



BIBLICAL HERITAGE REPORT & DISCOVERING THE BIBLE

Creating a better, happier and safer world through research & the distribution of factual information about our religious & spiritual histories!

<http://www.biblicalheritage.org>

Jesus at the Temple

By Jim Myers

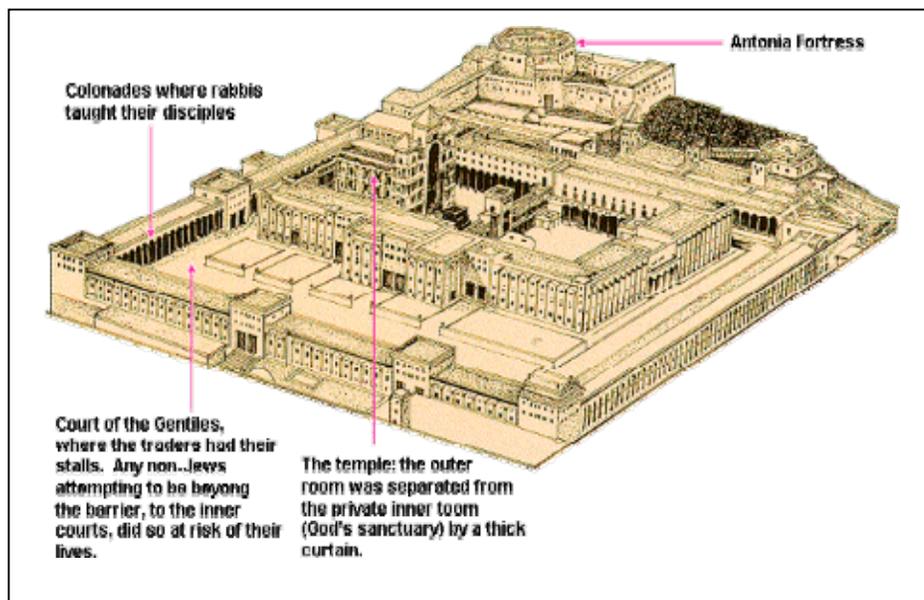
One of my primary goals for many years has been to learn as much as possible about the real Jesus, the historical Jesus who lived in Galilee and Judea in the first century CE. The sources for much of our information about him are the Synoptic Gospels. However, in order to learn about the historical Jesus, they must be viewed in their original chronological and cultural environment – *Israel during the first century CE*.

During the life of the historical Jesus the Temple played a major role in the lives of every Jew. To truly understand the importance of its role we would have to view it as an institution

with the power of the White House, Vatican and Federal Reserve Bank all rolled into one. It was the center of financial, political and religious power for Israel. The fact that the Temple played such a dominant role is reflected in the ancient writings that have been passed on to us – *Mishnah*, *Dead Sea Scroll* and the *New Testament*.

And Jesus was teaching daily in the temple. (Luke 19:47)

In the four canonical Gospels, certain of Jesus' teachings are set in the Temple court. Mark 11:17, 12:35 and Matthew 21:23 refer to the fact that Jesus taught in the Temple complex. Luke's mention of Jesus' *daily* teachings in the Temple, and this idea is corroborated by the other canonical Gospels (Mark 14:49a, Matt 26:55c, John 18:20).



The practice of teaching in the Temple court was common in the Jewish society of the first century. Josephus suggests that teachers of the Jewish Law discoursed in the Temple precincts (*J. W.* 1.648-651; cf. *Ant.* 17.149-155). Josephus

even refers to the presence of numerous disciples of an Essence, named Judas, in the Temple court (*J. W.* 1.78). In the picture above, you will see the "Colonnades" (upper left) where the rabbis taught. We not only know that he taught at the Temple, now we also know where he met with his followers.

The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (Vol. 2) by Emil Schurer is a great source for cultural information for this period.

Until A. D. 70, the activities of the Torah scholars were, of course, mainly centered on Judea. But it would be a mistake to look for them there alone. Wherever zeal for the Torah was alive, they were indispensable. Consequently, they were to be found in Galilee too, at first sporadically, but after A.D. 140 in large numbers. (p. 329)

The professional activity of the Torah scholars was concerned primarily with the legal sections of the Torah, and therefore with the administration of justice. They were responsible (1) for defining and perfecting the legal principles underlying or deriving from the Torah; (2) for teaching them to their pupils; and (3) for helping to administer the law as learned counselors in the courts of justice. (p. 330)

Thus the whole undertaking of the formation of the law was effected by means of oral discussions. The accepted authorities not only gathered pupils around them in order to instruct them in the Torah; they also debated legal questions with them, indeed discussed with them the whole substance of the law. (p. 331)

For such a method to be possible, the heads of schools at least had to live together in certain central places, though many of their disciples were scattered around the country as teachers and specialists in the law. But most of the predominantly creative authorities must have been concentrated in one locality – until A.D. 70 in Jerusalem. (331)

The accounts of Jesus teaching fit well within this cultural environment. He is continually facing questions from other groups concerning issues

that fall well within the Jewish Law that was being discussed at the Temple. The questions posed to him focused on dietary laws, Sabbath laws, purity laws and beliefs about the Mashiach. These are the same topics that are addressed in the earliest writings of Rabbinic Judaism (Mishnah) and those from Qumran (Dead Sea Scrolls).

There are also a number of other questions in the Synoptic Gospels concerning the identity and authority of Jesus. The historical Jesus may certainly have been asked those questions, but I doubt that they overshadowed the other questions as they would in later Gentile Christianity. I would imagine that those who heard the historical Jesus teach were much more interested in his views on the questions that affected their daily lives. I would also imagine that his answers provided them with a great deal of information about the source of his authority – *something that modern readers would fail to understand.*

It is very important for us to recognize the significance and impact of the cultural shift that the Jesus Movement experienced after 70 CE. The original movement of Jesus was strictly a Jewish movement. The leaders chosen by the historical Jesus were all Jews. But, after Jesus was executed the movement began to fragment into a number of different groups, i.e., believers who were Pharisees.

Another group, called the “Way,” was under the leadership of a Jew from Tarsus named Saul (Paul), who was also a Roman citizen. Saul was not one of the original leaders who were personally called by the historical Jesus. Saul’s group opened its membership to Gentiles and worked to introduce this new innovation to the other groups. After the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE the Gentile membership increased dramatically.

Teachings that were of great importance to the historical Jesus and the Jewish members of his movement were not understood by, and thereby of little interest to, the new Gentile majority. *They were more interested in determining who he was – than understanding what he taught.* **BHC**

The Biblical Heritage Center Guiding Principle

Our respective systems of beliefs serve as the foundation for our security, the basis for our values and way of life, and the standard to which we turn when faced with important decisions. Such beliefs are primary factors in forming the way we see the world – our reality.

Living in a post September 11th era, we are now facing a challenge that hits at the very heart of our spiritual foundation – the potential deadly consequences of religious belief systems. History reveals that people who blindly follow dogmatic religious belief systems represent a threat to civilized society and the quality of life of their fellow man. Religious beliefs have been at the heart of countless conflicts ranging from interfamily fights to bloody wars between nations. This cycle of conflict has been repeated countless times throughout the history of mankind.

The Biblical Heritage Center has concluded that the only healthy solution to this situation is the voluntary incorporation of factual information by individuals who sincerely desire and search for spiritual truth. The result of the inclusion of factual information is that the belief system is expanded and the person becomes more open to examining their personal beliefs, as well as becoming more willing to change when error or incomplete information is discovered. Those who follow this principle become more compassionate and tolerant, thereby making our world a safer and happier place.

You are invited to become part of the Biblical Heritage journey by using our information, sharing it with others, sharing your information with us and financially supporting BHC's work. You are encouraged to make copies of the attached article and distribute it (or e-mail it) to as many as you wish. If you find any errors or feel that additional information should have been included, please send it to us so that we may review it and update the article if needed. We appreciate and value your input.

Please use the back of this page to make other comments or suggestions for future articles.

Please make check or money orders to – **Biblical Heritage Center.**

___ I will keep BHC in my daily prayers; enclosed is my gift of \$ _____.

___ I will help BHC by sending a monthly donations of \$ _____.

___ I will help BHC by sending a special "seed gift" of \$ _____.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ ST _____ Zip _____

E-Mail Address _____

**Print this form and mail it to: BHC – P. O. Box 79 – Cleburne, TX 76033-0079.
If you prefer to make an online donation -- go to <http://www.biblicalheritage.org> .**