

What Got Jesus into Trouble?

An Examination of Jesus' Actions in the Last Week and Jewish Backgrounds

Jewish Backgrounds and Jesus: Cultural Scripts. (On da Giants and Frozen Tundra)

We shall consider some areas where Jesus did things that together indicate who he was and what he sought from those who responded to him, putting Jesus in his historical context. We will juxtapose Christian claims against their Jewish backdrop.

Base Text for this approach: Matt 11:2-6=Luke 7:21-23: "Go tell John what you have seen and heard..." Eschatological acts Isaiah described that pointed to the time. Understand the act, appreciate its context.

1. Sabbath Incidents

- Obviously the issue of the Sabbath from a Jewish perspective was important as the commanded day of rest from the Ten Commandments.
- Issue: Jesus' claim of authority over holy time, the divine calendar, *and* a commandment of God.
- Jewish rules varied: Law example- Num 15:32-41; forty less one- m Shabbat 7.2; Qumran: CD 11.13-14 (very restrictive); Pharisees: m Shabbat 18.3 (Less restrictive); Such healing could wait- Luke 13:14; Jews strict on dishonoring of God or his authority with penalty of death for law violations- Philo, *Special Laws* 2.46.252-256; Jub 50:8.
- Key Texts: Mk 2:23-3:6=*Matt 12:1-14=Lk 6:1-11; Lord of the Sabbath claim is one of "high" Christology (like Mk 2:10); John 5:1-18 also fits here. In Marcan, L, and John materials- multiply attested. Son of Man authority

Sabbath Practice

- m. Sabbath 7.2:A. The generative categories of acts of labor [prohibited on the Sabbath] are forty less one: (1) he who sews, (2) ploughs, (3) reaps, (4) binds sheaves, (5) threshes, (6) winnows, (7) selects [fit from unfit produce or crops], (8) grinds, (9) sifts, (10) kneads, (11) bakes; (12) he who shears wool, (13) washes it, (14) beats it, (15) dyes it; (16) spins, (17) weaves, (18) makes two loops, (19) weaves two threads, (20) separates two threads; (21) ties, (22) unties, (23) sews two stitches, (24) tears in order to sew two stitches; (25) he who traps a deer, (26) slaughters it, (27) flays it, (28) salts it, (29) cures its hide, (30) scrapes it, and (31) cuts it up; (32) he who writes two letters, (33) erases two letters in order to write two letters;
- (34) he who builds, (35) tears down; (36) he who puts out a fire, (37) kindles a fire; (38) he who hits with a hammer; (39) he who transports an object from one domain to another—
- lo, these are the forty generative acts of labor less one.

2. Forgiveness of Sins

- Backdrop: Forgiveness as a prerogative of God/Forgiveness as a context for moving one to righteousness and acceptance tied to Jewish sacrificial system
- Key Texts: Luke 7:36-50; Matt 9:1-8= Mark 2:1-12= Luke 5:17-26
- “Your sins are forgiven (by God)”- a direct claim to understand God’s forgiveness (Contrast Nathan in 2 Sam 12:13- “The Lord has taken away your sin.” Largely unprecedented in Judaism. 4QPrNab 1.4 (=4Q242) is the only known possible, but debatable exception- “an exorcist forgave my sin” (reading is disputed). So either unprecedented or a very rare claim in Judaism.
- Josephus (Not a Christian) Ant 18:63-64
- From forgiveness -> repentance ->conversion -> gratitude/discipleship

Josephus

- “Now, there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, *if it be lawful to call him a man*, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. *He was the Christ*. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; *for he appeared to them alive again on the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him*. And the tribe of Christians, so named for him, are not extinct to this day.”

Josephus

- “Now, there was about this time (a source of further trouble) Jesus, for he was a doer of surprising works , a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure (men who welcome strange things). He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him (cease to cause trouble). And the tribe of Christians, so named for him are not extinct to this day.”

Victory over Satan

- Assumption of Moses 10:1 - And then His kingdom shall appear throughout all His creation, and then Satan shall be no more, and sorrow shall depart with him.
- 1 Enoch 55:4: You mighty kings who dwell on the earth, you shall have to behold Mine Elect One, how he sits on the throne of glory and judges Azazel, and all his associates, and all his hosts in the name of the Lord of Spirits.
- Jubilees 23:29: And all their days they shall complete and live in peace and in joy, and there shall be no Satan nor any evil destroyer; for all their days shall be days of blessing and healing.
- Beelzebul Controversy (Luke 11:14-23)

3. Purity and Other Practices

- Key texts: Mark 7:1-23=Matt 15:1-20 (unclean issues); Luke 5:33-39 (lack of fasting); Lk 11:37-54 and Matt 23 (Condemnation of Jewish leaders' practices). Multiply attested as a point of tension.
- Jewish Texts: *Aristeas* 1.129-131- these laws picture of avoiding the bad and not catching "depravities" to picture the effects of sin
- Ethical concern: Hypocrisy; Key Point: What comes out of the heart defiles (not what goes in). Jesus is rejecting the development of oral law expanding Lev 15 here. Prioritizes ethical-relational dimensions of Law over its strict liturgical practice (See Mk 7:1-23, ethics not lost as purity laws are challenged).
- Issue: not the comments of a scribe, prophet or rabbi. Who has the right to prioritize what is in the Law? New era with new wine (Mk 2:22=Mt 9:17= Lk 5:38). Supersessor of Mosaic era, revealer of the new era, who speaks of *my Father*. Greater than Moses is here.

Purity in Judaism

- Aristeeas 129-131: When we asked why, since there is but one form of creation, some animals are regarded as unclean for eating, and others unclean even to the touch (for though the law is scrupulous on most points, it is specially scrupulous on such matters as these) he began his reply as follows:
- Aristeeas 130 'You observe,' he said, 'what an effect our modes of life and our associations produce upon us; by associating with the bad, men catch their depravities and become miserable throughout their life; but if they live with the wise and prudent, they find the means of escaping from ignorance and amending their lives.'
- Aristeeas 131 Our Lawgiver first of all laid down the principles of piety and righteousness and inculcated them point by point, not merely by prohibitions but by the use of examples as well, demonstrating the injurious effects of sin and the punishments inflicted by God upon the guilty.

4. Temple Cleansing/Judgment

Mixed approach to temple, affirms some things challenges others (like Jesus' relationship to the Law)

- Key Debated Text: John 2:13-22; Mt 21:12-13=Mk 11:15-17=Lk 19:45-46). Is Jesus seeking a cleansing reform of the temple (including a house of prayer [Mt 21:13] inclusive for Gentiles [Mk 11:17]; for this: early Jerusalem church's continued use of the temple).
- Jewish Texts: idea in Judaism the temple would be renewed in the eschaton- *1 Enoch* 90:28-30- the Lord of the sheep brought a new house greater and loftier; Zech. 14:21, *Shemoneh Esreh* [18 Benedictions], benediction 14 juxtaposes new Davidic king and renewal of Jerusalem) or does he predict the destruction of the temple (fig tree incident follows, John 2:19, another temple is more central, fits Olivet Discourse prediction).
- Issue: Who has the right to make such a claim on the holy space of the temple (a priest, a prophet, or the one who is associated with the eschaton, esp. given Jesus does it after riding in on a donkey as a messianic claimant and what Jesus does with issues associated with Law and when one compares his body to the holiness of the temple, Jn 2:19!)? Opponents saw the issue, for the next thing they asked- Who gave you such authority to do *such things*? Not one thing but several upset them)

Temple and Judaism

Shemoneh Esreh 14: And to Jerusalem, your city, return with mercy and dwell in its midst as you have spoken; and build it soon in our days to be an everlasting building; and raise up quickly in its midst the throne of David. Blessed are you, Lord, who builds Jerusalem.

Temple in Judaism

- Tobit 14:5-7a: But God will again have mercy on them, and God will bring them back into the land of Israel; and they will rebuild the temple of God, but not like the first one until the period when the times of fulfillment shall come. After this they all will return from their exile and will rebuild Jerusalem in splendor; and in it the temple of God will be rebuilt, just as the prophets of Israel have said concerning it. Then the nations in the whole world will all be converted and worship God in truth. They will all abandon their idols, which deceitfully have led them into their error; and in righteousness they will praise the eternal God.
- Picture of earlier return like the end.





Judaism and Vindication

- 1 Enoch 62:5-9: And one portion of them shall look on the other,
- And they shall be terrified,
- And they shall be downcast of countenance,
- And pain shall seize them, When they see that Son of Man
- Sitting on the throne of his glory.

And the kings and the mighty and all who possess the earth shall bless and glorify and extol him who rules over all, who was hidden.

For from the beginning the Son of Man was hidden,

- And the Most High preserved him in the presence of His might,
- And revealed him to the elect.

And the congregation of the elect and holy shall be sown,

- And all the elect shall stand before him on that day.

And all the kings and the mighty and the exalted and those who rule the earth

- Shall fall down before him on their faces,
 - And worship and set their hope upon that Son of Man,
- And petition him and supplicate for mercy at his hands.

What Got Jesus into Trouble?

- His claims of personal authority (over the Sabbath, over forgiveness, over purity, over the Temple, as one who would be vindicated and judge).

Why the Vindication Claim Is So Important

- Resurrection claim is really about vindication, about the claim of who Jesus is, and the claim that God has acted on Jesus' behalf.
- Why resurrection accounts are not created.
 - 1) No one would create an account with women as the first witnesses.
 - 2) No Jewish precedent for an immediate bodily resurrection.
 - 3) The age of these claims reaching back to the AD 30's (Saul -> Paul)

Summary

- Examination scene with Jewish leadership led to a charge of being a king before Pilate (Religious charge turned into a relevant for Rome political charge and Rome becomes responsible)
- Claims of divine vindication ran into views that saw Jesus as a blasphemer. Once again, the two options of the Beelzebul controversy remain to be sorted out.

Summary

- Cultural scripts out of Judaism show what got Jesus into trouble. They also show why the claim to be raised is an innovation and a powerful claim to vindication.