

That The World May Know – The Life and Ministry of the Messiah – Session 6: Language of Culture

The Significance of Nazareth

The small village of Nazareth in Lower Galilee was where Joseph and Mary made their home. At the time of Jesus' birth, they were in Bethlehem for the census required by Caesar Augustus. They had been told by angels that Jesus was the Son of God who would save His people from their sins. When King Herod sought to kill the infant Jesus, an angel warned Joseph and the family fled to Egypt, where they remained until Herod died and an angel told Joseph to return to Israel. Matthew 1:18 – 2:20
Luke 1:26 – 38

1. When Joseph brought Mary and Jesus back to Israel, where did they settle?
Matthew 2:21 – 23
2. Why was it important for them to live in Nazareth?
Matthew 2:23
3. The description "Jesus the Nazarene" ("Jesus the Branch") clearly linked Jesus to the prophecies that the Messiah would be the "Branch" that would grow out of Jess's stump. What did Jesus say to confirm this identify?
Revelation 22:16

Understanding Our Relationship to Jesus – The Image of the Olive Tree

When olive trees grow old, their branches no longer produce fruit, so the farmer will cut off those branches, leaving a stump several feet wide and tall. Soon, new shoots begin to grow out of the old stump, and new branches are sometimes grafted onto the old stump. The prophets, Jesus, and the apostle Paul used this image, which was familiar to the people of Jesus' day, to help explain His relationship to His people.

1. In order to understand the metaphor of the olive tree, we must know what it represents. What is the identity of the "stump" and the "shoot?"
Isaiah 11:1 – 3
2. What does Jesus reveal about God's relationship to the tree?
John 15:1

What must God, the gardener, do to the "tree" that will not produce good fruit?
Matthew 3:10
Matthew 7:19

Has God ever had to do this? What was the result?
Isaiah 6:11 – 13
3. What were early Christians called? What did that description mean?
Acts 24:5
Jeremiah 33:15
4. Gentile Christians, like Israel, are expected to produce fruit. What enables the branches to produce fruit?
John 15:4 – 5

Jesus the Master Builder

Although Jesus was a trained *tekton* who could build with any material, He probably spent much of His time working as a stonemason, shaping and laying stones. Look at some of the images from the construction world that Jesus used as He taught His varied audiences.

1. On what did Jesus say He would build His church?
Matthew 16:18
2. After seeing the spectacular construction of Herod's temple, what claim did Jesus make? What impact did it have on His audience?
John 2:19 – 22
3. With which part of a building did Jesus identify Himself?
Matthew 21:42
Acts 4:11 – 12

What does this metaphor say about His role?
4. Following Jesus' example, Peter also used images from stone construction to explain what it means to participate in the kingdom of God. What is Jesus in Peter's analogy?
1 Peter 2:4 – 8

What is Jesus the *tekton* building today?
With whom?

Jesus and the Herods

From His birth until His death, Jesus' life on earth was intertwined with that of the Herod dynasty—Herod the Great, Herod Archelaus, Herod Antipas. Consider how Jesus may have been familiar enough with them to refer to them in His teaching.

1. What was the response of Herod the Great to the birth of Jesus, the “king of the Jews?”
 2. Matthew 2:1 – 18
 3. When Joseph moved his family back to Israel, what caused him to settle in Nazareth, thereby fulfilling prophecy? Matthew 2:19 – 33
 4. The lives of Herod Antipas and Jesus were closely intertwined. Herod Antipas was the only Herod to meet Jesus face-to-face. After Herod Antipas had John the Baptist killed, what impact did Jesus' ministry have on him? Matthew 14:1 – 2
Mark 6:14 – 16
- What was Herod Antipas' attitude toward Jesus after John's death?
Luke 9:7 – 9
Luke 13:31
- When Pilate sent Jesus to Herod Antipas, how did they respond to each other?
Luke 23:8 – 11

Cultural Images in Jesus' Teaching

Jesus used word pictures and ideas designed to communicate effectively to His audiences. Consider these elements of the world of wealth and power that were part of Jesus' teaching.

1. Compare the parallels between Jesus' parable about the man of noble birth and widely known facts concerning Herod Archelaus.
Luke 19:12
Luke 19:14
Luke 19:27
2. Compare Jesus teaching with a widely known fact concerning Herod Antipas.
Luke 14:31 – 33
3. What did Jesus say to His disciples about the politicians of His day?
Matthew 20:25 – 28
4. The theater was popularized in Israel. The plays often focused on gods and goddesses and mocked honorable and sacred things. How is each of the following examples related to stage actors? What is the point of each teaching?
Matthew 6:2 – 4
Matthew 6:16 – 18
Matthew 23:23 – 28

Jesus did not come to improve your life, a little tweak here and a little tweak there. Jesus came to transplant a new way of thinking into your mind, a new way of living into your soul. Once we join Jesus and pursue God's vision for this world, everything changes. You will go places you never thought you would go.. You will ask God for what you need and trust God to provide. And you may find there is not as much need to worry.

References

Isaiah 6	Luke 1
Isaiah 11	Luke 4
Isaiah 53	Luke 8
Jeremiah 23	Luke 9
Jeremiah 33	Luke 13
Zechariah 3	Luke 14
Zechariah 6	Luke 23
Matthew 1	John 1
Matthew 2	John 2
Matthew 3	John 3
Matthew 6	John 7
Matthew 14	John 11
Matthew 16	John 14
Matthew 20	John 15
Matthew 21	Acts 4
Matthew 22	Acts 15
Matthew 23	Acts 23
Mark 3	Acts 24
Mark 6	Romans 11
Mark 12	Philippians 3
Mark 14	1 Peter 2
Mark 16	

Ephesians 4:1 – 6: As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.