..." (1 Corinthians 5:8). In Acts 20:6 it is recorded that Paul and his companions kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23: 6-8) which comprises Passover. Jesus teaches that he is the unleavened "Bread from Heaven" in John 6: 32-33. In this passage, when Jesus feeds the masses five loaves and two fishes the scripture clearly notes that the Feast of Unleavened Bread was approaching (John 6:4).

First-fruits (Leviticus 23: 9-14) 1 Corinthians 15: 20-23 states that the Messiah in his resurrection is our first fruits. James and John both state that believers are also a type of first fruits (James 1:18, Revelation 14:4). This festival was on the third day after the Passover. This is specifically mentioned by Flavius Josephus.

Pentecost (Leviticus 23: 15-22, Exodus 23:16) This was a celebration of the giving of the law. The church

was born on the Feast of Pentecost and the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples as is recounted in the second chapter of the book of Acts. Paul continues to keep Pentecost as is seen in Acts 18; 19-21 and also Acts 20: 16. Paul reported to the leadership of the church in Jerusalem on Pentecost.

The Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23: 23-25) This was a holy convocation and has eschatological significance in both the Old and the New Testaments (Isaiah 18:3, Joel 2:1-3:21, 1 Thessalonians 4: 16, 1 Corinthians 15:52, Revelation 8-9).

Yom Kippur is the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23: 26-32). This feast is the subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Paul is mentioned observing Yom Kippur in Acts 27:9. Paul is often depicted as someone in active opposition to the observance of Jewish practices and yet, in the Book of Acts he is shown as being observant of the Feasts of the Lord. In ancient Jewish Christian literature James the Just, the Lord's brother, acts as a priest interceding on behalf of the people in the manner of the high priest during the Day of Atonement.

The Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23: 33-36; 39-43, Exodus 23:16) According to John's Gospel, Jesus the Word became flesh and "tabernacled" among us (John 1:14). Peter reminds that that our body is a "tabernacle" that must be put away (2 Peter 1: 13-14). Jesus' observance of the Feast of Tabernacles is noted in John 7:2. On the principle day of the feast

which is called “the Great Hosanna” the Jews carried out a ceremonial pouring out of water. On this occasion Jesus cried out, “If any man thirst. Let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture has said, out of his inward parts shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:37-38). John says that Jesus was speaking of the Holy Spirit. Where is this prophecy written? Jesus was probably quoting an Aramaic Targum rendering of a passage in Isaiah, most likely Isaiah 28: 16-17, where waters come from a hidden or interior place. He may also be referring to Isaiah 12:3, 44:3, 55:1, or perhaps even all of these passages. We should also be mindful of Jesus’ teachings on those who thirst (Matthew 5:6) and the teaching on the Living Water he gave to Samaritan Woman at the Well. Jesus is not the living water, he gives the living water. The living water is the Holy Spirit (John 4:14, John 7:39). The last chapter of Zechariah contains an important prophecy related to the End of Days and a prophetic significance of the Feast of Tabernacles. During the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus declared, “I am the Light of the World. He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). During this festival, the Jews lighted great lights in the temple and in the city of Jerusalem. Jesus in this context identified himself as the Light of the World.

Two others Feasts are Biblical Feasts but are not the Seven Feasts of the Lord. These include the Feast of Purim which has its origins in the Book of Esther and Hanukah whose origin is described in the first

book of Maccabees. In John 10:22 we find Jesus in Jerusalem observing Hanukkah. Jesus, on this occasion, identifies himself as the Good Shepherd of Israel perhaps as the heroic Maccabees were shepherds of Israel in the past. He also affirmed his divinity on this feast day. Hanukkah is still a very relevant feast-day especially with the struggle against paganism we are suffering through today.

Phillip Yancey wrote a book entitled The Bible Jesus Read. I assumed that it was about the Aramaic version of the Bible that Jesus would have been familiar with. Instead, it was about the Old Testament itself. Mr. Yancey was trying to argue that the Old Testament has value and we should read it. Actually, one cannot understand Jesus, his Good News, the Kingdom of God or his identity as the Messiah apart from the Old Testament. The Old Testament is a necessary introduction to the person of Jesus of Nazareth. This is noted in the introduction to The Dead Sea Scroll Bible: The Oldest Known Bible Translated for the First Time into English.

Which of these many biblical books are represented most among the Qumran scrolls? In other words, which writings were most popular for the Qumran community? The following list emerges; (1) the Psalms, with a total of thirty-even manuscripts, (2) Deuteronomy (with thirty manuscripts), and (3) Isaiah (with twenty-one manuscripts). Although many scrolls have been lost, these

statistics serve to indicate which books were most frequently used among the Qumran community. If we count the number of times an Old Testament passage is quoted or referred to in the new Testament, the same three books turn up most; the Psalms (cited about sixty-eight times), Isaiah (sixty-three times), and Deuteronomy (thirty-nine times).

The church accepts the Old Testament scriptures as the revealed Word of God and, along with the New Testament, it is the Holy Bible. Attempts to reject the Old Testament by Marcion and other heretics, were rejected by both the eastern and western churches. The Old Testament, and the Aramaic Targum version of the Old Testament, were used and revered as the divinely inspired word of God by Jesus the Messiah and his students.

Rukha Qudsha:

Yeshua, The Anointed One Who is Anointed by the Holy Spirit

Who or what is the Messiah? It means “Anointed One” in Aramaic. This refers to an anointing with oil. In Aramaic oil is MESHKHA one who is anointed with oil is MESHKHA. This word means ‘messiah’ and the equivalent Greek word is CHRESTOS, or Christ. Jesus’ last name wasn’t ‘Christ’ it is a title that means “the Anointed One” or the deliverer who would be prophet, priest and king. Priests and kings were consecrated by an anointing.

Prophets were anointed in a spiritual sense. It is important to realize that Jesus as the Anointed of God is more than a prophet. This ancient practice of anointing is mentioned in Psalm 133.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

It is like the precious ointment upon the head, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments, Like the dew of Hermon and like the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there Yahweh has commanded his blessing, even life forever more.

Jesus is the Anointed One. He is Yeshu Mashika, Jesus the Anointed. He was specifically anointed by the Holy Spirit upon his baptism by John the Baptist. The oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit. What is the Holy Spirit? He is the breath, the wind of God. We as the followers of Jesus are given the Holy Spirit as a Guarantee or an Advance Payment to our future rewards in glory according to Ephesians 1:14. Paul tells us twice in his epistles that it is the Holy Spirit (Rukha Qadsha in Aramaic) that makes us able to cry out unto God, "Abba, Father." In the Beginning of creation we find the Holy Spirit playing an active role in creation. In Genesis 1:2 we find the Spirit of God hovering over the waters. In Psalms 51 David is repenting of his most grievous sins. In verse 10 he cries out, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and

renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.” So we see that the Holy Spirit is God’s empowering presence. It is a very grave thing to offend God’s Holy Spirit as can be seen from Isaiah 63:9-10.

For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie; so he was their savior. In all their affliction, he as afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bore them, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit, therefore, he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them.

To reject God’s Holy Spirit is to become God’s enemy and to incur his wrath. Therefore Jesus said:

Wherefore, I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him, but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven them, neither in this age, neither in the age to come (Matthew 12: 31-32).

Jesus ascended to the Father in order to send the Holy Spirit (John 14:25). The Holy Spirit is the Life-giver. Rukha means “Breath” as well as “Spirit”. He

is the breath and the wind from God. Jesus uses this language in John 3:8. We receive true life, meaning eternal life, through the Holy Spirit. As in Psalm 133 there is a connection between the anointing and “the blessing, even life for evermore.” Jesus did not begin his ministry until he was filled with the Holy Spirit. If God Incarnate, the Word made flesh, needs to be filled with the Holy Spirit, how much more do we? Believers in the Messiah need to live a spirit-filled life. The Holy Spirit is not just a power or a force, it is a being and a person, one of the three persons that constitutes the one eternal living God.

Jesus began his ministry by preaching that he was the anointed of God. According the Luke 4: 16 Jesus inaugurated his ministry by preaching from Isaiah 61:1-2.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, he hath send me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to get at liberty them that are bruised to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

This was Jesus’ “mission statement”. This passage should be read with Matthew 11:5 and Isaiah 35:5, Isaiah 29:18. In the Old Syriac Aramaic rendering Bruce Chilton notes that it reads

The Spirit of the Lord is upon you, on account of which

He has anointed you to message triumph to
the poor;
And he delegated me to proclaim to the
captives release,
And to the blind sight
-and I will free the broken with release-
and to proclaim the acceptable year of the
Lord.

I have doubts about the authenticity of this rendering of the scripture, but Christ's commission is our commission. Christ's mission must become personable; it is our mission, also. As Messiah is the Anointed One, we too, are anointed ones. John teaches this in his epistle. 1 John 2:20 says, "You have been anointed by the Spirit and have knowledge...the anointing you received abides in you." The Holy Spirit is the empowering presence of God. Jesus is the Messiah, the message as well as the messenger. There can be no greater prophet than the Messiah.

Part Three

Aramaic Christianity



The church Jesus founded was Aramaic. The Aramaic Jewish Church continued for centuries but then disappeared. These Jewish Christians were called Nazoreans, Ebionites and Hebrews. They did leave behind certain important writings that have survived.

Thomas and Thaddeus founded the Aramaic Church in Assyria and it has remained until this very day.

The Assyrian Aramaic Church has a strong missionary heritage. While Europe was in the Dark Ages Aramaic Christians walked all the way from Iraq to China preaching the Gospel the whole way. They even preached before the Emperors of China. They carried the Gospel to India and even to obscure and dangerous lands such as Mongolia and Socotra. Many of the greatest Christian missionaries in history

were Assyrian Christians. Aramaic Christianity was widespread until the Arab Conquest. The Aramaic Churches have survived centuries of persecution by Islamic extremists.

The remaining Aramaic churches include the Assyrian Church of the East, formerly known as the Nestorian Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church, formerly known as the Jacobites, and the Chaldean Rite Church, who are Roman Catholic Assyrians.

CHAPTER ONE

Maranatha: An Early Aramaic Prayer of the Christian Jews



Maranatha!

1 Corinthians 16: 22, Revelation 22: 20, Didache
10:6

Maranatha is translated from the Aramaic as “Come, Our Lord.” Early Aramaic Christians often prayed this short prayer, the most ancient Aramaic Christian prayer. A similar phrase is found in the Lord’s Prayer. Jesus told his disciples to pray “Tethay Malkuthack”, “Your Kingdom Come”. (The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible notes, “Marana tha. ‘Our Lord, Come!’ These Aramaic words can also be read Maran atha, meaning “Our Lord has come.”). Christians all around the world pray that the Lord will return but few who say these words actually desire them to be fulfilled. We as children of God should desire that God and Man be joined.

Modern Assyrian Christians still say Maranatha in their form of Aramaic today. THY KINGDOM COME, THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IN HEAVEN is often prayed, but not sincerely, too often we don't even want God's will done in our own lives. The Maranatha prayer reminds us of the Second Coming of Jesus and the role of prophecy in the Bible as seen in Amos 3:7-8; "For the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets. The Lion has roared, who will not fear? Yahweh has spoken, who can but prophesy?"

We should desire to be like Jesus. He was a prophet. Jesus said that his disciples would do greater things than he did. But now few desire the gift of prophecy. One of the nuances of the Aramaic word NAZOREAN is "a prophet". Jesus is often called the Nazorean. Early Jewish Christians were called the Nazoreans. One of the connotations of this is that the early Aramaic Christian were called "the prophets". The New Testament, or New Covenant, was to be an era of prophecy. This was taught by Simon Peter in Acts 2 when he quoted from the Prophet Joel (Joel 2: 28-32). In the New Covenant both men and women are prophets (the same is true in the OT Deborah and Hulda). Examples of the apostles exercising prophetic gifts are found throughout the New Testament.

Peter went in to a trance and saw visions (Acts 10:10-11).

John saw visions in an altered state of consciousness (Revelation 1:10).

Paul received special revelations, saw visions and his spirit journeyed into the realm of the heavenlies (2 Corinthians 12:2)

Agabus was a prophet who saw the future (Acts 21:10).

Thus, John the Baptist was not the last of the prophets, as many incorrectly teach. Rather, prophetic ministry, as we have seen from the Bible, continues into the church era. Paul said we should “earnestly covet” spiritual gifts but in this era many discourage the prophetic gifts (1 Corinthians 12:31).

John the Baptist is an example of the two functions of prophecy: “Fore”-telling the future and “Forth”-telling God’s inspired word. In “forth-telling”, he preaches against sin. As when he called upon the people to repent and rebuked Herod for his sin. In “fore-telling” John the Baptist foretold the coming of one greater than himself, the Messiah. The Church is God’s prophetic voice to the world, or ought to be. When the church condemns sin and provides moral direction she is fulfilling her prophetic role.

The Maranatha prayer has greater significance than just a prophetic significance. Ben Witherington III notes the importance of the Maranatha prayer in his book The Brother of Jesus, “In concluding his letter, Paul, in 1 Corinthians 16:22 offers up a prayer in Aramaic, “Maranatha”, which means “Come,

Lord.” In other words, Jesus is already called Lord by Aramaic speaking Jewish-Christians, and he is prayed to. Now, early Jews did not pray to people who were merely revered dead rabbis, teachers, or even prophets. They might well pray for a rabbi to be raised on the last day, but they would not pray to him and implore him to come. Yet, that is what Paul is doing here, and he is probably echoing a prayer he heard offered in the Jerusalem church, where such prayers were spoken in Aramaic. The dramatic importance of such a prayer should not be underestimated. Jews were forbidden to pray to someone other than God. This prayer strongly suggests that Jesus was included within the earliest Aramaic Jewish Christians understanding of God. In other words, Jesus was already viewed very early on as divine by his earliest followers, and this included James [the Just]. The notion that seeing Jesus as a divine figure was added only late in the first century and was done so only by Gentiles is simply not true.”

CHAPTER TWO

Acts of the Aramaic Apostles: James the Just, Thaddeus the Heart, Thomas the Twin and Mary of Magdala



James the Just

The recent discovery of an ancient Jewish burial chest, a bone box called an ossuary, drew much attention to the person of James the Just, the Brother of Jesus. The bone box was inscribed with the Aramaic words that are translated, “James Son of Joseph, Brother of Jesus”. This discovery has become controversial with some saying that it is authentic and others saying it is a forgery. Regardless of its authenticity, James was a very important leader in the early church. James was called the Brother of Jesus by the early church. Another brother of Jesus was Jude, who like Paul, was a missionary. Both

James and Jude wrote epistles that are included in the New Testament. Many ancient traditions about James that originated from the Aramaic speaking Jewish Christian Church have come down to us. The martyrdom of James is mentioned in the works of the great first century historian, Flavius Josephus. James was greatly beloved for his wisdom and sanctity even by the non-Christian Jews. After James was murdered the city of Jerusalem was in an uproar and the populace demanded that the high priest responsible be defrocked, and he was. According to ancient church tradition and scriptural references, James, not Peter, was the leader of the church (Acts 15:13, Acts 21:18, Galatians 2:9). Some of the Aramaic traditions of James were written by the early Jewish Christian historian Heggissipus and are included in the Church history written by Eusebius Pamphylus around 325 AD. One such tradition says that James's knees became like the knees of a camel due to his constant praying in the temple.

James was the leader of the church with authority over Peter (Cephas) and the rest of the apostles. According to the Gospel of Thomas Christ himself appointed James to lead the church. [Parts of The Gospel of Thomas may be authentic but the original is lost and it now exists only in a version that was reworked by heretics. Thus it should be used only by specialists and only with extreme caution.] Thomas Verse 12, "The Disciples said to Jesus, "We are aware that you will depart from us. Who will be our leader?" Jesus said to them, 'No matter where you come it is to James the Just you shall go, for whose

sake heaven and earth have come to exist.” (The latter part of the Thomas saying is a primitive Jewish idiom used to praise those of virtuous character. It is stated in Jewish proverbs and in Jewish tradition that God created the Heavens and the Earth for the sake of the righteous. James the Just is another way of saying Jacob the Righteous.) This verse from Thomas’s Gospel doesn’t tell us whether Christ commissioned James during his public ministry or after the resurrection. Either way his authority is unquestioned. In Galatians, Paul describes the church being led by the ‘pillars’ James, Cephas and John. Here James is given precedence over Peter (Cephas). At the Counsel of Jerusalem James decision was final and not subject to debate. “James answered, saying, ‘Men and brethren, listen to me...I judge that we should not trouble those from among the gentiles who are turning to God...’ (Acts 15:13-21). We know that James was extremely “Torah-observant”. He was a devotee of the Mosaic Law, which he described as “The Perfect Law of Liberty” (James 1:25). However, he decreed that gentiles do not need to be circumcised in order to be saved. Gentiles were to avoid pagan worship so much as to avoid food that was consecrated to false gods. And they were commanded that they must not commit sexual immorality. (James did not include Sabbath observance among the basic requirements necessary for Gentile converts to be viewed as acceptable by their Jewish brethren.) Paul met with James soon after his conversion (Galatians 1:19). James was called the Zaddick, which means in both Hebrew and Aramaic,

‘the Just’ or ‘the Righteous’. He was very Torah Observant and Christian Jews who were “Zealous for the Law” surrounded him (Acts 21:20). Cephas (Peter), was intimidated by these people (Galatians 2:11-12). The other “Brothers of Our Lord” [Joseph, Judah and Simeon] also had a special function in the Church as apostles and missionaries. Like Cephas (Peter) they were married (1 Corinthians 9:5). This verse implies that James was married as well. When Cephas (Peter) was freed from prison by the angel he instructed Rhonda to tell James and the other Brothers that he was safe (Acts 12:17). Paul reported to James on the progress of his missionary endeavors and to bring an offering to support the Ebion, the poor saints of Jerusalem (Acts 21:18). Paul was an observant Jew, but he stressed the difference between being saved and observing Jewish rites. James instructed Paul to worship with some brothers in the temple and perform Jewish rites and to pay their expenses. This was to show that Paul was a Jew and had a deep respect for Jewish tradition. Neither Paul nor James was in error for doing this. *The Epistle of James the Just, the Brother of Our Lord* is the first of the General Epistles because James was the preeminent apostle and had authority over Peter, whose epistles follow that of James. James’s teaching style is the most similar to that of Jesus as found in the Synoptic gospels. (Matthew, Mark and Luke). It is wisdom literature and actually only mentions Jesus once. It is addressed to the Jewish Diaspora specifically but it is obviously intended for all Christians as well. It has a strong focus on works, “Be doers of the

war". The early Messianic Jews believed the destruction of the temple was God's wrath for the death of James. James was interpreted as being the Righteous One referred to in this passage.

Many scholars see James as a champion of the poor and of the oppressed. The Sadducean Religious establishment was a small group of closely related priests who ran the temple and enriched themselves by exploiting the people. Some scholars believe that one of the motives the priest had in murdering James was that he was a champion of the poor, especially of poor priests. While the high priestly family fatten themselves off of the people's offerings many Levites were starving. (The Levites were an Israelite tribe that was a priestly caste.) The high priests seized and confiscated for themselves tithes that were to go towards the support of impoverished priests. Their corrupt practices enraged the populace so much that certain high priests met violent ends. Many priests, because they didn't have connections, were not allowed to serve in the temple, or like Zacharias the father of John the Baptist, were allowed only to function in the temple once in their entire life, if their name came up on the roll. Many priests waited their whole lives for an opportunity to worship in the temple and were never allowed to. Jesus opposed the High Priest's corrupt practices when he cleansed the temple. [Although Jesus had strong words against the Pharisees He had much more in common with them than with the Sadducean Priestly establishment. Not all priests were Sadducees but all the Sadducees were wealthy priests. Certain Bible scholars consider

“heart”. Thaddeus was obviously “all heart”. The ‘breast’ or ‘bosom’ is depicted as a special place of love and comfort in the New Testament. Lazarus the Poor Man is depicted as being comforted in the Bosom of Father Abraham in an important parable of Jesus (Luke 16:22-24). John the Priest, as the Beloved Disciple, or “whom Jesus loved” is depicted as leaning on the bosom of Jesus (John 13:23). Thus in the Aramaic culture in which Christ lived the bosom was the symbol of love, friendship and compassion. Thaddeus was a tender and sensitive man who loved people. It was this meek and loving man who converted the Assyrian Kingdom to faith in Jesus. This man of love is the father of the Assyrian Aramaic church. In Modern Aramaic Thaddeus is called Addai.

Eusebius Pamphylus, the father of church history, wrote of the Conversion of Abgar the king of the Aramaic peoples. According to Eusebius, Abgar, who was ailing, heard of the miraculous power of Jesus and sent a letter to him requesting that he visit and heal him. Jesus responded that after his glorification he would send a disciple to minister unto him. After Pentecost, Saint Thomas sent Thaddeus and the disciple Mari to preach to King Abgar. Thaddeus prayed for Abgar and Abgar was immediately miraculously healed. Thaddeus baptized King Abgar into the church. After seeing the miracles and listening to the gentle wisdom of a kind and caring man that Thaddeus was, many of the Aramaic speakers and the Assyrians also were converted. Eusebius, called the “Father of Church History”, writing in 325 AD,

they who have not seen might believe and live. As to that part of your letter, which relates to my giving you a visit, I must inform you, that I must fulfill all the ends of my mission in this country, and after that be received up again to him who sent me. But after my ascension I will send one of my disciples, who will cure your disease, and give life to you, and all that are with you.

Thomas also ministered to the Assyrians and went on to preach in India. The Doctrine of Addai is an Aramaic work describing the ministry of Thaddeus and other of the apostles to the Aramaic peoples. *The Acts of Thomas*, also written in Aramaic, describes the ministry of Thomas in India. The Doctrine of Addai not only tells the amazing and fascinating story of Thaddeus and the founding of the Assyrian Church it also introduces the core principles of Christianity. This book is one of the best books written introducing Christian doctrine in a way that is easy to understand for the layman. Thaddeus the Heart loved people and he wanted them to understand the Good News of Jesus in a simple way. This important theological work of Thaddeus has been preserved for us in the original Aramaic by the Assyrian nation. The Divine liturgy used by Assyrian Christians, called “The Hallowing of the Holy Apostles Mar Mari and Mar Addai,” is also believed to have been composed by Thaddeus. It has been determined to be the oldest liturgy still in use in the world. This liturgy is still recited in the ancient Aramaic language of Jesus. Ian

Thomas was also venerated on the isle of Socotra. He was believed to have been shipwrecked on Socotra while he traveled to India. Christianity was exterminated from Socotra by an invasion of Islamic fanatics in the 1800s.

Mary of Magdala: The Forgotten Aramaic Prophetess of Christianity

Many strange theories about Mary Magdalene have been circulating especially after Dan Brown's book "The Da Vinci Code" has become a best seller. As Mary of Magdala's name is Aramaic, and as she is one of the personalities quoted actually speaking in Aramaic in the New Testament, she is an important figure in Aramaic biblical studies.

In the apocryphal First Apocalypse of James the Just it is claimed that Jesus had twelve male disciples and seven female disciples. Of course, Jesus had more disciples than just the twelve and probably had more than seven female disciples, but it is possible that that number did represent a core. (Matthew says "many" women followed him in Matthew 27:55.) Female disciples of Jesus included Mary of Magdala, Salome, Susanna, Joanna, Mary of Bethany, Martha of Bethany, Mary the Mother of Our Lord and Jesus' aunt, who is un-named in the scripture.

Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well at Sychar and at that time it was unheard of for a man, especially a Rabbi, to speak to a woman. It was unacceptable for a Rabbi to speak to a woman in public much less take women as disciples. In his book, Dan

Brown makes it seem that there was friction and animosity between Peter and the male apostles and Mary of Magdala. However, when Mary of Magdala was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied on the day of Pentecost, Peter did not try to silence her. Instead he defended her actions by appealing to Old Testament scripture (Acts 2:14-17, Joel 2:28-32). Women behaving in such a manner at that time would have been considered behaving in a outrageous and undignified manner. It is obvious from the context that Mary Magdalene was present and that she prophesied. The scripture specifically states all the believers were gathered, men and women, and that the Holy Spirit came upon them all. To clear away all doubt Peter refers to both men and women prophesying.

Mary Magdalene is not to be confused with Mary of Bethany. Mary of Bethany of Judea was the sister of Martha and Lazarus. Mary of Magdala was a woman of wealth from Galilee who supported Jesus from her means. This is clearly stated in Matthew 27:55, "*And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee ministering unto him: Among these was Mary Magdalene...*" Jesus cast seven demons from her. A Catholic tradition says the demons were the "Seven Deadly Sins" (Pride, Avarice, Lust, Gluttony, Sloth, Greed, and Wrath) but this is unlikely. Mary was a demoniac. We need to consider the First Century and Biblical understanding of demonic possession. In the Holy Gospels Jesus is presented as an exorcist. Demonic possession was manifested by madness, disease and

blasphemy. This was due to the victim being inhabited by an evil personality that was a spiritual being or entity. Jesus warned that the demons could return to the hosts if the host did not repent and do good works (Matthew 12:44-45, John 5:14). Innocent children sometimes suffered from demonic possession. However, the demon is usually attracted by sin and “invited in” by it. Mary of Magdala was under evil spiritual influence. She may have been physically healed by Jesus since one of the demons inhabiting her may have been a spirit of infirmity. Mary, or more accurately Miriam, was a Jew, and not an Egyptian, Ethiopian or Greek. She was named after the Hebrew prophetess Miriam the sister of Moses. She definitely was not a priestess of Isis or any other pagan deity. After Jesus banished the demons that tormented her, Mary of Magdala became a very loyal and devoted disciple of Jesus.

The Aramaic *Miriam of Magdala Nunayya* is in English Miriam of Magdala or Mary Magdalene. In Aramaic *Magdala* means ‘tower’, “fortress, or “watch-tower”. St. Jerome, who was fluent in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, commented on Mary from an Aramaic perspective,

Those unbelievers who read me may perhaps smile to find me lingering over the praises of weak women. But if they recall how holy women attended our Lord and Savior and ministered to him of their own substance, and how the three Marys stood before the cross, and particularly how Mary of Magdala, called

“of the tower” because of her earnestness and ardent faith, was privileged to see the rising Christ even before the apostles, they will convict themselves of pride rather than me of folly, who judge virtue not by the sex but by the mind.

In the Talmud she is called “Miriam Megaddela”, meaning, “Miriam with the braided locks” and there is presented as an adulteress and a sinner. Saint Jerome said that the name Magdala, meaning Tower, denoted the steadfastness of her faith. Origen of Alexandria saw in her name the word gadal, meaning ‘to be great’ in Aramaic, and saw in her name a prophecy of her spiritual greatness as having ministered to her Lord and having been the first witness of the resurrection. In the Eastern Churches she is called Holy Myrrh-Bearer and Equal to the Apostles Mary Magdalene and she is called the Apostle to the Apostles. Magdala is on the banks of the Sea of Galilee between the cities of Capernaum and Tiberias. The Gospels relate that Mary was a constant companion of the Lord and followed Him when he went with the apostles through the cities and villages of Judea and Galilee preaching about the Kingdom of God. She most likely shared with the Apostles the evangelistic tasks with the other women as well. The Gospel relates that Mary of Magdala was present at Golgotha (Aramaic for ‘place of the skull’) at the moment of the Lord’s crucifixion. While the other disciples of the Savior ran away, she fearlessly remained at the cross together with his mother and the Apostle John.

She was faithful to him not only in the days of his glory, but also at the moment of his extreme humiliation and agony. As the Evangelist Matthew relates, she was present at the burial of the Lord. Before her eyes Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus went to the tomb with his lifeless body. As a torah observant Jew she kept the Sabbath day and returned to the tomb Sunday morning. The form of her name is Aramaic and in the Gospel she is quoted speaking to Jesus in Aramaic saying “Rabboni”, meaning “my teacher”. She was Jewish and Semitic in her cultural orientation. Many Bible scholars believe Mary of Magdala began following Jesus after the miraculous feeding of the multitudes. This is because Jesus visited Magdala after this miracle and it was probably at this time when Mary began following him (Matthew 15:39). This is so depicted in the mini-series Jesus of Nazareth and the motion picture The Gospel of John. Probably the most accurate depiction of Mary Magdalene in a motion picture was in The Miracle Maker.

Mary Magdalene enters the Gospel narrative, with certain other women, as “ministering to Jesus of their substance” (Luke 8:2 and see also Matthew 27:55)

Accompanying him were the twelve and some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, Joanna, the wife of Herod’s steward Chuza, Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their resources.

upon the cross alone. This is why the Lord, knowing her faithfulness, appeared to her first and esteemed her worthy to be the first to proclaim his resurrection. She was an influential figure, a prominent disciple and a valuable leader of the early Christian movement. Mary Magdalene is always mentioned first when the women are listed with the exception of a passage in John where the mother of Jesus and her sister are mentioned first.

Paul mentions the Magdalene in Rome. (He also mentions other prominent people from the land of Israel, members of the Herodian royal family and the son of Simon the Cyrene, Rufus.) Paul says that Mary has “labored much.” According to Bible scholars, the Roman church was Jewish in its cultural orientation both before and after the visit of Paul. The writer of Hebrews writes to them his epistle because he fears the influence of radical Judaizers in the Roman Church. Mary of Magdala is believed to have lived to old age, perhaps her seventies, but maybe even as old as ninety. Tradition states that she died in Ephesus. Some have suggested that she may have later married John the Evangelist. An older tradition states that she died in Jerusalem. The legend that places her in France is unreliable and confuses her with Mary of Bethany.

In the Talmud Magdalene is related to the Aramaic word “megadlella” or “hairdresser”. There it is a term for a prostitute. In the Talmud Mary Magdalene is a whore, an adulteress and sinner. It was sin that attracted the demons to her that possessed her. It is very possible that the sinful woman who anointed

the feet of Jesus was Mary Magdalene but that is not clearly stated in scripture. The woman taken in adultery was probably not Mary Magdalene. Mary very well may have been a prostitute but we know that she was a woman of means that supported Jesus' ministry with her finances and that Jesus had cast out seven demons out of her. The city of Magdala was noted for its wealth, depravity and its prostitutes. In Jesus and His World: An Archeological and Cultural Dictionary the authors, John Rosseau and Rami Arav, ask concerning Magdala, "Can a correlation be made between its depravity and the seven demons that Jesus cast out of Mary?" If Mary of Magdala had been a prostitute, and she very well may have been, she is a symbol of the transforming power of Christ and his power to save from sin and to change our natures. If she was a prostitute before coming to Jesus she also is an example of the grace, love and mercy that Jesus had in accepting people who repented, no matter what their pasts had been, their sins were forgiven. It may be that Mary was a young or middle-aged widow. She may have inherited money from her dead husband. In the first century the mortality rate was very high. Apparently, Mary ran from and to the tomb of Christ when she found it empty so she obviously wasn't in extreme old age and she wasn't decrepit (John 20:2).

Jesus, in the Gospel account, traveled through and ministered in the city of Magdala. According to the Talmud Magdala was a prosperous city of exceeding wickedness which was destroyed by God through the Romans. In Matthew 15:39 it is stated that Jesus came

to the region of Magdala. Magdala is also associated with the name Dalmanutha as in Mark 8:10. What do we know about the city of Magdala? In Aramaic it is Magdala-Nunnaya, Fish Tower. In Greek it is called Tarichae, place of salted fish. It was a prosperous city. Magdala was an important agricultural, fishing, boat-building and trade center at the junction of the road coming north from Tiberias and the Via Maris coming from lower Galilee into the fertile plain of Gennesaret. It is between Tiberias and Capernaum. The town was a center for processing fish, which was sold in the markets of Jerusalem and exported as far as Rome. The boy who gave his food to Jesus in the miraculous feeding of the 5,000 had fishes that must have been either preserved by being salted or smoked. It is possible that these fish were processed at Magdala. Magdala was also renowned as a center for flax weaving and dyeing, and the robes worn by Jesus at the time of his crucifixion are said to have been made there.

During the Jewish War that ended in 70 AD Magdala was defeated by the Romans. Josephus recounts that the Romans under Titus conquered the city with much blood-shed. Since Magdala was a center of boat building, many of the remaining residents fled to the sea in their vessels and a great sea battle erupted with a total of 6,500 Jews slaughtered in the sea and on land. The Sea of Galilee became red with blood and filled with dead bodies. Titus's father Vespasian declared that the whole city and its inhabitants should not be spared. Even the old and infirm were slaughtered. Those that survived were sold as

aqueduct system, a theatre and a hippodrome, the latter holding 100,000 men [a hippodrome was a place where horse races and gladiatorial combat were held]...reports also list from the digs at Magdala one needle for repairing nets, lead weights for nets...pottery...Many coins were found...In 1991 when the waters of the Sea were low after a severe drought, a tower appeared about 150 feet from the shore of Magdala...this was...a lighthouse for the fisherman working at night on the Sea... Rabbinic literature mentions a synagogue and a famous beth midash (study house), famous scribes (Niqai) and rabbis (Isaac, Judah) at Magdala. The priestly order of Ezekiel is said to have had its seat there. The Talmud mentions that the town had a small harbor... Strabo reported that "In Taricheae [Magdala] the sea provides the finest fish for pickling and on its banks grow fruit trees which resemble apple trees." The town had a reputation for opulence and immorality. According to the Talmud "Magdala was destroyed because of prostitution (znut)"...So strong is the Magdalene's legend that some have suggested that "Mary the Magdalene" might be the equivalent of "Mary the Harlot," since "by the Jews the word Magdala was used to denote a person with plaited or twisted hair, a practice then much in use among women of loose character." Since the Aramaic word for hairdresser is megaddlele, some sort of

pun may have linked the city and the profession, but I have found no description of prostitutes wearing their hair plaited, or working as beauticians, though that occupation may have been regarded as disreputable...As a site of military history, Magdala and the area around it ran with blood. [The city figured prominently in the Maccabean revolt and the Jewish War.]

Interestingly, the first word uttered by the risen Christ was “woman”. Both John and Mark specifically state, “he appeared first to Mary Magdalene...” (Mark 16:9). A very detailed account of Mary’s encounter with the risen Lord is found in John 20. This account must have come directly from Mary Magdalene. (Interestingly, Paul does not mention Mary Magdalene when he lists witnesses of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15. He does however mention Mary in Romans 16:6, “Greet Mary who has labored much for us”. In that era a woman’s testimony did not carry much weight.) Note that Mary wept and mourned over the body of the Lord. This was a real love. She said, “They have taken the body of MY LORD, and I do not know where they have laid him.” Like Thomas, Mary did not believe until she had seen. When she saw the resurrection Jesus she exclaimed in Aramaic, “Rabboni”, this means “my teacher” or “my master”. This Aramaic word is used only here and in the story of blind Bar Timeaus in Mark’s Gospel. Mary wasn’t believed by the apostles when she proclaimed the Gospel to them. When she

recognized Jesus she reached out to embrace him. He said “Touch me not” or “Don’t cling to me” (in Latin *Noli Me Tangere*, but Jesus said this in Aramaic not Latin). He first had to appear before the Heavenly Father. After this he did allow the disciples to touch and handle him.

Mary of Magdala forces us to confront the question of the role of women in the Early Church. In Galatians 3:28 Paul says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”.

It should be remembered that Jesus as an infant was prophesied over and blessed by Annah the Prophetess in Luke 2: 36-38.

Acts 2:1-21 Peter quotes Joel’s prophecy that God’s Holy Spirit will fall on men and women.

In Acts 9:36 the disciple and minister Tabitha, Aramaic for Gazelle, is mentioned. She is resurrected from the dead by Peter.

Acts 21:9 Phillip the Evangelist’s daughters are prophetesses.

Romans 16:1 Phoebe is the minister of the church at Cenchrea.

Romans 16:3 Priscilla (Prisca) is a fellow-worker with Paul. See also Acts 18:24-26.

Romans 16:7 Junia the Apostle is a woman “outstanding among the apostles”. Junia may be the same person as Joanna, the Disciple of Jesus mentioned in the Gospels.

Women leaders of house churches in the New Testament are Chloe (1 Corinthians 1:11), Mary the mother of John Mark the Evangelist (Acts 12:12), Lydia (Acts 16:14), Nympha (Col 4:15) and Apphia (Philemon 2).

Euodia and Syntyche are mentioned as co-workers who were active evangelists (Philippians 4:2).

1 Timothy 3:11 in the Greek refers to a deaconess. Paul says that Timothy’s mother and grandmother, Eunice and Lois, had a godly influence on him. According to Rodney Stark in The Rise of Christianity most early Christians were women. He says that, “Christianity promoted liberating social relations between the sexes and within the family, giving women more status than they enjoyed in Roman society, where they remained the property of men. Moreover, from the very beginning Christianity opposed infanticide and abortion, gruesome procedures that produced a pagan population that was disproportionately male. Women also benefited from the church’s sanctification of marriage and opposition to divorce. Roman men held marriage in low estate, and even when they did marry produced few children.”

News was that God was inviting people to repent, and that the opportunity to repent was available to all. God would forgive the repentant sinner and they would be accepted by the community. This love attracted Matthew. Yet it also had a great challenge.

The calling of Matthew shows us what repentance really means in the teachings of Jesus. Mark 2: 14 states that, Jesus “passed by and saw Levi the Son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. And he said to him, “Follow me.” So he arose and followed him”. It is important that we meditate on this verse and not pass over it too quickly. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German theologian who was martyred by the Nazis, brought out some important truths from this passage.

Jesus summons people to follow Him not as a teacher, or a pattern of the good life, but as the Christ, the Son of God. In this short text Jesus Christ and his claim are proclaimed to us. Not a word of praise is given to the disciple for his decision for Christ. We are not expected to contemplate the disciple, but only Him who calls and his absolute authority.

Levi must leave the receipt of custom in order to follow Jesus. One would have thought that nothing so drastic was necessary as such an early stage. Could not Jesus have initiated the publican into some new religious experience and leave him as he was before? He could have done so, had He not been the incarnate Son of God. But since He is the Christ, He must make it clear from the start

that His Word is not an abstract doctrine but the re-creation of the whole life of man. The only right and proper way is quite literally to go with Jesus. The call to follow implies that there is only one way of believing on Jesus Christ and that is by leaving all and going with the incarnate Son of God.

Now He has come, and His call goes forth. Faith can no longer mean sitting still and waiting—he must rise and follow Him. The call frees him from all earthly ties and binds him to Jesus Christ alone. He must plunge into the absolute insecurity in order to learn the demand and gift of Christ.

Had Levi stayed at his post, Jesus might have been his present help in trouble, but not the Lord of his whole life. In other words, Levi would never have learned to believe. The new situation must be created—the impossible situation in which everything is staked solely on the word of Jesus. The road to faith passes through obedience to the call of Jesus. Unless a definite step is demanded, the call vanishes into thin air, and if people imagine that they can follow Jesus without taking this step, they are deluding themselves.

Matthew was an educated person. He knew how to keep records and documents. He gave that all up and used his skill to become a scribe in the Kingdom of God. In Matthew's Gospel scribes are praised. Matthew 13:52, "Therefore every scribe

instructed concerning the Kingdom of heaven is like a householder that brings out of his treasure things old and new.” Scholars believe that Matthew traveled to Antioch and established a school of Christian scribes known as the School of Matthew. Around 90 AD the Gospel of Matthew was completed. Ignatius of Antioch, an early church father, was familiar with Matthew’s Gospel. This subject is dealt with in the book Antioch and Rome by Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier.

In the genealogy of Jesus found in Matthew’s Gospel numerical symbolism is used. In Hebrew and Aramaic, as in the Roman alphabet, letters can also be numbers. The idea of Hebrew letters being numbers strikes many people as a mysterious concept but it shouldn’t. I, V, X, L, C and M are numbers. This is one, five, ten, fifty, one hundred and one thousand. This demonstrates that the concept of letters representing numbers is not unfamiliar to us. Matthew assigns the numerical value of fourteen to the name David and uses it as a structure to organize the genealogy of Jesus. Aramaic and Hebrew letters are the same and have the same numerical value in both languages. In Hebrew David is D-V-D or 4+6+4, which of course, is 14. In Matthew, as Jesus said, the Son of David is greater than Solomon, he is also greater than David, as David himself said in the Psalm (Mark 12:35, Psalm 110:1). The divisions in the genealogy represent that Jesus is three times greater than David. The genealogies found in Matthew and Luke were, according to Eusebius, preserved by the Despoynia, the surviving relatives of Jesus. Luke

used one of their family trees and the other was later added to Matthew's Gospel. The Gospel states that Jesus is greater than Solomon, the son of David, who was the greatest of all the kings of Israel (Matthew 12:42). While Solomon built a temple for the Lord, Jesus, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, built the church. Jesus was greater than the prophet Elisha. While Elisha fed 100 men with only 20 loaves of bread, Jesus did more with less. Jesus fed over 5,000 with 5 loaves (2 Kings 4:42-44, Matthew 14: 14-21). Jesus was greater than Moses. While the Law came through Moses, better things, such as grace and truth, came through Jesus Christ (John 1:17, Hebrews 3:3-6). While the Law of Moses is good, Jesus found it deficient. He said, "Because of the hardness of your hearts [Moses] gave you this precept, but from the beginning it was not so" (Mark 10:5, Matthew 19:8). (Jesus was specifically speaking of Jewish divorce customs in this passage.) As Moses gave his law from a mountain, Jesus gave a new and superior way from a mountain (Exodus 34:4, Matthew 5:1-2).

Matthew's Gospel is about what Jesus did and said. He juxtaposes large sections of teachings with miracle stories. Two things are important and distinctive about Matthew's Gospel. His Gospel contains large amounts of the Doctrine of Jesus. This means what Jesus taught. All four gospels and the book of Acts contain many examples of prophecies fulfilled by Jesus, but Matthew has more Old Testament citations than the rest of the Gospels.

Papias was one of the early church fathers. He was a second generation Christian and lived at the end of

the first century and the beginning of the second. He interviewed people who knew the apostles and wrote down saying of Jesus that had been passed down orally. He knew three of the apostolic generation, John the Elder, his disciple Polycarp and someone named Ariston. Papias's work has been preserved only in fragments. Papias stated, "*Matthew collected the oracles in the Hebrew language and each interpreted them as best as he could*". In the New Testament and in the early Church era the Aramaic dialect of the Jews was called 'Hebrew'. In the New Testament sometimes Aramaic, and sometimes Hebrew, are referred to as 'Hebrew'. For example, Golgotha is called a Hebrew word in John's Gospel. It is Aramaic. But in the Revelation Abaddon and Armageddon are spoken of as being Hebrew words and they are Hebrew and not Aramaic. Since in the first century Aramaic was sometimes called 'Hebrew,' this has created confusion and some controversy. This chapter will explore the question concerning whether the Gospel of Matthew was written in Hebrew, or if the Aramaic language is referred to rather than the language we call Hebrew today.

A Hebrew version of the Gospel of Matthew has been found in a medieval book entitled "the Touchstone," Evan Bohan in Hebrew. It is an anti-Christian book written by a Rabbi named Shem Tov Ibn Sharput. This book was written in 1380. It contains the Gospel of Matthew in Hebrew which is interrupted with and followed by a running commentary attacking Christianity. During the Middle Ages Jews were forced to come to "disputations"

where they debated Christianity with authorities in the Roman Catholic Church. The Evan Bohan was written to help Jews argue against the truths of Christianity in these sessions. There are other medieval anti-Christian Hebrew gospels, such as one that is called “DuTillet”. Hugh Schonfield, George Howard and Michael Rood argue that this Gospel of Matthew contained in the Shem Tov work represents the original text of Matthew’s Gospel that had disappeared but had been secretly preserved by the Jews and re-surfaced in Rabbi Ibn Sharput’s attack on Christianity. Careful examination of the evidence shows that this is not so.

Neither Ibn Sharput nor the Jewish community claimed that this Hebrew Gospel was the original version. If they did find it in their archives why didn’t they say they did?

Such Hebrew Matthews appear only in polemical works (the DuTillet version also contains commentary attacking Christianity). The reason behind this is that they originated for polemical purposes. The text of the Polemical Matthews do not preserve Hebrew or Aramaic forms of the names of the Apostles, the text even has the Latin form “Apostolos” instead of the Aramaic or Hebrew form Shlikha. It has Petros instead of Cephas, James is called Jimmy instead of the original Jacob and even Matthew has the Italian form Matio! If it was based on a Hebrew source why doesn’t it have Hebrew forms of the apostle’s names? Even our Greek New Testaments have Simon Peter’s Aramaic name, Cephas. See Shem Tov Matthew 10: 2-3.

The Polemical Matthews are full of Latin words. This shows that they are translations from the Latin. The Latin is so obviously the source and background of these Matthews. The Shem Tov Matthew has a Latin substratum. If it has a “Hebrew” substratum where is it? No part of the Shem Tov Matthew can be proven to be a primitive Hebrew substratum. Here is a list of only some of the Latin words embedded in the Shem Tov. The Hebrew text is full of Latin words written in Hebrew letters.

Mavangeleo, Good Gift Matthew 4: 23
Libela repudio, Divorce Decree Matthew 5:31
Ipocrates, Hypocrites Matthew 6:2
Paralatiko, paralyzed Matthew 8:6, 9:2
Paan Sagrah, Holy Bread Matthew 12:4
Rezinah de Isteriah, Queen of the East Matthew
12:42
Kristo, Christ Matthew 16: 16
Phiblios, Tassels Matthew 23: 5
Evungili, Gospel Matthew 24:14

Whoever wrote the Polemical Matthews did not know the geography of the Holy Land. He confused Gilgal with Galilee in Matthew 4:12. (Gilgal is the place in the southern region of the Jordan River where Joshua and the Children or Israel crossed into the Promised Land.) He has Jesus travel to Macedonia in Greece in Matthew 15:39. It should be Magdala not Macedonia but the author of Shem Tov Matthew didn't know the geography of the Holy Land. He also calls Bethany “Cephar-hananyah” and Arimathia

“Karnasiah” because he doesn’t know these places and has no idea of where they are. The author of the Shem Tov Polemical Gospel could not have been Saint Matthew! The writers of the Polemical Matthews did not know their Jewish history. The translator is unaware of who Herod Archeleaus is in Matthew 2:22. The translator also confuses Simon the Cyrenian with Simon the Canaanite, who is the same as Simon the Zealot (Matthew 27: 32).

Early Church Fathers knew of, described to us, and even quoted from Hebrew versions of the Gospel of Matthew. The Shem Tov and related versions do not fit these descriptions of the Hebrew Gospels and do not contain the additional and alternate readings known to be found in the Hebrew gospels. For example, the Hebrew Matthew was slightly shorter than our canonical Matthew. Nicephorus, Patriarch of Constantinople from 806-818, counted 2200 lines of texts in the Hebrew Matthew and according to his computations was 300 lines shorter than our Biblical Matthew.

People who believe that the Polemical Matthews represent the original version of the Gospel of Matthew are one of three things. Either they are not very intelligent, ill-educated or poor scholars or perhaps they are fooling themselves, wanting to believe something that so obviously isn’t true. It is possible that they are deceiving other people, perhaps willfully. Someone who would promote Shem Tov as a type of “Dead Sea Scroll” discovery is a sensationalist at best and a huckster and charlatan at worst.

With the Shem Tov Matthew we are getting far removed from the original Aramaic source. With the Shem Tov we have a translation of a translation of a translation. And Shem Tov is a bad translation of even the Latin! It is full of errors, scribal errors and translation mistakes. With George Howard's The Gospel of Matthew According to a Primitive Hebrew Text we are far removed from the original. Here is how it goes; English from Hebrew from Latin from Greek from the original Hebrew and Aramaic. There is nothing 'primitive' about the Shem Tov Matthews, they are very obviously from the Middle Ages and are poorly translated from the Latin Vulgate Version of the Bible. The scholarship of the proponents of the Shem Tov Matthew is very questionable. Schonfield is the author of the Passover Plot, a book advocating the "swoon theory" and saying that Jesus was a phony messiah orchestrating events in order to deceive the populace. (In the "swoon theory" Jesus merely fainted on the cross and then woke up in the tomb and afterwards faked his resurrection. The Romans ensured that Jesus was indeed dead on the cross when they stabbed him with the spear.) Certain advocates of the Polemical Matthews have been quoted saying that the Greek word for God (theos) used in the New Testament refers to a pagan deity and shouldn't be used by followers of Yeshua. If this is true the New Testament is not the inspired word of God and Paul was instructing the people of Athens to worship a false god when he told them that the "Unknown God (theos)" they ignorantly worshiped he came to declare to them (Acts 17:23-

So we know that although it is called the “Hebrew” Gospel, Aramaic is meant.

Additional Readings from the Gospel of the Hebrews

There is additional information about Jesus that was only preserved in the Hebrew Gospels. For instance, we know from the Hebrew Gospels that when Jesus went to be baptized by John that his mother and brothers went with him. In 1 Corinthians 15:7 Paul mentions the appearance of the Resurrected Jesus to James the Just, his brother. In the Hebrew Gospel we have a fuller account.

The Lord, after he had given the linen cloth [the Shroud] to the priest’s slave, went to James and appeared to him. (Now James had sworn not to eat bread from the time that he drank from the Lord’s cup until he would see him raised from among those who sleep.) Shortly after this the Lord said, “Bring a table and some bread,” and immediately it is added: He took the bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to James the Just and said to him, “My brother, eat your bread, for the Son of Man has been raised from among those that sleep.”

The Jewish Gospels also have it that at the Baptism a great light shined down on Jesus and danced on the water like flames. This tradition is preserved in Aramaic Christian art and is depicted on Syriac Icons.

72 hours. This issue is dealt with in Three Days and Three Nights-Reconsidered in the Light of Scripture by Ralph Woodrow. Over 20 verses in Scripture say that Jesus rose on the third day and only one says “three days and three nights,” and this wording isn’t found in the Aramaic Matthew. Scripture ought to be used to interpret scripture. We shouldn’t try to count time in this Biblical context with our western reckoning of time. According to Rabbi Eliezer Ben Azariah, who lived during the New Testament era, in the first century in the Jewish mode of measuring time any part of a day is sometimes counted as a full day and night. This is found in the Jerusalem Talmud in Shabbath ix 3. What is important is that Jesus is risen from the dead, not the exact amount of time he spent in the tomb. When the people diagram the 72-hour theory day by day a huge and very obvious error appears. They have Jesus crucified on Wednesday and have a special Sabbath on Thursday. But with this scheme Friday is a work day. I lived in the Old City of Jerusalem. There is no way that the women would not have sufficient time to buy the ointment, prepare it, visit the tomb and anoint the body in one day. The Old City is a small area. I have walked all over the city, through the markets and to Gethsemane and Calvary all in a few short hours. While the city has changed over the centuries in some ways, including its relative size, it has not changed. (Certain people who hold to the 72 hour theory, have made scenarios in which Jesus rose on Saturday evening rather than Sunday morning. This contradicts the Gospel accounts and early Jewish Christian beliefs. The early Jewish

Christians kept the Sabbath, but they held fellowship meetings on Sunday in observation of Sunday as the day of the resurrection.) Another, frankly irrelevant, false teaching going around is that the Magi visited the child Jesus a full two years after his birth. These deceivers say that it took a full two years for a caravan to travel from ‘the East’ to Bethlehem. As the Magi are Persian priests of the Zorasterian religion (which is considered monotheistic) the Magi would have come from the region between Babylon and Susa. There were caravans going back and forth in this region unceasingly. This journey was one of about 900 miles. According the Ezra the Scribe, who took this journey in 458 BC, it took about four months after departing from Babylon to arrive in Jerusalem (Ezra 7:9). When I lived in the Holy Land I was surprised how close Bethlehem is to Jerusalem. It is less than a five minute drive. King Herod thought that the child was less than two years old and was possibly a new born (Matthew 2:16). Believers do no service to God or to other Christians by creating fantasies masquerading as historical facts. Sloppy and improper scholarship makes Christians look deceitful. It also makes God appear deceitful to unbelievers. What I am arguing for here is accurate information, rather than falsehood. No, I am not a “closet pagan.” No, I am not a “wolf in sheep’s clothing.” No, I haven’t “bought into pagan propaganda.” I am a born again Bible believing, spirit-filled Christian trying to get at the historical truth. In the West traditionally there are held to be three Magi. In the Aramaic tradition there were twelve. The Bible does not give a number. What

is important is that Jesus came in history and fulfilled prophecy-not speculation about how long it took the Magi to arrive or even how many Magi there were.

The Hebrew Matthew also contained a verse that read, “Even if you are resting on my breast but do not do the will of my Father in heaven, I will cast you away from my breast.” A similar saying is found in John 15: 2 and 5-7. Hebrew Matthew had a longer version of the story of the rich young man.

“Master, what good things must I do to have life?” He replied to him, “O man, you should keep the law and the prophets.” He responded, “I have already done that.” Jesus said to him, “Go, and sell all that you have and distribute the proceeds to the poor, then come, follow me.” But the rich young man scratched his head, for he was not pleased. And the Lord said to him, “How can you say, “I have kept the law and the prophets” For it is written in the law, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” But look, many of your brothers, sons of Abraham, are clothed in excrement and dying of hunger while your house is full of many good things, not one of which goes forth to these others.”

In the Hebrew Gospel it reads that Jesus said, “You should never rejoice except when you look upon your brother in love.” There are several other expanded sayings and extra narratives from the Hebrew Matthew that have been preserved.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Assyrian Christians of Mesopotamia: The Oldest Christian People



The Assyrians are the descendants of the ancient Assyrians, Chaldeans and Babylonians. Their ancient ancestors were converted to the worship of the one true God by the Prophet Jonah who came and preached to the Assyrians in their great city of Nineveh. Jonah is an Old Testament symbol of Jesus Christ. Like Jesus he had a message, not only for Israel, but for all nations. Like Jesus he was in the deep for three days and three nights and then rose again from a type of death. Jesus taught that the Assyrians of Nineveh believed in God and their faith condemned Israel, and Jesus said that he was the “sign of Jonah” (Luke 11:29-32). Every year the Assyrians remember the conversion of their ancient ancestors in a celebration called the Rogation of the

Ninevites. It is no surprise that the Assyrians were among the first people to accept Jesus as Messiah and King, and are the oldest Christian people. In an ancient Aramaic manuscript, called “The Doctrine of Addai,” there is the story of the healing and conversion of the Assyrian King Abgar at the preaching of Saint Thomas and Saint Thaddeus. These ancient historical records were referenced by and cited by Eusebius the Father of Church history in his book of Christian History that he wrote around the year 325. Some scholars believe that the Shroud of Turin, which many believe bears the image of Jesus, was given by the apostles to King Abgar as a gift. Later, this holy relic was stolen from the Assyrians and found its way to Europe. The Assyrians are Aramaic speakers. They are the last speakers of the Aramaic language which is the Holy Language that was spoken by our Lord and Savior Jesus the Messiah. The Assyrians have preserved for us texts of the Holy Gospels in the Aramaic language. With these manuscripts we can examine the teachings of Christ in the language in which they were originally spoken.

The Assyrians have always been a people eager to share the good news of the message of God’s love available through Jesus his Messiah. While Europe was in the Dark Ages Assyrians were going to the ends of the earth to spread the word of God. Before the year 650 AD Assyrians had started churches in Ethiopia, Mongolia, China, India and on Socotra. Some, but not all, of these mission churches were destroyed by Muslim extremists.

call this the “Forgotten Holocaust.” Hitler studied this campaign of violence and publicly admitted it was his inspiration to carry out the Holocaust. Rev. Joel Werda described the suffering of the Assyrians under the Moslem radicals in The Flickering Light of Asia

Little children were stabbed with daggers, or chopped in pieces by axes before the eyes of frantic parents. Young virgins were assaulted while their helpless fathers were compelled to witness the hellish crime. Many of these refugees had fled back and sought the shelter of church edifices, thinking perhaps Islam’s passion might balk at the sight of the sacred shrines which its adherents were accustomed to revere, but the malignant flood of crimes knew no bounds. The Christians’ Holy Bibles were opened on the pulpits, and their pages were desecrated by the committal of unmentionable deeds...The murderers entered with every conceivable weapon, from a long sword to a wooden mallets. They first commenced with the little children and infants. The latter were held by their tiny feet and their heads dashed against the walls and stone pavements. The older ones were held up by the hair of the head, hanging, while their bodies were severed by one stroke of the sword. The little girls were publicly assaulted and then cut in twain. Others were taken to the roofs of buildings, and from there dashed to their

death in the streets below. Others had their hands and their limbs amputated by sickles and axes, and then had their skulls crushed by wooden mallets. The spacious courtyard became impassable from the still bleeding fragments of the victims' mutilated bodies, while blood literally leaked from the floor of each building to the one below. Of the entire number of the Christians, estimated at more than six thousand, in the French mission buildings alone, not more than sixty souls remained who escaped in a miraculous way; and all the rest were put to death in less than forty-eight hours, the official time for the application of the mandate of the "jihad."

Hitler admitted he drew his inspiration for his treatment of the Jews from the actions of the Moslem fanatics against the Armenian and Assyrian Christians. On 22 August 1939 Adolph Hitler stated, "I have given orders to my Death Units to exterminate without mercy or pity men, women and children belonging to the Polish-speaking race. It is only in this manner that we can acquire the vital territory which we need. After all, who remembers today the extermination of the Armenians?" (Armenians are not Aramaic Christians but they are ancient Christians and live as neighbors to the Assyrians.) For more information on the Jihad I recommend Jihad in the West by Paul Fregosi, The Decline of Eastern Christianity Under Islam: From Jihad to Dhimmitude by Bat Yeor and The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam by Robert Spencer.

statements people make in opposition to organized religion. People who make such comments show that they haven't fully thought out what they are saying.

The Essential Doctrines of the Kingdom of God are best simplified in an expansion of the ancient Apostles Creed called the Nicean-Constantinoplian Creed. This is the Creed in English and a small portion in Aramaic. These are universal New Testament Truths that all Christians who believe on the authority of scripture adhere to. The New Testament itself contains some creedal statements (1 Timothy 3:16, Acts 2:22-24).

Kim-haim-nukh bkha alaha baba Ahdeedh kol. Baraya dculma dikpayish khizya W-bekha Marya Eashua Meshika Berd alaha eehhee-dhaya bukhra Dkallay beryatha. Awa dmin babeh pishleh ewheedah. Alaha shareera dmin alaha sharera...

We believe in one God, the Father the Almighty, the Creator of Heaven and Earth and all that is seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God. Begotten not made, one in being with the Father. Through Him were all things made.

For us men and for our salvation, He came down from heaven, by power of the Holy Spirit. He was born of the Virgin Mary and he became man. For our sake He was crucified

under Pontius Pilate. He suffered, died and was buried. On The third day he rose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy and universal and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism of the remission of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the Life of the world to come. Amen.

(A biblical study on the Nicene Creed entitled “Words of the Nicene Creed from the Holy Bible” is available from the Ancient Assyrian Aramaic Church of the East in Australia. See www.assyrianchurch.com.au.) This creed, a statement of faith, is recited by the Aramaic Christians and it is completely biblical. Protestant Christians often state that their beliefs are strictly biblical. However, certain common practices of Protestants have no direct biblical basis, such as the “sinner’s prayer,” altar calls, mourners benches, calling Jesus “personal savior,” as well as many traditions associated with Christmas and Easter. Even the “Plan of Salvation” and the “Roman Road” aren’t found in one single scriptural citation, but are based on doctrinal statements found throughout the

Bible, just as the Nicene Creed is. This creed is not a belief added to the Bible or beliefs imposed upon the Bible. Instead the Creed represents scriptural truths organized in a helpful form (just as the plan of salvation does). In the 1800s an evangelist came up with a slogan “No Creed but Christ, No Book but the Bible.” However, before long he wrote a creed and a book of the doctrines he held. The creed represents a simple statement of faith of the Aramaic Christians and shows that they are not and have not been, as they have been traditionally viewed, heretics and schismatics. In the past, Evangelical Christians have been called ‘Fundamentalists.’ Although this word now has negative connotations, this word come from the ‘Fundamentals’, the core doctrines found in the Nicene Creed, that Evangelicals defended from attacks by Liberals in the early twentieth century. (There were initially five ‘fundamentals’. These were 1. The Divine Inspiration of Scripture, meaning that the Holy Bible is historically reliable and is the spiritual authority of all matters of faith, doctrine, and practice, 2. The Virgin Birth of Christ and the Deity of Jesus, 3. The Doctrine of the Substitutionary Atonement through God’s grace and human faith, 4. The bodily resurrection of Jesus, and 5. The authenticity of Christ’s miracles and the certainty of his Second Coming. These doctrines mirror those in the Nicene Creed and are explored in The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth compiled by R.A. Torrey in 1917.) Jude the Brother of Jesus tells us in his epistle to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). By this he is refer-

ring to the core doctrines all Christians hold, whether they are Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox or Aramaic. These core tenets are called ‘orthodoxy’.

The Assyrians have been called the ‘Nestorians’ in the past, and they have even called themselves ‘Nestorians.’ This term is incorrect. The Church of the East predates Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, by several centuries. Although Nestorius was condemned as a heretic, now scholars realize that he wasn’t a heretic and did not hold to the views his enemies accused him of holding. This issue has been clarified by the discovery of his autobiography, which was preserved in Aramaic. See [Heresies: Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church](#) by Harold O. J. Brown. Nestorius’s theology and his method of interpreting the Bible literally, rather than figuratively, were indeed influential in the Aramaic church.

There are over 10 million Christians in the Middle East. Most of them are Arab Christians although some are Aramaic rather than Arabic. Christianity, even Arab Christianity, predates the Islamic religion. Armies of Islamic extremists attacked, invaded, subjugated and forcibly converted the Middle East to Islam. Syria, Lebanon and Egypt still have many Christians. From pulpits in America I have heard Christian preachers say terribly hateful things about Arabs. Such as, “If only Abraham didn’t father Ishmael, the Father of the Arabs, this world would be a better place for it.” Ishmael was not a Muslim, although he is the Father of the Arab people. Arabs are a Semitic people, some of whom are Christian although the majority belongs to the Islamic

is great power in prayer. Thirdly, give. Give of yourself, give of your time and also give financial gifts. Christians need to support an advertising campaign to increase awareness of the Assyrian crisis and to encourage prayer for the suffering believers in Iraq. Advertisements should be placed on Christian Television and Radio and in Newspapers and Christian Magazines. Christians need to pray about and give aid to the following efforts: The establishment of an Assyrian Safe Haven in Northern Iraq, the resettlement Assyrian villages, encouragement of democracy, freedom and tolerance in Iraq, and the establishment of schools for the study of the Aramaic language where students from around the world can come and learn the language of Jesus in an Aramaic speaking village and also explore biblical archeology in Iraq. There is also a great need for humanitarian assistance of poverty stricken Assyrian and provision of education and school supplies for Assyrian youth.

Christianity came to the world through the Aramaic people. Since the Aramaic people gave us such a great blessing we, as followers of Jesus, should bless them in return. Paul reminds us of this in Romans 15:27. He says that since they have blessed us in spiritual things it is our duty to minister to them in material things. We are in debt to the Aramaic people for the gift of Christianity. If we have partaken of this spiritual blessing it is our duty to minister unto the needs of our Aramaic brothers and sisters in Christ, especially at this time of great suffering.

Part Four

Power for Abundant Living The Aramaic Message of Hope and Love



Jesus preached the Good News of the Kingdom of Heaven (*Malkutha D'Shmaya* in Aramaic). Part of the Kingdom of God deals with eternity, when the children of the Father dwell with their God in an eternal state of bliss. Paul says, “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9, Isaiah 64:4). The Message of Jesus also gives us practical principles that lead to a victorious and purpose-filled life on this earth.

tongue celebrated Jewish survival in a land under foreign dominance by reminding Jews of God's enduring covenant with Abraham—the very covenant put into practice in Jesus' circumcision. Even his name in Aramaic, Yeshua, conjured up the memory of Joshua, the heroic successor of Moses.—Bruce Chilton
Rabbi Jesus

“**S**halama Alakhom—Peace Be Unto You!” (Luke 24:36). Jesus used this greeting several times when speaking to his disciples. In one chapter he uses this Aramaic blessing three times! This establishes that this is an important statement of Christ. Almost everyone is familiar with the Hebrew greeting “Shalom.” It means both “hello” and “peace” or “peace be unto you”. Jesus, as an Aramaic speaker, would have used the Aramaic form of this word which is “Shalama.” These Semitic languages are related to each other and to Arabic. Hebrews say “Shalom,” Assyrians say “Shalama,” and Arabs say “Salam.” In ancient times it had the connotation of “I surrender to you”. In the ancient Near East life was difficult. Much of the land was barren and with limited resources. Tribes would often raid and pillage one another. War was constant. Due to dangers from men, beasts and environment when one visited another he would declare peace and surrender to his host. Since in Semitic culture a virtuous man is to be hospitable and gracious to visitors and guests the honorable man would in return declare, “Beshayna,” and thus receive the guest with peace. The guest would be provided

for by his host and under his protection. Due to the constant threats to survival it was necessary to belong to a tribe or a clan in order to survive. Shalama is related to the word “islam” which means to surrender or to submit. To have true peace in life it is necessary to submit to God.

Jesus offers us a peace in a cold, desolate, hostile, loveless and inhospitable world. In the ancient Middle East the traveler would cry out, “Shalama”, and hope for a peaceful reception. Many hurting people suffer needlessly not knowing that if they only cry out God, the loving Father, will give them the gift of peace in his Son, Jesus the Messiah. Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you, Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (John 14: 27) Jesus offers to us the gift of Shalama, the true peace, the everlasting and real peace that comes from the loving Father. When Jesus lived his earthly life the words of peace constantly flowed from his lips. We, like Jesus, need to speak words of peace. Disciples should pattern their lives after their master. Jesus taught his disciples not to be anxious but to trust in God and accept his peace.

Shalama is the Aramaic equivalent to the Hebrew word “Shalom.” Christianity is about peace. In Aramaic and Hebrew the word has the connotation of friendship. According to William Barclay it means “right relationships between man and man, true fellowship, not just polite toleration.” He translates this beatitude “blessed are the peacemakers” as, “O the bliss of those who make friends with each

other.” According to Rabbi Paul of Tarsus that is what Christianity is all about. 1 Corinthians 5: 18, “...God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their sins against them, and had committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God!” God “maketh wars to cease” (Psalm 46:9) and we do need peace, between nation and nation and between man and man. But the greatest peace is the gift of having peace within and establishing peace between God and man. This is the reason that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ founded the church.

However, although Jesus constantly used the Aramaic expression “Shalama Alakhom” or “Peace be Unto You” in text the New Testament Jesus is quoted speaking this statement most often after the Resurrection (Luke 24:36, John 20: 19, 21, 26). The Resurrected Jesus has, by his blood, purchased peace for us, and offers it to us as a gift. Before the Resurrection Jesus spoke to the disciples and told them that it was his mission to give them a gift of a real and enduring peace (John 14:27). When Jesus preached his Joyful Message his central theme was being at peace. Jesus commanded us not to be consumed by anxieties and not to allow ourselves to worry but to completely trust and depend on God. Peace and tranquility comes from humbly accepting the grace of God in the person of Jesus Christ. The

Peace of God that comes from the Resurrected Jesus “passes all understanding” (Philippians 4:7). This Peace was made possible through the blood of Jesus (Colossians 1:20) and it is to rule in our heart (Colossians 3:15). When trials and oppressions come we have assurance that our God, the God of Peace, will crush Satan under our feet shortly (Romans 16:20). True peace, and Peace with God, can only be found through the resurrected Jesus.

Jesus lived during the era called PAX ROMANA, the Roman Peace, in which through harsh violence the Romans forced their peace of military coercion on the known world. This peace achieved through force of arms was not the inner peace that was preached by Jesus Christ. Who is our Peace? Jesus is. Paul said, “For he himself is our peace, who has made both one...” (Ephesians 2: 14-18). In this passage Paul says that Jesus brings reconciliation between man and man (in this case Jew and Gentile). Jesus gave the church the ministry of reconciliation. Jesus told his disciples that they could give peace by uttering the word “Shalama” and if those who received the peace were unworthy that they could take it back to themselves (Matthew 10:13, Luke 10:5-6). We have the power to bless and curse, Jesus commanded his disciples to speak words of peace and share the peace we have with others. In Hebrews Jesus is called the King of Shalom (Hebrews 7:2). What did the apostles of Jesus preach in the Book of Acts? Peter says, “The word which God sent to the Children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ, he is Lord of All” (Acts 10:36). In Romans 5:10 Paul calls the

gospel, “The Good News of Peace.” The Church is to be God’s agency for grace, mercy and peace in this world (1 Corinthians 1:3, 2 Timothy 1:2).

What is Peace? Dictionaries define peace as: 1. an absence of war or hostilities 2. a treaty to end hostilities 3. harmonious relationships 4. law and order 5. tranquility, serenity, and inner contentment. We also have peaceable meaning, calm, undisturbed, inclined or disposed to peace and peaceful, which is defined as calm, undisturbed by strife or turmoil. Shalom/Shalama has all of these and additional connotations such as “health, prosperity, wellness, happiness, friendship, and safety.” The Greek equivalent ‘eirene’ means “peace, prosperity, quietness and rest.” This word was used in the New Testament to translate the original Aramaic word Shalama. Young’s concordance defines the Hebrew Shalom, and the Aramaic Shelam (or Shelama) as “completeness and peace”. We find completeness in belonging to God; that is, participating in God’s plan for the redemption of our souls. Peace is the fruit of the loving-kindness (Chesed) of God

Jeannine K. Brown, in Shalom: A Biblical/Theological Vision for God’s People describes the Biblical concept of shalom

In the Bible, shalom connotes the complete well-being of a society of community. Because it had a strong communal emphasis, shalom necessitates “right harmonious relationships to other human beings.” Part of that right relationship can be seen in the linking

of shalom with justice. That these two words are at times found in parallel lines of Old Testament poetry indicates that shalom and justice are closely related concepts. While shalom includes more than justice, it certainly produces nothing less than a just society. In addition the common linking of shalom with covenant in the Old Testament seems to indicate that shalom comes as a result of God's covenantal commitment to his people. If this is the case, then a look at God's intentions for this covenant people will help in fleshing out a vision of biblical shalom...The story of humanity, however, shows that the shalom envisioned by God for humanity and established at creation was marred in the fall. As a result of sin, not only was the relationship between God and humanity broken, but there was also increasing division among peoples... The marring of the original vision of Shalom is exemplified in many similar kinds of injustice and division...God's redemptive solution to what sin had marred is revealed in Genesis 12. God calls Abraham into a covenant relationship to bless him and his descendants. God makes it clear, however, that Israel is to be a blessing to all nations. God's plan for restoring universal shalom is to be accomplished through his particular choice of Israel...Acting on Israel's behalf, Jesus Christ fulfilled God's intention of bringing shalom to the nations by becoming "a light

for revelation to the gentiles and for glory to
[God's] people Israel.”

The Old Testament background of the word Shalom can be seen in many passages. It should be noted that other words besides “shalom” are translated as “peace” in our English Bibles. These words include Shalvah which means “rest, ease and security” and Shalam which means “to make peace, to cause to be at peace, to complete.” Other words are charash, chashah and damam which mean “to hold ones peace, to be still, to be silent.”

Here are some Old Testament passages that give us a background to the peace God gives his people.

Numbers 6:24-26

This is called the Aaronic blessing, this is the blessing that the Lord commanded Aaron, the high priest, to bless the people of Israel with.

Yahweh bless you and keep you;
Yahweh make his face to shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
Yahweh lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you SHALOM.

Isaiah 9:6

A prophecy of the coming of the Messiah:

For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government shall be upon his shoulder,
And his name shall be called

Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting
Father,

The Prince of SHALOM.

Jesus is the prince of SHALOM!

Isaiah 32:17

The work of righteousness shall be peace.

*(True righteousness does not produce pride or a
judgmental spirit, but rather peace.)*

Isaiah 45:7

*This passage reminds us that God is always in
control.*

I form the light and create darkness,

I make SHALOM, and create calamity,

I, Yahweh, do all these things.

Ezekiel 37:26

*The New Testament is called the Covenant of
SHALOM in the Old Testament.*

Moreover I will make a covenant of SHALOM with
them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with
them; and I will set my sanctuary in their midst
forevermore.

The Peace of God comes only through knowing Jesus
the Messiah.

In 1 Corinthians 7:15 Paul says that we are “called to
peace.” He reminds us that our God is not a God of
confusion but the author of peace (1 Corinthians 14:
33). Paul tells us in Colossians 3:15 that the peace of

God is to rule in our hearts. Here he states that this is to what we are called and for what we are to be thankful for. In this passage Paul speaks of ‘the body’ meaning the body of believers. In Ephesians 4:3 Paul tells us that as believers we have unity in the body, which is the “bond of peace.” We are not only to have peace with our brothers and sisters in the church, Paul tells us that, “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:18). All Christians, to some degree, should have the Holy Spirit. One of the fruits of having the Holy Spirit is “Peace” (Galatians 5:22). Love and peace are in unity. Jesus said that it was our love one for another that would testify to the world that we are disciples of Jesus Christ (John 13:35). Jesus is the Prince of Peace and according to the author of Hebrews, the Father is the God of Peace, “may the God of Peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do his will, working in you what is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen” (Hebrew 13:18).

CHAPTER TWO

Good News for Modern Man



In the Scriptures the message proclaimed by Jesus is called the everlasting Gospel. Gospel in Aramaic is “Sabratha”. This word means ‘good news’ or ‘joyful tidings.’ The message of Jesus is always good and it is always new. This message is for every man and every woman, every boy and every girl. It is for all people regardless of age, nationality, language, country of origin or ethnicity. The Good News is that God can be known and that He loves Mankind. God wants mankind to find the truth by accepting His word in His Son, Jesus. God gives us the gift of happiness and inner peace by knowing God as Father in Jesus the Messiah by the power of the Holy Spirit. God had revealed himself to this world through Jesus Christ. We can know God and have a relationship with him as our Father by being spiritually born into his family by trusting in his Son. Jesus died on the cross for our sins and defeated the power of evil by

his resurrection. Jesus came to serve mankind. He said, “The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). Jesus is the great spiritual King who was announced beforehand by the prophets of old. By acknowledging his kingly rule over our souls we become members of the Kingdom of God. This is the secret of eternal life. Those who belong to the Kingdom of God will live with the Father forever, after this life and this world passes away.

There are seven Aramaic principles for followers of Jesus and these are repentance, faith, confession, baptism, profession, worship and discipleship.

Repentance

Repentance in the Aramaic is Taybutha. It is related to the word for ‘good’. It is a conscious decision to turn from a selfish life of sin and to follow the Way of Jesus. Both John the Baptist and Jesus the Christ began their ministries by preaching repentance. Repentance is the first step in knowing God. To repent one sees his or her wrong actions and inadequacies and need for God and his grace.

Faith

Haimanutha is the Aramaic word for Biblical Faith. Joachim Jeremias focuses on the Aramaic meaning of the word ‘faith,’ which is hemin and hemanutha. Jesus says that if you have faith you can move moun-

that were healed that it was their faith that enabled the miracle to happen. Haimanutha is to have faith and to trust in the truth of the words and deeds of Jesus. In the teaching of Jesus the idea of faith is closer to taking a 'leap of faith' rather to an idea of fate or kismet as some 'Reformed' theologians contend. Faith also means a belief in Jesus as Lord and in his resurrection (John 6: 28-29; 17:3). When asked by the Philippian Jailer; "What must I do to be saved?" Paul answered; "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." (Acts 16: 31).

Confession

Confession is mowbeeyta in Aramaic. Christians confess their faults and their need for God. Also in the Bible we are reminded to confess our sins one to another (James 5:16). This Biblical concept of community has helped many people, such as those in the 'Alcoholics Anonymous' program. Confession also means to confess, or testify, to the truth of the message of Jesus.

Baptism

At the time of Jesus Jews often underwent baptisms. This was in order to fulfill Old Testament regulations about ritual purity. Many baptistery pools from the time of Christ have been excavated by archeologists. They look very similar to baptistery pools found in modern Baptist churches. The requirement was a total immersion. Even all

and for washing or bathing “*mashuta*.” The word for the Baptist is *Mammdana*. The earliest concept of the Church was believers baptism by immersion. The original practice was self-immersion in the presence of a witness. According to Joachim Jeremias the precise ancient Aramaic word used was *Tebal* which he translated as “undergo immersion, to immerse oneself.” In the inauguration of the Old Testament the nation of Israel was baptized (1Corinthians 10:1, Exodus 19:10) and when we enter the New Testament we also must be baptized. It symbolizes consciously identifying with the Messiah in a visible ceremony. It represents washing away of the old life of sin. It also is symbolic of death and a rebirth and a testimony to the burial and resurrection of Jesus.

Profession

Disciples of Jesus profess Christ’s message through their life. Jesus preaches the Good News or Joyful Tidings (in Aramaic *SABRATHA*). In Aramaic *Sabratha* means news or tidings. It comes from the Aramaic word *sbar* which means to think or believe but also to broadcast, to tell abroad, to spread good news. It is also related to the word *sabra* which means hope, trust and expectation. Evangelism, or Fulfilling the Great Commission, is actualizing the Kingdom of God. In Aramaic the Gospels are called *KARUZUTHA*, the announcements, the proclamations, the gospels. A *Kazora*, which is what all believers must be one way or another, is an announcer and ones who proclaims

a message. Joachim Jeremais notes the good news that Jesus proclaims is “You share in God’s reign’ (Luke 6:20). Jesus had a message of Good News before he suffered on the cross. He was preaching that we must be Born Again before his resurrection and he told Nicodemus that this was an elementary spiritual truth.

Worship

There are many ways in which Christians worship (**saghed** in Aramaic). One way is through prayer (**slota** in Aramaic). Today the Aramaic Christians have preserved the ancient practice of singing praises. The practice of this singing of psalms, songs and spiritual songs is from the ancient Aramaic apostles. (In Greek the word “psalm” refers to plucking the strings of a musical instrument. Early Christians used musical instruments to worship God and today eastern Christians use a variety of musical instruments to worship.) The Aramaic church has also produced great poets and song-writers, such as Ephraim the Assyrian and St. Isaac of Nineveh. Jesus says that all true believers will love the Lord with all of their heart, mind, soul and strength (Mark 12:30). As each is given a different gift each can worship in his or her own manner.

Two important modes of worship for Christians are church attendance and observation of the Lord’s Supper. Jesus himself established both of these practices. Jesus founded the church. There are two words in Aramaic for ‘church.’ Edha and Kenushta. Both

two laws sum up the essence of the Kingdom of God. Love Yahweh with all your heart, mind, soul and strength and love your fellow-man as much as you love yourself (Mark 12:30). Jesus also said, “If you love me you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Later we are given a new commandment, to love one another. Jesus said, “Love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12) Without love nothing works. Without love there isn’t life because love creates and maintains life.

In Aramaic the word for disciple is Talmid. This word means pupil or student. Jesus is the malpana, the teacher. According to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German theologian who was martyred under Adolph Hitler in Nazi Germany, “Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.” Jesus sent his disciples out to “make disciples” not to merely make converts or get “professions of faith” (Matthew 28:19). He told them to make other disciples and to teach them to observe all things he had commanded them. Christianity is a discipline.

As noted above another word for “gospel” in Aramaic is “Karazutha” this means to herald or to proclaim. The duty of every Christian is to proclaim the good news of Jesus the messiah and to be a witness to him in word and in deed.

CHAPTER THREE

GOLGOTHA

Aramaic and the Passion of King Messiah



“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”

Jesus of Nazareth, John 12:32

“Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”

Jesus, John 15:13-14

The movie [The Passion of the Christ](#) was filmed in the original language Jesus spoke, Aramaic. Many Aramaic words can be read in our English Bibles especially in the Passion narrative. Jesus was a Middle-Easterner, a Semite and a speaker of Aramaic.

His cultural disposition was Jewish and Hebrew. He was an observant Jew. Aramaic is the sister-language of Hebrew. It shares many words, has many cognates and shares the same alphabet as Hebrew. (Modern Aramaic is written in a cursive script but it is the same alphabet.) Aramaic is a very different language from English or Greek. It is earthy, passionate and deeply spiritual. A language contains imbedded within in it a way of looking at the world, this world and the world beyond. Aramaic nuances and shades of meaning are not always carried over when they are translated into English or Greek. God in his providence chose this language to be the one in which his message, the Good News, would be proclaimed to the entire world. To understand Jesus and his Word in all its fullness we can step back in time, look at how he lived in the first century, what he did and what he suffered and also study his words in the language in which they were originally spoken.

Pesach, the Passover

“Behold, the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world!” John the Baptizer proclaimed this at the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus (John 1:29). John was saying that Jesus is the world’s Passover lamb. (In the Passover story it is the blood of the lamb that saved the people from death and granted them freedom from slavery.) James Strong in his Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible makes a connection between the Aramaic word Pascal, meaning Passover, and the Greek Pathos, meaning

“passion.” The word for Passover is Pascha, Chaldean [meaning Aramaic] for the Passover (the meal, the day, the festival or the special sacrifices connected with it). Passion or Suffering is Paskho, including the forms, patho, and pentho. It is used in certain tenses, apparently a prime verb to experience, a sensation or impression (usually painful) to feel, passion, suffer, vex. In certain Christian traditions, Jesus is called the Paschal Lamb.

The Greek word is connected to the word “experience.” We need to experience the passion with Jesus. Suffering and Pain are apart of life, we come in and depart from this life with pain and mourning. Passion is defined as an intense or violent emotion, especially sexual desire or love, intense anger, a great liking or enthusiasm, a violent emotional outburst, the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, one of the gospel accounts of this, a musical work based on such an account. Through the Passion we can experience true and unconditional love, joy and forgiveness. Jesus endured the cross for joy. The Bible says, “Looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of God” (Hebrews 12:2). Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice for us.

In *A Guide to the Passion: 100 Questions About the Passion of the Christ*, the authors state:

This event [referring to the Exodus], which occurred about 1,200 years before the birth of Jesus [actually 1,500 years is a more

correct number], is the key to understanding Christ's Passion, because the Passion is the fulfillment of the Jewish Passover ritual. The Passover event of Exodus is a foreshadowing of Christ's death on the cross. The blood of Jesus, the perfect "lamb", would be sprinkled on the cross (the doorpost) for His followers. All who accept Christ and keep His commandments will be saved by His blood; death "passes over" them, for they have eternal life.

On the Mount of the Transfiguration Jesus was discussing the "Exodus" he would soon undergo in Jerusalem. The Bible says, "He took with him Peter, John and James and ascended the mountain to pray. As he was praying the appearance of his face changed and his clothing turned a dazzling white. And now two men were conversing with him. These were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and discussed his exodus which he was soon to solemnize in Jerusalem" (Luke 9:31). It is impossible to fully understand the Passion apart from the Jewish Passover meal. The Cup of Blessing is one of the four cups of the Passover meal. It is interesting that Paul the Apostle calls the cup used in the Eucharist, the Cup of Blessing (1 Corinthians 10:16).

In John's account of the Last Supper he does not include the institution of Holy Communion. Instead of introducing that sacred rite, John's Gospel has Jesus instituting the ritual of foot-washing (John 13:5-20). Jesus commanded us to wash each others

Joseph of Arimathea: A member of the Jewish ruling counsel (the Sanhedrin) and a follower of Jesus. He did not consent to the condemnation. He took care of the body of Jesus after his death.

Nicodemus: Another prominent member of the Sanhedrin. He met with Jesus and defended him against his adversaries. He also took care of Jesus' body with Joseph of Arimathea.

Mary the Mother of Yeshu In the beginning of Jesus' ministry she supported him but later on she seems to have doubted (Mark 3:21,31-35). At the time of his death she was supporting him again.

Mary of Magdala: A wealthy young woman from the city of Magdala (Aramaic for 'the Tower'). She was the leader of Jesus' female disciples and she followed him from Galilee. She was a very devoted follower of Jesus.

Judah Thomas of Galilee: Thomas is Aramaic for 'the Twin.' He was so-called because of his resemblance to Jesus. He was also a carpenter. Had previously risked his life for Jesus and expressed his willingness to die for him on earlier occasions. However, at Christ's betrayal he had ran away like the other disciples. Later, he doubted the resurrection.

Other Characters: Cleopas, Mary the mother of James, Salome, the mother of the sons of Zebedee and Jesus' aunt were witnesses to his death and resurrection. Malchus was the servant of the high priests whose ear was cut of when Peter tried to defend Jesus from him.

The Agony of Gethsemane

Gethsemane in Aramaic literally means “wine press of oils” or more plainly “olive oil press”. The Aramaic is pronounced Gat-Shemanim. It was an oil press, where olives are crushed into oil. Here Jesus was “crushed” for our sins and here Jesus “crushed” the serpents head. (Isaiah 53 is sometimes translated as “he was crushed for our iniquities”.) God cursed the serpent at the Garden of Eden and said, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15). The Fall of Man took place in a Garden and here the Redemption of Man is begun in the Garden. Interestingly, recent archeological evidence shows that in crucifixion the nail went through the heel, which could be a fulfillment of this ancient messianic prophecy.

The oil represents the Holy Spirit and the anointing. The word in Aramaic for Messiah is Meshika and it means Anointed One. A priest or a king was consecrated to the holy office by being anointed with oil. This is described in the Book of Hebrews where it says, “But about the Son he says, ‘Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy’” (Hebrews 1:8-9 NIV, Psalms 42:6-7). Jesus is the Messiah. Followers of Jesus have an anointing as well. 1 John 2:20 states, “You have been anointed by the Holy One and all of

you have knowledge...the anointing that you have received abides in you.” I have been to the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. There are some living trees there that are perhaps 2,000 years old that may have stood as silent witnesses of those terrible events that occurred there so long ago.

In Luke 22:43-44 it says, “He was in such agony and He prayed so fervently that His sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground.” Such a phenomenon is known in medicine and similar occurrences have been recorded of others while in extreme mental, emotional and physical stress. The medical term for this is HERMATIDROSIS. Agony is an intense mental or physical suffering, an intense feeling, a hard struggle; the Agony is the suffering of Jesus in Gethsemane. The word comes from the Latin AGONIA. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews describes the agony of Jesus in the Garden of the Gethsemane:

Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him who was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared. Though he were a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation *unto all them that obey him* (Hebrews 5:7-9).

He took Peter, James and John with him to pray. However a great feeling of distress and desolation

began to fill his mind. He said to them, “My soul is sadly distressed. It feels as though I were dying. Stay with me here and be wakeful by my side” (Mark 14:34). They however, quickly fell asleep. So he awoke Peter and said, “Is it true then that you lacked the strength to remain wakeful by my side, and be it only for an hour? Do remain wakeful, while uttering a prayer to be spared from having to undergo the final test. As for the spirit, it is indeed eager enough, it is the flesh that makes us weak.” (Matthew 26: 36-41). We need to understand that Jesus was fighting a terrible spiritual battle here. As Paul tells us, we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against evil demonic spiritual forces (Ephesians 6:12). (Aramaic Christians believe that there are angels that watch over us, but also that there are evil spiritual forces, devils, that tempt us to do wrong.) Also, Jesus asks us, “Can you not pray with me for one hour?” (Mark 14:37). We can spend hours in idle conversation and watching inane films and television shows and, yet, we cannot find time to talk to the Lord. How much do we love him?

Ant Amarat: “Thou Sayest it”

Jim Bishop in The Day Christ Died noted that during his trial the Nazarene muttered: “Thou hast said it,” which was an Aramean colloquialism meaning “yes,” but meaning more than yes. It also meant “You have said it, not I.” He would use this expression once more before he died. In Aramaic it is “Ant Amarat”. He said this to Judas when Judas

asked Jesus if he were the traitor in Matthew 26:21-35, he said it again before his identification of himself as the Messiah during his trial (Matthew 26:54), and also to Pilate when Pilate asked him if he was a king (Mark 15:1-5, Matthew 27:11, Luke 23:3)”.

Malkutha D’Alaw: The Kingdom of God

In the Gospels Jesus proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God. Pilate questioned Jesus about his kingdom, and Paul says Jesus made “a good confession before Pontius Pilate” (1 Timothy 6:13). Jesus preached the Kingdom of God but we hear very little preaching of it today. In the same passage Paul says that Jesus is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. It is the Messiah’s kingdom. The kingdom of God is the relationship that Christ brings us to with the Father. It is manifested in our lives in acts of love for others as seen in Matthew 25:31-46. It is living in submission and obedience in love to God’s righteous authority.

Akel Dema: the Field of Blood and the Thirty Pieces of Silver

Many people have tried to psycho-analyze Judas Iscariot and justify his motives. The Bible clearly states that the man was a liar, a thief, greedy, selfish, condescending, and a demoniac. It was prophesied that the Lord would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12, Jeremiah 19:1, 32:9-6). In the Old Testament it was the price of a slave but

Jesus the Son of the Father or Jesus
the King of the Jews

Pilate gave the mob assembled by Caiphas a choice, Jesus Barabbas (meaning Jesus the Son of the Father) or Jesus the King of the Jews. Jesus was not really an uncommon name at the time. There were many Jesus', Simons and Judes, these were all very common names.

The scripture reads, "At the festival season it was the Governor's custom to release one prisoner chosen by the people. There was then in custody a man of some notoriety, called Jesus Bar-Abbas. When they were assembled Pilate said to them, 'Which would you have me to release to you-Jesus Bar-Abbas, or Jesus called Messiah?' For he knew that it was out of malice that they had brought Jesus before him." (Matthew 27:15-18 NEB)

Gabbatha: The Pavement

The Gabbatha, Aramaic for the Pavement, was the judgment seat of Pilate where Jesus was condemned to die. The Gabbatha has been excavated and it is now possible to stand on the very spot where the just judge of all the earth was condemned and the creator of the world was sentenced to death by his creation. Thus, it is an especially stirring experience to stand on the large paving stones located at their proper level where Pilate's Judgment Hall once stood. Roman soldiers carved symbols into the pavement for their amusement. Some are astrological symbols others are

What did crucifixion entail? Many of the so-called “experts” often contradict each other. Much “medical evidence” is suspect. Surprisingly, little actual research has been done on crucifixion. Speculation and conjecture is often passed on as authoritative fact.

Crucifixion was slow death by torture. It was so horrific that Roman citizens had immunity from it. It was so painful that the word “excruciating” comes from the Latin words meaning “out of the cross”. Crucifixion was a shameful death. It was reserved for slaves, rebels, murderers and deserters. Those crucified were stripped completely naked.

How long did it take for someone to die on the cross? Sometimes victims could survive on the cross for several days. In fact, Pontius Pilate was surprised that Jesus died so quickly. The Bible says, “Pilate was astonished that Jesus died so soon” (Mark 15:44).

On what were people crucified? Various modes of crucifixion were carried out, sometimes for the amusement of the soldiers. For instance, Peter was crucified up-side down, according to legend. (We know that Peter was crucified because Jesus prophesied this in John 21:18.) Some people avoid the term cross and instead say pole, gibbet or execution stake. The Jehovah’s Witnesses deny that Jesus was crucified on a cross at all. They claim he was nailed to a pole with his hands stretched over his head and one nail put through both hands. When Jesus predicted Peter’s crucifixion he said that they would “stretch out his hands,” not raise up his hands (John 21:18).

What were the components of a cross? The upright post was called the **stipes** and the crossbar was called the **patibulum**. The sign inscribed with the victims name and crime was called the **titulus**. A plank that served as a seat on some crosses was called the **sedile** or the **sedulum**. A block for the feet was called the **suppedaneum**. According to the paper [On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ](#) the cross would have weighed over 300 pounds. This is unlikely. They say that only the patibulum was carried to the place of crucifixion and that it weighed 75 to 150 pounds. It probably wasn't that heavy. It is believed that the upright pole was permanently erected and that the cross-bar was carried to the crucifixion pole and attached there. There is an ancient depiction of a man carrying the entire cross to the place of crucifixion so it is possible that Jesus carried the entire cross to Golgotha, and not just the cross-beam.

Were the nails put through the palms or through the wrists? Everyone crucified was nailed to the cross. It is often said that a nail through the palm would not support the weight of the body that the flesh would tear and the body would fall from the cross. However, in the Philippines, penitents are crucified with a nail through the palm and the flesh does not tear. The Shroud of Turin seems to show the blood coming from the wrist but some Shroud experts believe that the nail went through the palm at an angle. Hand in the Greek of the New Testament is used mostly in the figurative sense such as “at my right hand”. It is used only John 20: 20-27 in connection to crucifixion. In

individuals, which encompassed the entire body and some instances actually drenched the volunteers, running off the toes to form a puddle on the floor.

Apparently, dehydration is one of the major causes of death by crucifixion. Wilson continues,

The Los Angeles artist Isabel Piczek has similarly explored the physiological effects of crucifixion, due to the not uncommon need for crucifixion scenes in her huge church murals. When these are required she routinely asks the figure model to allow himself to be roped to a cross that she steps up in her studio. On such occasions the model may need to hang suspended for hours on end, with just the occasional rest-break. Though to make things easier, Piczek mostly ropes around the arms only, allowing the feet to be free but standing tip-toe. Even so she invariably finds that the model's chest expands alarmingly, and that he suffers breathing difficulties, which increase as breathing out becomes more difficult and as the blood pressure falls dangerously. The ends of the fingers and toes turn white, then blue, and become increasingly painful. Despite air-conditioning, the model sweats with astonishing copiousness, just as Zugibe observed of his volunteers. Also the abdomen becomes strangely distended, while the genitals correspondingly shrink in size.

Interestingly, crucifixion caused little bleeding. I was surprised to see almost no blood coming out of the nail wounds of people who were crucified in the Philippines. The blood Jesus shed came mostly from the beating he endured and his being stabbed with a spear. According to Jesus and His Times, “It is known that insects frequently bored into the lacerations of the crucified, and birds of prey might rip at the eyes, ears and nose of the immobile prisoners. Thirst would become unbearable, as the body dehydrated. In fact according to the Gospel of John, Jesus’ only admission of discomfort was a single cry, ‘I thirst.’ (John 19:28). Insects would light upon or burrow into the open wounds or the eyes, ears and nose of the dying and helpless victim and birds of prey would tear at these sites. Outside of the Holy Land, often predatory animals would devour the bodies”.

The only physical evidence we have of crucifixion are the bones of Jehohanan. His bones were found in an ossuary with his name inscribed on it. He lived about the same time as Christ and the Apostles. A six-and-a-half inch nail was left in his heel. It was imbedded in the bone. His legs were broken. In the law of Moses it was forbidden for a body that was hanged to remain exposed over an evening. The body had to be taken down by sundown. Breaking the legs would hasten death. In foreign lands people crucified could remain living on the cross for several days, but in the Holy Land religious law required that those crucified had to be dead and removed from the cross in one day, especially if it was the dawning of a Sabbath or a Holy Day. (The practice of breaking

the legs was called **crurifragium** or **skelokopia**.) Josephus told an interesting story of rescuing people who had been crucified from off of the cross.

I saw many captives crucified; and I remembered three of them as my former acquaintance. I was very sorry at this in my mind, and went with tears in my eyes to Titus, and told him of them, so he immediately commanded them to be taken down, and to have the greatest care taken of them, in order to their recovery; yet two of them died under the physician's hands while the third recovered.

Jim Wicker complained about how people on the cross in movies seem relatively motionless. He says, "In reality, people who were actually crucified were constantly squirming, pushing up and sinking down in order to breathe." It is likely that crucifixion victims did writhe on the cross, but not to the extent Dr. Wicker imagines.

YESHUA HAN NOSTRI MALKA

DIYAHUDA EY: Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews

Was the title above Christ's head written in Aramaic or Hebrew? In this instance both are possible. Aramaic was the common spoken language but sometimes Hebrew was used for official purposes. Many of the Dead Sea Scrolls were written in the common spoken language, Aramaic, but the majority

ficed. The ancient Jews also made offerings of grain and wine.)

“Woman, Behold thy son.”

“Son, Behold thy mother.”

If Jesus had brothers why did he entrust his mother to the Beloved Disciple (John 19:26-27)? Even if they were cousins it would still be their duty to watch over and provide for her. The reason Jesus entrusted his mother to the Beloved Disciple is because he was a wealthy man, unlike his family of carpenters or the other disciples. John had to have been a priest because he was known to the High Priest (John 18:15 and 16) and also he was concerned about ritual cleanliness (John 20: 4-7). (Although he arrived at the empty tomb first, he didn't enter until Peter verified that it was empty. As a priest he was concerned with ritual purity and was concerned that he would become ceremonially unclean by coming near a corpse.) Jesus loved his mother and one of his last thoughts before he departed this life was his concern for her welfare.

“They shall look upon him whom they have pierced.”

And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then shall they look upon me whom they have pierced. Yes, they will mourn for him as

Rabboni: The Risen Master

*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but quickened by the spirit.
1 Peter 3:18*

The resurrection proclaims that Jesus is the Messiah and was not only a martyr. Many people complained about the film The Passion of the Christ, saying that our focus should be on his resurrection rather than his crucifixion. We need to preach the Resurrected Christ, but it was his death that paid the price of our sins and it is by his stripes that we are healed. The Risen Jesus appeared to Mary of Magdala and she proclaimed him RABBONI, Aramaic for “my teacher.” W. Phillip Keller in his book Rabboni: the Story of Jesus, “This was the loftiest adulation she could confer on him.” (In the scripture Jesus is addressed as “rabbi” more often than any other designation.) In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul proclaims the story of the Resurrection. Jesus appeared to Cephas, the Twelve, to James the Just and then 500 believers, and lastly, the resurrected Jesus also appeared to Paul. Jesus fulfilled the Jewish Feast of First-fruits in his resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:23, James 1:18).

There is transforming power in the resurrection. It was necessary for the resurrection to occur for the Holy Spirit to be given. Jesus did not begin his ministry until he was baptized by the Holy Ghost. We need to be baptized in the Holy Spirit and live a spirit filled life. The Risen Jesus breathed upon the

Washed in the Blood?, Nothing but the Blood, and Jesus Thy Blood and Righteousness.

The Theology of the Cross

Interestingly, in the Gospels the focus is on the disciples of Jesus carrying their own crosses rather than Christ carrying his. See Matthew 10:38, 16:24 and 27:32 and Mark 8:34 and 10:21, and Luke 9:23 and 12:27. Jesus calls us to pick up our cross and follow him. We have our cross to carry and on it we crucify our pride, selfishness and sin. We also must suffer for the cross (See Galatians 6:12-14). We have been reconciled to God and made one by the Cross (Ephesians 2:16-17). Colossians says we have made peace and have been reconciled by the blood of the Cross (Colossians 2:20). There are also hymns that celebrate the theology of the cross such as At the Cross, When I Survey the Wondrous Cross, Down at the Cross and the Old Rugged Cross. Paul states, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

The Offense of the Cross

In Luke 2:34 the Prophet Simeon foretold that Jesus would be a sign that will be spoken against. Jesus referred to Micah's prophecy and announced he came not to bring world peace but rather the sword of division (Micah 7:6, Matthew 10:34-39). A lot of

on you Mr. Gibson, I am trying to forgive you.” No, the shame remains on the writer, and that shame will condemn her unless she allows Christ to bear her shame for her. What more could God do to forgive us our sin than to send his only beloved son to die and suffer for us?

Paul mentions how offensive the Cross was to the Jews of his day. He says, “For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:22-24). In the Aramaic prophecy of Daniel a stone is a symbol of the Messiah (Daniel 2:45). In Matthew Jesus says, “Did you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner...‘And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder” (Matthew 21: 42-44, quoting Psalm 118:22-23 and Isaiah 28:16, Isaiah 8:15. See also Romans 9:30-33). Peter also quoted from this passage when speaking before Caiaphas, and he added, “Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4: 10-12, 1 Peter 2: 6-8). In this day and age the exclusive claims of Jesus are offensive to many. Jesus warns us not to think in a carnal or human manner, but rather to think in a heavenly manner (Mark 8:33). We are warned in Proverbs, that “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man,

The Shroud of Turin

The shroud is a controversial relic. It is a burial cloth with stains showing the front and back sides of a crucified man. Some have dismissed it as a medieval fabrication. However, with the visual arts being at the state that which it was at that time, it seems that it would have been impossible for it to have been produced in the Middle Ages. It is a mysterious relic and may be genuine. It is called The Shroud of Turin because it is now kept in Turin, Italy. Ian Wilson, a shroud expert, believes it was given to the Assyrian Aramaic Christians by St. Thaddeus. He believes it was stolen from the Aramaic people by Europeans and smuggled to Turin, Italy.

The Via Dolorosa : The Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross is a Roman Catholic Tradition. In Jerusalem it is possible to walk the Way of the Cross, or the Via Dolorosa (the Way of Sorrows), as I have done. Among the Stations of the Cross is Saint Mark's house, which is believed to be the location of the Upper Room. This is now a church that belongs to the Aramaic Syrian Orthodox Church. The entrance to this church is marked with a large Aramaic inscription. Originally there were 34 stations but the Church reduced it to 14 in the 12th Century. One of the stations is most likely mythological. This one is the Legend of Bernice, called Veronica, because she stopped to wipe the Lord's face and the cloth with which she did this bore the

impression of his face (Veronica means True Image). Jesus must have fallen under his cross, but we don't know how many times. In the tradition Simon initially refuses to carry the cross. This is probably an anti-Semitic later addition. Simon didn't have the option to refuse. I have walked the Stations of the Cross in Jerusalem. Few of the real sites can be identified with certainty because the actual street level in Jesus' day was about 15 feet below the present street level. Yet, walking in the Old City section of Jerusalem today still gives one the feeling of going back nearly 2,000 years to that time. Although every traditional location of the biblical sites of the Via Dolorosa may not be accurate, they are still likely to be close to the real location. Not all of the events mentioned in the Stations of the Cross are biblical, and some may not even be historical.

- I. Jesus is condemned to death
- II. Jesus takes up his cross
- III. Jesus falls for the first time
- IV. Jesus meets his mother
- V. Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry his cross
- VI. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus
- VII. Jesus falls the second time
- VIII. Jesus meets the Daughters of Jerusalem
- IX. Jesus falls the third time
- X. Jesus is stripped of his garments
- XI. Jesus is nailed to the cross
- XII. Jesus dies on the cross
- XIII. Jesus is laid in the arms of his mother

XIV. Jesus is laid in the tomb

Good Friday in San Fernando, the Philippines

For the past 500 years in San Fernando Pampanga, north of Manila, in the Philippines, during Good Friday celebrations volunteers are briefly crucified for penance. The Roman Catholic condemns this practice yet has not been able to curtail it. Around 1990, according to Life magazine, a Belgian woman traveled to the Philippines to be crucified. Within 20 minutes of being on the cross she went into shock and had to be given emergency medical attention. A nail through the palm does indeed hold up the normal weight of the body. It is surprising how little the nail hole bleeds.

Christ the Evidence

There is much extra-biblical evidence of Jesus Christ. He is referred to in near contemporary works by Jewish, Roman and Greek historians. An inscription bearing Pilate's name was discovered in the Holy Land. A full account of Pilate's rule in Judea is found in the works of Flavius Josephus. The bone-box and bones of Caiaphas the high priest have been discovered. This bone-box bears an inscription referring to Joseph Caiaphas in the Aramaic language. Additional evidence is referred to in The Case for Christ by Lee Strobel and Jesus the Evidence by Ian Wilson.

Chronology of the Crucifixion

In The Day Christ Died Jim Bishop broke down the Passion narrative hour by hour.

6:00 PM	Jesus and his disciples gather for the Passover meal
7:00 PM	Jesus washes the disciple's feet
8:00 PM	Jesus tells the apostles that one of them will betray him.
9:00 PM	Judas leaves and reports to the high priest to betray Jesus
10:00 PM	Jesus institutes Holy Communion
11:00 PM	The disciples sing the Hallel Psalms (This is a section near the end of the Book of Psalms in the Old Testament, Psalms 113-118) and depart to the Garden of Gethsemane
12:00	Midnight Jesus gives his farewell discourse to the apostles
1:00 AM	Jesus travails in the Garden of the Gethsemane
2:00 AM	Jesus finds the apostles sleeping. Judas arrives.
3:00 AM	Jesus arrested. Peter cuts off Malchus's ear. Jesus heals Malchus. The apostles flee.
4:00 AM	Jesus is brought to Annas's house.
5:00 AM	Jesus tried and condemned by the Sanhedrin
6:00 AM	Judas tries to return the money
7:00 AM	Judas commits suicide

8:00 AM	Jesus appears before Pilate. Pilate's wife warns him not to harm Jesus. Pilate sends Jesus to Herod.
9:00 AM	Jesus appears before Herod. Herod sends him back to Pilate.
10:00 AM	Jesus condemned and Bar-Abbas released
11:00 AM	Jesus carries his cross to Golgotha
12:00	Noon Jesus crucified
1:00 PM	Soldiers gamble over Jesus' clothes
2:00 PM	Jesus speaks from the cross
3:00 PM	Jesus dies on the cross
4:00 PM	Jesus' body removed from the cross.

Some of these times might not be correct. For instance, Judas possibly did share in the Holy Communion. Jim Bishop was a Roman Catholic. The book is well written and has background information to Jewish and Roman culture and also references the Aramaic language.

Theories of Atonement

The Passion of the Christ forces us to deal with the questions –‘Why did Jesus die on the Cross?’ and ‘What does it mean that Jesus died for my sins?’ Answers to these questions have been given by theologians in their study of the Bible. All four ‘theories of the atonement’ contain truth. However, even though Christ’s actions are a moral example, they were more than that, they give us the power to be redeemed. Theories of Atonement are ways of

explaining the meaning of the Suffering of Jesus and are explanations of his sacrifice.

1. The Ransom Theory: Jesus' death defeated evil and frees those who accept his grace from Satan's domain.
2. Substitution theory: Jesus took our sins upon himself and satisfied the wrath of God.
3. Moral Exemplary Theory: Jesus showed us holiness in his suffering that we should emulate.
4. Blood Sacrifice Theory: Jesus fulfilled the Levitical priesthood and sacrificial system on the cross.

Who is culpable for the blood of Jesus?

Pilate condemned Christ to the cross and Romans killed him. Jesus said that the temple leadership committed the greater sin by betraying Christ and turning him over (John 19:11, 1 Thessalonians 2:14-15). It was our sins that crucified Christ. We are all responsible. Also it was God's will for Jesus to be crucified. Christian doctrine teaches that the sins of humanity led to the crucifixion of Jesus. The only way to save mankind was for the Messiah to sacrifice himself for the sins of the world. *Polycarp the Disciple of Saint John the Evangelist wrote of the Second Coming of Christ in his Epistle to the Philippians saying, "He comes to judge the living and the dead, and God will require His blood at the hands of any who refuse Him allegiance."* This

means that those who accept the blood of Jesus as the Lamb of God will be saved as the Jews under Moses were at Passover. Those who do not will be held guilty and be judged for the death of Jesus. We are all culpable for the death of Jesus. Our sins killed him. Those who accept the blood of Jesus accept God's grace; those who refuse it will bear His wrath. (I believe Aslan in the children's story The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe is an excellent device in explaining the concept of the Atonement in an allegorical manner. C. S. Lewis was a great Christian writer and intellectual. He preferred to refer to Narnia as a Christian "supposal" rather than "allegory" but this was probably in deference to his friend J.R.R. Tolkien, who hated allegory, but was also a Christian.) Too often, Protestants reject all the church fathers. Instead we should judge them in the light of scripture. Much of what they wrote is true and useful. Tertullian of Carthage was practically a Protestant himself. While I do not condone anti-Semitism, it bothers me to see certain Christians who falsely portray all of the early church fathers as rabidly anti-Semitic. Where they are in error, we should reject the error, but even if they had certain erroneous beliefs that doesn't mean that they were completely in error and it doesn't mean that there is nothing beneficial in their writings. We shouldn't throw out the baby with the bath water. Of course, those who oppose the church fathers the most are the ones who know nothing about who they were and what they wrote. Actually, the church fathers have had a tremendous influence on Protestantism.

Lutheranism and Calvinism are based on the writings of Saint Augustine as much as they are on Scripture.

Why Did Jesus have to die?

Jesus died for the Jewish nation but not for the Jews alone, but also, so that he would gather into one the scattered children of God (John 11:51-52). Why did Jesus die? It was “for we men and our salvation.” The blood of Jesus sanctifies us. We are reborn to serve God and obey him in living a life of holiness. Christianity is a discipline and a way of life. The sanctification is not just a “legal” pronouncement or Jesus being holy for us, it is a call to live a holy life. The Bible says, “without holiness no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:13). As believers we share in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Romans 6:4 says, “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in the newness of life.”

Why did Jesus die? He died to destroy the works of the Devil, and he died tasting death for everyone, not just the Jews and not just the elect (Hebrews 2:9&14). Jesus died for every human being, Jew and Arab, all Gentiles, all men and all women and all races. The blood of the Messiah purifies us from sin (Hebrews 9:13-14). This is the blood of the covenant God has ordained for us. In the ancient world, covenants were implemented by a blood sacrifice (Hebrews 9:20-22). Without the shedding of blood there is no remission or forgiveness of sins. In Revelations 5:9-10 it states

that the slaughtered Lamb ransomed us unto himself as a nation of Kings and Priests. This is what we are as born-again blood -bought believers.

Golgotha is the Aramaic word for Calvary. There are many churches named Calvary but I have never heard of a church named Golgotha. Golgotha is Aramaic for 'Skull Place' and Calvary is the Latin equivalent. Ever hear of a Skull Place Baptist Church? Golgotha was a place near Jerusalem where public executions were carried out. Probably every day there were several men crucified there. On one of those days Jesus was crucified between two thieves. Golgotha means "Skull-place" so in the early church Golgotha was supposed to be the burial place of Adam's skull. It was believed that the blood of Jesus dripped down a fissure in Golgotha and that it dripped onto Adam's skull and atoned for his sin. (Recently, this ancient legend has been altered to state that the Lost Ark of the Covenant, rather than the skull of Adam, is hidden under Golgotha, and that the blood of Jesus leaked into a fissure and dripped down onto the very mercy seat of the Ark. The blood of Jesus has spiritual power, and it isn't necessary for it to anoint any physical object, whether a skull or an ark. The blood of the Lamb needs to anoint our hearts.)

Fulfillment of Prophecy

Three important passages are profound in the understanding of the Passion. Jesus fulfilled these prophecies in an amazing way. There are many other prophecies that Christ fulfilled but these three

passages are the most profound: The first is Psalm 22. This Psalm, written centuries before Jesus was born, graphically describes his crucifixion. The second is found in the Book of Isaiah (Isaiah 50:6 and 52:13-53:12). This is the prophecy of the Suffering Servant. The third prophecy is Zechariah 9-14. This is Deutero-Zechariah or Second Zechariah. Important passages that show the fulfillment of prophecy from Zechariah are the Palm Sunday or Triumphal Entry prophecy (9:9), the thirty pieces of silver (11:12), the Pierced One (12:10) and “smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered” (13:7).

Jesus is the Messiah, the Anointed One of God. He is the expected one whose coming was long ago foretold by the prophets. Among the many prophecies that Jesus fulfilled three are particularly important. These prophecies that Jesus fulfilled in his passion and include Isaiah 53, Psalm 22 and what is known as Deutero-Zechariah.

Isaiah 53 is very popular passage of scripture, and it is even put on T-shirts. I doubt anyone has a T-shirt emblazoned with Deutero-Zechariah. Jewish people read the entire Bible every year in their synagogues and every year they skip over Isaiah 53 and do not read it. By Jewish Law Isaiah 53 is not to be read aloud in the synagogue. Years ago I read a story in the newspaper about a Jewish Christian man who went to a non-formal Jewish cultural event. He was chit-chatting and not in any way making a nuisance of himself. A rabbi saw him and noticed that he was wearing a T-shirt with the words “Isaiah 53” on it. The rabbi became enraged, physically accosted the

man in the T-shirt and threw him out of the room. While it is part of the Jewish Bible, Isaiah 53 is a very powerful passage of scripture and certain people, as I have just illustrated, feel very threatened by it. I will explore Isaiah 53 below. Deutero-Zechariah is Zechariah 9-14. This section of Zechariah is different from the rest of the book and some scholars believe it was written by another author and added to the end of Zechariah. (I am not saying that Deutero-Zechariah was written by an unknown author. What I am saying is that the second part of the Book of Zechariah is different from the first part of the book and it has several important prophecies in it that were fulfilled by Jesus.) Whatever the origin of the book it is extremely important and very obvious that Jesus set out to fulfill these prophecies in what is called “the Passion week.” Jesus even said that he was doing this from his own mouth (Mark 14:27). Zechariah was written around 518 BC.

First Prophecy:

The Humble King on a Donkey

Jesus rode into Jerusalem in a humble manner on a donkey in his ‘triumphal entry’ when he arrived to celebrate the Passover in what is often called ‘Palm Sunday’.

Zechariah 9:9

Fulfillment

Mark 11:1-10

Fourth Prophecy:

“Strike the Shepherd and the Sheep shall be Scattered!”

When Jesus told his disciples that they would all briefly lose faith, he quoted this passage from Deutero-Zechariah.

Zechariah 13:7

Fulfillment

Matthew 26:31

Mark 14:27

The great Aramaic expert Joachim Jeremais notes, “This connection is confirmed by Zech. 13: 7-9. There, too, the murder of the shepherd is followed not only by the scattering of the flock...but by the purification of the remaining...so that they can become God’s people by the time of salvation. There is no mention in Zechariah of the way in which the death of the shepherd and the purification of the people of God is thought to be made. The only help is a hint from the context, which says that on the day of the lament for the one ‘whom they pierced’ (12:10) a fountain will be opened up ‘for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness’ (13:1). Thus, a representative death for the flock may be thought of. This is, at any rate, the way in which the Johannine homily on the shepherd where (John 10:11, 15, 17f)

His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the power to become the sons of God, even those who believe in His name” (John 1:11-12). While Jesus was a Jew, and so were the disciples, the majority of the Jewish nation rejected Jesus, even during his ministry (Matthew 11:20-28).

*For he shall grow up before him as a tender
plant,
And as a root out of a dry ground.
He hath no form nor comeliness,
And when we shall see him,
There is no beauty that we should desire
him.(Verse2)*

Jesus came in humility. Jesus was born in a barn and a feeding trough was his first cradle. He was raised in an impoverished village deep within a rural district. He was a carpenter (Mark 6:3). He rode into Jerusalem humbly upon a donkey (John 12:14). He taught his followers to serve by serving them (John 13:5-20). Jesus became incarnate as a common man and he identified with suffering humanity.

*He was despised and rejected of men,
A Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.
And we hid as it were our faces from him;
He was despised, and we esteemed him not.
(Verse 3)*

John also refers to the rejection of Jesus as a fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah. John says, “But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke” (John 12:37-41 NKJV).

*Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried
our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten of God
and afflicted.
But he was wounded from our
transgressions;
He was bruised for our iniquities.
The chastisement of our peace was upon
Him,
And with his stripes we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned every one to his own way;
And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of
us all.(Verse 4 and 5)*

This is the clearest statement of the substitutionary atonement in the Bible. The grief and sorrow Jesus, the Suffering Servant, bore were ours, not his. He has borne them for us. It states we esteemed him smitten of God, but he really wasn't being smitten for his own sins, but for ours. Matthew states that this wasn't only a spiritual healing his suffering brings to us, but also physical healing. Matthew says Jesus “healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying; “He Himself took our

*He shall see the travail of his soul,
And shall be satisfied.
By his knowledge shall my righteous Servant
justify many,
For he shall bear their iniquities.
Therefore I will divide him a portion with
the great,
And he shall divide the spoil with the strong,
Because he hath poured out his soul unto
death.
And he was numbered with the transgres-
sors; and he bore the sin of many,
And made intercession for the transgressors
(Verses 10-12. KJ21)*

We see the Resurrection prophesied, for although he was ‘cut off’, yet he shall prolong his days and see his seed, this refers to the Church. Those who come to faith in the suffering servant and the offering his soul made for them, shall be justified (Romans 3:24, 5:1 and 9, 8:30, 1 Corinthians 6: 9-11, Galatians 2:16). Now, Jesus as the Son of Man stands before God the Father and intercedes for our sins as the great High Priest (Hebrews 7:11-8:13). Jesus saw the travail of his soul and saw that it accomplished its purpose to redeem Mankind. Other scriptures that show the fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah 53 include 2 Corinthians 5: 21 and Luke 22:37.

His Sacrifice for us was in his perfect innocence
(v. 9)

It was voluntary (v. 10)

It was suffering patiently borne (v. 7)
Willed by God (v. 6, 10) and it was atoning for
others.

Isaiah 53 is dated by some scholars to 539 BC but is
probably centuries older than that.

Jesus is the Atonement. Isaiah 53 us a powerful
prophecy of the Passion of the Christ.

Aramaic Words in the Passion Narrative

Oshana (In Aramaic it means “Praise”. Luke translated it as “Glory”. The Hebrew word Hosanna means “Bring us Salvation now”.) Matthew 21: 9, Luke 19:38.

Gethsemane (Other scholars believe Gethsemane in Aramaic may be Gey-Shamanim a term that means Fertile Valley, which may be a reference to Isaiah 28: 1&4; in the Syriac Aramaic it is Gusemani.) Mark 14:32

Abba-Daddy-Father Mark 14:36

Barabbas Yeshua Bar Abbas, Jesus Son of the Father John 18:40 The name ‘Jesus’ or ‘Yeshua’ was a common name in the first century.

The Nazorean John 18:5 It means “one from Nazareth” but it Aramaic is has different connotations such as “the Holy One” and “the Observant One”.

God, whose blood takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29, Revelation 5:12). This is the Blood of God (Acts 20:28). For Salvation to take place the blood had to be applied (Exodus 12:7). Jesus was the Firstborn Son (Luke 2:22) and the Only Son (of God, Jesus did have brothers and sisters). As a sign of the coming Savior, God had told Abraham to sacrifice his “only son” (Isaac was symbolically the “only son”, Abraham had fathered Ishmael, but had banished him. See Genesis 22:16). Abraham prophesied that God would provide a lamb for a sacrifice (Genesis 22: 8).

It is significant that while Jesus was being crucified the Passover lambs were being sacrificed in the Temple. Jesus is the Passover Lamb. This sacrifice of the lamb is uniquely connected to Passover. The atoning annual sacrifice at Yom Kippur was a bull, and not a lamb. It was the blood of a bull that was sprinkled on the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant (Leviticus 16:11-14). The blood of a bull was atonement for the priest and it was followed by the blood of a goat which was atonement for the people. John said that Jesus is the Lamb because he is the sacrifice that frees us from the land of slavery. As Joshua, Jesus leads us into the land of promise. Only the Blood of the Lamb could free the captive slaves. This is the only way God has made for atonement. Who went out with Moses? Those who obeyed God’s word through Moses did. The Bible says it was a “mixed multitude” because some Egyptians were obedient to God (Exodus 12:38). Once more,

ethnicity or race doesn't matter. Whoever applies the Blood of the Lamb of God has salvation.

Salvation is in the Resurrection

As soon as I heard that Mel Gibson was going to make a film on the last twelve hours of the life of Christ shot entirely in Aramaic and Latin, I contacted Father William Fulco, Gibson's historical consultant, Aramaic scholar and translator of the script into the original languages. My concern I expressed to him was that it was vital that movie contain a resurrection sequence because a failure to depict the resurrection in the film would be a denial of the resurrection. I was assured by Father Fulco that the Resurrection would be depicted in the film. Some have complained that the movie should have shown more of the Resurrection, but the movie was about the passion and not the Resurrection and I am pleased with how the Resurrection was depicted in the movie. The Passion alone did not achieve our salvation. Redemption would not have taken place without the Resurrection. Jesus arose victorious over death, hell and the grave. The Gospel's depict a physical resurrection of Jesus. John speaks of it as that "which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled" (1 John 1:1). The Resurrected Jesus is not a ghost or an apparition nor is he a hallucination. He spoke to the disciples and said "It is I myself. Handle me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have" (Luke 24:39). He ate food (Luke 24:40-43). He was even able to convince

a skeptic like Thomas, who refused to believe until he had poked his finger in the nail-holes and stuck his hand in the place where the spear pierced his side (John 20: 24-30). While Thomas did doubt, earlier he had shown extreme faith for Jesus (John 11:16) and later he did again when he preached in Assyria, Parthia and India.

Eastern Christians place a higher emphasis on the Resurrection than do Western Christians, who instead focus on the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus. This is illustrated by a powerful ancient painting of Christ as the Son of Man defeating the powers of evil by his resurrection. This painting is entitled “The Harrowing of Hell” or alternately “Anastasis”, meaning “Resurrection” in Greek. This painting is in the Church of the Blessed Saviour of the Chora in Constantinople. The church was forcibly taken from the Eastern Christians and is now a mosque. The painting was made some time around 1215-1321. In the painting Christ, after his death on the cross, descends into Hell, tramples on Satan and rescues Adam and Eve while other saints from the Old Testament await their liberation. Christ stands on the gates of hell, which he has just broken down, the chains and locks of hell are broken to pieces and Satan is chained hand, feet and neck. In my opinion this is one of the greatest pieces of Christian art ever made and it also captures the Biblical concept of Jesus Christ as the Son of Man.

Peter teaches that we are saved and born again through the power of the resurrection of Jesus. He says “blessed be the God and Father or our Lord Jesus

Christ, who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah from the dead” (1 Peter 1: 3). Paul agrees with Peter and meditates on the importance of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15. Paul says that in the Resurrection Jesus is a “First-fruits” of those who sleep (1 Corinthians 15:20). As Jesus fulfilled the Passover on the 14th of Nisan, He also fulfilled the Jewish Feast of First-fruits, which Josephus says took place on the third day from Passover which he places on the 16th of Nisan. The salvation experience includes our becoming resurrected with Jesus, in a spiritual sense. Paul says, “Ye are buried with Him in baptism, wherein ye are also risen with in through the faith in the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead” (Colossians 2:12). Being adopted into the Family of God, by being engendered or begotten from above, is accomplished through the resurrection power of Jesus the Christ. This is a core doctrine of the Christian faith.

The Seven Sayings from the Cross in Aramaic

1. *Abba, Shwoq ilhon: La Geir Yadien Mana Audien!*

Father, Forgive them for they know not what they are doing!

Luke 23:34

2. *Amen Amar Na Lakh, D'Yawmana Am Thihui
B'Pardaisa*
Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in
Paradise.
Luke 23:43

3. *Attha, Ha Brekh. Ha, Immakh.*
Woman, Behold your son. Son, Behold your
mother.
John 19:26-27
Jesus did have brothers and sisters but his family
was poor. John, who is John the Priest, was a
wealthy man and was known to the high priest.
He was a man of means and influence and was
equipped to look after and to provide for our
savior's mother.

4. *Shiena!*
I thirst.
Researchers have discovered that being in the
position of crucifixion causes profuse sweating
and obviously dehydration.
In a spiritual sense Jesus represents God thirsting
for communion between God and man and Jesus
is symbolic of this thirst.
John 19:28

5. *Elohi, Elohi, Lamana Shabacktani!*
My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?
Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34

CONCLUSION

Learning More



This book is meant to be only an introduction to Aramaic studies. I have treated The Nazorean, The Son of Man and Mary of Magdala more fully elsewhere. In this volume I didn't include any of my research on the Beatitudes. I believe that the Holy Spirit directed me to write this book and directed me into an Aramaic ministry. I have included an "Aramaic Resource Guide" to direct those interested to more information. This guide is by no means complete or exhaustive. In this book I have left out a lot of information and I have left in some repetition for clarification and emphasis. I hope to make more information available later in a forthcoming book. Much of the material in this book is from a series of lectures I have on Aramaic at the Nathaniel Center in Humble, Texas. I am currently in the process of translating "The Aramaic New Testament: The Gospel of Mark."

Reverend Missick is available for lectures. Videos and teaching tapes are available including booklets, tracts and broadsides. Teaching series on important and interesting subjects such as “The Lord’s Prayer in Aramaic,” “The Beatitudes in Aramaic,” “The Original Aramaic Meaning of ‘Son of Man,’” “Jesus the Poet,” “Jesus the Nazorean” and other exciting topics are available. For a complete listing:

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Aramaic Resource Guide



Aramaic Versions of the New Testament

There are several English translations of the New Testament from the Aramaic version, most notably the translation by John Wesley Etheridge. Gorgias Press has the translation from the Syriac by James Murdock available. James Murdock, trans. The New Testament Translated from the Peshitto Version (Gorgias Press, New Jersey 2001)

“Light of the Word Ministries” has a parallel Bible containing various translations of the Aramaic Bible into English. This ministry is headed by Jan Magiera and information can be found at www.aramaicresearch.org.

Joseph Paskha has written The Aramaic Gospel and Acts and a key to aide in the pronunciation of the Aramaic. An Interlinear Aramaic New Testament is freely available at www.peshitta.org.

Aramaic Sources to the New Testament

Maurice Casey has written two helpful Aramaic books [Aramaic Sources of Mark's Gospel](#) and [An Aramaic Approach to Q: Sources for the Gospels of Matthew and Luke](#). These books are published by Cambridge University Press. I don't agree with everything Mr. Casey says, but I respect his scholarship. His chapters about the languages spoken in the Holy Land at the time of Christ are excellent. Also, he uses only Aramaic from the Holy Land that has been dated to the time of Christ to reconstruct the words of Jesus in the original Aramaic.

Joachim Jeremias is my favorite Aramaic scholar. He lived from 1900 until 1979 in Germany. As a Baptist, I do not agree with his teachings on infant baptism. Helpful books by Joachim Jeremias include, [The Basic Message of the New Testament](#), [New Testament Theology](#), and [The Prayers of Jesus](#). I have seen many books by charlatans who try to pass themselves off as Aramaic scholars, so I want to promote sound Aramaic scholarship, such as what we have in the writings of Joachim Jeremias. (I plan to expose false teachers who use Aramaic to promote the New Age Movement in a forth coming volume.)

[The Poetry of Our Lord: An Examination of the Formal Elements of Hebrew Poetry in the Discourses of Jesus Christ](#) by Rev. C.F. Burney in 1925 is useful. He also wrote a book on the Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel.

Charles Cutler Torrey also wrote about Aramaic and the New Testament in Our Translated Gospels: Some of the Evidence.

On of the best examinations of the words of Jesus in the Aramaic is The Words of Jesus: Considered in the Light of Post-Biblical Jewish Writings and the Aramaic Language by Gustav Dalman and An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts by Matthew Black.

The Aramaic Christian Heritage

Samuel Hugh Moffett A History of Christianity in Asia Volume I: Beginnings to 1500 (Harper San Francisco 1992)

Hans-Joachim Klimkeit and Ian Gillman Christians in Asia Before 1500 (University of Michigan Press 1999)

Sebastian P. Brock and Davis G. K. Taylor The Hidden Pearl: The Syrian Orthodox Church and Its Ancient Aramaic Heritage: Volume I The Ancient Aramaic Heritage Volume II the Heirs of the Ancient Aramaic Heritage Volume III At the Turn of the Third Millennium, the Syrian Orthodox Witness (Transworld Films, Italy 2001) with accompanying videotapes.

of the East and its teachings is seriously flawed. For accurate information see Moffett and Klimkiet& Gillman above.

James the Just

John Painter Just James: the Brother of Jesus in History and Tradition (Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1997)

Jeffery J. Butz The Brother of Jesus and the Lost Teachings of Christianity (Inner Traditions, Rochester, Vermont 2005)

Robert E. Van Voorst The Ascents of James: History and Theology of a Jewish Christian Community (Scholars Press, Atlanta, Georgia, 1989)

F. F. Bruce Peter, Stephen, James and John: Studies in Non-Pauline Christianity (Eerdmans Publishing Company 1979)

Learning Aramaic

The best tool to learn Aramaic is currently www.assyrianlanguage.com.

Helpful Web-sites

Assyrian International New Agency www.aina.org

Zinda Magazine www.zindamagazine.com

How can one find God?

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

Romans 10:9

Who can find God?

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Romans 10:13

A Sinner's Prayer

Dear Father, I know that I am a sinner and need forgiveness. I believe that Jesus Christ died for my sin. I am willing to turn from sin. I now invite Jesus to come into my heart and life and my Lord and my Savior. I am willing, by God's grace and mercy, to follow and obey Christ as the Lord of my Life. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

About the Author



Reverend Stephen Andrew Missick graduated from Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas and has attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has extensively studied the Aramaic language, Aramaic literature and Biblical studies and the Christian Churches of the Aramaic tradition.

He has several articles on the history of the Assyrian Aramaic Church published in the *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies*. He is the writer and illustrator of the weekly cartoon strip, “Chronicles: Facts from the Bible”.

Reverend Missick served in the United States Military in Baghdad in Operation Iraqi Freedom during 2003 and 2004. He has traveled throughout Middle East several times visiting Christian communities in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and the Holy Land.

Although Bible scholars have called Aramaic “the Language of Jesus” most Christians have never heard of Aramaic. However, anyone who has read the Bible has been exposed to Aramaic whether he or she knows it or not. “Abba, Father” is Aramaic. Golgotha, the place where Jesus was crucified is Aramaic for “Skull-Place.” Names such as Thomas, Barnabas, Martha, and Magdalene are all Aramaic names. “Maranatha” is a short Aramaic prayer that is left un-translated in the New Testament. Translated from the Aramaic it means, “Our Lord, Come!” After the release of Mel Gibson’s movie “The Passion of the Christ,” which was filmed mostly in Aramaic, more people have been exposed to the Aramaic language than ever before.

Aramaic is an important but often over-looked tool in discovering the mind of Christ. This book is an introduction to Aramaic biblical studies and to the last Christians who still speak the ancient Aramaic language, the Assyrians of Mesopotamia.

This book also explores the Aramaic behind Christ’s words, such as in the title Christ used for himself, the Son of Man, which is *Barnasha* in Aramaic, and looks at important people in early Aramaic Christianity, such as James the Just and Mary of Magdala.



REVEREND STEPHEN ANDREW MISSICK graduated from Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas and has attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has extensively studied the Aramaic language, Aramaic literature and Biblical studies and the Christian Churches of the Aramaic tradition.

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The village depicted on the cover is Maloula, an Aramaic-speaking Christian village outside of Damascus, Syria.

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