

Series: God & Abraham #1110

Title: An Introduction: The Importance of the Hebrew Bible (Part 3)

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. Did you have a chance to read in John chapter 7 and Mark chapter 14? That was my invitation to you as we ended this radio broadcast and internet podcast yesterday. And why read about Jesus in those chapters? We do so because they present to us a very Jewish Jesus.

We are looking at ways in which Christians can restore the Old Testament to the proper place this needs to have in our lives. First we saw how Jesus and others valued the Hebrew Scriptures and used them. And now second, and this is a major point of emphasis, to understand Jesus we must understand Him from a Jewish perspective and that means knowing those same Hebrew Scriptures upon which He based His own life and ministry. Jesus, who is God in human flesh, is always our focus here on *God Is* and we accompany Him again as we end this week together, by putting these Gospel passages in dialogue with portions of the Hebrew Scripture as we have, I think properly, renamed our Old Testament.

We are going to come to John's Gospel and Mark's Gospel soon but one brief stop first in Matthew's Gospel. In Matthew chapter 9 Jesus is greeted by an official or a ruler related to the synagogue who bows before the Lord and says that his daughter has just died. And he asks if Jesus can please come and lay His hand on her so that the girl will live. Responding positively to this man's faith Jesus sets off following him to his home. And then in verses 20-22 Christ is interrupted. I am reading Matthew's Gospel chapter 9, verses 20-22,

"²⁰ And a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years, came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak; ²¹ for she was saying to herself, 'If I only touch His garment, I will get well.' ²² But Jesus turning and seeing her said, 'Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well.' At once the woman was made well."

Here is what I invite you to notice: where this woman touched Jesus. It was on the "fringe of His cloak." What was on the fringe of Christ's cloak? Tassels were. And these tassels were sown onto the edge of the garment as a reminder to the person wearing them that he was always to obey the commandments of the Living God. This is a Jewish practice derived from where? Listen to the Book of Numbers chapter 15, verses 37-41.

"³⁷ The Lord also spoke to Moses, saying, ³⁸ 'Speak to the sons of Israel, and tell them that they shall make for themselves tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and that they shall put on the tassel of each corner a cord of blue. ³⁹ It shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the Lord, so as to do them and not follow after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you played the harlot, ⁴⁰ so that you may remember to do all My commandments and be holy to your God. ⁴¹ I am the Lord your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt to be your God; I am the Lord your God."

God commanded the Israelites to wear the tassels on the corners of their garments and so where was Jesus wearing the tassels? At the corner, the fringe of His garment, the one this woman reached out and touched. People can read Matthew 9 a hundred times and miss the implication of where this haemorrhaging woman touched Jesus. But if one has read and understood the Book of Numbers, in the Hebrew Torah, then that same reader will have a much deeper appreciation for how obedient Christ was to His Father in heaven. And just how Jewish Jesus was.

We find the Jewish Jesus again when we come to John's Gospel at chapter 7. I do not have time to read all of the 39 verses I recommended to you. We will just have time to zero in on what interests us for today, and to do that let me begin at verse 1 and read verses 1 and 2, then make a comment. John 7, verses 1 and 2 reads as follows:

“After these things Jesus was walking in Galilee, for He was unwilling to walk in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill Him. ² Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near.” What was the “Feast of Booths”? To begin with this feast is also known as The Feast of Tabernacles and it is one of the most popular feasts that commemorated the Israelites march through the wilderness in which they built booths or tabernacles. It is connected to the harvest of grapes and olives. God commanded it in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. That is in the Torah, the Hebrew Bible.

Leviticus chapter 23 and verse 34 God says, **“³⁴ Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘On the fifteenth of this seventh month is the Feast of Booths for seven days to the Lord.’”** And Deuteronomy 16, beginning in verse 13, **“¹³ You shall celebrate the Feast of Booths seven days after you have gathered in from your threshing floor and your wine vat; ¹⁴ and you shall rejoice in your feast... ¹⁵ Seven days you shall celebrate a feast to the Lord your God in the place which the Lord chooses, because the Lord your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be altogether joyful.”**

When we circle back to John 7 we find this is the Feast of Booths that was near. The Jews were still celebrating this. Throughout this Gospel John highlights various of the Hebrew feasts, and the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles is one of the most popular. That’s why the crowds headed to Jerusalem for it. But as the story develops Jesus says he is not going to go. At least not with the others, because Jesus wants to go in secret.

Verse 10 of John chapter 7: **“¹⁰ But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then [Jesus] Himself also went up, not publicly, but as if, in secret.”** So now Jesus is in Jerusalem to celebrate the feast alongside all the other Jews and Jesus did this because He was Jewish and He participated in the feasts that were commanded by God in the Hebrew Bible.

Still in John 7, verse 14: **“When it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach.”** And verse 37: **“³⁷ Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.’”** Do you hear the emphasis therein on this Jewish feast? And do you see the connection between Jesus and the Hebrew Scriptures – the very ancient texts in which these feasts were commanded? Friends, to understand Jesus we must understand Him from the Jewish perspective. He was committed to joining His fellow Jews in these holy days.

And that brings us to Mark’s Gospel, chapter 14, where we read about the Lord participating in Passover. Ah, Passover, another of the great holidays celebrated to this very day. It commemorates Israel’s firstborn being protected from the plague of death prior to the exodus from Egypt. And let me strongly encourage you to read the account of the Passover in the Hebrew Bible, Exodus chapter 12. Reach back into what you know as the Old Testament and read Exodus 12. This will be a great and instructive use of time this weekend. You will read the harrowing, true story of how God prepared His people and what happened on that night.

And in Exodus chapter 12 and verse 42 we read of the Lord commanding the Passover to be remembered and celebrated, **“⁴² It is a night to be observed for the Lord for having brought them out from the land of Egypt; this night is for the Lord, to be observed by all the sons of Israel throughout their generations.”** (Exodus 12, verse 42.) This is repeated again in Leviticus and in Numbers, two more Books of the Torah. I will read Numbers chapter 9, verses 1, 2, and 12. **“Thus the Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying, ² ‘Now, let the sons of Israel observe the Passover at its appointed time...(Verse 12) According to all the statute of the Passover they shall observe it.’”**

The Lord Jesus has all of this on His mind and in His heart as He joins the other Jews in Jerusalem for Passover. Making the connection now between what is written in the Jewish Bible and what the Jewish Jesus does, I will read from Mark 14, beginning in verse 12 and I will read to the first half of verse 18. Mark 14, verses 12-18a.

**“¹² On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover *lamb* was being sacrificed, His disciples said to [Jesus], ‘Where do You want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?’
¹³ And [Jesus] sent two of His disciples and said to them, ‘Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him; ¹⁴ and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher says, ‘Where is My guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?’ ¹⁵ And he himself will show you a large upper room furnished *and* ready; prepare for us there.’ ¹⁶ The disciples went out and came to the city, and found *it* just as [Jesus] had told them; and they prepared the Passover. ¹⁷ When it was evening [Jesus] came with the twelve. ¹⁸ As they were reclining *at the table* and eating...”**

You can read the rest of this amazing story later, but capture this: again we have the Jewish Jesus celebrating the Jewish Passover which occurred in history and was written about in the Jewish Bible. To understand Jesus we must understand Him from a Jewish perspective and we will continue with this on Monday on God Is.

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