

# Who Do You Say That I Am?

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Symbol and Controversy

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Introduction: Kingdom Symbol and Controversy



## The Power of Symbol

# The Problem of Symbols

- Why was Jesus executed?
  - A *political* clash with the Romans-Jesus was an insurrectionist leading a revolution.
  - A *religious* clash with the Jewish establishment-Jesus was a heretic teaching a new religion.
  - The temple action as a *political* clash with Jewish authorities
- What are we to make of the religious controversies with the Pharisees and Sadducees?

# The Story-Line

- Jesus Kingdom Announcement (praxis and story)
  - Claimed that Israel was experiencing return from exile
  - YHWH was returning to Zion
  - The Judgment of YHWH would fall not only on the Gentiles but also on those within Israel who were not loyal
    - Jesus definition of 'loyalty' was different than other groups like (The Maccabees, Pharisees and Essenes)
    - The *shape* of his claim was thoroughly consistent with other 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple renewal movements
    - The detailed *content* was strikingly different
  - Jesus was claiming that both fulfillment and catastrophe were being radically *redefined* through his own work.

# Controversy about Controversy

- Traditional reading:
  - Jesus is the teacher of the religion of love and grace, of inner observance of the heart rather than outward observance of legal codes.
  - Jesus opposed the Pharisees because they supported a religion of outward observances; the Pharisees opposed Jesus because they perceived him to be an antinomian (against the law).
- Problem: Jesus did not speak against the law and what he said about it would not have been particularly irritating for the Pharisees.

# Torah and Jesus

- Is Jesus for or against Torah?
- Jesus teaching on adultery, murder, etc. would have intensified law keeping not diminish it.
- The issue with the Torah for Jesus is eschatological:
  - YHWH was doing *the* 'new thing' promised in the prophets for which Israel longed.
  - Torah could regulate certain aspects of human behavior, but it could not touch the heart.
    - That is not a criticism of Torah; just that Torah operates in its own sphere.
  - When the promises were fulfilled, the heart would be changed, and the supreme position of Torah would be relativized.

# The Heart of the Torah Controversy

- The Question is not is Torah a good thing or a bad thing?
- The Question is what does Loyalty to Israel's God mean for a 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish person faced with the announcement that the long awaited Kingdom is now at last appearing?
  - The zealous contemporaries would have answered: Torah provides the litmus test of loyalty to Israel's God and to his covenant.
  - Jesus answer: What counts is following me.

# Symbol and Controversy

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Symbols of Israel's Identity: Sabbath, Food, Nation, Land

# Introduction: Context and Agendas

- Eschatology: Study of the last days
- Israel's God is inaugurating his kingdom, this praxis, these stories, this person, was the mode and the means of its inauguration.
- Jesus is not just telling to people “what time it was” –it carried an agenda!
- Jesus' challenge to his contemporaries:
  - give up your interpretation of your tradition—which is driving you toward a cliff-edge!
  - Embrace a different interpretation of your tradition which –though it looks like the way to loss—is indeed the only way to true victory!

# The Pharisees

- Not simply religious group but political
- Zeal for Torah – meant no compromise with the idolatrous pagan nations.
- YHWH would recognize the righteous observance and liberate Israel from the Pagans.
  - Guard Israel from paganization and Idolatry
  - Throw off the yoke of paganism where possible.
- They would guard the law and the life of true Israel with zeal including violence. (example Saul of Tarsus)
- Hope was in national liberation and defeat of the pagans.
- Temple-cult, food taboos, Sabbath observance, circumcision marked Jew out from Gentile.

# 1 Maccabees 1:41-49

Then the king wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people, and that each should give up his customs. All the Gentiles accepted the command of the king. Many even from Israel gladly adopted his religion; they sacrificed to idols and profaned the sabbath. And the king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the cities of Judah; he directed them to follow customs strange to the land, to forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary, to profane sabbaths and feasts, to defile the sanctuary and the priests, to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice swine and unclean animals, and to leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane, so that they should forget the law and change all the ordinances.

# Sabbath

## Mark 2:23-28 Jesus Is Lord of the Sabbath

<sup>23</sup> One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. <sup>24</sup> The Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?” <sup>25</sup> He answered, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? <sup>26</sup> In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.”

<sup>27</sup> Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. <sup>28</sup> So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”

# 1 Samuel 21:1-7 David at Nob

- <sup>1</sup> David went to Nob, to Ahimelek the priest. Ahimelek trembled when he met him, and asked, “Why are you alone? Why is no one with you?” <sup>2</sup> David answered Ahimelek the priest, “The king sent me on a mission and said to me, ‘No one is to know anything about the mission I am sending you on.’ As for my men, I have told them to meet me at a certain place. <sup>3</sup> Now then, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever you can find.”
- <sup>4</sup> But the priest answered David, “I don’t have any ordinary bread on hand; however, there is some consecrated bread here—provided the men have kept themselves from women.”
- <sup>5</sup> David replied, “Indeed women have been kept from us, as usual whenever I set out. The men’s bodies are holy even on missions that are not holy. How much more so today!” <sup>6</sup> So the priest gave him the consecrated bread, since there was no bread there except the bread of the Presence that had been removed from before the LORD and replaced by hot bread on the day it was taken away.
- <sup>7</sup> Now one of Saul’s servants was there that day, detained before the LORD; he was Doeg the Edomite, Saul’s chief shepherd.

# Sabbath

## Jesus Heals a Crippled Woman on the Sabbath (Luke 13)

- <sup>10</sup> On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, <sup>11</sup> and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. <sup>12</sup> When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, “Woman, you are set free from your infirmity.” <sup>13</sup> Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God. <sup>14</sup> Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue leader said to the people, “There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath.”
- <sup>15</sup> The Lord answered him, “You hypocrites! Doesn’t each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? <sup>16</sup> Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?”
- <sup>17</sup> When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.

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# Food

## That Which Defiles Matthew 15:1-20

<sup>1</sup> Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, <sup>2</sup> “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don’t wash their hands before they eat!” <sup>3</sup> Jesus replied, “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? <sup>4</sup> For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother’<sup>[a]</sup> and ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>5</sup> But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is ‘devoted to God,’ <sup>6</sup> they are not to ‘honor their father or mother’ with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. <sup>7</sup> You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:

<sup>8</sup> “These people honor me with their lips,  
but their hearts are far from me.

<sup>9</sup> They worship me in vain;  
their teachings are merely human rules.”

# Food

## That Which Defiles Matthew 15:1-20

- <sup>10</sup> Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen and understand. <sup>11</sup> What goes into someone’s mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them.”
- <sup>12</sup> Then the disciples came to him and asked, “Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?”
- <sup>13</sup> He replied, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. <sup>14</sup> Leave them; they are blind guides.<sup>[d]</sup> If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.”
- <sup>15</sup> Peter said, “Explain the parable to us.”
- <sup>16</sup> “Are you still so dull?” Jesus asked them. <sup>17</sup> “Don’t you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? <sup>18</sup> But the things that come out of a person’s mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. <sup>19</sup> For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. <sup>20</sup> These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them.”

# Nation and Family

## Jesus' Mother and Brothers (Luke 8:19-21)

<sup>19</sup> Now Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. <sup>20</sup> Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you." <sup>21</sup> He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice."

# Nation and Family

## **Luke 11:27-28**

<sup>27</sup> As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, “Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.”

<sup>28</sup> He replied, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.”

# Nation and Family

## Matthew 10:34-39

<sup>34</sup> “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. <sup>35</sup> For I have come to turn

“a man against his father,  
a daughter against her mother,  
a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—  
<sup>36</sup> a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’

<sup>37</sup> “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. <sup>38</sup> Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. <sup>39</sup> Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

# Nation and Family

Mark 10:28-30

<sup>28</sup> Then Peter spoke up, “We have left everything to follow you!”

<sup>29</sup> “Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel <sup>30</sup> will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. <sup>31</sup> But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

# Possessions

- Jesus encouraged Israel to sit loose to possessions:
  - Mt. 6:19-21
  - Lk. 12:13-15
  - Lk. 12:33-44
  - Lk. 14:33
  - Mk. 10:21-22
- “Family and property, then, were not for the ancient Jew simply what they are for the modern western world. Both of them carried religious and cultural significance far beyond personal, let alone ‘individual’, identity and security. Both function symbolically within the Jewish worldview.

# Symbol and Controversy

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Symbols of Israel's Identity: The Temple

# The Temple and Significance

- The Presence of YHWH
  - The Holy of Holies
- The Sacrificial System
  - Thanksgiving and celebratory offerings
  - Individual purity and sin offerings
  - Guilt offerings for the nation
- The Temple's Political Significance
  - Significance of the Temple Builder as King
  - Significance as a Nation of Kingly-Priests
  - Significance of the Sovereignty of YHWH, Israel and Israel's King.



## Jesus' Action in the Temple

Jesus intended to symbolize the destruction of the Temple.

YHWH was in process of Climactically Judging and Restoring Israel

Rome would be the agent of Judgment

Israel's failure to heed the Call and their commitment to national rebellion and enact the purposes of the Temple in the first.

# Jesus and the Temple

## Jesus Curses a Fig Tree and Clears the Temple Courts

<sup>12</sup> The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. <sup>13</sup> Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. <sup>14</sup> Then he said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard him say it. <sup>15</sup> On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, <sup>16</sup> and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. <sup>17</sup> And as he taught them, he said, “Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’”

<sup>18</sup> The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

<sup>19</sup> When evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

<sup>20</sup> In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. <sup>21</sup> Peter remembered and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!”

<sup>22</sup> “Have faith in God,” Jesus answered. <sup>23</sup> “Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. <sup>24</sup> Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. <sup>25</sup> And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”

# Isaiah 56:6-8

- <sup>6</sup> And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD  
to minister to him,  
to love the name of the LORD,  
and to be his servants,  
all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it  
and who hold fast to my covenant—  
<sup>7</sup> these I will bring to my holy mountain  
and give them joy in my house of prayer.  
Their burnt offerings and sacrifices  
will be accepted on my altar;  
*for my house will be called  
a house of prayer for all nations.”*  
<sup>8</sup> The Sovereign LORD declares—  
he who gathers the exiles of Israel:  
“I will gather still others to them  
besides those already gathered.”

# Jeremiah 7:3-15

<sup>3</sup> This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. <sup>4</sup> Do not trust in deceptive words and say, “This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD!” <sup>5</sup> If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, <sup>6</sup> if you do not oppress the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, <sup>7</sup> then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your ancestors for ever and ever. <sup>8</sup> But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless.

<sup>9</sup> “Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, <sup>9</sup> burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, <sup>10</sup> and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, “We are safe”—safe to do all these detestable things? <sup>11</sup> *Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you?* But I have been watching! declares the LORD.

<sup>12</sup> “Go now to the place in Shiloh where I first made a dwelling for my Name, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of my people Israel. <sup>13</sup> While you were doing all these things, declares the LORD, I spoke to you again and again, but you did not listen; I called you, but you did not answer. <sup>14</sup> Therefore, what I did to Shiloh I will now do to the house that bears my Name, the temple you trust in, the place I gave to you and your ancestors. <sup>15</sup> I will thrust you from my presence, just as I did all your fellow Israelites, the people of Ephraim.’

# Jeremiah 8:11-13

<sup>11</sup> They dress the wound of my people  
as though it were not serious.

“Peace, peace,” they say,  
when there is no peace.

<sup>12</sup> Are they ashamed of their detestable conduct?

No, they have no shame at all;  
they do not even know how to blush.

So they will fall among the fallen;

they will be brought down when they are punished,  
says the LORD.

<sup>13</sup> “I will take away their harvest,  
declares the LORD.

There will be no grapes on the vine.

*There will be no figs on the tree,  
and their leaves will wither.*

What I have given them  
will be taken from them.”

# Symbol and Controversy

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Jesus' Symbols of the Kingdom

# Restored Land, Restored People

- **Isaiah 35:1-10**
- <sup>1</sup> The desert and the parched land will be glad;  
the wilderness will rejoice and blossom.  
Like the crocus, <sup>2</sup> it will burst into bloom;  
it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy.  
The glory of Lebanon will be given to it,  
the splendor of Carmel and Sharon;  
they will see the glory of the LORD,  
the splendor of our God. ...
- <sup>5</sup> Then will the eyes of the blind be opened  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped.  
<sup>6</sup> Then will the lame leap like a deer,  
and the mute tongue shout for joy.  
Water will gush forth in the wilderness  
and streams in the desert. ...
- <sup>10</sup> and those the LORD has rescued will return.  
They will enter Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy will crown their heads.  
Gladness and joy will overtake them,  
and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

# Restored Land, Restored People

## Matthew 11:4-6

<sup>4</sup> Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: <sup>5</sup> The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy<sup>[a]</sup> are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. <sup>6</sup> Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.”

- Restored land is about restored human beings.

# The Redefined Family

- Matt. 8:5-12
- When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. <sup>6</sup> “Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly.” <sup>7</sup> Jesus said to him, “Shall I come and heal him?”
- <sup>8</sup> The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. <sup>9</sup> For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”
- <sup>10</sup> When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. <sup>11</sup> *I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.* <sup>12</sup> But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

# The Redefined Torah

- Sermon on the Mount
- The returned from Exile-People who had received mercy and forgiveness were now under obligation to show the same mercy and forgiveness in their “new family” relationships.
- Food taboos are replaced with table fellowship.
- See Matt 18:21-35

# The Rebuilt Temple

Fasts turned to feasts. Zech. 8:19 and Mk. 2:18-22

<sup>19</sup> Jesus answered, “How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them.

<sup>21</sup> “No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. <sup>22</sup> And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins.”

- In His work the *Temple is being rebuilt*

# Forgiveness of Sins (Mark 10:5-13)

- <sup>5</sup> When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” <sup>6</sup> Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, <sup>7</sup> “Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”
- <sup>8</sup> Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, “Why are you thinking these things? <sup>9</sup> Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk’? <sup>10</sup> But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the man, <sup>11</sup> “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” <sup>12</sup> He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

# The Symbolic Focus

- Healing, Forgiveness, The Twelve, The New Family, New defining Characteristics, Open Commensality, The Promise of Blessing for Gentiles, Feasts replacing Fasts, The destruction and rebuilding of the Temple: Israel's Exile is Over—and Jesus is responsible for it and at the center of it.
- When Jesus came to Jerusalem, the city was not big enough for both Him and the Temple. The House built on sand would fall with a great crash.

# Symbol and Controversy

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Jesus 'Leading People Astray'?

# Deuteronomy 13

- <sup>12</sup> If you hear it said about one of the towns the LORD your God is giving you to live in <sup>13</sup> that troublemakers have arisen among you and have led the people of their town astray..., saying, “Let us go and worship other gods” (gods you have not known), <sup>14</sup> then you must inquire, probe and investigate it thoroughly. And if it is true and it has been proved that this detestable thing has been done among you, <sup>15</sup> you must certainly put to the sword all who live in that town. You must destroy it completely, both its people and its livestock. <sup>16</sup> You are to gather all the plunder of the town into the middle of the public square and completely burn the town and all its plunder as a whole burnt offering to the LORD your God. That town is to remain a ruin forever, never to be rebuilt, <sup>17</sup> and none of the condemned things are to be found in your hands. Then the LORD will turn from his fierce anger, will show you mercy, and will have compassion on you. He will increase your numbers, as he promised on oath to your ancestors— <sup>18</sup> because you obey the LORD your God by keeping all his commands that I am giving you today and doing what is right in his eyes.

# Was Jesus a false prophet?

- Mark 3:21-23
- 21 When his family[a] heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.”
- 22 And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.”
- 23 So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan?”

# What do you say that he is?

<sup>46</sup> “No one ever spoke the way this man does,” the guards replied.

- <sup>47</sup> “You mean he has deceived you also?” the Pharisees retorted. <sup>48</sup> “Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? <sup>49</sup> No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law—there is a curse on them.”