

# The Lost Gospel of the Kingdom

(A point summary of important ideas from “The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom”<sup>1</sup>)

## **Part 1: The Problem of Defining “Gospel”**

- “Inherent egocentrism may prevent us from ever discovering the actual meaning of “gospel,” and therefore keep us from embracing the spiritual realities that were the concerns of the biblical authors. Individual, cultural, social, literary, spiritual, and religio-political mindsets convince each of us that we have sufficient education and awareness, whereby we have become qualified to judge and situate ourselves in, what supposedly are, the most correct perspectives and positions.”<sup>2</sup>
- Like Albert Einstein, we begin to learn when we start calling into question everything that we have ever been taught. At the same time we need to hang on tightly to Jesus, our teacher, who knows everything.
- The Gospel is not the story of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. He preached the gospel, so it couldn’t have been that. The true gospel was preached by John the baptizer and also by the angel to Zacharias and to the shepherds. These facts come from the use of the Greek terms *euaggelion* (εὐαγγέλιον) and *euaggelizo* (εὐαγγελίζω).
- The same gospel Jesus preached was preached to Abraham<sup>3</sup> and to the Israelites under Moses<sup>4</sup>.
- “The intellectual loss of the meaning of the first century’s understanding of the ‘gospel’, occurred over a period of 200-300 years as theologians, scholars and students of the scriptures unwittingly and unquestioningly superimposed their own contemporary definitions of terms back over the texts of the Bible as they read, translated and interpreted.”<sup>5</sup>
- *In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last [εσχάτος—eschatos] days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.*<sup>6</sup> The “eschatos” here was not ‘the end of time’, but simply ‘the later time’ that had been long hoped for and waited for by the Israelites since Abraham.
- Christian eschatology has no relevance to Hebraic eschatology or to the ‘gospel’ of the NT.
- These factors led to the loss of the genuine gospel:
  - The different competing forms of the gospel message in the 1<sup>st</sup> century
  - The change from ‘The Way’ to ‘Christianity’
  - The change from an Eastern paradigm of thought to Western mindset based in Aristotelian rationalism
  - The 4<sup>th</sup> century pogrom to remove the charismata (gifts of the Spirit)
  - The change in terminologies of modern translators
  - The rejection of Aramaic scriptures as being irrelevant

## **Part 2: The Loss of Hebraic Judaism/Christianity**

- Following the persecution of believers by the Jewish leaders and Roman Caesars, the pagans began to exterminate the Christians because they blamed them for every poor harvest, plague and catastrophe. Because they refused to offer sacrifices and pay homage to the gods these attacks took place for the sake of the wellbeing of their society.
- Emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Milan in 318 AD giving legal status of the Christian religion so it became sanctioned alongside Paganism.

1 – Steven R. Service (2015) “The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom : A First Century Hebraic Perspective” [PDF of 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition] [www.amazon.com.au/Lost-Forgotten-Gospel-Kingdom-Perspective-ebook/dp/B07124XNG9](http://www.amazon.com.au/Lost-Forgotten-Gospel-Kingdom-Perspective-ebook/dp/B07124XNG9)

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2 – p:1

3 – Galatians 3:8

4 – Hebrews 4:2

5 – p:11

6 – Hebrews 1:2 (RSV)

- “It was the very essence of the Rabbi Jesus’ life to help followers of Judaism see, hear, enter and experience ‘God’s word’, as the word was the means by which His reign was repeatedly manifest in the world from the time of Abraham to the historical present.”<sup>7</sup>
- Because believers had to operate ‘underground’ for more than two centuries, Christianity had diverged and become a variety of different streams. There were the Montanists<sup>8</sup>, Ebionites<sup>9</sup>, Marcionites<sup>10</sup>, Docetists<sup>11</sup> and Gnostics<sup>12</sup>. No one knew which one was truly authentic.
- The Montanists were a charismatic revival which started with Montanus in Cybele (Phrygia) in the mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century. They were a threat to the orthodox Great Church (AKA Roman Catholic organisation) because they were led by the Spirit rather than the clergy. They were persecuted by the church leaders until they were eliminated 200 years later.
- Books read by Christians at this time included the ‘Gnostic Gospels’<sup>13</sup>, ‘The Gospel of Thomas’<sup>14</sup>, ‘The Shepherd of Hermas’<sup>15</sup>, ‘the Apocalypse of Peter’<sup>16</sup> and ‘The Epistle of Barnabas’<sup>17</sup>.
- Constantine instigated the first Church Council at Nicaea in 325 AD to formalize the faith and to clear up all the differences.
- Through ‘majority rule’ the important questions were answered so belief fitted in with the Greco-Roman world.
- Subsequent church councils after Nicaea produced Christian orthodoxy (viz ‘the correct way of glorifying God’).
- “Christianity became the official state religion early in the fourth century, and with this new status began an unfortunate secularization of the Church. When the Christian faith was mixed with the Roman world, the world did not become Christian so much as Christians became worldly. In reaction, many earnest Christians fled to the desert and ultimately to monasteries and convents as a way of escaping the world and living a faithful life.”<sup>18</sup>
- The development of a unified system of theology (Orthodoxy) saw Christianity become an intolerant dictatorial politicized religious structure which did not allow for the freedom of thought or speech.
- Other believers thought the need to formalize doctrine was irrelevant and they kept to themselves, practising the spirituality they learnt through Jesus – love forgiveness and mercy.
- Saint Anthony, Pachomius, Shenouda the Archimandrite, Benedict of Nursia, and many others, abandoned the institutionalized Church and lived in the wilderness or in monastic communities where they were free to practice their spirituality according to conscience.<sup>19</sup>
- By the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, the Greek mindset, attributed to Aristotle (384-322 BC) was the dominant force in the Western world. Under this mindset (AKA ‘rationalism’), logical explanations were required to legitimize, approve, or accept anything. Aristotelian logic operated via the hidden premise of the ‘Law of Non-Contradiction’, where, if something could be contradicted in any way, it couldn’t be true. Any idea had to be explained in non-contradictory terms for it to be believed to be true or “the truth”.
- The Eastern mindset of the Middle East was based on reason. If any perspective or conclusion was reasonable it wasn’t invalidated because it might contradict another. This Eastern paradigm understood that there were many ways that realities and events might be explained. Paradoxes and alternative

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7 – p:29

8 – [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montanism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montanism)

9 – [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebionites](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebionites)

10 – [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcionism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcionism)

11 – [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Docetism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Docetism)

12 – [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gnosis#The\\_Gnostics\\_in\\_the\\_Early\\_Christian\\_Era](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gnosis#The_Gnostics_in_the_Early_Christian_Era)

13 – [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nag\\_Hammadi\\_library](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nag_Hammadi_library)

14 – [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel\\_of\\_Thomas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_Thomas)

15 – [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Shepherd\\_of\\_Hermas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Shepherd_of_Hermas)

16 – [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apocalypse\\_of\\_Peter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apocalypse_of_Peter)

17 – [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistle\\_of\\_Barnabas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistle_of_Barnabas)

18 – Richard Foster & James Smith, ed. (1993) "Devotional Classics: Selected Readings for Individuals and Groups" p:178  
[www.amazon.com.au/Devotional-Classics-Selected-Readings-Individuals/dp/0060777508](http://www.amazon.com.au/Devotional-Classics-Selected-Readings-Individuals/dp/0060777508)

19 – See [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Desert\\_Fathers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Desert_Fathers)

perspectives were acceptable because validity was based upon the possibility for reasonableness.

- “*The word*, was widely understood in the Hebraic Tradition from the time of Abraham onward to the point of the composition of the text above from Acts, as the mysterious manifestations of God that would come into the world in the events of its occurrence in order to bring the kingdom/reign of God.”<sup>20</sup>
- These references to ‘the word’ are not referring to the text of the OT:
  - Psalm 107:20 (NIV) – He sent out his word and healed them...
  - Psalm 119:81(NIV) – My soul faints with longing for your salvation, but I have put my hope in your word.
  - Psalm 119:105 (NIV) – Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.
  - Psalm 130:5 (NIV) – I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope.
- Understanding what ‘the word’ is brings clarity to what the gospel really is.
- “Whereas ‘truth’ in the Greek Platonic sense had more to do with ‘facticity of information’, in the more ancient context of biblical Hebraic Eastern thought, the case is easily made that ‘Truth’ was understood as the ‘essence of God’s Being’ that was imparted to humankind through encounter.”<sup>21</sup>
- Peoples’ lives became aligned with God’s purposes by engaging with ‘the word’ (i.e. the Spirit living in them, the Truth himself). This became their motivator of righteousness. Encounters with the Spirit of Truth provided followers of God with the means to stay in line with his aim and goal for their lives.
- To the ancient Eastern mind, ‘truth’ was inseparable from the being of God and was synonymous with his Spirit – i.e. the Spirit of Truth<sup>22</sup>.
- As Christianity changed into a Greek-thinking religion, the concept of ‘truth’ as the Spirit of God was lost. Salvation became knowledge of objective scriptural truth rather than a relationship with the Truth.
- By the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the edicts of the church overrode experiencing Truth, where character was miraculously transformed by God and help was received from Heaven every day through a loving and living relationship of divine intimacy.
- “A variety of literary strategies were used to explain divine/human encounter in the narratives of OT scripture. Some of these seemed paradoxical to future generations. Although the Hebrew and Aramaic Bibles were filled with many genres of literature that involved God, the Jews realized that He was not reducible into any number of valid doctrinal statements about Him. Because He transcended anything anyone could say about Him, ultimately His presence had to be experienced.”<sup>23</sup>
- Combined as the OT, the texts were a witness to a tangible pathway where it led readers into revelatory participation with God’s kingdom/reign. The text highlighted for Hebraic thinking readers that they should imitate the patterns of relationship found in them. They could achieve the benefit of a similar relationship with God if they walked righteously, sought him every day, listened for his direction, and obeyed his voice or his actions on their behalf.
- “By contrast, the Western practice of using the scriptures as a divine knowledge base from which to strip individual verses out of historical and authorial context, from here and there or anywhere, then placing these next to one another in order to prove points of deductive logic that might have supposedly provided “true” doctrines, would have been absurd to the inspired biblical authors.”<sup>24</sup>
- In the Hebrew mindset, Jesus was God because he was a manifestation of ‘the word’. He didn’t need to be proven so by logic.
- Orthodoxy limited God and his voice to the pages of the Bible. This was a book that the populace couldn’t read because of widespread illiteracy. It was at this point that God was deemed to have stopped talking personally. He now only spoke through the Bible and church leaders. The Bible now contained ‘God’s word’, so mystical experiences were no longer necessary.

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20 – p:42-43

21 – p:46

22 – John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; 1 John 4:6

23 – p:49

24 – p:50

- ‘Word’ from *dabar* (Hebrew), in the ancient context of language usage, was a generalization for actions and events. It was also a literary term associated with dreams, visions, or other forms of divine encounter such as angelic visitations or theophanies. For example:
  - Genesis 22:16 (ESV) – By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this *dabar/word*<sup>25</sup>, and have not withheld your son, your only son...
  - Isaiah 42:16 (NASB) – These are the things [*dabar*] I will do, And I will not leave them undone.
- English translators since the KJV regard ‘word’ as written symbols or statements. The original meaning of ‘word’ has been lost. The notion of active words or thinking of words as non-verbal actions makes no sense today. For example: “the young man worded all the men of his town”<sup>26</sup>, makes no sense.
- Obliterating the meaning of ‘word’ also caused the concept of God’s reign/Kingdom being extended to the earth by the manifestation of *dabar* was also lost.
- Hebraic Tradition implicitly understood that ‘the word’ was the means by which God’s reign came into the earth to accomplish his will.
- Matthew 13:10-13, 16-17 (NIV) The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?” He replied, “Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them... But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.
- In the above passage Jesus mention of the “secrets of the kingdom” (AKA “mysteries of the kingdom”) was referencing their personal experiences of seeing and hearing of the word of God (him and Heaven’s impact)! NOT what he was preaching and teaching.
- “The word of the Kingdom” in the parable of the sower should be viewed in light of ‘the word’ being the impact of the Kingdom on the Earth with the manifestation of the Word (Jesus), rather than the gospel message.
- It is an error of millennia that has mistakenly associated the concept of “abiding in the word” with devotional reading of the Bible and memorizing scriptures.
- “A loathsome mutual hatred grew between the factions within Judaism, one segment of which would shortly become stigmatized as “Christians”. The enraged animosity became so intense over the next hundred years that Christian leaders abandoned interest in studying Hebrew or engaging themselves with the texts of the OT Scriptures.”<sup>27</sup>
- By the time of Origen (185-254 AD) few if any Jewish Christians remained because of persecution in Judea by the Jews and the Romans. They spread out from the Middle East taking the gospel with them.
- The OT was written in Hebrew, translated in Aramaic (Targums) and used after the Babylonian captivity (586 BC) and translated again into Greek as the Septuagint (200-300 BC). In Jesus’ Day Judeans spoke Hebrew, Aramaic and Koine Greek (a Jewish version of Greek), the language of commerce.
- “Since translators have not realized the dichotomy between the “word” and the “sacred writings,” the differentiation does not appear in the English texts.”<sup>28</sup>
- Because OT authors were of different backgrounds they used different terms for the same thing. e.g. ‘the word’, ‘Spirit’, or ‘the presence of God’ are equal.
- The Targum translations radically personify ‘word’ with the term *memra*. *Memra* was understood to be one who made visitations to have fellowship with his people and to provide protection for them, especially those who were righteous.
- EXAMPLE: Genesis 28:20 – And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, “If the *Memra* of the Lord will be my help, and will keep me in that way in which I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to wear, and bring me again in peace to my father’s house, the *Memra* of the Lord shall be my God.”

25 – “This thing”, i.e. action of sacrificing his son as God asked him to

26 – Genesis 34:24

27 – p:87

28 – p:103

- *Memra* was seen as the Deliverer of ancient Israel. The Targums are full of examples. The faithful were taught through the OT texts to call upon *Memra*, the abiding ‘word’ of God. *Memra* personified ‘word’ in the Targums in a simple way that even children could understand that he was their sustainer.
- EXAMPLE: 2 Chronicles 18:31 – Jehoshaphat cried out and the *Memra* of the Lord came to his aid.
- EXAMPLE: 2 Chronicles 20:29-30 – The *Memra* of the Lord had waged war against the enemies of Israel...the *Memra* of his God gave him rest on every side.
- Loyal to and faithful reliance on *Memra*, along with a wholehearted commitment to living according to his righteousness were attributes that God looked for and honoured with His deliverance. By partnering with *Memra*, the reign/Kingdom of God was established on the Earth.
- An encounter with *Memra* was the daily hope of every spiritually-minded Israelite. The promises for the continued abiding of *Memra* were not only for those he helped for their righteous ways, but also for their descendants.
- *Memra* was of great eschatological importance throughout the Aramaic scriptures. Where unrighteousness led to his abandoning them, there was always the promise of his future return. This is why John explained Jesus as ‘the word’ (*Memra*) of God returned to the people.
- “Why are so many theologies presented with the stamp of authority as if they are “BIBLICAL?” Is this ultimately a reflection of insecurity and an expression of the need to control others’ lives? Might not the disciples and apostles laugh heartily if they were able to comment on some of the ideas we’ve labeled as biblical and thereby (supposedly) sanctioned with divine authority?<sup>29</sup>
- The Masoretic changes to the OT Hebrew where they introduced pointers to help with vowel pronunciation caused confusion from the 7<sup>th</sup> century to today.
- “Not only did the Masorite community live more than a thousand years after the original penning of the biblical texts, but they were also far removed intellectually, socially and in all likelihood, with regard to their religious experiences. Their own eschatology had changed so markedly over such a vast period of time that they could not have perfectly understood or reduplicated the author’s intentions. Although their work was well intended and served a valuable purpose, the assumption that all of the Masoretic dichotomizations were in accord with delineations intended by the original composers remains questionable.”<sup>30</sup>
- FOR EXAMPLE: Esther 4:14 – relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place. This better translated “‘Spirit’ would bring deliverance...”, or “the ‘Spirit’ of deliverance will come from...”. If not for this, there is no spiritual content to the book of Esther.
- The Masoretic changes were made many centuries after the texts were originally composed (700–800AD). These editors showed no literary understanding in their translation of the “word”/dabar inherently relating to the personality of God.

### **Part 3: A Hebraic Primer for Biblical Interpretation**

- Many words, terms, phrases and idioms used in the OT and NT by Jewish writers are only understood from a Hebraic (Hebrew) understanding. Using a lexicon or Bible dictionary is of no help with many as they are only understood from knowing the Hebrew mindset at the time of the writer. Many were also deliberately corrupted by the 4<sup>th</sup> century Roman Catholic organisation in an attempt to formulate theology that fitted in with their religious paradigms. The following is a help for understanding a few very essential Hebrew terms so reading the Bible can make sense using a 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish perspective.
- From the time of the Reformation era (1517-1555)<sup>31</sup> onward, the phrase “‘word’ of God” was limited to the concepts of either the scriptures, the preached message from the Bible and/or the promises of God. This was part of a forced move by Bishop Epiphanius and the Orthodox church to extinguish the intuitive Hebraic concept that God’s kingdom/reign entered the world as people encountered and

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29 – p:106

30 – p:117

31 – [www.history.com/topics/reformation/reformation](http://www.history.com/topics/reformation/reformation)

experienced subjective personal divine manifestations. This move caused Christianity to emphasise even more an intellectual and sacramental religion, the acquisition of religious knowledge and agreement with church doctrine.

- The Greek word *aionios* (αἰώνιος) from which we get Aeon, can be translated as looking forward or backwards, depending on the context.
- As Orthodox theology has no concept of past life with God (i.e. with ‘the word’) so *aionios* is usually given an eschatological quality when translated into English.
- FOR EXAMPLE: Matthew 19:16 (NASB) – “Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal [*aionios*] life [*zoe*]?” Note that *aionios zoe* is almost always translated “eternal life’ when in fact it should be “ancient life”, the life Moses taught about. Jesus directed Nicodemus backwards in time to Moses’ teaching, so his question couldn’t have been about eternal life in the future.
- The above example highlights the Christian focus on going to Heaven after death as their quintessential goal. Translators producing “eternal life’ would do so because they would consider going to Heaven as the most important question a person could ask.
- FOR EXAMPLE: Psalm 133:3 (KJV) – ...for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore. The underlined phrase is translated “life forever”<sup>32</sup>, “life forevermore”<sup>33</sup> or “eternal life”<sup>34</sup> in English translations. The actual phrase in the Septuagint<sup>35</sup> (OT Greek translation done by 50 scribes) is ζῶην ἕως τοῦ αἰῶνος which translates properly to “life until now of the ancient”.
- References to the “ancient life” in the time of David was normal as there was no existing important Jewish theology about living forever after physical death.
- It is plain then that Jesus taught his disciples about their heritage in the “ancient life”, not eternal life. This life was one of faithful obedience in partnering with God and was characterized by prophetic empowerment.
- When it’s recorded that Abraham “believed the LORD; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness”<sup>36</sup>, it was not because he believed what God had said to him. A better understanding is “the LORD considered his response of faith as proof of genuine loyalty”<sup>37</sup>. The reason for righteousness (i.e. doing what’s right in God’s sight) was because Abram made the big commitment of a marriage pledge to the Lord – that was the fact that this was the right thing to do.
- The concept of the marriage between the nation of Israel and God is why he laments about them and calls them “adulterers, a crowd of unfaithful people”<sup>38</sup>.
- Authentic Hebraic belief was characterized by swearing an unswerving allegiance to God, and then following and obeying him. They were faithful believers who made themselves vulnerable to divine-human intimacy based on mutual love. He would then unveil his passion for/on them and make them the inheritors of his word.
- In the NT when people believed on Jesus,<sup>39</sup> it was not an acceptance of fact (his claim to be Messiah) or intellectual agreement with his teaching, but a commitment of loyalty to him (i.e. the Hebraic act of making a personal commitment to trust, to be trustworthy and to obey). This is different to what we read ‘believed’ to mean today.
- With this understanding of ‘believe’, here is a Hebraic understanding of Hebrews 11:6 –
  - “Without a deep and enduring committed relationship of loyalty, it is impossible to please God. For whoever might hope to draw near to God in the spiritual realm of His holiness today, must believe not merely that God exists, but moreover must come to the astounding realization that He

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32 – 11 out of 40+ versions in Biblegateway.com

33 – 14 out of 40+ versions in Biblegateway.com

34 – 9 out of 40+ versions in Biblegateway.com

35 – In 132:3 as the books are slightly different in that version

36 – Genesis 15:6

37 – NET

38 – Jeremiah 9:2 NIV

39 – John 2:11; 2:23; 7:31; 12:37

longs to lavish His love upon those desiring this kind of relationship as they seek Him.”<sup>40</sup>

- Jesus didn't teach people a list of things to believe! Instead, he helped them to see what they needed to become so they could enter and be part of his kingdom.
- “The very purpose of Hebraic faith was tangible entry into God's kingdom—today—right here and right now...In the Hebraic sense, believers were individuals who lived in an ongoing, unending prophetic conversation with Him; moment by moment and day by day.”<sup>41</sup>
- “Son of Man” from the Hebraic perspective was reference to a human being in the presence of God where they were foreign, being flesh and bone.<sup>42</sup> This is the case of a person interacting with ‘The Word’. The title was given to Daniel, Elijah, John the Baptist and Jesus. A miraculous encounter with ‘The Word’ was a shared experience of these and it was this that changed their lives and gave them spiritual authority [exousia].
- When Jesus was questioned why he didn't comply with the Torah<sup>43</sup> he was actually operating as a ‘son of man’ with godly authority. For his day, acting in accordance with the specific word (*dabarim*) of God was more importance than conforming with the Law. Rather than elevate himself, he chose to point out other components of the Law.
- Hebraically, the target of worship was to experience immersion into God's presence. Although this was formally done by priests in the temple, baptism into the realm of the Spirit was able to be discovered by any person, independent of a priestly mediator. Those who were designated “prophet”, “seer”, “oracle” and “son of man” were such individuals.
- “The word' as a dwelling place was intended to have been known as the ancient inheritance of every believer.”<sup>44</sup>
- The Hebraic understanding of *ekklesia* (called-out-ones) referred to those to whom the word of God came and who then became his faithful servants. Speaking of Abraham<sup>45</sup> in Isaiah, God says a blessing (“good-worded”) followed the call-out according to the use of *ekklesia* there in the Septuagint.
- Salvation has been translated wrongly because of Orthodoxy being divorced from Jewish thought.
- In Hebraic thought, ‘salvation’ was not looking ahead to life after death in Heaven, but a description of God's help and rescue in a person's daily life.
- Jesus is an “ancient [*aiionios*] priest” of the order of Mechizedek, not a “a priest for ever”. He is not a source of “eternal salvation” but a source of “ancient [*aiionios*] salvation”. These are the Hebraic understandings of Hebrews 5:5-14.
- In regard to the afterlife, from the 1<sup>st</sup> century all the way to the composition of the Gospels in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, there was no clear uniform eschatology of going to Heaven after death.
- “Whereas Orthodox Christianity grew in its emphasis of obtaining life after death in heaven, the antecedent faith system of Hebraic eschatological spirituality understood that ‘heaven’ was the holy realm into which seekers sought entry in the present day in order to embrace ‘Yeshuah’<sup>46</sup>; or alternately, the place from which He came to render help.”<sup>47</sup>
- When Jesus' teaching is examined, as well as that of the Gospel writers, they were more concerned that people should learn to experience the word/Kingdom/reign of God in their lives, in ‘the here and now’, so they could find “salvation” that was ‘*yeshuah*’ (God's help every day).

#### **Part 4: Preamble to the Hebraic Gospel**

- Only when we understand the ancient knowledge of the Hebraic Faith, from Abraham to Jesus, plus the

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40 – p:138

41 – p:139, 140

42 – See Ezekiel 1:28-2:1

43 – e.g. Matthew 12:10

44 – p:150

45 – Isaiah 51:1-3

46 – The outworking of the name is: “God's help every day”

47 – p:165

changes that were made by the Great Church in the first few centuries will we be able to grasp the “gospel” which makes up the Gospel that was originally preached.

- Those like Oregin who tried to understand the original gospel had to fight the church system. They had their reputations ‘muddied’ and after their deaths their written works were collected and burnt to eliminate any vestige of their knowledge. When Montanism was eradicated, even Tertullian’s written works on the ecstasies of spiritual life of then Montanists disappeared.
- The main catalyst for the loss of understanding of the Hebraic ‘gospel’ was the redefinition of ‘the word’.
- “The term ‘gospel’, as it was used in the Hebraic paradigm of understanding in the writing of the New Testament, was a reference to the re-manifestation of God’s word. Although the word had been taken away from ancient Israel due to their rampant idolatry, He, the ‘word’ of God’ had returned.”<sup>48</sup>
- When 1<sup>st</sup> century believers called on the name of Jesus (*Yeshuah*) they were calling for salvation (*Yeshuah*) in the form of daily miraculous help just like the patriarchs did.
- They walked in faithfulness to God and in righteousness, seeking the blessing of Abraham to guide, empower them and deliver them each day. This was the same lifestyle as David.
- The NT gospel was a convergence of all the elements of the Hebrew faith. The Kingdom/reign of God was back, Heaven was open, and his people were again seeing dreams and visions, encountering miracles, and they were having angelic visitations.
- “The vast problem with Orthodoxy re-defining the ‘word’ as the ‘scriptures’ was that after the representation was popularized, it also became normative for references to the ‘word’ in the biblical texts to be identified as the text itself.”<sup>49</sup>
- Readers of the Bible superimposed their contemporary understanding on the contents as they read. It became the source book for religious doctrines and wise sayings.
- Jesus fulfilled the eschatological expectation of the Hebrews as the ‘son of David’, inheriting his throne.
- “The start of the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. was understood, in the Hebraic perspective, as the expected time of the latter days of fulfillment. David’s son, also being the very Son of God, had returned to further re-establish God’s kingdom/reign through renewal of His covenant in order to provide the faithful with a dwelling place of rest, where they would also experience the ancient-life that had been intended for all from the foundation of the world.”<sup>50</sup>
- In the Hebraic tradition, ‘Holy One’, ‘spirit’, ‘Spirit’ and ‘presence’ were synonymous with the ‘word’/‘God’s word’/‘The word’.
- “If direct encounter with God was the spiritually minded person’s highest hope (i.e. obtaining the ancient life), and relationship with one’s neighbors was what this depended upon, then what the Law caused ones to become made Torah integral to encounter with the word (i.e. the gospel). To think that the Law and the gospel were set at odds with one another was unthinkable.”<sup>51</sup>

## **Part 5: The Trajectory & Motifs of Hebraic Eschatology**

- Theologians state that there are many difficult sayings of Jesus. As well as that, some actions and statements in the NT seem to make no sense. The reason for these difficulties in comprehension is the misunderstanding of Hebraic figures of speech, metaphors and idioms. Chief among these are eschatological ones. The most important key to resolving these problems is the proper understanding of *dabar* (the living ‘word’) in the Hebrew paradigm.
- In the Hebraic paradigm, the reign of God by His Spirit, as consistently recorded in the Bible, took place above the surface of the water. In contrast, both sin and disobedience found their abode under the surface of the waters in the pit or the dark abyss.

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- This is why above the water/sea metaphor signified in their mind God’s presence and protection, or absence of it.
- “Above the water” examples:
  - The Spirit moving over the water’s surface during creation
  - The importance of Jesus walking on water
  - Noah riding on the flood waters in a boat
  - The Israelites walking over dry land on the sea bed (the sea had been conquered)
  - Moses being found floating on water
  - Saints stood on a “sea of glass” (Revelation)
  - Jonah being cast into the sea
- “Under the water” examples:
  - Sin being cast into the sea
  - David was delivered from his enemies was described as rescue from the depths of the sea
  - Jesus said those who cause believing children to falter will have a millstone tied around their neck and cast into the sea.
  - Water baptism – from death under the water to life above the water (“in Christ”)
  - Babylon was thrown into the sea (Revelation)
  - No more sea on the “new Earth” (Revelation)
- Because of Abraham’s 3-day journey to sacrifice Isaac on the last day, Hebrews understood “3 days”, “third” and “last” as a motif of encountering the *Memra* (‘word’) and some form of miracle. Jonah’s 3-days in the big fish resulted in a journey and a miraculous last day. Moses went for a 3-day journey after being released by Pharaoh.
- A 3-day journey was a move to greater connection with God: allegiance was tested; humility was grown; refinement occurred; the person was prepared; freedom was achieved; & identity was affirmed as being in God.
- Jesus was involved in 3-day events: teaching for that long before the miracle of the loaves and fishes; that day of a Cana feast where he turned water into wine; buried 3 days in a tomb
- The “third day” also had eschatological overtones. It provided an expectation of signs, wonders and miracles – e.g. temple destruction in 3 days.
- Hebrew terms for ‘word’ and ‘wilderness’ (דבר vs. מדבר) share a similar etymological relationship.
- Going in and out of the wilderness signifies going in and out of an encounter with ‘the Word’
- John the Baptist had been in the wilderness and experienced ‘The Word’, returning as a prophet.
- “Where did Jesus really go after being raised above the water [after baptism]? Reading of the text makes it appear as if He went into the Judean Desert. Nevertheless, we also take note that Jesus went into a visionary ‘word’ encounter.”<sup>52</sup>
- Hebraic eschatology revolved around a sacred meal, often associated with ‘the word’. This mimicked Adam and Ezer in the Garden eating of the fruit in God’s presence.
- “It is vital to understand the intermingled Hebraic concept of food and words. Adam and Eve could only become representations of God’s image so long as they ate His food and listened to His voice. They abode with the word intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. Likewise the word abode in them. They were the product of the word and all that He provided for them.”<sup>53</sup>
- Throughout the OT, ‘bread’ was used as a generalization for ‘word’/*dabar* and spiritual encounters – even when the Hebrews were eating a normal meal. In the Hebraic tradition, seeking food (‘bread’) and eating it was strongly figurative of looking for and experiencing an encounter with God.

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- FOR EXAMPLE: Exodus 16:16 (NASB) – This is what<sup>54</sup>[*dabar*] the Lord has commanded...
- FOR EXAMPLE: Exodus 16:32, 35 (NASB) – Then Moses said, “This is what<sup>55</sup>[*dabar*] the Lord has commanded...the sons of Israel ate the manna for forty years, until they came to an inhabited land...
- This is the reason (?) Jesus told the disciples to ask Father for their “daily bread”. Not just physical bread, but spiritual bread as well.
- Jesus described himself to the people as the meal of God which would restore fellowship with God.
- FOR EXAMPLE: John 6:27 (NASB) – Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to ~~eternal~~ life [i.e. the ancient life], which the Son of Man shall give to you, for on Him the Father, even God, has set His seal.
- Eschatology for the Hebrews was established in their minds from Ezekiel 39:24-40 & Micah 5:2-5.
- “The sacrifice Jesus was going to make would have the potential to restore them to their heavenly dwelling place while they yet lived on earth through encounter with the word (and of course, eternally after they died). The life they might have today if they became faithful was the life of the Spirit of God, which came to them as the word dwelt in them, even as Moses had taught.”<sup>56</sup>
- ‘Keep’ is literally ‘treasure’ (i.e. love and treat as precious).
- “The Greek term translated in this sentence as “keep” is *tereo*—*tereo*. It is a very important term in many contexts expressing the concept of “guarding” or “treasuring”. Jesus was not merely asserting the idea that He was obedient to the word; rather He was making the more salient point that the word was His treasure. His continued use of *tereo* with respect to the word was an admonishment to His disciples. They too should have become ones who treasured the word.”<sup>57</sup>
- FOR EXAMPLE: John 8:51, 55 (NKJV) – Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps [lit. ‘treasure’] My word [*logos*] he shall never see death...Yet you have not known Him [Father God], but I know Him. And if I say, ‘I do not know Him,’ I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep [lit. treasure] His word.

## **Part 6: The Lost and Forgotten Way of Hebraic Spirituality**

- In Hebraic eschatology the ultimate reward was the Lord himself as the sustaining bread, as the living water, as a shelter, as a shield and a constant Helper. However, the spiritual marriage relationship depended on the ‘bride’ continuing to reverence her spouse (i.e. God) so the Lord would walk with them and guard them carefully.
- As a Father and Bridegroom, God relentlessly pursued his bride/children. He strongly desired to be their provider and sustainer.
- The act of resisting temptation and keeping untainted by the world system was viewed Hebraically as a refusal to eat at the enemy’s table. This was exemplified when Jesus resisted eating the miraculous stone-bread that Satan suggested he produce to satisfy his hunger.
- Faith in the Hebraic Tradition was never meant to have been religious activity, nor were the Israelites supposed to operate in religious elitism. Instead, faith was meant to be participating in God’s Kingdom reign to restore his loving-kindness in the world. The Hebrews job was to lead people back to the source of life (their Creator).
- “Even as its adherents had received *yeshuah*/salvation/God’s help/deliverance, in like manner they were also to become the benefactors of strangers among them. As God had welcomed them into His presence, so also the Lord would become manifest through them to the needy. The ultimate hope was that all those within the sphere of influence of His servants would turn to the Lord and become vehicles of His care for others around them.”<sup>58</sup>

54 – literally: *the thing which* ([classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+16%3A16&version=NASB#en-NASB-1964](http://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+16%3A16&version=NASB#en-NASB-1964))

55 – literally: *the thing which* ([classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+16%3A32-35&version=NASB#en-NASB-1980](http://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+16%3A32-35&version=NASB#en-NASB-1980))

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57 – footnote p:275

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Laurence

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(Readers will need to look up for themselves any scriptures alluded to in this document)[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Shepherd\\_of\\_Hermas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Shepherd_of_Hermas)