



# STARFISH

Encountering Jesus as a 1st Century  
Rabbi, Mystic and Wisdom Sage

## Session One: The Five W's

|        |  |
|--------|--|
|        | <p>Jesus of Nazareth was a Jew born to a Jewish mother circa 4 BCE who died at the hands of Rome circa 30-33 CE.</p>   |
| Who?   | <p>For some he was a miracle working rabbi, for others a political and spiritual revolutionary, and for still others the Messiah, the Anointed One chosen</p>  |
| What?  | <p>Jesus referred to himself as <i>The Son of Man</i>. The phrase <i>ben adam</i>, “son of humanity”, appears over one hundred times in Torah, the Five Books of Moses sacred to Jesus. Placing the definite article “the” before “son of man” is unique to the Gospels. The title Son of God was given to Jesus by the early Church to assert his divinity, something Jesus himself did not do.</p> |
| When?  | <p>Jesus lived during a time of great internal and external turmoil. Internally, Jews were split into four competing camps: Priests, Rabbis, Zealots, and Essenes. Externally, the people chafed under oppressive Roman occupation.</p>  |
| Where? | <p>Jesus primarily preached in the Galilee, a region of Israel known for its heterodoxy. It was only when he moved his mission to Jerusalem to take on the two ruling factions—the Priests and the Romans—did he find himself in danger.</p>   |
| Why?   | <p>Jesus’ mission was to revive a fifth way of Jewish life: the Way of Wisdom. It is this Way that will be the focus of this retreat.</p>  |

## Session Two: The Religion of Jesus

The religion of Jesus was Judaism. Judaism was already a millennia old civilization that had endured numerous occupations and even exile (587 BCE). Prior to the destruction of the First Temple and the exile of Jewish leaders and literati into Babylonia, Judaism was a religion centered around animal sacrifice held in the Temple and conducted by a birthright priesthood. With the destruction of the Temple and its accompanying exile, Judaism began a slow transformation from a religion of sacrifice to a religion of literacy where the study of the newly canonized TaNaKH (acronym for *Torah*, *Nevi'im*/Prophets, and *Ketuvim*/Writings) under the guidance of an educated elite of scribes and Pharisees (rabbis) competed with the newly reconstituted Temple and newly re-enfranchised priesthood.

The Pharisees continued the work of the Prophets who also sought to shift Judaism from a tribal religion of sacrifice to a global religion of ethics:

Micah 4:2-5

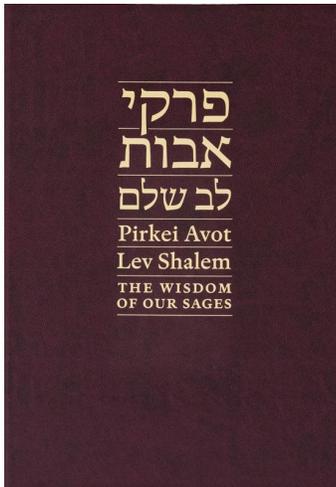
Many nations will come and say,  
 “Come, let us go up to the mountain of YHVH,  
 to the temple of the God of Jacob.  
 God will teach us holy ways,  
 so that we may walk in God’s paths.”  
 The law will go out from Zion,  
 the word of YHVH from Jerusalem.  
 God will judge between many peoples  
 and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide.  
 They will beat their swords into plowshares  
 and their spears into pruning hooks.  
 Nation will not take up sword against nation,  
 nor will they train for war anymore.  
 Everyone will sit under their own vine  
 and under their own fig tree,  
 and no one will make them afraid,  
 for YHVH has spoken.  
 All the nations may walk  
 in the name of their Gods,  
 and we will walk in the name of YHVH  
 our God for ever and ever.

Micah 6:4-8

With what shall I come before YHVH  
 and bow down before the exalted God?  
 Shall I come with burnt offerings,

with calves a year old?  
 Will YHVH be pleased with thousands of rams,  
 with ten thousand rivers of olive oil?  
 Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,  
 the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?  
 God has shown you, Humanity, what is good.  
 And what does YHVH require of you?  
 To act justly and to love mercy  
 and to walk humbly with your God.

Selections from Pirke Avot



1:1 Moses received the Torah from Sinai and gave it to Joshua. Joshua gave it to the Elders, the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets gave it to the Sages of the Great Assembly. They would always say these three things: Be cautious in judgement. Establish many pupils. And make a fence around the Torah.

1:2 Shimon the Righteous was among the last surviving members of the Great assembly. He would say: The world stands on three things: Torah, the service of YHVH, and deeds of kindness.

1:4 Yossei the son of Yoezer of Tzreidah, and Yossei the son of Yochanan of Jerusalem, received the tradition from them. Yossei the son of Yoezer of Tzreidah would say: Let your home be a meeting place for the wise; dust yourself in the soil of their feet, and drink thirstily of their words.

1:6 Joshua the son of Perachia and Nitai the Arbelite received from them. Joshua the son of Perachia would say: Assume for yourself a master, acquire for yourself a friend, and judge every person to the side of merit.

1:7 Hillel and Shammai received from them. Hillel would say: Be of the disciples of Aaron—a lover of peace, a pursuer of peace, one who loves the creatures and draws them close to Torah.

1:14 Hillel would also say: If I am not for myself, who is for me? But if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?

1:15 Shammai would say: Make Torah study a permanent fixture of your life. Say little and do much. And receive every one with a pleasant countenance.

3:6 Rabbi Chalafta the son of Dosa of the village of Chanania would say: Ten who sit together and occupy themselves with Torah, the Divine Presence rests amongst them, as is stated: "The Almighty stands in the congregation of God" (Psalms 82:1). And

from where do we know that such is also the case with five? From the verse, "He established his band on earth" (Amos 9:6). And three? From the verse, "He renders judgement in the midst of the tribunal" (Psalms 82:1). And two? From the verse, "Then the God-fearing conversed with one another, and God listened and heard" (Malachi 3:16). And from where do we know that such is the case even with a single individual? From the verse, "Every place where I have My name mentioned, I shall come to you and bless you" (Exodus 20:21).

3:7 Rabbi Elazar of Bartosa would say: Give God what is God's, for you and whatever is yours, are God's...

3:9 Rabbi Chanina the son of Dosa would say: If your deeds exceed your wisdom, your wisdom endures. But if your wisdom exceeds your deeds, your wisdom does not endure.

He would also say: One who is pleasing to others, is pleasing to God. But one who is not pleasing to others, is not pleasing to God.

3:15 Rabbi Akiva taught: All is foreseen, and freedom of choice is granted. The world is judged with goodness, but tempered in accordance with the amount of your positive deeds.

4:1 Ben Zoma would say: Who is wise? One who learns from every man... Who is strong? One who masters desire... Who is rich? One who is satisfied with what is... Who is honorable? One who honors others....

4:3 Ben Azzai would say: Do not scorn anyone, and do not discount anything. For there is no one who has not their hour, and no thing that has not its place.

4:17 Rabbi Yaakov would say: A single moment of repentance and good deeds in this world is greater than all of the World to Come. And a single moment of bliss in the World to Come is greater than all of the present world.

4:18 Rabbi Shimon the son of Elazar would say: Do not appease your friends at the height of their anger; do not comfort them while their dead still lies before them; do not doubt their sincerity at the moment they make a promise; and do not endeavor to see them at the time of their embarrassment.

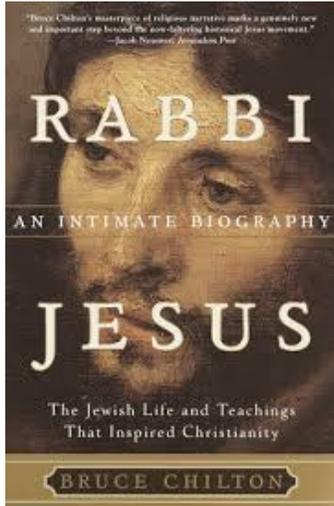
5:16 Any love that is dependent on something—when the thing ceases, the love also ceases. But a love that is not dependent on anything never ceases.

5:17 Any dispute that is for the sake of Heaven is destined to endure; one that is not for the sake of Heaven is not destined to endure.

5:21 Ben Bag Bag would say: Turn Her and turn Her, for everything is in Her; see with Her; grow old and worn in Her; do not abandon Her, for there is nothing better.

5:22 Ben Hei Hei would say: Five years is the age for the study of Scripture. Ten, for the study of Mishnah. Thirteen, for the obligation to observe the *mitzvot*. Fifteen, for the study of Talmud. Eighteen, for marriage. Twenty, to pursue wealth. Thirty, to pursue political power. Forty, to pursue understanding. Fifty, to provide counsel. Sixty, to pursue wisdom. Seventy, to become a sage. Eighty, to manifest spiritual power. Ninety, to yield it all. One hundred to be nobody at all.

### Session Three: Jesus as Rabbi



The Gospels speak of Jesus as a *tekton*, carpenter, a livelihood he would have learned from his father, Joseph. The language of Jesus wasn't Greek but Aramaic, the language then common among the Jews. The Aramaic word for "carpenter" is *nagger*, a word that also means "scholar". Mistaking *nagger* as "carpenter" inadvertently erased the rabbinic status of Jesus.

Jesus was an itinerant teacher and miracle worker, both occupations being common in his time. What made Jesus stand out among his contemporaries wasn't his wonder working but his teaching. Jesus expanded upon the teachings of Hillel (65 BCE-20 CE) to create a global Judaism beyond the bounds of both priestly and Pharisaic Judaisms.

When challenged by a gentile to recite the entire Torah while the gentile stood on one foot, Hillel complied saying, "What is hateful to you do not do to another. This is the entire Torah. All the rest is commentary. Now, go and study it!" (Talmud, Shabbat 31a).

Hillel made the Golden Rule the central pillar of Judaism, and claimed that all the rest (by then two thousand years of tradition and law) to be in service to compassion and the Rule. Jesus' did the same: "Do unto others what you would have others do unto you, for this is the entirety of Torah and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12). In this way Jesus saw himself fulfilling Torah (Matthew 5:17) in opposition to both Priestly Judaism and the legalism of the Pharisaic school of Hillel's chief rival Shammai.

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

## Session Four: Jesus as Mystic

For Christians there is perhaps no question more powerful than Jesus' inquiry: "Who do you say I am?" (Mark 8:29) If you answer, "You are the Christ" as Peter does (Mark 8:29) you are Christian. If you answer, "You are my cousin" you are a Jew. The answer we offer in this StarFish retreat is this: You are a God-realized rabbi, mystic and wisdom sage.

## Jesus' Mystical Awakening

- \* I am the bread of life: whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall that thirst (John 6:35)
- \* I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me shall not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life (John 8:12).
- \* I am the gate for the sheep (John 10:7); I am the good shepherd (John 10:11);
- \* I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though they die will yet live (John 11:25);
- \* I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one come to the Father except through me (John 14:6);
- \* I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever lives me, I live in them. Abide in me as I abide in you and bear much fruit—apart from me you can do nothing.

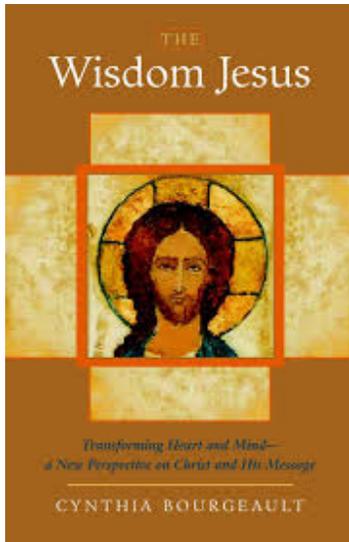
A mystic is a person who strives for, and often achieves, a direct unitive awakening in, with and as God. God is no longer a being outside creation, but that larger reality manifesting creation the wave an ocean manifests waves. As Rabbi Saul/Saint Paul puts it: God is that in whom we live and move and have our being, (Acts 17:28). Realizing one's unity with God leads to living a life that is godly: "Doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with your God" (Micha 6:8) in service to being a blessing to all the families of the earth (Genesis 12:3).

At the heart of Jesus' self-understanding is his realization that "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). Indeed many of the "I am" statements found in John speak to Jesus' mystical awakening: "I am the bread of life; one who comes to me shall not hunger, and one who believes in me shall never thirst" (John 6:35); "I am the light of the world; one who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12); "I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me" (John 14:6); "I am the vine, you are the branches" (John 15:5). The "I" in these statements is not the egoic-self, but the God-realized Self.

The egoic self, what Jews call *mochin d'katnut*, narrow mind, is narrow in the sense that it is focused on the duality of self and other, and unaware of the greater nonduality that is God. When we move beyond narrow mind, we awaken *mochin d'gadlut*, spacious mind, the Self that sees God manifest in, with and as everything. When Jesus identifies with God he does so from the perspective of *mochin d'gadlut*. The "I" of the Jesus' "I am" sayings is not narrow mind but spacious mind.

What Jesus discovers is not unique to him. The Hindu sages of the Upanishads say, *Tat Tvam Assi*/Thou are That; the Jewish kabbalist Abraham Abulafia (b. 1240) says, *Ani hu*/I am He; the Sufi saint Al Halaj (d. 922) was killed for saying *Ana al-Haqq*/I am Truth, and the Buddhist masters of China affirm that *samsara*, the world of seemingly separate things is *nirvana*, the world of the one thing.

## Session Five: Jesus as Wisdom Sage



The God-realized mystic integrates narrow and spacious minds. Spacious mind without narrow mind leads to escapism. Narrow mind without spacious mind leads to brutality. Together they reveal the principles of right living that transform this world into the World to Come (as the rabbis call it) and the Kingdom of Heaven (as Jesus called it): One God manifesting as one universe, one humanity, and one moral code: justice and compassion for all.

The Wisdom School of Judaism emerged during the Babylonian Exile (586-538 BCE) and lasted into the early centuries of the Common Era, albeit in different forms. The major books of the Jewish Wisdom Library include Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, Sirach, Wisdom of Solomon, *Pirke Avot* (the proverbs of the early rabbis), and the Gospel According to Thomas (the Sayings Gospel of Jesus). At its heart is the notion that embedded in Creation are physical, ethical, and moral laws that, if followed, will align one with God and make one a vehicle for godliness. Study (of nature, scripture, and the proverbs and parables of the Wisdom sages) rather than sacrifice or prayer, is the primary discipline of wisdom. One who studies well comes into contact with Wisdom (*Chochma* in Hebrew, *Sophia* in Greek), a personified quasi-divine Woman who is the first of God's creations.

*Chochma/Sophia* is a “Tree of Life to those who hold her close,” (Proverbs 3:18). Since the Tree of Life is in the center of the Garden of Eden, finding Wisdom is finding your way back to the Garden. The way back is not through faith in Wisdom, but in unlocking the secrets of Wisdom. These secrets are contained in Her proverbs and parables which are found throughout Jewish Wisdom Literature. As Jesus says, “Whoever discovers the interpretation of these sayings will not taste death” (Gospel of Thomas, 1:1).

Interpreting Wisdom requires the help of a teacher, and the master-disciple relationship is at the heart of the Wisdom School. While it is easy to see this relationship embodied in that of the rabbis and their students, and Jesus and his apostles, the earliest Wisdom model was not masculine but feminine. Wisdom is a Woman and Her disciples were women. While Wisdom welcomed all to her table, Her inner circle was decidedly female. Over time both Wisdom and Her School become centered on men. We can see this most clearly in the transformation of *Sophia* to *Logos*. Philo

makes it clear that the two words are synonymous, and John makes it clear that Jesus is Wisdom transgendered.

*Chochma/Sophia* is the first-born Daughter of God, “*HaShem* created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old” (Proverbs 8:22); Jesus is the first-born Son of God. *Chochma* says, “Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth. Before the mountains, before the hills... before the dust... when He established the Heavens I was there” (Proverbs 8:23-27); Jesus says, “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58). *Chochma’s* disciples are woman (Proverbs 9:3); Jesus’s disciples are men. *Chochma* calls to everyone saying, “Leave foolishness and live” (Proverbs 9:6); Jesus says, “Follow me,” (Matthew 4:19). *Chochma* says, “Come eat of my bread and drink the wine I have mixed” (Proverbs 9:5); and Jesus says, “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life” (John 6:54). True to the Wisdom School, Jesus taught through parables and proverbs and it is through his parables and proverbs that we can reclaim first century Jewish Wisdom and its power to enlighten.

Jesus is asked by the rabbis to articulate the “great commandment of Torah,” (Matthew 22:35). While Matthew presents this as a test or trap, it was in fact a sign of respect. Asking one another which of the commandments is key was common among the rabbis (Makkot 23b). Jesus replies, “Hear, O Israel *HaShem* our God, *HASHEM* is one, and you shall love *HaShem* your God with all your heart, with every breath, and with all you have and are” (Deuteronomy 6:4-5) and adds, “And you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18; Mark 12:31; Matthew 22:39). What he did not cite, but certainly practiced was the third element of the Jewish creed: Love the stranger (Leviticus 19:34).

Jesus did not abandon Judaism, but, like rabbis before him highlighted what he took to be its core message. But Jesus did more than remind the Jews of Judaism, he, like his rabbinic colleagues, sought to show them how to live it. He did this through the Beatitudes and parables. To understand his message, we have to place the text in the context of the Judaism of his time. Here are two examples:

“Do not resist evil. If a person strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also,” (Matthew 3:39).

The key to understanding this teaching is in Jesus’ reference to the “right cheek.” Jesus does not say, “Turn the other cheek,” but turn the left cheek. In good rabbinic style, the genius is in the details.

Roman law of occupation allowed soldiers to dismiss occupied peoples with a backhand slap to the face. Since most people are right handed, a backhand slap is a slap to the right cheek. According to Roman custom only people of equal stature may strike one another on the left cheek. Jesus is saying, “Do not resist the slap, resist the implication of the slap. Refuse to accept that Romans are superior. Challenge the occupier to treat you as an equal. Of course, he can strike you on the right cheek, now dare him to do so on the left.”

Jesus takes a similar position with regard to going the extra mile:

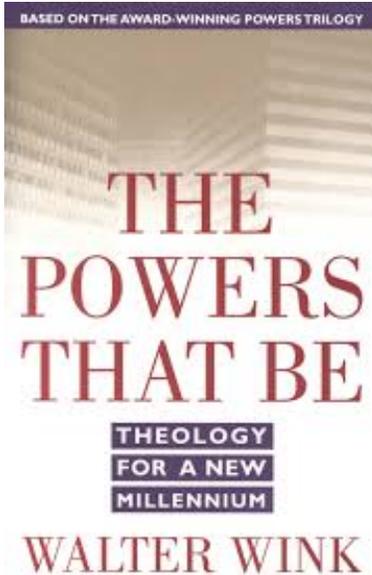
If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles (Matthew 5:41).

Roman law allowed any Roman soldier to commandeer a bystander to carry his pack for up to one mile. After that, the pack must be returned and the person set free. Jesus does not ask that his people resist carrying the pack— they could be killed for doing so. Rather he tells them not to accept the notion that they are pack animals. Carry the pack a second mile as a free human being.

Jesus’ Torah offers a way of dealing with oppressive occupation that honors the Jewish creed to love both God and the other. While spoken to a particular people at a particular time, Jesus’ Torah is both universal and timeless. Almost 2000 years after Jesus, Mahatma Gandhi will call his Torah *Satyagraha*, nonviolent resistance, and use it to free India from the British. A century after that, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. will use it to transform the United States.

Yes. Jesus is perhaps the clearest embodiment of Hebrew Wisdom. His understanding of Judaism as love of God and other is as vital today as it was two thousand years ago. His proverbs and parables are no less Jewish and enlightening than those of his rabbinic contemporaries. For Jews, Jesus should be reclaimed as a favorite son, if not of God, then certainly of his people.

\* \* \*



Selections from Gospel of Thomas



(1)

And he said,  
Whoever discovers what these sayings mean  
will not taste death.

(2)

Yeshua said,  
Seek and do not stop seeking until you find.  
When you find, you will be troubled.  
When you are troubled,  
you will marvel and rule over all.

(3)

Yeshua said,  
If your leaders tell you, “Look, the kingdom is in heaven,”  
then the birds of heaven will precede you.  
If they say to you, “It’s in the sea,”  
then the fish will precede you.  
But the kingdom is inside you and it is outside you.  
When you know yourselves, then you will be known,  
and you will understand that you are children of the living father.  
But if you do not know yourselves,  
then you dwell in poverty and you are poverty.

(13)

Yeshua said to his students,  
Compare me to something  
and tell me what I am like.  
Shimon Kefa said to him,  
You are like a just messenger.  
Matai said to him,  
You are like a wise philosopher.  
Toma said to him,  
Rabbi, my mouth is utterly unable to say  
what you are like.  
Yeshua said,  
I am not your rabbi.  
Because you have drunk, you are intoxicated  
from the bubbling spring I tended.  
And he took him and withdrew, and spoke three sayings to him.

When Toma came back to his friends, they asked him,  
What did Yeshua say to you?  
Toma said to them,  
If I tell you one of the sayings he spoke to me,  
you will pick up rocks and stone me  
and fire will come out of the rocks and consume you.

(18)

The students said to Yeshua,  
Tell us how our end will be.

Yeshua said,

Have you discovered the beginning and now are seeking the end?  
Where the beginning is, the end will be.  
Blessings on you who stand at the beginning.  
You will know the end and not taste death.

(22)

Yeshua saw some babies nursing. He said to his students,

These nursing babies  
are like those who enter the kingdom.

They said to him,

Then shall we enter the kingdom as babies?

Yeshua said to them,

When you make the two into one,  
and when you make the inner like the outer  
and the outer like the inner  
and the upper like the lower,  
and when you make male and female into a single one,  
so that the male will not be male nor the female be female,  
when you make eyes in place of an eye,  
a hand in place of a hand,  
a foot in place of a foot,  
an image in place of an image,  
then you will enter the kingdom.

(37)

His students said,  
When will you appear to us  
and when shall we see you?

Yeshua said,

When you strip naked without being ashamed  
and take your clothes and put them under your feet



like small children and trample them,  
then you will see the child of the living one  
and you will not be afraid.

(43)

Yeshua said, Be passersby.

(50)

Yeshua said, If they say to you, “Where have you come from?”  
say to them, “We have come from the light,  
from the place where the light came into being by itself,  
established itself, and appeared in their image.”

If they say to you, “Is it you?” say, “We are its children and the  
chosen of the living father.” If they ask you, “What is the evidence  
of your father in you?” say to them, “It is motion and rest.”

(61)

Yeshua said,

Two will rest on a couch. One will die, one will live.

Salome said,

Who are you, mister? You have climbed on my couch  
and eaten from my table as if you are from someone.

Yeshua said to her,

I am the one who comes from what is whole.

I was given from the things of my father.

Salome said,

I am your student.

Yeshua said,

I say, if you are whole, you will be filled with light,  
but if divided, you will be filled with darkness.

(77)

Yeshua said,

I am the light over all things.

I am all.

From me all has come forth, and to me all has reached.

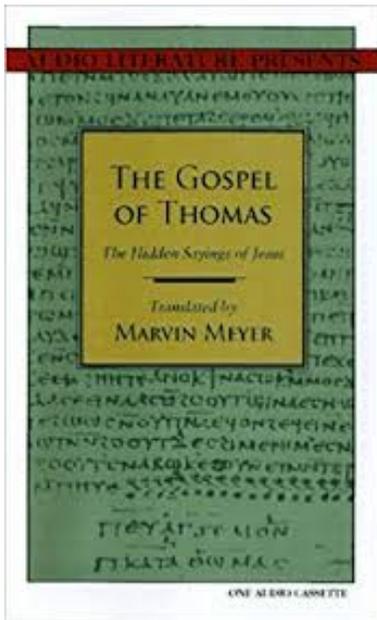
Split a piece of wood.

I am there.

Lift up the stone

and you will find me there.





(96)

Yeshua said,  
The father's kingdom is like a woman  
who took a little yeast, hid it in dough,  
and made large loaves of bread.  
Whoever has ears should hear.

(108)

Yeshua said,  
Whoever drinks from my mouth will become like me.  
I myself shall become that person,  
and the hidden things will be revealed to that one.

(113)

His students said to him,  
When will the kingdom come?

Yeshua said,  
It will not come because you are watching for it.  
No one will announce, "Look, here it is,"  
or "Look, there it is."  
The kingdom is spread out upon the earth  
and people do not see it.

(114)

Shimon Kefa said to them,  
Miryam should leave us.  
Females are not worthy of life.

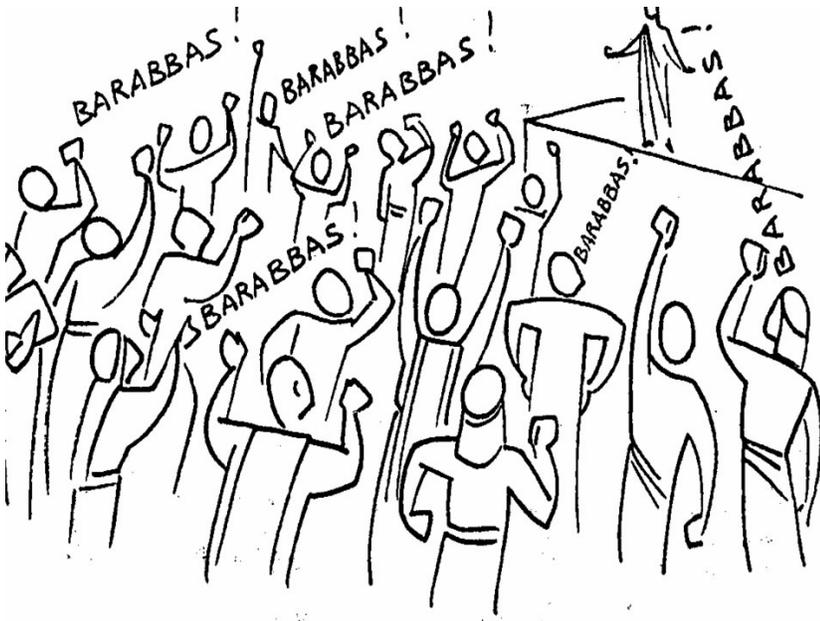
Yeshua said,  
Look, I shall guide her to make her male,  
so she too may become a living spirit resembling you males.  
For every female who makes herself male  
will enter the kingdom of heaven.

PS: Did the Jews kill Jesus?

No, the Romans did. Did Caiaphas and others among the Jewish aristocracy collude with Roman in Jesus' death? Most likely. But most Jews of the time never heard of Jesus, and a large number of those that did welcomed him as a liberator on "Palm Sunday."

The Gospels tell us that Pilate offered to free Jesus, but "the Jews" demanded the release of a terrorist named Barabbas instead (John 18:39-40). What we have in this story is a half truth. Neither Jewish nor Roman law allowed for a prisoner release at Passover. And the notion that Rome would release a terrorist who killed Roman soldiers is absurd on its face. With both history and logic arguing against the validity of this story, I think we can dig a bit deeper and find out just what may have happened.

Ancient Greek manuscripts of the Gospel of Matthew tell us that Barabbas' first name was Jesus. "Barabbas" is Aramaic: *Bar Abbas* means Son of the Father. The Gospels have the Jews storming Pilate's compound demanding the release of Jesus Barabbas, Jesus Son of the Father. That there were two men in custody, one named Jesus son of the father, and another Jesus Son of the Father is simply unbelievable. What we have in the Gospel is the remnant of an historical event: the Jews who welcomed Jesus on Sunday demanded his release on Friday. The story is turned inside-out in order to shift blame for Jesus' death from the Romans, who the Christians were seeking to convert, to the Jews, from whom they were trying to distance themselves.

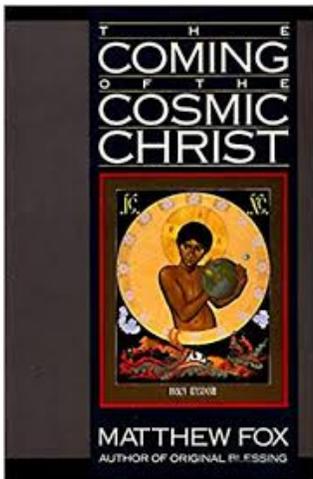


Choosing Barabbas

Posted by Kathryn Getek  
Soltis, 5.27.2015

Lectionary

## Session Seven: Cosmic Christ



“The Cosmic Christ is the light in all things and also the wounds in all things (the crucified Christ). The Cosmic Christ is the primary archetype of the mystical experience in Christianity (in Buddhism one speaks of the Buddha Nature and in Judaism of the Image of God).

The Cosmic Christ is the universe itself—yes, all two trillion galaxies, each with hundreds of billions of stars in them. Christ is the “light in all things” (John 1) and science today is telling us that there are light waves or photons in every atom in the universe. And that’s a lot of atoms! I see the historical Jesus as the *particle* that light is—and we too are particles of light. And I see the Cosmic Christ as the *wave* that light is. Science, after much debating, has concluded that light is not particle or wave but particle *and* wave.

Albert Einstein proposed that we are entering a “third era of religion” called a “cosmic religion” that will be characterized both by conscience taking precedence over jingoism and religious ideologies and by a deep awareness of the marvels of the cosmos.

The ecstasy that we call “Experiencing God” is the launching pad for the rest of our spiritual journeys. The mystics call it the *Via Positiva*, the experience of Awe, wonder and delight. Children are often most attuned to this sense of “radical amazement” as Rabbi Heschel calls it. “Awe is the beginning of wisdom” as he declares.

From the *Via Positiva* comes the *Via Negativa*, a deep experience of silence and letting go of things, of emptying therefore. And also our experiences of sorrow, loss and grief.

Next on the journey comes the *Via Creativa*, our co-creating with the Holy Spirit. And the journey culminates (but does not end and rather spirals back to the *Via Positiva*) in compassion and healing, celebrating and justice making. Throughout it we experience the Divine in deep but diverse ways. The light of God, the Cosmic Christ, is present within and around us as is the Kingdom/Queendom of God which we are steeped in but also helping to create. It will be characterized by Joy (*Via Positiva*) and Justice (*Via Transformativa*)." —Matthew Fox

Hymn of Jesus from the Acts  
of John, adapted



On the night before he was taken captive Jesus gathered us in a circle with himself at its center. He bade turn the circle and respond “Amen” to his song:

Glory be to You, Abba:

Amen

Glory be to you Imma:

Amen

Glory be to You, Sophia:

Amen.

Glory be to You, Grace:

Amen

Glory be to You, Spirit:

Amen

Glory be to You, Holy One:

Amen

Glory be to You, Brilliance:

Amen

We give thanks to All:

Amen

We give thanks to Light in whom no falsehood dwells:

Amen

[Now the roles are reversed. The circle speaks and the center says “Amen”]

I would be saved, and I would save.

Amen.

I would be loosed, and I would loose.

Amen.

I would be wounded, and I would wound.

Amen.

I would be born, and I would bear.

Amen.

I would eat, and I would be eaten.

Amen.

I would hear, and I would be heard.

Amen.

I would be thought, being wholly thought.

Amen.

I would be washed, and I would wash.

Amen...

[Roles are again reversed with the circle responding "Amen"]

The Whole that is All partakes in our dancing.

Amen.

One who fails to dance, fails to understand what is to pass.

Amen.

[Roles are again reversed with the center responding "Amen"]

I would flee, and I would stay.

Amen.

I would adorn, and I would be adorned.

Amen.

I would be united, and I would unite.

Amen.

A house I have not, and yet I have houses.

Amen.

A place I have not, and yet I have places.

Amen.

A temple I have not, and yet I have temples.

Amen.

I am a lamp to those who see me.

Amen.

I am a mirror to those who perceive me.

Amen.

I am a door to those that knock upon me.

Amen.

I am a way to those who seek me...

I am a bed and all may rest upon me.