

Mat 15:4 Didn't God command you to respect your father and mother? Didn't he tell you to put to death all who curse their parents?

THIRTY PIECES  
OF SILVER  
...plus expenses  
dr newman

or X

How Jesus did His Miracles  
Who Killed him  
and Why

“The world is full of obvious things  
which nobody by any chance  
ever observes.”

—Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

“The purpose of religion is to control sin.  
Fortunately, people sin.”

—The Smirking Prophet

Dear Reader,

This started as a class exercise. The assignment was to imagine a plot then quickly scribble a chapter. Those six pages stubbornly grew into a novel.

The protagonist was an ex-legionnaire, tough-guy detective who found himself stranded in 33AD Israel. Mary Magdalene was the mysterious and sultry dame who hired that down-on-his-luck gumshoe to find her long lost lover... dead or alive.

Other people had interest in the investigation. Caiaphas the Pharisee wanted the case resolved because the budding Jesus cult threatened the Jewish people's successful subservience to Rome. Haunted by the Ghost of Jesus sightings, Pontius Pilate descended into the tyrant's all too typical paranoid dementia. Pilate's illegitimate daughter hoped to solve the Jesus mystery in order to ease her father's guilt-fevered mind. To that end, she reinvented herself as the world's original costumed superhero—Persephone, the Pagan Goddess of Hell.

The novel's schlocky characters included a giant, a deaf ninja, two apostles and one hideously stereotypical blind wizard. They invented everything from brass knuckles to the tortured metaphor. The story was fun to write. The good guys were often nasty and even the worst of the villains had a sympathetic side. As I wrote... the clues, motivations and timeline flowed smoothly from the Gospels and dropped neatly into place.

A problem grew chapter by chapter. This was too smooth... too neat... too convenient. A genuine murder mystery lay hidden in the pages of the Gospels... and, to this day, the killer eludes justice. For the sake of several billion believers, the book had to be rewritten.

In the case that Christendom's thanks comes posthumously, I take this opportunity to say, you're welcome.

drnewman

## *Acknowledgments and Denials*

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There are hundreds of dogmatic and literary versions of Jesus with each no more legitimate than every other. This version deserves equal consideration or indifference as the case would be.

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All footnoted Bible verses are from the King James Version Revised (KJV) unless otherwise noted. In footnotes, all parentheses ( ) and *italics* are directly from the KJV. A tilde (~) replaces contiguous scripture that is omitted for brevity. The sequence of the scripture's words in footnotes is unchanged. Footnote underscoring and brackets [ ] are the author's emphasis and do not appear in the quoted scripture.

Because the word Pharisees is irritating, this author's preference is to use Pharisee as both singular and plural as in Cherokee or Pekingese. Additionally, a few words in this book are not legitimate words but should be. Some other words are not legitimate words either.

The Jesus Fish symbol ><> denotes fictional dramatizations.

Names of some fictional characters (under possible copyright) are blacked out as a litigious precaution. Other words are redacted for other reasons.

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# Thirty Pieces of Silver... plus expenses

## 1. You are a Detective

You are a detective. You may not wear a trench coat, sport a pencil thin mustache<sup>1</sup> or chew a matchstick while lingering in the lonely shadows of the city's mean streets. Nevertheless, you are a detective. If not all the skill of Cha■■■ Cha■, you still have the scrutable spirit of a criminal investigator. The relentless force of nature and/or the blessings of an intelligent designer have inexorably encoded that spirit into your genetic programming.

Deductive reasoning is your most essential survival trait. Ancient hunters used the same rational skills to read broken twigs and track game. Today, the physician interprets signs and symptoms that lead to a patient's diagnosis. A suspicious wife may check her husband's cell phone numbers or rifle receipts from his pockets. The applications for an investigator's skills are many. Only the tools change.

The most celebrated investigator is the classic private eye. He may be a hapless hero who is often delinquent with the rent on his seedy office and even seedier apartment. Solving a case may cost him some cracked ribs or a bullet in the shoulder but the payoff is worth the price. In the case's thrilling conclusion, the sleuth exposes dark secrets, names the guilty and absolves the innocent.

The pulp detective stimulates our sense of right and wrong. He might whip a double-crossing snitch with the butt of his snub-nosed .38 or give a tight-lipped thug a taste of a brass-knuckled sandwich but he is never seduced to the dark side. Although he may stare down the throat of Evil, he remains the ever-faithful paladin of Lady Justice. In the literary galaxy, a lone gumshoe stands between the innocent and ever-present Evil.

We cannot ignore Evil. Along with other supernatural creatures, adults instill a belief in Evil during childhood. Evil lives in black-robed witches, shadowy bogeymen and in God's flipside, Satan. We learn to regard Evil as a metaphysical force personified. We mortals remain as helpless prey to Evil's insatiable hunger.

We exploit our fear of Evil. Stephen King creates hellish images to tease and poke at our dark terrors. Comic book writers include evildoers in their plots. One president stamped citizens into fits of patriotism by labeling America's enemies as "evildoers."

Our main fear is what we imagine Evil can do. The greatest of those fears is that Evil can kill us in many horrible ways. Evil earns an exaggerated portion of our mortal fears although Evil is a minuscule sliver of a single slice in the great pie chart of possible deaths.

People die, as all living things die. Some see death as justifiable punishment in a legal execution. We sometimes accept the end as a blessing when Death takes a relative suffering with intractable pain. In battle, a body count is the score that decides which side is the winner.

The worst of all possible deaths is when a psychopath goes on a rampage in a school. There is always someone in the news who offers a bright side to the incomprehensible. He says, "We thank God that more were not killed." There is often a mother whose broken heart is completely crushed when another parent proclaims, "God protected my child. The Lord wanted my child to live."

There are reasons people die but there is no acceptable reason for a child's death. We try to find one. We put a divine spin to a senseless sentiment by saying, "God wanted this little one in Heaven." "The child is in a better place" is equally hollow but no one can fault the suffering parent who clutches at any straw to soften their relentless pain. The best the grieving can hope for are visits in their dreams.

A most dreaded death is murder. The murderer is a vandal destroying the years remaining in one's life and the time left to those who love them. The surviving family may hope for the punishment of justice or perhaps God's vengeance. God's vengeance is the most socially acceptable and yet the most horrific of the six vengeancees.<sup>2</sup>

Murder is what makes death evil. It is not surprising that murder is the dominant crime in detective stories. A title including the word "murder" quickly draws our morbid curiosity. Some examples are *Dial 'M' for Murder*, *A Murder of Crows*, *Murder Most Foul*, *Murder Most Frothy*, *Murder on K Street*, *Coffin on Murder Street* and *Killing Jesus*.

*The Murders in the Rue Morgue* by Edgar Allen Poe fathered the entire detective genre. Poe's investigator, Monsieur Dupin, preceded all others. When criminals moved to the airwaves, screenwriters created more detectives to apprehend them. Many sitcom comedians were born-again as detectives. Andy Griffith, Buddy Ebsen, Dick Van Dyke and Tony Shalhoub are just a few.

The most enduring of detective stories are the real ones. The courts officially closed many famous cases but not to everyone's satisfaction. TV and paperbacks periodically revisit these crimes. Among them are the (alleged) O.J. murders, the suspected Lizzie Borden parricides, the butcherings of Jack the Ripper and the assassinations of JFK, RFK and MLK, not to mention the suspicious chariot crash and hasty burial of Pharaoh Tut. These old cold cases wait for a dogged criminologist to reopen and competently solve them. Amateur sleuths comb trial transcripts, surf the Internet and read between the lines of the latest books for another thread of evidence to weave into the solution that closes the case forever.

Although a crime is decades cold and the witnesses are dust, hope endures that justice can yet be served on the guilty if only as an entry in history books. We long for redemption for the falsely accused: to vindicate our ancestors' good names. We want the victim's ghost freed of its earthly shackles by the truth and thereby diminish Evil, if ever so slightly.

That brings us to the most infamous murder of the last two millennia, the killing of Jesus of Nazareth, AKA Christ, the Son of God.

## **2. Problems with the Jesus Case**

Jesus is mentioned in and is the subject of more books, movies and songs than any other personality. Billions are familiar with Christ's bloody execution. Dramas portray Christ's trials, exploit his tortures and/or pander to people's morbid compulsion to witness his torment. Be it a Bible-themed amusement park in south Florida or a daily stage show at an outlet shopping Mecca in the foothills of the Smoky Mountains, actors draw excited crowds to watch Jesus murdered. Paying audiences wallow in that sanguine execution again and again. Many spectators swear that amid the heavenly gore and glory, they can feel the divine love.

It is little wonder why no real detective reopens this case. With such great exposure, one cannot hope to squeeze a new clue from the Gospels. You cannot expect a cynical, iron-jawed private dick—who is more comfortable with a platinum floozy in one hand and a cheap bourbon in the other—to pull Jesus' file from the cold case archives. A flatfoot can't cover his bar tab by tackling cases that are already solved. Every weeping evangelist,

who begs you to send your love via cash, check or PayPal™, is quick to point out there is no new Gospel fact about Jesus' death. Those pastors opine, "I know which people killed Jesus, Those people know who they are. God knows who they are and we know that they know that God knows who they are."

New information on Jesus' murder does crop up from time to time. Scientists publish their most recent analysis of the ghostly image in the Turin Shroud. Scholars sift through histories of ancient kingdoms for references to the Christ. Archaeologists dig for any pottery or ossuary with "Jesus" crudely scratched into its side. Modern day cryptographers translate Bible decoding, which cannily predicts past events. Even grilled cheeses with images of Jesus has sold for thousands on eBay.<sup>®</sup> Although those sandwiches have—as of this publishing—provided no helpful clues.

It is a seemingly impossible task to examine this fully autopsied crime scene in hopes of uncovering new evidence. Still, the temptation can be irresistible for a sleuth because—as always—the more impossible the mystery, the more glory in ciphering the solution.

*The Jesus Case* is rife with miracles and that is the main problem. Miracles and supernatural elements ignore all logic and reason: the stuff that detectives are made of. Even Jessica Fletcher would be stymied if Col. Mustard murdered Mr. Boddy with a candlestick in the conservatory then established an adulterous alibi by magically teleporting himself to Mrs. Peacock's boudoir in another city.

Another problem with *The Jesus Job* is that the case does not have a catchy name. Without a snappy alliteration like *The Wronging of the Riddled Rabbi* or *The Puzzle of the Purloined Prince of Peace*, no metaphor-slinging and cliché-swinging gumshoe would accept the case and tuck his fee into his disheveled trench coat.

The biggest problem with *The Nefarious Nailing of the Nazarene* is that it does not legally qualify as a murder. Imagine Ben Matlock defending Pontius Pilate for killing Jesus. It would be the quickest acquittal of the southern gentleman's dignified career. He would object, "Judge, I insist you dismiss the charges against my client. The prosecution cannot produce a body. Without a corpse there is no proof of a death... much less evidence of a murder."

Another problem with *The Case of the Killed Christ* is that it is already solved. All the guilty parties are not only named but also convicted *in absentia* by apologists, pastors and priests. The partial list of the guilty include Pontius Pilate, several legionnaires, Judas Iscariot, the Council of Pharisee, "the Jews" of Jerusalem, Jewish people in general and—of course—"the Jews" specifically. What armchair sleuth would waste time on a murder case already so definitively solved?

One fellow who watched *The Passion of the Christ* was convinced that every man, woman and child on Earth is guilty of Jesus' death... as well as everyone who has lived or who will ever live, including future colonists on the Moon, Mars, out into infinity and beyond into other dimensions. That fellow would never make a good detective although he could enjoy a promising career as a prosecuting attorney in Texas.

Perhaps you don't think you are sharp enough to be an investigator. Let's try a little test. Read John 3:16.<sup>3</sup> That scripture is often called the Gospels in a nutshell. Now take a moment and think about that verse. Take a second moment if you need to.

Did your left eyebrow just pop up? Do you hear a little voice inside your head? Does something about the verse cause a feeling in your gut? That is the stirring of your natural investigative juices.

Your little voice is correct. God did not give his son's life as the scripture states. At best, it was "Indian giving."<sup>4</sup> Jesus was merely out on loan from Heaven. Unlike the sons and daughters sacrificed to the Bush-Iraq war, God's child did not stay dead. Neither God nor Jesus permanently sacrificed anything.

If the judge presiding over Pilate's hypothetical trial denies the motion to dismiss the murder charges then the wise old lawyer might argue, "Judge, the prosecution concedes the victim is not even allegedly dead. How can my client, Mr. Pilate, stand trial for murder when the plaintiff insists the victim is alive?"

[judge's gavel bangs] "Case Dismissed!"

As any good detective, you see the problem. Jesus may have died but he got better. If the victim does not stay dead, it is not murder. It is not even negligent manslaughter. At most, it is attempted homicide or perhaps prolonged aggravated assault under extenuating circumstances. No prosecuting attorney charges a suspect with murder because the victim's heart stopped for a few minutes in the emergency room. Although killed, Jesus did not stay killed. At best, or worst, Jesus suffered an extremely (extremely) unpleasant afternoon.

Another reason gumshoes ignore the *Predicament of the Perforated Prophet* is purely dogmatic. An investigator should have at least a passing knowledge of the Bible, however most Bible enthusiasts are faithful believers. You cannot expect Father Dow █████, Sister Stev █ or Brother Wi █████ of Baskerville to impugn the veracity of the Church's official interpretation. No detective who is leached like a teabag in hot holy water would take the case. Who can blame him? Questioning official dogma could lead to shunning, excommunication, threats of a few punitive centuries in purgatory or the curse of an infinitely longer damnation in Hell.

If Bible experts will not investigate the *Enigma of Emmanuel's End*, who will? What about you? You are a naturally gifted detective. You take the case. All the facts you need to unravel the *Conundrum of Christ's Cross* are sitting boldly right there in the Gospels—in full view of the entire world—for a score of centuries. Compare the testimonies. Puzzle the motives and assemble the time frame. If you examine the facts with a private eye's eye, you will expose a radically different solution.

Go ahead. Take the case and solve the *Slaying of the Semitic Savior*. You will eventually say the two words every detective lives for. "Case Closed"

### 3. The Limits of your Investigation

Investigating *The Clues of the Corpus Christi* has almost insurmountable limits. All the physical evidence is lost or corrupted. You cannot question the witnesses or suspects as all the participants are dead or otherwise beyond your corporeal jurisdiction.

You could expand your investigation to include later books on Jesus however such a study would be long, if not endless. Many religious corporations own 501(c) 3 publishing houses dedicated to cranking out paperbacks, CD's and coloring books on Jesus. They employ theological experts whose studied opinions depict other Christian sects as cravenly mistaken or willingly Satanic. Dogmatic differences range from wine versus communion grape juice to baptismal sprinkling versus dunking or sister wives versus serial polygamy. Fortunately, you can ignore those resources and leave them for others with more time to invest. Jim Rock █████ rarely took more than fifty-five minutes to solve a case. Although this mystery is two millennia old, a bright detective like you will need not spend more than a couple of hours.

You need but a single reference book. The venerable *King James Version* (KJV) of the Bible has been the inerrant word of God for the last four hundred years. This is wonderfully convenient for you. You need not search volumes of Josephus, pore over decades of *The Watchtower* magazines or suffer Fox commentators' politically served theological musings.

What could be simpler?



You don't have a King James Bible? No problem. You can download a digital one or grab a complimentary copy of the Gideon's Good Book the next time you stay at a motel. Most any motel will do.<sup>5</sup> Even motels in Salt Lake City offer complimentary Gideon's Bibles. You Catholics should already have the Douay-Rheims version (DRV) in your living room. You may have the New International (NIV) Teen Study Version illustrated with hipster cartoon characters. Even the new Klingon translation will work fairly well, however, sticking with the English King James (KJV) will help keep us all on the same investigative page.

Easy enough? Don't answer yet. It gets easier. You will not need all sixty-six books of the Bible. You can check and triple-check each fact in this investigation from one convenient source. Every eyewitness clue in this case comes wholly from the four Gospels and nowhere but the Holy Gospels.

You find the archaic language of King James awkward? Who doesn't? This investigation cites the Contemporary English Version (CEV) when the Old English quotations are vague or cumbersome.

But wait! There is more! You will not even need that Bible at your elbow. This investigation provides all biblical footnotes.

What could be easier?

Additionally, this investigation will accept as an unassailable fact that Jesus was a real person who actually lived and appeared to perform the miraculous. There is a... small... practically minuscule... hardly worth mentioning... stipulation. One cannot solve a case with miracles if paranormal elements are not, at least, questioned. Therefore, we will disregard the supernatural as the final answer. Instead, we will follow Sherlock Holmes' method of eliminating the impossible to see what remains. We will accept Thomas Jefferson's opinion on the supernatural of the Bible<sup>6</sup> and observe Kiri-Kin-Tha's First Law of Metaphysics<sup>7</sup> We will consider answers other than the supernatural.

If you accept these terms and if you are ready for an adventure, tilt the brim of your Fedora downward and clamp a fresh matchstick between your teeth. You are ready to tackle *The Mystery of the Murdered Messiah*.

#### **4. Depositions in the Jesus Murder**

Bits of truth linger within each legitimate legend and every marvelous myth. The flood of the Black Sea likely inspired the world's deluge in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. The Grand Canyon does gouge deeply into Arizona even if Babe the Blue Ox (probably) had nothing to do with it. The frustrated wife may not consider her desire for a good rogering as a Genesis verified curse from the divine but it is.<sup>8</sup>

As far as this investigation is concerned, the titled authors wrote the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. We will not question if these men were the actual writers or fuss with how many decades passed before they penned their stories. We will consider those gospels just as factual as any legal deposition.

Every group of witnesses has discrepancies in their testimonies. One witness recalls a fact while a bystander contradicts that account. Most witnesses do not intentionally lie but his memory is tinted with hues from the palette of his personal experience and bias. It is just human. Even when a witness deliberately lies on the witness stand, he still tells some measure of the truth. Any good falsehood always dresses in a generous cloak of veracity.

We will not consider the Gospel writers as untruthful—quite the opposite. Just as any other witness, we will accept the Gospel testimonies entirely at face value. You can have

faith that they wrote the truth. In fact, your investigation depends on the fact that the Gospels did indeed write the truth.

[Repeated for emphasis] Your investigation depends on the fact that the Gospel writers did write the truth..

Get ready, Detective. The game at hand is now afoot.

## 5. Our Witnesses

Your witnesses are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

John the Apostle (not to be confused with John the Baptist) was a fisherman from a family of fishermen.<sup>9</sup> Other Gospels confirm that one of the apostles was indeed named John. Popular Christian tradition considers that the apostle identified as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” to be John.<sup>10</sup>

Matthew made his living as a publican (tax collector) before his apostolic career.<sup>11</sup> Both Luke and Mark name Matthew as one of the twelve apostles.

Matthew and John were among the original twelve apostles. Of the four Gospels, they were the only two who ever met Jesus. The Gospels of Matthew and John do record incidents where neither writer was present nor do they claim they were. We will not quibble. We will also accept those testimonies as factual at face value.

Luke—as the Bible notes—was a physician.<sup>12</sup> Luke never met Jesus. He painstakingly drew his facts from others.<sup>13</sup> We will accept his word that he carefully interrogated eyewitnesses for the details in his Gospel. We will also accept his testimony as accurate.

Our last Gospel writer, Mark, never saw Jesus. We will assume he was on a first name basis with some surviving apostles. Being on a first name basis was not much to brag about since (with the exception of Mr. Judas Iscariot) the apostles had only first names. As with Luke, we will also accept it on hypothetical faith that Mark conscientiously gathered his facts from reliable eyewitnesses.

Our four Gospel writers’ testimonies slightly contradict each other. Do not be discouraged. Small disparities should strengthen your trust in the Gospel’s truthfulness because some contradiction is normal in the testimonies of honest men. A few minor differences cannot stop your investigation. Take inspiration from investigator Lilly Rish who solves old cold cases with major contradictions not to mention substantial obstacles of time.

## 6. John the Baptist

John the Baptist was the world’s first Christian evangelist and the Gospel’s most unforgettably quirky character.

Today, Christ’s televangelists unashamedly strut on stage in flatteringly tailored suits decorated with the occasional brocaded dove logos. They flaunt obscenely extravagant bling and camouflage their meager pates with desperate combovers. To finance God’s work, they incessantly beg for believers’ donations (cash), tithes (cash) and pledges (future cash). Evangelists contribute to God’s work by buying more airtime to elicit more love offerings (love cash) and emergency donations (fast cash). Televangelists never end a broadcast without telling the audience to tune in at the same God time on the same God channel. *And for the love of Jesus... send more cash.* (Who says love cannot buy money?)

John the Baptist puts all those puffy peacocks to justified shame. John lived by naked faith and never coerced his congregation for money. He literally wore his faith on his sleeve. As protection from the desert’s frozen nights and blistered days, John wore an itchy shirt of camel hair and girthed his loins with animal skins.<sup>14</sup> For sustenance, he ate

grasshoppers and stole honey from wild bees. His peculiar diet and Bohemian appearance attracted attention. John drew crowds and created converts using little more than his booming voice.<sup>15</sup> His preaching style resembles today's Christian soldiers who march onward to spiritual battle at busy intersections while armed only with a bullhorn and the Good (albeit dog-eared) Book. Their booming message is the same one that John the Baptist bellowed two thousand years ago.<sup>16</sup> "Repent! Christ is coming! Judgment Day is nigh." That message never gets old. And it stands to perfect reason that with each disappointing rapture-less decade, Judgement Day must be even more nigh-er: thus the more urgent for palliative repenting.

Christians give John credit for popularizing baptizing but he was also a fully-fledged, dyed in the camel wool, card-carrying prophet. John was as much of a prophet as any from Able to Zechariah.<sup>17</sup> But unlike other prophets, John did not channel miracles from God.<sup>18</sup> He preached one very specific prophesy. "*The Messiah is coming.*"

Not unlike the noble savage, John dwelt alone in the wilderness. God's divine generosity sustained John for the decades he dwelled in the wastelands.<sup>19</sup> That is if a celibate hermit eating insect vermin, robbing hives of angry bees for honey and weaving camel hair into clothing could be called dwelling. At the age of thirty-something, John abandoned his reclusive lifestyle. He deserted the desert and dedicated himself to baptizing and prophesying the Messiah.

John's baptizing ministry was not as complicated as Jesus' mission. John did no miracles.<sup>20</sup> John ministered an efficient, one-man operation. John simply warned that the Lord was coming with His infamous wrath<sup>21</sup> then offered baptism to avoid that divine punishment.<sup>22</sup> Prior to John the Baptist, animal sacrifice was the way to wipe away the taint of sin. John rejected the purification by beast's blood in favor of baptism's repentance to absolve sins.<sup>23</sup>

We should note that Jesus confirmed John was actually the long dead prophet Elijah.<sup>24</sup> There is no precedence in the Bible for a soul's reconstitution into another body and Jesus offered no details on the matter. The migration of Elijah's soul into John the Baptist is the only reincarnation in the Bible. John's unique situation puts him in a class by himself. John the Baptist was not just a prophet. He was a prophet incarnated as another prophet or a prophet squared.

In his roll as Elijah, John was on a mission from God.<sup>25</sup> That mission required him to precede the Christ onto the world's stage then introduce the Savior. John the Prophet served as publicity agent, warm-up act and carnival barker all rolled into one. He saved Jesus months of preliminary legwork. Thanks to John the Baptist, by the time Jesus began his ministry, Israelis far and wide knew of the Christ's imminent arrival. Jesus found the already organized Jews for Jesus officially converted and pre-baptized.<sup>26</sup> Jesus needed only spread his arms and sing out, "Here I am, the one that you love." Overnight, he went from Emmanuel, blue-collar unknown, to Jesus Christ the Supernatural Star.

## **7. John the Suspicious Baptist**

Jesus sought out John the Baptist at the River Jordan and there, John baptized him.

You would think God's highest holy people could sense each other, perhaps by a spidery tingling sensation but the Bible story tells us otherwise. John the Baptist flatly denied knowing Jesus.<sup>27</sup> John leads us to believe that the first time he met Jesus was on the banks of the Jordan. To leave no doubt, John repeated his denial of knowing Jesus.<sup>28</sup> John also claimed he could not know who the Messiah was until the Holy Spirit flew down and roosted on the Messiah's shoulder.<sup>29</sup>

We accept our Gospel witnesses' facts on the strength of their word alone. Nevertheless, you are investigating a murder. It is inevitable someone will lie. The liar's job is to confound you and deflect attention from the suspicious. With apologies to our Latter Day Baptists, the first liar in this case is the original Baptist... John. (Again, do not confuse John the Baptist (liar) with John the Gospel writer (assumed truth teller.))

John denied knowing Jesus but testimony indicates he knew Jesus for decades. They were secondary cousins as their mothers were first cousins. The two families had much in common. John's mother and father knew Jesus would be the Messiah even before Jesus was born. They also knew (before John's birth) that their son would be a prophet. It is incredibly unlikely that John's parents would fail to share these facts with John since his destiny was to introduce Jesus to the world..

John knew Jesus was the Messiah. John recognized Jesus prior to the baptism and before the Holy Spirit confirmed Jesus' identity as the Christ. John said to Jesus, "I should not baptize you. You should baptize me." <sup>30</sup> John definitely knew Jesus prior to their meeting on the River Jordan.

Did John tell a little white fib or was he a big fat liar with his camel hide pants on fire? The bigger question is, "Why would he claim prior ignorance of Jesus' divinity?"

John the Baptist preached of the coming Messiah. It is conspicuous that he never mentioned that the Messiah would be his own dear cousin. John probably kept mum about Jesus being family for fear the apostles might suspect nepotism. They might reconsider accepting Jesus as their savior if John bragged in his sermons, "Yep. The Messiah is coming. And he's my cousin ... on my mother's side."

Nepotism is not an issue in today's religions. The Church has no nepotism since a priest cannot inherit a ministry from his parents. Protestant sects have no such restrictions. Nepotism is business as usual in the lucrative evangelist industry. We expect progeny in the sectarian dynasties of Roberts, Robertson, Schuller, Swaggart, Hagee, Osteen and Falwell to prophesize and profiteer for many generations to come.

## **8. The Miracle at Jesus' Baptism**

The miracle at the River Jordan was stupendous. All succeeding marvels are mere card tricks by comparison. Curing the sick?—Yesterday's news. Commanding the forces of nature?—Old Testament stuff.. Holy men claiming God talks to a them?—What toothless soothsayer, puddle-eyed preacher or GOP presidential hopeful hasn't?

The greatest marvel of the entire Bible happened at Jesus' Baptism. In our universe of 11.0005 trillion cubic light years,<sup>31</sup> all three parts of the God of all Creation (God the Father, Jesus the Son and Holy the Ghost) converged on our humble planet in the Northern Hemisphere at the River Jordan. Such a divine congress never happened on Earth before and—as far as the Bible is concerned—has never happened since.

All four Gospels record that God's voice boomed from the sky. The shapeshifting Holy Spirit assumed the form of a dove, flew down to Earth and perched upon Jesus. That divine sign established Jesus as the Messiah.<sup>32</sup>

There is one small hiccup. The baptism miracle is hearsay. None of Jesus' apostles witnessed this—the greatest event of the New Testament. Matthew did not see this miracle. Matthew describes Jesus' baptism in the third chapter of his Gospel.<sup>33</sup> He did not meet Jesus until the ninth chapter. John the Apostle did not see this miracle either. He did not become a follower until some forty days after the baptism.<sup>34</sup>

The day after the baptism, John the Baptist introduced Jesus to the first of his disciples.<sup>35</sup> They were Andrew and his brother, Simon (AKA Peter, AKA The (original) Rock. <sup>36</sup> Three Gospels name these apostles as the first ones. Mark verified this timeline.<sup>37</sup>

No apostle saw the miracle at Jesus' baptism. All four stories of Jesus' baptism are hearsay from John the Baptist. We have only John the Baptist's word as retold by the Gospels that this miracle happened.

We know John was less than forthcoming with the truth and the depths of his untruths remain to be plumbed.

## **9. John the Baptist Provides Jesus his First Apostles**

Jesus did not start from square one when he began his ministry. He did not have thirty-foot Jumbotrons<sup>®</sup>, choirs of Gospel singers, or databases with mailing address for soliciting tax-free donations but he did have John the Baptist. John provided hundreds of baptized people waiting for the advent of the Messiah. Next, John contributed some ready-vetted apostles to Jesus' ministry. John made the introductions a couple of days after the baptism. "Christ, here are some apostles for you.<sup>38</sup> Disciples, here is your Messiah, whom I predicted."

Jesus the Carpenter had a humble peasant's birth but—thanks to John the Baptist—Jesus the Messiah hit the ground running complete with eager apostles and a multitude of pre-baptized converts.

## **10. Jesus Changes Water to Wine**

A few days after his baptism, Jesus, his mother and his new apostles Andrew, Nathaniel, Simon and Philip attended a wedding in Cana.<sup>39</sup> Mother Mary complained to Jesus, "They have no wine."<sup>40</sup> From the context, Mary is asking Jesus do something about the lack of wine.

Apparently irritated, Jesus snapped back. "Woman! This is none of your business and besides... it's not yet my time."<sup>41</sup> We might reason that Jesus meant it was not time to reveal himself to the public as having supernatural powers and/or reveal himself as the Son of God.

In spite of her son's rebuke, Virgin Mary did not shy away. She commanded nearby servants, "Do what Jesus tells you to do."<sup>42</sup> Jesus instructed those servants to fill the nearby pots with water — each held a volume of two to three firkins.<sup>43</sup> They did; topping off those kiln-fired tankards. Jesus told the servants to draw some out and take a cup to the governor of the feast (who might be called a wedding planner today.) The governor sipped the miraculously fermented wine and complimented the groom on the fine vintage.<sup>44</sup>

The above is the way this miracle is always told. To the believer, Jesus the God had divine powers and no one need delve deeper. To the un-believer, Jesus was a fictitious character doing fictitious miracles so any examination is a double waste of time. A detective is more curious than either of those extremes. If we entertain that Jesus was a real person with limited human abilities, we can ask real questions and find practical answers.

One glaring curiosity that begs questioning is Jesus rebuking his virgin mother. His surly response to his literally sainted mother is against one commandment and contrary to his gentle reputation. It was bad enough to snap that his business was none of her's... but dismissing her as "woman" sprinkles the wound with a double pinch of salt. The detective should note this was not the last time Jesus addressed the grace-filled lady so coldly. The Gospels quote Christ using the word "mother" thirty times yet he never once referred to her so considerately. Christ always addressed her crudely if not cruelly as... "Woman."

When your investigation becomes public record, godfearing parents will consider training their children to follow Jesus' example. Toddlers at breakfast tables will one day hoist high their sipping cup and demand, "More Ovaltine®... Woman."

## 11. How to Turn Water to Wine

A cynical detective doubts miracles. The renowned magician, James “The Amazing” Randi, could give several ways to perform the water to wine illusion. Even if we do not have Mr. Randi’s faith-healer investigating and fraud-exposing genius, we can consider the following...



(Reminder: The fish above indicates that the following is an illustration by way of fiction.)

Place: A mile outside of Cana, Galilee

Time: Several years after Jesus’ crucifixion

Scene: The Council of Pharisee has hired Doctor the M.D. (Miracle Detective) to investigate Jesus’ water to wine incident. Now, only days later, the Council dispatched several priests to hear the Doctor’s conclusions.

Doctor was a short, compact man with foreign manners that gave him the air of intrigue. He used the time he saved not combing his Hippocratically bald dome to fastidiously snip his Christmas-snow-white beard to symmetrical perfection. He trimmed his mustache so expertly that neither porridge nor wine ever strained through.

This day, a group of seven priests waited in varying degrees of impatience. Annas, the Pharisee Council’s second highest priest, stood at the gang’s lead. Jethro, Annas’ assistant stood to Annas’ immediate left while the remaining **five** priests stood a respectful distance to Annas’ rear.

Jethro was not yet twenty but had quickly advanced in rank to full Pharisee. Jethro’s naive enthusiasm coupled with his considerable ignorance was ever irritating to his new boss. Still, what Jethro lacked in priestly wisdom, he more than compensated with influential family ties to the still powerful Herodian dynasty.

Pharisee Annas was also on the Pharisee’s fast track but unlike Jethro, his promotions were earned by marriage. Annas’ was the father-in-law to the Council’s highest high priest, Caiaphas, who had presided over Jesus’ trial before the Council.

**Four** subordinate priests also attended Doctor’s demonstration. They looked on in silent deference; waiting for exactly what... they did not know.

Doctor cleared his throat and began. “These past few years, the Jesus movement has created problems for the Council of Pharisee. Jesus’ followers are now questioning the Council’s authority to speak for the Divine Creator. The Council hired me to duplicate Jesus’ illusions to show that a mortal can fake the same miracles.

Today, we will recreate the miracle at the wedding of Cana. Pharisee Jethro, you will play Jesus’ mother.” Doctor faced the subordinate priests. “You **four** will portray the apostles who witnessed the miracle.” Doctor pointed to the last priest. “You can be Jesus. Doctor gestured to Annas the High Priest and said, “You will be the servant who carries the water.”

Annas resolutely crossed his arms. He was a cleric of aristocrat status. He sneered. “A high Council priest will not behave as a slave.”

“Of course not. My mistake.” Doctor dipped his head and hissed a stream of Greek under his breath. Doctor turned in place scanning the horizon. Annas follow doctor’s gaze. A distance down a rocky road, two weary men shouldered large sheaves of straw bound for the brick maker.

Annas shouted, “You two!” He beckoned by pointing to the ground at his feet. “Come here. Now!”

The laborers recognized the Pharisee vestments of high office. They obeyed. Dropping their bundles, the pair trotted over and stood attentively passive: their eyes cast to the ground. Neither spoke. They were slaves and no one told them to speak.

Annas pointed a palm toward the laborers. "Here are your water bearers."

Priest Jethro grumbled, "I don't want to play the woman either."

Annas ignored Jethro. "Get on with it, Doctor."

Doctor bowed. "Pharisee Annas, will you honor us by portraying the Lord of the Feast?" Annas nodded in the slow, regal manner that lords nod. The doctor turned to the two laborers. "Go stand by the waterpots. You two will pretend to be servants."

One of them stammered, "Pretend?.. b-but we're are servants. We're slaves."

Another curse hissed within Doctor's breath before he grumbled, "Then go be slaves over there... by the waterpots!" The pair stepped quickly to their places.

Doctor addressed Annas. "As you know, guests ceremonially cleanse themselves before joining a wedding celebration<sup>45</sup>. The custom assures that guests do not introduce any uncleanness into the new union. Ritual cleansing usually involves washing only the face, hands and feet so as not to get one's fashionable finery soggy or to get unduly naked for a practical shower. Jesus himself ritually washed his apostles' feet at the Last Supper.

The wedding at Cana had a cleansing station with six large water vessels and you see six here. It is reasonable that the wedding planner segregated the waterpots with its unclean wastewater runoff well away from the sanctified celebration."

Annas sighed impatiently. "Just tell us how the miracle was done... now! Else we will leave and you can forget your fee."

"Very well." Doctor clapped his hands together. "We are ready to make a miracle." Doctor pulled himself to his full height, which could only be described as diminutive, but he proclaimed in a booming voice, "Just as Jesus did at the wedding of Cana, I will make gallons of wine," he swept his right arm in a graceful arc, "miraculously vanish!"

Annas pointed two weary fingers at the doctor. "We are paying you to conjure wine, not to make wine disappear."

Doctor smiled. "Actually, that day, Jesus also made the wedding wine disappear ... but first things... second." Doctor began again with equal flourish. "I will now miraculously turn water into wine!"

Doctor pointed to Jethro. "We know that Mary arrived at the wedding earlier in properly punctual decorum but Jesus and his disciples did not arrive until much later. So we will begin at that point."

"Stop right there." Annas sighed with strained patience. "The story says that Mary, Jesus and the four disciples arrived together."

"Incorrect, Honorable Sir." Doctor bowed slightly to soften his disagreement. "John's Gospel says Mary attended the wedding but Jesus and his disciples were summoned long after the festivities began. <sup>46</sup> We know this because the Governor of the Feast's comments place Jesus' arrival long after the wedding began. Also, it is doubtful that Jesus was even invited else he would not have arrived so insultingly and unfashionably late."

Annas said, "I fail to see the significance of who arrived when."

Doctor replied, "Yes. It is such shortsightedness that allows charlatans to victimize the gullible. In my land, a fakir can convince ignorant people that playing a hypnotizing melody on a magic flute will make a deadly cobra harmless. The gullible audience does not know that cobras are all stone deaf."

Annas bristled with the innuendo of his naivete but instead promised himself to somehow get payback on the insulting little doctor.

Doctor looked to Annas, "Shall I continue?" Annas stiffly nodded.

Doctor continued, “At this time in our demonstration, Jesus and the apostles have just arrived at the waterpots. Virgin Mary, some dozens of cubits away with the rest of the wedding, noticed their approach and joins them there.”

Doctor held a small papyrus scroll at eye level for the men who portrayed the apostles. He said, “Read this... aloud.”

They recited in unison, “We want some wine.” xxxxx

Doctor unrolled his scroll two rotations before saying to Jethro, who earlier complained about playing Mary’s role, “Read this line.”

Jethro asked, “Should I speak in a female’s squeaky voice?”

Annas slapped his open hand sharply against the back of Jethro’s head. The acting-Mary recovered his composure then read, “They... ran... out... of... wine.”

Doctor, in his role as Jesus recited his part, “Woman, this is none of your business. It is not the right time.”

Doctor again twisted the scroll and held it up for the actor portraying Mary. Jethro again read haltingly, “You servants... do as... Jesus... says.”

Doctor turned to the laborers standing at the terracotta vessels. “Fill the jugs with water.”

Doctor motioned to the bewildered peasants. “Pay attention! That is your cue. Fill the waterpots.” He pointed. “There is a stream over there.” As the priests and the doctor watched, the two men relayed buckets of water. When the jugs overflowed, they capped each vessel with its ceramic lid.

In his role as Jesus, Doctor ordered, “Servant, draw some out. Take a cup to the Governor of the Feast.”

The two servants glanced at each other then looked back to the priest who played Jesus. They asked in unison, “Me?”

The priest shrugged then pointed to the servant standing on the left, “You the ginger... you fetch it.” The redhead reached for a bucket.

“Not a bucket. Use this.” Doctor reached into his shoulder bag and pulled out a cloth bundle. He unwrapped a finely tooled brass cup, fit for a gentleman’s table, and gently tossed it to the servant.

The peasant lifted the waterpot’s lid and dipped: spilling some pristine waterdrops as he lifted the cup from the pot’s mouth. He turned to replace the lid then walked to the group of priests. He bowed as he presented the bronze cup to Annas.

The high priest’s eyes widened. He put the cup to his nose then to his lips. Annas whispered, “It is wine. This is just a trick!”

Jethro took the cup, sniffed and sipped.” He gasped. “It’s a miracle!”

Annas raised his ceremonial shepherd’s staff. Jethro grimaced as Annas whipped the rod across the acting-Mary’s back. “I saw the slaves fill the pot. I saw water dripping forth.”

Doctor cheerfully echoed, “How? How indeed. That is the mystery the Council is paying to solve. And once I am paid, I shall reveal the secret to everyone.”

“What? Pay you now?”

Doctor hesitated in saying what they both knew. “That was our agreement.”

“You gave this cup to the slave. I know what you did.” Annas sprayed spittle as he shouted. “It is a trick cup! You coated the inside of the cup with dry powdered dye. After dipping, the water mixed with the dye and stained the water in the cup to only look like wine. Then you bewitched me to believe it is wine.”

Jethro raised the ornate cup to his lips and drained it: swishing the last mouthful cheek to cheek before swallowing. “Tastes like fine wine to me.” Jethro held out the empty cup. Bewitch me some more.”



“Shut up!” Annas again swung his shepherd’s staff down on Jethro. The bent rod snapped. Annas slung the broken shaft to the dirt then glared at Doctor for long angry seconds. “Very well, Doctor.” Annas’ nostrils flared. “I admit it is wine. Well played... but not well enough.” A crooked smile crawled to the left side of the priest’s face. “I am afraid we will not pay your fee.”

Doctor objected. “We had a deal. I showed you that a mortal could perform the wine miracle.”

Annas “Our deal was that you would duplicate Jesus’ miracle. You produced one measly cup of wine. Jesus conjured gallons of wine.”

“Begging your pardon.” Doctor spoke tactfully. “Honored Sir, You are mistaken. John’s Gospel describes Jesus producing only one cup of wine: no more. That was the cup that the governor tasted. The Gospel’s wine miracle story ends at that point: leaving all conjecture to the reader’s imagination. Like you, Gospel readers just assume the water in the other waterpots also turned to wine. Like you, they imagine the celebration continued with wine from the waterpots. Such is the way with miracles grow. Since reality is no limit with supernatural doings... the story can be shamelessly embellished without anyone questioning.”

“That may be so.” Annas sniffed. “Unfortunately, we are holding you to that assumption. No one could be so gobsmacked by a single cup of wine to believe is a miracle from God.” Annas sucked at a crevice in his teeth to loosen a remnant of his breakfast. “As it stands, you get nothing. If you produced gallons, we would have rewarded you with three times your fee.”

Jethro wheezed incredulously, “We would?”

Annas glanced wistfully to the broken shepherd’s staff laying in the dirt but otherwise ignored Jethro’s comment.

Doctor bowed. “As noble guardians of the Law of Moses, I trust you will keep your word.” The doctor glanced toward the waterpots. The redhead raised his foot to the top-heavy terracotta and pushed. The pot tipped on its side. It’s cap slipped off and a stream of purple-red wine glub-glubed onto the thirsty ground. One of the servants placed a bucket in the stream. He handed the bucket to the priest who played Mary.

Jethro raised the bucket and drank from the rim. Sanguine rivulets trickled down his cheek. “Wine” he said. “Excellent wine! Gallons! It is a miracle. Now we will have to worship Jesus and Doctor too!”

Annas whipped Jethro’s miter from his head and lashed the stooge of a priest three times across the face shouting, “Fool, fool, fool!” Annas glared at the doctor. “How? How did you do this?!”

Doctor offered his right hand to show his palm and the emptiness of its hollow.

Annas marched to the waterpot, cupped his hand in the waning drizzle of wine. He tasted. Annas measured slow, deliberate words, “I saw the slaves fill the jug with water. I saw the water dribble as it dipped from the jug. This is imposs...”

“Impossible? You mean miraculous? A miracle? You flatter me, Sir.” The diminutive wizard continued to hold out an expectant palm. “My fee three times, said you did.” Annas jerked an embroidered purse from his belt and flung it. The compact doctor stood statue frozen save his right hand that snatched the purse from the air as it tried to fly past.

Red-faced, Annas again shouted, “How!?”

Doctor explained, “The reveal of a miracle is what sticks in people’s minds. What people do not remember is what occurs before and afterward. Just as with Jesus, this water turned to wine before the Governor of the Feast took a sip but after the servant drew the water. Everyone saw water in the cup as it lifted from the vessel. If they noticed even stained water, they would have reacted with surprise. Neither the servants nor the Apostles at

Jesus' performance reacted in any way. John's Gospel tells us why. It specifically says that the servant dipped water from the waterpot.<sup>47</sup> No one from Jesus' audience noticed anything odd because neither the cup nor the vessel contained wine... at that moment."

The Pharisee cast bewildered looks so Doctor began again. "You saw me give the servant an empty cup. He dipped into the waterpot. You assumed that was the same finely tooled cup he handed to you. That should have been your first clue. In fact, this servant carried an identical cup already filled with wine. When the servant replaced the waterpot's lid, he turned his hand slightly out of your line of sight. That was when he switched the brass cups. He stashed the one with water into a pocket in his robe. He handed you the one filled with wine. Doing the switch with two servants—as in Jesus' performance—makes the trick even easier. The second man can briefly block your view of the first man or distract your attention."

Jethro repeated, "... a pocket? What is a pocket?"

Doctor smiled proudly. "It is a magical invention of mine." He reached to the redheaded servant's robe and pulled it aside to reveal a half-moon piece of cloth sewn into the inside. "Clever, isn't it? Instead of a purse, you can carry your coins in your pocket. Were it not for me. I don't think that pockets in clothes would be invented for another thousand years... perhaps a millenium and a half." Annas sniffed. "So you own these two peasants?"

Doctor shook his head, "They are my associates: not slaves. When you recruited them from the road, you inadvertently disguised that they are part of the trick."

Annas objected, "You pointed out these men on the road. You manipulated me into calling to them."

"Did I do that?" Doctor smiled sheepishly. "We will learn that Jesus was a bit of rascal too."

Annas said, "Continue."

"Prophets have the advantage over magicians. Prophets can choose where and when he performs. Unlike the magician, he does his miracle without forewarning and you don't know who is assisting him." Doctor pointed to his associates. "Now that you know the servants in Jesus' story were confederates, you might wonder who else assisted with the water to wine miracle."

First line should be VIRGIN MARY PROVIDED SERVANTS . Mary did the same when she ordered seemingly random wedding servants to follow Jesus' orders

"Virgin Mary wrangled an invitation to the wedding. Since she knew the family previously, Jesus had days to set up the miracle." Doctor held his hands wide. "This was a large wedding. The family hired a wedding planner and procured servants to attend the guests. It was a simple matter for someone to loan a couple of slaves to help service the party. As servants, they could move freely about the wedding without drawing notice."

"You are accusing Virgin Mary of being in on the trick?"

Doctor shrugged. "We have no doubt the servants were in on the trick. Mary also participated in the performance albeit as a pawn or knowingly. To give her the benefit of doubt, I concede it is possible that someone just told Mary what words to recite and when."

Annas asked, "What if I had agreed to play the part of servant as you first asked? That would spoil your trick."

"I knew you would refuse. Bearing water is a chore for a woman or a slave. I doubt if you fetched a pail of water in your privileged life. If you did agree to play the servant, I would have asked you to don a commoner's cloak as costuming for the part."

"Yes." Annas shivered at the thought of peasant's lice crawling across his skin. "I would have refused." He asked, "Where is the first cup?"

The red-haired servant reached into his robe under his armpit. He produced a familiar looking brass cup. He poured. Clean water puddled on the thirsty soil. The other servant

produced an identical capped cup but when he poured, burgundy-red stained the dull ground.

“So the ginger peasant still has the cup with which he drew the water. But why two cups of wine when the trick only required one?”

Doctor answered, “The illusion appeared more random because someone from your group chose which servant dipped the cup. Since each man had a cup of wine to switch with the first cup, it did not matter which servant dipped the water from the pot.”

Annas massaged his forehead as if to ease a growing headache. “How do you know this is the way Jesus did the trick?”

“Jesus was clearly perturbed with Mary’s insistence for Jesus to fix the problem. By being curt with her, he appeared to perform the miracle begrudgingly and spontaneously. This was only the first time that Jesus’ showmanship enhanced his performance. It is surprising that Jesus is never appreciated as a gifted grifter.”

Annas nodded, to show he understood. He did not.

“Virgin Mary provided the first of the clues.” Doctor paused to let his last statement sink in. “Mary acted as Jesus’ magician’s assistant but she was incompetent for the task. She exposed the trick to all but the most dimwitted... present company accepted, of course.” Doctor offered a sham of a bow as if to apologize for the veiled insult. “This was Jesus’ first miracle so Mary flubbed when she indicated she knew Jesus could perform a wine conjuring miracle. Mary also goofed when she told the servants to “do what Jesus says.” She revealed that she knew exactly how Jesus would perform that miracle. She knew he would give the servants instructions. She clumsily identified the servants as shills in the illusion. This was not the end of Mary’s collusion in the illusion; nor was it the start.”

Annas did not ask what Doctor meant by “collusion in the illusion.” He was beginning to understand.

“As I said before, it is important to examine what happens before and after the miracle. Let us replay the trick again. We now know the servants were in on the performance. We also know they were in place before the wedding as they attended the arriving guests.

Doctor pointed to Jethro. “Virgin Mary arrived long before Jesus. Jesus and his disciples did not arrive until about halfway through the celebration.”

Annas interrupted, “How do you know Mary was there first?”

Doctor blinked twice as if confused by Annas’ density. “John’s Gospel says so. Mary attended the wedding as a guest. Jesus didn’t arrive till the festivities were half over. Additionally, Mary was the only one who knew that the wine had run out and she informed Jesus and the Apostles of that fact while they were at the waterpots. If she arrived with Jesus she would have had to be cleansed... then dash to the wine tent to learn the wine was exhausted and then return to the waterpots to deliver the bad news. Such behavior would be odd indeed, if not unladylike.”

Doctor glanced to Annas for some sign of understanding. Annas bid Doctor continue with a dismissing outward brush of two fingers.

“Jesus arrived well after the festivities began. The governor commented on the custom of bringing out cheaper wine after the guests are drunk on the good stuff. We might estimate the time from judge-like sobriety to Legionnaire drunkenness at an hour or so. Additionally, we learn that Jesus “was called” to the wedding. We suspect that Mary sent the messenger to summon Jesus to the party since she was the one who insisted that he solve the wine problem. The “message” to Jesus was just part of the act to make the illusion appear more spur-of-the-moment. You might suspect the messenger was one of Jesus’ brothers. We know Jesus’ brothers were in the area and a brother would know exactly where another brother and his Apostles were.”

Annas repeated, “How did you make that wine in the waterpot?”

“I am getting to that. A miracle worker often performs several overlapping illusions: all the better to befuddle an audience. Jesus made a cup of wine appear in the servant’s hand but he also made the wedding’s wine disappear. “A stage magician does not need a reason to turn a pitcher of goat’s milk into a fluttering dove.” Doctor pointed to the priest playing Jesus. “However, a prophet needs a setup to work a miracle. Without a reason, Jesus would look like the braggadocios Son of God doing cheeky tricks to show off.”

“A setup?”

Doctor nodded. “Like all brides, this virgin merely wanted her nuptials to be absolute perfection. Consequently, the groom spared no costs. To insure the festivities went smoothly, he hired a wedding planner. The groom and this Governor of the Feast likely tallied the guest list so they would know how much food, water and wine they would need. The groom probably overstocked wine since wine is the key to a joyous party plus wine does not spoil as quickly as meats and melons. It is doubtful that both the groom and the wedding planner miscalculated so badly that the party ran out of wine halfway through the celebration. Remember that they correctly estimated the food for the guests.”

Jethro took that moment to chime in. “That’s true. No one mentions the wedding running out of food.”

Annas would not be sidetracked. “I don’t care about the wine vanishing. I want to know how you made wine in that waterpot. Now! No more stalling.”

Beneath his beard, Doctor smiled. *Always leave them wanting more.* “As you wish, Sir. You saw the water poured into the jug. What you did not know is the jar was already half filled with wine and a custom-stitched goatskin stretched inside the mouth, across the opening and down inside the jar. My assistant filled only that bota bag with water. He dipped the water from the top reservoir of that skin. While you were distracted in tasting the cup of wine, he corked the mouth of that goatskin and loosened the binding that held it in place. Then, weighted by granite stones, it sank to the bottom of the jug. With all the poured water in the bag, the wine displaced to the top. In the case of Jesus’ miracle, it would be a simple matter for the servants to pour wine while the water bag sat on the jug’s bottom. One could even look down the opening as the bag is hidden from view beneath the deep burgundy.”

Annas squinted into the waterpot’s dark mouth. The bald magician wagged a finger at the jug. Doctor’s redhaired associate reached inside and pulled. He wrenched a plump purpled bag from the opening to lay bloated on the ground. Annas glimpsed the flash of a blade between the man’s fingers but not from where it came nor whence it disappeared. This was no helpless servant. As if gutted, the goatskin disgorged water and river-smoothed granite stones onto the ground.

“A specially made wineskin.” Pharisee Annas absentmindedly tugged his beard as he stared towards the butchered skin: at one end a circular skirt with round wooden stopper in the center. “No! You have broken our deal. Jesus couldn’t have done this. He had no tannery skills. He was a carpenter.”

Doctor winced and tilted his head in regretful disagreement. “Actually there are several ways to perform this same trick. I only chose this method because of Jesus’ expertise. Carpenter or not, Jesus knew about sewing wineskins airtight.<sup>48</sup> He noted in one of his parables that wineskins weaken with age. He said that old skins can burst by the pressure of fermentation from new wine. He recommended a fresh wineskin to hold new wine. It is a small leap from that to stitching a custom lambskin to fit inside a waterpot. I have no evidence Jesus sewed the skin personally but he gave us the clue on how to do this illusion.”

The priest consider another rebuttal, “You tricked us into paying you more!”

“I’m a magician. Like prophets, it is my job to fool you or to lead you to believe as I wish.” Doctor hefted the coin filled purse. “Since you paid so generously, there is more I can explain, free of charge, if you care to hear.”

“More?” Annas calmed himself with two deep breaths.

Doctor nodded. “Jesus needed a reason to conjure wine so he made half of the wedding’s wine miraculously...,” Doctor plucked a denarius from the embroidered purse and clenched his fist around the coin. He splayed his fingers one by one to finally show his empty hand. Doctor didn’t say the word but Jethro did.

“Vanish!” Jethro blurted out proudly, “You made it disappear. Can you conjure gold too?” Jethro ducked his head in anticipation of a cuffing.

Annas stood stoically, remaining undistracted with the sleight of hand. “So how did Jesus make half of the wedding’s wine disappear?”

“It was brilliant.” The miracle detective smiled in professional admiration. “We have only to ask if the wine truly ran out or if Jesus simply made his audience believe it did. No one from the wedding realized the wine was exhausted. The wine stewards would immediately alert the governor of the feast if the wine even ran low. They did not. Instead, the governor assumed the wine in the servant’s cup came from the regular stock and praised the groom’s choice in vintage. The groom suspected nothing amiss and simply accepted the Governor’s compliment.”

Annas hissed impatiently, “... sooo?”

“Mary was the only person who claimed or was somehow aware the wine was all drunk up. She told the sad news to the Apostles at the waterpots some hundred paces away from the party. The apostles had no reason to think otherwise because they knew the celebration was underway before they arrived. If they saw people at the distant party drinking, they would have assumed those cups were the last of the dregs. By simply saying *there is no wine*, Mary made the party’s wine disappear. We now see that the apostles were Jesus’ target audience. Mary told only the Apostles that the wine was depleted and only the Apostles witnessed Jesus conjured more wine.”

“What do you mean ‘target audience?’” **TARGET AUDIENCE**

The wedding party was not Jesus’ intended audience for this miracle. Jesus told Mary, “My time is not now” when she implied he should do something about the lack of wine. From the context, we see that he meant the time was not right for the masses to learn of his divine powers.

None of the wedding guests realized Jesus performed a wine miracle. We imagine the wedding continued with giddy bethrothing instead of twitchy godfearing anxiety and/or screaming and running away. Furthermore, the servant who knew from whence the wine came did not bother to tell the Governor, which was probably a good idea. Since the waterpots were in an unclean area, it would be like telling the Governor, “The wine I just gave you to drink came from a *Gaul’s pissoir*.””

“It is no surprise that ‘we want wine’ was the first thing the Apostles said on arrival at the wedding. **FOOTNOTE** These four men were recent devotees of John the teetotaling Baptist. Since followers dutifully emulate their master’s example, those disciples did not imbibe during the weeks or months of John’s divine tutelage. That wedding day, the Apostles anxiously anticipated hoisting tankards of Golan Merlot to the newlyweds’ progeny and again to their progeny’s progeny and to each generation thereafter till the ground swayed under their feet.

Jesus spoke disrespectfully to his mother for suggesting he prematurely reveal his powers by performing a wine miracle. The obvious compromise was to conjure miracle wine without taking credit, which is what Jesus did.”

Caught up in the story, Jethro said, “What happened when the guests discovered the miracle wine in the six waterpots?”

Doctor replied, “Excellent question.” Jethro beam proudly at the compliment but Annas winced. Doctor continued. “The Gospel story has a blank spot between the Governor tasting the wine and Jesus leaving Cana. Given Jesus’ behavior, I can only take the clues from the Gospel to know what transpired in that time.

First, Jesus could not permit his Apostles to mingle at the wedding. They would learn there was never a problem with the wine supply nor did the guests discover tankards of wine at the wash area.

Secondly, since the long abstaining Apostles looked forward to leaping off the sobriety wagon and bending a few elbows, Jesus probably told the servants to fill a couple of buckets for the road. With the excuse of keeping his powers from the public, he immediately led his Apostles away from the wedding grounds. They probably spent the night joyfully celebrating. Hallelujah! Not only did their new master approve of drinking wine but could conjure it with only a moment’s notice.”

Annas groaned, “He got his Apostles drunk?”

“I would.” Doctor shrugged, “The Wedding Governor himself said that he expected guests to get intoxicated plus their hangovers would testify to Jesus’ supernatural talent with potent potables. As eagerly as the Apostles anticipated wine when they arrived, they would have been equally disappointed with the news that there was none and then elated by the miracle. It wouldn’t take an alchemy scientist to convince a few tipsy fellows that they had seen wine in the other five jugs as well.”

Annas strained to find a flaw in Doctor’s explanation. “If Apostles talked to anyone who had attended that wedding, they would learn that wine was not discovered in the waterpots.”

“That would be easy for Jesus to explain away. First, if such a wedding guest happened to discuss the wedding with an Apostle, he could only say the wedding continued with ample libation. Secondly, an Apostle would not expect the sommelier to tell guests the wine they were drinking came from something akin to an unclean Gaulish *pissior*, miracle or no miracle. Still, Jesus could just make sure his Apostles would not speak to anyone from the wedding, Jesus just left town, which is exactly what he did. Then he made a brief stop in Capernaum before moving farther down the road.” **Footnote**

## APOSTLES LEAVE AREA

“So Jesus kept them separated from the guests to preserve his trick? But the wedding party surely discovered...”

“... nothing.” Doctor finished Annas’ thought. Having wine in the other waterpots would be an unnecessary expense as well as a time consuming chore. To keep the guests from realizing anything unusual had occurred, the servants had but to retrieve the bouda bag from the magic waterpot, fill that pot with water from one of the others then dump it out and walk away leaving nothing suspicious but a little stain in one pot and some soggy ground.”

Annas asked, “But what if an Apostle looked in one of the other waterpots?”

“Would not have happened. Either the servants or Jesus would have distracted him. If an Apostle did manage to peak under a lid, Jesus could have said that his lack of faith made the wine turn back into water. That’s the beauty of doing miracles. Explanations don’t have to make sense. In fact, the more absurd a miracle is, the more determined the faithful are to imbue it with mystical wisdom. And Jesus conjured a few mystical doozies.”

**WHAT DID THE MIRACLE ACHIEVE?** When a magician performs an illusion, no one asks “why?” because the trick justifies itself. However, when a prophet performs a miracle, ‘why’ is a necessary question. The ‘why’ of this miracle was to convince his new Apostles. Jesus performed this miracle just for his apostles to prove his supernatural abilities. Till that point, they had only John the Baptist’s word of his divinity. The Gospel says it plainly... It was miraculous wine that convinced the Apostles to place their ultimate faith in Jesus.” FOOTNOTE MOVE UPWARD

Between ralphing trips to the bushes, the apostles would bellow loud happy songs praising their new master.”

Annas asked, “He got them drunk?”

Say it.”

Xxxxx section cut from here

As would be expected, the wedding planner segregated the waterpots and the resulting unclean wastewater a comfortable distance from the food, the dancing and the altar where the excited couple likely killed some animals to sanctify their vows. Mary arrived at the wedding earlier while Jesus and the apostles arrived insultingly late. Jesus’ tardiness assured that all the other guests already arrived and no one would linger about the washing area and its unclean runoff. Therefore no nosey guest would klutz up Jesus’ prestidigitation.

Mary intercepted the latecomers at the waterpots as performed their ceremonial cleansing. At that time, the apostles could observe that the jugs contained only water. The Sainted Mother announced the wine was depleted and the apostles had no reason to suspect she was lying. Jesus and Mary bickered briefly but the act was for the apostle’s benefit. Jesus conjured the wine and ordered the first servant to carry a cup to the governor of the feast. The servant’s short stroll to the party area and turning his back to the apostles afforded him ample opportunity to switch the cups. There was no risk that an apostle would tag along because they would not so rudely enter the crowd without performing the ceremonial cleansing. In fact, the apostles would not hear the governor’s comment from that distance and over the happy banter of the party-goers. We have only the servant’s word for the governor’s reaction.

The Gospels neglect to say what happened next but given the previous, we can deduce those events with appropriate likelihood. Jesus could not afford for his entourage to mingle with the wedding party. The apostles would discover the wine never ran out or their blabbing about a miracle would lead a skeptical guest to asking questions and spoil the illusion.

Fortunately, Jesus already thought of that. He presumably turned all the water in those six waterpots into wine, which was useless for the ceremonial cleansing. That presented a minor obstacle to the attending party unless Jesus reconstituted a jug back into water. An encore wine to water miracle also proved unnecessary because his tiff with his mother established to his apostles that Jesus deemed it premature for the public to learn of his powers and/or his divinity. He probably told the apostles that they shouldn’t hang out at the wedding since people would eventually learn of the miracle wine in the waterpots from the servants.

Still, Jesus' water to wine miracle sealed the deal with John's former disciples. Any latent doubt that Jesus was the Savior vanished. The Messiah's first miracle was not as flashy as Superman squeezing a lump of coal into an expertly faceted diamond but it was enough. The fledgling apostles were followers for only a couple of days but the water to wine miracle sold them that Jesus was the Son of God. We see now that convincing those new apostles to believe in Jesus was the sole purpose for the miracle at the wedding." <sup>49</sup>

High Priest Annas raised his chin, turned left to the water pot then right to the servants standing next to Jethro, the Mother Mary proxy. He nodded his knowing approval. "Yes, that's the way I would have done it."

**MOVE** We can deduce Mary was the one who summoned Jesus; especially since she insisted Jesus do something about the lack of wine. We also know Mary mingled with the guests because she knew that the wine supply was depleted. The newly arrived disciples did not know.

**MOVE** Doctor spoke slowly. "A miracle is similar to magic. Since all forms of sorcery are forbidden in your land. I must explain magic first. In my homeland, a magician may perform for payment of a coin or a handful of beans. He might conjure objects or make them vanish. It is only a skill, like juggling, which anyone with practice can master." Doctor reached over and tweaked Jethro's nose with his left hand. A small red ball of pith dropped downward into Doctor's right hand. In a reflex, Jethro reached to rub his nose: testing for abnormalities as his nose never before issued anything but blood and snot. As he spoke, Doctor twisted and slowly rolled the ball in his hands. The red ball became two, then three wedged between the fingers of one hand. One more gesture and there were none. Doctor appeared to snatch the little ball from the invisible ether and again held it up for his audience to see. He repeatedly executed the same motions slower and slower till Pharisee Annas could see there were always three balls but alternately hidden in one palm or the other palm or slung to the backside of a hand with a gossamer thread.

When the trick's secret was obvious, Jethro enthusiastically clapped until Annas' icy stare stalled the singular applause.

Doctor lightly tipped his head in a gracious bow before continuing. "Magic is an honest lie. A magician may not reveal his tricks' secrets but he will always confess his performance is indeed a trick; not divine. Honesty is one difference between magicians and miracle workers. A prophet has other tools of deception at his disposal. Unlike the stage magician, a prophet can choose when and where he performs and he can carefully pick his audience. His audience is not forewarned that a miracle is about to occur so he can postpone his performance if the conditions are not perfect. Additionally, if he fails in his prestidigitation he can blame the shortcoming on random supernatural factors such as the competence of his audience's faith. eeeeeeeee

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## 12. Virgin Mary AKA, Madame Madonna, Psychic

As a detective you must consider Mary's involvement. If the wine to water was a real miracle then Virgin Mary either had the power to foretell the future or the ability to read minds. The water to wine is the first Jesus miracle ever performed.<sup>50</sup> However, Virgin Mary knew Jesus could and would conjure wine for the wedding party. Mary knew Jesus would perform the feat, in spite of his irritation with her for suggesting it. She also knew Jesus would conjure the wine with the help of assistants. Finally, she was the one who ordered nearby servants to assist with the miracle. If she knew all that, you might find it suspicious that she knew the wine ran out when the people throwing the party had no clue. Ya' gotta



ask how Mary knew so much about the workings of a genuine Jesus miracle when she'd never seen one.

If Mary was a psychic, the Bible offers no hint of how or when she gained that gift. The Church teaches she was conceived immaculately<sup>51</sup> but she never demonstrated telepathic powers before or after the wedding in Cana. One might speculate if Mary's E.S.P. resulted as a side effect of her intimacy with the Holy Spirit.

The Bible quotes Virgin Mary prior to Jesus' first miracle but never afterward. She witnessed other miracles. She attended the crucifixion. She watched Jesus die. Although she survived Jesus by many years, the Bible never again quotes a single word uttered by Virgin Mary. We don't know if she inadvertently dropped clues hinting at how Jesus performed other miracles since the writers neglected to quote her.

We accept the Gospel testimonies as accurate. However, we cannot help but notice the coincidence. Virgin Mary's last words in the Bible are the same as today's ministers shout to spur their congregations into joyful obedience. "Do as Jesus says!"

What other fabulous facts will you uncover in the course of your investigation? Regardless of how she gained a superpower, Mary's extrasensory talent went unnoticed and unappreciated by the entire Christian world for lo' these many years. Christendom will thank you, the transcendent detective, for proving that Mary had psychic powers. Non-Christendom will thank you for proving she didn't. Who says a detective's work is thankless?

And... you're welcome

### 13. Miracle vs Magic

When a magician performs, the audience gathers at a specific time. The magician tells what trick he is about to do. The audience watches for sleight of hand plus they might inspect the props before and afterward. The audience can also presume the magician's assistant is in on the trick.

The miracle worker does not have those constraints. He need not announce his miracle beforehand. If the conditions are not right, he can postpone for a more opportune time without the audience ever knowing the miracle's performance has been postponed. His audience does not have the opportunity to inspect the props beforehand. The holy man's assistants can disguise themselves as bystanders. The holy man can hide failures with a variety of supernatural excuses but the magician cannot.

The miracle of the water to wine is an example. Jesus set the stage when the apostles did not know that a miracle was forthcoming. If some kibitzer persisted in hanging around, he could just postpone the trick for another day. If one of the curious apostles lifted the lid of one of the wineless pots, Jesus would have berated his lack of faith and claimed his disbelief prevented the water in that pot from becoming wine or that lifting the lid disturbed the supernatural forces.

The magician is always a liar but he is far more honest than the holy man who passes off his sleight of hand as divine.

Accepting a miracle as fact frustrates a criminal investigation. Miracles would make physical evidence meaningless. A defendant who exclaims, "It's a miracle," to explain why police found crystal meth stuffed down his crotch is definitely bound for the slammer. He would be better off saying, "This is not my underwear. I am just wearing them for a friend."

A jury finds one "guilty" and "not guilty" by weighing the physical evidence and testimony against the opposing scenarios proposed by the defending and prosecuting

attorneys but modern courts exclude supernatural explanations. Salem witch trial executions are only inevitable when courts admit miraculous evidence. In such courts, “the Devil made me do it,” is not a defense but a confession.

Like UFO’s, religious miracles are growing increasingly rare. Flying saucer sightings all but ended when nine-year-olds began carrying phones with high definition video cameras. Miracles started their decline when people grew brave enough to question them. Each year hundreds of thousands of the desperately ill visit shrines like Our Divine Lady of (*fill in the blank.*) Churches have drastically cut back on proclaiming contemporary miracles. Today, the rare Lourdes miracle is not impressive enough for reporting by legitimate journalist organizations or even Fox News. Today, people use the “M” word less to describe divine manifestations than to explain a lone survivor of a public transportation disaster.

In Jesus’ day, people demanded miracles from their gods and prophets. Today (any time of the day) you can tune in TV stations and watch evangelists channeling God’s power. Instead of conjuring, today’s miracle workers limit themselves mostly to miracle healings. Tearful folks testify of diseases miraculously healed and of supernatural remedies that cured their anemic bank accounts. Glitzy infomercial segments filmed on gaudy stages encourage people to ignore annoying reason. Unfortunately, a prophet’s proof and the huckster’s spoof are indistinguishable to the faithful and the rube alike. The FCC is now the evangelists’ unwitting dupe. The viewing audience must think, “The FCC would not let con men and criminals broadcast TV shows to obviously victimize American citizens... for so many decades. Would they?”

#### **14. Jesus’ Problem with Miracles**

Jesus’ miracles served as his Messiah’s I.D. card.<sup>52</sup> Consequently, he preached a conflicted message. “Believe in me because I do miracles but don’t believe in other prophets even if they do miracles.” Unfortunately, he also commanded, “Believe anyone who invokes my name.” Consequently so many broadcast stations operating as 501(c)3 tax-exempt religious enterprises prey on hapless people by incessantly and indecently evoking Jesus’ name.

Jesus downplayed miracles. More specifically, he pooh-poohed other men’s miracles. Even as his marvels earned devotion, he cautioned that a false prophet’s feats could easily fool anyone. Jesus cautioned followers not to be taken in by fraudulent christos who do tricks and miracle cures.<sup>53</sup> However, Jesus did not say how to recognize fake prophets. If he had, today’s faith-healing practitioners would be forced to seek honest employment or, at least, turn their efforts to some other criminal enterprise.

One day the apostles came upon a suspicious fellow [We will call him, Ernie] who was busy expunging demons from folks. Although a stranger to the apostles, he did those exorcisms in Jesus’ name. Ernie was not unlike today’s demon-thrashing ministers who close their fiery incantations by shouting, “...in the name of Jesus!” although they often pronounce his name in three syllables—Jä · ēē’ · zäs. However, Ernie was not one of Jesus’ followers. He was an outsider who horned in on the Messiah’s turf.

The outraged apostles ordered Ernie to knock it off his exorcising and reported to Christ that Ernie was stealing his act.<sup>54</sup> Jesus did not ask where Ernie learned his sorcery or who he got it from. Jesus did not investigate to establish if the guy was a fake. Jesus did not recruit Ernie the Exorcist into his entourage. Jesus’ only concern was that Ernie did not badmouth Jesus.<sup>55</sup> Christ then coined the benign and largely forgotten saying, “If he is not against us, he is with us.”<sup>56</sup> Sometime later, Jesus amended it to the version<sup>57</sup> loosely quoted by an American president who rallied citizens into a dishonest war. “He that is not with us is against us.”

Jesus grew peeved when folks criticized his miracles. Today's believers are wowed by miracle stories, however, the audiences in Capernaum, Bethsaida and Corazin were unimpressed by his supernatural healings. Jesus warned that his naysayers and critics would suffer worse than the Sodomites.<sup>58</sup> When he performed underwhelming magic, he blamed his performance's mediocrity on his audience's lack of faith.<sup>59</sup> Jesus provided refreshments of fish and bread at a couple of performances. When his spectators grew less impressed in his miracles, he chided them as bums only interested in mooching the proverbial free lunch.<sup>60</sup>

The Council of Pharisee and Herod Antipas both invited Jesus to do what every magician dreams: to play The Palace. A command performance before the Council and Herod was the perfect venue. The Christ could heal some sick, cure a few corpses then pluck a shekel or two from a child's ear. He could win to his flock Israel's religious hierarchy and the ruler of Galilee too. Instead of seizing that opportunity, Jesus refused.<sup>61</sup>

Jesus loathed doing marvels for the sophisticated. He did no miracles in the cities of Sepphoris, Tiberias, Caesarea or Jerusalem: places where the educated and worldly people lived. Instead, he performed for the great unwashed in backwater villages. Jesus explained that God prevented him from doing miracles for wise and prudent people. Instead, God only empowered Jesus to do supernatural performances before the guileless. God guaranteed that ignorant folks (virtual babes) would thrill to Jesus' miracles.<sup>62</sup>

Some religions emulate those audiences that Jesus preferred by shunning education and rejecting skeptical thinking. Jehovah's Witnesses discourage higher education. Amish shun schooling above the eighth grade. Religiously founded schools teach censored history and redacted science. Some religious fanatics kill women who seek education. Perhaps to keep with Jesus' teachings, one state's political party presented its platform (in 2012) (in writing) (in Texas) of their party's opposition to teaching critical thinking skills in public schools as such thinking challenges fixed beliefs and undermines parental authority.

A detective may consider that Jesus found it too risky to chance sleight of hand or conjuring miracles before a sophisticated audience. That is a sound policy. Bible miracles are often wasted on discriminating folk. The following is an example.

## 15. Jesus and Satan Fly up a Mountain

After his baptism, Satan flew with Jesus to the peak of a high mountain. From there, they could see all the kingdoms of the earth. None of the apostles witnessed this miracle so it is no more substantial than a rumor and is unworthy of questions. We will examine it anyway because critical thinking is common except in Texas.

Jesus and Satan flying to the peak of a mountain notwithstanding, this miracle is still quite peculiar. Since the earth is a sphere, one cannot see all earth's kingdoms even from our planet's highest point, the summit of the Chimborazo volcano. Some suggest "seeing all the kingdoms" was just a metaphor or a vision but fail to explain why a metaphor or vision requires flying up a very high mountain. The detective who attempts to unravel this riddle risks driving himself into a debilitating obsession. Even the progressive creationist, who begrudgingly admits the earth is a sphere, agrees that this story is a puzzler.

In 1984, an astute apologist from Looneyville, Texas wrote in his blog that he solved this mounting mystery. The answer came to him in a dream's flash of revelation. He realized the biblically fabled mountain has to be Mons Hadley. This mountain's peak is exceedingly high and unlike any mountain on Earth, a patient man can see all the world's Kingdoms.<sup>63</sup>

This investigation will not examine this miracle further since the Bible gives no mention of any mortal witnessing it. But, of course, no mortal could.

## 16. Jesus and the Money Fish

Jesus' miracles often appear as foggy lessons blurred in mystical befuddlement. Several were worse.

Jesus once told Peter to go fishing. Jesus said the first fish Peter snagged would have a coin in its mouth. He told Peter to take the coin and pay their taxes.<sup>64</sup> In Jesus' day, evangelical ministers paid taxes and freely preached their narrow politics from the pulpit. The only difference today is ministries don't pay taxes.

Believers accept the coin spitting fish as a miracle but they might reconsider. The Bible never says Peter went fishing or caught a fish. Jesus only *told* Peter to go catch a fish with a coin in its mouth. We don't know what happened. Perhaps Peter failed to set the hook and the money-fish slipped his line. His frail fisherman's pride may have kept him from admitting his clumsiness. Maybe Peter paid the tax by filching a coin from Jesus' moneybag that Judas carried.<sup>65</sup> Peter might have hooked a penniless minnow or a bass with chipmunk cheeks full of denarii. We don't know.

The Bible never says anyone saw this miracle or that it actually occurred. No Gospel quotes anyone saying Peter caught a coin-laden fish. Readers only assume he did. That assumption puts this allusion of wizardry at #28 in the Jesus list of marvels but at #1 under the column labeled, "Why in the hell does conjuring a coin require a fish?"

## 17. Faith and Belief

You should not question the faith of your witnesses or the honesty of their testimony. As far as this investigation is concerned, those apostles saw Jesus raise a four-day corpse to life. They witnessed Jesus make two thousand pigs seppuku themselves like clinically depressed lemmings. However, the investigator cannot blindly accept *it's a miracle* as the first and last explanation. Miracles make every objective question unwelcome. Doubting a religious illusion quickly leads to the irreverent or blasphemous because an open-minded investigator must eventually ask, "What if this miracle is a fraud?"

Faith in miracles is an all or nothing proposition. Faith has no limits or guidelines. If you believe in one miracle, you must entertain any otherwise unbelievable thing someone tells you is true... on faith. From making the sun go backward in the sky to riding a winged horse or the innuendo of plucking a coin from a fish, the magnitude of a marvel makes no difference. One miracle may be more zany than another but no less sacred to a believer.

Our elders may say we should respect others' beliefs. Sometimes elders are wrong. We may choose to graciously respect a person's privilege to believe as he wishes. It is quite another thing to respect the flying horsepucky he believes. Otherwise, you'd be respecting the blessings of holy water, the charms of circumcision and the supernatural powers of Mormon underwear.

Twixt the religious and the secular, it is the religious who deny people the freedom to believe as they wish. When folks fail to believe correctly... well, there's always the sacrificial pyre. The problem begins when the correct/approved belief changes. When King Henry VIII ruled, he executed wrong thinking Catholics. When his Catholic daughter, Bloody Mary, took the throne, it was the Protestants who sizzled on the spit. When her sister, Elizabeth, took the throne, the English people put their Catholic Holy Books in storage and dusted off their Anglican Bibles, while former Queen Mary went to her Catholic maker, if not with her Catholic head attached.

People have faith. It is never misplaced. Faith is never wrong. Neither is there such a thing as absurd faith. Belief, devoid of reason, is faith's essence. The more irrational a belief, the more devoted the faithful. From Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son to

today's honor-executed daughters, the greatest faith is often expressed in degrees of homicide. The extreme theist can abandon the compassion we credit to the lower beasts because the greatest faith often justifies the greatest acts of inhumanity.

Do not confuse faith with trust, conjecture or flawed reasoning. Faith is without accountability. Faith begins when one swears, "the lord has told me to tell you," or "the lord told someone who told someone who told me to tell you... so now, we gots sum killin' to git done."

## 18. Faith Healing: a History

Faith healing existed long before the first century. In ancient Greece, it was poor manners to seek a healer's treatment without flattering his mystical skills. Otherwise, a physician would tell you to take your piddly complaints and oozing sores elsewhere.

Faith healers wowed audiences for tens of centuries before Jesus and millennia since. Today, financial faith healers offer Miracle Anointing Spring Water® to entice spirits to deposit thousands into needy bank accounts but before receiving that wellspring of dollars, another bank account needs priming. *And how would you like to make that tax-deductible money-seed, love-donation? Cash or Check or Plastic? We also accept bitcoin.*

Roman Pagan priests performed miracles and mystical cures. No pagan temple was complete without a levitating statue, a chamber that spontaneously emitted spooky moans or doors that opened mysteriously when anyone lit a fire in the offering bowl. Greeks gathered in their temples for spiritual cures. Early physicians administered herbs and slimy animal parts along with incantations and prescriptions for which dumb creatures the ill needed to sacrifice to which gods. Hippocrates upset this faith-based medical system when he composed his principles of modern medicine.

Israel's god also prescribed specific animal sacrifices for sin's remedies and particular occasions. Joseph the Carpenter had the choice of commemorating Jesus' birth by killing a pair of turtledoves or killing two young pigeons.<sup>66</sup> In addition to the birds, God's prophesy also predicted child sacrifices as a heralding sign of Jesus' birth.<sup>67</sup>

We have all seen TV's faith healers use their version of Mr. Spock's nerve pinch on audience participants. Those afflicted people are not deliberate fakers. Their desire to elicit a cure causes them to imitate the behavior the audience expects. Faith healers also screen the audience to identify those with the greatest desire for healing and the greatest suspension of disbelief. When the person gets a smack on the forehead, they collapse to the floor to writhe in divine ecstasy. Sometimes they twirl on the floor running pinwheels like Curly of The Three Stooges. With that proof, everyone knows something miraculous happened on stage.

Modern technology presents challenges as well as opportunities for charlatans. America watched Mr. James Randi expose a hi-tech fraud on Johnny Carson's *The Tonight Show*. The husband and wife team ran a multimillion-dollar faith-healing racket. The histrionic healer worked the crowd divining his audience's names and addresses as well as their disease. It was a scam. Accomplices gleaned the info from the audience before the show. During the services, the healer's wife transmitted the information from backstage to her husband's in-ear receiver. If the audience believes the healer can inexplicably know their names and addresses then he must have healing powers too. Instead of cocking a doubtful eyebrow, the desperately ill in the audience (with checkbook in hand) trembled in thankful awe.

That fakir later used his powers of salvation to forgive himself and relocated to the airwaves. You can *B.E.T.* you will *Discover* the *Channels of Learning* on cable where his show runs dozen of times per week (as of June, 2014) hawking plastic vials of Miracle

Debt Relief Spring Water®. He might sue if this author allowed his resolve to *peter* out then *pop off* with the name of the ~~son of a bitch~~ man or of his ~~daughter of a bitch~~ wife.<sup>68</sup>

The best known Jesus-club TV show has God on retainer. On cue, in the last few minutes of each broadcast, God sends His blessings of healings down to the studio. The host and other shitepokes kneel or sit: eyes clenched, knees together, straining to squeeze out miracle affirmations.

“The Lord Gawd Almighty is telling me someone has a longtime pain in their back or leg. Someone named Don or Dan or definitely a name beginning with T or B like in Ted or the nickname Bob or Rob from Robert... is being healed of his sciatica pains or psoriasis or something in or on his left leg—possibly the right leg as he faces the TV—right now... this very minute... right at this exact moment.”

Videotape creates additional opportunity for today’s faith healers. The 7 message, *all-powerful God loves you but needs your money*, need not go out as a live broadcast. The recorded shows run in nonstop loops from Jesus’ TV and radio transmitters across our planet, 24/7. In spite of the obvious video-recording, the healers never mention if “right at this moment” is earlier in the day when the camera records the host’s messages from God. Or if “right at this moment” is hours later when someone out in TV Land tunes in the rebroadcast.

These TV shows demote the Christian God to the level of an organ grinder’s capuchin pet or the fisherman’s worm. These programs target suffering, desperate people at the speed of light, almost transcending time and space. Still, we never see headlines like *Mayo Clinic Sponsors Research Center to Study up to 700 Miracle Cures*. Conspiracists assume the Mayo Clinic is a greedy corporation who<sup>69</sup> is neck deep in medical corruption and who does not want anyone to discover that negotiable love offerings tendered to an evangelist can cure all ills.

## 19. Jesus does a Half of a Healing Miracle

Jesus cured the blind. Our faith healers today do not attempt that miracle (at least not with a camera filming.) A person hopped up on holy endorphins can ignore his chronic pain long enough to toss his cane and dance a dignified jig across a stage. It is another thing for a totally blind man—even temporarily—to count someone’s upheld fingers.

Like the evolving bacteria that grow immune to antibiotics, Jesus encountered one case of miracle-resistant blindness. Jesus usually healed with a single word, touch,<sup>70</sup> hocked spittle<sup>71</sup> or a daub of loogie mud pie.<sup>72</sup> However, he had to make two attempts to cure one sightless man. After Jesus’ first attempt, the fellow said he saw men as walking trees. This was the only half-miracle Jesus ever performed. He followed it with another half miracle. He completely restored the half-blind man’s sight with his second touch.<sup>73</sup>

Either the blind man was an overacting Elmer Gantry shill who hogged the spotlight a little longer by hamming up his big scene or supernatural powers have supernatural limitations.

## 20. Jesus Invents the Door-to-Door Extortionist

Jesus meandered the Promised Land for about a year preaching, healing and converting nonbelievers. His followers grew many fold.

Surprisingly, John the Baptist did not team up with Jesus to spread the Good News. His job was to introduce Jesus then get out of the way. John did not change his message from “The Messiah is coming” to “The Messiah has arrived.” Instead, John retired from

baptizing. He relocated to Jerusalem and began his full-time preoccupation of harassing Herod Antipas.<sup>74</sup>

Instead of enlisting John the Baptist into his ministry, Jesus recruited twelve apostles. He also chose six dozen disciples and assigned them evangelical jobs. Broken up into two-man teams, those seventy-two were like today's latter day's saintly young missionaries who bicycle to your door and knock, knock, knock during your lazy weekend catnaps.

In defense of today's white-shirted, black-tied and name-tagged missionaries, their message is identical to Jesus' original door-to-door salesmen. "Hello. Have you heard of Jesus? He loves you. He does not want you to burn in Hell. So love Jesus and it will go much better for you."

Jesus sent his seventy-two missionaries to canvas remote villages. If they were not welcomed in a particular home, Jesus told them to walk outside and shake the dust from their shoes. The symbolic act not only damned that household but also threatened annihilation for the whole city.<sup>75</sup> In Jesus' day, such a warning from God was no mild admonishment. Drawing God's notice invited anything from apocalypse to xenocide. Inadvertently provoking God's ire brought mass killings of His Chosen People, their enemy, bystanders and bewildered animals too. When the God of the Old Testament got personally involved, some folks were definitely gonna die.

TV's smirking televangelists explain that terrorism, earthquakes, pestilence and economic upheaval are all cryptic messages sent from a severely inarticulate God. The grinning Holy Man on TV interprets God's disasters and denounces those responsible. He righteously proportions blame to anyone from the ACLU, abortionists, mandatory school prayer opponents, interracial couples, ABC's *Modern Family*, homosexuals in general and (as always) uppity and damnable liberals.

God is to human as man is to insect.<sup>76</sup> Perhaps this is why the Old Testament god had no interest or little choice but to kill people to make Himself understood. There is a rationale to this buggy analogy. Since insects cannot understand human speech, a big foot is the most practical mode of communication. As a child, were you never inspired by Sunday school lessons to stomp on pissant anthills and shout, "Sin. Sin. Sin?" (Yeah, me neither.)

Jesus did not own television transmitters or streaming satellite feeds. However, his creating the seventy-two missionaries was a brilliant public relations strategy of the first millennium. Most assume that Jesus spread news of his coming by himself. He did not. Jesus' four score and four devotees efficiently dispensed his message of love and his threats of damnation. If the regular missionaries were not enough, Jesus created the even more potent super-missionary, which will be covered later in this investigation.

## **21. Jesus Rides a Donkey... It is a Miracle!**

Several days before the crucifixion, Jesus and the donkey he rode on passed through Jerusalem's gate and thereby fulfilled an ancient prophecy. The donkey incident was not a self-fulfilling prophecy. Jesus deliberately rode a donkey because he knew the Messiah should ride a donkey colt into Jerusalem.<sup>77</sup>

Donkey riding was common for Jewish folk in the first century. Artists depict Mary riding one from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Jesus rode a donkey only once but as a prophecy. Burro riding is not as impressive a prophecy as being virginally conceived but it is prophecy nonetheless.<sup>78</sup> In the messiah business every little prophecy bit helps.

The donkey prophecy posed a problem. Jesus did not have a donkey. He sent two disciples to rustle up a couple.<sup>79</sup> He predicted they would find two donkeys in a neighboring village—a mare and a colt. Christ did not tell his disciples to get permission **to borrow the animals but** if anyone asked... just reply, "The Lord needs these donkeys."<sup>80</sup>

It is a supernatural mystery how Jesus could possibly know those stubby equine would be in a distant village just waiting for the disciples to fetch them. Jesus somehow knew the owner would not scream, “Donkey Rustler! Ass Bandit!” Instead, the man handed over the reigns, saying, “Okie-fine.” If not impressive enough, Jesus also knew, perhaps magically, those two donkeys would be a mare and its foal would be a colt.<sup>81</sup>

Jesus rode through the Jerusalem gates at the peak of his popularity. The crowd numbered in the thousands. His converts danced behind him and ran ahead waving fronds. They shouted “Hosanna!”<sup>82</sup> Spectators threw their clothes and palm branches into the street and softened the steady clip clopping of the donkeys.<sup>83</sup>

Discriminating believers demote burro riding to a bottom-of-the-barrel miracle. Even the Gospels describe the donkey incident in decreasing degrees of the miraculous. Mark<sup>84</sup> and Luke’s<sup>85</sup> versions confirm Jesus’ donkey E.S.P. but quantify the miracle by writing it was only one donkey, not two. John wrote that Jesus simply found a donkey somewhere but it was still miraculous because prophecy wrote Jesus would ride a young ass.<sup>86</sup>

Pointing out these small discrepancies in this jackass story is not a criticism of our Gospel writers. It is quite the opposite. Differences in honest testimonies are not only normal but expected. The Gospels’ candor with details will prove invaluable in breaking this case.

Donkeys are second only to mules in their reputation for stubbornness. Sam McCloud, the cowboy detective, could tell you broncs resist all initial attempts to ride them and donkeys are no exception.<sup>87</sup> Unbroken donkeys buck, kick and bite as enthusiastically as any maverick. For Jesus to ride a young donkey colt with any modicum of regal dignity is impossible. Since impossible is the short description of a miracle, this means you have uncovered another hitherto unknown Jesus miracle. Congratulations! Because of you, Wikipedia® will include donkey riding in its list of Jesus marvels. Texas schoolbook depositories will slip inserts describing this new miracle under the covers of world history textbooks.

As civic groups sometimes raise money by putting on donkey basketball games and donkey softball games. Folks up north probably enjoy donkey hockey. The rules are simple. Each player must play the game, shooting baskets, running the bases or chasing pucks while riding, pulling and/or slapping their stubborn burro. There is bucking and kicking, biting and stomping plus the occasional broken collarbone. The games are hilarious and a good time is had by all. It is well worth the modest ticket price and doubly worthwhile since the money often goes to a worthy cause. The funds might buy Bibles for our overseas troops or send underprivileged kids to strictly chaperoned Jesus summer study camps.<sup>88</sup>

The next time you watch a Jesus movie, note if there is one donkey or two. Watch which donkey Jesus rides. If Jesus is not riding the foal or the foal is a jenny, stand up on your chair, point to the screen and shout in your most righteous and puffiest indignation, “That is wrong! You people are going to Hell if you watch this inaccurate blasphemy!” (Of course, that is not true... but if the audience thinks their souls are at risk, they might start fact checking their Bible movies.

We have several unnamed and shadowy characters moving about the Gospels. The first ones were the servants who assisted Jesus with the water to wine miracle. Now we encounter a donkey owner who enabled the donkey miracle. Who is this mysterious man? We have few clues since Jesus sent a couple of lesser disciples to retrieve the donkeys. None of the twelve apostles ever saw this donkey wrangler’s face.

As the case continues, we will learn Jesus had a band of secret operatives. We will dub this latest shadowy fellow, Donkeyman. Before this moment in history—before you took



this case—the world steadfastly ignored the Donkeyman. Your careful investigation will address this shortcoming to the benefit of future mankind.

Are you fretting the fate of the young donkey that Jesus rode? Fear not. Neither the baby burro nor mama donkey ended up as a Passover sacrifice.<sup>89</sup>

## 22. Jesus, John and the Pharisee

Both Jesus and John the Baptist relentlessly insulted and threatened the Council of Pharisee. They publicly reviled those priests as snakes<sup>90</sup> and hypocrites.<sup>91</sup> They cursed the Council with terrible eternal damnation followed by worse damnation.<sup>92</sup> A few Pharisee tried to hop on the Jesus bandwagon by getting baptized. However, Jesus and John the Baptist rejected them.<sup>93</sup> The detective should recognize Jesus' *modus operandi*. He had no interest in any compromise. Jesus gunned for a showdown with the Council from the beginning. The Pharisee priests had no choice. If they could not join Jesus, they would have to beat him (kill him).

Pharisee spies stalked Jesus in the outlying villages for weeks. They gathered incriminating evidence. They planned to entrap him into saying something that could and would be used against him in a court of religious law.<sup>94 95</sup> The council decided to make the problem of Jesus go away, permanently.<sup>96</sup> They recruited Herod's enforcers to kill him<sup>97</sup> but Jesus remained defiant.<sup>98</sup> When Herod's henchmen failed to whack Jesus, the Pharisee decided to ice the Messiah themselves.

Jesus proved to be a resourceful fugitive. When a snitch tipped off the Pharisee to Jesus' location, Jesus abruptly changed his plans at the last minute and slipped through the Pharisee dragnet.<sup>99</sup> It appeared Jesus could read their minds but it was not supernatural. Jesus knew the Priest's schemes because, according to the Gospels, Jesus had a spy on the Pharisee Council.

Author's note: Bible classes omit Jesus had a network of spies. You learned it here first. Aren't you glad you bought *Thirty Pieces of Silver... plus expenses?* Why not buy a few copies for your minister, deacons and co-parishioners? The book also makes a thoughtful stocking stuffer that keeps on stuffing.

## 23. Judas and the Pharisee

Jerusalem's Passover pilgrims who missed Jesus' performances during his miracle ministry tour were anxious to hear the stories of the Christ.<sup>100</sup> Followers told tales of Jesus' adventures in the temple and retold them in the marketplace. The word on the street was that Jesus confirmed himself as the Christ by riding a donkey down Jerusalem's Main Street.<sup>101</sup> The citizens expected their new King of the Jews to seize Israel's throne, cast off Rome's oppressive rule and oust the collaborating priests.

Jesus' popularity forced the Pharisee to their wit's end. They ached to murder him but Jesus was too clever to let an assassin corner him in some dark alley and he surrounded himself with witnesses. As an extra precaution: Christ never lodged for a single night in Jerusalem. As Passover drew near, the Pharisee became more desperate and their nefarious schemes grew less elegant.

The Council of Pharisee had Jesus on their persons-of-interest list for weeks. They spread the word that they wanted to interrogate anyone who had information on Jesus' whereabouts.<sup>102</sup> In spite of their efforts, Jesus frustrated their plans at every turn.

The Pharisee hoped to murder Jesus in Jerusalem's streets. Unfortunately Jesus kept to crowds where an assassin would have no easy escape.<sup>103</sup> Several days before Passover, the Pharisee got a hot tip and sent temple police to nab Jesus.<sup>104</sup> Instead of alluding them as

usual, Jesus bewitched those police into returning empty handed. The Pharisee grew desperate as Passover drew near. They needed Jesus arrested then put on trial and executed or arrested and executed or, in a pinch, just executed.

As the story goes, Judas went to the Pharisee to tell say he wanted to betray Jesus. The priests thought Heaven answered their prayers.<sup>105</sup> They could rid themselves of Jesus the Apostate and not look like the bad guys. With Judas as an informer, they had an apostle on their side. One of Jesus' innermost circle was not just willing but eager to rat him out. No one could fault for the Council for finding Jesus guilty of heresy. If the Pharisee were suspicious of Judas, those doubts faded when Judas asked for pay.

With Jesus' murder in the bag, the Pharisee abandoned their plans to kill him in a messy and amateurish back ally stabbing.<sup>106</sup> They decided to slay Jesus publicly, in full view of every Jerusalem citizen.

The scheme was so shrewd even their enemies must admire their guile, if not their *chutzpah*. Jerusalem's pilgrims seeing Jesus' execution served the Pharisee's purpose. The pilgrims could carry the message to the ends of Israel and all who Jesus and John the Baptist contaminated with their preaching. The message would be clear. As a messiah, Jesus was just a false alarm. He was a fake Christ and—thanks to the Pharisee—a dead one to boot. With Jesus' body on a stake and John's head on a platter, the Pharisee estimated another five centuries would pass before the Jewish people embraced another meddlesome prophet.

## 24. Jesus Executes a Tree (No... Seriously)

After his triumphant donkey parade through Jerusalem Jesus enjoyed a tour through the magnificent Temple. As the sun dipped low in the west, he turned eastward. Jesus departed Jerusalem's walls to stay at a friend's home in Bethany.<sup>107</sup> The next day he came back to the Temple but on this visit he noticed the money-changers. He ended up scourging those merchants.<sup>108</sup> He scolded them pretty good too.

Strolling with his apostles toward Jerusalem the next morning, Jesus spied a fig tree off the highway and craved some tasty figs.<sup>109</sup> After hiking off-road to the distant tree, he found it bore no fruit. The tree peeved Jesus so badly that he cursed the tree to be fruitless forever.<sup>110</sup> He did not just neuter the fig as one might expect from the wording. Instead, Jesus' hex shriveled the tree to its roots: dead... dead/dead.

Many of us have had a bedpost stub our toe. We immediately personify it with threats of hell or a profane accusation of incest with its mother. As foul-mouthed as we with that bedpost, Jesus saw anger beyond human parody. Jesus literally judged the tree guilty, passed sentence and executed it. Where's the anthropomorphized justice here? The fig did nothing to Jesus. If any intent at all, the fig was dutifully minding its own arboreal business. It did not trip him with a protruding root or so much as drop a dried twig on his head.

The Gospels give two versions. Matthew says, the tree wither before the apostles' eyes.<sup>111</sup> Mark says the apostles didn't notice the tree was dead until the morning of the following day. The Gospels' readers must judge which rendition is possible and which is embellished. Consulting John and Luke is no help because they neglected to write of the cursed fig. Considering how ridiculous the incident, we cannot blame them.

Mark's rendition is more candid. Despite how silly it portrays Jesus, Mark points out it was the wrong season for figs.<sup>112</sup> Jesus committed the arboricide within days of the vernal equinox but figs ripened only in late summer. Cursing a tree for not bearing fruit in the wrong season is twice as zany as cursing one for any other reason. It is as if Matthew avoids addressing the *out of fig season* kerfuffle with the "but a miracle happened!" excuse.

Why was the Son of God so angered by a lowly tree that he squandered a fatal curse on it? The tree did no more and nothing less than what evolution or the tree's intelligent designer designed it to do. Matthew wrote Jesus executed the fig as a demonstration of how deadly faith can be.<sup>113</sup> Considering the number of faith-based wars and murders. His lesson of the executed fig puts a new spin on Jesus' anecdote about knowing someone by how fruity they are.<sup>114</sup>

The practical lesson of the fig tree appears childish. *If I can't get my way... and eat figs, right now... from this tree... no one will... ever.* Matthew's explanation ignores Jesus originally wanted a tasty snack. Killing the tree did nothing to satisfy a sweet tooth. A greater miracle would be to bless the fig to sprout forth sugary fruit in the wrong season. Considering Jesus' substantial powers, such a miracle would be more reasonable and certainly more impressive. Any fool with a pocketknife can kill a tree. Instead, Jesus killed a tree in a creepy way for an equally creepy reason.

Apologists give torturous rationalizations to excuse the Jesus vs Tree insult. The apologists say the tree wasn't a tree. It was a metaphor. Or—it was a real live parable. Or—the tree was a symbol of Israel. Or—it represented the evil Pharisee. Or—the tree transgressed and deserved the wages of sin but we must wait till we get to Heaven to learn what sin a tree can perpetrate. Or—it was not fig fruit that did not hang on the tree. It was something entirely different that did not hang there. Apologists offer explanations but they rarely offer an actual apology for the migraine their reasoning induces. The painless way to regard the execution of the pitiful fig is to slowly shake one's head and groan, "Well, it's a mystery," and delve no deeper.

It is not the detective's job to scare up reasons why the omniscient Son of God did not know figs were out of season. That is the job for the spin-doctors of divinity. Nor do you need to explain how Jesus could mystically foresee a pair of donkeys tethered in a distant village yet not know that fig was figless when he first spotted it. That foresight alone would have saved trudging so far off the road and also the fruitless anticipation.

Except for his one-sided snit with the tree, no one gives Jesus credit for having any sense of humor. In spite of making mankind in His image, God the Father has no funny bone either. No scripture includes a ribald limerick or a knee-slapping monkeyshine. In the seven thousand years the Good Book spans, there is nary an amusing tale, a simple joke, or even a lowly pun. The closest to joyful humor is the righteous pleasure of punishing sinners or a baritone's sadistic chuckle rumbling in thunder across the heavens. The only other possible humor of the Bible is Jesus' shenanigan with the fig tree.

A lesser-known theory is Jesus killed the tree as a joke. It is commonly accepted that the Romans crucified Jesus on Good Friday, April 3<sup>rd</sup> 33AD. Jesus cursed the tree to death two days previously. If (as it is also commonly accepted) Jesus knew the future, then he knew what that day would become some fifteen centuries later. The fact is; Jesus pulled the world's first April Fool's Day prank.

Now there's an explanation worthy of an apologist.

The question facing the detective is mercifully devoid of a metaphysicist's pseudoscience or the apologist's rationalization. If the *Feat of the Fatal Fig* was not a miracle then how did Jesus fool the Apostles?

Miracles always need a setup. If there is no reason for the miracle then the miracle worker is simply a prancing show-off. The setup here is that Jesus was hungry. Hunger was the excuse for Jesus to veer off the Bethany road to the distant tree.<sup>115</sup> However, there was no reason for Jesus to be hungry. Bethany was the home of Lazarus and his sisters Mary and Margaret. Jesus dined there previously. The recently deceased and resurrected Lazarus owed Jesus a big favor. Bethany was also the hometown of Simon the Leper who also

treated Jesus to dinner. Surely, Simon would have sprung for a continental breakfast. Jesus also dined at the home of another Simon who was a Pharisee. At that dinner, a lady sinner cried on Jesus and spent a considerable time kissing his feet.<sup>116</sup> Experts have not yet decided if the saying, “Kiss my foot,” originated in the Gospel of Luke.

Several in Bethany would be happy, if not eager, to extend Jesus the warm hospitality that folks of the Bible are so famous. Whoever he spent the night with in Bethany would have served Jesus a filling breakfast and offered to send him on his way with a generous picnic basket. Jerusalem was a short two miles from Bethany.<sup>117</sup> If Jesus was still hungry when he spotted the fig tree then his hunger was by his choice or contrived as an excuse for the miracle. His hunger was not by happenstance.<sup>118</sup>

We know Jesus saw this particular tree several times in the days prior to slaying it. Jesus traveled that road often.<sup>119</sup> In the week before Passover, he traveled to and from Jerusalem several times. He lodged in Bethany<sup>120</sup> where his good friend Lazarus lived. Disciples found the burros near Bethany.<sup>121</sup> If Jesus wanted to fake a supernatural fig tree execution, he certainly had opportunity to scope out that lone tree.

Discounting a miracle, making a fig look dead is easy. Every Boy Scout knows the rising heat of even a small campfire quickly wilts overhanging branches of a deciduous tree. In response to the heat injury, the tree immediately cuts off flow of precious moisture to the heated branches. The plump leaves of green shrivel to a posthumous brown within a few hours.

This is how Jesus could do the miracle without supernatural curses.

As the Apostles looked on, Jesus rebuked the figless tree then they continued to Jerusalem. When Jesus’ entourage was out of sight, a lone fellow stepped to the tree carrying a torch strapped to a tall pole. He lit the torch and slowly passed it under the broad green leaves. He methodically moved the flame from branch to branch. He paused to replenish the torch’s oil but continued on until his torch’s flames had briefly bathed all the branches. To assure all the leaves wilted, he probably returned a couple of hours later to repeat the process on the more robust branches. When the apostles returned to Bethany in the evening, no one gave the tree a glance. By the next morning the leaves had a full twenty-four hours to shrivel to a deathly brown before.

Returning to Jerusalem, one of the apostles, Peter pointed out the dead tree. The apostles again tramped off-road to the tree. Although Peter appeared to explain the miracle to Jesus, he was actually effectively the miracle for the bewildered apostles.<sup>122</sup> In effect Peter said, “Jesus, you were angry with that tree yesterday. You cursed it and today it is withered dead. Is that not a miracle?”

As a detective, you must not get mired in superfluous details. You do not want to miss the most important point of the fig tree. Like the miracle of the water to wine and the donkey incident... the *Termination of the Trembling Tree* was an illusion easily performed with a discreet assistant. As your investigation continues, the Bible identifies several of Jesus’ secret operatives. And Peter? It could be happy coincidence Peter pointed out the miracle of the killed tree. A detective distrusts coincidences: especially the happy ones.

If you feel the growing excitement of solving this murder then you have stirred the detective’s soul within you. You crave justice. How satisfying for you when—after 2,000 years—you name Jesus’ killer.

## **25. The Aquarian Operative**

After killing the fig tree, Jesus’ next miracle was to make reservations for the Last Supper. The city was thick with pilgrims so vacant rooms in the Holy City were less than

scarce. The day of his Last Supper, Jesus sent the apostles John and Peter into Jerusalem. He told them to look for a man carrying a water jug. That man would lead them to an available banquet room.

Finding a particular fellow carrying a water jug seems like a difficult task. Jerusalem was an arid city with scant plumbing. You would expect every third man to be carrying a waterjug but you would be wrong. Fetching water was an endless and thankless chore. Therefore, it is... woman's work. Except during battle (when women are less available) the Bible never mentions a man carrying water or drawing water from a well.<sup>123</sup> Consequently, a man carrying a waterjug, even in a great crowd, would be quite noticeable.

Jerusalem was no quaint hamlet. It was a great metropolis. The Holy Temple alone covered forty acres. (That's thirteen city blocks to you New York, New Yorkers.) The obvious question Peter and John would ask Jesus is where they should look for this man. Jesus must have told them what part of the city or at which public well they should stake out to spot the man with his water jug.

The two apostles did not know the man they were to find. However, that man had to know their faces because Peter and John were celebrities in Jerusalem. When the Aquarian spotted the apostles, it would be an easy matter for him to hide his face by hoisting the waterjug to his shoulder. The water-bearer likely knew Jesus instructed his apostles not to approach him. The apostles would secretly tail him instead of introducing themselves and/or walking alongside the mysterious Aquarian<sup>124</sup>

The apostles had reason to be discreet because the Pharisee were on the hunt for Jesus. As far as the apostles knew, they had a price on their heads too. Their cloak and dagger rendezvous with the Aquarian is like Na[redacted]n Solo recognizing a secret contact by the orange Montblanc™ in his breast pocket. The head of U.N.C. [redacted] keeps his [redacted].L.E. agent in the dark because the contact's identity is on a need-to-know basis. Likewise, Jesus kept his apostles ignorant of the Aquarian's identity because they didn't need to know or Jesus needed them not to see his face.

Some people claim finding the Aquarian was a miracle. The Bible is less concrete on the notion that the Last Supper reservations or locating the mysterious water bearer was any sort of a marvel.

In Matthew's version, there was no Water Bearer. On the day of the feast, Jesus bluntly said, "I have already taken care of the Passover Supper reservations." The Savior told apostles to go into Jerusalem and meet a certain fellow. That certain fellow had already prepared his home for Jesus' Last Supper.<sup>125</sup>

The Donkeyman and the Aquarian are similar characters. We suspect the apostles never saw the Donkeyman because unnamed disciples fetched the donkeys. In addition, neither John nor Peter spoke to the Aquarian. They only stalked him then watched which door he entered. It is doubtful John or Peter ever caught a clear look at the secretive Aquarian's face. Another similarity is neither the Donkeyman, nor Water Bearer ever again appeared in the footlights after they played their roles. Like other mysterious players in the Bible, they hit their marks, took their cues, recited their lines then exited into the wings, never to appear on Jesus' stage again.

You have a detective's hunch that Jesus had a fourth set of helpers apart from his seventy-two disciples, twelve apostles and the group of women who followed him from Galilee. If you heed that hunch, you will not be surprised when you prove how far Jesus' spy ring reached.

Do you hear the itchy little voice inside your head? You will need that little voice's wise counsel. This case grows a little more complicated but stick with it. A mystery is not worth solving if it is so simple that you deduce the killer's identity before the twenty-sixth chapter.

## **26. The Passover Preparation**

The apostles tailed the Aquarian to a house and watched which home he entered. Neither Peter nor John knocked but instead quietly slipped through the door.<sup>126</sup> Once inside they spoke to the master of the house. As with the Donkeyman, they gave the secret password. “Our teacher wants to know the place where he will eat his Passover meal.”<sup>127</sup>

The homeowner likely gave the counter-password. “Okie-fine.” Their host showed them to a large upper room. Someone furnished the room with food, wine and utensils.<sup>128</sup> Other pilgrims scrounged for places to sleep and crammed themselves into any available nook, alcove and alley in Jerusalem. It was a virtual miracle any room was available for Jesus... much less a last minute reservation ready for a dinner party of thirteen.

Once the host led John and Peter to the Upper Room, the pair set to preparations for the dinner party.<sup>129</sup> They likely discussed the seating arrangements and maybe rosambo’d to decide who would sit on Jesus’ right. Once they prepared the meal, they left the house to rejoin the group. John and Peter accompanied Jesus and the other apostles to the home with the Upper Room later in the evening.<sup>130</sup>

## **27. The Suspicious Host of the Last Supper**

Now that we are paying attention to the ancillary characters in the Jesus saga, we should consider the Last Supper’s host.

As hospitable as the benefactor was to open his home to Jesus and friends, the host did not reveal himself to the apostles. Nor did the Aquarian butt in on the dinner. Neither man helped John and Peter prepare the meal.<sup>131</sup> Neither greeted Jesus’ entourage “welcome” when they arrived that night nor bid the dinner party “good evening” when they departed. The host and the Aquarian either left the building or sequestered themselves in another section of the house away from the Upper Room. If the host and his servant intended to keep their faces hidden from the remaining apostles, they could not have done a better job of it.

As you keep track of the background individuals, you must ask yourself if it is possible any of these men could be the same person. Was Donkeyman and the host of the Last Supper the same man? The apostles would not know. John and Peter were the only apostles who saw the host’s face. It was unnamed disciples, not apostles, who spoke to the Donkeyman when they fetched the donkeys.

Was one of the servants who tended the water jugs at the wedding and the Aquarian the same man? None of the apostles saw the Aquarian’s face. Since Jesus had tip-top secret operatives unknown to his trusted apostles, it is possible two or more of those men were one and the same.

You are a meticulous investigator. You must wonder why Jesus kept those men a secret from his inner circle of apostles. Don’t worry. You’ll figure it out. There is more evidence to come.

## **28. Who’s Coming to Dinner? Could it be Satan? atan? tan? an?**

Jesus was less festive than during previous Passovers<sup>132</sup> and the Last Supper’s mood grew solemn.<sup>133</sup> Jesus shared his last wishes and final teachings. He foretold that an apostle would betray him. When Jesus exposed the treachery,<sup>134</sup> Judas rushed away from the dinner to do his dastardly deed.<sup>135</sup>

Both Luke and John accuse Satan of possessing Judas that night.<sup>136</sup> If Satan did possess him, Judas could claim the Flip Wilson defense. *The Devil made me do it*. Any post-Salem court would acquit Judas, twelve—zip. A jury cannot convict if the defendant is compelled by a supernatural malefactor to commit a felony; less so if a demonic spirit steals the man's free will and commandeers his body.

A clever state's attorney could easily rebut Mr. Iscariot's Flip Wilson defense. The prosecutor would point out Judas accepted payment to betray Jesus well before the dinner.<sup>137</sup> Judas premeditated the crime days before the night of the dinner when John and Luke claim Satan took hold of Judas. So much for *the Devil made me do it* defense and a quick acquittal.

Neither Matthew nor Mark mentions the Devil commandeering Judas' body. Only John and Luke lay any culpability on Satan in Jesus' arrest. You will discover someone did indeed pull Judas' strings to direct his actions that night. However, the evidence implicates another puppetmaster... not Satan.

## 29. Jesus Outs Judas

At the Last Supper, Jesus announced someone would betray him and identified Judas as the traitor. How did Jesus know? The knee-jerk answer is it was a miracle of mind reading or fortune telling.

If Jesus used clairvoyance to discover a traitor in his midst then he did it the hard way. Jesus needed no supernatural powers to know Judas sold him out to the Council because Jesus had a deep-cover spy in the Pharisee Star Chamber. Weeks before the Last Supper, a certain undercover Pharisee tipped off Jesus on Herod's plans to kill him.<sup>138</sup> Jesus' agents would know of Judas' treacherous pact with the Pharisee.

That night, the apostles shared a Communion meal of wine and thin bread. This sacrament has since evolved for sober Baptists into grape-flavored drinks and unleavened, unsalted saltines. For some religions, Communion is not wine, juice, bread or crackers. By transubstantiation, the wine and bread literally transforms into real Jesus blood and raw Jesus sinew before it hits the parishioner's stomach. The next time you take Communion, do not think about chewing raw human meat or swallowing thickening blood with coagulated clots floating on top. Remember; do not think of that.

The Bible does not say the apostles devoured actual human tissues at the first Holy Communion. It is more disturbing than deeply disturbing that at least one church declares Communion as an actual cannibal sacrament called transubstantiation, whereby the crackers and wine transforms to real flesh. [Just a second...gagging a little bit here] That is an official interpretation of the Gospels but... inaccurate and gross. The Gospels plainly state Jesus only offered his symbolic flesh and blood in a pretense of cannibalism, albeit deeply disturbing pretend cannibalism.

Cannibalism is not without biblical precedence. In Ezekiel, God spends chapter after describing the terrible anguish he was going to visit upon the Jewish people. Among those horrors was starvation so great children would eat their parents. In an earlier book, there is an account of two gluttonous women who ate a whole child in one day.<sup>139</sup> Although there are rules against eating various animals there appears to be no commandment against eating the ancient equivalent of Soylent Green. In the spirit of full disclosure, we should note the Old Testament never describes consuming real human flesh as a good thing.

Jot a notation in your evidence pad. The timing of the pretend cannibalism at the Last Supper is important because the act establishes exactly when Jesus exposed Judas and exactly when Judas departed the dinner. The sequence will be important later.

### **30. Jesus and the Apostles leaves the Supper Party**

As Judas ran to the Pharisee, the twelve men stumbled about a half-mile to the Garden of Gethsemane: across the Brook Cedron.<sup>140</sup> Instead of a typical garden growing tomato plants and cucumber vines, this garden had squat-ugly olive trees with thick contorted trunks. The Mountain of Olives was a sprawling orchard, or an olive garden.<sup>141</sup>

The detective is often like the annoying four-year-old. The incessant question is, “Why? Why?” and “Why?” again. So why did the Passover dinner party leave that warm, well-furnished home for the cold, naked woods? Jesus knew he would be arrested.<sup>142</sup> He counted on it. Why go to the woods to await arrest? Jesus made no effort to evade capture as he did in previous weeks. Why didn’t he await those soldiers in the comfortable home in Jerusalem?

The reason is simple. If troops nabbed Jesus in that house, it would implicate the homeowner. Jesus was a wanted man with a bounty on his head. The Pharisee already issued a demand for the public’s cooperation to find Christ the Fugitive. If discovered, the homeowner would face charges of harboring a wanted felon.<sup>143</sup> Instead, Jesus relocated to keep the host’s identity a secret from the authorities: just as he kept the homeowner’s identity a secret from the apostles.

Jesus also had a tactical reason to protect the Last Supper’s host. That secret operative and the home itself had crucial roles to play in the following days.

The third reason to move the dinner party was the skittish apostles themselves. The apostles were terrified the Pharisee also put a target on their backs xxxxxand they were not exactly warriors with nerves of bronze. During the arrest, the apostles scrambled away leaving Jesus to the mercy of the mob.<sup>144</sup> Relocating to the dark Gethsemane woods would help calm the apostles’ frayed nerves. The apostles knew Judas would betray them because Jesus said so. However, the last time Judas saw them, they were in the house of the Last Supper. If Judas brought the authorities to the Upper Room, they would be gone. As far as Judas knew, they might have gone to Lazarus’s home just a short walk away in Bethany or camp anywhere in the Jerusalem outskirts among the pilgrims who could not afford a room. John writes Jesus sometimes relaxed in the Gethsemane Garden <sup>145</sup> although there is no scripture stating as such.

The apostles could feel safe. Even if Judas did name Gethsemane as the place, the olive grove covered hundreds of acres. At night, without a campfire and among the thick low hanging branches, the group would be difficult to locate and impossible for soldiers to sneak up on.

### **31. Judas Leaves the Last Supper**

John wrote that when Judas left the last supper, the apostles assumed Jesus told Judas to go buy something for dinner or told Judas to go give money to the poor.<sup>146</sup> John’s explanation is a plausible alibi for the apostles’ ignorance. It also serves as an excuse for why no apostles, including John himself, stopped Judas from committing the betrayal.

Making an excuse is easy. Making a good excuse is harder. John’s excuse is not a good one. Judas went to buy something for the supper? Unlikely. Shopkeepers did no business at night especially on a holiday.<sup>147</sup> Jerusalem had no Kwik-E-Marts. Merchants closed shop at dusk. Those shopkeepers were sitting in their homes enjoying their own Feast of Flatbread.



Jesus told Judas to give money to the poor? Double unlikely. Giving money to the poor was out of character for Jesus. Although Jesus repeatedly preached charity for the downtrodden, he never personally gave a single penny to the poor nor did his apostles. In spite of Jesus' plump moneybag,<sup>148</sup> the only coin Jesus ever parted with was one presumably plucked from a fish's mouth, which he used to pay his taxes. After nightfall is also a peculiar time to wander Jerusalem's dark streets looking for needy folks to grace with coins.

We know Gospel John was an honest man. He may have made an honest presumption for the reason Judas left the Last Supper. His subconscious may have created this excuse long after the fact in order to ease his guilt for not stopping Judas. As weak as the charity excuse was, it forced its way out of his brain and down his arm, through his quill and onto his manuscript.

### **32. Judas: Undercover Traitor or Doublecrossing Secret Agent**

Judas Iscariot is horribly demonized by Christian lore. You know the contemptuous terms: Kiss of death, Judas kiss, Judas goat, Judas Bush, trickle down Judas or simply Judas. All are synonymous with betrayal. We know Judas sold out Jesus because—like the vacation Bible school anthem says—*the Bible tells us so*. Children's indoctrination ditties aside, the Bible specifically tells us the exact opposite. Judas was not a traitor. He was indeed a secret operative but he did not work for the Pharisee.

Parents often christen baby boys with apostolic names. There is Matt, Nate, Markie, Johnnie, Andy, Jimmy, Petey and occasionally a Bart. No parents name their child Judas anymore and the phone book lists very few Iscariots.<sup>149</sup> Long ago the Iscariot clan took the surnames like Smith and Jones or O'Reilly. All the hate heaped on the Iscariot name will change when you prove Judas was—excepting Jesus—the greatest hero of the New Testament. He was the one most loyal to Jesus. Of all the apostles, Judas was more self-sacrificing than any Christian who ever lived. After your investigation becomes public, proud parents will christen more sons “Judas” than all the Joshes, Jasons, Jordans, Justins, Edwards and Jacobs combined. Thanks to your investigation, a future Holy See will choose, as his papist moniker, Pope Judas the First.

### **33. Judas' Motive to Rat Out Jesus**

Judas never confessed his motive for snitching on Jesus to any Gospel writer. Gospel John only speculated the motive was greed. However, it makes no sense Judas would sell out Jesus for a piddly thirty pieces of silver. Not betraying Jesus would provide opportunities to steal far more. Judas himself noted the oil Mary (this Mary being Lazarus' sister) used to perfume Jesus' feet was worth three hundred silver coins.<sup>150</sup> Pilfering just a tenth of the oil would be equal to the wages of his perfidious sin.

There is no hint Judas was a thief yet John accused Judas of pilfering from Jesus' operating funds.<sup>151</sup> Judas was Jesus' treasurer and accounts payable officer.<sup>152</sup> While the motive of greed was Gospel John's honest opinion, it is still just an opinion. If John had proof Judas was guilty of larceny then he kept it to himself. We know this because Jesus never fired an embezzling Judas from the treasurer's job. Judas still carried Jesus' moneybag even as he ran from the Last Supper to snitch to the Pharisee.<sup>153</sup>

We can forgive John's groundless suspicions. At the time, John was still an imperfect human. Decades passed before John died and transformed into a spirit. Over ten centuries passed before the Church promoted Apostle John's holy ghost to the rank of saint.

Greed is an increasingly doubtful motive. After doing the deed, Judas refunded the blood money. Matthew states Judas gave the money back because he realized the Pharisee condemned Jesus, an innocent man, to die.<sup>154</sup> Now, let us get a couple of things straight. There is no way in Christian Hell Judas thought the Council would sentence Jesus to forty hours of community service, a ten denarii fine and court costs. All the apostles knew the Council wanted to kill Jesus. The Pharisee enforced the Law of Moses and that law embraced the death penalty more lovingly than a buzz-happy Texas governor with dewy eyes cast to the White House.

It is a Bible fact Judas committed suicide.<sup>155</sup> But it is a red herring that he contritely hanged himself to ease a guilt-ridden conscience. Judas did indeed have a reason to kill himself but it was not because the Council's court handed down an unexpected death sentence. That excuse for Judas' suicide is as weak as the traditional explanation for his betrayal.

Judas' suicide only appears bewildering. We must keep the jury out on Judas' guilt for a little longer. All the testimony is not yet in. When you finish your investigation, you will have proof that miracles, greed and demon possession were never factors in Judas' alleged betrayal. You will show Judas' suicide makes perfect sense in the Jesus conspiracy.

Judas' motive? Oh come on. You know... Judas was following orders but not the Pharisee's orders.

### **34. Passed Out in the Olive Garden**

It is Thursday around 10 p.m. Sundown was at 6:30 p.m. The dinner party finished the Last Supper and retired to the Garden of Gethsemane. The apostles are curled up on the ground in peaceful slumber. In contrast, Jesus is not only wide-awake but clearly agitated. Jesus gripes because his followers cannot remain awake with him. Spurred by his nagging, a few groggy apostles manage to rouse themselves for a few minutes at a time. The fidgety Jesus distracts himself with short walks and reciting prayers.

The first time Jesus slipped away from the camp to pray, he roused Peter, James and John to walk part of the way with him. Jesus told them to hang back and stay awake while he went ahead for a nice spot to pray privately. By the time he finished his prayer, the three apostles were snoring lullabies in three-part harmony.<sup>156</sup>

You are wondering why the apostles were unable to stay awake. Anyone in the apostles' sandals would be chewing their fingernails down to their knuckles. Jesus told them he would be arrested and crucified. He declared one of the twelve would betray him. He announced Judas was the traitor shortly before Judas abruptly fled the dinner. The apostles knew the temple police hunted for the Christ. If the apostles did not realize Judas ran to the Pharisee to snitch on Jesus, they would have to be remarkably dense. So why did they sleep so peacefully?

In spite of Jesus' imminent arrest, the apostles slept soundly even in that crisp spring night. We know it was cold because men in Jerusalem huddled by a warm fire.<sup>157</sup> You are now thinking, *What fugitives—who knew the cops were hot on their trail—would skip posting a lookout then stretch out on the frosty ground for a catnap?* Catnap? No, the apostles did not just sneak a few winks. They were zonked-out like your Pickwickian uncle plopped in a La-Z-Boy® while the TV bathes him in the flickering blue light of the Turkey Bowl.®

Gospel writer Luke also questioned the apostles' peculiar slumber. Luke proposed they were weary from sadness because Jesus would soon be killed. Their great sorrow prevented them from staying awake.<sup>158</sup>

With all due respect to Luke, ask yourself how many times you've heard someone complain, "I am so sad I just cannot stay awake?"

Yeah, me neither.

Have you ever attended a funeral where mourners grabbed some shuteye during the eulogy?"

Yeah, me neither.

We must sympathize with Luke's floundering explanation. Keep in mind that Luke conducted his own investigation into Jesus' murder. Luke felt obligated to take a stab at explaining the more inexplicable events for his baffled readers. Luke offered his soporific sorrow theory because he was lost for a reasonable reason.

One clue should stick in your investigator's mind. Out of those thirteen men, eleven were unable to stay awake that night. The only two men who did stay awake were the same two who abstained from the blood wine at the Last Supper.

One Bible scholar offered a dramatic explanation for why Judas did not drink the blood wine. He said it was impossible for Judas to partake of Jesus' Last Communion because Judas had Satan in him. If Judas sipped the blessed wine, he would scream in terrible pain as hellfire's blue blazes roared from his throat. Judas would melt into a steaming puddle of evil, leaving only his crumpled cloak. While this is a delightfully imaginative theory, it has no biblical precedence. The Bible gives clues for why Judas did not drink the wine. Those clues suggest no vampire's pyrotechnic anaphylaxis to a holy-spirited potent-potable.

Matthew writes Judas did not join in the blood wine toast because Jesus exposed Judas as a traitor before the drinking of the blood wine.<sup>159</sup> Additionally, Mark stated Jesus revealed Judas as the traitor before pouring the blood wine.<sup>160</sup> John never mentions any wine at the dinner but testifies Judas had bread (the sop) in his hand when he left the Last Supper<sup>161</sup> and the books of Matthew, Mark and Luke stipulate that Jesus' flesh (bread) was served before drinking Jesus' blood (wine.)

In Luke's rendition, there were two rounds of wine, one of normal wine and a second of blood wine.<sup>162</sup> Jesus poured the blood wine after the meal then revealed the traitor in their midst. Luke never mentions when the apostles drank the blood wine nor specified when Judas left the Last Supper. However, Luke does state Jesus served the bread before the wine.

Like Judas, Jesus did not drink (even symbolically) his own blood. FBI agent Clarice Starling could tell you that, with or without a fine Chianti, not even the severely demented cannibal, Dr. Hannibal Lecter, would dine on his own liver. Self-cannibalism as metaphorical nourishment or mystical symbolism makes no sense. A Holy Man does not consume his own holy blood to become holier. Of course the Last Supper was not an actual cannibal potluck but more like a little girl hosting a pretend tea party... if the little girl was a disturbing Fellini character.

The second reason we know Jesus did not drink the blood wine is because the Bible says so. Jesus specifically excused himself from imbibing the blood wine. While the apostles drank, he vowed he would not drink any wine until he was in Heaven.<sup>163</sup>

Jesus ordered his apostles to, "Drink it all." A sip of pretend blood is no more potent than chugging a tankard of pretend blood. So why did Jesus say, "Bottom's up boys?"<sup>164</sup>

Neither Jesus nor Judas drank the blood wine and they were only two from the Last Supper who managed to stay awake that night. Is it conceivable Jesus slipped a Mickey Finn into the blood wine? Did Jesus want the apostles anesthetized for some reason? —to dull their fears of the coming arrest? —to keep them from fighting the soldiers and getting arrested? —to keep them from screwing up his plans?

We assume Jesus had no opportunity to personally drug the wine. He neither prepared nor procured the meal. John and Peter prepared the meal then departed the home to return

with the others at dusk. Jesus did arrange for the mysterious host to supply the wine and did keep this host a secret from the apostles until the last minute. The mysterious host did have the opportunity to dope a jug of wine.

Luke speculated it was sorrow that made the apostles so sleepy. Here twenty centuries later, you have unearthed a bizarre alternative that fits the equally bizarre facts. Do not judge harshly. If Jesus roofied his apostles then he surely had good reason. Even if Jesus didn't have a good reason, he's a god for God's sake and (if you know what's good for you) you best keep anything resembling an opinion to yourself.

### 35. Bloodsweat and Tears

In the garden, Jesus waited and prayed and prayed and waited. In his anxious anticipation of the arrest, Jesus agonized; *Just what in Hell is taking Judas so damn long?* Did Judas lose his nerve? Did he not report to the Pharisee? Did a devoted yet misguided disciple kill Judas before he got to the Council? Did the Pharisee have a double-double-secret agent who discovered Jesus' plan? What if the Council decided to hunt him down and murder him during Passover when no witnesses would be in the streets? What if the Pharisee did not crucify him at the right time? If the scheme's timing went wrong, all the years of preparation, his Cousin John's life and Judas' life, not to mention his own would be squandered in vain.

If the waiting was not torture enough, the apostles were worthless for even the merciful distraction of a little conversation.<sup>165</sup> In spite of Jesus' kvetching, the apostles lay blissfully passed-out on the cold ground. ... But more importantly... *Just what in Hell is taking Judas so damn long?*

The Messiah knew his arrest would begin a chain of events ending in horrible suffering... his suffering. However, he did not anticipate the extended delay before the arrest. No wonder his dread was so great. He did what every condemned man must endure. He awaited his executioner.

Any stigmata expert will tell you Jesus sweated blood that night. We can not blame the Christ if he sweated literal blood or figurative bullets. In his circumstance, most of us would be clammy, trembling, soiling our robes and puking our last supper. However, none of us would wipe blood from our perspiring brow. Condemned prisoners in Texas may stagger on rubbery legs to the electric chair but not even the innocent ones have sanguine perspiration or are embarrassed by bloody pit-stains.

Humans do not sweat blood. [For the hard of hearing] HUMANS DO NOT SWEAT BLOOD! Apologists cite the dictionary listing "hematidrosis" to add truthiness<sup>166</sup> to their claim Jesus sweated blood. That is true. Or rather, it is true that lexicons do include the word hematidrosis (Greek Origin: blood-sweat-condition of). The word is defined as *an extremely rare condition of sweating blood caused by extreme stress as in the fear of impending death*. However, cobbling a word from Greek syllables is not evidence the phenomenon is real. Also, a dictionary including the word "lycanthropy" is not evidence that a werewolf bite will spoil your romancing under the summer's Harvest Moon. By the way, WEREWOLVES DO NOT EXIST!

Regardless of what you might read, high blood pressure, increased adrenaline levels and/or extreme psychic stress does not cause bloody sweat. Hematidrosis is a pseudo-scientific myth and if your doctor claims otherwise, dump him and hire a physician who isn't a quack. (While we are at it, stigmata is horsepucky too.)

When it comes to sweating blood, the Bible is clear. No scripture ever says Jesus sweated blood. The Bible states Jesus sweated as it were great drops of blood falling. His sweat fell like drops of blood.<sup>167</sup> The Holy Book only says Jesus sweated profusely. If your

preacher claims otherwise you should consider joining a Druid Church or converting to the Pastafarian religion.

What preachers preach and what the Bible actually says is often at odds. Consider yourself justified to interrupt your minister's next *Jesus sweated blood* sermon. Stand up. Conspicuously clear your throat. Loudly announce, "That is incorrect!" Please feel free to quote this book or buy copies for your church's library. Your fellow parishioners will praise you as their vetting angel watching over them from the back pew.

### 36. Jesus' Arrested Arrest

Jesus was anxious in the garden because the arrest was delayed by hours. Judas left the Last Supper and did exactly as Jesus instructed.<sup>168</sup> In spite of Judas promptly reporting to the Pharisee, it was late night before the soldiers finally stormed into Jesus Camp shouting the first century equivalent of, "Freeze! Show your hands you apostolic dirtbags!"<sup>169</sup>

Why the mob was so late?

A week or so previously, the Pharisee got a tip on Jesus' 10-20. The Pharisee dispatched temple police to nab him but the cops returned empty handed.<sup>170</sup> The Temple officers' excuse for their failure was that Jesus svengalied them out of arresting him.<sup>171</sup> "He told us that we would look for him but won't find him."<sup>172</sup> The Pharisee chewed out the temple police for being weak-minded fools.<sup>173</sup>

The incident is reminiscent of Obi-Wan Kenobi using the power of The Force to mesmerize stormtroopers and sneak R2D2 and C3P0 past a spaceport checkpoint.

Obi-Wan cooed, "These are not the droids you want."

An imperial soldier echoed, "These are not the droids we want."

Obi-Wan flicked a couple fingers as he muttered, "Move along."

The stormtrooper waved his hand and commanded, "Move along."

By the time Judas reported to the Council, it was well past nightfall on Thursday. Just twenty hours remained. The temple police failed to collar Jesus days earlier when he stood right in front of them. The Pharisee could not afford a second failure. As far as the Pharisee were concerned, Friday was Jesus' literal deadline.

The Pharisee knew the citizens would riot if they killed Jesus on Passover Saturday.<sup>174</sup> Sunday afternoon would be too late. Hoping to beat the exodus rush, most pilgrims would depart Jerusalem just before Sunday's dawn. Otherwise, those pilgrims would spread the good tidings that the Messiah paraded regally through the Holy City's streets under the riotous adulation of Jerusalem's citizens.

If the Pharisee didn't kill Jesus on Friday, the news of a new Messiah would spread quickly. Deferring to Jesus, the people would question the authority of the Pharisee as God's sole representatives on Earth. If there is anything some Holy Men hate, it is questions. Religious leaders prefer pliant parishioners nodding in their pews—like a toy bird dipping its beak to a glass of water—bowing, automatically and ever so devoutly.

The Pharisee did not trust their weak-minded temple cops to arrest Jesus. The Pharisee could not afford another screw-up. They needed a stronger breed of soldier. They needed professionals. Fortunately, the greatest warriors of the known world billeted just across the city. They were the indefatigable Legionnaires of the Roman Empire.<sup>175</sup> The Pharisee reasoned Jesus could not stupefy them with his hypnotic voice as he did to the Temple soldiers.

It took time for the Pharisee to recruit legionnaires from Pilate. The extra time delayed the arrest by an hour or so. Consequently, the arrest came much later in the night than expected. This explains why Jesus grew so agitated as he waited... and waited...

### **37. Waiting and Praying, Praying and Waiting**

Three times during the fateful night, Jesus walked away from Camp Gethsemane to pray.<sup>176</sup> Jesus threw himself to the ground in prostration before God and begged the Lord to call off the crucifixion.<sup>177</sup> He went into the woods three times to repeat the same pleading prayer.<sup>178</sup> Such sniveling is strikingly uncharacteristic for the brave Jesus. In the preceding days, he swore he would die in sacrifice to save others.<sup>179</sup> He proved himself resolute to fulfill his divine destiny. When the mob came to arrest him, he did not hesitate. True to his resolve, Jesus gallantly stepped forward and boldly presented himself to his would be tormentors. Later, he did not falter during any of his three trials. Jesus did not plead for mercy or even cry out when the soldiers pounded nail after nail after nail through him. These are the actions of a supremely brave and resolute individual.

Some facetiously liken Jesus' repeated prayers to the kid who incessantly asks if he must eat his broccoli; each time hoping for a different answer. Such a disrespectful interpretation of scripture mocks Jesus' character. Such comparison is not only unworthy, it is a cheap shot and dangerous. It is risky to disrespect gods. Gods never serenely ignore ridicule. Without exception, mockery infuriates gods and devils alike. It is their kryptonite. No matter how self-confident gods appear in their omnipotence, they have onionskin egos and are powerless to ignore impudence. While demons have the reputation for eagerly killing the innocent and the insolent alike, the God of the Bible is less restrained.

A detective must ask if Jesus' repetitious prayers in the garden served another purpose.

Yes... Yes, they did.

Sidenote: Chanting the same prayer word for word and over and over is common to several religions. The pious keep count of their prayers in sets and reps with string beads, knotted ropes, handheld clickers or wallet-sized plastic cards with raised bumps. Some feel the counting devices soak up divine residue from the multitudes of prayers. Rosary style beads can keep an accurate count of the message, "God, you are the awesomest god" or "Please don't kill me, God" in units of tens, hundreds and even thousands. The compulsively godfearing may use a collection of Mardi Gras beads to count prayers in the hundreds of thousands. Although Jesus repeated his prayers word for word, this automaton's style of chanting is not exactly how the Gospels describe the prayers in the garden. So... nevermind.

### **38. Teen Angel, Are You You Up Above?**

The Bible tells us Jesus was not the only divine being on the Mount of Olives that night. An angel flew down from Heaven.<sup>180</sup> Of all the events in Gethsemane, Jesus meeting with the angel is the scene most often immortalized by talented artists who delicately feather subtle oils onto canvas and by flea-market hacks who airbrush garish glow-in-the-dark pastels on cheap black felt. Jesus is depicted kneeling with his lean face turned upward and his palms pressed together. Heaven bathes him in a silvered shower of moonlight while an angel (suspended on majestic wings) hovers above the praying Christ.

Those paintings are accurate except for the wings. The Bible never describes an angel as a humanoid-bird hybrid with enormous wings. The Bible does mention satyrs (goat and human), seraphim (humanoid with six wings) and also unicorn (horse and rhinoceros but no human). It is doubtful a Gospel writer would neglect to mention anyone who sported a dozen-foot wingspan. Whoever this angel was, he didn't have wings so the gifted artists and the flea market hacks share the inaccuracy.

That night, the apostles snoozed on the ground. Jesus managed to briefly rouse Peter, John and James the Greater. He bid them walk with him a distance away from camp where he told them to stay put and keep watch. Jesus went on about a stone's throw farther for his prayers.<sup>181</sup> That would be around eighty-five feet if we estimate a stone's throw to be the distance from a Little League® second base to home plate.

Each time Jesus went to pray, those three men, like the other apostles, immediately nodded off back to sleep.<sup>182</sup> Still, those were the only apostles who had a vantage point to see Jesus meeting with the angel. One of them must be Gospel Luke's source for the angel incident in his gospel. Gospel John (who was present) did not share the incident in his gospel.

We're not yet through with this angel.

### 39. The Naked Young Man of the Cloth

The Bible tells us the apostles were not the only mortals camping out in the garden that night. There was another who proved to be a prickly problem. This was a young fellow who is ignored by most Bible readers. This mysterious young man has never and will never ever appear in any Jesus movie... *ever!*

As the troopers stormed Jesus Camp, a startled young man bolted. This particular young fellow hastily draped himself with a linen cloth. A soldier grabbed at him as he ran but only managed to jerk off the youth's makeshift garment. [Cripes! How does one tactfully write this?] ...The youth bare-ly evaded capture? He evaded capture whilst in a state of bareness? He escaped capture by the skin of his... ass? <sup>183</sup>

It does not take the analytic genius of Nero Wolfe to hypothesize why screenwriters cut this youth from all Jesus movies. The incident just raises too many uncomfortably prurient questions. No one can blame you for those thoughts skittering along the baseboards of your brain. It was so cold that night that fully clothed men in Jerusalem huddled by fires. So why was this young fella so woefully underdressed?

This incident again demonstrates how the Gospels honestly reported the facts no matter how peculiar. Imagine you write a novel... In an action packed scene, villains storm in to capture the hero. Would you write that a naked youth pops up and streaks naked through the middle of the action? Such a scene is a distraction to suspension of disbelief. Your readers would complain and literary critics would say hurtful things. *This character wasn't in previous scenes. He isn't in later scenes. He has nothing to do with the plot ...and why is he naked?*

The gospel chroniclers faithfully included cumbersome and disjointed events that they swear to as truth. They faithfully reported those situations even when the details defied the authors' understanding. These ignored details remained unnoticed and unexamined between the covers of the Bible. Like Leviathan's petrified bones locked in the stony earth, these clues lay hidden for thousands of years just waiting for you to dig them up, piece them together and flesh them out. <sup>184</sup>

When solving a murder case, you cannot dismiss facts because they are peculiar or salacious. No doubt you wish you could ignore the incident of the naked fellow. You would not need to wonder about his identity. Nor would you need to guess why this young fellow needed to cover his naughty bits with an improvised loincloth. Nor would you need ask any lewd questions about what the young fellow was doing before the rowdy mob interrupted him: in the camp: in the middle of the night.

Fair warning detective, this is not the last time you will encounter the problematic youth in the linen cloth nor it is the first.

## 40. Jesus' Intelligence Network

Jesus grew anxious as he waited in the garden. Put yourself in his position. He expected his arrest, his trial and his crucifixion. However the Council could easily change its plans at the last moment. Jesus paced his campsite. That night, the Messiah's mission was at its most vulnerable. In prior weeks the Council put a bounty on Jesus' head and sent spies to collect evidence against him. They tried to arrest him. When that failed they enlisted Herod Antipas who was experienced in killing Holy Men (having already executed John the Baptist) The worst efforts of the Pharisee failed but Jesus worried the Council might modify its evil scheme.

Caiaphas was another wild card in the game. The High Priest proved he was a man who could make quick and lethal decisions to meet his goals. He could smoothly bend the Council's decisions. Fed up with Jesus, Caiaphas might have said, "The heck with this complicated crucifixion scheme. When Judas points him out, I want the soldiers to kill Jesus on the spot. Just yell, "He's coming right at me!" then shove a spear through him. Or say Jesus tripped and fell on a sword. I don't care which."

Rather than push through a quickie trial and execution, Caiaphas might convince the Council to arrest Jesus but postpone the crucifixion until next Tuesday when Passover festivities would not make their schedule so hectic. The Pharisee might toss Jesus in Herod's dungeon till next Jubilee and then (only if he still lived) execute him.

Jesus needed to know immediately if the Pharisee changed their plans. Further, he needed to know well before the arresting officers got to his camp. Such information was more than critical. It was a matter of life then death and life again. In any conspiracy, intelligence is everything. If you do not know what the enemy is doing then you damn sure don't know what you are doing.

If Jesus had a spy in the Council it is unthinkable the operative would fail to keep Jesus informed at such a crucial point. Otherwise, he would be a very poor spy. Even priceless intelligence is worthless if you cannot pass it in a timely and secure manner to the agent who needs it. You are probably wondering. *Did Jesus have a secret agent in the Pharisee Council?*

No... He had two.

Yeah... that was never in my Sunday School lessons either.

## 41. Direct Line to Gethsemane

The most efficient way to communicate with Jesus required three men. For now we will code name them Council Spy, Deep Disciple and the Angel.

It was crucial the Council Spy remained with the Pharisee. He kept an unblinking eye on all the Pharisee's discussions. In that position, he learned of any rumblings in the Council that could effect their plans. The Council spy could not afford to be absent from the Council for more than a minute or two. When he gathered information that could be important to Jesus, he passed it to Deep Disciple.

While Council Spy continued to monitor the Council, Deep Disciple relayed messages to the edge of the Garden of Olives about a half-mile from Jerusalem's gate. That done, Deep Disciple would trot back to the Council to await the next communiqué. Since speed was critical, Deep Disciple did not waste time picking his way through the trees to Jesus Camp. Instead, he passed the intel to the third man (The Angel) at the edge of the olive grove.

The Angel held the anchor position on the relay team but the last leg across the Mount of Olives presented different challenges. The olive forest covered a few hundred acres and the Angel did not have the guiding light from the fugitives' campfire. A fire would instantly



draw attention from the authorities.<sup>185</sup> As mentioned before, even a small campfire can damage a tree and olive oil was a valuable staple. Since the mountainside faced Jerusalem, a citizen would immediately spot the firelight and instantly sound an alarm. The gang of twelve would find themselves surrounded by Jerusalem's volunteer fire brigade.

Once he got the message from Deep Disciple, Angel had to navigate through a dark stand of gnarly olive trees and cover ground strewn with rocks and snaked with roots. His going was slower since he had to remain as stealthy as possible. Camp Jesus was not a fortress but it had an early warning system. Slipping on loose rocks or snapping a branch in the still of the night would expose any skulking interloper.

The Angel likely picked out his route earlier that day. He knew where Jesus would take the apostles. The Angel would have memorized low hanging limbs and the wanton roots along his trail. A careful man would brush the path of dry sticks that might crack underfoot. He would zig-zag in the leafy canopy of moon-cast shadows then wait for the right moment to meet Jesus away from camp. After he passed the message, he would return to the edge of the olive grove to wait for the next communiqué.

In this relay arrangement, Jesus would know of any happenings in the Council chambers in about thirty minutes or less. The blissfully ignorant apostles would only think that Jesus just walked from camp to pray again.

You are growing curious about the identities of the Deep Disciple, the Council Spy and the Angel. The clues are sitting right before you in the Gospels. A sharp-eyed sleuth like you will soon figure it out.

## 42. Meanwhile... Back in Jerusalem

Jesus strategically placed his campsite on the west side of the olive mount. If his plan went wrong, the mob could not corner Jesus within Jerusalem's torturous alleys and narrow streets. The Jesus Camp's location was double insurance. The camp sat on high ground looking down to the city.<sup>186</sup> Jesus would know exactly when the Pharisee's posse departed. Even from the half mile away, he would see the torches of the mob exit Jerusalem's east gate then snake across the gentle slopes of the Cedron Valley.<sup>187</sup>

Judas could not just tell the priests the location of the apostle's campsite. The olive grove covered a great expanse of the mountainside. Judas needed to personally guide the mob to the camp.<sup>188</sup> This assured the Pharisee could not send an assassin ahead of the mob.

If, at the last minute, the Pharisee decided to also arrest the apostles, Deep Disciple would relay that news too. Jesus could then intercept the mob well away from the olive garden campsite. The legionnaires would then arrest Jesus on the road and the apostles would remain sleeping: safely hidden in the deep dark woods.

If the Council decided to imbed an assassin in the mob to murder Jesus when they found him, Jesus would need to know that too. In such a case, the Deep Disciple would run ahead of the Pharisee's hit squad and send the emergency signal. When he got to the Cedron brook, he would pick up a pair of river-smoothed granite stones and repeatedly slam them together. *tap.tap.tap TAP-TAP-TAP tap.tap.tap* The sharp cracks would echo up from the Cedron valley to Gethsemane. The message would be, "*The jig is up. Run!*" Given a quarter-hour head start, Jesus could easily meld with the shadows and steal away into the limitless night.



Deep Disciple had already made two runs to Gethsemane. The first time, he relayed the message that Judas had reported to the Pharisee. The second time, he carried the news that the arrest would be delayed because the Council went to Pilate to recruit legionnaires.

Deep Disciple trotted up to the outside wall on the east side Caiaphas' courtyard. He closed his eyes and pulled his cold-weather hood down over his eyes. One accidental glance to a courtyard torch's bouncing flame would ruin his night vision. It would take several minutes before his pupils returned to their maximum. Deep Disciple did not attract unwanted attention by carrying a torch when dashing in and out of town. The light of the full moon was sufficient.<sup>189</sup> It was near midnight and he see well enough to run at a full sprint down the rocky road and skip over the occasional donkey doo-doo too.

DD couldn't let the Pharisee see him dressed in commoner's clothes so he leaned against the courtyard outside wall in a shadow's well. To recover from his last run, he concentrated on his breathing. Slow breaths... all the way in... all the way out. His job now was simply to wait for the Council Spy to hand off the next message to Gethsemane.

Deep Disciple stood too still too long in the cold. He stamped his sandals to get the lazy blood in his feet flowing. He heard the Council Spy's whisper drift over the wall. The message was, "*Caiaphas recruited soldiers from Pilate. The legionnaires have orders to arrest only Jesus.*"

Deep Disciple repeated the message. The Council Spy whispered, "Correct. Now go! The mob will leave for Gethsemane within minutes."

This was the last run of the night. Deep Disciple did not need to conserve his strength on this last run. Once outside the eastern wall, DD dashed downhill to the Cedron floor. Three hops and a skip across the creek put him at the foot of the Mount of Olives. The rest of the way was all up-hill. He sprinted until his legs burned. DD staggered to a stop at a large rock on the edge of the olive grove. He tried to whistle but his mouth was dry. He managed to work up a drop of saliva and tried again. He managed a weak tweet.

The brush stirred. One of the bushes spoke. "You are winded after a little run? Elderly gentlemen should take it easy in their golden years."

Deep Disciple pointed a threatening finger at the insolent bush and wheezed, "Shut... up."

A trim young man stepped from the thicket. He wore nothing but sandals on his feet and an infuriating smirk on his face. Deep Disciple wanted to box the brat's ears but that could wait until later. DD sat down heavily on a stool-sized stone. He repeated the message. *Caiaphas recruited soldiers from Pilate. The legionnaires have orders to arrest only Jesus.*

The young man lifted his linen sheet from a tree limb. He hung it there to keep it clean and unwrinkled. He draped himself in the thin fabric. If not one in truth, the costume made him look the part. He became an angel.

The proper detective Miss M<sup>■</sup>ple could tell you linen originated thousands of years ago. Craftswomen weaved the fine fibers of the flax plant into a thin fabric then sun-bleached it to a brilliant white. The Shroud of Turin is flax linen, which is neither here nor there. Although the Turin Shroud inspires tearful and fearful devotion, it is, never-the-less, a medieval fake from the fourteenth century. (Oh come on. You knew the shroud was a fake when you first heard of it.)

The goal of slinking in and out of the garden as quietly as a phantom likely inspired the young man's costume. He draped the sheet over his shoulder. With a single stitch joining the edge of the cloth at each side of his hips, the modified toga covered the parts necessary for modesty and the hem hung to his calves. If the apostles caught a glimpse of the young man speaking with Jesus or gliding under the shadows, they would take him for the an angel. Who but a spirit would wear such a gossamer garment on such a chilly night? If the apostles caught sight of him, they would keep their distance. Everyone steered clear of angels and ghosts. Supernatural creatures are (without exception) dreadful. God's angelic messengers would just as soon kill you as cripple you with blindness<sup>190</sup> and demons aren't much nicer.

If you want to impersonate an angel, you would imitate the traditional image. You would have a male's face that is androgynously free of whiskers. No Bible verse describes any angel sporting a beard. You would not wear a halo for the same reason. Nor would you have wings. Seraphim and cherubim sprout wings. Angels do not. With respect to medieval artists, Angels do not have halos. Lastly...God's angelic commandos probably do not wear underpants. Undergarments disturb a fabric's draping and disrupt the smooth lines of a divine angel's lithe and supple body.

The Angel needed nothing more than the scattered puddles of moonlight to light his way. Lifting the hem of his billowing skirt, the young man skipped gracefully up the trail's rocky footing; gliding as silently as his spirit namesake. Within earshot of Jesus Camp, he cupped both hands to his mouth. He blew the doleful call of a nocturnal bird. Owls of scripture were often harbingers of dread and haunted the desolate and lonely places. However, it was the only night bird's call he knew.<sup>191</sup> The apostles—groggy and not knowing a barred owl from a barn door—paid no attention to a lonesome bird pleading to the night, “Who? Whooo?”

When Jesus heard the call, he roused John, James and Peter. “I am going to pray again. Come with me.” A few cubits later he said, “Stay here and keep watch.”<sup>192</sup>

Jesus walked another fifty-five cubits to a place where the olive tree canopy briefly opened to the diamond bedazzled sky. The apostles' eyelids drooped lower and lower as they heard Jesus repeat the same prayer he recited twice before.

Then there it was. An angel stood before Jesus. The glowing creature contrasted the tortured shapes and ominous shadows of the olive forest.<sup>193</sup> The angel's garment was not smudged, soiled or frayed. It had no puffy seams or the clumsy laces of a mortal's garment. The sheet flowed over his body like standing ripples in a silent brook. Bathed in a shower of polarized moonlight, he glowed with divine radiance.

Meeting the angel served two purposes. The obvious one is the angel brought Jesus up-to-speed on the Pharisee's plans. Secondly, it provided an opportunity to create yet another miracle for the apostles to marvel. Even through it was through wine-strained eyes; it was the first time any apostle glimpsed an angel. The apostles knew Jesus faced down demons. It stands to reason he commanded angels too.

The apostles kept a frightful distance. An angel is not the sort of celebrity you rush for an autograph. Angels killed folks... lots of folks... men, women, kids and animals too. It is no coincidence, “Do not be afraid,” is the first thing an angel says to people who they don't intend to kill.<sup>194</sup> If angels say anything to other folks, it is, “Be afraid. Be sore afraid.” Apostles John, Peter and James the Greater were in no shape to get an autograph anyway. Before Jesus and the angel finished the brief meeting, the apostles rolled over on the ground, accepted Morpheus' foggy embrace and drifted back into the realm of dreams.

The Bible says the Angel comforted Jesus and that is true.<sup>195</sup> The waiting is painful enough but not knowing what was happening is agonizing. After so much planning and sacrifice, the operation stood at a crucial point. The angel kept Jesus apprised of all the Pharisee did and said. The angel brought good news assuring Jesus everything was going according to plan.

The angel leaned close to Jesus' ear and whispered. “*Caiaphas recruited some soldiers from Pilate. The legionnaires have orders to arrest only you.*”

The next thing the apostles knew, Jesus was standing over them and shouting. “Wake up! They are here. Wake up!”<sup>196</sup>

The olive forest was a cacophony of loud men charging about clanking weapons and wielding torches. One of the mob yelled, “There's another over there!” Although dressed only in a linen cloth, the mob did not mistake him for an angel. The intruders lunged to

seize him but only managed to snatch away the young man's linen.<sup>197</sup> The young man lost himself to the shadows, as quick and silent as a jackrabbit on the Negev's desert sands.

### 43. That Pucker Judas

After eighteen years, the waiting was finally over. The arrest was going down. The Jesus gamble would either win big or go bust. After the troops charged the garden and the commotion died, Judas did his part. He committed the greatest offense of all time and perpetrated the crime with an ironic kiss.

Some say Judas' motive for betrayal is a mystery but a mystery is a puzzle that has some solution. Anyone who tries to solve the Judas Kiss has no such expectation. This kiss is not a mystery. It is a quagmire of bafflement. It is inanity without the wildest hope of explanation... until now... until your investigation.

To understand the Judas Kiss, we must return to Judas' deal with the Pharisee.

The Pharisee rejoiced when Judas volunteered to inform on Jesus. With Judas' help, they could resolve the Jesus problem before Passover. Judas' betrayal would convince the Jewish folk Jesus was guilty. A trusted member from Christ's inner circle of twelve, turned in Jesus to answer for his crimes. Judas' betrayal proved Jesus was a false prophet, a true blasphemer and Prince Beelzebub's pawn.<sup>198</sup> The Pharisee could add more indictments posthumously—after more consideration.

If Judas turning state's evidence was not enough for the Pharisee to praise their lucky stars, Judas asked how much it was worth to finger Jesus.<sup>199</sup> Judas wanted money! The fancy-robed Councilmen wanted to jump to their feet. They felt like swaying to a quick four-quarter beat and belting out a chorus of *Oh Happy Day!* The Pharisee appreciated greed, bribery and betrayal. They bribed the temple police when all it took was a greased palm to get what they wanted.<sup>200</sup> Judas presented himself as a man with a greedy fetish peddling betrayal. The Pharisee were comfortable with betrayal. The Pharisee routinely betrayed their own people to appease their Roman overlords.

Without realizing it, the Pharisee put their execution schedule entirely in Judas' hands. The Pharisee were confident they understood Judas' traitorous greed. It was not the Council's last blunder but it was their biggest. If not the actual Devil, their bargain with Judas was a deal with the proverbial one.

With Judas as their snitch, the priests abandoned their amateurish plans to shank Jesus in some dark alley then leave him in a pool of thickening blood. The fix was in for the Jesus frame-up and execution. Buying Judas' loyalty allowed the Pharisee to relax. A street-smart dick like you can see the problem the cunning Council did not. The flipside of the betrayal was Jesus could relax too. He need not worry about a bothersome assassin slipping a shiv between his ribs at an inconvenient time. The events would move forward but not on the Pharisee's schedule. It would follow Judas' schedule, which followed the Jesus agenda.

### 44. The Kiss

The previous section does not explain the kiss. Does it? It is one thing to rat out a friend to the executioner. It is quite another to do it with the mustache-twisting flair of melodrama's black-caped villain.

Judas led the mob to the Garden of Gethsemane but the mobsters did not need Judas to identify Jesus. Everyone knew Christ's face. The angry villagers saw him several times in the temple.<sup>201</sup> The temple troops who previously tried to arrest Jesus knew his face. The

Pharisee and their legal staff took meetings with him.<sup>202</sup> Every palm frond waving citizen who hosanna'd the Messiah's parade down main street could pick Jesus out of a line-up. Judas' sole function that night was to lead the mob to Jesus Camp. Once there, Judas' job was finished. When the mob arrived, Jesus boldly stepped forward and said, "I am Jesus." Since Jesus already identified himself, Judas planting a big wet one on Jesus appears either pointless or just plain mean.

Today's religionists declare the kiss as profoundly evil so no detailed examination was ever considered because evil is its own motive. The world's most famous kiss would have remained unquestioned forevermore had you not taken this case.

One explanation is Judas intended to be blatant. The other explanation is... Well, there is no other explanation. Judas the Drama Queen could not be more obvious if he had theme music sung by an upstaging chorus line of prancing demons.

The Pharisee theocrats wanted Jesus dead. To have Jesus killed and thoroughly discredited was good. To have one of Jesus' apostles as his accuser was better... but to have Judas, sardonically betray Jesus with a kiss?... less.

The Pharisee were the only ones who benefited from the kiss. The Council expected the mobsters and town criers to spread the word. Judas, the loyal apostle, discovered Jesus was a messianic conman. People would say Judas did his civic duty. Judas could have anonymously stood in the shadows and just pointed to Jesus. Instead Judas betrayed the Christ unashamedly, before God, the Holy Spirit and everyone... with a kiss. With Judas as their confidential informant, the Pharisee would be revered as vigilant servants of God's justice.

Jesus insulted the Pharisee mercilessly. The Pharisee had good cause to rub Jesus' nose in it and get a little payback. The Pharisee probably said to Judas, "Jesus publicly called us hypocrites, sinners and snakes. We want him betrayed big time. So... since we are paying for it... Judas... how about a little kiss?"

The Gospels show the Pharisee had motive, opportunity and the leverage to insist on the kiss.

- They paid for the betrayal.
- The Pharisee and the temple officials discussed how Judas should betray Jesus.<sup>203</sup>
- The kiss served no purpose but for Judas to maliciously discredit Jesus.

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Agreeing to the kiss; Jesus kept the Pharisee on Judas' hook. The ostentatious smooch assured the Pharisee would not question if Judas was a double agent. All during the arrest, the trials, the crucifixion and resurrection, the Pharisee never suspected that Judas manipulated them.

The betrayal and the kiss presented a problem to the Jesus Conspiracy. Judas numbered among the twelve closest to Jesus. He witnessed the miracles and heard Jesus' teachings. If anyone was a believer, it should be Judas. People would wonder, "*How could Jesus be the Messiah when his close friend and apostle accuses him of fraud?*" Judas had an answer for that question. He walked out the city gate, found a tree with a stout limb and hanged himself.<sup>205</sup> As with the ostentatious kiss, Judas doubtless strung himself up in conspicuous view of Jerusalem's main gate.

Tradition explains that greed spurred Judas' betrayal but after the Pharisee sentenced Jesus to death, Judas could not bear the blood of an innocent man on his hands.<sup>206</sup> He gave the money back but that contrition did not earn self-forgiveness. Unbearable guilt drove him to blood atonement by conspicuously committing the unforgivable sin of suicide. His

lifeless body sent a message to all Jerusalem citizens. *Judas killed himself because he betrayed the real Messiah.*

With Judas' suicide, the Pharisee could no longer point to Judas as proof Jesus was a fraud. No one would kill himself for a fraud. Judas' suicide rescinded any accusation he leveled against Jesus. His betrayal now meant nothing. The Pharisee had only Jesus' body hanging on the cross to show Jesus as a false messiah and prove their righteousness.

Your investigation shows Judas was the most sacrificing of Jesus' apostles. He not only forfeited his life but he framed himself as a villain to be reviled by all Christians for all time. After your investigation, theologians will rewrite Judas' epitaph. His new legacy will hail him as a lucid Don Quixote who marched straight into Christendom's Hell for Christ's sake.

## 45. The Miracle Ear

It happened right after the kiss.

*The soldiers stepped forward to lay hands on Jesus. Apostle Peter bravely drew his sword and charged. With a mighty lunge, Peter sliced off a soldier's ear. Jesus ordered his apostles to stand down then picked up the ear and reattached it to the soldier's head.*

The previous is the story ministers recite in passionate Easter sermons. You watch the same in movies or reenactments. By this point in your investigation, you should not be surprised to learn this is not the Bible's actual story. The chances of the Holy Scripture matching what ministers preach is like shooting craps or praying for a miracle. The odds are long and your knees grow sore.

Pull out your detective's notebook and check the facts. First... Peter did not attack a soldier. All four Gospels agree. Peter's opponent was a simple civilian. The man was a "servant."<sup>207</sup> **His name was Malchus.** Jesus movies portray him as a rugged trooper in battle-scarred armor with a helmet on his head and a powerful sword at his hip. Jesus film producers find it less cinematically titillating that Peter would challenge a nobody to swordplay. Instead, a little movie magic transforms the cringing servant into a warrior for his role in *The Passion of the Christ*.

The reader should note that when the word "servant" pops up in the Bible, it corresponds with the contemporary, "slave." The believer may be reluctant to accept God would condone slavery but He did. The Jewish people's unpleasant bondage in Babylon is one instance. God grants the birthright of a king and his bloodline to rule just as written in the *Divine Right of Kings* and endorsed by kings everywhere. It stands to reason that if a fortunate birth ordains one man to a royal life then an unfortunate birth destines another man to a slave's toil.

Author's note: The Bible has much to teach us about slavery. How much sex to have with a slave, where to buy slaves, how long a slave must live after a beating for his abuser to be innocent of murder, etc etc We will not dwell on the Bible's wisdom on the subject. This book is already too long.

The severed ear is a fact. All four Gospels say Peter hacked off a man's ear.<sup>208</sup> The big question is pasted on car bumpers nationwide. WWJD? (What Would Jesus Do?) Or, WDJD (What Did Jesus Do?)

WDJD according to the Gospel of John? Zip. Nada. Goose egg. Jesus did not so much as cringe, "Eew, that's gotta hurt."

What about Mark?... Still nothing. Jesus deigned even to offer a pouting, "Poor baby. That's gonna leave a mark."

WDJD in Matthew's Gospel? Nothing. Jesus said nary commiseration nor cast sympathetic frown.

Surely, Luke wrote Jesus reattached the liberated ear back to the man's head. Right? Not exactly... Luke wrote Jesus "touched his ear and healed him." In Luke's original Greek Gospel, Peter cut off a major form of the word "ear" (ους). Jesus healed the minor form of "ear;" (ωτιου) earlet or lobe.<sup>209</sup> Luke does not say Jesus picked the ear from the ground. Luke does not say Jesus reattached the ear to the servant's head. Luke does not say the ear grew back. Luke does not say Jesus made the ear whole. Instead, Luke states Jesus healed the man by touching the ear's stump.<sup>210</sup>

If a man suffers a wound then heals, what does that mean? The blood stops leaking? The wounds scab over and scar? New skin grows? A severed limb regenerates? In the case of a war wound, healing could be first-aid and dousing the stump with a styptic herb, to allow the soldier to rejoin the battle. If you reattach a body part, that goes way beyond healing.

This miracle provides only minor clues in finding Jesus' killer. We could leave it right here and dump this mystery onto the great heap of Bible oddities. Detectives who are not interested in exploring this miracle further should skip the next two sections. The more tenacious of you may press on.

It is not blasphemous or nitpicking to ask if reattaching body parts is typical in the Bible. It is not typical. It is not occasional. It is not even rare. Rejoining body parts is otherwise nonexistent in the Bible. There is no instance in the Old or New Testaments where any prophet, angel or god reattached a severed body part. Neither did an amputee ever regenerate a leg nor did a blind man with plucked eyeballs (like Samson) grow new ones.

The ear miracle is also unique because it was Jesus' only cosmetic miracle. Men with their pinnas cut off can still... hear... just fine... or pretty good.

It is conspicuous all four Gospels confirm Peter sliced the ear clean off, yet three of them say nary a word about Jesus reacting in any way. The retellings of retellings of the miracle ear distort Luke's honest account beyond any hope of recognition. If Jesus returned the ear to one piece, Luke (who was a physician) would have composed a few stanzas lavishing awe-filled praise on the one-of-a-kind miracle. Instead, Luke's tone, as well as his words, imply this was not much of a miracle. Now we know why Caiaphas did not re-consider prosecution when the priests, scribes, mobsters and the mutilated servant reported that Jesus miraculously reattached an ear. It never happened.

Detective, we do not need any loose cannons on this homicide investigation. Do not jump to the conclusion you are disproving this biblical miracle. You are not... If anything, you are defending the Holy Bible's sacred scripture against willful misinformation and pandering scallywags. Do not wonder if loathsome evangelists wantonly bastardize the scriptures to use Jesus as a pawn for tax-exempt swindlings. Do not question if Passion Plays in Te~~l~~a theme parks twist the Gospels for macabre performances. Do not suggest shepherds of mega-churches deliberately keep their bleating congregations biblically ignorant for easier fleecing.

Oh wait... That is exactly what we are doing. Nevermind. Carry on, Detective.

In the garden, Jesus asked the arresting soldiers to let his people go if their warrant named only him.<sup>211</sup> It appears Jesus' cooperation made the arresting officer lenient. Jesus ordered Peter to stand down. Jesus also sternly scolded his apostles for using violence to resist the arrest. Jesus compassionately rendered first-aid to the injured man. The legionnaire commander agreed in spite of Peter assaulting Caiaphas' servant and maiming him with a *lethal weapon too*.<sup>212</sup>

You are wondering if there is more testimony regarding the severed ear. (You are definitely a gumshoe cut from tough leather.) Yes, there is. Later that night, a man loitered about Caiaphas' courtyard. John identified this fellow as a relative of the servant whose ear Peter cut off. John did not identify him as a relative of the man whose ear Jesus reattached. Caiaphas' servant did not linger with his uncle in the courtyard. No doubt he paced the floor in his servant's quarters. By lamplight, he squinted sideways at his reflection in a pan of water and barked, "dammit... Dammit!"

Gospel John saw Peter slice an ear off the slave's head. John reports the unfortunate fellow's profession—servant. John identifies the slave's master—Caiaphas the High Priest. John gives the one-eared servant's name—Malchus.<sup>213</sup> John noted that Malchus' relative lingered in the courtyard.<sup>214</sup> John quoted what his kinsman said to Peter.<sup>215</sup> John included all those details in his Gospel. Yet John, like Mark and Matthew, never offer a hint that Jesus so much as apologized for his hotheaded apostle—much less performed the most unique healing of the entire Bible.

Today, faith healers never attempt to reattach body parts. No faith healer ever regenerated a severed limb and, if one takes the Bible literally, neither did Jesus.

#### 46. Miracle Ear: Part II The Lonely Years

The sword is a heavy weapon that a warrior must swing powerfully to split bone and separate arteries. The thick blade is relatively dull so the odds are low for a man to strike and only cut off his opponent's ear. A downward swing having the to speed to chop off a springy ear would also have the inertia to carry the blade deep into the victim's shoulder. Some jump to the conclusion that Peter was so skilled that he could slice off a man's ear with a precision only Zerkow, the rapier swishing, crimefighting detective, could match.

The attack only makes sense when all the elements become known.

Peter did not use a sword. The Gospel's Greek word for his weapon (*machaira*) indicates a blade the size of a small machete or a large kitchen knife.<sup>216</sup> The KJV's New Testament refers to any bladed utensil as a sword. Consequently, the words knife, dagger, shiv and blade never appear in the Good Book. The KJV's description of Peter's weapon may be lacking in specifics but the wording is excellent for the KJV's prose. A verse like, *He who lives by the kitchen knife shall die by the kitchen knife* just doesn't have the same poetic oomph to it.

A knife, better explains how Peter concealed the weapon. It also explains how another apostle, who also carried a large knife, kept his blade hidden. There is no mention the mob disarmed that second Apostle.

So does a kitchen knife work? There is still little chance one could slice off an ear with just the swing of a kitchen knife. The ear is floppy and the cartilage is resilient. Anyone who has sliced thawed chicken breast knows how difficult cutting off an ear might be.

Peter was right-handed by a 10:1 probability. Further, there is no biblical hint Peter was left-handed. When a right-handed swordsman faces an opponent, the easier target is the left ear. We must consider how a right-handed man could swing a blade to sever an opponent's right ear yet the leave the man's neck, skull and shoulder undamaged.

Fortunately, the Gospels provide the key to this minor mystery. In truth, you aren't the first to discover the solution. Italian renaissance artist Friar Angelico (Guido Di Pietro) remained faithful to the scriptures when he painted *Arrest of Christ*. Fr.Guido depicts Malchus as a simple servant in simple clothes who is both unarmed and unarmored. In the painting, Peter rears his right hand with a large knife. Peter is poised to slash Malchus while his left fist clutches the right side of the slave's head: presumably the right ear.



Ear-snatching is a technique perfected by no-nonsense grandmothers worldwide. It is the easiest way to drag the most stubborn of a precious little angel to wherever the child doesn't want to go. Although in pain, the brat doesn't try to run away for fear his ear might remain in his Gam-Gam's iron-knuckled little fist. Brother Guido's *Arrest of Christ* nicely illustrates Peter's ear-snatching move. Malchus is shown off balance with his head wrenched awkwardly to the side. Malchus' right hand clutches at Peter's left forearm in an attempt to relieve the pressure on his ear.

The Gospels say Peter stretched out his hand and (then) drew his sword and (then) cut the ear.<sup>217</sup> At first reading, you might assume his outstretched hand reached for the blade but one does not stretch out one's hand to draw a weapon from one's own body. It is more likely that when Peter stretched out a hand, it was his left hand. That hand grabbed the ear... then his right hand went for the knife. With the ear in Peter's fist, the victim could not recoil or retreat. Peter had a stable target as he shoved the hilt of his blade into the ear's notch. Peter yanked the blade back and downward to smite the ear clean off in one smooth motion.

The biblical scenario—illustrated by Guido's painting—answers all the questions. Peter grabbing and stabilizing the ear explains how even a relatively dull blade can so cleanly cleave an ear's tough cartilage. It also explains why the ear did not harmlessly flop aside as the blade swept downward. It explains why Malchus had no collateral wounds of the head or shoulder. It explains why Peter's victim did not succeed in dodging, ducking or instinctively drawing away to make himself a harder target. It explains how Peter could so accurately hit his mark. The Bible's details even explain why Peter chose the right ear to amputate. If Peter was right-handed and tried to hold and cut Malchus' left ear: Peter would have to cross his arms in an awkward manner.

Now that you know the Gospel facts, you might reconstruct the amputation yourself. If you use a volunteer to practice choreography, you best use a NERF® sword just to be on the safe side.

What was Peter's motive in assaulting a lowly servant? We know it wasn't rage-filled revenge else he would assault Judas, who obscenely betrayed the Christ. We know the attack wasn't to protect Jesus from harm, else Peter would stab at a pitchfork-wielding mobsman or a soldier or someone who posed some immediate threat. Instead, Peter molested the most harmless fellow of the whole mob: a lowly slave.

The evidence suggests Peter's only goal was to cut off that ear. Had Peter wanted to disable the man, he would slash the man's exposed throat or soft belly or sink the blade into his victim's chest. Those were quicker, easier and more debilitating targets. As Mr. Mike Tyson can attest, taking a chunk of an opponent's ear makes him no less formidable.

We also know (or we will soon discover) that another apostle also carried a knife. Even, if Peter thought he was leading a two-man, armed charge against the mob, such resistance would still be foolish and futile.

We need to hit one more point before this cold horse is completely tenderized. You are thinking this miracle was staged or pre-staged. You are thinking that for Jesus to do an ear-healing miracle, someone needed to cut off someone's ear. For Peter to do that, Peter would need a blade. And, if Peter was to have a blade, then Jesus had to give him one... and also permission to carry it. That is exactly what happened.

The apostles went unarmed during Jesus' ministry. No apostle readied a weapon when the Nazarenes tried to throw Jesus off a cliff or when the men in the Temple tried to stone Christ. They didn't brandish weapons to cover Jesus' back when Jesus attacked the money changers in the Temple. In fact, Jesus specifically forbade his apostles to carry weapons: not even a humble shepherd's staff.<sup>218</sup> So why was Peter packing heat this particular night? Where did he get the blade? And did Peter break Jesus' order against carrying a weapon?

That night after the diner in the upper room, Jesus told the apostles to arm themselves. Jesus ordered his men to get weapons, even if they had to sell their clothes.<sup>219</sup> Peter must have said, “Hey, look. What a coincidence! Jesus told us to get swords and I see the two swords right here on this table. John and I used them to prepare supper.” Peter slipped the blade in his belt. We don’t know which apostle carried the second knife but it was probably John.

Of the two knives, Jesus said, “It is enough.”<sup>220</sup> Enough? Enough for what? How could two blades be enough? Two weapons shared betwixt eleven men in battle is definitely not *enough*. However, if the intended purpose was for one man to cut off another man’s ear then Jesus was correct. Two was indeed enough.

Jesus put the sword in Peter’s hand. Jesus made secret arrangements for the apostles to have their Last Supper in the Upper Room. The home belonged to one of Jesus’ secret operatives. Jesus’ mysterious host supplied the utensils, which included a couple of large knives. After the meal, Jesus rescinded his “no weapons” rule. He told the apostles to get weapons at any cost and two large knives lay in Peter’s reach. These facts are beyond extremely ~~coincidental~~ coincident.

When the posse approached Jesus Camp, Peter lightly touched the knife tucked under his robe. Peter seethed as Judas stepped forward and kissed Jesus. When a soldier laid a hand on Jesus, (as depicted in Fr. Guido’s *Arrest of Christ*) Peter decided someone had to pay for the insult. His new sword could collect that fee.

Peter scanned the threatening mob. Who should pay for the sin of disrespecting Jesus? Peter could not attack one of the citizens in the mob. Assaulting a free man would land him in court. The law regarding a non-slave was an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth and presumably *et cetera* across the face. Besides, those citizen-mobsters had weapons and they would tend to fight back. Peter could not attack one of the Pharisee or scribes. The Pharisee ran the courts. They would mete out a terrible judgment for molesting one of their own. Attacking a legionnaire of was suicidal. Despite any evidence to the contrary, Peter was not stupid or suicidal.

Peter’s spotted his man. Malchus the Slave stood in the midst of the crowd. Slaves do not stand ahead of their betters. Malchus would be an easy victim. A slave learns early in his career never to run or dodge when abused. To resist whipping makes a slave appear willful and willfulness earns extra lashes of the whip. Still, Peter had to be careful even when attacking a slave. If he slashed the slave’s throat, he would incur legal problems. Authorities could charge him with destruction of private property. However, if Peter severed the timid man’s ear, the most a court could convict him of would be vandalism of private property.

The Bible’s implies the *ear for an ear* rule had an exception for slaves. A slave’s ear wasn’t a big of a deal in Jesus’ time. Under certain conditions, a master could impale an indentured servant’s ear to a door with an awl. That act forces the man to live as property forevermore or until his death, whichever came first.<sup>221</sup> If Caiaphas’ slave had such a mangled ear, it would mark him for life as property: much like a goat or a chair. Malchus might not consider his right ear as much of a loss.

Here’s what happened

In the Upper Room, Jesus commanded his apostles to arm themselves. Two weapons lay in full view of everyone. Peter obediently took a blade and slipped it under his cloak.

When Judas kissed Jesus, Peter rushed headlong past the mobsters with clubs, around the soldiers with swords and through the scribes with their pencils. He took a firm grasp of the shocked bondsman’s right ear in his left hand. He drew his knife and, in one smooth

motion, liberated the slave's pinna. Peter may have righteously grinned before victoriously tossing the ear to the ground. The dumbfounded mobsters thought, *What's wrong with that guy? Why is he harassing that slave?*

Jesus shouted at his apostles to be still. The ear's stump dripped blood and spurt with each beat of Malchus' heart. Jesus discreetly filled his palm with powdered yarrow (a styptic agent.) Jesus pressed his hand against the ear's stump. He may have also used a thorn to plug the spitting little artery. When he removed his hand, the spitting and oozing blood had ceased. Any competent medic of the time could have done the same. But when Jesus did it, tradition exaggerated the details of the story then pronounced it as a miracle. With the bleeding stanch, the wound was effectively healed. Although unclean with spattered blood, Malchus could resume his slave duties at 100% of his previous efficiency.

After the ear healing, Jesus reinstated his 'no weapons' policy.<sup>222</sup>

## 47. After the Arrest

Hour: Approximately midnight

Place: Mount of Olives, Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus Camp

Scene: The apostles have scattered into the night. The mob is dragging their prisoner down the road to Jerusalem.

One by one, twelve men drift back into Jesus Camp. The apostles loiter about. They are without a leader and they have no standing orders to follow. One scratches his head. Another aimlessly kicks at dried olive pits littering the ground. They glance sideways at each other in the shared shame of failure and helplessness. Each apostle wrestles with the same questions. What should they do? Will Judas rat them out too? Will Jesus spill their names as apostles? Will the Pharisee decide to arrest them as apostates? Should they flee to Galilee before the temple police slam them in a Judean hoosegow?

The apostles sensed something did not add up. With Jesus and Judas gone, there should be eleven men in the camp. Instead, they numbered twelve. The twelfth man stood patiently waiting to be acknowledged. John and Peter recognized him. Jesus trusted this man. Even better, this was a man with a plan. The Bible never gives his name. Some of you sleuths already know his real name as well as his profession. The rest of you will figure it out later. For now, we will call him by his codename, Deep Disciple.

This twelfth man spoke. "Gather round. Make a circle. Everyone take a knee and listen up." He spoke low and slow. "We need to know where they are taking Master Jesus." Deep Disciple paused to assure everyone listened carefully. The apostles had to follow his directions perfectly because any deviation would put decades of work in jeopardy. He knelt down. "Now here is what we are going to do..." Deep Disciple picked up a twig. He made X's, O's and sweeping lines in the dirt as he outlined the plan.

Without Jesus or John the Baptist, the apostles were leaderless. The apostles were petrified of the Pharisee but they had no better ideas. They had to go along with DD's plan for their own sake.

Firstly, the apostles needed to learn what was happening to Jesus. DD would take care of that. Secondly, the apostles could not run around freely saying who-knows-what to who-knows-who. The apostles had to be put on ice and mysterious Deep Disciple would take care of that too.

DD picked Peter to go with him and follow the mob. Peter seems to be a poor choice: considering Peter's reckless attack on a lowly slave risked drawing retribution. However, Peter had to follow the mob if he was going to make one of Jesus' prophesies come true. Jesus predicted Peter would deny Jesus three times before the cock crowed. If he cloistered

with the faithful apostles, there would be no occasion to deny Christ and no opportunity to make the prediction come true.

After the apostles departed the olive garden for the Upper Room, DD took Peter and followed after Jesus and his captors.<sup>223</sup> Any sober man could easily trail the boisterous gang carrying torches through the night.<sup>224</sup> However, Deep Disciple had an advantage. Regardless of what meandering route the mob took through Jerusalem's twisty streets or what stops they made along the way, DD knew exactly where they were taking Jesus. It was his job to know. Deep Disciple was a spy.

The mob stopped briefly at Pharisee Annas' home. Instead of taking Jesus to the Jerusalem courthouse or a place where Jerusalem leaders conducted officious public proceedings, the mob dragged Jesus to the private home of Annas' son-in-law, Caiaphas the High Priest.<sup>225</sup>

Deep Disciple fell in with the mob as they led Jesus along then strolled through the gate without challenge.<sup>226</sup> However, when Peter tried to enter, the suspicious gatekeeper refused to let him pass.<sup>227</sup> Perhaps Peter did not look like the type usually admitted to the high priest's compound. Who knows? Maybe there was a secret gang-sign for temple mobsters. Whatever it was, Deep Disciple had it and Peter did not.

#### **48. A Spy in His Messiah's Secret Service**

Goldfinger types never recognize J.B. when they first meet him at the baccarat table. It is only after James has bugged all the martini olives and banged half of S.P.E.C.T.R.E.'s secretarial pool before the arch-villain discovers Sir Bond is a double-naught spy. As with James, the bad guys never discover a good spy until it is too late. However, a great spy never blows his cover. He takes his secrets to the grave. The enemy never learns that a secret agent walked among them.

In spite of a best-selling book, a blockbuster movie and ousting of a president, we did not learn the name of Woodward and Bernstein's spy for some thirty years.

Deep Disciple deserves his moniker. As a spy, he is in a class without peers. His identity remained secret for these past two millennia. Identifying DD alone will earn you a place in the Private Eye Hall of Fame. When you name Jesus' killer, you will guarantee yourself canonization to shamus sainthood.

Here are the Bible's clues about Deep Disciple.

- He was one of Jesus' secret disciples
- Caiaphas knew him well.<sup>228</sup>
- He led Peter from the Olive Garden to Caiaphas' home.
- The gatekeeper allowed DD to enter Caiaphas' residence without challenge.
- DD secured Peter's admittance past the gatekeeper<sup>229</sup> only after he stepped back out of Caiaphas' residence.

#### **49. Jesus' Spy Ring**

The Bible makes it clear. Jesus the Spymaster had a secret network of operatives, which today's clergy ignore. We must accept the Bible's holy word that there were people, beyond the apostles and beyond Jesus' disciples who operated covertly to further his objectives. We call two of those operatives, Deep Disciple and the Council Spy. It is time we give them their rightful names.

The one we call Council Spy is Joseph of Arimathaea. The Holy Bible verifies Joseph was one of Jesus' deep undercover operatives.

Joseph of Arimathaea's cover was as a respected member of the Council.<sup>230</sup> He was not a full priest but more akin to an alderman or filthy rich parishioner. With his wealth as his defining attribute, he may have used his money to grease his way into the Council's good graces. The Bible says he financed much of the Jesus Conspiracy. He brought a fine shroud to Golgotha and likely paid for the burial spices too. He purchased the plot and excavated the burial tomb days before the crucifixion. He was so thoughtful and complete that Joseph of Arimathaea should be adopted by today's undertakers as the father of the pre-paid funeral.<sup>231</sup>

Nicodemus is the man we call Deep Disciple. The Bible leaves no doubt Nicodemus was one of Christ' undercover disciples. Long before the crucifixion, he skulked about under the cover of night to take clandestine meetings with Jesus.<sup>232</sup> Nicodemus deferred to Jesus; calling him rabbi and teacher. Nicodemus proclaimed Jesus came from God and was armed with God's powers.<sup>233</sup> In fact, Nicodemus was taking private disciple lessons when Jesus recited the now über-ubiquitous John 3:16. In the same secret tutoring session, Jesus introduced the concept that is today's oft pew-shouted ultimatum to get "born again" or suffer God's terrible punishments.<sup>234</sup>

Pharisee Nicodemus was a fully fledged Pharisee<sup>235</sup> who Jesus described as a master of Israel.<sup>236</sup> Unlike Joseph of Arimathaea, he did not use wealth to influence people. Instead, as an educated priest, Nicodemus cited legal precedents. After the Council arrested Jesus, Nicodemus quoted the law to make sure they gave Jesus a formal hearing. He asked the accusations to be entered into the record and hear Jesus' defense against the charges.<sup>237</sup> Any parliamentary motions in a kangaroo court is a sham, however, Nicodemus' formality ate up time and kept the slap-happy temple troops otherwise occupied in the few hours before they transferred Jesus to Pilate's court.

Nicodemus and Joseph share a trait in common with sleeper spies: murky pasts. Joseph's hometown was the mysterious Arimathaea,<sup>238</sup> which neither the Old or New Testament mentions in any other specific context or any context at all. Nicodemus' origin was also a mystery. Members of the Council did not know where Nicodemus called home. The Pharisee only speculated that he hailed from Galilee.<sup>239</sup>

A good undercover agent uses subterfuge and assumes disguises when needed. Nicodemus was no different. Pharisee Nicodemus could not move about freely or anonymously but his alter ego, Deep Disciple, could.

That night, he pressed his enormous beard up under his chin then secured it by looping a soot-blackened cord around it to tie the ends at the back of his neck. He hid his lower beard by stuffing it down his tunic and snugging his collar. It was not the best way to disguise ZZ Top whiskers but in the midnight forest, it worked well enough. And when DD needed to make a quick wardrobe change, he could snap the cord and fluff his beard to its full glory. By wearing a peasant's robe, pulling his hair back into a ponytail and covering his head with a cold weather hood, he passed as a common laborer. Many workers shorten their cumbersome hair with sheep shears. Being a master spy, he likely slouched and faked a slight limp to flesh out the persona.

At the edge of the olive grove, Nicodemus hid himself to wait for the mob. As the gang marched by, Nicodemus slipped from his hiding place and fell into the mob's ragged formation. Later, as the soldiers dragged Jesus away, Nicodemus ducked behind the fat trunk of a squat olive tree. When the mob was safely out of sight, Nicodemus showed himself to the apostles. If he wore his pontific clothes, the skittish apostles would have scrambled for the thicket, screaming like pigs uprooting a hornet nest.

Having precious little time to gain the apostles' trust, Deep Disciple stepped out of the shadows so the full moon shown directly on his face. John likely said, "Hey! I know you. You showed led me and Peter upstairs to the room in your home where we had supper tonight." Once Nicodemus gained the apostles' trust, he gave them their instructions. When satisfied the apostles understood their orders, he took Peter and set off trailing the mob.

The gatekeeper thought nothing of it as Deep Disciple walked past with the mob. The gatekeeper waved DD right through.<sup>240</sup> The gatekeeper may have recognized Deep Disciple because he entered and exited Caiaphas' residence several times that night. However, Peter was a stranger and a peasant so the gatekeeper did not admit him. While the guard at the courtyard gate held a suspicious eye on him, Peter tried to appear nonchalant as he loitered outside.

So how did DD get Peter admitted into the courtyard? Your big clue is Deep Disciple went inside Caiaphas' residence then came back out. Apparently he did something, while inside, that empowered him to give the gatekeeper orders.<sup>241</sup> Why go inside instead of just ordering the gatekeeper to give Peter admittance as the mob entered?

We know Nicodemus did not ask Caiaphas for permission to let Peter watch the trial. That was too dangerous. Caiaphas had to suspect Jesus had a mole in the Council of Pharisee. That spy passed information about the Council's previous arrangement with Herod to kill Jesus.<sup>242</sup> If anyone recognized Peter as an apostle after Nicodemus vouched for him then suspicion would fall on Nicodemus. It would blow his cover if Caiaphas suspected Nicodemus' allegiance belonged to Jesus.

Nicodemus' cautious attitude is understandable. Caiaphas grilled Jesus for the names of his accomplices.<sup>243</sup> In spite of the angry interrogation, Jesus clammed up. He was no cowardly snitch who squeals on his buddies to cut himself a deal for a lesser rap.

There was one way DD could get Peter past the gate's guard and into the courtyard without risk of exposing himself as a Jesus conspirator. Deep Disciple entered Caiaphas' home but it was someone else who exited forth. Once inside the house, DD glanced left and right. He loosened his collar as he ducked into a broom closet <sup>244</sup> where he shed his commoner's clothes then donned his Pharisee costume. Moments later, Pharisee Nicodemus the Hero of New Judaism stepped out. He sported the full glory of a pompous Pharisee priest: complete with his towering hat, monstrous beard and shoulder length hair. It was not the commoner Deep Disciple but Pharisee Nicodemus who ordered the gatekeeper to let Peter pass.<sup>245</sup>

When later interrogated, the gatekeeper had little to testify.



The gatekeeper sought a deep breath then began. "Many people came and went from Caiaphas' home that night. When the mob led their prisoner inside, one peasant brought up the rear. I did not know him so I did not let him pass. He lingered impatiently outside the gate. Shortly, a priest stepped out of Caiaphas' doorway and commanded, "Let the man pass," then slipped back inside. I didn't question the order. Why would I? He wore the holy vestments and he had the generous beard of an elder Pharisee.

I do not know which Pharisee he was. Dozens attended Caiaphas' home that night. They all wore the cleric's garb. The sash hanging down the sides of his hat and the shadows kept me from seeing his face clearly. That priest never faced me directly and the courtyard was dim with only flickering flames for light. Plus it was many cubits from the doorway to my post at the gate. He could be any one of the Pharisee.

When Peter stepped inside the gate, I thought I recognized him as one of the apostles but he swore I was mistaken.<sup>246</sup> As Peter warmed himself at a courtyard fire, the flickering light washed across his face. Men at the campfire recognized him too and asked if he was a

disciple but he denied it.<sup>247</sup> Others pressed him again and again he repeated his denial.<sup>248</sup> A short time later, a lone rooster in the distance greeted the early morning with a cock-a-doodle-do.<sup>249</sup> The rooster appeared to terrify him. Peter began to sob uncontrollably. He ran from the courtyard, blubbing as he went.

## 50. The Caiaphas Kangaroo Court



Caiaphas shouted, “Names! I want the names of your apostate gang. Who is working with you?” Saying nothing, the prisoner casually examined his fingernails. Caiaphas sputtered, “I know a Pharisee warned you about Herod’s plans to kill you. Name the traitor now! Answer!” Even as Caiaphas trotted out witnesses, Jesus remained quiet. Out of frustration, Caiaphas ripped his cassock<sup>250</sup> in spite of the law that forbids Pharisee from tearing their holy vestments.<sup>251</sup>

Caiaphas grilled Jesus. Nicodemus needed to distract Caiaphas from questioning lest Jesus let a wrong word slip. Nicodemus considered a noose tightening about his own neck but his voice was steady. “High Priest Caiaphas. Our law does not judge any man, before it states the crimes he has committed and hears his defense.”<sup>252</sup> Nicodemus added, “Shouldn’t we convict him of something before we hang his accomplices?”

You cannot beat information out of a defendant and, at the same time, give him a fair trial or even a fake trial. Nicodemus’ interruption and citing parliamentary procedure bought Jesus a short reprieve. Sunrise was just hours away and the Christ had another court date... with Pontius Pilate.

Caiaphas’ Council court convicted Jesus of speaking blasphemy<sup>253</sup> or claiming he was God<sup>254</sup> or calling himself a king<sup>255</sup> or stirring subversion against Caesar.<sup>256</sup> If they had thought of it, the Council would have added multiple counts of faith healing without malpractice insurance.

The indictments did not matter. Criminal attorneys always prefer secret trials when the trial itself is a crime. Legal proceedings convened in the dead of the night at an undisclosed location often have vaguely stated charges but they always hand down a sure verdict and a predictable punishment.

If there was a whisper of a chance Jesus would get an acquittal, Jesus himself squelched it. He acted as his own lawyer and presented a remarkably feeble defense. He neither declared his innocence nor entered a plea of not guilty. Jesus the Defense Attorney never bothered to shout, “Objection,” even when the bailiffs smacked the defendant and mocked him cruelly.<sup>257</sup>

At sunrise, the mob whisked the impeached Prince of Peace off to Pontius Pilate. The Pharisee expected a hasty hearing and speedy sentencing followed by an expedited execution.

## 51. Jesus the Court Jester

Sidenote: There are omissions and confusions in the sequence and events of Jesus’ trials. It is impossible to align the four testimonies to agree perfectly. These Gospel contradictions do not faze the believer and should encourage the investigator. Honest witnesses never agree perfectly and eyewitnesses who do agree perfectly are never honest. The following inquiry is as faithful to all four gospels as possible.

Pilate found himself in a difficult position. The primary job of a Roman governor in an occupied land is to keep the taxes flowing. Revolts hinder that goal because squashing rebellion squanders military resources and butchered citizens are notorious tax evaders.

Being a devout pagan, Pontius Pilate wanted nothing to do with the Jesus trial. He recognized the proceedings as a sham for religious persecution. He saw Jesus as a deluded but harmless fellow who was being sacrificed to appease Israel's persnickety tribal god. Unfortunately, Pilate was the Prefect of Judea and duty bound to hand down a ruling.

If Pilate sided with the Pharisee and their mob, he would execute a pathetic wretch who—at worst—suffered from delusions of the most extreme grandeur. Ruling in Jesus' favor would irritate the Pharisee. Pilate needed to stay in the Pharisee's good graces because the Council kept the Jewish population submissive to the Empire. By divine proxy, the priests used Jehovah's name to yoke the citizens in their own faith then handed the reigns to Pilate. With the Council's help, taxes flowed from Israel to Rome as freely as prohibition's Communion wine.

Normally, Pilate had neither scruple nor qualm with crucifying Israelis. The people of conquered lands often needed a little executing if nothing more than for blood to grease the wheels of governing. But in this case, Pilate knew the Pharisee manipulated him and he hated that. Pilate knew the Pharisee could harangue Herod Antipas into chopping off the deluded man's head if for no more offense than spitting on a Bethany sidewalk. Or, a temple toady could slip a shiv between Jesus' ribs in one of Jerusalem's deadend alleys. Or, Herod could lock Jesus in John the Baptist's old jail cell for a few years. Or, the temple soldiers could rendition Jesus off the Bethany highway and Gitmo him so completely that no one would find where he rotted. Instead, the Council dumped their problem on Pilate's doorstep; as unwelcome as a flaming bag of dog-poop. The incompetent Pharisee botched their chances to ice Jesus. Now they wheedled Pilate into doing their dirty work.

Upon hearing Jesus hailed from Nazareth, Pilate seized the opportunity to force Herod Antipas, the governor of Galilee, to judge the case. If Herod pronounced Jesus innocent and freed him, Pilate would shoo the annoying priests from his court. He would tell the Pharisee to take their piddly complaints to Herod. If Herod Antipas handed down a guilty verdict then Antipas could execute Jesus himself... as cleanly as he cleaved John the Baptist's head. If Herod declared Jesus guilty then sent Jesus back for a routine execution then Pilate would not be complicit in the regicide of the paranoiac King of the Jews. In that case, Pilate would merely be the legal executioner, not the judge and jury.

Like Pilate, Herod Antipas was no stranger to ordering executions. John the Baptist was only one of his recent victims. Surprisingly, Antipas liked and respected the Baptist.<sup>258</sup> However, Lady Herodias, Antipas' wife, despised John. John publicly criticized her marriage because she divorced Antipas' brother to marry Antipas.<sup>259</sup> She saw the Holy Man as a home wrecker trying to break up her happy marriage. Lady Herodias cunningly used her coquettish daughter to seduce Antipas into beheading the gossipy prophet.<sup>260</sup> Being publicly-whipped by two women, Herod Antipas could not resist but to do as he was told.<sup>261</sup>

Herod Antipas regretted killing John. He should have considered his father's remedy for a kvetching woman. King Herod was not only a tyrant but also a lady-killer. Be she queen-wife or royal mother-in-law,<sup>262</sup> King Herod knew one sure, quick and lasting solution for a nagging wench.

King Herod was a serial-killing psychopath. His son, Herod Antipas came by it honest... the insanity that is. When Pilate sent Jesus to Antipas the Schizophrenic, the Galilee ruler remained true to his erratic personality. Instead of murdering Jesus on sight—as he originally planned—Herod bubbled with giddy excitement to meet the celebrity savior. Antipas heard about Jesus and was anxious to see his magic.<sup>263</sup> However, the Savior did not so much as pluck a shekel from a child's ear. Jesus clamed up. He refused to answer any questions<sup>264</sup> or defend himself against the charges the Pharisee leveled against him.<sup>265</sup>



Although disappointed, Herod salvaged the encounter by making Jesus his court jester. He lampooned Jesus' claim to the throne of Israel.<sup>266</sup> After tiring of the joke, Herod decided to poke a little good-natured fun at Pontius too. He dressed Christ in a majestic, royal-purple robe and sent him back to Pilate <sup>267</sup> along with a mischievous judgment. In yet another schitzzy contradiction, Herod pronounced Jesus, "Not guilty."<sup>268</sup>

## 52. Lobbed Back into Pilate's Court

Herod's decision peeved Pilate. If Herod declared Jesus not guilty then why not just cut him loose? Instead, Herod playfully kicked Jesus back to Pilate all gussied up in a gorgeous royal robe like the grand marshal of a pagan fertility festival.

Pilate addressed the crowd saying, "Herod judged this man to be without fault and so do I."<sup>269</sup> The mob loudly rejected both not guilty verdicts. Pilate proposed a compromise to satisfy the angry throng. He offered to whip Jesus then set him free.<sup>270</sup> Ropy drool dangled from the madmen's jowls as the priests worked the mob into a rabid frenzy. Like wild dogs baying in the night, the mobsters howled in unison, "Kill Jesus! Kill Jesus!"<sup>271</sup>

Pilate hardened his resolve to save the man. He offered to release a prisoner. Pilate chose a condemned man who, as a convicted murderer, was a far greater sinner. His name was infamous in Jerusalem: Barabbas.

Pilate figured the mob would revile a murderer like Barabbas.<sup>272</sup> Pilate figured wrong. "Thou shalt not kill" is not prominent in the Moses list of the biggest ten commandments. It does not even make the top five. Other prohibitions come first. Perhaps this is why Moses' *thou shalt not kill* rule has a long, long (freakishly long) list of exceptions, exclusions and superseding directives.<sup>273</sup>

Barabbas was either terrorist or *La Résistance*. As in today's world, being demonized as an enemy of the state or hailed as a freedom fighter all depends on who asks and who answers. It is opinion. Collaterally damaged bystanders do not care if war is for liberation or a domestic rebellion. They could not care less if they died by a high-tech, smart bomb carried on a missile or a dumb, garage-tech explosive strapped to a lunatic's ass. The dead never enjoy opinions.

The criminal Pilate chose was surnamed Barabbas; full name... Jesus Barabbas. [repeating] The man's name was Jesus Barabbas.<sup>274</sup> You can almost see skeptical FBI Special Agent Dina Scully cynically roll her eyes heavenward. When we learn that Jesus Barabbas translates as "Jesus, the Son of the Father,"<sup>275</sup> we can almost hear *The X-Files*' hauntingly whistled theme.

Pilate was desperate to extract the horns of this priestly dilemma from his arse. He had other prisoners in irons but Pilate figured the same name could confuse the raucous crowd. If they yelled, "Crucify Jesus." then Pilate could set Jesus free, order Barabbas crucified and slam his gavel before anyone objected. If they yelled, "Free Jesus," he could do the same.

Author's note: A later New Testament book mentions a Jewish magician named Barjesus, which is translated *The Son of Jesus*. Such Dan Brownesque innuendo is outside the Gospels and the agreed limits of this investigation. Therefore, Barjesus is not mentioned in this investigation. A footnote for Barjesus does not appear in this book.<sup>276</sup> We never spoke of this. And we were never here.

Pilate plopped down on his judge's bench. If he wasn't frustrated enough, his wife sent a pleading message. It read...

*My Dearest Pontie,*

*Have nothing to do with that poor innocent man.*

*I had hideous nightmares of him last night .* <sup>277</sup>

*Love and kisses,*

*Claudia*

*P.S. Bring home some goat's milk.*

Jewish citizens were sympathetic to agitators like Jesus Barabbas. Although the Pharisee shamelessly brown-nosed their foreign masters, Rome's occupation sickened the common folk. As a rebel, Barabbas killed during a selfless act of patriotism or he coldly murdered Roman peacekeepers... again, depending upon opinion.

Standing before the mob, Pilate asked, "Which man do you want released? This Jesus or that Jesus?" <sup>278</sup>

Pilate's gamble lost. The Pharisee incited the mob to chant, "Give us Jesus the Barabbas. Crucify the one from Galilee."

Hoping to sway the mob's murderous nature and spare the Nazarene, Pilate asked three more times. <sup>279</sup> But it was too little too late. The ravenous mob already caught the scent of fresh blood.

Like a busted gambler desperately betting his last buck on an inside straight, Pilate drew the ace of spades. He lost far more than his ante. Pilate released a proven enemy of the state to walk away scot-free. Barabbas the Terrorist found himself free to murder again or (from his point of view) to continue the good fight.

Pilate had one gamble left. It was the same hand Herod Antipas had played to win a not guilty verdict. Pilate figured repeating Herod's jester routine was worth a try. Just as in Herod's court, Pilate's troops dressed Jesus in Prince Herod's royal-purple robe. <sup>280</sup> To carry Herod's farce further, the Roman soldiers fashioned stage props; a stout reed for a scepter and a ring of thorns for a pointy crown. The troops worked the crowd with hammy overacting. They improv'd a parody of comical fawning and satirical genuflecting. <sup>281</sup> Using the makeshift scepter like a Punch and Judy *bataccio*, they bopped Jesus on the head <sup>282</sup> and adlibbed some spitting.

With Jesus comically costumed in the kingly robe, Pontius good humoredly introduced Jesus to the mob as a motley King of the Jews. <sup>283</sup> He intended to tickle the crowd's funny bone and loosen their stingy compassion. The gaggle cackled and offered a smattering of mean-natured applause. Pilate repeated that he found no guilt in the man saying, "Jesus does not deserve to die." In spite of the comedy show and two not guilty verdicts, the lynch mob stubbornly cried for Jesus to be hoisted up a pole. They again yelled, "Crucify Jesus." They added a final charge. "He opposes Caesar!" <sup>284</sup>

Late that night Pilate had one of those I-shoulda'-said moments. Pilate sat straight up in bed and growled. "I shouda' said, "Jesus opposes Caesar? Waitadamnminute Barabbas is a murdering terrorist. Barabbas opposes Caesar big-time. No deal!" Pilate punched his pillow. "Dammit! Next time. I'll know what to say the next time the Pharisee dump one of their messiah rejects at my door."

Pilate the Pagan did not want history to remember him as an accomplice to sacrificing a man for Israel's irritable god. Pilate took pride that pagans gave up that sort of nonsense ages ago when the Jewish people still worshiped Molech or Baal or some other dark, sithy lord. <sup>285</sup> The gladiator thing? Pilate did not consider the Coliseum's games as human sacrifice. That was just show business.

Pilate could stand no more and would not be pushed further. He refused to sign his name like a period at the end of a sectarian death sentence. Instead, he called for a bowl of water and dipped his fingers. As if in surrender, he held his dripping hands high and proclaimed, "This is murder of an innocent man and I am washed of it."<sup>286</sup>

Still under the righteously murderous spell cast by the Pharisee, the dumbass mob screamed, "Let Jesus' blood be on us!" They crossed the line into double dumbassness when. They ranted, "Let his blood be upon our children too!"<sup>287</sup>

With the mob simmering ever closer to a roiling boil,<sup>288</sup> a defeated Pilate reluctantly gave Jesus up. The soldiers put Jesus' clothes back on him then led the condemned man to Golgotha.

Is Pilate still on your list of murder suspects? If Pilate's compassionate efforts do not clear him, one last irrevocable point must. As with Satan during the Job unpleasantness,<sup>289</sup> Jesus said that God granted Pilate the power to do what Pilate did.<sup>290</sup> Jesus pardoned Pilate of any guilt because Pilate served God's will. Who are we to disagree? If Jesus says so... then so say we all and Pilate is officially eliminated as the guilty party in Jesus' death.

Detective, your list of suspects in the Jesus murder is shrinking.

Sidenote: Pilate's attempts to save Jesus are not forgotten. One Ethiopian church made him a saint. You will be happy to know Saint Pilate does not languish in heaven's eternity alone. An Eastern Orthodox church bestowed high holy honor on his lovely wife, Saint Claudia, too.

### 53. The Scourging

Since Jesus was a murder victim, you will want to inventory all of his pre-crucifixion injuries to establish the cause of death (COD).

The bailiff slapped him during the Pharisee's cross-examination.<sup>291</sup> Herod's cruel soldiers made fun of him.<sup>292</sup> A Roman soldier smacked him on the head with a reed,<sup>293</sup> which probably made the crown of thorns punch deeper into Jesus' scalp. This is a fairly complete list of the extra-crucifixion injuries. If any are missing please jot them in your e-book's margins. Do not pencil in the spear stab in Jesus' side. That was a postmortem insult and irrelevant to the cause of death.

When scourging is the subject, writer, director, actor and alleged **■**ck-a-d**■**dle, Mel Gibson, immediately comes to mind. In Mr. Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, Jesus suffers over two hundred blows. The Romans beat Jesus with a sturdy rod some three dozen times. Unsatisfied with the first thrashing, a legionnaire carefully selected an extra especially loathsome flagrum from his S&M arsenal. The soldiers administered another thirty-something blows counted off in Latin. A typical sadist would stop there, enjoy a cigarette and bask in the afterglow but, seemingly giddy with the foreplay, this film's screenwriter disingenuously depicts the soldiers whipping Jesus all the way to Golgotha.

An ordinary Roman flagrum consists of a handle connected to a splay of leather strips and often with small pieces of bone or metal balls tied to the strap's ends. As terrible as an legitimate flagrum is, it wasn't good enough for *The Passion's* director. The flagrum in his movie was no common off-the-torture-rack device. The propmaster souped up the contraption with custom metal claws. A roman soldier demonstrated this super-flagrum for the audience by ripping chunks of wood from a table with a single blow.

Tradition claims Jesus received a flogging of thirty-nine lashes. As traditions often are, this one is horseshit. It is quantified horseshit but horseshit nonetheless. The Bible never mentions Jesus suffering thirty-nine lashes. Thirty-nine lashes with a standard issue flagrum and especially with a tricked-out one would kill a man from shock alone. Only a

perverse fantasy could portray Jesus as a shredded side of meat who is conscious, ambulatory and able to suffer more of the sadist's pleasure.

Putting Mel's gratuitous titillation aside, let us examine what the Bible actually says. By the least Gospel account, no scourging occurred. By the worst account, any scourging injury was minor and fell far short of life threatening.

For Pilate to order a flagrum's fatal flaying makes no sense in light of his actions. He vigorously sought to avoid killing Jesus. We know Pilate even offered scourging as a compassionate compromise. Mind you, your investigation does not suggest the Gospel writers are liars but it does prove that some people lie about the Gospels... and you sumbitches know who you are.

Sidenote: Jot this in your sleuth's little black evidence book. A scourge differs from a Roman flagrum. A scourge is a number of thin ropes bunched into a handle at one end. A scourge is designed to inflict non-fatal pain. Jewish disciplinarians scourged people in the temples.<sup>294</sup> The author of Corinthians received thirty-nine lashes of a scourge on five separate occasions.<sup>295</sup> Jesus himself scourged people when they needed a little scourging.<sup>296</sup> Keep the non-lethality of scourging in mind.

The timing of the scourging is in some question. John states Pilate judged Jesus innocent then ordered the whipping after which Pilate pronounced Jesus innocent a second time. Matthew<sup>297</sup> and Mark<sup>298</sup> state the scourging occurred immediately before departing for Golgotha. In Luke's gospel, Pilate twice offered to chastise Jesus then let him go. However, the mob rejected those offers and no chastising (scourging) occurred. By Luke's version, Jesus never suffered a scourge at Roman hands and certainly not a flagrum.<sup>299</sup>

These small variations in the Gospel stories are understandable. Neither the apostles nor any disciples attended the trial. Additionally, none of the writers watched Jesus walk to Golgotha.

We can excuse Matthew and Mark as mistaken in the sequence of events in Pilate's court. It would be peculiar for Pilate to order his troops to whip Jesus immediately before crucifixion. Doing so would be like the punch line to a very old and very filthy joke. The chief of the natives said to a prisoner. "Having the choice between booga-booga and death, you have chosen death. We honor your decision and death it shall be! But first... a little booga-booga."

If the legionnaires did scourge Jesus then John's version is the most reasonable. In John's Gospel, Pilate scourged Jesus early in the trial as part of Pilate's continuing efforts to strike a bargain with the mob to save Jesus' life. After this scourging, the soldiers dressed Jesus in a comical king's costume. Pilate said, "Behold the man."<sup>300</sup> Pilate's actions said, "See? I scourged Jesus and now, I publicly humiliate him before you."<sup>301</sup> This man is sufficiently punished." The mob rejected the compromise with boo-ing and chants of, "Crucify. Crucify!"<sup>302</sup>

We know none of our gospels are deliberately lying but someone is definitely foggy on the sequence of events. Still, all the Gospels agree the scourging was a less than significant injury. Don't believe it? You accept Mel's rendition? Then follow the clues and see for yourself.

## 54. Whose Cross to Bear?

In *The Passion of the Christ*, Jesus suffers a gauntlet of whips as he wrestles his slippery blood-soaked cross through the streets. After doddering and tottering a couple of blocks, Jesus collapses for the umpteenth time. Then the troops coerce Simon the Cyrene to help. Together, the Cyrene and the Christ drag the cross the rest of the way to Golgotha.

Just one problem. It did not happen that way... Surprise!

First things first. Contrary to Mr. Gibson's passionate film, the Bible never mentions anyone whipping Jesus on the way to Golgotha. By this point in your investigation, you must realize movie versions are willfully negligent (if not deliberately slanderous) with respect to Bible facts. The Gospels give two versions of who carried the cross. Neither book claims Jesus and Simon shared the chore.

Matthew, Mark and Luke testify Jesus never bore his cross a single inch. As Jesus exited Pilate's court, the soldiers drafted a fellow to carry the cross. Matthew says his name was Simon and gives Cyrene (in present day Libya) as his land of origin. Luke and Mark say Simon came into the city from the countryside. Mark names Simon's two sons; Alexander and Rufus. Luke adds Simon carried the cross while Jesus walked ahead.<sup>303</sup> These three Gospels give details complete with who, what, where, when and the kids' names too. Matthew, Mark and Luke give so many supporting facts so as to tilt the scales of accuracy to their side. The testimony is three gospels to one in favor that Simon alone carried the cross to Golgotha.

John writes Jesus lugged his cross to Calvary without any help.<sup>304</sup> John may have mistakenly assumed Jesus carried his cross. We know John stood on Golgotha with Mother Mary and Mary Magdalene when Jesus died but that was three hours after Jesus arrived at Golgotha. Neither John nor those women attended Jesus' trial in Pilate's court nor reportedly watched Jesus making his way to Calvary. For all we know John arrived at Golgotha just minutes before Jesus died. Perhaps Gospel John knew the two criminals dragged their crosses and jumped to the conclusion Jesus did the same. We can forgive John for a faulty assumption and we can count ourselves lucky we have Matthew, Mark and Luke to correct John's mistaken assumption.

The question of who carried the cross is not helpful in answering who killed Jesus. However, it does bear on the Roman soldiers' attitude and that attitude is very pertinent.

Restating one more time...No writer states that soldiers whipped Jesus on the way to Golgotha.

## 55. The Vinegar Cocktail

The Gospels note the legionnaires offered Jesus vinegar to drink several times. Such cruel taunting makes the Romans appear as vicious as The Joker; Batman's cackling, psychopathic nemesis from *Detective Comics*. But were they so vile?

Where did all this vinegar come from? The idea that Roman troops carried vinegar for an emergency Italian salad dressing is a delightfully quirky possibility but wrong. The scribes of the KJV copied from the Greek and translated "cheap wine" as "vinegar." If you ever polished off a bottle of a brown tinted Chardonnay, you know the sharp bite of a tainted wine.

You might think the KJV's "vinegar" is a simple mistake in translation. It is not. It is deliberate. In either case, it is not the failing of our Gospel writers. We must fault the KJV scribes. The Contemporary English Version (wine) and the International Standard Version (sour wine) correct the translation error. The New International Version splits the difference and calls the drink "wine vinegar."<sup>305</sup> The Romans did some bad things and some very bad, bad things but cruelly giving the wretched Jesus kitchen-strength vinegar to drink is not one of them.

There is one compelling reason why the KJV translators specifically used the term "vinegar" instead of "cheap wine." You know the reason but several other detectives working this case are not as quick as you are. We will stall a little while before revealing

that reason. The Chief Inspector Clouseau types among you will have additional time to stumble over the clues.

## 56. The Spiked Wine

Mark says legionnaires offered Jesus cheap wine mingled with myrrh. Matthew says the wine soldiers offered Jesus had a lot of gall. Few medicine cabinets have those tinctures today. To find out what they were used for back then, you will have to do a little legwork. If you do not have the spare time to learn Greek, it is fortunate for you that the CEV has already translated it. Gall is “a drug to ease pain”<sup>306</sup> while myrrh is “a drug to ease pain.”<sup>307</sup>

How’s that for a plot twist? The Roman soldiers offered Jesus wine spiked with an analgesic drug or—as Sgt. Joe Friday might say—the stuff nightmares are made of; dope, nose candy, brain bakin’ soda, Jesus juice, daddy’s doughnut powder...

The clue a detective should note is two Gospels verify Jesus had access to drugs during the crucifixion.

## 57. The Crown of Thorns

The image of Jesus wearing the crown of thorns while high on the cross is iconic. You should question the crown because it is an icon. An icon is a symbol and as a symbol it is without substance. You have seen the renaissance paintings, the stained glass windows and the spiked armband tattoos on the bad boys of Christian Rock. You have seen graven fetishes of torture hanging behind the podium of so many houses of passionate worship. Looking up to the crucifix from your pew, you can count the ribs of Jesus’ emaciated body as the crown of thorns gouge into his forehead. Blood flows down Jesus’ cheeks and puddle in his heaven-cast eyes.

Many accept Jesus wearing the thorns on the cross as fact. It is not. Neither is it biblical, where “biblical” is often synonymous with “truth.” It is just one more little fib in a passel of lies.

This crown of thorns was originally a prop for an impromptu king’s costume on Pilate’s judicial stage. The other props were Herod’s royal robe and a reed as a scepter. The soldiers gave up the improvisational comedy when it failed to sway the mob to mercy. The costume served no further purpose so, after the stage show, the legionnaires stripped Jesus of the royal robe and returned his clothes.<sup>308</sup> The Romans had no reason to leave Jesus wearing just part of the costume. The Bible never says the soldiers left him holding his scepter; much less wearing the crown. Scripture does not describe Jesus wearing the ring of thorns on his way to Golgotha, while on the cross or describe Joseph removing the crown when taking the body down.

Subjecting Jesus to a crown of thorns on the cross was out of character for the legionnaires. They were duty bound to follow Pilate’s orders to nail Jesus: that much is sure. Roman troops, like all professional soldiers, not only obey their superior’s orders but also the spirit of those orders. The legionnaires knew Pilate loathed ordering the execution. These soldiers would not take it upon themselves to inflict additional suffering, especially when Pilate tried to treat Jesus mercifully. The legionnaires would follow Pilate’s intent, which is why those troops spared Jesus from lugging the heavy cross up Golgotha. They drafted a civilian for the backbreaking chore. Then, when on Golgotha, the legionnaires offered Jesus painkillers, twice.

Can you imagine those troops saying, “Mr. Christ, we hope you understand our commander regrets crucifying you. You should appreciate we made Simon tote the heavy

cross for you. We did offer you narcotics to keep the spikes from hurting so much. So if you don't mind, would you please wear your prickly crown while on the cross? We know this is not the standard crucifixion procedure but, while you hanging up there, could you please not shake your head around too much?"

Do you feel the detective's instinct churning your gut? Are you growing the notion the Roman soldiers were a smidgen less sadistic than the maniacally giggling ghouls in today's annual horror shows of Easter?

Representing Jesus suffering a crown of thorns on the cross makes for compelling movie posters and damn fine customizing decals for pick'em-up trucks in Corpus Christi, Texas but it is a lie. It is no more biblically honest than children's indoctrination cartoons, which depict cherubs as winged baby angels<sup>309</sup> and Moses as a levitating kosher pickle.

Luke says the Romans cruelly mocked Jesus on the cross and we do not doubt the sincerity of our venerated witness. However, Matthew and Mark testify the very same soldiers offered Jesus painkilling drugs. We cannot doubt their testimony either. How can we reconcile that these soldiers cold-bloodedly mocked and teased a dying man when minutes before, the very same soldiers took pity and offered the doomed Christ comfort in the form of narcotics?

The detective in you is thinking, "*Of course. It is obvious.*"

Calvary was in a clamor as the legionnaires readied to hoist the crosses. There was hammering and screaming and more screaming and more hammering. With all the distractions, a soldier could surreptitiously offer Jesus a cup of drugged wine before they hoisted the cross. It was not so easy to be discreet when Jesus hung in plain view high over Golgotha. Everyone would notice if a legionnaire offered a drink to any of the three men. Even sour wine would be a refreshing beverage to a suffering man and all the more refreshing if doped with narcotics.

Romans staged crucifixions to be long, painful and publicly performed death scenes. It was part of their crime deterrence program. The longer, the more painful and the more public... the more of a deterrent. It would be an inconsistent performance if onlookers noticed the soldiers compassionately offering the victim painkillers. Sending such a conflicting message would confuse citizens and/or potential criminals.

Note: Today's executions in America are worse than Israel's crucifixions. The condemned's blood is not on some unanswerable tyrant. Blood stains the hands of each citizen who does not say, "Enough!" As a representative democracy, our signature is on the bottom line of execution orders.

Jesus hanged so high on the cross and in full view of everyone. So how could a soldier offer Jesus narcotics a third time without appearing to serve him refreshments? The solution was to taunt Jesus at the same time. While the Pharisee jeered Jesus, the soldiers could do the same while presenting the drug-laced wine to Jesus' mouth.<sup>310</sup>

Luke does not mention narcotics in the wine or the two times the soldiers offered Jesus drinks. In Luke's rendition, the soldiers appear as their stereotypically nasty selves. Apparently, that was what the soldiers wanted the audience to think. It was their way of being discreet. Luke never noted dope at the crucifixion. Apparently, the people he interviewed for his gospel failed to mention it.

## 58.     **brains**     ...     **brains** !

Although they have nothing to do with the goal of this investigation, the miracles around the crucifixion are too stupendous to pass over without mention.

*Darkness filled the sky for three hours. Earthquakes split the earth. Corpses of Holy Men crawled out of their graves. Undead saints shambled through the streets of Jerusalem and scared the bejesus out of everyone.*

The Bible does not explain why the sky darkened.<sup>311</sup> An eclipse can shadow a town for hours but it always happens within the strict schedule of the Divine Watchmaker's cosmic clockwork. Earthquakes are seemingly random so <sup>312</sup> earthquakes and a solar blackout occurring at the same time is more than rare. A host of sauntering corpses in concert with earthquakes and an eclipse is even less common.

We give Matthew sole credit for documenting the incident of the walking cadavers. To the screeching delight of horror fans everywhere, Hollywood paid homage to Matthew by reprising his meandering corpses in the early 1900's. The silver screen's zombies are also reanimated carcasses. They carry stiff spines atop clumsy legs tramping about with a herky-jerky stagger. Movie zombies, just like the reanimated saints, awkwardly step to their own discordant drummer. Just like Matthew's voodoo saints, Hollywood's pop-eyed and worm-riddled undead also lack freewill. They don't speak to anyone, brush their teeth, slip back into their grateful widows' warm beds or resume their former lives in any way.

Except for moaning, "Brains... brains," Hollywood's zombies are indistinguishable from Matthew's carrion clergy.<sup>313</sup> Ironically, zombies exist only in horror films. Although they are an indisputable biblical truth, Jesus movies never include Matthew's holy undead. Those movies either cut those characters from the shooting schedule or leave all celluloid of the somnambulist saints on the editing room's floor.

Casual Bible students assume the Bible zombies resurrected and paraded through Jerusalem on the day of the crucifixion. That is incorrect. The earthquakes did split the graves open on Good Friday and the saints did rouse to life the same day.<sup>314</sup> However, Matthew's jawbone-dropping corpses did not scratch their way out of the ground until days later when Jesus resurrected.<sup>315</sup> This is understandable. After a short night's sleep, we often slap the snooze button for a few more minutes of sweet pillow time. How much longer would an arthritic corpse procrastinate clawing out of his grave after lying in his earthen bed for decades?

The Bible gives no clue what hour the zombies stepped out of the ground. Biblical scholars suggest they walked around Jerusalem shortly after sunup Sunday. Today, we greet Easter with dyed eggs, chocolate bunnies and packed pews at sunrise services. Sweet lasses wearing little white gloves and darling bonnets join the Easter parade to neighborhood churches. After your investigation, a new Easter tradition will pop up in cities from Rome to Dallas. People will powder their faces with unleavened flour then darken their eye sockets and the hollows of their cheeks with Wednesday ash. Dressing up in their finest of frayed funerary, they will lay down in cemeteries just before sunrise. With the morning's first rays, they will stand on shaky legs, assemble ragged ranks and stumble a discordant march through the streets to Easter Sunday services. Some of the ambitious faithful may learn the choreography to Michael Jackson's *Thriller*. The hoards of shuffling creaky saints will celebrate the Easter parade just as God did on the original Easter.

The earthquakes? Mark, Luke and John considered the earthquakes unworthy of mention. This investigation will respect their decision and also say nothing.

## **59. The Cross is Pole-ish**

The Old Testament God prescribed death for a hodgepodge of sins.<sup>316</sup> The Romans did not consider simple death as a punishment. The Romans knew the law abiding die no less frequently than criminals. Death is the minimum everyone pays for even the most fleeting chance at life. Jesus cured Lazarus of an advanced case of necrosis. Even so, poor Lazarus



eventually relapsed and that relapse—as of this publishing date—persists. The Jesus cure was (at best) a palliative postponement.

Death was not punishment to the Romans but torture was. The criminal's anguish served as the crime deterrent part of their death penalty. Victims suffered for a week or longer. The happy part of crucifixion was the actual death. To deny the crucified man such pleasure, Roman commanders posted guards to prevent a son or daughter from reaching up to lovingly slashing their father's throat.

Hanging a man up on tall wood was not a Roman innovation. Some seven-hundred years before Romulus "the Wolfman" and "Lupy" Remus co-founded Rome, Jewish authorities practiced hanging sinners' bodies in trees.<sup>317</sup> Imaginative Roman crucifixioneers merely refined the macabre art. The Romans might hoist the victim up to a neighborhood wall, a convenient tree, a pole or the classic cross then affixed the person there by lashing, nailing or impaling.

Constantine iconified the Christian cross in the fourth century. The symbol has grown so invasive no one in American society can ignore it. It adorns everything adornable. Believers paint crosses on the broadsides of barns, tattoo them on pectorals and stake them off the shoulders of hairpin roads. Cinema actors form the cross with two index fingers when fending off a vampire's thirst. If T's highways are any example, some prefer their crosses as Gawdy as mortal taste allows.

The cross itself is a symbol of faith in more ways than one. The first is the faith Jesus ever hanged on the iconic cross at all. The Bible never hints at its shape. No scripture describes the crucified men with their arms stretched horizontally. The Gospels never specify the shape of the timber Simon the Cyrene carried to Golgotha. We do not know if he lugged a crossbar or a simple pole. Perhaps he shouldered a complete three hundred pound cross. For all we know, he dragged a cross fitted with little training wheels like the ones crucifixion enthusiasts in Saginaw, T's roll along parkways on otherwise pleasant weekends.

Although the English word "cross" appears in the Gospels, the original Greek Gospels are less than helpful in nailing down the specific shape. The word "Cross" translates from *stauros* (*stow-ros*). The word refers to a pole or a stake. *Stauros* can also mean a pike or pale on which you might impale a victim. To be fair to the folks who erected a hundred and seventy foot cross in South Houston, *stauros* also includes the classic cross shape. The Golgotha *stauros* could also resemble a plus sign (+), an 'X,' an upper case 'T,' or possibly the computer keyboard's pipe (|) key. If the gospels had quoted the Romans as saying *crux decussata*, *crux immissa* or *crux simplex* we would better know the cross' shape. They didn't so we don't.

Do not worry. If your investigation finds Jesus died on a simple pole you can let others fret with the ramifications. Cross-decorated wife-beater undershirts will be out of vogue. A bedazzled cross stitched on the taunt denim of nubile buns will be soooo last millennium. Sculptors will melt down and recast crucifixes. Dermatologists will laser away crucifixion tatoos... painfully. Anti-semites will blame the Jewish race for shafting Jesus. Jehovah's Witnesses will smugly tweet, "We told you so." Television criminals will fend off the vampire turned police detective, Nicho█, with the new sign of the cross; the hand's longest finger extended heavenward.

None of that is your problem. You just want the facts, Mam... just the Gospel facts.

The shape of the crucifixion pylon has little to do with the mystery we are trying to solve. That being, "Who killed Jesus Christ?" However, it does bear on Jesus' cause of death. Detectives always seek the cause (COD) and the estimated time of death (ETD) in a homicide investigation.

## 60. The Crucifixion Timeline

*Noon Friday*—The Romans tacked a wooden sign on top of a cross. They attached Jesus underneath it. That sign read in Greek, Latin and Hebrew, “King of the Jews.”<sup>318</sup> The Bible does not say why Aramaic was omitted.

*Shortly after noon*—The Pharisee came beating on Pilate’s door. They didn’t like the sign’s wording. They wanted the sign reprinted to read, “He said he was King of the Jews.”<sup>319</sup> The Council argued execution placards are supposed to state the crime of the condemned.

Pilate did not care if the wording pissed off the Pharisee. In fact, he preferred to annoy them. It was only fair since the Council was long past annoying him. Pilate refused to change the words.<sup>320</sup> He told the priests to get a life then kicked their collective ass out his door.

*Sometime before 3 p.m.*—“The Jews” came pounding on Pilate’s door. They complained the condemned men were far too lackadaisical with their dying. They (“the Jews”) quoted the Old Testament requirement that crucified men be taken down before the Sabbath. To that end, they wanted the men’s legs broken for a more punctual death.

*Seconds after sometime before 3 p.m.*—Furious and red-faced, Pilate shouted, “You want what!? Crucifixion takes days to kill a man. Everyone knows it takes days. Why did you people chant, “Crucify him. Crucify him,” at the trial? If you wanted him dead by sundown, why in Hades didn’t you shout, “Behead him. Behead him,” or “Hang him. Hang him?” By Hades eternally blistered feet, are you all wack-a-doodle?” (More on the broken legs in the More on the Broken Legs section.)

Side-note: Religion experts who critique this book will point out, and rightly so, that Pluto is the Roman god of the dead while Hades is the Greek god. Also, neither the Roman nor the Greek hell is cobbled with burning brimstone. Additionally, wack-a-doodle is neither Latin nor Greek.

*A while after seconds after sometime before 3 p.m.*—Joseph Arimathaea went secretly and pecked on Pilate’s door. Joseph told Pilate that Jesus expired then pleaded for the body.

“Dead?” Pilate scratched his head. “Seriously? Dead?... I cannot believe fractured bones killed him this fast. I only just now gave the order to break his legs... What?... My legionnaires did not break his legs and he still died this soon?” Pilate glanced to his sundial but the clouds obscured the hour. “I don’t believe it. I want a centurion to check his body.”

*Shortly after a while aft- 3:18 p.m.*—A breathless centurion entered Pilate’s door and dropped to one knee. The legionnaire reported Jesus was indeed dead. Although perplexed with Jesus’ premature death, Pilate released the corpse to Joseph Arimathaea. The pagan governor exhaled a grateful sigh of relief. The prickly matter of Jesus was finally over, done and finished... kaput.

*6:30 a.m., Daybreak Saturday*—The pagan governor closed his bathrobe then slipped on his slippers and padded out of his bedroom to again answer the knocking at his door. A bleary-eyed Pilate shouted at the Pharisee, “You again? You again? You sons of...” (to be continued)

Now that we have the timeline, let us examine a couple of curiosities.

## 61. More on the Broken Legs Section

“The Jews” asked Pilate to break the legs of the men on the crosses so they would die faster.<sup>321</sup> While breaking legs is the tried and true way for a loan shark to encourage prompt payments, it is not a reliable way to kill someone.



(Fade from black. The scene is Pilate’s court Friday afternoon.)

*The Jews:* (pointing toward Golgotha) We need the criminals taken off their crosses.

*Pilate:* Oh, for the love of Jupiter. (rubbing the heels of his palms against his temples as with a headache) Why?

*The Jews:* (unrolling a scroll) It says so in Deuteronomy. It’s like a rule.<sup>322</sup> For example, let us say your son persists in disobeying. Naturally, you stone him to death.

*Pilate:* You kill your children?

*The Jews:* Well, granted it is tough love but nipping a son’s misbehavior will make his siblings will think twice about back-talk. (The Jews continue.) Now, since he is a sinner, you hang your son’s body up in a tree for everyone, including other willful children, to see. However, someone must take down the body before sundown.

*Pilate:* That is barbaric!

*The Jews:* The tree part?

*Pilate:* No. The Stoning part... All of it! (Pilate mutters) Jupiter give me strength. (Pilate raises his voice.) Forget that. Anyway, that rule doesn’t apply here.

*The Jews:* (one brow rises) Why not?

*Pilate:* (sighing as if to fortify his patience) These men are not in trees.

*The Jews:* (shrugging) Pole, cross... tree... Close enough. It is still a rule. See? Right here. Deuteronomy... (pointing to the scroll and reading) Take-down-bodies-before-nightfall.

*Pilate:* I have been the Prefect of Judean for seven years. This is not my first rodeo so why do I hear of this rule only now?

*The Jews:* (embarrassed-to-the-point-of-grimacing-in-pain) We have been somewhat negligent in enforcing this law.

*Pilate:* I see. Negligent. Did you also neglect to notice those men are not dead? They will not die for several days. No rules are violated. So... goodbye. (nudging door closed)

*The Jews:* (slipping a sandal between the door and its frame) Yeah, about that. (clearing throat) We also want your soldiers to break the criminal’s legs so they will die quicker. Then, being dead, we will take them off their crosses by sundown. It’s like... a rule.

*Pilate:* You want them dead... now? right now?

*The Jews:* (smiling agreeably and nodding enthusiastically)

*Pilate:* You did not mention this... rule... before my legionnaires nailed up those men.

*The Jews:* (whispering in embarrassed confidence) We forgot.

*Pilate:* You forgot? You are a liar. (leaning closer) This has nothing to do with any Deuteronomy dictum. This is all about Jesus. Isn’t it?!

*The Jews:* (shrug)

*Pilate:* And why do my legionnaires have to do it? I didn’t want to crucify Jesus in the first place. You wanted crucifixion. (Pilate shouted, jabbing both arms into the air like a cheerleader “Crucify! Crucify! Yeaayay Crucify!” Does that jog your memory from three hours ago?)

*The Jews:* Yeah, about that... We forgot then too.

*Pilate:* Two hours ago, you wanted the plaque’s wording changed. Now you want him off the cross? You wanted him to suffer days of crucifixion and now you want him killed in the first couple of hours? Can’t you make up your minds?

*The Jews:* (nodding enthusiastically) Kill him... see? Final answer.

*Pilate:* Okay, then you break their legs. I’ll loan you a mallet.

*The Jews:* Oh heavens no! (contorted expressions of revulsion) We could not do that. That would be wrong. *Thou Shalt Not Kill* is one of our highest commandments.

*Pilate:* Jesus was right. (sneering) You are hypocrites.

## 62. Who are “The Jews?”

Gospel John wrote “the Jews” demanded Pilate smash the crucified men’s legs.

Who exactly were these “Jews?” Of course, “the Jews” cannot literally mean the entire race to anyone but a pinhead. As a detective, you deduced “the Jews” were not any of the temple toadies. No one in the mob would scratch his or her ass unless a priest told them which cheek itched. “The Jews” were not Jerusalem’s general population. Neither common Jewish folk nor the mob of toadies had the privilege to stroll into the Roman governor’s office and demand changes in the capital punishment procedure.

Who could strut past Pilate’s receptionist without an appointment? Correct! The Pharisee. The Pharisee were in the habit of pounding on Pilate’s door, even after normal business hours, for the least whimsy. The Pharisee also pestered Pilate in the middle of the night when they wanted Roman soldiers to arrest Jesus.

As the Jewish religious leaders, the Pharisee spoke for and as “the Jews.” The Council of Pharisee had to be the ones who requested the broken legs. Right?

Perhaps your Fedora is pinching your skull because you should conclude the exact opposite. Whoever “the Jews” were, they could not possibly be the Council of Pharisee. The last thing the Council wanted was Jesus quickly snuffed, shucked of the cross and stuffed in the ground out of sight. Thousands heard Jesus’ rebellious message declaring the Pharisee unworthy to speak for God. To erase that message, the Pharisee wanted every Jerusalem citizen and pilgrim to see that which a god would never tolerate, the prophet’s once mortal and lifeless body on a cross with a mocking sign above his head.

The Pharisee preferred for Jesus to hang on his cross for several days. They envisioned his body as a macabre signpost alongside the Jerusalem highway. The roadside message for the departing mass of pilgrims, would be...

—MAKE NO MISTAKE—

—DO NOT BELIEVE—

—ANYONE BUT—

—THE PHARISEE—

    rma - ave

It is difficult to accept the Council begged Pilate to rewrite the “King of the Jews” plaque at one p.m. only to return two hours later and ask Pilate to kill Jesus and take him from the cross. It is equally unbelievable the Pharisee would incite the mob to chant for a week long crucifixion at noon if they wanted him tucked into his graven bed before dusk. If someone else asked for the broken legs then you can remove the Pharisee variable and balance the Jesus equation.

Who asked for the broken legs? As far as Pilate was concerned, the Pharisee were “the Jews” and vice versa. “The Jews” could only be someone impersonating the Council of Pharisee.

We know the Pharisee counselor, Joseph of Arimathaea, was not “the Jews.” Joseph could not be the one to say, “The legs need to be broken,” only to show up a half hour later

and whine, “You are not going to believe this but Jesus died before your soldiers could break his legs. Sooooo, since you agreed to take the bodies down... can I have Jesus’ body? Just Jesus’ body; I don’t care about the other two.”

You are right! You are way ahead in this investigation. “The Jews” was the Pharisee Nicodemus. Unbeknownst to the rest of the Council, he gussied up in the costume of his sectarian office then pounded on Pilate’s door. Pilate often found the Pharisee on his stoop so Nicodemus’ intrusion raised no suspicion. To make Nicodemus’ visit more officious, some fresh-faced accomplice probably dressed as an intern scribe and tagged along with quill in hand. As far as Pilate was concerned, Nick the Priest and his apprentice sidekick represented the Council and personified “the Jews.”

Having granted Nicodemus’ (“The Jews”) request to break the men’s legs, Pontius was primed for Joseph Arimathaea who knocked on Pilate’s door minutes later. Joseph said, “Jesus is dead. Can I take the body? Please? By the way, has anyone mentioned our law requires the bodies be off their crosses by sundown?”

Right now, you are thinking, *It looks like Nicodemus the Pharisee and Joseph of Arimathaea worked as partners from the beginning.*

As Pontius Pilate would ask, “Tu cojecto?”

Sidenote: The original authors of *The Passion Play* adapted their work from *The Gospel of John* as source for its plot. We cannot prove a later Jesus movie producer chose John’s gospel for its anti-Semite tone. KJV’s Matthew, Mark and Luke collectively include the term, “the Jews,” sixteen times with twelve of those instances in the phrase “the King of the Jews.” The KJV’s Gospel of John includes the phrase “the Jews” sixty-seven times. Six of those instances are in the phrase “King of the Jews.”

So when it comes to the anti-Semitic leanings of Gospel John... been there, done that, ciphered the math, got the †-shirt.

### 63. Jesus’ COD

We know Jesus did not die of crucifixion so we must look closer for his cause of death (COD.) You do not have an autopsy report from Dr. Quincy, the medical examiner detective. However, you do know Jesus’ injuries included being smacked by the high priest’s police, hurtful insults by Herod’s courtiers, scourging by Pilate’s legionnaires, thorns puncturing his scalp, nails piercing his limbs, a spear stabbing his side and cross-affixion for three hours.

That is a great amount of abuse. However, human bodies are often more resilient. We must look closer for Jesus’ COD.

Sidenote: (Redacted due to movie spoilers.) Jesus movies are a constant source of disinformation. If you suffered through *The [redacted] of the [redacted]*, you will remember the soldiers [redacted] a chain around Jesus then [redacted] off a six-story bridge. Jesus bounced [redacted] like [redacted] poor man’s IMF Agent Et [redacted] Hu [redacted]. You can excuse that scene as [redacted] looney tune’s ignorance of physics complicated by a wanton disregard of the Gospels.<sup>323</sup> Artistic license is one thing. Total wack-a-doodle [redacted] something else. This investigation does not consider any injuries from that over-the-top, off-the-bridge-fall. (BTW Why would [redacted] bring a hundred and sixteen [redacted] of chain to arrest one guy?)

When the supernatural is in question, the answers are simple but rarely lucid. The explanations for Jesus’ COD are no exceptions. Theories bounce from blood loss to congestive heart failure and suffocation to magic.

## 64. Suffocation

Suffocation is the most popular theory for Jesus' death. The rationale for that COD wanders a twisted path of quackery.

- The strain on the victim's arms impinged on the rib cage's movement.
- The cross occupants used their legs to push themselves upward to breathe.
- To get them to die quicker, legionnaires broke the two criminal's legs.
- Broken legs kept them from pushing upward to ease pressure on their ribcage.
- Unable to push themselves up, the two criminals suffocated.
- Therefore, Jesus died of suffocation.

Hanging by one's arms has nary to naught to do with suffocating. If it did, new mothers would snap at new fathers for allowing baby sons to hang from the proud daddy's index fingers. Elementary schools would ban monkey bars. West Point cadets would hyperventilate before doing chin-ups. And the medieval rack would never earn its reputation as a slow torture device.

You inhale by two ways. Your external intercostal muscles expand your ribs or your diaphragm contracts. You normally exhale by relaxing those muscles or you can forcefully exhale by contracting your internal intercostal muscles. Those actions are all independent of your arms. Try it for yourself. Go out to your backyard. Leap up, grab a tree's limb and hang there for a bit. A couple of minutes should be sufficient. Have any problem with your breathing? Didn't think so.

In case the obvious needs repeating, the soldiers did not break Jesus' legs. This makes the suffocation theory for Jesus' death nothing more than another big steaming bowl of horseshit, which Mr. O'Reilly reconstitutes in his book, *Killing Jesus*.

## 65. Exsanguination

Jesus bled to death from the wounds in his wrists and feet? Not likely.

Few souls are sentenced to Limbo, Purgatory or are cursed to wander the earth as a restless spirit because they slit their wrists. Those who do die from blood loss typically gash larger arteries along the length of the arm or in the crook of the elbow. Those people keep the vessels open with something like a paperclip and/or submerge their limbs in warm water and/or take hyper-therapeutic doses of pills and/or hang their neck in a noose and/or shoot themselves in the head. Contrary to urban wisdom, cutting one's wrists rarely results in a successful suicide.

It would be a moderate to major miracle for Jesus to bleed to death within three hours of crucifixion. Even if the nails punctured arteries in his hands, wrists and feet, the tapered spikes would tend to block blood loss. Additionally, any increase in adrenaline would also decrease bleeding due to constriction of arterioles, which shunts blood toward the crucial organs and away from the periphery. Additionally, the inflammatory clotting response by mechanical tissue damage plus holding any wounds held above heart-level also lessens bleeding.

Jesus did not die of hypovolemia.

## 66. The Kindest Cut

This is the sequence after “the Jews” pressured Pilate to kill the crucified men.

Roman soldiers broke the legs of the criminal on Jesus’ left.<sup>324</sup> Then they broke the legs of the man on Jesus’ right.<sup>325</sup> We don’t know why the soldiers strolled past the center cross to cripple the second criminal before turning their attention to Jesus; many a happenstance in the Bible is just plain peculiar. When the soldiers did finally look to Jesus, they decided he was already dead. Instead of breaking his legs, a soldier stabbed him with a spear. Here comes that question once more. Why? Why stab Jesus if he was already dead?

The soldier could have stabbed Jesus with his legionnaire’s standard issue sword. The gladius has a shorter blade but it is still twice as long as Croco█ Dun█’s “noif.” The business part of the weapon is about the length from a man’s elbow to the end of the middle finger. The gladius is short but it is a swift sword made quicker by the minimum of a defensive hilt. Although the gladius is more petite than the claymore or scimitar, the double-edged blade is perfect for the precision, closed-ranks tactics of the Roman infantry. The gladius’ outstanding characteristic is its point. Although the blade can inflict a substantial slashing wound, its finely honed tip is absolutely perfect for a stabbing thrust.

The Bible gives hints for why the soldier might use a spear instead of his trusty sidearm sword.

A prominent hill is a typical lofty spot for crucifixions. With a tall pole, the victim is higher still. Rejecting the quick efficiency of a private beheading, Romans offered the excruciatingly slow execution of crucifixion more like a public service announcement. The higher they furl a criminal, the more people in the distances could see that breaking the rules has harsh consequences. Any fellow, from wise to witless, would soon know those rules by heart.

Romans hanged Jesus high on his cross. Jesus was so high that it appears it was easier to poke his side with a tall spear rather than using the legionnaires’ ever-present, ever pointy gladius.

Do you detectives see where all this is going?

The trooper who declared Jesus dead made his prognosis while Jesus’ head was perhaps ten feet above his own. This trooper did not place two fingers to Jesus’ carotid pulse. He did not hold a cool mirror to Jesus’ lips. He did not climb the cross to lay his head to Jesus’ breast and listen for the pa rum pa pum pum of his heartbeat.

Theologians often repeat that legionnaires were professional killers and therefore experts at pronouncing a man le█ly, eth█ly, spir█ly phys█ly, pos█ly ab█ly, un█ly re█ly and most sin█ly dead. Right? Wrong. A warrior’s sole job is to incapacitate the enemy. After a legionnaire on the battlefield smashes a Syrian skull or slashes a Gaul’s groin, he spins to the next adversary. He does not waste time in the heat of battle to assure the fallen enemy has ceased gasping, gurgling, and spurring

Death is not always self-evident. Even an experienced embalmer cannot glance to the customer on the stainless steel bed and know if his client has expired. When a mortician is unsure, there is an old-fashioned funerary procedure he can use. The embalmer can inject a couple of drops of ammonia under the customer’s skin. If the skin immediately whelps and reddens, it means the heart is still pumping and perfusing the tissues. In that case, an ethical undertaker will consider postponing the embalming in favor of a more appropriate time.

Conversely, even the conscientious crucifixioneer need never hone the skill to diagnose a victim as completely dead. Nor does the executioner need never pry all the criminal’s cold and stiff body from the cross: only some of it. Peckish crows tear away any but the most gristly parts; a little morsel at a time.



(twenty-four seconds before the stabbing on Golgotha)

A Roman legionnaire stepped to the foot of Jesus' cross. He drew a fortifying breath and raised his maul. Before he could swing the great hammer, "Stop! Stand down soldier! Are you blind? This one is already dead."

Longinus the Legionnaire was not so sure.<sup>326</sup> He was Missouri skeptical. We do not know why he was suspicious. Maybe Longinus saw tiny drops of sweat growing into larger ones on Jesus' forehead. Like John Grisham's talented investigator Memphis Attorney Reggie Lov, he may have thought, "*Dead men don't sweat. Now, do they?*"

Perhaps the stab was a little test. Longinus lifted his spear and gave Jesus a quick poke to see if he grimaced. Longinus reasoned if Jesus flinched then he was alive and would need his legs broken. Jesus did not flinch. In this scenario, the soldier had no reason to skewer Jesus halfway through his gut. Just a little stab would do.

Another possibility is the stab was just not a little poke. Longinus knew crucifixion was horrible. Everyone knew. Worse was dying while suffering shattered legs with the dubious promise that the angel of death would visit a few hours sooner. More reliably, a blade through either kidney causes an immediate blackout. Then death comes as quick and sure as corporate welfare in a red administration.

Let's imagine Longinus drew his spear back and mercifully ran it completely through the still but still-living Jesus. Longinus might have muttered, "You're welcome buddy. I hope someone returns the favor when my time comes." This is one scenario fundamentalists do not tolerate... nor should they. Scripture says the stab was not merciful euthanasia. The inerrant Bible is explicit. Jesus died before the stab.

John is the only Gospel who wrote about the stab in Jesus' side. Skeptics propose the stab was a literary device. They speculate John worried that even staunch believers would find it far-fetched that Jesus died by simple crucifixion in a scant three hours. The skeptics suggest John added the spear stab to nourish the reader's belief Jesus had truly expired. With that assurance, Jesus' resurrection was all the more impressive.

With the spear wound, Jesus was double-dog dead. Gospel John wrote we can have faith Jesus legitimately died. We must again defend Gospel John against the cynics who pish on the veracity of his testimony. John could have fibbed a wee bit and wrote that he personally witnessed the blood and water spew from the spear's wound but he did not. He frankly and freely admits it was an unnamed someone who actually saw the blood and water issue forth.<sup>327</sup> They don't call him Honest John for nothing.

## **67. Dead Men Don't Bleed either**

Apologetic forensic coroners claim Jesus died of congestive heart failure. They speculate Longinus' spear punctured the fluid engorged sack of Jesus' pericardium and watery fluid gushed forth with the blood. This congestive heart failure theory alludes Jesus died from CHF before the stabbing. Since Jesus was one of the wholly dead. They say the stab was not so much a *coup de grâce* as it was cadaver abuse.

The stabbing invites closer inspection.

Why did Jesus bleed? Actually, he did not just bleed. John says blood and water issued forthwith.<sup>328</sup> Without the push of a beating heart, blood does not usually issue forthwith. Pulmonary effusion can be a pinkish mix of blood and watery serum but it does not issue forthwith. We might wonder if the soldier stabbed into the bladder and onlookers mistook something else for water. We cannot say. We have only John's hearsay testimony about the bleeding of blood and water.

John appears to say, "Sure, Jesus bled blood but he bled water too. Live men don't bleed water. Do they?"



If we exercise our CSI imagination, we might wonder if Jesus somehow suffered a tension hemopneumothorax. In that case, blood pooled in the chest cavity along with air trapped at a pressure of perhaps 30 cmH<sub>2</sub>O. When Longinus stabbed between Jesus' ribs, he punctured the parietal pleura. The pressure sprayed bloody froth like New Year's champagne. A casual onlooker could easily take the pink spume as blood mixed with water.

## 68. As Serious as a Heart Attack

Someone succumbing to congestive heart failure does not die quickly. In CHF, fluid backs up into the lungs reducing cardiac output and oxygenation. In cardiac tamponade, fluid gathers in pericardium and restricts the heart's pumping. As the heart fails to adequately push the blood, the brain starves for oxygen. In both cases, the person suffers the delirium of oxygen deprivation. When he passes out, his chest continues to heave as the medulla drives his body to breathe. The breathing continues rhythmically then waxes and wanes in crescendoing waves. As the brain dies, the breathing stutters with starts and stops; often with accompanying spells of spastic panting before beginning everlasting apnea. This is not how the Gospels say Jesus died... so nevermind.

If you were looking for a COD that fits Jesus' death as described by the Gospels, one need go no further than a common heart attack. Embolus → cardiac hypoxia → chest pain → fibrillation → loss of blood pressure → rapid unconsciousness → breathing cessation → death.

Jesus died like a character in the 1950's detective show, *Peter Gunn*. The mortally wounded fellow coughs twice. He speaks his final words. He confesses his crimes and/or gives a final farewell to his loved ones. He exhales his final breath then, as a sad violin weeps from off-camera, his head lolls to one side. All four Gospels quote Jesus speaking powerfully and eloquently in the moments before dying. He consoled his crucifixion companions and forgave his tormentors. He entrusted his mother to his beloved apostle. When finished, he said, "It is finished," then [*sans* violin] passed away.

## 69. Sympathetic Death Pains

Regardless of how Jesus died, the prickly fact remains the other crucified men still lived.

As a detective, you should note Pilate's surprise Jesus died so quickly. If one trusts a Roman soldier's expertise to look up at Jesus on the cross and pronounce him dead then we must also respect Pilate's experience. Pilate ordered many crucifixions so he knew how long it takes a man to die. Yet he expressed shock at Jesus' premature demise. Pilate's disbelief is notable, as he was also well aware of Jesus' prior injuries.

Pilate is not the only person puzzled by Jesus' early death. Bible readers often wonder, "Why did Jesus die so quickly?"

## 70. One for the Road (to Heaven)

Jesus hanged on the cross for three hours. He finally complained, "I thirst."<sup>329</sup>

A spectator in the crowd dipped a sponge into a full jar of wine, ran up to Jesus and held it up to his mouth then Jesus drank. He was scant minutes away from his death. As his final act on Earth, Jesus enjoyed one last swallow of second-rate wine. Of our witnesses, three state Jesus drank from a wine-soaked sponge.<sup>330</sup> Two Gospels wrote "gave him to drink"<sup>331</sup> while the third just states "put the drink to his mouth."<sup>332</sup> Luke wrote that a soldier offered Jesus a drink.

Other translations of the Bible refer to what Jesus drank as wine, cheap wine<sup>333</sup> or vinegar wine. We posed the question earlier why the KJV scribes insisted on translating “wine” as “vinegar.” You already have the clue that points you to the answer. Do not be embarrassed if you have not figured it out. Few of us have Nancy Drew’s youthful inquisitiveness and feminine intuition.

During the Last Supper, Jesus swore not to imbibe wine, until he was in Heaven.<sup>334</sup> This posed a problem for the King James translators. If they wrote Jesus drank wine after he vowed not to, they would portray Christ as a hypocrite. Instead, translators used the word “vinegar.” Problem solved. Jesus drank vinegar, not wine. Now the KJV makes sense. Jesus was not a fibber and all in the universe is as it should be.

## **71. The Good News? Today, You Die.**

Jesus knew he would die that Good Friday. He knew the two criminals would also die the same day. He told them so. One might assume Jesus used his psychic powers to know those two criminals would enjoy a quicker death.

Jesus shared the good news with his fellow criminals. They would not loiter on their crosses for excruciating days. They would frustrate the executioner’s scheme for a long, slow demise. The bad news was the criminals would suffer shattered legs prior to their mortal departure but he didn’t tell them that. The other good news was one of the criminals would go to heaven before the end of that very day. In Jesus’ time, a day ended at sundown instead of midnight so the criminal had but a couple of hours before he stood at the Pearly Gates. Jesus made no such promise to the other criminal.<sup>335</sup> The innuendo is the second criminal would find himself in unfortunate Hell and arrive with a couple of smashed kneecaps to boot.

Jesus constantly repeated his theme of Hell or Heaven.<sup>336</sup> Even on the cross he did not resist restating that lesson with his crucifixion companions as examples. One will go to heaven: the other? Not so much.”

The important point is Jesus predicted those two criminals would die that day even though a crucified man normally suffered for many days. Did he read the future? There is an alternative explanation for those investigators who consider less supernatural answers. Jesus knew his crucifixion companions would join him in death that day because their deaths were necessary to the plan. It would draw uncomfortable questions if Jesus died after only three hours while the other two lingered for a week. Jesus knew Nicodemus (“The Jews”) would demand Pilate execute the men on the crosses. The two criminals must die, if no other reason than for appearance sake.

The criminals on their crosses did eventually die. Gospel John leads us to understand their CODs were complicated by broken long bones along with possible pulmonary embolism, additional stress on the heart and possible loss of blood volume by jagged bones puncturing a femoral artery. However, it is still possible they might linger for days. Their dying that same day was not guaranteed nor does the Bible say they reached their expiration on that date. Bible readers just assume they died as Jesus predicted.

God’s Holy Book cannot be more clear. No one atop Golgotha died of crucifixion on that first Good Friday.

## **72. Final Diagnosis: It is a Miracle!**

The Gospels give us the last word in Jesus’ death. Jesus’ biblical COD is often ignored. The Gospels say Jesus’ death was a miracle. Jesus used the force (of his will) to give up his

spirit at the moment he chose. A common human does not have the power to order his body to die on command. However, in the minutes before his death, he spoke lucidly and eloquently. When finished, he declared, “It is finished.” He robustly commended his holy spirit to God then—right on cue—he released that spirit.<sup>337</sup> He died.

Congratulations, Detective. Christendom will thank you for discovering two more miracles that, before your investigation, the world ignored.

1) As a divine being, Jesus had the supernatural equivalent of an internal suicide switch allowing him to die at the moment of his choosing.

2) Jesus predicted the premature deaths of his crucifixion companions.

You ministers need to add two more to the list of Jesus’ miracles.

### **73. Jesus Leaves the Cross**

We rejoin the case at the point after Pilate ordered the release of Jesus’ body to Joseph.

The Bible gives us these facts. After Pilate granted permission,<sup>338</sup> Joseph of Arimathea removed Jesus’ body from the cross.<sup>339</sup> Joseph carried the corpse to a freshly carved tomb close to Golgotha.<sup>340</sup> Nicodemus lugged a hundred pounds of aloes and myrrh to the tomb.<sup>341</sup> Together, Nick and Joe prepared the body in accordance with the Jewish tradition.<sup>342</sup> A couple of Marys discreetly followed Joseph to the tomb.<sup>343</sup> They watched the two men inter Jesus’ body.<sup>344</sup> When finished, Joseph rolled the stone to close the sepulcher.<sup>345</sup>

Jesus was not the only one who predicted his untimely crucifixion death. Joseph also foresaw it and prepared for the interment of Jesus’ corpse. In preparation, he carved a brand new tomb close to Golgotha. If the tomb was for himself that would be curious since his home was Arimathea.<sup>346</sup> Was Joseph clairvoyant? Be cautious. Gullible cops absolutely do lend their names and reputations to the ridiculous TV show, *Psychic Detectives*, but even marginally competent investigators do not accept clairvoyance as real.

Since it took a couple of days for a stone mason to carve the new tomb,<sup>347</sup> Joseph had time to gather the supplies for a decent burial ritual. This is probably why Joseph was Johnny-on-the-spot with a fine linen to shroud Christ’s body as Jesus came off the cross.<sup>348</sup>

Joe and Nick made impeccable preparations days before the crucifixion. Their planning, timing and execution was flawless. Here comes that question again. “Why?” With so much time to prepare and stock supplies, why did Nicodemus lug an additional hundred-pound load of aloes and myrrh to the tomb in the last minutes before sundown?<sup>349</sup>

With aloes and myrrh being so expensive, the detective may suspect wealthy Joseph paid for the spices as well as the tomb and the fine linen.

### **74. We are a World**

Contrary to Adam and Eve’s origin story, a human is not a single life. God or evolution made us as a menagerie. We are literally legion or legions with over 10,000 different species living inside us. A virus in our brain can go unnoticed for years before the little beastie finally decides to kill. You are a community of life. More individual plants, fungus, viruses, bacteria and tiny animals occupy your body than the number of souls on earth. Unlike the immeasurable soul, those creatures total three to six pounds in the average adult. Like the vermin who nest in the pores of faces, most contribute nothing and take nothing. These creatures are silent save the yeasts who orchestrate the sonorous and often inopportune fart.

Our fellow creatures are mostly benevolent but sometimes turn malevolent. *Escherichia coli* bacteria living in our gut produces vitamin K, without which we would bleed to death. Occasionally a disgruntled *E. coli* can go rogue then rampage on a killing spree in a small **T** town.

At the moment of our death all those little creatures claim their birthright to the mortal coil our consciousness shuffles off. Our stagnant tissues become a promised land to the little friends who were our faithful companions through life's long journey. Our corpse bloats with bacteria and bugs. We putrefy on our poetic return to ashes, dust and simpler elements. Poetry aside, we melt into a soupy, funky, discordant mess. Many cultures scatter colorful flowers and aromatic plants to make paying final respects a less gut-retching fare-thee-well.<sup>350</sup> Regardless of those efforts, after a few days in a closed tomb, without refrigeration or ventilation, a corpse grows horribly ripe. As Martha said of her brother, Lazarus, "He stinketh."<sup>351</sup> A day less in a tomb probably made one's body only mildly rank.

## **75. Which is Heavier 100 lbs. of Gold or 100 lbs. of Myrrh?**

Gospel John wrote Nicodemus carried a hundred pounds of aloes and myrrh to Jesus' tomb.<sup>352</sup> John likely specified the weight to impress his readers with Nicodemus' physical effort to lug the load uphill to the tomb and/or the value of those spices.

We must distinguish aloes and aloe. Alternative medicine claims juice from the succulent leaves of the aloe vera plant is an anti-inflammatory and an antibiotic. People used it as an anti-fungal centuries before anyone decided what a fungus is. People used aloe as a wound treatment for thousands of years before Jesus and thousands afterward. Typical aloe juice has little to no fragrance.

Aloes is different from aloe vera. Aloes gum is and was a fantastically expensive fragrant extract from an aloe tree infected with a particular fungus. *Worth its weight in gold* is an understatement. Unprocessed aloes are the aromatic shavings from the tree. The Old Testament mentions aloes shavings a few times but the Bible's only reference to aloes as a gum is during Jesus' preparation for the grave.

While myrrh is pleasantly aromatic, the Gospels identify myrrh as an analgesic. It is also a topical antiseptic. The Christmas story suggests myrrh's value was on par with gold since the Wise Men presented gold and myrrh as seemingly equal in value.

The Bible says Pharisee Nick and Arimathaea Joe made meticulous preparations. They spared no expense and took bold risks to secure Jesus' body. In light of such careful planning, one must ask why Nicodemus brought such a large sack of spices to the tomb in the fading minutes before sundown.

There are two possible situations.

### **Situation # 1: Jesus Died on the Cross**

Nick and Joe would have ignored this contingency. They took a positive attitude expecting to wrest Jesus from the brink of oblivion. Jesus would not brim with confidence if he knew Nicodemus stockpiled funerary supplies for a celestial *bon voyage*. A surgeon often tells a family to "Pray for the best but prepare for the worst." As sage as this advice is for the anxious relative pacing the waiting room, it inspires no optimism from the one who must stretch out on the surgeon's table.

At the tomb, Joseph and Nicodemus faced the worst case scenario. They had no hope to revive Jesus. Being unprepared, Nicodemus retrieved the necessary for burial rites. Wracked with grief and the guilt of failure, Joseph and Nicodemus gave Jesus a farewell worthy of a demigod. They anointed his divine body far and beyond what burial customs required. A hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes was as excessive as it was expensive.

## **Situation # 2: Jesus Survived the Cross**

Jesus' body still had the spark of life as he lay in the tomb but there were complications. Neither Joseph nor Nicodemus anticipated the spear wound to Jesus' side. The spear point punctured Jesus' lung or gut. In Jesus' time, as now, both are serious. A sucking chest wound can bring death in minutes but one can survive with quick treatment. A gut wound is another matter. It is a slow death. If intestinal bacterium causes the wound to fester, ooze and stink. The end may come long agonizing days later but death is nothing but sure.

With Jesus holding to a spark of life, Nicodemus ran to fetch some of the best medicines of his day; aloe gum and myrrh. He wanted to assure he had enough herbs but a hundred pounds was as much as Nicodemus could carry.

In either case, with Jesus dead or alive or with Nicodemus grieving or jubilant, the plan still had to move forward. It was one thing for Jesus to die. It was quite another for his sacrifice to be nothing but vanity.

We are not yet finished with the hundred pounds of spices. There remains another glaring question. It is the question any competent detective will ask.

### **76. She knows Where the Bodies are Buried**

When Jesus' suffering no longer amused them, the Pharisee and their rabble drifted away from Golgotha.<sup>353</sup> The remaining audience consisted of a few onlookers: including Joseph of Arimathaea, a couple of legionnaire crossguards and an unnamed fellow with a jug and a sponge on a stick. Only a handful of Jesus' followers stood watch, waiting for the moment to wave farewell when Jesus' heaven bound ghost drifted upward from his body. They were Salome, John the Apostle,<sup>354</sup> Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jesus and Mary the mother of Joseph.<sup>355</sup> After Jesus died, John escorted grief-stricken Virgin Mary, his newly adopted mother, away from Golgotha. Someone in Jesus' entourage suspected the body would not remain on the cross for long because two Marys remained to attend the body's final disposition.

Most mothers will walk through blue/green blazes to see her child's body to its final rest. Virgin Mother Mary is the exception that proves the rule. Mary did not follow the body to the tomb but Mary Magdalene did. We must wonder if the Virgin Mother asked Magdalene to escort Jesus' body to his final rest. Like today, one cannot deny any earthly request from a grieving mother.

When Joseph of Arimathaea took the body down, Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James and Joseph followed at a discrete distance. Positioning themselves within sight of the sepulcher, the women watched Nicodemus meet Joseph at the tomb then perform the necessary rituals. Nick and Joe had to be looking over their shoulders. They were afraid the Pharisee would discover their connection with Jesus. Being so wary, it is doubtful the skittish men did not notice the two guileless women spying on them. In fact, they expected Maid Mary to follow them. It was part of the plan. In a mystery, someone must learn where the body is buried. Otherwise, it is not an interesting detective story.

Once assured the two Marys had the location of Jesus' tomb, they needed the women to go on their way. The surest way was to give them nothing more to see. Joseph rolled the stone to close the tomb and, with Nicodemus in tow, departed.<sup>356</sup> With the day ending, the women also departed. Sundown came upon them and the first hour of the Sabbath began.

### **77. The Easter WABiT**

Time: Early morning on Saturday

By the Law of Moses, it was the day for resting<sup>357</sup> but the Pharisee did not relax. Instead, they scrambled to Pilate in a panic. They pleaded for legionnaires to guard a man who died fifteen hours previously.<sup>358</sup> Like you, Pilate had to wonder why the Pharisee waited until the Sabbath's morning (and a Passover to boot) to ask for tomb guards.<sup>359</sup> Pilate would also wonder, *What idiot wants a dead man put under house arrest?*

No one from the Council kept tabs on Jesus as he hanged so high. Neither the temple toadies nor the Pharisee lingered on Golgotha. As soon as Jesus settled in on the cross, the priests departed. They figured Jesus was finished. Besides, what could happen with fearsome Roman legionnaires standing watch? Plus the priests needed to prepare for a holy day, as the Sabbath was about to begin.<sup>360</sup> The mob left Golgotha too, tossing parting insults as they passed by the cross.<sup>361</sup>

The guards on Golgotha certainly did not keep the Pharisee informed because those guards were legionnaires, not temple troops. Those Roman soldiers cared nothing about the annoying Pharisee. They would not notify the Council when Jesus died unless Pilate ordered them to do so.

All that dark night no one noticed that Jesus' body went missing. It was first light on Saturday morning before someone happened to glance toward Golgotha. Three poles stood tall atop Calvary's summit. To the Pharisee's horror, the one with which they were concerned—the center one—was *muƿ desocupado*.

The Pharisee did not know “the Jews” asked Pilate for the executions of the men on the crosses. When the Pharisee did discover the empty cross, they ran to Pilate and desperately pounded on his door. That was when the Pharisee learned that Pontius released the body for burial the previous evening. As with typical crucifixions, the Pharisee expected Jesus to suffer for days. They did not imagine he would expire so prematurely much less be taken from the cross so promptly. Now with the situation changed, they wanted Roman soldiers to stand guard on Jesus' grave. The Pharisee grew concerned (terrified) that disciples would grave-rob Jesus' body then pull off a *Weekend at Bernie's* resurrection scam.<sup>362</sup>

The Pharisee feared that people would take the disappearance as proof of a resurrection. A string of religious and political dominos would tumble one after another. Like a stormy sky closing from the west, the teachings of the new Messiah would drift steadily across Israel. Following Jesus' example, the Jewish people would reject the Pharisee's authority to speak for God and also question the Council's authority to dole out death as the punishment for dozens of sins. The Pharisee would lose control of the people. Citizen anger over the Roman occupation and the Pharisee's complicity with Rome would multiply many fold. The people would first reject the Pharisee then revolt against their Roman oppressors. Lastly, the Pharisee feared Rome would retaliate by destroying that bastion of Pharisee authority, the Great Holy Temple of Jerusalem. The previous is not deductive speculation. It is exactly what the Bible says the Pharisee's feared.<sup>363</sup>

We will call it, the *Weekend at Bernie's Theory*. WABiT... for short. Ironically, the Pharisee feared the Easter WABiT most of all and their dread was not unfounded. A few decades later, the Pharisee did fail to keep the Jewish people under control. The commoners did revolt. Exactly as the Pharisee predicted, The Empire struck back and crushed the Holy Temple. Legions hauled off the Temple's riches along with its broken pieces. They also took a portion of Jerusalem's population as servants (slaves.) For a final insult, Rome banished Jewish people from the area in and around the Holy City.

Note: As far as Rome was concerned, the Jewish uprising was good fortune. The Romans used the excuse to raise the Temple and strip its riches and fine marble. The Romans used Jerusalem's spoils to finance the Colosseum and enslaved tens of thousands of Jerusalem citizens for the construction's

cheap labor. In a manner of speaking, the Holy Temple still stands today hidden within The Great Roman Colosseum. All that remains in Jerusalem is a portion of the Temple's foundation.

Passover Saturdays were hectic days for priests. They had cleric duties scheduled. There were hours of chanting, rattling of beads, swinging smoky brass thuribles, sacrificing animals, blessing victuals, burning candles, exorcising demons, talking in tongues, handling snakes and/or maiming children's penises. It is hard to say what Temple priests did back then and there are so few Pharisee these days. What we do know is that instead of tending to their holy chores, they scrambled to Pilate's door. The priests begged for his help even in the dawn's early light of their High Holy Day.<sup>364</sup>

Each time Pilate thought he finished with the whole Jesus mess, the priests just pulled him back in. You can imagine Pontius Pilate's hissy fit that Saturday morning. *"Those nutty Holy Men constantly pound on my door; pissing and moaning and making screwy demands. Their Jesus nonsense caused my sweet Claudia to have nightmares.<sup>365</sup> Now they want Rome's legionnaires to guard a tomb? Why don't they pester Herod for a change?"*

Pilate had his own problems. Jesus Barabbas was an enemy of the state. Barabbas murdered Romans during a brief insurrection yet Pontius freed this avowed enemy combatant.<sup>366</sup> Pilate must have worried that the news of pardoning a convicted terrorist would reach the Roman Senate. Pilate could find himself standing trial for treason. He could face the death penalty or worse. Pilate figured the less said about either man named Jesus, the better.

## 78. Yeah, That's Our Story... We Forgot.



Time: Daybreak, Saturday morning

Pilate shouted, "You again? You sons of..." Shivering in his doorway, Pilate cinched his bathrobe around him. "You want legionnaires posted on a delusional heretic's tomb? Are you insane? You wake me up for that? On Saturn's day? My day off?"

The Pharisees made small talk. They complimented Pilate's pajamas. They mentioned the incompetence of their temple soldiers. They bemoaned that resurrection rumors would be so inconvenient. Oh by the way... could Pilate loan them some spare legionaries to guard Jesus' tomb?

Pilate yelled. "If you are worried about a thief stealing Jesus' corpse, why didn't you ask for troops yesterday when he died? Why bother me today?"

The Pharisee wanted to appear as absentminded fools instead of ignorant fools. "We remembered, just this morning. He threatened to come back to life... in three days." They blushed under their beards and mumbled, "We forgot about that."<sup>367</sup>

"You forgot?" Pilate sputtered, "With all your scribes, lawyers, doctors and prostrating priests ... You all forgot?"

Of course, they did not forget. Forgetting was less embarrassing than admitting they were clueless. They expected Jesus to hang for days but someone snatched the body off the cross from under their noses. The "we forgot" excuse was just the spin. It was like phoning your boss Monday morning with descriptions of your explosive diarrhea because, although embarrassing, it is still better than admitting you're still stinking drunk from a three-day bender.

"You want my troops to guard a tomb?" Pilate growled, "Roman legionnaires are professionals. They have serious duties." Pilate drew another breath. "Use your own temple troops if you want guards on your stupid grave!"<sup>368</sup> He strained to slam the door but the

wood was thick and the hinges were slow. Slamming a door in someone's face in the first century was not as satisfying as it is in the twenty-first.

Pilate told the Pharisee that Joseph of Arimathaea took the body. The priests likely connected the dots when they discovered Joseph owned a newly carved tomb. What is more, a fresh corpse occupied that tomb. We may speculate how the Pharisee located the correct grave but we know they did because they posted their temple soldiers at the same tomb Mary visited on the following morning.<sup>369</sup>

## 79. Undercover Pharisee

In a conspiracy, the worst mistake is to use one more accomplice than is necessary. A slip of the lip can sink a ship and the more lippage, the greater the chance of slippage. To reduce that possibility, spies use disguises to multiply their number without multiplying their personnel. One example is Secret Service Agent Art ██████ █ordon of *The Wild Wild West*. He often assumed different persona to spoil the evil schemes of Dr. Love ██████.

Several nameless individuals pop up in the *Affair of the Aramaic Almighty*. These mysterious characters show up at just the right time and do just the right thing to advance the Jesus conspiracy. Afterward, they vanish from the pages. We must wonder if some of these characters are the same man in different disguises.

We already noted Nicodemus matches the description of the man who escorted Peter from the Garden of Gethsemane to Caiaphas' home. At that time Nicodemus assumed an alternate identity. We called that persona, the mysterious Deep Disciple.

The detective need not wonder if Nicodemus was disguised when he lugged the load of spices to the tomb. Of course he was. A pompous priest in prissy robes lugging a washing machine-sized sack through Jerusalem's streets would be more than conspicuous. Pious peasants would tag behind and pester the Holy Man: begging to carry his burden. However, no one would give a commoner a second glance. Deep Disciple blended in like any devout peasant fetching provisions for Passover.

We know Nicodemus took clandestine meetings with Jesus because the Bible says so. The secretive priest dared not wear his Pharisee robes when he met with Jesus. No doubt Nicodemus ditched the gaudy vesture of his priestly office for commoner's garb and wrapped himself in the cloak of night as he skulked the narrow streets to his rendezvous with Jesus.<sup>370</sup> He could not risk being spotted by one of the Council toadies. Jesus had a price on his head. Just failing to inform the Council of Jesus' location would mark Nicodemus as a Jesus sympathizer.

Ironically, Nicodemus' priestly garb also served as a disguise. He likely wore his sectarian robes when he asked Pilate to cripple the men on their crosses. His religious plumage—along with someone dressed as an apprentice—would identify him correctly as a Pharisee but incorrectly identify him as “the Jews.” Remember, the Bible does not say “some Jews” asked for those broken legs. It was “the Jews.” Pharisee priests had enough authority over the Jewish people for Pilate to call them “the Jews.”

What other characters did Nicodemus play? It is good odds he was also the unnamed Pharisee priest who secretly tipped off Jesus of Herod's plans to murder him.<sup>371</sup> We cannot rule out he also donned commoner's garb to portray Donkeyman. No apostle of “the twelve” saw Donkeyman's face. Three Gospels specify Jesus sent two of his unnamed disciples (of which there were several dozen) to fetch those donkeys.<sup>372</sup> The Gospels avoid mentioning any of the twelve seeing the donkey's owner—the fellow we call Donkeyman.

Considering Nicodemus' pivotal involvement, it is likely that Nicodemus hosted the Last Supper too. Peter and John were the only ones to see the host's face but this was necessary because someone needed to recognize him later in the Garden of Gethsemane. Being



recognized as the Last Supper's host allowed Nicodemus to quickly gain the apostles' trust and send them back to the house with the Upper Room.

It is surprising today's Sunday Schools give Nicodemus so little attention in scripture studies. Without his skillful performances, Christianity might never have grown beyond a Judean cult.

## 80. Three Days, Schmree Days

You have heard the story a thousand times. Jesus was dead for three days. The difference is that now, you are a detective. You must ask questions. You have a case to solve. You are not a member of a bobbleheaded congregation; nodding approval at every minister's statement which ends with the question, "Amen?"

Around 6 p.m. Friday, Joseph of Arimathaea sealed Jesus' corpse in the freshly chiseled sepulcher. Mary Magdalene discovered the empty crypt about 6 a.m. on Easter Sunday. You scratch your head. The itchy little voice in your brain is complaining, *Something doesn't add up*. Then it comes to you. *Hey, that's not three days. It's only thirty-six hours ... no more than a day and a half!*

You are bulldog of an investigator. Like the headstrong Dirty Harry, you are a maverick. You prefer to work alone. Never going by the book, you break all the rules except your own. Don't be so stubborn. Be a team player. Everyone says it was three days. Check a calendar. Joseph closed Jesus' tomb on Good Friday around 6 p.m.<sup>373</sup> The three Marys found the tomb empty on Easter Sunday around 6 a.m.. Friday, Saturday and Sunday... a long weekend... three days! Why are you so picky-nicky? Everyone in Christendom says Jesus was dead and in his tomb for *trois jours, tres dias, ethray aysday*. But that is not good enough for you, Inspector Cahalan? Granted, it is not three days like seventy-two hours or three days as from noon Friday to noon Monday. However, if you count Friday evening as a whole day and Sunday morning as a whole day then it is sorta' kinda' three days.

Right now, you are punching [PgDn], [PgDn], [PgDn] as you furiously flip through your digital King James. You are looking for Matthew 12:40 ~ *so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*. You do have a point. It wasn't three days and three nights either.

Your long-suffering precinct captain might threaten to take your badge and your .44 magnum. However, he must admit you found a broken alibi worth investigating.

A day and a half is still a respectable time for a man to be a corpse before rejoining the living. Witnesses say he was dead for all that time... don't they? Joseph of Arimathaea personally took the body down and immediately shrouded it in linen. In so doing, he shielded the body from the view of any nosy spectator.<sup>374</sup> Witnesses on Golgotha could only testify they saw Jesus appearing to be lifeless for about a half-hour. Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus could say he was dead for an hour or so longer. But they did not. Like so many other characters involved with Jesus' adventures, they both disappeared from the Gospel's pages after they played their parts.

## 81. Mary Spice

Mary Magdalene returned to the tomb at sunrise on that first Easter morning. Why? Neither Matthew nor John says why Maid Mary trudged to the tomb. Both Mark and Luke offer the excuse that she brought spices to prepare Jesus' body for the grave. Does something here smell like a three-day-old fish? If you are a math detective like Prof. Ernie Epp of *Numb3rs*, you might calculate high odds that Mary's trip to the tomb served another purpose.

Gospel John specified the unusually large amount of spices Nicodemus carried to the tomb but the writers don't tell what spices Mary brought. We may assume the spices were portable enough for a lady to carry and about the same amount and cost as for a traditional burial.<sup>375</sup> In spite of the soiled linen that wrapped Jesus' body, no Gospel mentions she carried a fresh, replacement shroud either.

Let us address the excuse that Mary went to the tomb intending to prepare Jesus' body.

All four Gospels testify Joseph and Nicodemus wrapped the body in a linen shroud.<sup>376</sup> John also specified that Joseph applied the spices with the shroud to comply with the Jewish burial custom.<sup>377</sup>

Mary had to know those two Holy Men should not ethically, could not morally, would not so callously let Jesus' body fade into eternity without a decent burial and officious last rites. Even a deluded individual deserves a proper burial. The women saw Joseph wrap the body in fine linen after he took the body from the cross. The two Marys spied on the goings-on at the tomb.<sup>378</sup> They saw Nicodemus wrestle the hundred pound sack of spices to the tomb. Mary had to see Jesus' body received a proper Jewish burial so why did she carry the basket of spices to the tomb on Sunday?

A proper lady doesn't disturb the rest of the dead. When Mary arrived Sunday morning, she presumed Jesus was dead for days. Mary's intention to exhume a putrefying body, unwrap it, anoint it with spices and re-wrap it in the same soiled shroud is unthinkable. Centuries earlier, Princess Antigone reburied her dead brother's exhumed body against the wishes of her king. She did not notice that the gods had already buried him and did not need her help. That incident ended badly.

Mary did go to the tomb on the first Easter morning but she had no intention to do any funerary rituals. You know that's true but more importantly, Mary knew it too. Even as she walked to the tomb, she lamented on the great stone that sealed the entrance. She admitted she and her companions could not open the tomb.<sup>379</sup> If she sincerely planned to violate Jesus' grave, she would bring a couple of stout disciples to roll the stone.

You might be thinking Mary was insane. Insane is a harsh a word. We all lose a good measure of our senses when grieving for family, friend or lover. Poor Mary suffered a far greater loss. Jesus was her doctor who cured her of an infestation of devils.<sup>380</sup> Women occasionally fall in love with their physician but Mary didn't stop at tender affections. Mary worshiped Jesus. Mary fell for Jesus like a thousands of tons and a thousands of years old stone Buddha dynamited off an Afghan mountain by batshit crazy Taliban fruitcake uncleftucers.

*Law & Order's* psychological Detective ██████ by Gor████ would weigh Mary's actions against her history of mental illness. However, except for her odd behavior Sunday morning, we have no hint Mary's devil infestation was in anything but total remission.

Time and again, we find myth-taken beliefs running amok through Christian dogma. The saint-engorged Church besmirched Mary Magdalene's reputation for centuries. They branded her as a soiled hooker and/or a demon-possessed nymphomaniac. To support such titillating infamy, artists, who pandered to priestly patrons of the fabulously wealthy Church, maliciously depicted her as a fallen temptress with wantonly passionate red hair. There is not a whiff of an innuendo in the Bible to support such loathsome and cowardly character assassination. You libelous renaissance painters and slanderous priests should be ashamed of yourselves.

As your reward for cleansing Mary's reputation, the Church may someday sanctify a particular saint for private investigators. There are thousands of canonized spirits who patronize specific professions from zookeepers to arms dealers. However, there is no dedicated saint who listens to the prayers of a self-employed gumshoe. Police Detective Lt.

Theodore M. Lojak can pray to St. Michael, the patron saint of police, but Private Eye Phil Marlow has to beg heavenly favors from the ecumenical pool of general-purpose saints.

A detective must wonder if crippling grief exhausted Mary Magdalene's common sense and induced her odd behavior. Jesus was not only murdered before Mary's eyes but she watched helplessly for the hours he suffered. She could not grieve in public since Jesus died under a heretic's shame. Mary wept in solitude as she cradled the pieces of her broken heart. She was in a frail mental state. She recovered her rational mind just weeks before when Jesus healed her of devil induced insanity. No one could blame Maid Magdalene if severe emotional trauma caused a relapse of her nasty little demons.

If anyone deserves our sympathy for regression into madness, it is dear, sweet Maid Mary of Magdala. Worse, the crucifixion was not the end of little Mary's sorrow. Greater suffering lay in wait. She endured the worst anguish any devout Christian can imagine. In the days to follow, the one she loved with all her fleshy heart and eternal soul, the one she worshiped, the Risen Jesus Christ himself, callously shunned her.

It was odd behavior for Mary to go to a sealed tomb to wash a long dead corpse. Odder still, she had company. They were her Sister-in-the-Lord, Mary, and her other Sister-in-the-Lord, Mary. Those two women might have dissuaded Magdalene from making such an ill prepared and grief impaired trip to the tomb. They did not. They might suggest recruiting some young fellows to move the tomb's stone. They did not. They might have suggested a clean shroud to replace the one crusted with all manner of precious bodily fluids. Neither of those women voiced the steady counsel of reason.

Did temporary insanity strike the other two Marys as well? Indubitably dear Watson, there is another explanation for Mary's odd behavior.

The characters in a conspiracy include the perpetrator, police and victim and sometimes the patsy and pawn. A patsy is one who finds himself framed for the crime. A pawn is one who unwittingly provides a false alibi or bogus evidence such as a bloody glove. This way, the real perpetrators remain outside the investigator's scrutiny. Even better, a polygraph or Gitmo torture cannot expose a patsy or pawn as a liar because he or she is never aware they are lying.

Mary Magdalene was the perfect pawn. Who could doubt the honesty of a *naïve* and fragile young lady? This grieving damsel seems incapable of deception. After these two thousand years, no one doubts her sincerity. Even as a cynical detective, you have no reason to be suspicious of her eyewitness testimony... those clever conspirators.

Look deeper, Detective. Mary provides the crucial elements to the resurrection conspiracy. She knew where the body was buried. She knew the location of the apostles' hideout. She discovered the empty tomb. With Mary's unwitting but timely help, the news of Jesus' resurrection could travel through the city with Sunday morning's first light then radiate out to Israel's distant villages with the returning pilgrims.

With all her complicity, we might suspect Mary Magdalene was a full conspirator but it is more likely someone manipulated her. Someone convinced Mary to follow Jesus from the cross to the grave. There was another person who had every reason to accompany Jesus' body... Nay. There was someone who we would bet our last nickel would follow Jesus to his tomb; if nothing more than to cling to the cold stone softly sobbing or collapse before the grave and keen in ever-growing wails. That person had the best reason to go to the tomb regardless of whether or not the body was anointed... or whether the tomb was sealed... or guarded by soldiers... or whether the day was Passover... or not. That someone was Jesus' canonized mother. Astoundingly, Mother Mary never went to Jesus' tomb. She

never wept over his grave. In the list of the Bible's most incredulous things, this one has to be in the top thousand or so.

Why did Virgin Mary skip going to the tomb? She didn't follow Jesus' body on Friday evening. She didn't go on Saturday. She skipped going on Sunday morning. A good detective like you must wonder if Virgin Mary already knew Jesus' body was gone. Perhaps the conspirators thought the resurrection story would sound dodgy if Jesus' closest relative discovered his resurrection.

Perhaps the conspirators did not trust Virgin Mary to play a role in another miracle. She was unreliable. She already flubbed the water to wine miracle.

Who was the puppeteer who deftly worked Maid Magdalene's strings? Who sent her to Jesus' grave, not just once, but twice? Who could assure Mary M knew the location of the apostle's hideout? You know but you are hesitant to say. You know who stood beside Mary M on Golgotha just before she stalked after Joseph as Joseph whisked Jesus' body away. You know who Magdalene comforted during that joyless Passover. You know who Ms. Magdalene stayed with the night before she went to the tomb on Sunday morning. You know the name. You don't have to speak it aloud. Just whisper it to yourself. *The Virgin Mother*

Detective work is sometimes distasteful. It is understandable a gumshoe in your gunboats would hate to bookie some dough on the hunch that the Virgin Mary was an accomplice to an elaborate con job, which included the murder of her son. Still, as a detective, you must follow where the evidence leads.



Scene: 6:05 a.m., Sunday. Mary Magdalene's is already awake. She is worried. Virgin Mary spent another night with only fitful sleep. Mother Mary is the first to speak.

"Will you go prepare my son's body?"

Mary of Magdala whispered, "Do you not remember Holy Mother? You asked me to follow your son to his grave. I did. I watched his body anointed with spices then wrapped in a fine burial shroud. A Pharisee priest and a Pharisee Councilman performed a proper interment. I could tell from their care that they too loved your son. Nicodemus personally carried an even greater load of spices to his tomb. Your son suffers no more. He rests peacefully in the earth's bosom."

Virgin Mary gestured to a wicker basket on a table. "Here are the spices you will need. You should leave now so you can be at the tomb as the sun rises."

"Venerable mother, do you not understand?" Mary spoke slowly and softly, "Nicodemus and Joseph already performed the burial rituals. No one need disturb Jesus' peace."

Virgin Mary's sorrow did not allow her to hear Magdalene's words or perhaps she was not listening. "Maybe you should take James' mother, Mary, and one of the other Marys with you."

Magdalene knew that one cannot reason with a grieving mother. The best thing was to soothe the woman's broken heart. Magdalene played along as best she could. She sighed, "Yes. Of course, I will."

Virgin Mary handed the young woman the basket of spices and asked, "Now, you do remember where the apostles are hiding. Right?"

Maid Mary nodded. The elderly and distracted Virgin Mary said where her newly adopted son, John, and the other apostles hid several times the previous day and twice that morning. Satisfied with Magdalene's nod, Virgin Mary added, "Of course, you will want to tell the apostles immediately if you notice anything... anything peculiar. Right?" The question mystified Magdalene but she nodded again.

Mary Magdalene had no intention to disturb the body. Touching a corpse or defiling a grave is bad ju-ju in most cultures.<sup>381</sup> In Israel, the dead were unclean. Blood was unclean.

A days old body—punctured and leaking—must have reeked with filthy uncleanness. Magdalene did not prepare to do a burial ritual. Although she carried spices, she did not take a fresh linen to replace the shroud, which was surely soiled with a variety of emissions. She also neglected to bring a couple of brawny fellows to roll the stone aside. She knew she could not anoint Jesus’ body. She knew she could not open the tomb.

Magdalene had no intention to perturb the body. Perhaps she planned to walk to the tomb then lovingly sprinkle the sweet smelling spices before the crypt. After returning, she would comfort the grieving Virgin Mary. She would assure Mary that her child found his home in eternity. That much was true. She would say the ritual was performed. That too was true. Nicodemus and Joseph lovingly attended the body. If need be, she might lie and say she anointed the body. Such a compassionate fib might ease Mother Mary’s terrible grief and the body could remain at peace in death’s cool embrace.

## 82. It is Dummy Jesus

It did not matter if Jesus was sincerely dead or deceptively alive. The tomb had to be vacated so neither the living Jesus nor the *corpus Christi* could interfere with the next step in the plans. The most convenient time to move the wounded Jesus or remove the body was Friday night. After sundown on Passover eve, Jerusalem would be a ghost town with tumbleweed streets with the citizens huddled indoors. No one would pay notice to a couple of men quietly pushing a corpse-sized cart to a safe house or down the road to a lonely, unmarked grave.

Once the Pharisee discovered someone liberated Jesus from the cross, the Council would stop at nothing to find the body. Out of fear of the Easter WABiT, the Council would order the temple soldiers to roust, harass and arrest Jesus’ followers until they found the body. Such a police dragnet would compromise the plans.

The conspiracists needed to manipulate the Pharisee into thinking they had the Jesus situation well in hand. They already fooled the Pharisee into thinking they were in control when they trusted Judas. Now, the conspirators needed the Pharisee to believe they had the proof of Jesus’ death—his corpse—secured in a vault.

By Saturday morning, Joseph of Arimathaea’s cover was blown. Joseph begged Pilate for possession of the body. The legionnaires on Golgotha saw Joseph remove the body from the cross. The Pharisee soon realized their trusted counselor was a Jesus collaborator who duped them. They had to worry how many other spies Jesus had in their midst.

The job of directing the Pharisee to Jesus’ tomb most likely fell to Nicodemus. Unlike Joseph, Nicodemus remained above suspicion. When he met with Jesus, it was always in secret. When he asked Pilate to break the men’s legs, he did it as one nameless priest out of the scores of priests who attended Passover. Pilate was at a loss to name Nicodemus except to identify him as “the Jews.” And when Joseph removed Jesus from the cross, Deep Disciple (Nicodemus) lifted nary a finger to help, thereby avoiding notice of the legionnaires on Golgotha. Instead Nicodemus secretly rendezvoused with Joseph at the tomb.

Good operatives avoid notice until it is too late for the enemy. Great spies never draw unwanted attention and Nicodemus was a great spy. Nicodemus needed to protect his cover as a loyal Pharisee Priest. He had later roles to play in the Jesus Conspiracy. Deep Disciple made sure no one recognized him as he watched the execution on Golgotha. He was just another peasant in the rabble.

We do not know exactly how the Pharisee found Jesus’ tomb but the Bible facts do not exclude Nicodemus leading them there. It might have happened like the following.

Sunrise Sunday:

Nicodemus hurried into Caiaphas' private chamber. He pulled the high priest aside and anxiously whispered, "Jesus' body is missing."

Caiaphas rushed to his window. The crest of Golgotha peeked over the Jerusalem wall. The center pole stood corpse-less. Caiaphas' brain raced with questions. *Who? Where? How?* But his mouth managed a single question. "Damnit?"

Nicodemus spoke quickly, "When I saw the empty cross this morning, I rushed to Golgotha. The legionnaires said they pronounced Jesus dead yesterday. They said a man dressed in elegant robes asked permission from Pilate to take the body." Nicodemus spoke slower for dramatic effect, "The man they described was Joseph of Arimathaea."

Drawn to the commotion, a male servant slipped silently into Caiaphas' chamber. Caiaphas growled, "Malchus, go find Joseph of Arimathaea and bring him here." Caiaphas grabbed the servant by his good ear and shouted into it, "Do it now!"

Nicodemus raised a halting hand, "I already went to the house where Joseph was staying."

Caiaphas released Malchus' ear. "Was? Was staying?"

Nicodemus nodded. "The servants say they haven't seen Joseph since late Friday night. His belongings are gone. I checked the stable. He must have loaded his donkey and hauled his ass out of Jerusalem in the early morning hours." Nicodemus sighed. "I am afraid there is more. Joseph of Arimathaea knew Jesus was to be killed and..."

Caiaphas interrupted, "Of course he knew. The whole Council knows. We've been trying to eliminate that troublemaker for weeks. So what?"

Nicodemus continued, "The servants said Joseph hired stone masons to carve a tomb close to Golgotha. He also purchased a linen burial shroud last Thursday." Nicodemus locked eyes with Caiaphas and spoke with as much gravity as he could manage. "I did not want to believe it but I think Joseph is a secret Jesus disciple. He deceived the Pharisee and wormed his way into the Council's trust. He duped you. I think Joseph of Arimathaea planned to steal Jesus' body all along. I think the apostles' plan is to make Jesus' body disappear so they can say he resurrected and..."

"...The Easter WABiT!" Caiaphas slammed his fist onto his writing desk. "Exactly what we feared. Will this messiah meshugas never be done with!?" Caiaphas grabbed Nicodemus by the elbow, "We don't have time to waste. I want you to return to Joseph's residence. Make the servants to tell you the location of the tomb." Caiaphas spun to his slave standing quietly in the corner. "Malchus! Go tell Annas to send temple troops to Arimathaea and drag Joseph back here. He is a spy and I want Herod to question him... to death."

Malchus bowed then hesitantly scratched at the bandage covering the stump of his right ear. He timidly muttered, "If Pharisee Annas asks where Arimathaea is, what should I tell him?"

Caiaphas rolled his eyes to the heavens as if evoking God's patience to deal with his dullard of a slave. Glancing to Nicodemus, Caiaphas grunted, "Tell him."

Nicodemus hesitated. "I am not familiar with Arimathaea... Arimathaea... Is it a city? It slips my memory. I know it is not in Galilee. Perhaps it lies in Ituraea or Abilene."

"It is in Judea. Arimathaea is north of... no, it is east of..." Caiaphas stepped to the large map hanging on his chamber wall. After several moments of squinting, he swore again. "Moses, Amram and Jochebed! There is no Arimathaea!"

"He gave us a fake address?" Nicodemus slowly shook his head. "This fiend is indeed diabolical. Joseph made sure we could not discover his deception. No one from Arimathaea could mention Joseph isn't from their hometown because there is no Arimathaea." Nicodemus raised the back of his closed fist to his forehead. He had practiced the

melodramatic pose just for this moment. “You were made a fool by this dastardly scoundrel.”

Caiaphas spun to his servant and yelled. “Malchus! You will not discuss this with anyone except Pharisee Annas... personally. Do not trust that bumbling Jethro to relay the message. Tell Annas to ask Pilate for sentries. I want legionnaires to secure and guard the grave for the next three days.”

Caiaphas turned to Nicodemus. “We do not know how many of Jesus’ spies still lurk among the priests of the Council. You have served well by alerting me so quickly.” Caiaphas placed his hand on Nicodemus’ shoulder. “You exposed the traitor in our ranks. You are the only one I can truly trust.”

Nicodemus tried to appear humble but in this game, Caiaphas was clueless. The scheme worked. The best way for a spy to remain above suspicion is to expose another spy.

An hour later, Nicodemus stood beside a tomb sealed with a large stone. He watched as Annas, Jethro and two temple troopers approached from the west.

Nicodemus called out, “You didn’t bring legionnaires. Where’s Caiaphas?”

Annas shook his head. “Pilate says posting legionnaires on a man’s grave is nonsense. He only gave us permission to assign temple guards. As high holy priest, Caiaphas cannot debase himself by standing in a graveyard on this high holy day.”

Nicodemus nodded then turned to face the large capstone. “Well, this is it. Joseph’s servants say Joseph hired masons to carve this tomb last week.”

Annas asked, “And the proof of Jesus’ death?”

Nicodemus pointed to the ground. “See the blood drops? You can smell the fresh myrrh. The body must be inside.”

Pharisee Annas glanced to the troops, pointed to the large stone and flicked his wrist. After rolling the stone aside, the temple soldiers nervously retreated several steps. Standing a safe distance from the cave’s mouth, Annas stooped down and squinted. In the dim depths, he could make out a human sized form covered with white linen and resting on a stone pedestal. “That is probably Jesus in there but we need to be sure before we seal the tomb.” Annas glanced to Jethro. “Go inside and make sure it is him.”

Jethro’s eyes snapped wide. “Me?”

Nicodemus suggested, “Be careful of snakes.”

“Snakes?!”

Nicodemus shrugged. “Vipers seek the warmth of the earth during cold nights.”

Jethro pleaded to Annas. “It was cold last night!”

Nicodemus added reassuringly, “I doubt there are spiders this early in the year.”

“Spiders?” Jethro turned desperate eyes to Annas. “If I touch a dead man, I’ll be unclean for seven days and forbidden from entering the temple.<sup>382</sup> I could not perform my chanting and animal sacrificing on this Passover... and what about the little children? Those little tykes won’t circumcise themselves.” Jethro pressed his right hand across his heart. “Won’t someone please think about the children?”

Annas lost patience with his fool of a sidekick. “I don’t care how many snakes are in there. Get in that cave and make sure the body is Jesus!”

“For Moses sake. We don’t have all day.” Nicodemus sighed. “I will do it.” Nicodemus handed his miter and cassock to Pharisee Jethro. “Take care of my vestments. I will retrieve them from you in seven days.” Jethro clutched the garments to his chest and nodded eagerly.

Nicodemus stooped down as he stepped inside the tomb. A few moments later he emerged. He was careful to assure his long morning shadow did not fall upon the shadows

of his fellow priests. Standing a safe triple arm's length from Annas and Jethro, he announced, "That's him. It's Jesus."

Annas barked, "Finally! An end to this messiah madness. If his apostles lie and claim Jesus resurrected, we will have the proof." Annas spoke to the two troopers, "Close the tomb. Stand watch. No one is to approach this grave."

Nicodemus added, "Do not leave your post for any reason. I will send two soldiers to relieve you before sundown."

Annas said to Nicodemus, "We should affix the Council's seal so all know this tomb is officially forbidden."<sup>383</sup>

Nicodemus understood the implied command. "I know. I am already unclean. I'll do it."

As Annas and Jethro walked back to Jerusalem's gate, Nicodemus kindled a small fire to melt the sealing wax. He breathed a sigh of relief. *It is almost over.* As long as the tomb bore the official and unbroken Council seal, the Pharisee would be positive they secured Jesus' body. If the Pharisee believed Jesus lay in the tomb, they would not search for his body or interfere with the rest of the plan by rousting the apostles or disciples.

The Golgotha witnesses reported Jesus died atop Golgotha. The legionaries pronounced Jesus dead while he still dangled on the cross. Joseph of Arimathaea wrapped the body in a burial shroud, which was ceremonial proof that Jesus died. However, those testimonies are nothing compared to the testimony of the Pharisee. By placing temple guards Jesus' tomb, they verified his mortal internment. If that was not proof enough, they gave irrevocable qualification of his death by affixing the Council's official seal on Jesus' tomb. The conspirators manipulated the Great Temple's learned Pharisee into pawns for their scheme. When the Council officially endorsed Jesus' death, they unwittingly certified half of Jesus' resurrection story.

After the Council pronounced Jesus officially dead, only two steps remained to complete the conspiracy. First: They needed to break the seal and empty the tomb. Second: They needed someone as enthusiastic as Hank Frankenstein to run about telling it on the mountain and everywhere, "It's alive! It's alive! Christianity is alive!"

### **83. A Hundred Pounds of Aloe and Myrrh**

A small town's sheriff in North Carolina once investigated the rustling of a single cow. The only evidence were three sets of boot tracks as the thieves as they made their getaway. As his excited deputy poured plaster castings of the shoe prints, the sheriff asked, "Where are the cow's hoof prints?"

When we investigate the missing body of Christ, we face a similar question. The Gospels tell us three things went into Jesus' tomb. They were the body, a burial shroud and spices. Jesus resurrected so the body is accounted. The shroud is also accounted as Peter found the linen laying inside the tomb.<sup>384</sup> If, in some alternate universe And ██████████ Taylor was Jerusalem's sheriff, he might ask, "Hey Barn ██████████, What happened to all those spices?"

Another detective might echo, "Where indeed."

Mary saw Nicodemus carry pounds of spices to the tomb but she did not see them lugging spices when they departed. That is understandable because any leftover herbs would be unclean and unfit for any other purpose.

A hundred pounds of spice should have littered the cave floor and covered the pedestal where the corpse had lay. Instead Peter found only the shroud.

A hundred pounds of spice is a ridiculous amount for burial rites and also ridiculously expensive. We should wonder if Nicodemus lugged only a few pounds of aloes and myrrh to the tomb and the rest was common straw. Now you are thinking, *Okay. If that was the case, what happened to all that straw?*



If Jesus still clung to life, the conspirators could neither leave him alone in a cold stony place nor, if deceased, leave his body. They needed an empty tomb. Since the Pharisee knew Jesus' body was not on the cross, the conspirators had to convince the Pharisee the body was locked safely away. Substituting another man's body was out of the question. A fresh body is hard to procure on a strict timetable. A real body would be cumbersome for the two men to lug around and tricky to hide until it was needed. If they used a stranger's corpse to convince the Pharisee Jesus lay in his grave, that body would have to be moved again and again hidden. All that requires precious time and manpower. It also introduces unforeseeable complications as real cadavers have a tendency to draw flies, scavengers and the attention of morbid busybodies.

By now you have deduced what happened to the hundred pounds of spices.

Mary and Mary waited outside the tomb. They assumed Joseph and Nicodemus anointed Jesus' body for his journey into oblivion. The two men actually stuffed the straw into a shroud. They shaped the linen bundle of straw into a rough human form and cinched the shroud shut. After the Marys departed, Joseph and Nicodemus returned an hour later. They retrieved the injured Jesus or his lifeless corpse and left the straw man entombed in his place.

The conspirators needed to assure the Council the priests had Jesus' body securely locked away. Anyone who squinted into the tomb's depths could see what they expected to see; linen covering a body resting on a stone pedestal.

A single man could break the seal, roll the stone, snatch up the dummy and throw down another shroud: folded and already decorated with convincing stains. He could dash away with the straw-stuffed scarecrow; dumping the stuffing as he ran. One moment the body is sealed inside. Thirty-eight seconds later, it is vanished.

#### **84. The Soldiers at the Tomb**

The Pharisee placed guards at the tomb on Saturday. Only Matthew mentions those temple troopers. The investigator should not view this omission as a contradiction on the part of the other Gospels. It is not. Those guards did not interact with Jesus, Mary or the apostles. Mark, Luke and John may have omitted the guards for frugal economy with words or the writer's prerogative to shorten his story.

According to Matthew, an angel opened the tomb at daybreak on Sunday. When the guards saw the angel, they fainted dead away.<sup>385</sup> Those troopers later reported to the Council that the body was missing. The Pharisee bribed the soldiers to say disciples took Jesus' body while the soldiers slept.<sup>386</sup> The Pharisee assured those temple troops they would not get into trouble if Pilate heard of the incident.<sup>387</sup> Lastly, scripture says the Jewish people tell this story "until this day."<sup>388</sup> Just for your investigation's record... Except for docents entertaining tourists at Jerusalem attractions, the Jewish people do not tell this story until this day. Jewish folks have more important things to talk about.

The Gospels always represent legionnaires as efficient and competent. On the other hand, the gospels depict the temple troops as inept, corruptible and feeble-minded. Pilate took that reputation into account when he questioned the temple soldier who guarded Jesus' tomb.



Time: Three days after the resurrection

Place: Pilate's office

A centurion and a young temple soldier stood before Pilate. In preparation for the appointment, the legionnaire had buffed his armor with fresh polish. In contrast, the temple trooper did not bother to scrape the street's donkey droppings from his sandals.

Pontius leaned back from his desk then glanced to the legionnaire. "Last Friday, I ordered you to arrest a Galilean named Jesus."

The centurion dipped his head. "Yes, Sir. Whatever Governor Pilate commands becomes true. Sir."

"You did not think to arrest his apostles?"

A tremor of surprise shook the legionnaire's stony expression. "Sir. I received no instructions to arrest them. Sir."

Pilate nodded. The question was a small test. A good trooper does not think. He follows orders. That was important in volatile Jerusalem. A legionnaire who rashly puts a rowdy citizen to the sword can spark a needless riot.

"One of those apostles cut off a man's ear. You did not arrest him either."

"Sir. I did not. The offender was Jewish. The ear was also Jewish. It was a civil matter. Temple troops also attended the arrest. The incident was within their jurisdiction. I do not know why they did not arrest that apostle." The legionnaire relaxed his iron-spine attention and chanced meeting his superior's eye. "Sir, I assure you. Had it been a Roman ear, my gladius would have cleaved the attacker's heart before the ear rolled to a stop."

Pilate grunted his approval. "Yes. Standard procedure for any assault on a Roman." Pilate glanced to the temple soldier. "As for you. Are you aware of scuttlebutt saying disciples stole the body of Jesus from its tomb while... you, on guard duty, ... slept?"

The temple troop put on a sly smile and winked. "That's only the cover story. The Pharisee paid me handsomely to spread that rumor. Did the priests not tell you?"

Pilate nodded. "The priests gave me your name and they told me the story you spread. They failed to mention the bribe: not that it matters. So what's the real story?"

The trooper took a deep breath. "My partner tried to take Jesus into custody early last week. Jesus avoided that arrest by bewitching him. If that was not enough, the Council wanted to kill Lazarus because raising Lazarus from the dead spread Jesus' reputation. Later, I heard it said that Jesus swore he would come back to life. We guarded a creepy haunted tomb. Every mouse scurrying in the weeds made me jump out of my skin."

Pilate's smile hid his irritation and encouraged the young trooper to keep talking. "So you stood your guard a safe distance from the tomb?"

"Anyone would stand back a few dozen cubits. We guarded a corpse... in a graveyard... at night! The deadman had a reputation for spooky magic. It was a relief to see the sky glow blue before the rising sun." The trooper leaned forward across Pilate's desk. His voice dropped to a serious tone. "Then it happened."

Pilate replied in a deadpan voice, "Something interesting, I hope."

"I was looking to the east and when I turned back, an angel dressed in a brilliant white robe stood before the tomb. He rolled the stone from the mouth of the cave. He spread his arms as if summoning Jesus' ghost to come forth."

Pilate sighed then rested his elbow on the desk and his chin in his palm. "...And you just stood there. As a guard, shouldn't you have done something? Perhaps your duty? One way to test a spirit's mortality is to run a gladius through its gut."

"I know it was an angel. No defenseless mortal will so boldly face down two armed soldiers. Besides, with the cave open, the Jesus corpse could leap out at any second... just like Lazarus did. Only a fool would provoke an angel and aggravate the walking dead at the same time."

"And your fellow guard?"

“My partner fainted... crumpled to the ground as if dead. I found myself confronting a supernatural being all alone. I did not want to provoke it. The creature ignored my partner so I dropped to the ground too.”

Pilate commented. “A wise strategy. Why should a warrior risk fighting when he can play dead?”

Standing silently at attention, the iron-spined legionnaire pretended to clear his throat as he tried to stifle a chuckle.

“It worked. I lay still with my eyes closed. I heard quick footsteps at the tomb. A minute later, I heard women talking as they approached. They spoke briefly with the angel and then ran away. If they noticed my partner and me, they didn’t say anything. After they all left and it was safe to stand, I glanced inside the tomb. Sure enough, Jesus’ body had walked away. It was gone, leaving only its shroud. I reported all this to the Pharisee. They paid us to say disciples stole the body while we slept.”

“Your story is amusing but...” Pilate sighed. “Son, I want you to know I sincerely appreciate your honesty. It makes my job easier. I do not care about a stolen corpse, a tomb-robbing angel or any of that nonsense. What concerns me is the other story you spread around Jerusalem. I cannot allow soldiers to imagine they can get away with sleeping on guard duty. An officer is nothing without discipline. I already have an image problem as a wishy-washy commander because I freed that damn terrorist, Jesus Barabbas.”

“The story does not reflect on you.” The temple trooper grinned. “I am under the Pharisee’s command.”

“The Pharisee told you that?”

Pilate’s tone eased the temple trooper into a cautious nod.

Pilate said, “Rome occupies this land. Israel’s leaders hold their positions only at the Emperor’s pleasure. I am governor of Judea by imperial appointment. The Pharisee may be your immediate superiors but you are still under my authority. The Pharisee acknowledged that fact when they assured you they would intervene with me on your behalf.”

The temple troop abandoned his calm. “But they did smooth things with you. Right?”

“They told you they could talk me out of punishing you.” Pilate sighed. “Son, they lied. I am surprised you believed them. They paid you to keep quiet about the truth... temporarily. What would it be worth to silence you permanently?” Pilate quickly scribbled a squiggle at the bottom of a document then lay down the quill and interlaced his fingers.

The young trooper repeated the words that concerned him. “Lied? Silence? Permanent?”

“Be reasonable, Son.” Pilate opened his hands with palms upward. “Consider my position. If I do not reprimand you, soldiers will start bringing their favorite pillow to guard duty.”

The temple troop whined, “But... But... The Pharisee said they would fix it with you!”

“They did... fix it. They gave me your name and told me the rumor you started. They fixed it so you will never interfere with their Jesus propaganda.”

“I did not sleep on guard!” The temple trooper stumbled backward. “It was the Pharisee’s idea to tell that story. They paid us.”

Pilate replied, “You should have reconsidered accepting their money. In any case, it was a stupid alibi. How could you know disciples took the body if you were sleeping? Your second problem is claiming you slept at all. Except for treason and cowardice, sleeping on guard is a soldier’s worst crime.”

The temple trooper whined. “But I did not sleep!”

“That does not matter nor do I care. You have no credibility. You admitted lying and taking bribes. Even the Pharisee distrust their own temple troops. The Pharisee asked for

legionnaires to arrest Jesus in the Garden because the temple soldiers are so incompetent. Hades! The Pharisee did not even trust you to guard a tomb. They wanted legionnaires for that too. It does not matter to me if someone bewitched you or drugged you or bribed you to let them take the body.”

The temple troop stuttered, “N-n-no... the disciples did not bribe me.”

Pilate’s replied, “So you are above common corruption. You only take bribes from Holy Men?” Pilate waved off the trooper’s objection. “I cannot call you *soldier*. The word sticks in my throat. This man,” Pilate pointed to the legionnaire, “is a soldier. I don’t know what you are.”

Pilate squinted at the young man’s face. “Bribery is worthless unless someone places a corruptible man in a key position. I want to question the man who assigned you to that guard duty.”

The temple soldier winced. “That’s going to be a problem. No one has seen Pharisee Nicodemus since last Sunday.”

Pilate grunted. “What about that fellow, Joseph: the one who begged me for Jesus’ body? He has a stake in this Jesus affair.”

The temple soldier groaned. “The Pharisee say Joseph of Arimathaea left Jerusalem that Friday night.”

“Well, there you have it. No other witnesses to question.” Pilate shrugged. “You spread the story the Pharisee wanted you to tell. Now, the priests have assured you will never interfere with their plans. The sad part... the truly sad part... is they are manipulating me into doing their dirty work... again. It does not matter if an angel knocked you out or if you fainted like a frightened old woman. The story you told about sleeping on guard is the only point that concerns to me.”

Pilate dismissed the two with a wave of his hand. The legionnaire seized the temple soldier by the throat and dragged him toward the door.

The squirming trooper managed to squeak. “I only followed the Pharisee orders. You cannot punish me!”

Pilate’s eyes blazed at the challenge to his authority. He shouted, “I can’t? Mine are the only orders that count.” Pilate pointed to the parchment on his desk. “See? There is my signature. You are quilled in for next week. What are you complaining about? At least you have time get your affairs in order with your god.”

“You said you were going to reprimand me.”

“I am Roman. We invented decimation. If a legion fights poorly, we kill every tenth man to encourage better performance from the survivors. How can a soldier who sleeps on guard expect less?”

“I didn’t sleep...”

“Stop saying that!” Pilate snapped, “It doesn’t matter!” Pilate softened his voice and spoke kindly, “My advice? Don’t accept any bribes from the Pharisee when you meet them in the afterlife.”

“Afterlife? We don’t have an afterlife. This is the only life I have.”

“And whose fault is that?” Pilate reached to his papers “Not mine.”

The troop gasped, “Don’t kill me. Please.”

Pilate sighed. “Look. If it makes you feel any better, I know you are innocent. But the Pharisee made you their dupe. I have no choice.” Pilot gave a fatherly nod and said, “Son, I will do you a favor. I will put you in a cell with some Greek prisoners. They can convert you to pagan then... Praise Zeus and pack your bags for the Elysian Fields.”

The temple troop pleaded, “That is forbidden. It is against Mosaic Law to accept a foreigner’s god.”

Pilate barely nodded to the legionnaire. The soldier released his grip on the temple trooper's throat; dropping him to the floor. "I am curious. What will your god do if you convert to pagan?"

"Who knows? Maybe rain frogs on my hometown? Sometimes he smites innocent people because of someone else's sin. Jehovah is truly unpredictable, which is part of what makes him terrible. However, the Pharisee will definitely kill me. It is... a rule."

"So what difference does it make? You are dead in any case. I couldn't save Jesus and I cannot afford to spare you. Son, I am not a heartless man but the chance for an afterlife is all I can offer." Pilate flipped two fingers of his left hand.

As the legionnaire dragged the prisoner out of Pilate's chamber, the temple troop pleaded, "I can live in an afterlife? That is the truth?"

Without looking up, Pilate reached across his desk to pull the next capital offense application from his in-box. He murmured to himself, "What is truth?"

Pilate grunted, "Next!"

## 85. The Lam of the Apostles

Let us account for the apostles' movements during the period after Jesus' arrest.

We know all twelve apostles were in Gethsamane when Jesus was arrested on Thursday. Except for Judas and Thomas, all of them were in the hideout on Sunday morning.

Judas departed the garden with the mob. He met with the Pharisee sometime before the crucifixion, to refund their blood bounty. As far as we know, they were the last to speak to Judas before he committed suicide.

Thursday night, Apostle Peter followed the mob from Jesus Camp to the home of Caiaphas. Peter lingered in Caiaphas' courtyard as Jesus stood trial then departed immediately after a cock crowed. With all due respect to Abigail Porterfield's murder mystery classic, *The Rooster Crowed at Midnight*, anyone who grew up on a farm will tell y'all roosters commence crowing per-i-neer two 'ars afore the sun. The crowing cock tentatively indicates Peter left Caiaphas' home around 4:30 a.m. Friday morning. We cannot be sure if he immediately joined the other apostles but we do know Peter was with them in the hideout on Sunday morning.

We can place Apostle John on Golgotha Friday evening. John stood with four women to watch the end of the crucifixion from a timid distance.<sup>389</sup> Around 4 p.m., John escorted the Virgin Mary and her sister, from Golgotha while two other Marys shadowed Joseph as he carried Jesus' body to the tomb. John was also in the hideout on Sunday morning.

The Gospels leave no question that the eleven apostles took refuge in the same dwelling for (at least) ten days. We need to determine when and why the apostles retreated to that hideaway in Jerusalem.

The apostles were on the lam. They feared they were on the Council's top-eleven most-wanted list. They developed a twitchy anxiety of snitches, spies, bounty hunters and the Pharisee's not-so-secret police. Let us be fair to the apostles' paralyzing panic. Considering what happened to Jesus, their fears were neither irrational nor cowardly. It is not paranoid to tremble before the executioner nor is it cowardice to run from the horns of a charging bull. Otherwise, Pamplona would celebrate the running of the cowards.

There is something nagging at you. Every detective has a little inner voice and yours will not shut up. *Why didn't the apostles split up and scatter?* The apostles knew the roads and trails from their travels. Running for the hills should be safer refuge. They could easily hide from noisy patrols of approaching troops: especially incompetent temple soldiers. Jerusalem should be the last place to hide. It was as if someone kept them from scrambling to Bethany, Bethphage and beyond.

Like Jesus, the apostles were famous as well as infamous in Jerusalem. Just days earlier, they drew attention when they stood by him while he preached to clamoring crowds. The apostles looked on as Jesus scourged merchants in the temple. As the city chanted, “Hosanna,” when Jesus paraded through the streets, the apostles were there. It is no surprise several people recognized Peter sitting before a gentle warming fire in Caiaphas’ courtyard. How much quicker would some snitch recognize the eleven celebrities in the brittle daylight of the city’s busy streets?

It is curiouser and curiouser still why such skittish men hid in the most dangerous place possible. The Christ did not go into Jerusalem without a defensive ring of disciples. To be doubly careful, he never dared to spend the night within the Holy City’s walls. <sup>390</sup>

## 86. Meanwhile, Back in the Upper Room

All we know about the apostles’ hideout is that it was in Jerusalem and it had a door with a lock.<sup>391</sup> Correct? No, not correct. A clever detective like you can know much more. You know the hideout was a place large enough for eleven men to cohabit because they cloistered in secret for over a week.<sup>392</sup> This room obviously had available food, water and some method of sanitation. Since they could not move freely about the streets, a caretaker or servant would be necessary for errands and sundry needs. Even though it was during the hectic days of Jerusalem’s Passover, this room was the rarest of places as it was otherwise unoccupied. The terrified apostles needed a place where they could feel safe. Lastly, it had to be a place they could go in the middle of the night after the arrest.

Does this room sound familiar? That’s right! The Bible neglects to state as much but the hideout and the Upper Room of the Last Supper were the same place.

There are hidden reasons for returning to that sanctuary and you will find them soon enough. No transcripts exist today but it might have happened this way...



It was after midnight in the Garden of Gethsemane. Soldiers arrested Jesus minutes before. The apostles cautiously emerge from their hiding places behind the squat and contorted trees. They mill about Jesus Camp helplessly watching as the mob’s torches snake down the Mount of Olives. *Where should they go? What should they do?* Herod Antipas took their first spiritual master, John the Baptist, as prisoner then beheaded him. Now the Council held Jesus as a prisoner facing crucifixion. For the first time in a year, they are without a leader.

The eleven apostles wander aimlessly about. One absentmindedly kicks at dried olive pits scattered about the ground while Peter uses a stick to poke at an ear. Andrew asks, “Should we choose a leader from among us?”

Peter knew another apostle carried the second sword from the Last Supper. “I will tell you what I think.” Peter grabbed the other apostle’s lapel, jerked the robe aside and drew the weapon. Peter raised the blade and growled, “We will all get swords. We will free the master!”

Bartholomew drew his forearm then sharply whipped the back of his knuckles across the right side of Peter’s face. Peter reeled from the blow. Bartholomew grabbed Peter’s arm and wrested the blade from his fist. “Enough with the swords already. You nearly got us killed. It’s a wonder the mob didn’t fall on us with their clubs and pitchforks. You almost sold our lives for the price of a slave’s ear. Your stunt may yet prove to be the death of us.” Bartholomew pointed to Peter’s face and said matter-of-factly, “You know Jesus’ rules.”

Peter knew. It was the “Other Cheek” rule. Peter shifted his weight evenly on both feet, he turned his left jowl forward then clenched. Having a steady target, Bartholomew

delivered a blow worthy of teaching a Bible lesson to be long remembered. The punch knocked Peter back two staggering steps. When he recovered, Peter said, “Thanks. I ne...”

Philip shouted, “Is this what Jesus would want? ...to brawl amongst ourselves?” His answer was shame-filled silence. “Okay then... Use your hearts. Think!”

As if taking inventory, James said, “Our master is arrested. He will stand trial and the Pharisee will find him guilty. As his followers, we are already apostates in the eyes of the Council. Even worse, Peter insulted the Highest Priest. Caiaphas will be furious when he sees how Peter defaced his servant. He will likely send the soldiers straight back to make an example of us too. The mob could return within the hour and hang us from these very trees. Well? So what do we do?”

James allowed the gravity of the situation to weigh on the disciples’ minds before asking, “Any ideas?”

Thaddaeus <sup>393</sup> offered, “Until we see if Jesus is crucified... and then until we see if he resurrects. Until then... perhaps it would be a good idea if we drop “the Apostle” from our names when introducing ourselves.” No one seconded the notion but no one vetoed either.

James suggested, “At the least, we should break camp and find another place to spend the rest of this cursed night.”

The other James chimed in, “We should escape Judea. We can make a run for the Galilee border. Maybe that’s what Jesus wants us to do.”

“I think I can help.” An unfamiliar voice drifted from the night. The voice belonged to a man draped in a cloak with a hood cinched underneath his chin. The stranger stepped from the shadows and tilted back his hood so the moonlight filled his face.

Judas (the other Judas, not Judas Iscariot) <sup>394</sup> whispered, “Who is that?”

You detectives know the man as Deep Disciple. Clues from the Bible identify him as Pharisee Nicodemus. However, John recognized his face as belonging to someone else.

John spoke, “I know him. He’s the master of the home where we ate tonight. This man escorted Peter and me to the Upper Room.” John spoke to the newcomer. “How are you here?”

Deep Disciple lied, “When I heard they were going to arrest Jesus, I followed the mob.” He dipped his hood lower. If one of the apostles recognized him as a Pharisee priest, they might all run squealing into the thicket like rutting pigs uprooting a hornet’s nest.

“So you have a better idea?”

“When the Pharisee come after you, I wouldn’t take the northerly roads. The Pharisee know you all are from Galilee. They have plenty of foot soldiers who know your faces. It won’t be hard for troopers to overtake you.”

Matthew said, “We could hide at Lazarus’ home until the heat is off. Maybe the Council will get tired of looking for us. Lazarus owes Jesus his life so he’ll do us this favor.”

Deep Disciple winced but tilted his head in polite disapproval. “I would think twice about that. The Council wants Lazarus dead too... again.”

John nodded. “He’s right! We made no secret that we lodged at Lazarus’ place. Half of Bethany saw us coming and going. The soldiers will surely look for us there. Lazarus’ home is out of the question.”

The desperate apostles turned to Deep Disciple. “You have any ideas?”

“Well, I have a plan. You can lay low a couple of days. Come Sunday, the roads will be rivers of pilgrims flowing from the city.” Deep Disciple waved his hand like Moses parting the waters. “You could ride a fire breathing dragon well past Bethlehem before anyone gives you a passing glance.”

Philip agreed. “That makes sense. We’ll just join the rest of the pilgrims who are camping outside the walls of the city.”

Deep Disciple grimaced sympathetically, “That’s not such a good idea. If the Council puts out the word they are looking for Jesus’ apostles then...”

Philip interrupted, “God da... I mean, Gosh darn it! He’s right. The whole city knows our faces. If we linger anywhere near Jerusalem, the Pharisee will have us in chains within a day.” Philip faced DD. “So you know maybe a cave where we can hide?”

“I have a better plan.” DD said, “You should return to the city and...”

“Forget you!” James the Greater snapped, “You want us to go back into Jerusalem? Where everyone is looking for us? Those are a demon’s words!”

“It’s not crazy talk.” Deep Disciple shrugged. “The mob arrested Jesus here on the Mountain of Olives. The last place the Pharisee would look for his apostles is under their very noses... inside Jerusalem’s walls. You can stay at my home.”

Bartholomew asked, “Is it safe?”

Deep Disciple nodded. “Of course. It is a safe-house Jesus anticipated for you. Jesus trusted me to host his Last Supper even when he had a bounty on his head. You can trust me now because he trusts me.”

Thomas spat his words, “Trusting you is not healthy. Jesus trusted you and now he is a prisoner facing execution. I will take my chances on the road.” Thomas grabbed a long stick from the ground for a hiking staff. “I won’t stop until I can cool my heels in the Sea of Galilee. Who’s with me?” Half of the apostles slowly nodded in half-hearted agreement.

DD sneered at Thomas’ doubting. “Your bellies are full now but what will you eat on the journey? You don’t even have wineskins to carry water. It will take you a week to get to Galilee and longer if you stop to beg for food along the way. And if you beg for alms in the name of Jesus, you will make it easier for the Pharisee spies to run you down.”

Matthew the Publican said, “No problem. One of us will go into villages along the way and buy food for the rest of us.”

DD almost smiled but held his dour expression. “How do you intend to pay for this food? Will you conjure coins from a child’s ear or a fish’s mouth?”

Matthew looked to his left then right then slapped his forehead. “That son-of-a-bitch! Dammit! I mean Darn it! Judas has all our money. He had the moneybag when he ran from the Upper Room. We are... shekelless.”

“Waitaminute.” Matthew eyed DD suspiciously. “How do you know we have no money or wineskins?”

“Lucky guess?” DD shrugged. “I also know Jesus told you not to carry a hiking staff...” DD pointed at Thomas’ long staff then looked to the knife Bartholomew took from Peter, “...or weapons.” Deep Disciple turned to Thaddaeus. “Think about it. My home has plenty of food and the upstairs room has a strong lock. No one will know you are there.”

Thaddaeus interrupted, “Have you forgotten Judas? He sold out Jesus and we could be next. Judas knows where we ate the Last Supper. He will tell the soldiers about that house. They will look for us there.”

Deep Disciple answered, “I would not hide you in my home if there was any risk. I harbored Jesus the Outlaw. Now I am aiding and abetting his fugitive apostles. If you were caught in my home, the Pharisee will punish me too. Just as I know Judas has all your money, I also know he will say nothing about my home. I cannot tell you how I know but I know. Besides, as I said, Jesus trusts me. So you can trust me.”

John objected, “Your neighbors will get suspicious. If anyone suspects we are on the lam, they will drop a shekel on us.”

“Everyone in Jerusalem is renting out rooms.” Deep Disciple gestured to Peter. “Besides, only you and Peter came to my house by daylight. You discretely followed my servant with the water-jug. Nobody saw you walking or talking with anyone from my home.” Deep Disciple waited for the facts to sink in before he continued. “Jesus and the rest of you



apostles came to my house in the dark of evening.<sup>395</sup> It was also undercover of night when you departed to come to this garden. If you return to the Upper Room before sunrise, no one will have a clue you are hiding in my home.”

John nodded. “That is true. We spoke to no one. No one knows we followed the Aquarian.”

Deep Disciple added, “There’s food in my home. You can take more than enough to get you to Galilee. I even have a donkey mare and her colt that I will give you to carry your provisions. You can take the mountain trails and never have to come close to a village. I’ll even give you a few denarii in case you need to bribe some temple police. Besides, Jesus may resurrect after all. Aren’t you at least curious?”

Peter muttered, “Someone should go see about Master Jesus.”

DD replied, “Excellent idea. Why don’t you and I follow Jesus. The rest of you can lock yourselves securely in the Upper Room. Peter will join with you later.”

Thaddaeus (also known as Jude) spoke up. “Take Peter to follow the mob? That is a terrible idea.” Jude pointed to a blood spatter on the ground. “Peter just cut an ear from the servant of the high priest. You think Caiaphas is not gonna get pissed about that?”

“Hey Jude, don’t be afraid.” Deep Disciple spoke confidently, “I will keep Peter out of trouble.”

Hearing no more objections, James the Greater relented. “Okay. Someone wake up Apostle Simo... I mean... Simon the Canaanite and we’ll head back to the upper room.”

DD lifted his left hand and snapped his fingers twice. “I can’t take the chance you might get confused in the dark and knock on the wrong door. My servant will guide you back to my home. You already know him as the Ange... I mean Aquarian.” DD waited some moments longer before snapping his fingers twice again but more insistently. A beardless young man trotted up from somewhere deep in the shadowy trees; fussing to tie his robe’s belt as he came.

## **87. Mary and the Angels**

It is no accident Mary Magdalene was one of the four people who knew the location of Jesus’ crypt. She also knew where the apostles hid. That was no accident either.

It does not take the mentalist turned CBI consultant ■trick Ja■ to realize how easily someone could manipulate Mary. She witnessed her lover, doctor and savior tortured to death. She suffered a frail state of mind, sinking ever deeper into loss. Emotionally wounded, the girl was the perfect pawn.

The Gospel writers got their story of the discovery of the tomb from Mary Magdalene. She gave four different accounts of who and/or what she saw at the tomb. It was a man<sup>396</sup> or two men<sup>397</sup> or an angel<sup>398</sup> or two angels.<sup>399</sup> We can sympathize if Mary’s trauma caused her conflicting recollections. We will split the difference and call him, it or them... the Angel.

The four Gospel’s agree that Mary found the empty tomb. They also agree the Angel appeared only to Mary. It (the angel) told her that Jesus rose from the dead. No Apostle saw any angels or strange men.

The Gospels report that the Angel rolled the capstone from the crypt however supernatural superpowers were wholly unnecessary for the task. Joseph proved rolling the stone required no angelic, Samsonian or Kryptonian powers. Days before, Joseph rolled the stone all by his puny human self.<sup>400</sup>

The chain of resurrection events has small variations from Gospel to Gospel. For our investigation, we will accept the events at the tomb as confirmed by at least two Gospels.

As Mary approached, she saw the opened tomb. She also saw an angel who dressed exactly like the angel in the Garden of Gethsemane.<sup>401</sup> The Angel at the tomb had it easier than the one in the garden. There was slim chance Mary would chase him down and strip him naked by snatching his linen skirt. This Angel did not need to disappear or fly away like a proper spirit. He recited his message then ordered the terrified Mary to run away.<sup>402</sup>

The Angel's appearance served one purpose. Like John the Baptist, the Angel proclaimed the Messiah is coming, albeit the Risen Christ this time. The Angel's message to Mary was simple and brief. "Jesus has risen. Go tell the apostles. NOW!"

By the time she and the apostles got to the crypt, the Angel had returned to the heavens or so Mary thought.

## **88. Mary the Pawn**

As a pawn in the resurrection, Mary needed to know where the paranoid apostles were hiding. How she knew is a mystery but a small one.

The apostles retreated to their hideout about fifteen hours before Jesus died. John slipped away to watch the end of the crucifixion. By Jesus' dying wish, John accepted Virgin Mary as his new mother. After Jesus expired, John escorted his adopted mother away from Golgotha. Evidently, Virgin Mary lodged in a place separate from the apostles' hideout. As Mary's new son, John would have at least told Virgin Mary where he and the apostles hid out in case she needed him.

After watching Joseph and Nicodemus lay Jesus' body to rest, Maid Magdalene returned to Virgin Mary to stay at her side and console the grieving mother. It was a simple matter for Virgin Mary to make sure Mary the Pawn knew exactly where the apostles holed up. Consequently, when the Angel told Mary to go tell the apostles, she already knew the location of the Upper Room hideout.

It is dangerous to let a pawn or patsy hang around too long. A pawn is a loose end that can unravel a conspiracy. If the Pharisee police interrogated Mary Magdalene in their hunt for Jesus' body, she might let slip a crucial piece of information. Not only was her usefulness finished, she was now an unacceptable liability.

Once the pawn or patsy serves his/her purpose then he/she ends up in either of two ways. You may doubt if Lee Harvey Oswald was a patsy as he claimed but still, Oswald ended up one of those ways... murdered. The conspirators did not kill Mary. Her fate was worse.

The conspirators could not risk Maid Mary's boundless love and reckless joy to muck up their plans. If she noticed anything strange about the Risen Jesus, she might contaminate the apostles with suspicion. It was too risky to let Mary Magdalene hang around. She had to go.

Mary devoted herself to Jesus. He was her physician, her exorcist, her teacher, her messiah, the object of her love and (not the least) her god. He was like food for her starvation or a gulp of sweet air to her drowning. Her adoration was total but her love was not simply unrequited. Her affection was bluntly and completely forsaken. Christ shunned her. The Risen Jesus did not kiss her goodbye or embrace her. He did not so much as hold her hand in the last touch of aching farewell. The last time Risen Jesus spoke to sweet little Maid Mary, he ordered her not to embrace or even touch him.<sup>403</sup> He told her to just go away... and take a message too.

Mary's usefulness ended with that final chore. Jesus did not deny Mary for another. Mary might sadly recover from rejection if he just loved another woman. Another woman could still mean he held some fondness for her. There wasn't another woman. Jesus was indifferent. Indifference is far worse than rejection or even loathing.

By bearing the good news of the resurrection, Mary became the Apostle to the Apostles but they shunned her too. To the last Amen, in the last book, of the last testament no scripture quotes her or notes anyone speaking to or of Mary Magdalene again: leaving her to her suffer in her misery alone. If more compassionate, the apostles would have bashed in Mary's head with a rock.

## 89. "Allah-Kazam" Risen Jesus Appears

Risen Jesus performed the first miracle after his resurrection by materializing in the locked room of the apostles' hideout. For an encore, he reappeared days later in the same locked room.

The apostle's locked chamber was their first century version of a panic room but it was little more than a symptom of their paranoia. Any faith they put in the locked door was misplaced. Even a thick hickory door with a crossbar of seasoned oak cannot hold a few determined soldiers at bay for long.

A better defense is the time-tested innovation standard in better homes and castles for thousands of years: the secret passage. While home invaders waste a few minutes hammering the bolted door into splinters, the residents slip through an emergency tunnel and exit into a nearby alley. However, there is a universal truth about secret doors. They swing both ways. One can enter a locked room as well as escape from it.

Miracles aside, the easiest way for a magician to materialize in a locked chamber is to quietly step out of a trapdoor or secret wall panel when an assistant misdirects the audience's attention to the other side of the room. Then the magician just stands waiting for the awe and adulation when his audience turns around to behold his awesomeness. He might say, "Ta Daaaa," and extend his arms to accept the applause. A magician might act modest or exhausted from the supernatural strain, which adds to selling the illusion.

We know Jesus reserved the house of the Last Supper days before the crucifixion. It would be a simple matter to cut a secret passage from an adjacent room or from the bottom floor. As a detective, can you rule out a trapdoor in favor of a miracle? We know Jesus kept the house secret from the apostles until the last minute. We know he continued to keep the home secret from the authorities by arranging his arrest in the olive garden. The secrecy allowed Jesus to use the same house after the resurrection. All of these elements were under Jesus' control.

Except for this one, Jesus never repeated the same miracle in the same place. He mystically materialized twice in the Gospel chronicles. Both of those times were in the same house and in the same room.

Instead of fumbling for the keys or fussing with the door's lock, first time Bible readers expect Jesus exited the room by melding with the wall and disappearing into it. That did not happen. Dematerializing from a room is difficult when your audience is uneasy with your ghost or anxiously worshipping you. No Gospel writes Jesus so much as vanished in a puff of smoke. He unbolted the door and *schlepped* himself out as might even a common *schlemiel*.

## 90. Mary Does not Recognize the Risen Jesus

No one recognized Jesus the Risen as the same Jesus who died on the cross

Mary did not recognize Jesus the Risen. She saw him <sup>404</sup> and spoke to him and heard him answer. Initially she thought he was a cemetery gardener.<sup>405</sup>

A few words passed and she turned to him before she decided the gardener was her Savior.<sup>406</sup> She spread her arms for him but he snubbed her. The Risen Jesus did not want

Magdalene to get close to him or touch him because. He said Mary's touch would contaminate him and complicate his ascension to Heaven.<sup>407</sup> (Thomas poking his fingers in Jesus' holes appears less of an impediment to hitching a ride home.) His excuse kept Mary at a distance and cut their reunion short. Jesus told Mary to tell the apostles that he would rendezvous with them in Galilee.<sup>408</sup> The Angel gave Mary the same message and added, "Go quickly!"<sup>409</sup>

The Risen Jesus kept his reunion with Mary Magdalene brief. Like the Angel, Jesus only told her to go do her job. Jesus never spoke to her again.

## 91. Unrecognizable Jesus: Part I Poking Christ

Resurrected Jesus first appeared in the Upper Room on Sunday morning. None of the ten men in the Upper Room recognized Christ until he presented his hands and feet.<sup>410</sup> The wounds and materializing in the locked room convinced those men he was The Risen Savior... formerly known just as The Savior.

The Bible offers no hint as to where Jesus hung out in those eight days after his first appearance in the Upper Room. Wherever he passed the time, he had to have it better than the Apostles. They remained cowering in the locked room enduring Jerusalem's stifling April heat and huddling by lamplight during the chilly nights. Resurrected Jesus likely ordered them, "Stay put." He probably added, "And tell Thomas to stop gallivanting around outside too."

Jesus effectively put them on ice till the heat died down. Without being locked up, the apostles were capable of nothing but jeopardizing the whole operation.

Thomas was present the second time Risen Jesus materialized in the locked room.<sup>411</sup> During that visitation, Thomas got tagged with the nickname that sticks with him for lo' these thousands of years later. Everyone knows the "Doubting Thomas" incident. We know the paintings of him poking his fingers inside Jesus wounds. Those paintings are...

(wait for it...)

(wait for it...)

...wrong.

Never happened.

Fortunately for all those misinformed folks, you are on the case. You can point out the facts and set the record straight. This what the Bible says happened.

When Thomas returned to the hideout the apostles told him that Jesus appeared to them inside the locked room.<sup>412</sup> In a skeptical tone, Thomas quipped, "I won't believe it until I poke my fingers inside his holes."<sup>413</sup> Thomas' initial response was little more than a facetious, off-the-cuff comment by a fellow in a blustery mood. In the same situation, someone of today might crack wise saying, "I won't believe Jesus is alive until I see his American Express® card."

After days of being cooped up in the same room, the apostle's conversation grew tired. Thomas probably badgered his flatmates for details on Jesus' first visit. "Where exactly did he appear in the room? What was Jesus wearing? Were his wounds still bleeding or oozing with puss? Did he ask about me? Did Jesus look mad? Was Jesus vexed-off because I ran away when the legionnaires arrested him? Did he say anything about damning me to Hell?"

Religistorians branded him Doubting Thomas. This is terribly unfair. Imagine you have every reason to think a friend died. You saw his body lying in state and attended his burial. A week later, someone tells you your friend came back to life. Your initial response of, "I don't believe it," is a perfectly normal reaction. When this investigation becomes required

reading in Christian re-education institutions, folks will christen Doubting Thomas as Typical Thomas, Reasonable Thomas or Unfairly Nicknamed Thomas.

Eight days later, Jesus materialized in that upper room a second time.<sup>414</sup> We can imagine Thomas' embarrassment when Jesus invited him to do exactly as Thomas blurted out days earlier: to probe Jesus' wounds. The innuendo is Jesus supernaturally knew what Thomas (AKA Didymus) had privately confided days earlier.

Jesus invited Thomas to poke his holes. Thomas glanced at Jesus' hands and looked at his side. It is ghoulish to think Thomas jabbed his nasty fingers into Christ's tender and infection-prone wounds. So what does the Bible actually say? Jesus double-dog-dared Thomas to stab his fingers into the wounds, that much is true.<sup>415</sup> Thomas thought, *Jesus! You are not going to hold me to a stupid, knee-jerk comment I blurted out a week ago. Are you?!* The Bible states precisely what Thomas did next. He answered... nothing but answered. He said, "My Lord and my God."<sup>416</sup> Wisely, Thomas never poked Jesus. If you know what is good for you, you do not poke, prod or probe (even if invited) angels or demons and certainly not a demigod who can send you to Hell.

During those meetings in the Upper Room, the apostles did not discern their master's face. It was his wounds that convinced the apostles the otherwise unrecognizable man was Jesus. With the exception of John, none of the apostles saw those injuries previously. John only saw the wounds from a distance and only while the nails still impaled Jesus' flesh. John departed Golgotha before Jesus' body came down from the cross.

Yet those wounds, not the Savior's familiar face, convinced the apostles this was Christ risen from the dead.

## 92. Unrecognizable Jesus: Part II A Duplicate Miracle

Even after Jesus twice materialized in the apostles' hideout, the apostles continued to have trouble recognizing the risen rabbi. Weeks later (in John's timeline) several apostles fished from a small boat on the Sea of Tiberias but had pitiful luck. Jesus the Risen stood on shore. As usual, the apostles did not recognize him.<sup>417</sup> The last time they saw Risen Jesus was in the Upper Room. He called to them to throw their net off the starboard side.<sup>418</sup> They did and miraculously pulled up a net vibrating with fish; one hundred and fifty-three to be exact.<sup>419</sup>

Note: One hundred and fifty three is a specific number and apologists propose theories as to why Jesus commanded that exact number of fish to throw themselves into the net. Hebrew does not have characters for numbers but instead uses letters for numerical values (excluding zero.) Religious cryptologists realized this system is reversible. They ciphered the values of the Hebrew characters in the sentence "I (am) God" (*anokhi elohim*) and found the sum to be precisely one hundred and fifty three. There is disagreement among those experts if "shut the front door" also adds to 153.

Still in the boat three hundred feet away, Apostle John recognized Jesus but not by his face or his trademark crucifixion holes. John remembered an identical fisherman's miracle from months earlier. Jesus told an apostle where to cast his net and so many fish filled it that the strain burst the net.<sup>420</sup>

On the second fisherman's miracle, the apostles did not risk splitting the bulging net by hauling the fish aboard. Instead, they dragged the catch through the water as they rowed to shore.<sup>421</sup> Traditional wisdom suggests Jesus may have also used his powers to prevent keep the net intact.<sup>422</sup>

Back on shore, the whole gang enjoyed a fish fry on the beach.<sup>423</sup> Having the fishing miracle as proof the man was indeed the Lord Jesus, none of the apostles dared to ask, “No really. Who are you?”<sup>424</sup>

### 93. Jesus’ Nonexistent Scourge and Thorn Wounds

Earlier in your investigation, you questioned the severity of Jesus’ scourging and the punctures from the crown of prickling thorns. The Risen Jesus identified himself to his old friends by his crucifixion injuries. However, Risen Jesus never bolstered his claim of resurrection by showing any punctures in his scalp or the scarlet stripes across his back. The detective must wonder if the scourging marks were too feeble to use as proof of his identity.

The Bible never mentions Risen Jesus’ showing the marks on his back. Consequently, we have no evidence anyone scourged him with knotted ropes; much less flogged him with a standard issue Roman flagrum. Risen Jesus pulled his robe aside to show the spear wound in his flank to Thomas. He exposed a portion of his side but neither skeptical Thomas nor anyone else mentioned seeing the whelps of a whipping. If the scourging was so un-notable then it was less than serious and far short of life threatening.

If those lash wounds were as nauseating as the gouges Mr. Gibson’s flesh-shredding, super-flagrum inflicted in *The Passion of the Christ* then the apostles would have begged. “We believe on you. We believe on you! But Jesus Christ, please, put your shirt back on. There are children in this neighborhood. You’ll give them nightmares.”

What about the wounds from the crown of thorns? In Mel’s horror show, that crown sent blood streaming down Jesus’ face. However, Risen Jesus did not bother to show the gouge wounds on his scalp. Jesus never brushed the hair from his forehead and announced, “I am me. See the thorn punctures?” No one noticed scourging whelps or thorny pricks as evidence for Christ’s identity.

### 94. Jesus Takes the Form of Another Man

There is another reason why the apostles did not recognize the Risen Jesus. He just wasn’t the man he used to be... or the same man (period.)

On the afternoon of the resurrection, the Risen Jesus approached Cleopas<sup>425</sup> who walked with another disciple on the road to Emmaus. He strolled with the disciples till the evening then accepted their invitation to dinner. As was typical of Jesus the Risen, his disciples did not recognize him. They assumed he was just another wayfaring stranger. Cleopas actually had two excuses for not recognizing the Messiah. #1 Some supernatural force muddled the men’s minds to keep them from recognizing Jesus.<sup>426</sup> #2 Jesus was in “another form” (presumably another adult male form).<sup>427</sup>

Cleopas and the other disciple were clueless until Risen Jesus sat down to dinner. The two disciples glanced down to Jesus’ hands when he broke a loaf of bread. They noticed his trademark nail wounds and recognized him as the Risen Jesus.<sup>428</sup>

As soon as Cleopas and the other disciple decided their dinner guest was none other than Jesus the Risen, he disappeared.<sup>429</sup> The Bible does not specify how Jesus disappeared from the dinner table. In Mark’s version, there is no mention of Jesus vanishing. In Luke’s recounting, Jesus disappeared but the disciples’ reaction consisted of discussing how they felt about what Jesus said; not about the fact he vanished. They didn’t exclaim, “Did you see that?! That guy just dissolved into thin air. It’s a miracle!”

This investigation will not deconstruct the vanishing from the dinner table. That de-manifestation is not included in theologians’ lists of Jesus’ miracles. These experts must

also have nagging doubts about the miracle's legitimacy. For all we know, Jesus exclaimed, "Hey, look at that two-headed donkey over there!" then ducked under the table to slink away.

Jesus' two dinner companions were definitely unreliable witnesses. Scripture states that they didn't recognize Jesus at first because their eyes and/or minds were somehow so muddled.

Those two disciples rushed to Jerusalem and told the apostles they saw Jesus alive but in "another form." Like Perfectly Reasonable Thomas, the apostles were skeptical.<sup>430</sup> They probably said, "*You saw Jesus but you didn't recognize him because he was a different person? That's kinda goofy, Cleopas. How much wine did you drink today?*"

That same evening, Jesus appeared to the apostles as the same unrecognizable man he chewed out his apostles for doubting people who claimed they saw him alive.<sup>431</sup> That meeting repeated the confusion that was typical whenever Risen Jesus introduced himself. Instead of inviting the apostles to examine his familiar face, he presented his hands and feet.<sup>432</sup> Again, Jesus' credentials were his wounds. To help convince them of his identity, he likely repeated his promise. *Anyone who does not believe in my resurrection will go to Hell.*<sup>433</sup>

The greenest of any police academy rookie can see the pattern. The testimonies of all four Gospels recount the difficulty everyone had in recognizing the Risen Jesus. All four say Jesus miraculously healed himself of putrefying death yet Risen Jesus' body retained the punctures of his hands, feet and side. Those wounds did not scar over, much less heal. The Gospels lead us to believe Jesus retained his mutilated hands and feet. Yet, his uninjured face was so divinely remade, he appeared to be a stranger's. His face was so different that neither his devoted disciples, adoring apostles nor gushing girlfriend recognized him.

The Risen Emmanuel was similar to a car crash victim who had reconstructive plastic surgery after going face-first through a windshield. When attending a high school reunion, old classmates exclaim, "That is you? Really? Jesus Christ! You don't look anything like yourself."

There are three explanations. Either...

- Resurrected Jesus was in his old body with his original crucifixion wounds but had a new face.

Or

- Resurrected Jesus had a new body with a new face and the nail holes were not the same wounds the Romans originally inflicted on the original body.

Or

- Resurrected Jesus was an imposter who had convincing but superficial wounds that were surgically faked.

The Gospels are clear. Except for his nail wounds, the Risen Jesus was not his former self. Apologists will tiresomely explain how the Risen Jesus was impossible to recognize because he was vivified then innervated with such divineaciousness that he grew a transmogrified visage on his reanimated yet still mutilated body. Even a mediocre detective will ask the ages-old question... *Now wait just one damn minute.*

There are times in an investigation when a witness blurts out a truth so self-evident it needs no analysis. In this investigation, you can sum up the apostle's difficulty with recognizing the Risen Jesus in a single verse. John 3:16 aside, this verse will be known as "the Gospels in Another Nutshell." Matthew the Eyewitness, gives us that verse in the conclusion of his Gospel.

“When they (the apostles) saw him (the Risen Jesus), they (the apostles) worshiped him (the Risen Jesus): but some (three or more) of them (the apostles) doubted (suspected the new Jesus was full of baloney.)”<sup>434</sup>

Ministers never tell you that some apostles thought Risen Jesus was a fake.

## 95. Who was the Risen Jesus?

You have precious few clues to nail down the Risen Jesus' identity. You might list what you know about this man then work the problem in reverse.

This is what you know about the Risen Jesus.

- No one recognized his face. (No one.)
- He had wounds in his hands, feet and side. (He showed them.)
- He did miracles (three).
- He did not walk with a limp. (A person with two injured feet cannot limp. He can only hobble.)
- He did not hobble. (Neither gods nor people impersonating gods hobble.)
- He avoided the general population.
- He showed himself only to eleven apostles and less than a handful of his disciples.
- He threatened the apostles for not believing (even when told by unreliable witnesses) that he raised from the dead.
- He convinced some of the ones that saw him that he resurrected.
- Some apostles remained unconvinced.

Imagine you are Sherlock Holmes' nemesis; the criminal genius, Professor James Moriarty. Who would you pick to impersonate the crucified Lamb of God? The minimum for a Jesus doppelganger is someone with similar color of eyes, hair and complexion. He would have the same height and weight. To sell the portrayal, the understudy would imitate Jesus' accent, mannerisms and rhythm of speech. He would dress in the same or similar garments as the original Jesus. He would cut his beard and hair in the same style. A clever impersonator would also wear Jesus' brand of cologne.

## 96. Another Jesus, Would Still Smell as Sweet

Elmy Queen, the investigator and mystery writer, never let a clue pass unexamined. A witness is left-handed. The dead man is found pointing at his Rolex. The newlywed widower's favorite pastime is singing in an all-men's chorus. Any fact can be a relevant clue.

So how did Jesus smell? Three Gospel writers say Jesus wore a bouquet of exotic cologne. In the days before the crucifixion, Lazarus' sister washed Jesus' feet with a pound of spikenard. Two other women also anointed Jesus with spikenard; once at the house of Simon the Pharisee and again at the home of Simon the Leper.<sup>435</sup>

All this anointing with such an expensive perfume was overkill. For a volume comparison, a pound of canola oil measures about a half-quart. The always curious canine detective Scoby-boo would ask, “Rut ra Rell ruz rall rat rarrointing roar? One would reason that anointing with a half liter of perfume is no more supernaturally potent than consecration with a few drops. A little magic goes a long way.



The apostles were also irritated with the expense and complained about the squandering. A pound of spikenard oil was about a year's wages to a blue-collar Israeli.<sup>436</sup> Three anointings is all the more costly. The apostles grumbled (following teaching on charity) that they should sell the precious oil and donate the money to the poor.<sup>437</sup> In lieu of charity, Jesus granted himself special dispensation for the extravagance. He explained that the apostles could be charitable to the poor at their convenience because there would never be a shortage of the needy. However, the window of opportunity to lovingly slather their in opulence would soon close. Christ reasoned the money was better spent on him even if it was to lavishly deodorize his feet.<sup>438</sup>

Jesus' "pish on the poor" attitude is both perplexing and typical at the same time. It is perplexing because Jesus routinely preached to give to the needy. It is typical because the Bible never notes Jesus giving a single red pence in charity.

During one anointing, Lazarus' sister, Mary, dried Jesus' extravagantly perfumed feet with her hair.<sup>439</sup> Have you ever tried to dry anything with your hair? Any cloth works much better than hair. Try it for yourself. Go wash your car. Now grab your cat and use Bootsy to buff the hood dry. Bites and clawing aside, it didn't work very well. Did it?

The hair incident does not push this murder investigation forward. However, it is evidence the gospels wrote about actual events and we should treat their testimonies as such. This incident describes what a typical woman might do if she coveted such precious perfume. Just like today, a lady loves to smell nice. Mary (Lazarus' sister) could not resist the temptation to wear that wonderful aroma. Drying Jesus' feet with her hair was a coy ploy and a means to that end.

Those ridiculously expensive anointings were also a means to the Jesus conspiracy's ends. The anointings provided one more element to convince the apostles that Jesus rose from the dead. With so much at stake, the conspirators capitalized on every possible element to convince the apostles Jesus the Imposter was Jesus the Genuine. Just like Sir Doyle's criminal genius Prof. Moriarty, conspirators would not neglect to exploit the apostles' sense of smell.

In the world of conspiracies, schemers exploit every advantage. Conspirators would not overlook how people associate smell with experience. Smell is the sense that stimulates our emotional memories. Someone who loses a spouse will nuzzle their sweetheart's pillow, softly inhale and, in a very real way, feel their lover's fading spirit. You might catch a whiff of crackling cornbread and instantly experience your Grandma's kitchen. In your mind's eye, you see the flowered wallpaper peeling in the ceiling's corner and the heavy ceramic jar over the stove where your Gam-Gam kept her morning's biscuits fresh.

Likewise, the apostles—confused, paranoid and isolated in a dark, locked room—would viscerally associate spikenard's unique scent with the original Jesus.

Imposter Jesus would not drench himself in the expensive oil before appearing to the apostles. As in Lazarus' house, the powerful aroma would flood the Upper Room.<sup>440</sup> The apostles would whiff the fragrance long before Jesus materialized in the Upper Room. Such a pungent smell would lead a sniffing apostle to discover the trapdoor.

A classy lady does not allow her sweet aura to assault her suitor in a sickly rich fog. She applies but a drop of perfume behind her ear or on her neck where the warm carotid pulse encourages the oil to evaporate. When exhaling or speaking, the air from her lips entrains the vapor and softly wafts the beguiling fragrance to the nose of the man (or woman) she is seducing.

Jesus reeked with spikenard during the previous week but an imposter could not make himself so obvious. One would expect that original pungent odor to diminish to a delicate fragrance. A Jesus imposter would wear only a hint of the oil, which would require he get very close to each apostle for them to sniff the perfume. Instead of daubing the oil behind

his ears, Jesus the Risen likely placed a couple drops of spikenard in his mouth. His breath would carry the divine fragrance of *Eau de Fantôme Sacré*. He need only exhale into each apostle's face. In an otherwise inexplicable incident, that is exactly what Jesus did.

Jesus graced his apostles by breathing the Holy Ghost onto each man.<sup>441</sup> The Holy Spirit proved he (definitely a "he") needed no such assistance to infuse into a human. He (the Spirit) entered the Virgin Mary. The Holy Ghost inhabited John the Baptist from birth. The Spirit entered Zacharias' and Elisabeth's bodies and spoke through their mouths. The Holy Ghost proved himself capable of inhabiting humans without help.

Jesus' endowment of the Holy Spirit was not readily apparent. The apostles did not go about conjuring wine or cursing trees to death. However, Jesus did assure them they would have the power to withhold God's salvation from people and thereby condemn those souls to Hell's punishment for the infinite remainder their afterlives.<sup>442</sup>

A later Bible book does mention Jesus' sweet smell.<sup>443</sup> The Gospels do not say if any apostle remarked on Jesus' trademark scent when he breathed the Spirit forward. We trust the writers were real men who wrote about the real adventures of a real Jesus. Perhaps they did not think it important. Perhaps they were preoccupied and only detected the fragrance subconsciously because they earlier smelled the fragrance so often and so intensely. Perhaps an apostle did comment that Risen Jesus smelled like his former self and the writers edited those comments as unimportant.

The breathing of the Holy Ghost into the apostle's faces and the pre-crucifixion squandering of expensive perfume now have a less than supernatural possibility. Thanks to your investigation, the next time someone asks you, "How did Jesus smell?" You will have the biblically justified answer.

## **97. One Jesus, Two Faces**

As a detective, you know humans have a natural talent to remember a face. One can recognize a classmate from four decades past. We can easily identify an acquaintance lying in the morgue although the body is mutilated and wearing a deathly veneer of cyanotic pallor. Our brains are physically hardwired with the ability.

Consequently, our conspirator would pick a Jesus impersonator who the apostles never saw or, at least, ever caught a good look at his face. It is one thing for an apostle to fail to recognize the Christ's familiar visage, it is quite another for him to say, "Hey, I know you! You're the brother of ... uh... the brother of ... what's-her-name... uh [sound of snapping fingers] ...Mary!"

A Jesus understudy needed to be as dedicated to his role as the aspiring actress who gets her nose shaved down and her bosom pumped up. That dedication would help him endure the surgery necessary to make convincing wounds of his hands and feet. Although it would be uncomfortable, a Jesus imposter would have the advantage of wounds superficially cut with an obsidian scalpel whilst under a hefty dose of medicinal wine. The wounds need only be shallow, providing the imposter could keep dubious folks from poking the holes.

Who would you suspect as Jesus' post resurrection avatar? You say Jesus' brother? Excellent choice! A brother would certainly bear a measure of family resemblance, at least from their mother's side.

Did Jesus have a brother?

No, he had four.

## **98. Oh Jesus Brothers, Where Art Thou?**

The CEV names Jesus' brothers as Joseph Junior, James, Simon, and Judas.<sup>444</sup> The KJV identifies them as Joses, James, Simon, and Judas<sup>445</sup> (in one verse and Juda in another.)<sup>446</sup> When the Bible references the Jesus brothers, it is always in the plural as simply "the brethren." Therefore, we do not know if two, three or all four were present whenever the scripture mentions them. The Gospels write nothing about the siblings individually.

The Bible says Jesus also had sisters but doesn't mention their names or how many. Since there were at least two sisters, by the statistical averages of scriptural probability, at least one of them was named Mary.

Some religions [cough cough Catholic cough] deny Jesus had blood brothers or sisters. The perpetual virginal mother never had and/or never desired sex again. She remained as a maid in blissful afterglow and therefore uncorrupted to the end of her days.

The Church suggests those brethren were stepsiblings and of no blood relation to Jesus. The Church's position is that Joseph's six kids (a minimum of six) were born by Joseph's first wife. As it so often is with Bible facts vs. Bible poppycocks, there is no hint in the scripture to support that Mary was Joseph's second wife. This notion comes from another fabulous book that failed to make the editors' cut of the Holy Book.

It is true that in Jesus' time, Jewish marriages could be in arrangements of polygamist trios or quartets and often with concubines. The only hard and fast rule was a marriage included but one male. However, the Gospels never mention a first Mrs. Joseph the Carpenter or say that Virgin Mary had any sister-wives.

The stepsibling explanation also ignores there is no mention of brothers who escaped with Jesus into Egypt. The Bible does state that Jesus was Mary's firstborn son and firstborn son implies a second born son. The Bible also states Joseph did not know Mary until after her firstborn.<sup>447</sup> We know what "know Mary" means in the biblical tense so we can be relieved the couple did not suffer chronic celibacy all the years of their marriage. Otherwise the Bible might quote Joseph lamenting, "Ah Mary. I never knew ye."

The Bible alludes Joseph died before Jesus began his ministry having no mention of him after Jesus' twelfth birthday. Also, as Jesus hanged on the cross, he entrusted his mother to John the Apostle as John's own mother, which could only happen if Joseph was out of the picture. We hope Joseph the Carpenter did die, mercifully. It would be a sour tale of romance if Joseph justifiably divorced his young wife out of frustration.

You would expect siblings or even step-siblings to be dedicated to Brother Jesus' ministry. This was not the case. Unlike his mother and his cousins, Jesus' brothers were neither disciples, converts nor fans during his lifetime. They did not sit on the cool green grass to hear his Sermon on the Mount or strut in his parade through Jerusalem. They did not watch their brother stand trial. They did not weep with their mother during the crucifixion. The Jesus brothers kept very low profiles. They anonymously drifted in the wake of their brother's adventures.

As discreet as the brothers were, they only once gave Jesus some advice with his ministering. Jesus planned to skip a festival in Judea to tour Galilee instead. Jesus felt attending the celebration would be a bad idea since the Judean leaders were determined to kill him.<sup>448</sup> In spite of the danger, his brothers recommended Jesus attend the festivities and show off his powers too.<sup>449</sup> Jesus finally decided to go but he attended in secret and without his brothers.<sup>450</sup> Still wary of the Jewish leaders putting out a hit on him, he likely used the hood of his cloak to shield his face and blend into the crowd. Even with such precautions, Jesus did not reveal himself until he was inside the temple and the festival was half over.<sup>451</sup>

Jesus explained his estrangement from his brothers. He flatly disowned them.<sup>452</sup> He said his family were those who believed in him and his brothers had no such faith.<sup>453</sup> This is the

only reason the Gospels offer for why the siblings kept their distance from Jesus and the apostles.

The Bible tells of only one instance when any brothers accompanied Jesus. His brethren, along with his disciples and his mother, briefly traveled with Jesus to Capernaum. This was the only recorded opportunity when the apostles might see the brothers. We do not know how many brothers came along on the excursion.<sup>454</sup> One brother would have skipped the trip if he intended to impersonate Jesus later. Otherwise an apostle might comment, "You're the Jesus resurrected? Yeah, I see the nail holes but... you know... you look exactly like your brother whom I met on the Capernaum trip."

## 99. My Corpus Christi is Your Corpus Christi

Demons, spirits and souls invading humans never happened in the Old Testament. Spirit migrations are exclusively a New Testament innovation and the Gospels were the first to record the phenomenon. Jesus dis-infested demons from Mary Magdalene and a couple of wildmen. Satan seized Judas' body. The Holy Spirit commandeered Zacharias<sup>455</sup> then later occupied his wife's body.<sup>456</sup> Jesus verified that Elijah reincarnated into John the Baptist.<sup>457</sup> Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit into his apostles. After the resurrection, Jesus' spirit apparently slipped into "another form," which was presumably a man with a different face. Given the rash of body-snatchings by spirits, there is little wonder why Herod Antipas grew paranoid that John the Beheaded Baptist's vengeful ghost reincarnated into Jesus' body.<sup>458</sup>

Jesus was not his old self after his resurrection. Although a brother is a likely suspect as the doppelganger, it was actually unnecessary for a man with familial resemblance to impersonate him. If a supernatural entity can inhabit any person's body then the Christ imposter could be anyone. Jesus' spirit could just as easily migrate into Caiaphas' barber or the neighborhood *mohel*. If the Holy Spirit could morph into a dove and God could inhabit a donkey then Risen Jesus could easily take the form of a muskrat or a republican. Don't scoff. In our enlightened times, Jesus inhabited toast, a stained refrigerator door, a spaghetti billboard and grilled cheese sandwiches.

The Jesus imposter could have been anyone.

## 100. The Forty Days that Was... Not

As Private Eye Thom Magm often mused in his pensive voice-overs, "I know what you are thinking." Right now, the detective in you is asking, "What about those forty days Risen Jesus walked the earth before he ascended?" You are an irritatingly meticulous investigator but you pose a necessary question. The Popes Innocent III and IV would be impressed with your inquisition skills.

You are correct to ask the question. It is one thing for policewoman Sgt. "Pepper" Anson to put on a platinum wig, oversized sunglasses and slutty makeup then slink inside a dark disco to impersonate an L.A. gangster's girlfriend for a few hours. It is quite another for her to portray a mobster's moll for almost six weeks. She would need to fool dozens of people. A suspicious person might ask a stream of questions on past events. She would have to repeatedly cover up apparent lapses in memory. How many times would someone ask, "Why is your face is sooooo different?"

The Jesus impersonator needed to sell himself as the original to create rumors of Christ's resurrection. The imposter's best strategy to avoid being exposed as a fake would be to

limit his exposure to as few people as possible and tightly control those meetings. It is coincident (not coincidental) this is precisely what Risen Jesus did.

It is common knowledge Risen Jesus lingered on earth for forty days after his resurrection. As a detective, you know common knowledge is often worth less than two common cents. This is an example of those times.

We may take it for granted Risen Jesus behaved the same after the resurrection as before the crucifixion: reading scripture in synagogues, drawing congregations, doing miraculous healings and conjuring wonders for simple village folk. A quick check of the Gospels shows that is precisely not what Risen Jesus did. He did no healings. He did not draw crowds. He made no appearances in public. He delivered no sermons. He didn't preach in the temple. He composed no new parables. He did not travel with his entourage. This reclusive and recursive Jesus had scant contact with the public in general and his disciples in specific. According to the Gospels, the only people Risen Jesus spoke with were eleven apostles, two disciples and three Marys. Even then, those encounters were brief.

Jesus had hundreds of baptized converts and scores of handpicked disciples. Thousands of synagogue goers heard him preach. Passels of pilgrims and Jerusalem citizens cheered his parade through the streets. Yet you can count the number of people to whom the Resurrected Jesus showed himself on two hands and a foot (if the Intelligent Designer gave a foot with six toes.) The Risen Jesus avoided showing himself in public. He revealed his resurrection to those sixteen incredulous followers but denied his multitudes the same proof. Take out your detective's notebook. Jot down, "Why?" Underline it twice. "Why?"

Imagine it is a few weeks after the crucifixion. Jesus has no thorn punctures or scourging stripes. All that remains of his wounds are four shriveling, nail-diameter-sized polka dots of shiny pale skin and a puffy pink scar in his flank. Those wounds would be shrinking evidence he ever suffered crucifixion. Worse, without a bruised and swollen face, he had no excuse for why no one recognized him.

It is one thing for eleven terrified apostles cowering in a dark room with locked shutters to accept some fellow as the crucified Jesus in "another form." However, it would be more difficult to convince those congregations in the villages where he preached just weeks before. The crowds who watched Jesus triumphantly ride his donkey through Jerusalem would be hesitant to accept Jesus in another man's body and wearing a stranger's face. They might insist on some non-faith-based evidence.

The Risen Jesus avoided crowds and the public eye. The risk was too great that someone might shout, "Hey, I know him. That's not Jesus! That guy lived across the street from me in Tiberias City... and he still owes me twenty denarii!"

When you took this case, you trusted all the testimony would be from the Gospels, the whole Gospels and nothing but the Gospels. That was a lie. Get used to it. People often lay their left hand on the Bible and say, "I swear to God..." then tell a *roll-up-your-pantlegs-cause-the-shit's-getting-deep-in-here* whopper.

To examine the forty days, we must step outside the Gospels because those forty days are not in the Gospels. The idea that Risen Jesus meandered about Israel for almost six weeks begins and ends with a single line from Acts 1:3. The verse states that for forty days, Risen Jesus proved he rose from the dead.<sup>459</sup> Forty days is a fair spell. However, all four Gospels indicate the Risen Jesus lingered on Earth a much shorter time.

Luke's version sites a brief post-resurrection period. On resurrection Sunday, Risen Jesus first ran into Cleopas on the road to Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem.<sup>460</sup> Jesus broke bread with him around sundown.<sup>461</sup> Cleopas immediately set out to tell the apostles in Jerusalem.<sup>462</sup> Shortly after Cleopas spoke to the apostles, the Risen

Jesus showed up in Jerusalem and joined the apostles for a late snack.<sup>463</sup> Afterward, Risen Jesus led them about three miles to Bethany. He recited a farewell blessing as he lifted off... up... up... and away into Heaven.<sup>464</sup>

A man walking at a leisurely pace takes about three hours to get from Emmaus to Jerusalem and around an hour from Jerusalem to Bethany. With sundown around 6:30 and if we estimate a couple of hours for chit-chat then the countdown from the empty tomb to Jesus achieving escape velocity was about eighteen hours.

Mark's story is similar to Luke's in suggesting the time from resurrection to ETA (Estimated Time of Ascension) was also less than a day. Mary encountered Risen Jesus at the tomb on Sunday morning. She ran to tell the apostles the big news. That evening, Jesus (in another man's body) bumped into a couple of disciples on a country road. Later the same day, Risen Jesus met with the apostles at dinnertime. After speaking with them for a few minutes, he floated up to Heaven.

Matthew never mentioned the apostles meeting resurrected Jesus in Jerusalem. Instead, Risen Jesus told the women who discovered his empty grave to tell the apostles to go meet him in Galilee.<sup>465</sup> Risen Jesus saw the apostles just one time in Galilee and gave them a brief, sixty-word fair-thee-well.<sup>466</sup>

Calculate the travel time from Jerusalem to Galilee. Today's driving distance from Jerusalem to the shore of the Galilee is about a hundred miles. Using that distance and figuring two-mph for about twelve hours per day then the walking time would be about four and a half days; less if the apostles hurried. The anxious apostles might have double-timed it since the last time any apostle saw Jesus, he was not unlike a scarecrow. (Actually, carrion crows find crucified bodies more chewy than scary.)

John gives us the longest post resurrection period. Jesus met the apostles the second time in Jerusalem; eight days after the resurrection.<sup>467</sup> They saw him the third and last time on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias.<sup>468</sup> If you figure the travel time from Jerusalem to the Sea of Galilee at around a week, the total is a minimum of fifteen days from resurrection to the end of John's Gospel.

No gospel speculates how Jesus occupied himself in that period. Although the apostles traveled with him all during his ministry, none accompanied the Risen Jesus during his post crucifixion period. Perhaps the author of Acts did write the Risen Jesus was on earth for fourteen days or fourteen hours. Maybe a scribe, secretary or scrivener made a typo or misplaced a decimal point.<sup>469</sup> A cleric's smudge in the Book of Acts could explain why the gospel writers indicate a post-resurrection period far less than forty days.

## **101. What if the Gospels Wrote about those Forty Days?**

The forty-day discrepancy is at the center of a fascinating plot twist in the Jesus saga. If he tarried on earth for an additional forty days as Acts 1:3 says then the Gospel writers missed out on composing reams of riveting scripture. If Jesus' epic adventure was exciting before, how much more so after his resurrection? He could drop in on Lazarus and say, "Look, I'm back from the dead too!" He might burst in on the Council of Pharisee, point at them and gloat, "Ha ha." He could console poor Pontius, who risked so much in attempting to spare Jesus from crucifixion. "Hey Pontius. I am baa-aack."

In a longer forty day period, the Risen Jesus would find it increasingly challenging to convince anyone of his identity. His nail holes would presumably heal at a humanly rate. Those circular wounds would shed their scabs and shrink into barely noticeable scars. Friends he had not seen in several weeks would say, “Jesus? Really? That is you? Yeah... Yeah... You already showed your hands and feet to everybody. Enough with the hands and feet. Let’s talk about why your face is so different.”

The accounts of those forty days would be a gripping, page-turner of a read. Imagine the intrigue, the danger and the unresolved conflicts.

Consider Caiaphas. He was not impressed with Jesus’ miracles the first time around. This man did not give up easily. The High Priest devised plot after plot to kill Jesus the Apostate. Christ in a new body, Jesus the Imposter or Messiah the Crucifixion Survivor would make no difference to him. If the Gospels are any indication, Caiaphas would be just as dogged to bump off Jesus’ avatar. Like Moses, Caiaphas had one solution for most problems... death. Caiaphas learned that Jesus raising Lazarus from the grave increased Christ’s popularity so Caiaphas schemed to return Lazarus to death’s domain.<sup>470</sup> He might rationalize it was not murder to kill someone (like Jesus or Lazarus) who was previously pronounced dead.

Consider Herod Antipas the schizophrenic son of King Herod the Homicidal Psychopath. During those long forty days, Antipas might lose his fickle good humor and again connive to delete the backup Jesus.

Pontius Pilate could change his merciful mind as well. He might rule that Jesus coming back from the dead was a violation of imperial statute twenty-one dash seventeen (Imperial Reg. XXI—XVII), which is “Criminal Evasion to Avoid Re-execution.” Jesus surviving made Pilate appear too *klutzy* to administer a routine crucifixion. Pontius could find himself the butt of cruel jokes at the annual Governor’s Convention in Rome. “Hey Pontius! Have you re-crucified anyone lately?”

With those three powerful men angered at the same time would surely result in a furious manhunt. The chase would be no less spectacular than the cavalry round up and dragnetting of feral humans in the original *Planet of the Apes*. Who knows? The Jesus story could include a goose-pimpled scene as when Mr. Kirk Douglas inspired thousands of indefatigable slaves to defiantly stand and boldly howl, “**I am Spartacus!**”

It is our loss. Jesus’ forty-day adventure would be a captivating read worthy of Oprah’s Book Club. Instead, we are disappointed when Gospel John summed up Jesus’ post-resurrection adventures with a frustratingly vapid final notation. He wrote *Jesus did lots of other stuff too... lots and lots of other stuff.*<sup>471</sup>

## 102. What Happened to the Risen Jesus?

Two of the Gospel writers give us definite resolutions to the end of Jesus’ time on earth.

- Mark limits his comment of what became of Jesus to a single sentence in his next to last verse. *The risen Jesus was received up into Heaven and there sat down on God’s right-hand side.*<sup>472</sup> Jesus’ final exit was both spectacular and mediocre at the same time. At least

Mark clued us in that God has a right side and presumably other the two physical dimensions. As for the fourth dimension, confident ministers expertly speculate on how God interacts with or is affected by or if he chooses when to exist in the dimension of time.

- Luke’s description of Jesus’ earthly departure was also a single line account but a little more dramatic. Luke wrote Jesus lifted his arms and was carried up into Heaven. He selflessly showered blessings down upon folks as he ascended.<sup>473</sup> Luke does not say where

Jesus sat once he arrived in heaven and neither writer says what creature or thing carried Jesus heavenward.

Infuriatingly, the two Gospel writers who rubbed elbows with Jesus never wrote a blessed word about his departure.

•Matthew writes the apostles saw Jesus only once after the cross. Jesus stood high on a mountain in Galilee. There, he recited a brief and seldom quoted fare thee well. Matthew never says those eleven apostles embraced him, dined with him, looked at his wounds, spoke to him, poked him or got close enough to touch him with a six point six six six cubit pole.

Matthew's Risen Jesus did not soar up into the heavens. He did not stroll away. He did not exit stage left. Like *The Sopranos* finale, Matthew's Gospel fades to black. The curtain falls. The End... Finis... "Th-a Th-a Th-a That's all, Folks!" Matthew's account of the Jesus departure is pointedly brief and atypically without miracles. There was no actual departure at all. Angels did not carry Jesus away. He did not fly into to the sky or slowly fade like the Cheshire Cat. For all we know, Jesus retired to an old prophet's home in the Greek Isles. Perhaps he sailed to North America as the *Book of Mormon* lead us to believe. Maybe he opened a custom cabinet shop at the foot of Utah's Mt. Olympus, which he still operates to this day. We don't know. It coulda' happened. Matthew never tells what became of the protagonist in his book.

Prior to the Nicaean Council in 325AD, *The Gospel of Matthew* was a single book. You can imagine the reviewers' scalding critiques in the literary section of *Roman Forum Today*. Angry about the cheesy ending, disappointed readers probably demanded the scroll monger refund their ¥19.95.

Constantine had the Nicaean Council's bishops review copies of the separate Christian books. Eventually some two dozen were judged as semi-holy and relegated to the Apocrypha and Deuterocanon. Those bishops ruled by simple majority vote on which twenty-seven books were holy enough to include in *The New Testament* volume. Even with the peculiar ending, Matthew's Gospel made the final cut.

•John's Gospel is no better. Instead of atop a mountain, Risen Jesus met the apostles for the first and last time some seven hundred feet below sea level on the shore of Galilee.<sup>474</sup> At that point, Jesus literaturely dropped off John's page.<sup>475</sup> John's Gospel does not end with Jesus so much as throwing a forlorn wave from the horizon. There are no melancholy strains from a tinkling piano playing *The Lonely Man* as Jesus shoulders a rucksack then strolls slowly across the Sea of Tiberias tossing his thumb to passing boats. John writes nothing about Jesus' final disposition.

First-time Bible readers through the centuries have the same reaction to John's and Matthew's endings. The neophyte flips John's last page back and forth on his e-book tablet as if to dislodge hidden paragraphs. "What the...? Did I miss something?" [swipe left] [swipe right] [swipe left] "Did he finally pop the question to Mary Magdalene? Did he ever get his holier-than-thou dad to reconcile with his mom? Did he use his upgraded powers to charge headlong into a phalanx of legionnaires and kick some Roman butt? What became of Jesus? [sound of Kindle slamming against table] This e-Bible has deleted files!"

All four Gospels claim Jesus suffered a bout of putrefying death but made a complete recovery (except for a few holes and a reformed face.) The cornerstone of Christian dogma is Jesus still lives. He resides in Heaven to this day regardless of what century you are reading this. However, Jesus ascending to Heaven as a Gospel fact is the toss of a coin; a perfect 7/10 split.



The two Gospel writers who never laid eyes on Jesus (Luke and Mark) wrote that Jesus flew up to Heaven.

The other two Gospel writers who walked with Christ are no help. On the question of what happened to Jesus, Matthew and John virtually raise their palms and shrug. Neither mentioned Jesus flew away, climbed a Jacob's ladder into the sky nor mounted a cherub and rode into the heavens.<sup>476</sup> The writers imply Jesus just wandered away to parts unknown. Those gospels leave us with the greatest cliffhanger in mankind's literary history. It is as if the sundial shadow clicked to five then John and Matthew scribbled "Amen" put down their quills, cracked their knuckles and contentedly groaned, "It's wine-thirty!"

### 103. Eliminating suspects

You are a hard-as-nails detective. The nights of haunting skid row fleabags and the days of suffering poorly crafted metaphors have forged you into an ill-tempered cynic. You know a "not guilty" judgment has little to do with innocence. As a crime fighter, you rub elbows with snitches, con men, sociopaths and filthy politicians. It is a miracle you do not believe the universal sin of being born both guilty.\*

\* Medical note: Original Sin is the only hereditary disease that supersedes space, time and genetics. It is also the only known malady incurable by death. Missionaries report the definitive symptom is the native's stubborn ignorance of their affliction.

Occasionally, a jury convicts the right criminal for the right crime. With your help, this crime will be one of them. You can anticipate redeeming the innocent, enjoying a self-righteous *schadenfreude* of the guilty and saying those two final, sweet, sweet words...case closed.

### 104. The Usual Suspects

In the eclectic study of the elegant mansion, the suspects are gathered. They watch your every move. You stiffly pace the floor with the minimum number of steps for the floor to be adequately paced. You clear your throat. You ask, "Who killed Jesus? Who had the motive? Who had the opportunity? Who had the resources? Who had the most to gain?" Then, with your back to the audience, you freeze in mid-gesture. You abruptly spin to face the suspects. "That person is in this room! (Don't be embarrassed. Every detective wants to do that sometime in his career.)"

Bible testimony proves the Romans did not kill Jesus. However, they are not wholly innocent. In the service of Rome, the legionnaires did crucify Christ but they did not crucify him to death. They were not guilty of his murder.

The Pharisee were the murderers? A court of law would hand down the verdict, *Not Guilty*. Although the Pharisee's innocence flies in the blindfolded face of Madame Justice, the Council did nothing illegal. Although the Pharisee did conspire to discreetly murder Jesus, they did not pull off that crime. It is not your goal to discover who is guilty of collusion to murder but who actually committed the murder.

Was the Pharisee trial legal? Although it was in the middle of the night and secretly conducted at a private residence, the Council did have a quorum. The priests conducted the case officiously and rendered the judgment that Jesus was guilty of a capital crime against the Israeli State. The court followed its legal bylaws and any question of right or wrong does not matter; just as right or wrong is not a factor in today's courts.

No false witnesses tainted the verdicts against Jesus. If there were irregularities in the proceedings, it was that Jesus acted as his own attorney. He offered an incompetent defense in his client's behalf.

Was it legal for the Pharisee to bribe Judas the Snitch? Paying Judas was no less lawful than the paid informers of today.

Did Judas frame Jesus? No. Judas did not testify at any of Jesus' trials so there was no perjury. Judas simply identified Jesus to the arresting officials.

Are the citizens of Jerusalem guilty? Forget what your white supremacist neighbor says. Trust what the Bible says. The gentilefolk of Jerusalem did not know the Pharisee arrested and tried Jesus in the middle of the night. They did not know the Council whisked Jesus to Pilate's court to stand a second trial at the break of dawn. They were not the mob shouting, "Crucify him!" That faithful day, the Jerusalemites were busy with preparations for the big Holy Day. The Passover pilgrims did not get up at the crack of dawn and trot over to Pilate's court to see if there was an unscheduled trial concerning Jesus. They would not know Jesus was suddenly arrested in the dead of night.

The Jewish citizens had nothing to do with the crucifixion. A few days earlier, Jerusalem's population cheered Jesus. Not one of those people attended Jesus' trial. The Bible's first hint the common citizens finally learned of Jesus' trials was after Jesus departed Pilate's court. Women along the avenue wailed as Jesus shuffled out the Jerusalem gate to suffer torture and death on Golgotha.<sup>477</sup> However at the trial, there was not a sniffle from Pilate's jury or timid pleas for mercy. No one stood silent in the court's gallery. Every soul in Pilate's court gallery chanted to crucify Jesus.<sup>478</sup> The rabble in Pilate's court consisted solely of temple toadies and Pharisee sycophants. The crowd did not include random Jewish citizens. That crowd was the same mob who arrested Jesus and the very same that attended the first trial before the Council.

Was the mob guilty for Jesus' death? No. The Pharisee convinced them Jesus committed a capital offense. If the Pharisee's indictment and officious conviction did not convince the mob Jesus was a false prophet then Apostle Judas' ostentatious kiss did. The mob was legally justified in calling for Jesus' crucifixion because, since the time of Moses, the lawful penalty for a false prophet was death. For the mob to shout for crucifixion in the penalty phase of the proceedings in Pilate's court was their divine duty and merely a formality.

This mob was only following orders. They were God's orders via Moses through the Pharisee and finally to the Chosen People. Likewise, some of today's true believers do not consider themselves guilty or even partly responsible when they obey holy demagogues who incite their congregation to dispense God's most lethal displeasure. No matter how many they murder, when the police cuff their bloody hands, they patiently explain, "I am only God's tool." What is most unsettling is they say it with pious modesty.

Are the Jewish descendants guilty? The mob at Pilate's did indeed scream, "Let Jesus' blood be on us and our children." Marginal people may believe such a self-inflicted curse justifies untold generations shouldering the guilt and suffering the punishment. Is the Jewish race responsible for Jesus' death? The answer for anyone with the empathy of an alley cat is not just, "Hell no," but, "Good Lord's Hell no!... and keep your hands where I can see them."

## **105. Jesus was Not Guilty**

I know what you are thinking. "*Jesus could not be guilty,*" or, "*How could Jesus not be guilty?*"

You do make excellent points. Jesus was indeed in the best position to foil his murder. Instead, he cooperated. He knew the Pharisee wanted to kill him yet he provoked them and challenged their authority at every turn. He goaded them with threats and loud public insults. Jesus secured his guilty verdict by offering no defense to the charges leveled against him during his three trials.

Jesus also performed poorly as a fugitive. Having foreknowledge of the arrest he could just walk away. Twice previously, he ran from men who wanted to stone him or throw him off a cliff. Instead, he paced about in the Garden of Gethsemane, impatiently awaiting his captors.

If you are considering Jesus committed the first century version of “suicide by cop,” you should be very, very careful. You are hellishly close to violating proposed United Nations anti-blasphemy resolutions. For your sake, we hope a future sectarian court does not make its blasphemy crimes retroactive.

Still, Jesus does appear to be the puppetmaster behind a suicide by crucifixion. Today, Jesus’ followers accept that Christ deliberately sacrificed himself. Followers reject the word “suicide” in regards to Jesus. They might also reconsider the word “murdered.” They describe Jesus’ death in terms of sacrifice, martyrdom, destiny or simply part of God’s plan. The devout admit Jesus was on a suicide mission from God and vehemently deny suicide at the same time.

A soldier on a suicide mission expects to lose his life to accomplish some valuable tactical objective. However, the kamikaze pilot cannot compare to Jesus. If a ship’s guns blast a Mitsubishi Zero from the sky, the suicidal pilot may be dead but his mission is a failure. Conversely, Jesus’ primary objective was to get himself killed. If he lived, his mission would be a failure. “God intended to give his only son for our sins” doesn’t sound right. “God temporarily gave his only son for our sins” is more accurate but never caught on as a catchy phrase.

Jesus played a crucial role in his own murder but he is not the felon we want to expose. We want to nab the murderer who has remained unnamed these past two thousand years. Although we have a shrinking list of suspects, the case is far from over. We are working towards the court scene where the angry man in the witness stand jumps up and cries with Samuel L. Jacksonian passion, “Hell, yes I killed him and I’d do it again!”

## **106. Motive for Jesus’ Murder**

Sometimes a motive is more difficult to uncover than the perpetrator. A murdered man may be a drug cartel snitch. However, Miami C.S.I. detectives can scientifically prove the real motive was jealousy and the man who killed him was a spurned lover. The real motive often hides behind a fake one.

Jesus’ people wandered a long hard road. Bible records say the Jewish people were slaves before the Exodus. *The Jewish people were slaves in Egypt* is so incessantly repeated that there is virtually no chance it is true. Since that factoid does not effect this case, we will leave the correction for another investigator.

Israel was the same in the first century *anno Christi* as it was in centuries before the first century. Following Assyria, Babylon, Persia and Greece, Rome was just the latest conqueror: a master in a long chain of masters. For better public relations, Rome permitted the Israeli to call themselves subjects. It is a more dignified and a more calming word than slaves. Just as the Roman term “taxation” was a nicer term than “tribute.” Those taxes were what Roman descendants in organized crime called protection money or damage insurance. The semantics did little to shush the Jewish people’s grumbling stomachs or to make their empty purses a lighter burden. Those hungry bellies complained louder when the Pharisee

collected God's cut. Ten percent... off the top. The Pharisee called it a tithe; again just semantics. It is not seriously debatable if the tithes ministers collect today amounts to faith-based extortion.

As always with oppressed peoples, rebellious individuals coalesce into angry gangs. Those gangs merge into a ragtag but prideful insurgence. The more ragtag the insurgents, the more needful the pride. Millennia later, the French christened their patriotic and desperately romantic women and men *La Résistance*. Likewise, tattered Jewish rebel rousers in the early AD years could barely manage to torch a Roman barrack or incite a brief riot. Their sedition accomplished little more than to invite vicious retribution. Those insurgents risked torture or execution or torture followed by execution and the additional persecution of their families. Jesus Barabbas was one of those impotently passionate rebels, albeit a lucky one.

Jesus heaped threats on Herod, Satan, the Pharisee, demons, gentiles, sinners, people who lead children away from Christian indoctrination,<sup>479</sup> Holy Ghost blasphemers,<sup>480</sup> unbelievers, those who questioned his resurrection and those who love a parent or child more than they love him.<sup>481</sup>

It has slipped everyone's notice over these past two millennia that the most unlikely group completely escaped Jesus' criticism. They were the ones who last forced the Chosen People into servitude. They were the very ones who nailed him to the cross. Yet Jesus never uttered an insult nor hinted a single admonishment against Rome or any Roman. Jesus was positively affable to them. Jesus gave Pontius absolution for his part in the crucifixion. As Jesus hanged on the cross, he forgave his Roman crucifixioneers who drove the nails.<sup>482</sup> He called non-Roman Gentiles "dogs" and "pigs." Jesus balked at healing the daughter of a non-Jew Greek<sup>483</sup> but he healed a centurion's ailing servant without complaint or hesitation.<sup>484</sup>

At his trial in Pilate's court, Jesus assured Pilate that his ministry did not oppose Rome's earthly rule because Jesus' kingdom was in another world. Jesus not only conjured a magic fish carrying a coin in its mouth to pay his taxes prior to the Ides of April deadline but he directed his followers to pay the Empire's taxes.<sup>485</sup>

We might conclude Jesus approved of the Roman occupation but this conclusion is wrong. The hidden motive for Jesus' murder was no less noble than to save the people of Israel from their slavemaster, Rome.

Jesus railed against the Council of Pharisee<sup>486</sup> —the stewards of God's laws. Those laws were the same ones carved by God's finger then carried from Mount Sinai by the lawgiver prophet: the one and only Holy Moses. Jesus' point man, John the Baptist, also badmouthed the Pharisee to their faces. The Pharisee were second only to sin on Jesus' hit list.<sup>487</sup>

Jesus had good reason to dislike the Pharisee. Rome's oppression was hard for the Israeli to resist. However, with the complicitous Pharisee, resistance was ~~fruitless~~... resistance was *vanity*. The Pharisee exercised the Divine's proxy and used G-d's authority to keep the people as docile as Passover sheep led to the altar.

The Pharisee could not care less which heathen dynasty, infidel kingdom or pagan empire ruled Israel. Their only concern lay in the Great Temple of Jerusalem. Stewardship of the holy temple gave them wealth and divine influence over the Jewish people. The Council bowed before anyone with the power to destroy their temple and its Holy of Holies, the place where God once dwelt.

The temple was not just the seat of the Pharisee's power. Like the grand cathedrals in later centuries, it was their power. Without the temple, the Pharisee would be resident rabbis of village synagogues or itinerant Holy Men. The priests knew the consequences if

the citizens rebelled. They knew their God would not stop Rome from razing Jerusalem's Holy Temple flatter than unleavened bread. God already allowed its destruction previously.

The Jesus plan was elegant if not simple.

- The conspirators would introduce a new prophet, Jesus the Messiah.
- Jesus would challenge the Pharisee's authority.
- Having no authority to execute citizens, the Pharisee would petition the Roman Governor to crucify him.
- Jesus would resurrect from the dead.
- Resurrection rumors would multiply Jesus' believers by many fold.
- Those converts would reject the Pharisee's authority as God's representatives.
- The Pharisee would fail to keep the masses docile.
- Israel would revolt against Rome.
- The Jewish revolution would expel the Romans from the Promised Land and Israel would finally enjoy self rule

... and—except for that last bullet—this is exactly what happened.

## 107. The New Judaism Makes Changes

If his ministry had any chance to bring down the Pharisee, Jesus needed a message with grassroots appeal. It was impossible to undermine the Pharisee with an opposing religion. Any evangelist of a foreign god is scourged, burned at the stake, thrown off a cliff, hanged and/or stoned long before he reaches the sermon's halftime when he passes the collection plate. Quickly executing foreign missionaries is one Mosaic rule<sup>488</sup> the Aleuts, Asians, Africans, Amazons, Aborigines and Native Americans would have been wise to adopt.

Cleverly, Jesus' revolutionary message did not propose replacing the Jewish God. He offered an upgrade; Yahweh version 2.0. Similarly, thousands of Christian revisions have popped up over the centuries. Among those Joseph Smith introduced the Mormon edition. Ellen G. White redefined Christian thought into Seventh Day Adventism. Mary Baker Eddy molded Jesus to fit her church of Christian Science. Clapboard churches in Kentucky handle snakes safely (most of the time) by drawing on their interpretation of Jesus' saving grace. At the extreme end of the Christian spectrum, the obscene Children of God perverted the Messiah in their cult of sexual subjugation and ~~alleged~~ pedophilia.

The main difference is that New Judaism (Christianity) bestowed an afterlife to converts. Islam, another of Judaism's spin-off religions offer heaven as a recruiting inducement. There are scores of virgins for every impatient martyr who takes the fast track to Heaven. Christianity skips the reward of heavenly virgins. That's probably a wise decision. Who wants to face eternity with perpetual virgins? The whining, "That part sounds gross," staining every new set of sheets and worst; constantly asking, "Wa'cha thinking?"

Christian girls who bear their virginity to the afterlife need not worry about marrying into a harem of frustrated sister-wives. Unfortunately, the Christian heaven forbids sex; matrimonial, procreative, clean, nasty, really nasty or otherwise.<sup>489</sup> In Christian heaven, souls do not have spare time for canoodling. They spend each minute and millennium in blissful worship<sup>490</sup> and singing hymns in praise of God's awesomeness.<sup>491</sup> If those heaven-bound souls grow lax their worship then, as Saint Thomas Aquinas recommends, they can look down into Hell and enjoy watching the suffering souls. Seeing the doings in Hell also encourages renewed devotion to worship. There but for the grace of God go I.

## 108. Monotheism: A Boss God

Many decades ago Europe and Asia were separate continents. One day, someone checked Webster's for the definition of "continent." That person coined the name Eurasia (much to the irritation of the Asiopians.) Today, we refer to Judaism, Christianity and Islam as the Big Three of the monotheist religions. Someone getta dictionary.

We accept the ancient pagan religions were polytheistic. Odin ruled the Norse gods. Zeus ruled the Greek gods and Jupiter ruled the Roman gods. Each had minor gods and half gods born to human mothers. Some mortal heroes were endowed with magic powers or enchanted weapons. There were also fantastic creatures like giants, dragons, satyrs and unicorn.

Although theologians consider Old Judaism as monotheistic, that religion shares elements with the polytheistic ones. Old Judaism had a head god with several classes of second rate gods. Among them were immortal angels, seraphim and cherubim. Also, lusty Sons of God made sweet, sweet love to earthling women who then spawned giants. Mortals like Moses and Samson had supernatural powers or wielded objects with supernatural charms. Fantastic creatures like dragons, satyrs and unicorn rounded out the cast.

Jesus' New Judaism retained the secondary immortal angels and superhero mortals but it added demons with godly powers. Christianity revised Satan into a completely evil antagonist to the totally righteous God. Christianity also promoted two more gods to the top rung of the hierarchy who can combine and separate at will. The Trinity's Jesus compares to several pagan demigods who also had human mothers and divine fathers. Like Old Judaism, the omnipotent Christian God employs helpers in the form of angels and human subjects to do tasks (mostly killing) that he wouldn't or couldn't do himself.

The line between polytheist and monotheist grew even fuzzier. The Church deified thousands of humans to heaven's saints. We can pray to saints for favors or do a long repetitious mind-numbing chant for them to intercede on our behalf with the higher Gods of the Trinity. These thousands of saints, like pagan gods, specialize in areas of specific concerns and even patronize specific professions. A pagan bowing to the Pantheon of Roman gods would feel right at home bowing to the Rom█ Cat█ Chu█.

The Big Three defined as monotheistic is shaky. Christianity's formula for one god is more unbalanced. *There is only one true God and he consists of three gods, of which one (Jesus) is totally God and also totally human.*

If you are a Deist, you might be a monotheist.

## 109. Gimme a D and an E!... Gimme a V-I-L! Yay Demons! Yay Demons!

Old Judaism would find the New Christian god familiar in His viciousness. The old deity routinely ravaged his people with war, slavery, disease and death for trifling offenses. It is curious the most inhumane god is paradoxically, the most comforting to a believer. Converts eagerly embrace a god who pores over which despair he will inflict next. Still, if you want to be a supremely God-fearing believer, the Christian god is the one for you.<sup>492</sup> He encourages fear reaching far beyond terror and far beyond this life.

In Godzilla's story, the Japanese inadvertently rouse the mutant beast. Lost, confused and more than a little annoyed, the monster cuts a swath of devastation through Tokyo. The great reptile flattens homes with freakishly oversized feet. He explodes skyscrapers with his radioactive breath. Thousands die in the rubble. Scientists scramble to discover what awakened him and what might pacify him. They eventually lure Godzilla back into the cool

calm of the blue depths. Even as the Lord of Lizards' knobby head slips beneath the waves, the Nipponese people accept it as their destiny they will again suffer the monster's wrath.

Godzilla is a coincidental rip-off of his namesake deity. Like the iconic lizard, when God goes on a killing spree it is the priest's job, instead of a scientist, to discover what sin spurred God from his indifference. The priest may have trifling success in pacifying God but he is never at a loss to explain God's motive for droughts, hurricanes and war or which sinners are to blame for God allowing terrorist attacks. The priest decides what sinner to stone or what sacrifice will scratch the Almighty's itch for carnage. One must wonder, "*Who is more powerful?: God or the priest who controls God's manic mood swings?*"

Old Judaism used prayers and sacrifices to keep its god, like Godzilla, from running amok and killing folks or worse... killing lots of folks. A fellow should sacrifice some prescribed animal. A child is born? Kill some doves. You touch a dead, unclean animal? Sacrifice a goat. You build an altar to the Lord? Steal someone's bull and burn it as a sacrifice. The occasion calls for it? Throw your only child on the sacrificial pyre. Follow the rules and, if you are righteous and/or lucky, maybe God(zilla) will not squash your village and mash your family into toe jam.

Both testament gods are more horrible than any demon in Steve K's nightmares. No devil exceeds the horrors of a whimsically omniscient God however, the New Testament God is worse... much worse. The OT God might smite you with calamity or some long suffering disease but when you finally die, he is done with you. Contrarily, The third leg of the trinity stool seeks vengeance for all eternity. Jesus is so malevolent he denies his victims even the mercy of death's oblivion.<sup>493</sup>

If this is how a god behaves, what does it take to be a devil? The most creative imagination cannot conceive a more soulless monster. Seriously, what does it take? If a supernatural god throws eternal souls into an eternal lake of fire, he is pretty awful. If the creature relaxes on a lakeside lawn chair to enjoy the spectacle then he is really, really awful.<sup>494</sup> How can an aspiring demon even dream of exceeding such terror?

Separating gods from ghouls can be a paradox of futility unless you have a rule to follow. In old Judaism, God was terrible. If He became angry, you were toast. End of story. Easy to understand. Next lesson. Christianity mucks up that formula beyond reason. It doesn't matter what the doings are in the realm of the divine and the demonic. Be they curses of pestilence, murderous mayhem, indiscriminate vengeance or ceaseless torture, the only thing that matters is which entity is doing what. In Christianity, God is always righteous no matter how seemingly depraved his behavior. Conversely, regardless of how benign the Christian Satan's actions, a demon is incapable of anything but evil. In the Bible, Satan never lied and never killed anyone without God's encouragement. Yet Satan is a compulsive liar and murderer for one reason, his name.<sup>495</sup> Since God is god, the opposite is true.<sup>496</sup> God is holy innocent of murder... no matter how high the corpses pile.

If God and Satan exchanged roles in Christianity, congregations would praise the Snake of Eden for using an apple to bestow humanity with the gift of intelligence. Churches would demonize the Lord for lying about the Fruit of Knowledge being poison.<sup>497</sup> Ministers of Satan would preach hate for the god who wanted to keep mankind as dumb beasts on his personal animal reserve in Eden. In that light, Satan is somewhat admirable. One might be tempted to join LaVey's Church of Satan if the members were not simply perennial adolescents looking for yet another way to piss off their parents.

The children's vacation Bible school rhyme can help you tell the difference.

The Devil is only evil, with one more d.  
God is only good, with one less o

## 110. The Missionary's Position

Old Judaism had no counterpart to the missionary. No one will knock on your door and ask, "Have you heard the good news of Moses?" You will not see roadside marquees inviting gentiles to attend the Saturday services and accept Yahweh into their hearts. Try it yourself. Drop by your neighborhood synagogue. Ask to convert to Jewish. The rabbi will likely tell you, "No." Don't take it personally. It is his job to dissuade you from a rash decision. If you are male, you might try to change the rabbi's mind. Claim you look forward to being circumcised. Say you will not mind enduring a couple of weeks of debilitating pain. After all, suffering bouts of vomiting and excruciating nocturnal erections is a small price to get on God's mercurial good side. (*See Section 112: Adventures in Circumcision*)

Evangelists have no such restraints in recruiting souls to Jesus. Give them a Bible to whack and a bucket of baptismal water to splash about and they will convert anyone, anytime, anywhere.

A Baptist church in Colorado hosted a small carnival of fun and games for the neighborhood kids. While the unsuspecting parents enjoyed a restful time-out at home, the festival organizers called the screeching kids away from the slippy-slide and sprinkler-fun. Ordained members gathered up the kids and baptized them in something akin to a clown's dunk tank. The chaperons neglected to send a note home with the kids saying, "Your kid is now a Baptist." In all fairness, the parents should have been wary from the git-go. After all, the church did have "Baptist" in its name. That's what Baptists do.

The next time you take your kids to the Wonderful Wacky Water Park, better make sure the geezer manning the water cannon isn't an overly enthusiastic Baptist. Come to think about it, you might also avoid leaving your kid alone with any minister, priest or other marginally creepy fellow.

## 111. "... Catapult the Propaganda"

Stealth baptisms aside, his invention of the door-to-door disciple was a quantum leap in his strategy to convert the masses. Jesus' missionaries effectively multiplied his public appearances by thirty-six fold. Besides converting and baptizing, Jesus gave those disciples the divine powers to cast out demons<sup>498</sup> and cure disease<sup>499</sup> The Bible doesn't say if their cures were effective but some disciples had no success with casting out demons.<sup>500</sup>

The seventy-two missionary disciples proved to be a powerful force in getting Jesus' message out to the people. However, Jesus' greatest invention was his super-missionary—the apostle. The super-missionaries did not demonstrate the same healing abilities of the seventy-two disciples during Jesus' ministry but they had two other powers. Like Jesus, those super-missionaries could induct other super-missionaries. Each super-missionary clone could recruit and induct other super-missionaries.

The apostles' second power was the ability to forgive sins and guarantee souls an eternity of praising God. Or, they could withhold salvation and thereby damn those folks' souls to Christ's gawd-awful Hell.<sup>501</sup> This tradition endures. Today, Jesus worshipers wisely toe the Christian party line. Otherwise, the wayward parishioner will find himself shunned, banished, denied communion or kicked from the congregation to the curb on the highway to Hell.

To make recruiting easier, there were no theological qualifications or previous experience required. Like many ministers today, Jesus' missionaries did not need to be experts on the Holy Word. Jesus' disciples and apostles appear ignorant of the scriptures. Neither the seventy-two disciples nor the apostles nor John the Baptist ever recited a single



verse in the Gospels. It appears Jesus chose illiterate peasants as his emissaries. We accept Gospel authors John and Matthew dictated their tales to scribes or learned to write in the decades following Jesus' death since neither demonstrated any literacy in Hebrew, Greek or Aramaic during Jesus' ministry.

Jesus' super-missionary concept is nothing less than a stroke of mathematical genius. New Judaism could outstrip old creeping Judaism by growing with virulent speed. Start with those eleven apostles in January. If each recruited just one super-missionary per month, there would be twenty-two in February. There would be forty-four in March and eighty-eight in April and so on. By the third June, there would be as many super-missionaries as there are people on today's Earth.

## 112. Adventures in Circumcision

If you ever consider performing a bris for yourself in the privacy of your home, be warned. It is not as painless as chopping off a finger. The number of nerves in the foreskin is a thousand times greater than your finger. For an adult, recovering from circumcision is like getting kicked in the groin each hour over several days.

Moses starkly illustrates the pain within a Genesis love story. Brothers Simeon and Levi took offense because Shechem, the Prince of the Hivites, schlonged<sup>502</sup> their unbetrothed sister, Dinah. The act constituted rape because Shechem didn't get the father's permission before the schlonging.<sup>503</sup> Still, Shechem was madly in love with Dinah. The Bible doesn't say how Dinah felt. A female's opinion is rarely noteworthy or even worthy. If it makes any difference, Dinah wasn't shackled in the Prince's dungeon but shacking up in his royal bedchambers. Prince Shechem wanted to follow the Mosaic rules that his future in-laws lived by. The law dictated a rapist must marry the girl and vice versa.<sup>504</sup> Shechem expected the rule also applied to dreamy-eyed, star-crossed lovers. Shechem pleaded with, Jacob, Dinah's father for her hand in marriage. Shechem melted Jacob's blustery objections and, to the Prince's delight, he quoted a price for the dowry. Dinah's brother interjected a condition to the marriage. He insisted all the males in the groom's tribe get circumcised as a sign of good faith in joining the families. Unaware that the two brothers were using their circumcised penises as secret weapons of mass destruction, the giddy groom agreed and set to preparing for the nuptials.

Three days post circumcision, the Prince's townsmen were still in such pain and so weak (probably from vomiting, dehydration and insomnia for fear of nocturnal erections) that the two brothers strolled through the town and put each man to the sword... every one.<sup>505</sup> As was Moses' military custom, the brothers seized the city's valuables—animals and crops plus the wives and daughters—as righteous spoils of victory.

The Bible never says what happened to Dinah. We imagine she spent her years daydreaming of the graceful princess she might have been. Because of the pre-marital sex, she was no longer a virgin and men (even the toothless ones, already with unhappy wives) wanted nothing to do with her. It is rumor she forced her brother, Simeon, to marry her. It is conjecture, based on the aforementioned rumor, that marrying her brother was part of her plan to turn the remainder of Simeon's life into an blistering and unrelenting hell.

## In the Beginning

For the final clues to Jesus' killer, we will need to return to the beginning, starting with the Nativity. Nativity means "birth" but you never hear anyone say, "Tomorrow is my nativity day" or "She gave him nativity in the back seat of a '57 Chevy." These days, everyone knows Nativity is the story of Jesus' birth. Since *everyone* knows it... it is, of course, wrong.

The Nativity is the story you hear in church and see portrayed in Christmas pageants. However, the Nativity is not the story of Christ's birth because that story does not exist. The Nativity is two different stories. Those two tales have grown as inseparable as conjoined twins sharing one corpus callosum. If you ask anyone about the details of the Nativity, they will recite a jumbled yarn. They recollect parts of both stories but all of neither.

Many swear the Gospels are dictated, inspired or Holy Ghost written by God. However, the men who penned the Gospels never hint God dictated a word, gave them messages in dreams or inspired a single Gospel tale. Those writers claim they either saw what they wrote or got their story from a witness or from someone who knew someone who heard it from a friend, who had a buddy, who spoke to a guy... who was actually there.

This is the place in your investigation where you must part company with Gospel writers John and Mark. Neither scribbled a single line about Mary's incubus-esque conception nor named God as Jesus' not so humble father. The cornerstone of Christianity is that was mothered by a virgin mortal and fathered by the non-organic Holy Spirit (which is the same as and a separate part of God.) However, neither John nor Mark considered those fabulous points worth the investment of ink and papyrus.

Although they wrote the two Nativities, neither Matthew nor Luke claim any personal witness to the events surrounding Jesus' birth. Nevertheless, this investigation accepts their Gospels as sworn and legitimate testimony.

Luke and Matthew both testify that Mary was a virgin with whom the Holy Spirit once... dated and that Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem when Jesus was born. Otherwise, the two accounts of Jesus' birth are striking in their lack of semblance.

Let us break down the Nativity into its gospel components.

Matthew: Joseph learned that Wise Men followed the Christmas Star to eventually find little Jesus who was born many seasons earlier.<sup>506</sup> Joseph escaped with baby Jesus and Mary into Egypt.<sup>507</sup> King Herod massacred babies.<sup>508</sup> Luke never mentions these points.

Luke: Joseph and Mary travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem because of a census.<sup>509</sup> There was no room at the inn<sup>510</sup> so Mary gave birth somewhere else. Angels told shepherds to go see the baby king laying in a manger.<sup>511</sup> Matthew never mentions these points.

Christmas Nativity TV shows usually end with the manger incident because the next scene of ~~ungodly~~ godly horrors throw a wet blanket on warm and fuzzy Yuletide sentiments. In response to the Wise Men informing him of the Messiah's birth, King Herod butchered the babies in the region around Bethlehem. However, an angel warned Joseph the Carpenter to escape the carnage by fleeing into Egypt with his wife and new baby.

As Jesus' contemporary, Gospel writer, Matthew had opportunity to interview Mother Mary and Mary's sister. Gospel writer Luke never met Jesus but it is possible he too interviewed the Virgin Mary. Neither author specifies where he got his information.

Consequently, the story of the first Christmas is a mishmash of those two writers' accounts. When someone tells the Nativity story, they pick the facts like a child playing with Lincoln Logs.<sup>®</sup> The kid uses the pieces he wants and leaves the rest in the cabin-shaped box. Still, these two stories offer valuable clues to lead a detective to the man who murdered Jesus.

Detective, with you on the case, he will not elude justice much longer.

### 113. Common Nativity Mistakes

An investigator cannot solve a mystery if he turns a blind eye to the actual clues of the Holy Book and instead accepts corrupted biblical tradition. For centuries, generations of priests butchered the Bible's story of Christmas with bastardized and self-serving fiction. Some call those creative changes devoted embellishment while others would toss the yellow flag and call a bullshit penalty. As a detective, you can correct those injustices but first you must dispose of some persistent Nativity equivocations.

Everyone is aware of foibles in the Nativity story but ignore those little lies to avoid rocking the Yuletide boat. We know for a fact December 25<sup>th</sup> is not Jesus' birthday and Santa Claus is not Jesus' chubby Nordic nephew. We will waste no time on the typical Christmas falsehoods. Let's look to the lesser known ones documented in the Gospels.

Jesus was not born in a manger. Each mid-December, in every major American city, a pretty blond reporter stands in front of a news camera. She does an obligatory, on-location broadcast from a mega-church's live, drive-thru Nativity scene complete with several costumed actors, four nervous chickens, three stinky donkeys, two Holstein cattle and a perplexed lama from the local zoo. At some cringing point, the journalist repeats the lie, "Jesus was born in a manger." It is enough to make you lose all respect for the fifth estate, if not some affections for perky blondes.

People, please! A manger is a feed box for barnyard animals. While a manger is the ideal size for a newborn's crib, the idea of delivering a baby while sitting in one creates a farcical image of the Christian deity's consort. The next time you hear a news reporter say Jesus was born in a manger, notify the broadcaster. Tell the station manager what a manger is. For that matter, you should phone and complain every time a station broadcasts negligent, ignorant or willful lies about Jesus. After all, little children can see those programs.

Nativity mock-ups always include three gaudily dressed men—often wearing anachronistic crowns or ermine fur—in a stable kneeling before a newborn infant. As the proud mortal parents look on, awful angels, awe-filled shepherds and oddly infatuated farm animals join the fawning wise men.

As it is so common with that which is common, those Nativities are wrong. The Wise Men did not visit Jesus in a stable and Jesus was not a newborn babe at the time but a toddler around two years old.<sup>512</sup>

Even an agnostic appreciates preserving the few truthful biblical facts that tenaciously survive. The Bible's original Sabbath was sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. Today, the Sabbath is 0000 hours to 2459 hours Sunday. Halloween shops sell sexy Satanette outfits accessorize with cute little horns, a petite pitchfork, and a barbed tail for the lady's booty. Christian supply outlets sell figurines of the Lord and Savior playing football with neighborhood kids. Worse, the resurrection celebration includes chocolate Easter bunnies that lay psychedelic chicken eggs in peculiar places, which must annoy evolutionists as well as a few Professors of Applied Creationism.

One shudders to think of what Christian shops will sell next; a springy dashboard Jesus wearing your football team's officially licensed jersey? A John the Baptist line of hot tubs? A brand of ██████y the ██████ immaculate ██████tors?

The next time a politician erects a Nativity on your courthouse lawn... complain. Do not gripe for the sake of Jefferson's Separation of Church and State but out of indignation for the wanton besmirchment of the Holy Word. Feel free to use the following form letter.

*Mr. Mayor,*

*Out of respect for my fellow Americans of the Christian persuasion, I request... Nay. I demand you remove that offensive Nativity. It is a parody of the Blessed Virgin Mother. It is a lie. The divine Virgin Mother received the three Wise Men in her home when Jesus was a toddler. Your farcical Nativity suggests Mary raised sweet Baby Jesus in a barn... with pigs!*

*Are you not a man who fears God? Don't make me report your blasphemy in my prayers.  
Yours in Christ,*

\_\_\_\_ ( your signature here )

### **114. Were you Born in a Barn?**

Virgin Mary did not shoo chickens or slap rutting pigs out of her house when she received the visiting Wise Men. And the "born in a stable" story is a ~~misunderstanding~~ malicious lie too.

Joseph, Mary's husband, was a man destined for sainthood. He was the God-ordained foster father of the Intelligent Designer of the Universe. An extraordinary gentleman like Joseph would never shelter his laboring wife in a livery reeking of rotting hay, stale donkey urine, fresh sheep dung, dung beetles and dung beetle dung. Would you? How could a husband keep his enormous wife comfortable in a stable? If he built a fire to warm her, ill-vented smoke would choke her labored panting. Popping sparks, dry beams and straw tinder would present a serious fire hazard.

Imagine you are Joseph. God told you to take care of Mary and her unborn child: His child. As a proper God-terrified man, you would go door to door and neighbor to stranger, unashamedly begging to get Mary into a clean room. Any clean room... a servant's quarters, the children's room... let the kids sleep in the chicken coop. Would you want God to learn Mary's delivery was in a rancid livery? Granted, Joseph may have snatched a manger from a neighbor's barnyard then thatched it with clean straw for a makeshift crib. Any good foster father or birthing coach would do the same. There is no reason to repeat the disgusting lie that sweet Baby Jesus was born in a stinky stable. What revolting gossip!

A stable is a nasty place for a mother and child disunion. More importantly, no Gospel says the Virgin Mary was in a stable... anytime! Nor does Luke hint the shepherds or anyone else saw Baby Jesus in a stable. At worst, Joseph would make a soft pallet for his platonic wife under the Christmas stars. Every nomad packs a sturdy tarp for a quick lean-to. If Joseph pitched camp next to a stream, his laboring young wife would enjoy cool water and a fire for soothing warmth and a soft dancing light.

What the Good Book actually says drives people crazy enough. There is no need to add deliberate nonsense.

### **115. Do You Know the Way to Beth..le..hem?**

Joseph and his pregnant wife traveled to Bethlehem with a sense of urgency. It was as if Joseph received news of the census on a Wednesday and the deadline was by the end of the business on Friday.

Bethlehem to Nazareth is seventy miles as the black crow flies and around a hundred miles as the three-legged fox trots. It is upwards of a fifty-hour journey by *hoof du l'ass*.

The trip is longer still if the traveler is acutely pregnant and stops for nature's call every six hundred cubits.

Joseph went to be census-counted in Bethlehem because it was the home of his twenty-eighth generation ancestor, King David.<sup>513</sup> At least that's the story. Why did Joseph choose David's ancestral home: a man who reigned a thousand years earlier? Joseph had twenty-seven grandfathers in his direct paternal chain to King David. All his grandfathers, including the ones in his maternal line, would number in the tens of millions. Many of them would be his grandfather several times over. Almost any town would be the home of a male ancestor. Many of those towns would be closer to Nazareth and a less taxing journey for an overly ripe woman.

Given the single-mindedness of his trip, we must wonder if Joseph journeyed to Bethlehem not in spite of Mary's pregnancy but because of her pregnancy. We must consider Joseph deliberately fulfilled the prophesy of Jesus' birthplace. To learn if Joseph had such a motive we need to answer. (1) Did Joseph expect Mary to give birth to the Messiah? (2) Did he know the prophesy said the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem? If the answer to both is "yes," we must consider the census was just an excuse for Joseph to rush his holy pregnant fiancé to Bethlehem.<sup>514</sup>

The first question is an unequivocal "yes." The Gospels confirm Joseph knew the Holy Ghost fathered the baby. An angel told him so in a dream.<sup>515</sup>

The second question is almost as easy. The temple priests in Jerusalem knew the Messiah must be born in Bethlehem.<sup>516</sup> Joseph had a temple priest in his extended family and that priest knew the Holy Spirit sired Mary's child. Additionally, Mary lived in that priest's home for many months before Jesus was born. We will investigate this priest and provide the proof in an upcoming section.

Luke's suspicious census explains why Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth, Galilee yet Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Judea. Matthew did not go into such detail. Without fuss or muss, Matthew succinctly wrote, "Jesus was born in Bethlehem." Matthew never mentioned a census or the couple ever living in Nazareth before the birth. He did write Jesus lived in Nazareth after his time in Egypt and that prophesy dictated people would call him Emmanuel and a Nazarene.<sup>517</sup> Not to impugn Matthew but a detective will not find any mention of a Nazarene in the King James Old Testament or a Nazarene prophesy or the town of Nazareth for that matter. While we are on the subject... no one ever called Jesus "Emmanuel" either.

A traditional self-fulfilling prophesy is when one knows of a prediction then inadvertently causes it to come true, often in an ironic manner. In this case, Joseph knew his wife carried the offspring of the Holy Spirit.<sup>518</sup> He knew of the prophesy that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. The Bible effectively points out the census alibi was just a contrived excuse to rush to Bethlehem in time for the birth. It was Joseph's self-fulfilling prophesy but there was nothing ironic about it.

## **116. Don't Count on the Census**

Ancient Romans were outstanding accountants and logisticians. They had to be. In spite of their awkward namesake numerals, Rome administered vast holdings. The empire invested the resources they drained from conquered lands to outfit great legions and conquer more kingdoms. Using census numbers to project tax revenue would be as routine in those days just as it is today. However, ordering millions of subjects to scamper to some distant ancestral town for the counting would be a tabulation rat's nest. Every census taker will tell you he counts people right where they are (even if they live under a bridge) not at some random town where they might show up next week.

Israel loathed censuses. The Jewish folk had a dreadful census misadventure. Centuries earlier, King David conducted a census at God's command but David did it improperly. So God became... anyone? ...anyone? *Annoyed*. So God did... what? ...what? *Killed folks*. God, smiteful as usual, used a disease and fatally smote seventy thousand Jewish men.<sup>519</sup> We do not know how many women and children died in that plague. No one counted them. The survivors likely feared counting the dead women and children would constitute another census and God would once again become... anyone? ...anyone? *Annoyed*.

Luke wrote that the Romans ordered all in Israel to journey to the town of their ancestor.<sup>520</sup> Since Luke wasn't an actual eyewitness we must wonder if he got his explanation a little skewed. Someone might assume the Romans valued people's pedigree since they ordained Herod's bloodline to Israel's throne. With that misunderstanding, perhaps Joseph might earn a higher status if he and his wife (who was also a descendant of King David) were counted in the House of David and in the town of David (Bethlehem.) The fact is that Rome cared little to nothing about Jewish genealogy or genealogy of any of their slave holdings.

If Joseph just filled in the twelfth blank on the census form while in Nazareth, he could have skipped the trip entirely.

X. How many wives? One.

XI. How many wives named Mary? One.

XII. Male head of household is descended from the house of David.

## 117. The Christmas Star

Holiday cartoons often depict the Wise Men tagging behind the Christmas Star as it floats westward toward a sleepy village. The star finally comes to a rest, hovering high above Baby Jesus. You may consider it childish to cite cartoons for your Jesus facts but, on this point, you should reconsider.<sup>521</sup>

As Space Detective Lanc█ Lew█s could tell you, even small stars are obvious, even to an eyeless man standing on a planet ninety-three million miles away. The Christmas star was not so obvious. King Herod did not see it. Herod's priests did not see it. Neither Joseph nor Mary saw it. The shepherds tending their flock did not see it. With the exception of the Wise Men, no one noticed the Christmas Star. Even the Wise Men lost sight of it in the last few miles in their long journey. Perhaps clouds obscured the stars that night and they pulled off the road at Jerusalem and ask King Herod for directions. They reacquired the star as they approached Bethlehem and followed it to find Baby Jesus. This is obviously not a star as we understand stars today.

Of course the Wise Men could not follow a star like a child chasing a wayward balloon. No one can. Anyone smarter than a fourth grader knows stars appear to drift westward across the sky because of the earth's easterly rotation. If you journey towards the only star in the northern hemisphere that appears stationary, the best you can hope to find is Super█'s Fort█ of Soli█, a sweatshop full of elves and a thinning polar cap (which right-wing radio limpets say "Bah" and rush to claim is mythical (the thinning polar cap that is.))

One possibility is the Wise Men were astrologers. They saw a planetary alignment or heavenly copulation that un-scienced people could never notice. Jewish folk heard stargazers could read God's poker face. Like in a crooked game of Tex█ hold'em, astrological mystics could sneak peeks at God's hole cards and foretell the future. However, Moses' law forbade Jewish people from studying any mystic arts. Jewish folks were steadfastly ignorant of the stars.<sup>522</sup> General Joshua could not wonder why—when God

stopped the sun in the sky—his soldiers were not thrown against trees and hills at eight hundred and seventy-eight miles per hour. Joshua didn't know his ascendant from a hole in the ground so he wouldn't use, "What's your sign?" as a pickup line in a Bethany singles bar.

We know Matthew was honest in his reporting. Unfortunately, his less than rudimentary knowledge of the stars merged badly with his enthusiasm to tell his Nativity story. Even if Matthew left out the angels, his story would still be astronomical nonsense. We must forgive Matthew. Someone else told him this fabulous facet of the Nativity story. Still, he documented the fable as faithfully as his considerable ignorance allowed.

We need not go into a discussion (futile) on the validity (none) of astrology (malarkey) to predict the future (poppycock) or name the president influenced by such horseshit (horseshit.) As a detective, you cannot consider astrological evidence any more than miraculous proofs. However, the astrological connection does give a clue to who killed Jesus.

### **118. How Smart the Wise Man?**

The Wise Men had their un-Mensa moments. As if Herod was a renter in the last week of a thirty-day eviction, the Wise Men strolled into his palace and remarked, "Oh! You are still here? Could you tell us where the new king is?"<sup>523</sup>

Put yourself in the Wise Men's pointy toed slippers. Would a smart fellow even hint of a new king or dare to suggest a successor to the throne lived? A Scientology psychiatrist would definitely diagnose these Wise Men with overt suicidal tendencies.

After consulting the Temple priests, Herod told the Wise Men where the scriptures foretold the Messiah's birth. "Bethlehem... a little town but you can't miss it if you exit Jerusalem's east gate then hang a right. Go five miles southwest. You'll run smack-dab into it." King Herod added, "Let me know when you find the new king... so I can worship his majesty too... seriously... just to worship him... and to hand over my crown... honest... cross my heart."<sup>524</sup>

History and legend describes time and time again how bloody ruthless a despot reacts when he imagines someone casting covetous eyes to his throne or when a relative dares to share the same bloodline. Likewise, King Herod liquidated his royal kinfolk whenever he grew peckishly paranoid.

The Wise Men themselves triggered that wholesale massacre of babies by tipping off Mad King Herod of the new king's birth. This blunder makes the three Wise Men appear profoundly dense. If they were not actually stupid, then tipping off Herod served a hidden purpose. Being a detective, you may already have a hunch of what that purpose could be.

### **119. Killing Babies**

The Christmas star was a sign to herald the birth of a savior but it was not much of a sign. Only the Wise Men noticed the Christmas star. However God provided another sign of the Messiah's birth. No one in Israel could ignore the second one.

Matthew's story says that God spoke to the Wise Men in dreams and told them not to tell King Herod of Baby Jesus' identity. They obeyed and discreetly departed Israel.<sup>525</sup> When he realized the Wise Men snubbed him, King Herod mumbled, "We are not amused." Herod wanted to keep the infant king from usurping his throne, however, he did not know which baby was born to do so. King Herod had a sure-fire solution. *Kill 'em all.*

The Bible's god routinely communicated with Earthlings in obvious but indecipherable signs. God's usual divine sign was killing people... mostly adults... mostly. Centuries

earlier, God promised (via Jerry the Prophet) that the Messiah's birth would be heralded by infant carnage. That promise might be translated, "*Joy to the world!... but first... carnage.*"<sup>526</sup>

## 120. A Few Dead Babies More

A famous fellow once wrote, "Belief in a cruel God makes a cruel man."<sup>527</sup> However, God may have gotten a bum rap in this particular massacre. If true, then King Herod was also framed. As the lead detective on this case, you have the opportunity to correct any injustice and set the record straight.

King Herod the Great was a badman. He was a very, very bad badman. He was a bloody despot, a seriously strict father and a cranky husband. He probably had a ceramic wine cup saying, "World's Worst Son-in-Law." Still, the detective must ask if Herod was indeed guilty of those baby murders.

People who explain peculiar things of the Bible claim society's customs and morals were different in ancient times. Killing children was sometimes acceptable. From Moses' and Joshua's stormtroopers infanticides,<sup>528</sup> to Abraham's plan to butcher his only son,<sup>529</sup> to Jephthah's filicide of his virgin daughter in burnt sacrifice,<sup>530</sup> to disemboweling forty-two brats for sassing a bald prophet,<sup>531</sup> to slaughtering every first-born male in Egypt.<sup>532</sup> Killing children (mostly male) was, and continues to be, a necessary part of God's master plan.

It is said that insanity is repeatedly doing the same thing while expecting differ... well, you know the rest. Although, this fortune cookie wisdom applies only to humans, the Good Lord repeatedly committed embarrassing murders and didn't learn from the experience. Still, no bumper stickers read, "Your god is insane and I'm not so sure about you."

Take the Flood for example. God killed everything on Earth, including infants, because the world was evil. Today's televangelists say the world is still replete with evil. If they are correct then the Flood was overkill and worthless at the same time. The Flood changed nothing. It did not eradicate evil. To memorialize his worthless massive murder, God invented the rainbow. So, every time you see a rainbow, remember.

Note: Given His murderous misadventures, isn't it time writers stop capitalizing "His" and "He" when referencing the god of the Bible? Someone should speak to the grammar authorities.

Noah's flood wasn't God's last mass killing. God massacred Egypt's firstborn males but that's only part of the story. It gets worse. That killing was His tenth coercion to get Pharaoh to free the Jewish people. His first ones consisted of infestations; frogs, lice, flies, boils, and locusts but also bloody water, hail and darkness, etcetera and etcetera.

Speaking of malfeasance. God cast a brainwashing spell over Pharaoh to prevent him from giving-in to the extortion and freeing his Jewish slaves. God effectively stretched out the Egyptians' suffering. That was just plain mean.

There's an old saying in Judea. I know it's in Tex█, probably in Judea too—that says, *Kill babies once, shame on...shame... shame on you. Kill babies twice and ... and ...*, well, you just shouldn't kill so many babies.

Since both stories are so sick and so gruesome, you gotta be uneasy about people who deem this sort of behavior as acceptable from their loving and merciful god. You gotta hope worshippers privately accept that many stories of the Bible are just perverse fairy tales. Otherwise followers would be like the confused child who still loves the sadistically abusive father.

This brings us to the next baby killing. The murders were so horrifically monstrous that someone gave it a name: *The Massacre of the Innocents*.



Who is guilty? The KJV translation is the most damning testimony. It names King Herod.

The KJV tells us Herod sent forth and killed all the children two years and younger in and around Bethlehem.<sup>533</sup> The ISV, NIV and CEV specify Herod ordered the killing of only infant boys.<sup>534</sup> This detail alone lowers the baby body count by half. You can reduce the alleged man-child massacre further if you note the KJV states Herod sent forth and slew the babies. The CEV, ISV and NIV translate that Herod only gave orders to do so.<sup>535</sup> We would hope some of the soldiers disobeyed those orders.

Your investigation decreases the number of tiny murders by a significant percentage thus reducing King Herod's many felonies. Of course, you cannot expect Herod to win Tyrant of the Year because he murdered only a few hundred babies instead of thousands.

You must wonder if you can exonerate Herod completely.

In the year 1 AD, Israel citizens knew God previously ordained slaughtering of children and the messianic prophesy demanded another round of baby culling. If the priests knew the birth would be in Bethlehem then they should have posted "*No Kids or Non-Virgin Preggers Allowed*" at the city limits. City planners should have zoned Bethlehem as an adults-only retirement community.

The Lord's prophesy stated there would be crying and mourning for the dead babes in the town of Ramah.<sup>536</sup> Ramah lay ten miles north of Jerusalem while Bethlehem is five miles to the south. Herod either murdered babies in the wrong town for the prophesy (oops) or worse, the baby killing fields extended from Bethlehem to Ramah and therefore included the metropolis of Jerusalem.

Knowing of their Deity's peccadillos, Bethlehem parents likely practiced baby-massacre disaster drills. When they heard stifled little screams in the distance along with mothers' anguished wails, the parents and grandparents grabbed their little tykes and ran for the Judean hills. Others stashed their munchkins under floorboards or stuffed them in hollow trees. Forward thinking parents likely dressed up their baby boys like little Shirley Temple until puberty.

Matthew is the only gospel writer who accuses King Herod of these killings. As sincere as his testimony is, it is weak. Matthew was not an eyewitness to the baby bloodbath. His account is secondhand hearsay from someone else. Yet Matthew's is the only voice accusing Herod. Prosecutors don't coerce defendants into a guilty plea solely on the dubious testimony of a single person... except of course, in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Herne, T<sup>■</sup>as.

We agreed to stick to the Gospels for the facts of this investigation. We will not break that agreement except to point out that no other book of the New Testament mentions these diminutive exterminations. No secular or sectarian historian chronicles the murders; much less blames Herod for it. There is absolutely no confirmation—historically, allegorically or phantasmagorically—that Matthew's horror tale ever happened. As supporting citation, please read the attached bibliography of every non-fanciful book in the world.\* Still, ministers persistent in justifying this pitiless prophesy. The tale endures like an urban legend because it sounds typical of Herod's character. No one would say, "Hey, Herod was a nice guy. He wouldn't be so cold-hearted." Just as none would dare second-guess God and say so vainly, "Our all loving God would never condone baby slaughtering ... again."

\*Author's note: *Killing Jesus* is not listed on that bibliography owing to Mr. O'Reilly's macabrely detailed yet fabulous rendition of the *Massacre of the Innocents*.

This horror tale is outlandish. No legitimate god would behave so perniciously. God sent dream messages warning the Wise Men not to return to King Herod. He sent dream messages to Joseph about Mary's pregnancy. God sent Gabriel to tell Mary of His plans

for her... twice. God sent angels to tell the good news of Christ's birth to a few random shepherds who had nothing to do with nothing.<sup>537</sup> The Holy Ghost also told an equally random fellow, Simeon, that Christ was born.<sup>538</sup> However, when it came to intervening in the imminent infant slaughter, God did fraking nothing. Well, not exactly fraking nothing... God did send a dream message to Joseph to run for the border and smuggle His Son, Jesus, safely into Egypt<sup>539</sup> and then another dream message to tell Joseph when it was safe to return to Israel. In a separate dream message, God told Joseph not to return to Judea but instead to settle in Galilee.

One cannot have it both ways. Either God and Herod behaved very badly or Matthew libeled both of them. Given that choice, some would judge King Herod as clean as fresh Christmas snow (at least in these murders) and completely absolve the Christian god (at least in these murders.)

Note: History records King Herod in greater detail than any other character of the Bible. Historians independently confirm his life and reign. Secular records tell us who his parents were, what factions his army battled, when he married, how he died and when he widowed himself. We know of his travels to Rome to grovel before the Emperor. We know the year Rome crowned Herod the King of the Jews. We know he founded Israeli cities, built the state-of-the-art Caesarea Maritima, designed the lofty fortress, Masada and the Jerusalem Temple. We know how many times Herod strolled inside the fantastic Holy Temple to admire the inner sanctum. We know all these things and more but there is no mention of a baby massacre.

## 121. He Loves the Little Children of the World

Some people accept the *Massacre of the Innocents* as righteous, necessary and—although He needs none—justified by God... and, b'Gawd, it really happened.” Those people are one reason to lock your doors and take down the *Baby on Board* triangle when stopped at traffic lights in front of fundamentalist churches in T~~exas~~.

A fundamentalist once explained butchering babies is a bad thing... most of the time. However, this slaughter served the higher purpose as a sign from God to announce the birth of Jesus. As with any prophesy, the killings were unavoidable... or destiny... or something else that omnipotent God couldn't stop but which he could stop (if he really wanted to.) It had to happen. Since God is always blameless, it was probably the devil's fault. This fundamentalist explained that one cannot fathom the Lord's perfect love and flawless justice without embracing God's spirit. After inoculation with the Holy Ghost, a believer sees God's boundless love in an event that normal people would see as an atrocity—or several atrocities. The fundamentalist fellow promised to pray for the Holy Ghost to occupy my soul.<sup>540</sup> That ended the discussion with the fundamentalist.<sup>541</sup>

Dear Fellow Murder Mystery Enthusiast,

Take heart and a cleansing breath. The *Massacre of the Innocents* never happened. You don't have to wring your compassion dry to justify God's cruelty in this nightmarish fantasy. In spite of the Holy Spirit inspiring Bill O'Reilly's *Killing Jesus*, (bless his heart) the scales of evidence slam to the conclusion that no babies were butchered.

As a justice-loving detective, you may feel cheated that you cannot pin wanton toddler termination on King Herod the Horrible. On the bright side, your investigation absolves the Christian god as an accomplice. If Christendom becomes a slightly nicer place because of you describing a slightly nicer god then, on behalf of planet Earth and the ISS, please accept this grateful writer's "Thanks."

## 122. ...and the Hommeee... of thaaa... Wise

We know the Wise Men were from The East and their journey to Bethlehem took almost two years.<sup>542</sup>

Do the math. Estimate a travel time for one year. If a man walks at two miles per hour... for six hours per day... for five days per week, the distance would be thirty-one hundred ground miles. With a camel, he could ride at least twenty-five miles per day and extend the range to six thousand ground miles.

The east-west superhighway of Jesus' day was the Silk Road. It stretched about five thousand air miles from Israel's technologically advanced Caesarea Maritima (thirty miles southwest of Nazareth) to the eastern coast of Asiopea (Eurasia). There were many intersections on the route. Maybe the Wise Men merged onto the Silk Road's camelpool lane in Persia, Babylon, Mongolia, India or took the on-ramp from what later became Tiananmen Square. You must look deeper for specific hints to the Wise Men's origin.

We agreed to limit all clues for this investigation to the four Gospels. Now, at about three-quarters through the case, this writer will break that agreement. Don't whine about it. Snitches and clients routinely doublecrossed ■am ■pade. Why should you be any different? This clue lies outside the Gospels but it is in the well-known Christmas carol with the most peculiar title, *We Three Kings of Orient Are*.

Kings? Three? Orient?! Are?... Are what? Oriental?

The Bible names The East as the Wise Men's origin but can you deduce where the word "Orient" came from in those lyrics?... Yes! It comes right out of the Gospels. The songwriter realized the King James Bible derives "Wise Men" from *magos* in Matthew's Greek transcript. The word *magos* may not ring a bell but you know the plural form, "magi"... oriental scientists or oriental magi-cians.<sup>543</sup>

## 123. The Wise Men Never Return

The Wise Men dedicated themselves to Jesus. They suffered an arduous journey. They showered baby Jesus with a fortune in kingly gifts. They worshiped him. Still, they got very little in return. No doubt little Jesus was as cute as a button but he was nevertheless, at the time, a drooling and leaking toddler. How much more determined would the Wise Men be to visit the Son of God a few years later when Jesus could do more than babble intelligible parables in baby-talk.

The Wise Men did not return to Israel. If their first encounter deserved mention, a second visit would be no less notable. If they had met Jesus again, their wealth, foreign attire and obsequious worship would surely draw notice of a Gospel writer but none made a notation.

If the Wise Men never returned to Israel, it may be because they did not have to. It may be that Jesus went to them.

## 124. The Land of the Wise Men (continued)

We know these Wise Men were stargazers. Their connection with the stars is additional evidence their home was China. The Chinese were renowned star gazers of Jesus' time. They even invented the first zodiac. Astrology nonsense aside, they also made great strides in astronomy. The Chinese kept meticulous records of heaven's movements. They built the first astronomical measuring device four hundred years before Jesus lived and died and lived. If the stars did anything peculiar, Oriental magi would be the first to know.

When we consider the distance they traveled, China again becomes a strong candidate as the Wise Men's home. If we figure the Wise Men traveled about two years, the range extends to twelve ground thousand miles. That is more than enough to span all of China.

What about Tibet? Tibet is certainly is in the orient. At three and a quarter thousand miles, Tibet is far enough away so the time frame fits. Tibet is also a convenient home for astronomers. With altitudes well above fourteen thousand feet, the Tibetan plateau is nicknamed the "Roof of the World." It remains one of the best places on earth for stargazing. A multinational cosmic radiation observatory resides there today.

The gospels verify the Wise Men traveled from the East. Most curiously, the center of the Tibetan plateau shares the same latitude with Bethlehem, exactly due east. Try it for yourself. Get a globe. Put your finger over Bethlehem. Twist your globe an eighth of a turn to your left. Now, read the word under your finger. Yep, it says, "Tibet."

Is this a coincidence or is it a clue left by the Bible's authors? Right now you are thinking, *People did not have globes in Jesus' time. They did not know about latitude. No one could know Tibet was exactly east of Bethlehem.* You would be correct if Hipparchus had not created the latitude system over a hundred years before Jesus.

Among his other accomplishments, Hipparchus calculated the earth's circumference and measured the distance from the earth to the moon. With his formula, a straight stick and a noonday measurement, a person can accurately calculate the latitude of any point on earth. Unfortunately, little of Hipparchus' writings survived the many library burnings and religious unpleasantness of the aptly named Dark Ages.

Ancient times were without planes, trains and automobiles but the Bible tells us that people did travel internationally. Trademen ferried goods to and from China. King Herod visited Rome. Virgin Mary lived for a while in Africa. "Apostle" Paul traveled to Turkey (Ephesus.)

For argument's sake, we will name Shangri-La, Tibet as the home of the Wise Men. We do not know for sure. The choice of Shangri-La is more a scribbler's whimsy than a fact. The Wise Men could have traveled from many places including Shambhala, Lemuria, Xanadu or Kaifeng, China.

Speaking of Kaifeng, China... An ancient astronomical observatory is not that town's only claim to fame. Kaifeng is also the home of an ancient settlement of Chinese Jews. The following moment's pause is to allow time for those who would like to reread the preceding sentence. An additional moment is provided for the inevitable scoffs and guffaws.

...

...

While we are waiting... a bit of house keeping. This investigation does not give footnotes for extra-biblical points. Careful sleuths ignore such references in favor of ferreting out the facts for themselves. Those investigators will test any statement in this book with or without a footnote and with or without the permission to do so.

Among the points fact-checkers will discover is Pearl S. Buck's novel, *Peony*. The story's setting is Kaifeng, China and centers on a family of Oriental-Jews in the 1850's. The founding of the settlement of Semite-Chinese stretches back so many years that the date of its beginning is muddled in history's worm-riddled pages. Who knows? Perhaps their origin reaches back to the Han Dynasty a couple of hundred years before Christ when the Silk Road was still a muddy rut. (One might wonder if the Chinese skullcap was a fashion accessory inspired by the yarmulke or vice versa.)

Could the oriental Wise Men come from a Jewish settlement in Kaifeng or Tibet? Why not? During Jesus' time Jewish immigrants lived in Egypt, Greece, Rome and other far away places with difficult to spell names.

Can we exclude any nations of origin? Tradition speculates the Wise Men were from lands closer to Israel. Christian theologians propose Babylon, Persia and Syria. The problem with those places is they were too close to Israel. Babylon is demonstratively close. The people of Judah were once held in captivity in Babylon as punishment for annoying their crotchety god.<sup>544</sup> If Babylon was a manageable journey for the whole Jewish nation, it would be a relaxing commute for a few fellows on camelback. Babylon's proximity to Israel would suggest the magi spent most of their journey lollygaging. The devoted Wise Men were most anxious to worship Baby Jesus. It is doubtful they would squander so much of their journey sightseeing and picking over cheap souvenirs in tourist traps.

## 125. Count 'em and Weep, Three Kings

Check the three kings in the next Nativity you see. One wears a bedazzled Pagri turban. Another wears a classic gold crown like that creepy Burger King® king. If you drove by Crossville's courthouse lawn some years back, you saw the third king wearing a Burger Chef® toque over his European coronet. (Just a prank to see how long it took for someone to notice)

Nativities portray the Wise Men as three kings. We can blame this mistake entirely on the Christmas carol, *We Three Kings of Orient Are*. The Gospels do not say the Wise Men were kings or there were three of them yet this notion survives in seasonal cardboard cutouts. By accident or design, the three kings serve as misdirection. Since a kingdom has but a single king, the idea of three kings suggests those three men hailed from different kingdoms so geographically separated that fashion evolved differently in each realm. These folks imagine the Wise Men encountered each other on the Silk Road as they followed the star westward. *You are traveling to Bethlehem to see Baby Messiah? What a coincidence. So am I!* Happenstance made them show up on Virgin Mary's stoop at the same time.

Contrary to Christian tradition, the Bible indicates these Wise Men acted in concert. They arrived in Jerusalem together, presented Jesus gifts together, met with Herod together and departed Israel together. They even had the same dreams of God's angels... together. There is not a single biblical hint that they did not depart from their home in the East... together.

To keep with the Tibet allusion, we will tentatively call the Wise Men's home The Buddhist Monastery of Shangri-La. (Do not grimace. You knew some murderous monk would be part of the investigation eventually.)

## 126. The Parabolic Connection and 72 Apostles too

Jesus' teachings centered on his parables. In comparison, Aesop, the honored Greek thinker, used fables as a teaching tool. Parables and fables are similar in that they illustrate a lesson or moral within an imaginative story. The difference is parables have human characters while fables portray talking animals.

Jesus never spun fables but the Old Testament does include some articulate animals. However, Eve's scheming serpent and Balaam's kvetching donkey<sup>545</sup> were not fables. Those were literal Bible characters.<sup>546</sup> The Bible's little bird that will tell on you for badmouthing rich people (Mr. Trump must love this one) is not a fable either since animals do not talk to humans in fables.<sup>547</sup> God's voice from the burning bush is not a fable because a plant is not an animal. The satyrs of the Bible could probably talk since a satyr's top half is human with only the bottom half being goat.<sup>548</sup> As a literary teaching tool, a

satyr would be more akin to a mixed metaphor. However, the Bible's satyrs are neither fable nor parable and the Holy Book does not quote its satyrs as saying anything.

Since the Old Testament did not use parables, a detective must wonder where Jesus picked up the technique. The answer points us (again) eastward. Many years before Jesus, the Buddha used parables extensively. Buddha's parables number in the hundreds while Jesus composed just shy of fifty. That is understandable since Jesus' ministry lasted about a year while Buddha's career spanned decades.

There is no need to speculate if Jesus copied his Sermon on the Mount, the Parable of the Prodigal Son and other stories from Buddha. Such incriminating innuendo is outside your investigation. Besides, other books cover those ~~coincidental~~ coinciding similarities and probable plagiarism so there is no need to raise the question here.

Luke quoted thirty-nine of Jesus' parables in his gospel. Those parables are each so forgettable that few people can recall more than a couple. Gospel John was also unimpressed with Jesus' stories. He mentioned only three parables.

One parable tells of a farmer who cast seeds in his field. Some seeds take root while others do not. You don't get the moral of the story? <sup>549</sup> You are not alone. Jesus was well aware that neither his congregations nor you would understand his parables... no matter how often he repeated them. What's more, he did not care. <sup>550</sup> Jesus did not preach without using parables <sup>551</sup> and he never explained any of his stories to his befuddled audience. We must wonder if he intended to teach anything

The apostles were also clueless about the parables' meanings. Jesus realized his stories made no sense on their own. The only reason we know their meaning is because his apostles asked what in the heck he was talking about. <sup>552</sup> Jesus' parables are like poorly told jokes. Each needs the punchline explained. Compared to Aesop's illustrating fables, Confucius' sage quotes and Buddha's wise tales, The majority of Jesus' deep thoughts were foggy, repetitive and simplistic. The rest were worse.

Jesus did not explain his cryptic tales to his congregations. A typical parable sermon might go like this. "A farmer sowed his field but a vengeful neighbor planted weeds among his crop. There was a fisherman who cast a net and some fish got away. A woman baked some bread with yeast and some without yeast. That's my time, folks. You've been a great audience. I'll be here all week and remember to tip your waitress."

The irony is Jesus' parables are simple to understand if you have the secret decoder key. Although he complained about it, Jesus supplied that key. Jesus hinted that if you understand one of his parables, you understand them all <sup>553</sup> and he was correct. Try it yourself. Pick any of Jesus' cryptic tales. The overwhelming odds are the lesson is *some souls go to Heaven and to Hell with the rest.*

Buddha's parables taught the nature of joy, anger, suffering, love, greed, grief and a host of human concerns both earthly and spiritual. Jesus' parables analogize God assigning souls to their eternal reward or damnation in metaphors of rising bread, a fishing net, a jewel merchant, a mustard seed, a farmer whose enemy plants weeds in his field *et cetera* and belabored *et cetera*. Compared to Buddha, Jesus' parables are like a skipping phonograph annoyingly repeating the same hellfire threats... the same hellfire threats... the same hellfire threats....

The Wise Men's orient connection helps explain Jesus' greatest evangelistic invention, the apostle. How does the apostle concept have an oriental connection? Do not beg for a clue. ■like ■ammer never begged.

Many religionists assume Jesus invented the disciple. He did not. He borrowed the idea. Buddha used the same concept of disciples teaching more disciples hundreds of years before Jesus. Self-replicating apostles made it possible for Buddha's wisdom to

disseminate with godspeed (very fast). Buddhism blanketed China, India and Tibet in a quick couple of hundred years. Jesus could expect the apostle technique to spread his new religion across tiny Israel hundreds of times faster. Five hundred years BC (Before Christ), Confucius also used the disciple technique. Tradition claims seventy-two of Confucius' disciples mastered his teachings. Seventy-two ... Seventy-two ... Now how ~~coincidental~~ coincident is that? Jesus also chose seventy-two disciples.

Two aspects of Jesus' ministry were contrary to Buddha and Confucius. Those wise men did not promote a cruel god or a merciless hell. The other difference is miracles. Jesus performed them routinely but Buddha and Confucius?... not so much. They won followers by the self-evident wisdom of their teachings not by repetitious threats and magic tricks.

## 127. Jesus' Censored Years part I

As honest as our Gospel writers were, they were woefully incompetent as biographers. Everything we know about adult Jesus totals just one year of his life.

Jesus' years from twelve to thirty-two are called *The Lost Years*. "Lost" implies you had something which, by happenstance, is presently misplaced. However, those two decades were not lost. They were never realized in the first place. The Gospel writers deliberately ignored that period without offering a paltry detail. It is more accurate to call that time *Jesus' Censored Years*. Because of that censorship, we do not know when Jesus kissed his first girl. We do not know if he was the kind of carpenter who frames houses or the kind who builds beautiful china hutches. There is no charming story of how he accidentally killed a mama bird with his slingshot then took responsibility by rearing her three nestlings. There is nothing. The period is a dark chasm two decades wide.

With all due respect to our otherwise diligent witnesses, none of them knew Jesus in those years. Luke and Mark were at a greater disadvantage since neither of them ever met Jesus or John the Baptist. Since Luke reported details of Jesus' birth, we trust he did as he said and pieced together the events from his own meticulous investigation. Judging from Luke's many facts on Mary's pregnancy, Luke must have interviewed Jesus' mother.

Unlike Luke, Matthew also had the opportunity to talk to John the Baptist before John's unfortunate beheading. Our Gospel writers had access to people who knew Jesus in those interim years yet none of them wrote a word of Jesus' teens or tweens. We would know nothing of Christ's pre-teens if Luke had not mentioned twelve year old Jesus communing with scholars in the Jerusalem Temple. The next we hear of Jesus' life is twenty years later when he met John the Baptist at the River Jordan.<sup>554</sup> Consequently, almost three decades of Jesus' thirty-three years is a complete void.

Note: John's Gospel implies Jesus' ministry lasted about three years. John mentions three Passovers occurring during Jesus' ministry. If we accept John's time frame—and the careful investigator does not—we would still know less than a tenth of Jesus' life.

## 128. The Baptist's Lost Years

Like Jesus, John the Baptist had his own missing years.

People forget no one vouched for John the Baptist's whereabouts in the years before John began his baptizing ministry.<sup>555</sup> Well, that is not exactly true. People do not forget because, before your investigation, no one gave John's Lost Years a second thought.

John's missing decades were no mystery to the apostles. John told everyone he lived those years alone in the vast desert. They believed him. John's appearance was the proof of his tale. He resembled an unkempt Neanderthal. He lashed strips of animal hide and camel fur to his body. He likely weaved ribbons of fresh animal sinew about each foot to save his

soles from the torment of the desert's hellish heat and prickly thorns. He doubtless sported a great beard as furious as his wild persona.<sup>556</sup>

If a man dresses like a feral human and claims he lived decades as a hermit in the wastelands scavenging kosher bugs for sustenance,<sup>557</sup> folks tend to believe his story. They would surely stand upwind of him but no one would doubt his enormous faith or question his alibi. If John did not spend those Lost Years in the desert then his evangelical performance deserves an Oscar.<sup>558</sup> No one suspected John's story to be a lie because name-dropping God's name in vain could get one into serious trouble.<sup>559</sup> Lying about hanging out with God in the desert could get a guy smote by a lightning bolt<sup>560</sup> or cursed with a case of howling hemorrhoids.<sup>561</sup>

Right now you are thinking, "*Waitjustadamnminute! John's Lost Years and Jesus' Lost Years occurred at the same time??*" This appears to be a simple coincidence but detectives doubt all coincidences, especially the simple ones. If not a coincidence, those Lost Years did coincide. The difference is "coincidence" implies something uncontrived while "coincide" does not exclude deception. Coincide is the preferred term in this context.

## 129. John the Baptist vs Jesus the Christ

John the Baptist and Jesus led almost identical lives.

- Both of their births were miracles.
- Angels predicted John's birth and Jesus' Nativity.
- Both descended from King David.
- Archangel Gabriel met with both Jesus and John's earthly foster fathers.
- An angel gave both Jesus<sup>562</sup> and John<sup>563</sup> their Christian names.
- Both were innocent of any capital crime yet both were officiously executed.
- Both resurrected.
- Both were charismatic speakers.
- Neither Jesus nor John the Baptist wrote a single word for posterity.
- Both preached half of the same message. John shouted, "The Messiah is coming." Jesus' proclaimed, "...and here I am!"

They had so much in common that Jesus the Messiah and John the Baptist were virtually cut from the same holy cloth. Although their families were close, the two cousins behaved like strangers when they met on the banks of the River Jordan. It is curious their riverside meeting did not erupt into jovial pummeling with belly punches, noogies and sharing stories, which all began, "Remember that time when..." With their families sharing so much, it is conspicuous the Bible says nothing of the families enjoying a get-together or sharing a potluck during a Passover festival. Instead, the Gospels give the impression the two holy families abruptly severed their ties as soon as John was born.

You are not the first to question Jesus and John's strange estrangement. Leonardo Da Vinci also thought the alienation between Jesus and John was peculiar. The Renaissance genius made this apparent in his painting, *Virgin on the Rocks*. The canvas depicts Elisabeth and Mary getting toddlers Jesus and John together for a play-date. Bart Murillo also depicted the youngsters frolicking about in his painting *Christ Offering a Drink of Water to St. John*. Murillo and Da Vinci appear to suggest that Jesus and John were not as distant as the Bible's baptism in the Jordan leads readers to believe.



### 130. John's Miracle Birth

John the Baptist's mother was Elisabeth, the elderly wife of Zacharias. John's birth by an old woman may not appear as miraculous as Mary's virginal pregnancy but it was. It deserves an equal, if not a greater, measure of awe.

A sexless birth in today's world is not a miracle. It is a routine procedure. Many a virgin heifer finds herself with calf without knowing bull (in the biblical sense.) A virginal woman can make a withdrawal from a sperm bank and skip any sweaty canoodling with the biological sire. A surrogate mother can even give birth to a child who is genetically unrelated to her. In the 90's, one virgin gave birth to a daughter ewe named Dolly without any sperm: natural or supernatural.

Modern marvels aside, in Jesus' time sex basics were the same. It was, and still is, normal for a nubile female to give birth when she is a fertile baby-making machine with shiny new plumbing, fresh eggs and all the hormones necessary for the intricate gestation. However, Elisabeth was an elderly woman well past her menopause and gnarled by cruel decades. Worse, Old Liz was a barren matron who failed to conceive anytime during her long marriage.

A crone giving birth is more complicated than a young lady's virgin birth. In today's world, Liz would need lab tests, medical support, regular monitoring and perhaps hormone injections for the best chance to carry a healthy baby to term. Still, Elisabeth gets no respect in the miracle birth category. The next time your office throws a Christmas party, you should slide your butt off the Xerox<sup>®</sup> machine, pull up your pants, doff the lampshade and encourage your coworkers to offer a little wonderment for that other miracle pregnancy, Elisabeth's.

If John's birth to a barren old woman was not wonderment enough, it was twice as miraculous because of Zacharias's inability to father a child. He had age related sexual problems.<sup>564</sup> We might guess male impotence since infertility is always blamed on the female for being barren. Zacharias confided as his sexual dysfunction to the Archangel Gabriel. The objective reader cannot help but wonder why the scriptures accuse Elisabeth of being barren yet leave Zacharias' virility unquestioned. Even if Elisabeth was postmenopausal, the fact remains that Zacharias did not put his wife in a family way when she was in the dewy flower of her youth or anytime during their long marriage. Neither did Zacharias have children by any other woman. It is chauvinistic to automatically blame Elisabeth for the couple's childlessness. Then again, the Bible encourages bigoted sexism but since that's the way God wants it... so mote it be.

### 131. Some Scriptures Claim, There's a Woman to Blame

No one is surprised the Bible blames Elisabeth for being childless.<sup>565</sup> "It is the woman's fault" is such a recurring theme in scripture that it runs from *ad nauseam* to persistent dry heaves. Like Pandora, the Good Book blames all the world's woes on the first woman and, by God's standard of justice, on all women thereafter and forevermore. The last time the scriptures mention Eve is in First Timothy. That verse absolves Adam of the unfortunate apple incident. Instead, it judges Eve culpable for mankind's original sin and thus every sin thereafter.<sup>566</sup> Eve is responsible for every soul tossed out the pearly gates and bounced down the stairway to Heaven to into Hell's eternal abyss. Today, all women of the Judeo-Christian-Islam religions suffer Eve's transgression. Now you know why there are so many sins prescribed and laws enacted to control women by fundamental religionists and the Grand Old (*Let's pass some more va-jay-jay laws*) Party.

Although holding women to high sin standards, the Bible often gives men a pass or divine dispensation. The following is an example.

Sodom and Gomorrah were the original sin-cities. The residents were the worst of wicked sinners:<sup>567</sup> so much so that God annihilated all the inhabitants... from the orgy-loving adults, to the promiscuous toddlers and all the horny goats too. The Lord spared one man from the destruction.<sup>568</sup> His name was Lot. He was the only righteous man in the twin cities of perversion. By virtue of their innocence by association to Lot, God saved Lot's wife and daughters too.

Angels took Lot and his family outside the walls of their doomed city<sup>569</sup> then told them to run for their lives and not to look back. The family reached the small town of Zoar just before God rained down flaming sulfur to destroy the twin sin-cities. Sadly, Mrs. Lot did not make it. She suffered a fate similar to Medusa's victims. Mrs. Lot looked back to what she should not look back to then froze into a statue of stony salt. Today many salt figures loiter about the Dead Sea. The Bible does not tell us who those pillars are. They are perhaps other women who failed to do as they were told. We don't know if anyone told Mrs. Lot that God would turn her into a giant salt lick if she looked back. Still, she should know that when God makes a suggestion, it is understood it always ends with, "...or I will kill you."

God spared Lot and his family because he was the most righteous fellow in the twin cities. Still, he had his own issues; father issues. He pimped his virgin daughters to a lusty crowd of men to do with as they wished in exchange for not pestering his two guests.<sup>570</sup> At first glance, Lot's behavior seems like poor parenting. However, those men of Sodom (all the men of Sodom) wanted to get to know (in the biblical sense) the two fellows staying in Lot's home.<sup>571</sup> The randy mob had no interest in virgin girls. They rejected Lot's compromise so the daughters' virginities remained intact, if only temporarily.

After the destruction of Sodom, Lot took his daughters from Zoar to hide in a cave. Although the people of Zoar escaped destruction, the daughters decided all the men of earth were dead. They figured if they were going to have babies, they would need to get their father's sperm. The daughter's plan relied on the fact Lot was a pissing-in-the-laundry-hamper-at-three-in-the-morning blackout drunk.<sup>572</sup> Fortunately, for the daughter's scheme, Lot the Sot stocked the cave with lots of wine.

Wouldn't you love to see Lot's case on court TV?

"Miss Judy, Your Honor, I am charging both of my daughters with violating me against my will. They raped me. My wife died just days before. My two girls took advantage of my grief and loneliness to get me horny drunk. If that isn't bad enough, they seduced me twice... on two consecutive nights. They schemed to rape me in a cave to assure no one would hear if I cried out for help." <sup>573</sup> Lot sniffs as he swipes his left eye with an overused tissue. [chin quivering] "Forgive my emotions, your honor. I raised my daughters to be as virtuous as I am righteous. We do not actually have a family surname but if we did, they would have besmirched it. They are no longer virgins. They misappropriated my generous schlong to... to... [several sniffs and another daubing the corner his eye with the soggy wad of tissue] deflower themselves and get pregnant." <sup>574</sup> I want both my daughters charged with gang rape and both charged as accomplices before, after and during the fact. [reaching for fresh tissue and blowing nose] Naturally, I also seek monetary damages for my emotional distress."

The matron judge might pause a few seconds to unclench her fists and pry her fingernails out of her palms. When she finally finds her voice, her trademark screeching could reach frequencies high enough to blanch an Amish tomato at a dozen feet.

Being the most righteous of Sodomites is not much to brag about.

Lot wasn't the first righteous man God spared when dispensing mass executions to sinful people. Eleven generations earlier, God spared Noah when God exterminated mankind with a worldwide flood. Noah and Lot had three notable things in common. Both were righteous men deserving of salvation. Both were world-class sots. And both had sexual boundary issues. Noah was not a mean drunk. Of greater embarrassment to his children was that he was a wrinkled, six hundred year old,<sup>575</sup> "Let's party naked!" drunk.<sup>576</sup>

### 132. Elisabeth's Victorian Secret

Gabriel the Angel foretold John the Baptist's birth and bore the happy news to the father. Gabriel told Zacharias that his wife was going to have a bouncing baby boy.

Bible facts put Zacharias' fatherhood in greater and greater doubt. Zacharias pulled Gabriel aside and confided his impotence issues. Given Zacharias' condition, one might question if Zacharias was indeed the man who impregnated Elisabeth. After all, Gabriel never specifically said Zacharias would be the biological father since any child born to Elisabeth would be Zacharias' legal son and also Jewish, regardless of the actual father. The Bible drops clues to the possibility Elisabeth's pregnancy—like Virgin Mary's—resulted from a romantic poltergeist.

Elisabeth suffered years of hurtful gossip so she was overjoyed with the prospect of becoming a fruitful woman<sup>577</sup> plus having children was a way for women to earn salvation.<sup>578</sup> You would expect pregnant Liz to proudly dodo-waddle around her neighborhood. She could point at her ripe belly and shout to the village busybodies, "In your face Clara Edwards! You too, Gladys Kravitz." Instead, Elisabeth hid herself behind the walls of her home.

You expect old Zacharias bragged to his drinking buddies, "Hells yeah, I did that!" Did not happen. Could not happen. Archangel Gabriel cursed Zacharias with a supernatural case of acute laryngitis.<sup>579</sup> He was as silent as Christmas snow from the day Gabriel shared the good news until the child's circumcision. Elisabeth's seclusion and Zacharias' silence kept the neighbors in the dark until a week after the birth.<sup>580</sup>

EEN&T note: Even in cases of extreme laryngitis, a person can rest his inflamed vocal cords by whispering. One can still carry on a quiet conversation. Zacharias' case was so severe, he could not even whisper. He had to write on a tablet in order to communicate.<sup>581</sup>

Detective, John's birth is raising questions. It was indeed suspicious but Liz and Mary were cousins. Suspicious pregnancies ran in their family.

### 133. Roomies Liz and Mary

Mary moved in with Elisabeth when old Liz was six months pregnant. We expect Mary helped with chores as Elisabeth convalesced. If this was the intention then Mary's assistance was sorely lacking. Today, a mother, aunt or female-in-law may move in with the new mommy sometime before the birth. This relative stays for a while during recuperation and helps with the day-to-day demands of a new baby. The experienced mother also drops pearls of wisdom on everything from feeding and burping to stretch marks and sore nipples.

If Mary was trying to be helpful, she did it backwards. She moved in several months before John's birth and departed around Elisabeth's due date.<sup>582</sup> As postnatal help, Mary was no help at all. She did nothing for the convalescing Elisabeth. Mary did not change or wash diapers. She sang no exasperated lullabies at three a.m.. She did not apply aloe to the baby's raw belly button nor smear medicinal myrrh to his circumcision insult. We are given to believe that when Elisabeth's contractions were a quarter-hourglass apart, Mary's

attitude was, *I don't know nothin' 'bout birthin' no babies. I gotta git goin' back to Nazareth. Yer on yer own, Cousin Beth.*

### 134. Johnny Has Two Mommies

If the doubtful detective has a nagging hunch about John's miraculous nativity, it should be that John's mothers were switched at birth.

Note these facts. Virgin Mary moved in with Elisabeth for no apparent reason then, three months later, left town for the same reason. Elisabeth and her houseguest Mary secluded themselves from the neighbors for several months before John's birth. Neighbors did not see Elisabeth's belly swelling week by week nor did the villagers meet Mary, who cloistered with Elisabeth behind closed doors.

Back then, Jewish folk considered women unclean for seven days after giving birth to a boy. Contrary to the *sugar and spice and everything nice* rhyme, having a baby girl made a mother doubly unclean: fourteen days.<sup>583</sup> The neighbors did not show up at Zacharias' home until baby John was eight days old. The villagers never saw Mary so they never questioned who was the actual mother of the new baby in the Zacharias household.

The facts fit the circumstance. Mary was the one who birthed baby John, not Elisabeth.

It is an old story. Girl finds herself pregnant. Girl leaves town when she begins to show. Girl delivers baby in another town. Girl entrusts baby to a female relative who raises the child as her own. There are variations. Sometimes a mother and secretly pregnant daughter leave town for an extended period, perhaps to care for a distant, long-suffering relative. When they return, the daughter has a new baby sibling and even the child may never learn the truth.

An alternate story does fit the Bible's timeline. Unmarried and pregnant, Mary left Nazareth in her second trimester when her frumpy robe could no longer hide her baby bump. Mary quarantined with Elisabeth behind the walls of Zacharias' home for the remaining three months of Liz's pretend pregnancy. Mary secretly gave birth behind the walls of Elisabeth's home then immediately departed. To maintain the illusion of being "unclean," Elisabeth continued her seclusion for over a week after the birth. Elisabeth's neighbors never saw the new baby until the barbaric bris\* on the baby's eighth day.

So who was midwife to whom? Consider the two women's life experiences. Young Mary recently entered her prime childbearing-years but she would have little to no experience as a midwife. On the other hand, old Elisabeth was long past her fertile time but she doubtless assisted with and delivered many babies in her many decades. She may have been an experienced, if not an expert midwife.

\*Medical note: Infant male circumcision is a moronic tribal practice. However, infant female circumcision is illegal in the United States only because it is so grotesque and so fanfuckingtastically cruel that it transcends even the politician's craving to kiss the proverbial ass of religious insanity.

### 135. The Results Say... You are Not the Daddy!

Angel Gabriel instructed Zacharias to name the baby boy "John." The elders in Zacharias' village disapproved because John was a not a name in Zacharias' lineage.<sup>584</sup> Their rationale was that a son takes the name of a male ancestor. It appears John's name is another clue Zacharias was not John's biological father.

Compare the onomastic implication of Jesus' name. First, like John the Baptist, Gabriel the Archangel gave Jesus his name.<sup>585</sup> Second, Jesus was not (according to the Bible) Joseph's biological son so the name "Jesus" should not be in Joseph's patriline. This is

exactly what we find. We also do not find Yeshua or Joshua, which are variations of the name Jesus.

Author's note: Perhaps this is a good time to mention that if Jesus was walking down an ancient Jerusalem street and you yelled, "Hey Jesus!" the Savior would not look your way because his name was not pronounced Jesus (je-sus) or even Jesus (hey-sous.) Perhaps that is why Jesus prayers are sometimes completely ignored.

Right now you are now thinking, "*Can we test this theory? What about Jesus' brothers: James, Simon, Joseph and Juda? Are all the brothers' names in Joseph's lineage?*" Yes... Yes, they are.

Right now you are thinking, "*James isn't on that list!*"<sup>586</sup> You are correct but Jacob is listed and the Hellenized form of Jacob is James. That is why it the *King James Bible* is not titled the *King Jacob Bible*. And before you bring it up, the name Simon cooresponds with Shimon.

**As for daughters, it appears that the default name is "Mary." Out of place**

We have evidence that Mary secretly birthed John. Now we must wonder who the biological father might be. We ask...

- What man was betrothed to and possibly slept with Mary?
- What man had the name "John" (Jonan) in his lineage?
- What man was (like Zacharias) in the line of King David ?

Yep, Joseph the Carpenter fits the bill. The Gospels provide clues hinting that Zacharias was not John's father. However similar clues do not eliminate Joseph the Carpenter as the father of the boy that Zacharias raised as his son, John.

Mary Povich, where are you when we need you?

### **135. He Ain't Heavy. He's My Cousin**

It is a solid fact Jesus was six months younger than his cousin, John the Baptist. At least it was a fact. Unless you place your bookmark here then turn off the bedside lamp, it will not remain a fact much longer.

Here is a recap of the birthing timeline. Gabriel cursed Zacharias with dumbness. Zach was speechless for the full nine months of the pregnancy. Liz quarantined herself at the point when a woman's belly begins to show; around five months before delivery. Three months before John was born, Gabriel told Mary that the Holy Ghost would get her pregnant. Mary moved in with Liz at three months before baby John's delivery and stayed with Liz behind closed doors. Mary departed around John's birth. Zacharias' curse of muteness lifted and Liz's seclusion ended at John's bris, eight days after his birth.

Three months before John's birth, the Archangel Gabriel told Mary of the Holy Spirit's intentions for her. The Holy Spirit never speaks in the scriptures without commandeering a human's body so it appears Gabriel played the part of matchmaker and Holy Spirit translator. Gabriel might have said, "Holy Spirit, I would like to introduce Mary. She's a virgin from the House of David who enjoys moonlit strolls on the Galilee beach. Mary, this is the Holy Spirit. He is the strong omnipotent type. He is but doesn't talk unless he is inhabiting a human's body so I will explain what is going to happen."<sup>587</sup>

Mary's meeting with Gabriel was three months before Elisabeth delivered. If Mary was impregnated at this meeting, then she was three months along when she returned to Nazareth from Elisabeth's home. While it takes nine months for duchess, heifer or Mother of God, it remains almost impossible for a woman to be in two different trimesters at the same time.

Superfluous details appear to eliminate Mary as John's mother without actually eliminating her. If Mary was indeed three months pregnant with Jesus, she could be eliminated as John's mother. However, your investigation suggests it is allusion which creates the illusion John was six months older than Jesus. You will find it is a shell game.

### 136. Doctor Doctor, Give me the Good News

Luke the Physician knew his book would spark cynical reactions. A writer should expect skepticism when he reports a supernatural geriatric birth and an equally fabulous virgin birth. Chanting, "Praise God. It's a miracle," explains everything and anything to the indoctrinated but only annoys objective folks. You have to delve deeper.

The Bible does not say how competent of a doctor Luke was. He was one of the finest physicians in the Roman Empire, a faith-healing quack or somewhere in between. It is unfortunate for Luke's readers that Luke did not witness any of Jesus' healing miracles. No doubt, Dr. Luke would provide some medically astute observations. When Luke interrogated people about Jesus and John's births, he likely asked medically pertinent questions but, judging from his gospel, he settled for impertinent answers. Still, the clues he dug up provide hints to solve the mystery of who killed Jesus.

We imagine Luke interviewing a witness on the details of John's birth.



Time: Some years after Jesus' death

Scene: Luke is interviewing a man while researching his gospel.

"So." Luke raised his fist to his mouth and lightly coughed to clear his throat. The witness wore a guarded expression. Luke tried to encourage the man's trust. Smiling broadly, he made small talk, "I guess Zacharias proves we should be careful what we pray for."

The witness's face remained wary. "What do you mean by that?"

Luke tapped the scroll sitting on the table. "God took decades to answer Zacharias' prayer for a son."<sup>588</sup>

The witness frowned. "Decades? I don't know that. Maybe Zacharias prayed for a son on the same day Gabriel appeared to him. People say everything is possible to God, especially impossible things."

Luke tilted his head toward the scroll. "Forgive me. I made an assumption. Your testimony does not say when Zacharias prayed that prayer. A young husband usually prays for a son even as he is cleaving his new bride. A middle aged man who has only daughters will pray the same, only more earnestly and more frequently. I would not expect Zacharias to wait until he became an impotent old man with a barren crone for a wife to say such a prayer. Also Zacharias did not believe such a birth could happen at his age. In fact, the angel Gabriel became so irritated with Zacharias for his lack of faith that Gabriel struck the old man speechless for over nine months. It is more reasonable Zacharias said that prayer decades earlier."

"I don't know anything about that." The witness shifted in his chair. "I just know he prayed for a son. I don't know exactly when he said that prayer."

Luke did not press the point. "At least we know one thing. Zacharias started the Christmas snowball rolling."

"What does that mean?" The witness tilted his right ear to Luke. "Why do you say that?"

Luke leaned back. "If Zacharias had not prayed for a son then God could not have answered such a prayer. Then John the Baptist would not have been born. The Messiah

would not have his Elijah to herald his coming. So you see, Zacharias was the key to the whole Jesus affair.”

The witness turned his gaze aside, “I never said that. Don’t write down I said that.”

“No, you didn’t but one thing leads to another.”

The witness barked, “Do not write down I said that!”

“Of course not.” The witness’ reaction puzzled Dr. Luke. He shifted the subject again. Luke ran his finger down the lines of his notes. “Ah, yes. When did Elisabeth realize she was with child?”

“I don’t understand.”

“Well... how did she know she was pregnant?”

The witness answered the question with a question, “What kind of stupid question is that?”

“You said Elisabeth was a barren woman of advanced years.” Dr. Luke lowered the scroll then put on his most charming bedside smile. “She would not notice her absence of menses. Past menopause, she would have none to miss. Initial weight gain could go unnoticed for a few weeks. Morning vomiting could be mistaken for tainted food or elfin demons living in her stomach.” Dr. Luke leaned forward. “You mentioned Elisabeth’s baby kicked when Mary greeted Elisabeth. I doubt that was the first sign of her pregnancy.”

The witness’ nose crinkled. “Menses and spewing sick... That’s personal... and unclean.”

“I ask because,” Luke pointed to his scroll with notes scratched into the margins, “this is for posterity.”

The witness grunted. “Gabriel told Zacharias. Zacharias told Elisabeth. That must be when she first knew she was going to be with child.”

“I see. Could Elisabeth read?”

The witness asked, “What? Why?”

Luke recited the witnesses’ deposition. “You stated, Gabriel struck Zacharias profoundly mute. He was so speechless, he had to scribble notes to communicate with the village elders. Literacy encourages women to independent thought. Consequently, they are always kept illiterate in strict patriarchal societies. So how did Zacharias tell Elisabeth she was going to be pregnant?”

The witness again fidgeted in his chair. “Maybe Elisabeth could read... or maybe her husband drew pictures. Who cares?”

Dr. Luke ignored the question. “So did they have sex after Gabriel’s visit?”

“What do you think? Elisabeth had a child. Did she not? You are very foolish. Exactly what kind of physician are you?”

Luke pretended he did not notice the insult. “You specifically stated Mary and Joseph did not have sex but you neglected to say that Zacharias... *knew* Elisabeth after Gabriel’s visit. Any child his wife bore would be Zacharias’ legal son. And the child would be Jewish, even if the biological father was Roman. No testimony states that Zacharias personally sired the child.”

“You are asking too many questions. You are asking the wrong questions.”

Luke said, “Forget that one,” then thought, *The wrong questions? What are the right questions?*

The witness’s left heel tapped the floor faster and faster as if trying to exceed the tempo of his bouncing knee. “All I know is The Holy Ghost commandeered Elisabeth’s body. The Ghostspoke through Elisabeth’s mouth saying Mary’s fruit of the womb is blessed. Is that not simple enough for you?”

“Yeah... about that... the Spirit’s exact words to Mary were, “blessed is the fruit of thy womb.” This is what the Holy Ghost said. Right?”<sup>589</sup>

“Yes! Are you deaf too?”

Luke answered calmly. “Dear friend, my hearing is fine. What these old ears do not hear is the phrase, “Blessed is the fruit in thy womb.”” Luke let a few tense seconds pass before adding, “If the Holy Spirit said “in thy womb” then it would establish Mary was indeed impregnated at that point. Instead, it proves nothing. All of Mary’s seven children were the fruit of her womb. The Holy Spirit was not specific to Jesus was He? I only hope to establish definitively if Mary was pregnant when she arrived at Elisabeth’s home.”

The witness sat up straight. “The fetus kicked! So there! The baby in Elisabeth’s belly kicked when Mary greeted Elisabeth. The unborn John sensed the Messiah in Mary’s womb so John the Fetus kicked. There is your proof that Mary was already pregnant.”

“Yeah... about that...” Luke twisted his scroll backward two rotations. “You stated the kick was in reaction to Mary’s voice.<sup>590</sup> A baby’s quickening is in the fourth month and Elisabeth was in her third trimester. Is there any reason to conclude the kick was other than perfectly normal or a weak coincidence?”

The witness folded his arms across his chest and his jaw clenched. Luke quickly added. “I am just doing my job and recording careful facts. My readers will wonder how much older John was than Jesus.”

“I told you. Gabriel told Mary she would be the mother of God. That was three months before Elisabeth’s child was born.” With sardonic patience the witness recited, “Nine... minus... three... is... six. Shall I repeat the math for you?... maybe slower?”

“Yeah... about that...” Luke frowned. “Gabriel did not get Mary in a family way did he?”

“You moron!” The witness’s short fuse finally burned away. He hammered the table with his fist. Angels are not God. **The story is that the Holy Ghost was Jesus’ father.** Not even archangels have penises. Anyone writing Jesus’ biography should know that. Gabriel just brought Mary the good news the Great Ghost would come on her later.”<sup>591</sup>

Luke mentally counted to ten as he gave the witness time to calm down. “Later ... Yeah... about “later.” How much later? A week? A month? A year? God delayed decades before granting Zacharias’ prayer to make Elisabeth with child. God’s timetable differs from human expectations, at least in sexual matters.”

“I don’t know. He didn’t tell me how to answer that question.”

He? Luke wondered if “he” could be the witness’s father.

Before Luke could ask the same question aloud the witness snapped, “Shut up! Just shut up. You are pis... I mean... vexing me off!”

Mr. Nice Guy was not working. “Fine! Sorry I wasted your time.” Luke slapped his scroll shut. He snapped, “I quit. You can give your testimony to Jesus’ other biographers. Maybe John or Mark... But they are not interested. They do not feel the miracle births are worth the investment of ink. You could try to tell your story to Matthew. However, Matthew only cares about Jesus’ birth. I am the only one bothering to write about the miracle of John’s birth.”

The witness stood up, “You can l-leave!”

Luke noticed the slight stutter. He snapped, “Gladly!” then growled, “Researching this story is like riding a lame donkey when you already have a pain in the ass.” Luke pointed his quill to the north. “I cannot verify your testimony. The merciful Lord knows I tried. I hiked to Nazareth. Oh, yes. I found a couple of old women who remember Mary and Joseph left Nazareth but they did not remember what year that was. Nor did they remember if she headed for Bethlehem or went to stay with her cousin Elisabeth.”

Luke pointed to the south. “I walked to Bethlehem. I could not find anyone who could verify your story or say when Baby Jesus was born. I know what you are going to say.” Luke poked the witness in the chest twice. His voice reached higher into a mocking, nasal



pitch. “What about the shepherds who the angels told to go find Jesus in a manger? What about the shepherds?” Luke asked in his normal voice, “Do you know how many Jewish shepherds live in Bethlehem? None! Not a damn one! After the rebellion, the Romans took most of the Jews around Jerusalem as slaves and banished the rest from the area. If I want to find a Jewish shepherd, I will have to drag my poor ass back to Galilee! How about the Jerusalem Temple’s court records? The Temple records don’t mention Jesus’ trial because the records are all gone... along with the Jerusalem Temple. I must dig up eyewitnesses or sons of eyewitnesses like you.”

As Luke drew a long breath, the son of an eyewitness spoke. “Look Doc, I was just...”

“No. You look! Just for the smell of a shekel, I can find a dozen beggars willing to swear to any story they think I want to hear about Jesus the Demigod. One told me Jesus was a hemi-mortal born to the half-snake, half-female Medusa who rode around on the back of her half-horse, semi-bird, hemi-brother Pegasus.” Luke sneered. “And you? I ask you a few questions and you insult me.” Luke stepped to the door and jerked it open. “Let someone else write the biography of Jesus. Let those writers make up lies to fill in the blanks. I quit!” Luke stomped across the threshold with the intention of slamming the rickety door but the witness stopped him with two words.

“I apologize.” The witness’s hard face softened. “I told this story to several who want to write Jesus’ story. They did not ask the questions you ask. He only told me... I mean... I am only allowed to tell you so much.” The witness leaned forward and whispered. “The truth is I cannot say exactly when the Holy Spirit impregnated Mary. It could have been during her journey from Nazareth or not. Your readers must puzzle it out for themselves.” The witness sighed. “I can only tell you what he said... nothing more.”

He again. Luke thought, “*When Roman Senators murdered Caesar, Mark Anthony had a word for it... conspiratio.*” Luke realized that someone fed the witness his facts. And the witness steadfastly held to those facts without hedging or speculation. Still, Luke had no one else to interview.

Luke returned his chair and slumped into it. He complained. “No one will understand this story. At this rate, solving the Mystery of Emmanuel it is going to take a couple of thousand years.”

The witness murmured under his breath, “Sounds about right.”

Luke shrugged. “Okay I will include your deposition in my Gospel. Of course, I will give you credit.”

“No!” The witness’s eyes grew round and wide. He pleaded. “Please, Sir. You cannot do that! I beg you.”

“Okay.” Luke whispered. “I will just call you an unimpeachable source and I promise the Son of Melchior will be unnamed.” The witness leaned back in his chair visibly relieved. “Now, any idea what became of those kingly gifts of frankincense and myrrh?” Dr. Luke poised his quill above the papyrus. “And what happened to all that...,” Luke squinted at the scroll pretending to refresh his memory, “...gold?”

### 137. Jesus was a Carpenter and a Capricorn

Jesus whiled away a few of decades in Nazareth cobbling goat milking stools and carving sword racks. Didn’t he? Didn’t we see a genuine Jesus armoire on PBS’s *Antiques Road Show*? You may have sat in commuter gridlock behind a huffing Hummer® with a bumper boasting, “**My Boss is a Jewish Carpenter.**”

There are only two references to Jesus and carpentry. One was a fellow who asked if Jesus was the carpenter’s son.<sup>592</sup> The only other hint to Jesus having any home improvement skills was a Nazarene man who asked if Jesus was a carpenter.<sup>593</sup> It was a

reasonable assumption. In Jesus' time, a son followed in his father's professional footsteps. Although Joseph was a carpenter, Joseph was Jesus' stepfather. Jesus' real father's job title was Lord of the Universe.

Jot this down in your detective's little black book. *The Bible never says Jesus was a carpenter* (nor a Capricorn for that matter.) The Gospels never mention Jesus pushing a saw's blade or affixing a biscuit joint. Jesus never included a carpentry metaphor in his parables. We can only imagine what curses Jesus shouted after whacking his thumb with a mallet. "Me! My Dad dammit!"

### 138. The Hometown Boy Doesn't Look the Same

Months before his crucifixion, Jesus visited his hometown. His skills and wisdom astounded the townspeople. They were pleasantly surprised when he told them he hailed from their own Nazareth. They reacted as neighbors typically would to a hometown boy who spent years abroad at university or who served a hitch in the navy. The villagers were familiar with Jesus' family but less so with their prodigal son.

"You are Joseph and Mary's kid? I wouldn't have recognized you... being all growed up. Yeah, I knew your pa. I know your ma and the resta' yer kin. Just last month I saw your sister, Mary, slapping clothes down to the stream. Son, I recall when you were knee-high to a locust. You sure 'nuff look differ'nt. How ya' been, Boy? Where'd ya learn all these fancy things?"

The detective finds himself echoing, *Where indeed?* Twenty-one years earlier, a boy calling himself Jesus of Nazareth wowed the clergy in Jerusalem with his knowledge of the scriptures. The Nazarenes asked where he learned such wisdom<sup>594</sup> instead of saying, "You're well versed on scriptures just like when you were a boy,"

You get the impression young Jesus never demonstrated his scripture expertise in his hometown. The villagers did not ask how or when or from whom. They asked where Jesus learned his teachings and miracles.<sup>595</sup> Their question itself is the answer to where Jesus was during those Lost Years. The answer is "not in Nazareth." While the town's residents asked "Don't his sisters live here in our town?" The townsfolk did not ask, "Doesn't Jesus live in our town?" While the Bible hints Nazareth was Jesus' home at until the age of twelve, it gives no hint Jesus lived in Nazareth in the two decades before Jesus began his ministry.

### 139. Homecoming King

The Messiah's single homecoming proved to be his last. He had good reason never to return. His welcome home ran out quickly. Rather than showering palm fronds on their hometown boy made good, the Nazarenes ended up throwing him out of town.<sup>596</sup> Jesus probably forgave the rude reception. He may have forgiven the townsfolk for dragging him to a high cliff. Once there they tried to heave him over that precipice to splatter on the rocks below.<sup>597</sup> We may wonder if Jesus forgave them for the over the cliff and splattering on rocks thinee.

There are just as many definitive decisions on this attempted murder of Jesus as there are professional apologists. You might **G@@U|E** those learned opinions when you have time for the pain (headache.) Instead, a good detective will invest the time to reconstruct the attempted murder scene.

Jesus arrived in Nazareth on a Sabbath. As was his Saturday routine, he sought out the synagogue and joined the parishioners. We have no Gospel hint he introduced himself

when he arrived or that the congregation gave him anything but passing notice. He stood during the services and read Isaiah from the original Good Book, which was probably called the Good Scroll back then. All three synoptic gospels agree the Nazarenes were friendly and impressed with Jesus' graceful mastery of the scriptures. We expect people shook his hand after the services. One likely said, "That was a really nice readin', young fella. I'm Jeremiah and these are my two old ladies: Mary and Mary. What's your name?"

Jesus replied, "I'm Jesus the Nazarene."

The Nazarenes huddled together asking, "This is Jesus? Does Jesus' sisters live in our town? Aren't Joseph and Mary his parents? <sup>598</sup> Don't we know all Jesus' brother's names?" The townsfolk struggled discussing if this man was the one they knew as Jesus. <sup>599</sup> The answer to that question appears to have offended them. The townspeople confirmed they knew Jesus' immediate family but they didn't recognize Jesus. The detective must ask, "Why not?"

Luke gives the most detailed account of what happened next.

Most people can quote Jesus as saying, "Physician heal thyself." What those folks invariably overlook is that Jesus said that the Nazarenes would quote that proverb to him: not vice versa. This proverb is similar to, "Don't notice the speck in another's eye when you have a big hunk of wood in your own eye." As proverbs, they both mean the same. Don't criticize the sins/faults of others when you have sins/faults of your own.

The Nazarenes never accused Jesus of anything. They were preoccupied with the question, "Is this really Jesus?" Jesus claiming the Nazarenes would quote the proverb to him is a clue to Jesus' relationship with the Nazarenes.

People in ancient days knew mental disturbances were not always caused by demons. A spike in fever could cause a sick person to say nonsensical things. A man sinking into his deathbed can mistake a son or wife for some long ago friend. A club to the head could do the same. How many times did a stoning victim pull himself from the ground and incredulously ask, "Where in the hell did all this blood come from?" or shout in triumph, "My dog has many bungalows!" Since Jesus didn't have obvious physical injuries, the Nazarenes had to consider he was a fevered man or hit his head or was an imposter claiming to be Jesus or, as Jesus alluded, simply crazy.

The proverb about a hunk of wood in one's eye is not literally possible because a hunk of wood in your own eye cannot go unnoticed. However, the physician proverb is more than possible. Jesus was indeed a physician. He boasted of his healing skills in the Nazareth synagogue.<sup>600</sup> He also mentioned the healings he did in Capernaum. Additionally, in the very next chapter, Jesus himself drops a hint that the proverb is literal by saying only the sick need a physician.<sup>601</sup> In predicting the Nazarenes would say, "Physician heal thyself," Jesus surreptitiously uses the proverb to say, "You may think I'm crazy."

Jesus provided an extremely weak and bewildering explanation to his apostles for why the villager's failed to greet him warmly. He said no prophets are liked in their own homeland.<sup>602</sup> As examples, Jesus told the following stories of Elijah and Elisha.

In one sad time, several centuries earlier, many people in Israel contracted leprosy. Though he had powers from God, Elisha the Prophet healed only one guy from Syria: leaving all Israelite lepers to suffer their sloughing skin.<sup>603</sup>

On another day of long ago yore, it was the time of Elijah. The Lord's punishment again fell on Israel in the form of a terrible drought. Many husbands died, which created many widows. Elijah the Prophet ignored all the Israeli widows but did tend to one Lebanese widow.<sup>604 605</sup>

Jesus declared that he would not do any healings in Nazareth so they would not like him and he told the apostles that a prophet is not liked in his hometown. It was as if Jesus was saying in a childish tit for tat, "You don't like me? Well, I didn't like you first!"

Consider the Nazarenes' confusion. They never said they disliked Jesus. They never asked him to heal anyone. They only questioned why they didn't recognize him as the Jesus they knew. The Bible reader should ask the same. After all, the Bible gives us the idea Jesus was absent from Nazareth for only a few months.<sup>606</sup> How could the villagers so quickly forget the man who presumably lived the last twenty years in their town?

In those ancient days, the most prudent thing a people could do with a stranger afflicted with a mysterious illness is to drive him away from their town away to limit spreading the contagion. A man suffering identity delusions would qualify as a mysterious illness. The Nazarenes had to wonder what sickness a man might have if he thinks he is someone else. The Nazarenes initially decided to err on the side of caution and drive Jesus out of town. However, someone must have realized they had a bigger problem. Not only did Jesus falsely claim to be a Nazarene<sup>607</sup> but he also claimed to be a prophet. That made him a false prophet.

The Law of Moses prescribed a more permanent remedy for false prophets: execution by stoning. The Nazarenes might have feared that ignoring their Mosaic duty might bring on God's wrath. However, a few in the crowd likely had nightmares of previous stonings: the blood, the sickening cracking of bone, the cries of anguish and—what is worse for any non-psychopath—the heart-rending pleas for mercy while clumsy executioners fling sub-fatal stones high and outside. Moses anticipated that compassion could spoil a good stoning. His solution was simply to forbid people from feeling pity.<sup>608</sup>

We don't know why the Nazarenes didn't give Jesus an ol' fashioned stoning. Perhaps all the good throwing stones were at the bottom of a cliff and rather than bring those up, they decided to throw him down.<sup>609</sup> Although vice versa, the method would still be death by stoning, technically. On the bright side, the killing would take but seconds. Empathetic Nazarenes need not suffer the victim's agony for the long minutes it takes to smash the life from a man... better for them...better for him. Ya gotta give the Nazarenes kudos for thinking outside the box.

Jesus Saves. We know Jesus saves because Te's billboards say so. But highway signs never tell us what Jesus does when Jesus needs to save Jesus. When manhandled to teeter on the precipice, he did not supernaturally knock the angry crowd unconscious. He did not call forth angel commandos or exorcise the Nazarenes' demons. Like any spindly kid bullied on a playground, he wrest their grasp and simply ran away.<sup>610</sup>

Wisely, Jesus "the Nazarene" never risked visiting Nazareth again.

## 140. Case Solved part I

At this point in the investigation, we have no Gospel clue to the name of the man who killed Jesus. However, biblical honesty never stops a minister from peddling misconceptions of what the Bible says or does not say. With no better justification, we will call him Caspar. He was not exactly a wise guy hitman but he helped engineer the Jesus murder. We could finger the henchmen Balthazar or Melchior as the criminal mastermind but Caspar has a ghostly name that appeals to simple folk who watch those ghost-hunting, bullshit/reality, TV shows. BTW It is folklore (not the Bible) that numbers the Wise Men as three and names them Caspar, Balthazar and Melchior.

If you deduced the killer was one of the Wise Men without skipping straight to this section, you are probably feeling pretty smug right about now. Do not let your head swell too big for your jauntily cocked Fedora. Unanswered questions yet linger. "How did Caspar do it?" and also, "Why did he do it?" You need to explain the crime before you can do your impression of iron-haired Detective Captain St Mc and quip, "Book 'em, Danno."

## 141. They Call Me, Mister Zacharias

In 40 BC, Zacharias was a fresh-faced, clergy apprentice. That was the same year the Roman senate decreed Herod as the new King of the Jews. The priests who did not loudly cheer Herod's kingship were no longer priests... or alive for that matter. Frequent replacements for dearly departed clergy maintained King Herod's high approval rating among the Council of Pharisee.

Being an old-school Holy Man of the ancient Jewish order of Abijah,<sup>611</sup> elderly Zacharias found himself at odds with the brown-nosing Council of Pharisee. Although the Pharisee were the high holy stewards of the grandiose Temple and the enforcers of Moses' laws, they (just like Herod) shamelessly groveled before Caesar's rule. Zacharias the Priest had a dogmatic bone to pick with the Pharisee but he saw the handwriting on the wall. Although King Herod was Israel's sovereign, he ruled only by Rome's pleasure. Herod preferred any Roman whimsy over the welfare of his own people.

One thing the Pharisee had in common with King Herod is they were also unsympathetic to the suffering of the Jewish people. The priests kowtowed to Rome to safeguard the only thing they valued: the grandiose Jerusalem Temple. They likely justified their lack of compassion by noting their God heaped loads of suffering on the Jewish people. So what's the big deal if the Pharisee created a little more misery? —in God's name, of course.

The Empire appointed Herod as King of the Jews till he died in 4AD. Herod flaunted his love for Rome. He made pilgrimages to Rome to humble himself at the feet of whoever wore the laurel crown. Herod built a state-of-the-art seaport for the Empire's trade on the Silk Road. He dedicated his great harbor as Caesarea Maritima in honor to Caesar Augustus. Herod designed Masada, his citadel in the sky, as eternal homage to Roman architecture. To make the Romans feel at home he built a hippodrome for their games, theaters for their plays and temples for their gods. King Herod even supplied amenities including raising statues for their pagan worship and herds of pigs for their supper bowls.

In the first year BC, Zacharias was already weary with years. The old priest lived long enough to see the Roman juggernaut enslave Israel with hardly a Roman sword brandished or a slingshot fired. If Zacharias had opinions about King Herod the Roman-loving despot, he held his tongue. He must have. Zacharias lived to a ripe old age and likely died in his sleep. Priests who dared to whisper a criticism of King Herod enjoyed neither.

When King Herod died, all delusion of Jewish sovereignty died with him. Rome split Israel like a man drawn and quartered. Keeping the illusion of a royal Jewish bloodline, the emperor appointed King Herod's surviving sons to reign over three regions of Israel. Herod Archelaus<sup>612</sup> managed Judea, Herod Antipas controlled Galilee and Herod Philip II ruled Ituraea while the Roman Lysanias became the sheriff of Abilene.<sup>613</sup> Later, Rome replaced Herod Archelaus with Pontius Pilate as the governor of Judea.

Pilate the Heathen ruling Judea had to annoy the Jewish people. Judea included the Holy City of Jerusalem. At the holy city's center sat the Holy Temple, which King Herod built over the bones of Solomon's Temple. At the Holy Temple's center was the Holy of Holies. That spot was holier than typical holiness because the second copy of the Ten Commandments once resided there and it was where the Temple's high priest communed with God. All those sacred places were under the rule of a Roman heathen.

## 142. Caspar the Friendly Magos

When Zacharias and Caspar met, it might have happened like this.



A Silk Road caravan stopped in Jerusalem on its way to Caesarea. It was safer for a wealthy man to travel with greater numbers so Caspar planned to take another caravan to his destination of Alexandria. Much of the world's archive of knowledge was lost forever but Caspar planned to help salvage the library from the charred ruins. Caspar predicted the library would burn again and he was right. It was later destroyed by the Catholic Church and again by the Muslims. Not to be surpassed, the Romans destroyed the library a second time. Be it religious or political tyranny, history shows that knowledge is always threatening. Book burning helps keep congregation and constituency pliable.

That night the shopkeepers of Jerusalem hosted a small feast for the caravan's merchants. The shopkeepers figured the investment in hospitality would pay dividends in future haggling. The shopkeepers also invited Caspar the Wise Man and Zacharias the Pharisee Priest to help balance the guest list of boring businessmen.

While guests speculated on the price of Chinese silk and Indian curry, Caspar and the old priest found relief in each other's company. Their higher-minded conversation touched on subjects from medicine to philosophy then settled on pessimistic politics. Caspar grumbled about Rome's inevitable advance to his homeland. If history was any indication, the Empire planned to smother the kingdoms of the East under its bloating borders.

Zacharias had no concerns for the eastern lands of the heathens. Israel had its own problems. God cursed the Chosen People... a-g-a-i-n. As by the Babylonians, Persians and Greeks: God punished Israel with yet another foreign slavemaster. This time it was Rome. No matter how many bulls and goats they sacrificed, God refused to break Israel's chains. There was no end in sight. God sent his last prophet to the Chosen People five hundreds years earlier. If the prophesied Messiah did not arrive soon, Zacharias knew God's Promised Land of milk and honey would be a lost memory: replaced by Caesar's empire of cappuccinos and calzones. xxxxx

Earthshaking ideas are sometimes born in a flash of genius. Zacharias could have conceived his plan in such a twinkling. Or maybe it smoldered in his subconscious for years before a spark of insight **coalesced** the scheme in his mind's eye. Perhaps it was Caspar's plan with details he worked and tenaciously reworked under a flickering oil lamp as a pile with crumpled drafts of Chinese hemp grew at his feet.

Regardless of who hatched the idea, the plan required both men. Fortunately, the pair made a great team. As a Pharisee priest, Zacharias had the scholarship to teach all the scripture a man would need to portray the Messiah. Steeped in the ghostly arts of the East Caspar and his friends could provide the powers a messiah required. Magic is easier than a miracle to perform on demand and—with a touch of showmanship—magic is just as impressive.

Zacharias reasoned it was God's omen that his name was so similar to Zechariah. Zechariah was of the last prophets God sent to the Chosen People but he died centuries earlier. For all Zacharias knew, he might be a prophet and not know it. Besides, if God did not want him to move forward with the plan then it was well within Heavenly Father's power to stop him.

Either way, it was worth the gamble. Zacharias did not fear Hell. He lived in the pre-Jesus years so eternal damnation did not yet exist. Zacharias was not much of a godfearing man either. The priest had little to lose if God killed him for of his impudence. God might smite him with a pestilence to rot his body or send a bear to rip him apart. But Zacharias had little to fear from death. He was an old man. He lived all but a fistful of his remaining years. His declining decade of feeble eyesight, failing sinew and aching bones would not be much of a loss.

The Jewish homeland was fading. Israel was lost if someone did not do something. Zacharias figured he was someone and Caspar made sometwo.

### 143. Making a Prophet

Zacharias could not simply recruit a patriotic fellow to impersonate a prophet. Prophets Elijah and Elisha were enthusiastic to do God's work. A few, like Moses and Joshua, felt unworthy of the divine honor. Jonah initially refused the Lord's appointment to prophet but reconsidered taking the job after God made him sit in fish puke for three days.<sup>614</sup> Those men had no choice in the matter. Like Samson, they were destined to be God's messengers from birth. The lesson was clear. You cannot train a man to be a god's suicidal terrorist or teach a three-year old to be a faith-healing evangelist.<sup>615</sup> If Zacharias wanted a messiah, he needed to grow one.



Jerusalem -1AD: A festive banquet hall. An old Temple Priest and an Eastern intellectual sit at a small table in the corner.

Zacharias whispered. "I can teach someone enough scripture to impersonate the Messiah but he must do miracles. Our prophets always do miracles. He will have to fulfill prophecies. He needs to raise people from the dead plus. He will have to raise himself from the dead... just as Hercules did."

Caspar, glanced downward in modestly and asked, "What else?"

Zacharias gasped, "What else? Everything! That's what. Change water to wine, heal people and exorcise demons. He will have to be born in Bethlehem to a virgin and he will need to ride a donkey into Jerusalem."

"I was afraid he needs eight arms. Ride a donkey?" A smirk tried to sneak past Caspar's inscrutable expression. "That's a hard one but I think we can manage it."

Zacharias flustered himself. "You know what I mean, dammit! I can't teach a man how to do miracles."

"I can." Caspar spoke so matter-of-factly one would think he was talking about plucking a chicken or milking a goat. "Anything else?" Zacharias later came to realize Caspar did not brag. Caspar did not boast. The Wise Man never spoke a word he could not fulfill.

Zacharias complained, "We cannot recruit or hire a man to be a messiah."

Caspar agreed. "I agree. We need to raise one."

Hearing the words from his own mouth sent a wave of chills across Zacharias' skin. "We will need a male child." Zacharias snapped his fingers. "No... two babies. We must have an Elijah too."

Caspar added, "And a spare."

"A spare messiah? A spare baby?" Zacharias choked on the words. The horror of their scheme became real. It is wrong to murder a man in a fit of passion or revenge. It is wrong to kill a child... mostly. How wrong is it to premeditate killing someone before he is even born? Zacharias dropped his face into his palms and fell quiet for some time. When he spoke again, his was a halting voice. "We will be the most vile murderers history has known. We are discussing breeding children like fattened lambs lead to the abattoir. Now we so callously discuss a spare baby? A spare human sacrifice?"

Caspar rolled his hooded eyes. "He will not be an infant when he dies. Things happen. A man can be crippled or cursed with disease. Children often die." Caspar shrugged. "If I die, Balthazar and Melchior will finish our plan. However, if our messiah or our Elijah dies... prematurely. We will have no backup messiah. And murder? Oh come now." Caspar's voice coaxed tenderly. "From the killing fields in the lowest shadowed valley of death to the highest Mountain Meadows Massacre, God's killers are always Holy Men. No God-fearing men never consider Moses or Joshua as genocidal monsters." Caspar leaned

closer and whispered. “What if our messiah takes a dim view of his crucifixion and changes his mind? Where would we be then?”

Zacharias narrowed his wiry eyebrows. He nodded. “That... could... happen.” He placed his palms tightly against his ears in hopes he would not hear himself. He mumbled, “We need a spare baby.”

#### **144. Congratulations Zacharias. It’s a Godson.**

Zacharias maintained secrecy by limiting his plans to family. Blood is slicker than water and relatives are easier to manipulate. Zacharias restricted the scheme to himself, his wife and two of his wife’s cousins. Of his wife’s cousins, one’s husband and five sons would play integral parts. The other and her two sons would also have important roles. These are just the people the Gospels reveal. If you continue your investigation, you will learn all their names.

Zacharias needed a male son. Mary, his cousin-in-law, could provide that son. It took little to convince Mary. Israel was a land of slaves and slavemasters but her baby would be the son of a temple priest. Mary’s child would eat well, receive a fine education and enjoy a bright future in Judea’s privileged religious cast. Since the foster mother was Mary’s cousin, the child would remain in the family. Zacharias the Priest assured Mary’s cooperation by explaining it was God’s will. Besides, the first born son is always God’s property because God said so.<sup>616</sup> Mary agreed to Zacharias’ plan.

One baby down... one to go.

#### **145. Joseph the Carpenter**

To fulfill prophesy, Zacharias needed a man who claimed lineage to King David. Joseph the Carpenter fit the bill.

Joseph was like other blue-collar men through the ages. He worked hard and worried. Joseph the Carpenter was always just one broken leg away from supporting his family by begging in the streets. On the bright side, laborers had plentiful work. Thanks to Roman municipal projects, there were construction jobs in Sepphoris, four miles from Nazareth and in Tiberias, thirteen miles away. The port city of Caesarea was under constant renovation but it was a longer thirty-mile commute from Nazareth. The down side was the Romans paid Jewish laborers a starving wage and then took some back in taxes.

Joseph’s fortunes improved profoundly when he agreed to marry Mary. He abandoned his work-a-day life. He made a spur-of-the-moment trip to Bethlehem with his pregnant wife in tow. After the birth, Joseph did not return to his miters and sawhorses in Nazareth. He lingered in Bethlehem for two years. Afterward, he retreated to Egypt and hid out there for the years it took stubborn King Herod to die.

The Gospels never mention Joseph earning a living as an itinerant carpenter during that time. Joseph appeared so financially secure he traveled like a footloose tourist. A detective must wonder how Joseph the Carpenter managed to support his young family and also pay for their travels. It takes shekels to keep food on the table and sandals on a wife and kid.

The Bible gives the clue. The wealthy Wise Men lavished Joseph with spices fit for a king. In a bartering society those valuable spices were as good as silver denarii and don’t forget the gold.

In a land of peasants and slaves, Joseph found himself to be a gentleman of leisure.



Time: 2 BC. Sometime after the births of John and Jesus

Place: A secret place in Jerusalem



Zacharias slipped across the threshold. He quickly closed the door, leaned against it and only then, allowed himself to exhale freely. A single oil lamp cut sharp but jittery shadows in the small room. Caspar placed his wine cup on the table. He stood and spread his arms wide. "Zacharias, My old friend!"

"Keep your voice down, dammit!" Zacharias squinted through a crack in the door. "You sure you weren't followed?"

Caspar frowned. "I'm super. Thanks for asking. And how are your handsome wife and your new son? Little Johnny is almost three now isn't he? And your little cousin Jesus. Isn't his second birthday is next month?"

The Temple priest ignored the pleasantries and glared. "Look at you!" Zacharias flipped one of the colorful silk scarves circling the Wise Man's neck. "You come here plumed like a freshly preened parrot. Are you trying to get us caught?" Without waiting for a response, he snapped, "Make this quick. We cannot be seen together."

"Okay. Down to business."

Zacharias sat down, reached for the wine jug and filled a cup to the brim. "I have done my part. We now have our Elijah and our messiah."

"No spares?"

Zacharias growled, "I never want to hear that word again." Zacharias tapped his knotted index finger against the tabletop. "Now, it's time for you to do your part."

Caspar reached beneath his robe and produced a leather pouch. "My part?" He placed the bag on the spot where the priest tapped. The table creaked under the bag's weight. "Done." Caspar smiled. "There is enough gold that Joseph can hang up his carpenter's apron and concentrate on the task at hand. He won't need to punch a time-clock for many years."

The old priest was afraid Caspar would bear him vapid excuses instead of yellow gold. Zacharias' tension unwound a couple of notches. After a long drink of wine, a relieved Zacharias sighed, "Good."

"Well, that's done." Caspar stood up slowly and spoke even slower as if he preferred to visit a while longer. "I suppose we should meet again in say... ten years?"

"Not so fast. You are not through. I want you to do something else."

Caspar spread his palms and bowed from the waist. "My old friend, I am at your service. Feel free to ask anything of me." He sat back down and, smiling, refilled his wine cup.

"I want you to tell King Herod the Messiah is born."

Caspar's cherry smile sank beneath a ghostly pallor. He spoke in measured words, "Ask...something...else."

"I am serious."

"I am serious too." Caspar crossed his arms and held Zacharias in an unblinking stare. "I am not going anywhere near Herod the Homicidal. You want to clue him into our plan? You are nuttier than Herod! You must be possessed by demons named Dozens Von Battalions because Legion isn't that crazy."

It pleased Zacharias to see Caspar jerked out of his young man's devil-may-care attitude. "Think about it. In a couple of decades, our messiah will begin his ministry. Kings bring gifts to God.<sup>617</sup> It should be the same for our new King of the Jews. We do not have kings to bear gifts to celebrate the Messiah's birth but we have Wise Men; you, Melchior and Balthazar. We cannot squander this opportunity to do some groundwork for our messiah."

"The groundwork you are talking about is digging a grave. Mine!" Caspar sputtered, "Nobody toys with Herod the Heinous. He kills relatives to save money on birthday presents. Why risk tipping off Crazy King Herod?"

Zacharias felt a grin stretch across his own face. It was the Wise Man's turn to wear a frown of worry. "Herod's ruthless and insane reputation is what I am counting on. You will

tell him you are three soothsayers. Tell Herod you foresaw the Messiah's birth two years ago. Make sure his servants hear it too."

"For Buddha's sake, why?"

"We will create a rumor that the Messiah is born and King Herod went into a murderous rage. Innuendo planted here and whispers seeded there will sprout into gossiping scandal. Rumors will spread that Herod hunted the tiny messiah to eliminate him." Zacharias snapped his bony fingers, "No, even better! Herod tries to strangle the little Jesus as he sleeps in his crib... No!... as poor baby Jesus swaddles in a manger!" Zacharias grabbed a fresh sheet of papyrus. He muttered, "This is good. I must take notes." Zacharias reached to dip his quill but Caspar covered the inkwell with his hand.

Caspar asked, "You want to squander my life on the slim chance someone, somewhere will believe such nonsense?"

Zacharias' allowed himself to enjoy an evil grin. "That is the beauty of it. Every Judean will believe any atrocity at the hand of Mad King Herod. Also killing babies has a divine precedent. Just like Moses, people will say our messiah was born in the horrors of male infanticide but survived by God's grace.<sup>618</sup> The rumors will grow." Zacharias raised a twisted arthritic finger. "People will nurture hope that the long awaited Messiah is finally coming. When it is time for our prophet to begin his ministry, Israel will remember that the year of the rumors and his age coincide."

As if he just received a terminal prognosis, Caspar leaned heavily back onto his chair.

Zacharias inked his quill and scribbled furiously pausing only to gulp wine. "This will also give Joseph and Mary the excuse to stay away from Nazareth for several years. They will say they feared for their baby's life. By the time Mary returns to Nazareth, no one will know when, where or how many babies she birthed."

"Here's an idea." Caspar asked, "Why don't I skip visiting Herod? I'll go straight to his ax-man's block and lay down my head. It will save time."

Zacharias spoke slowly. "Just tell Herod you don't know where the new messiah is but you foresaw his birth in tealeaves or chicken entrails. I don't care which. Make it sound inscrutably mystical. I will see to it the priests tell Herod the prophesy foretells Bethlehem as the Messiah's birthplace. Then you spend a couple of days poking around Bethlehem. Kiss a few babies. Tell everyone you seek the Messiah. After nightfall this Thursday, load your camels with nothing but water and food. Then you make a beeline east."

Caspar asked, "Have you thought about Herod? What do you think he will do when we don't report back?"

Zacharias answered, "Herod's so predictable." Zacharias shrugged. "He'll send several contingents to hunt you down and kill you. Of course."

"That may not bother you but it is disturbing on this side of the table."

Zacharias shook his head; dismissing Caspar's concerns. "You will have a twelve hour head start before he knows you are gone. Plus, I will see to it that he thinks you took the usual northern route. Joseph and Mary will leave Bethlehem at the same time but in the opposite direction... to Egypt."

"But..."

"No buts. You want to pull off the crime of the epoch with no personal risk? You think your gold keeps you from getting your hands dirty? Our messiah and our Elijah are going to give their lives." Zacharias lowered his voice for the proper gravity. "You are going to do this and I dast you say another discouraging word."

Caspar said nothing.

For once, Zacharias felt he'd bested Caspar's carefree wit so why not rub it in? "So, how about a little smile?"

Even with his teeth clenched, Caspar managed to pull the left side of his top lip into an upward curl.

## 146. Ten Years Later

Scene: Ten years later. A small room in Jerusalem.

Zacharias slowly opened his eyelids then forced them to a squint. The man at his bedside settled into the best focus Zacharias' milky eyes could manage. It took several seconds before the old priest realized the Asian man did not wear the face Zacharias expected. The visitor placed his palms lightly together and bowed deeply.

"You...?" Zacharias croaked, "Balthazar?"

"Yes, Master Zacharias. How do you feel? Should I visit later? I can wait outside until then."

"I am better now that you are here." Zacharias glanced off the other side of his bed. "And where is that insufferable peacock, Caspar?"

Balthazar brushed a smear of dust from his frayed sleeve. "I do not normally wear casual garments when I am burdened with solemn news but... Master Caspar asked me to don commoner's clothes when I bore his best and final wishes to you. Magos Caspar died six months ago."

"Caspar is a ghost? So the strutting dandy finds one final way to irritate me. I hoped to speak to him again but now..." The frail priest's words caught in his throat. He grimaced as he strained to sit up; struggling as he drew a strident breath.

Balthazar placed a firm hand between Zacharias' shoulder blades. "Your son, said to ask if you were hungry when you woke. Do you feel like a nosh?"

Zacharias barely shook his head. "Not now... More important matters." Zacharias pulled a scroll from under his thin mattress. "You need this... Instructions... The plan."

Balthazar repeated, "The plan? You should not have bothered yourself, Master Zacharias. Rest assured. Melchoir and I know the plan. We will do our part. Next year, either Melchior or I will see you again and take charge of the boys."

Zacharias' breath recovered. "If you think I will be here next year... I need to check your Wise Man's diploma for misspellings. No... Pharisee Nicodemus will take my part from here on. Your letter of introduction is in the scroll."

Balthazar nodded. "You say there's a small change in the plan?"

"Not small... but necessary. My son will be the Messiah. Joseph's son will become the Elijah. Jesus and John should exchange names as soon as you take them from Israel."

"They are to switch identities? May I ask why?"

"When he was born, I dedicated my son as Savior from our enemies. If Jephthah's burnt sacrifice of a virgin daughter teaches us anything, it is mortals should not swear impulsive oaths to God.<sup>619</sup> I spoke rashly and now my vow is coming true."

"Joseph's son will not be our messiah?"

"No. Joseph's son is raised the son of a laborer. Living under Joseph's roof made him more comfortable with toil of the body rather than the moil of the mind. He cannot twist his tongue far enough to speak a Hebrew verse of the Pentateuch. Try as he might, Joseph's son can barely read a page of Aramaic. His grasp of the scriptures is weak and his reach falls short. He would be a poor messiah but he has the passion to be a fine Elijah."

Zacharias sighed as if preparing for a tedious chore. "When John was born, I swore before God my adopted son would be our savior. I guess God took that as "Savior" with a capital S." <sup>620</sup> <sup>621</sup> Zacharias frowned but not from his many stubborn pains. "However, my son has a love for the Lord's word and hungers for his destiny. He has mastered the scriptures. When he quotes the Torah, his voice fills with obvious confidence." Zacharias

took another breath to speak his next words with a stronger voice. “The two boys must switch places.”

Balthazar trusted Zacharias’ judgment but he asked, “Will the Nazarenes not see your boy as an imposter who is calling himself Joseph’s son?”

Zacharias grunted in a graveled voice, “Cannot be avoided.”

Balthazar continued his thought. “If the elders of Nazareth realize our messiah is not the boy they knew as Jesus, they will take him for a false prophet and...”

“...kill him.” Zacharias closed his eyes to hint at a nod. “Yes. There is risk. That is why you must take both boys now. Joseph will make excuses for his son’s absence...apprenticeship with a master carpenter... living with relatives... Joseph will tell whatever story Nicodemus thinks is best. Joseph’s son will assume the name John, Son of Zacharias. His cover story will be that he communed with God for many years in the wilderness.”

Balthazar had questions but, as he often found true, it was wiser to listen.

Zacharias continued. “It was my rash oath to God or maybe just kismet that makes this switch necessary. The Messiah is prophesied to be in the line of David. That is still true. As my legal son, he is in the line of David because I am descended from King David.”<sup>622</sup>

Zacharias allowed his jaw to go slack as he tilted his head back for a deep breath. “You must begin training them now while they are young. As brothers, they do share a family resemblance. When they are a couple of decades older, the villagers in Nazareth may believe my son is the boy raised by Joseph. The old man touched the scroll. “It’s all in there.”

Balthazar lowered his voice. “You are not coming with us?” It was polite but not a question.

“My job is done. From here on, you do not need me. My son knows of his destiny. He needs only to mature. I tested him during the last Passover. I dressed him in commoner’s clothes and told the temple scholars he was separated from his parents. Over several days, he stunned them with his understanding of the scriptures. He can only grow more in the Holy Word.” Zacharias’ smile was weak but his pride was strong. “If not for his youth, my son could be a rabbi today. If my time on earth is squandered or invested wisely will depend on the success or failure of our messiah, my son.”

Balthazar put his hand on the old man’s shoulder. “Do not worry. We will not fail. Israel will be freed from Rome’s slavery. Persia, Babylon and all the threatened lands of the East, including my home, will breathe easier too.”

“I will not be there so I pray one selfish indulgence.” Zacharias whispered, “Tell me the wonders my son will do.”

Balthazar began to speak. For the first time in over a year, the pain that throbbed in time with Zacharias’ heartbeat did not mark the passing seconds. The old priest’s face relaxed as he listened the superhuman feats of Emmanuel. Emmanuel, strange visitor from the heavens who came to Earth with supernatural powers far beyond those of mortal men. Emmanuel, who would change the course of mighty nations, bend steeled minds like putty in his bare hands. And who—born as Jesus, lowly carpenter’s son from a small and insignificant village—wins the epoch battle for truth, justice and Israel’s Yahweh.

A half hour later Balthazar added, “...and he will be a physician too.”

Zacharias glanced aside to Balthazar. “You will teach him real medicine?” Zacharias frowned. “That’s not right. A messiah would heal with God’s power not herbs and potions.”

Balthazar nodded. “Yes he will. But the best way to be a fake faith healer is to have the genuine skills of an physician. If he treats a legitimate fever or wound, he will do it by

drawing on his messiah powers. He will never draw attention to his roots or herbs. He will disguise any real medicine as something like a magic mud poultice. Of course, several of our people will come to him as blind or lame so Jesus can “cure” them. With the help of disciples, he will learn in advance from which ailments people in a village are suffering. With his disciples as his eyes and ears, he will know which villages have someone so desperate they will be susceptible to a few mystical words and a suggested healing. He will never hint at any training in Eastern medicine.”

A bittersweet peace played across Zacharias’ gaunt face. “Our son... the doctor. Elisabeth would be so proud.” The old man’s yellowed and useless eyes focused on a distant place many leagues beyond the wall of the small room. As the daydream of his son’s future faded, Zacharias strangled on saliva then suffered a wrack of coughing. He reached for his water. Balthazar steadied the cup to Zacharias’ mouth. The old priest took a few trembling sips then nodded. The Wise Man returned the cup to the exact spot on the bedside table.

While the old man lay quietly recovering his breath, Balthazar stuttered. “There... is... I mean... I...”

Zacharias groaned, “Having so little left, I am now stingy with my time. Spit it out.”

“You and Caspar discussed a third child.” Balthazar threw his eyes downward; barely escaping Zacharias’ angry glare.

“No!”

Balthazar quickly answered, “Master Zacharias. He will not be a sacrifice. We need a magician’s assistant. We need not take him abroad for training. We can do his instruction in secret, here in Israel, before our messiah reveals himself. Also, it would help if he is a fisherman.”

“Oh yes... The fishing miracles you have planned.” The old man pondered for several seconds. “There is a Galilee fisherman named Zebedee. He is related to my departed Elisabeth by marriage. Zebedee is Mary’s brother-in-law who has two sons who are fine fishermen; James and John.” Zacharias paused for a moment longer then said, “There is another young man who fishes with them who may be a good choice. I met him once; very clever boy. His hatred of Rome is surpassed only by his devotion to our Lord and Israel. His name is Simon. Nicodemus can introduce you.” Strained by the conversation, both listening and speaking, Zacharias leaned back in his bed. He closed his eyes; fighting to summon another ounce of strength to continue. Zacharias licked his cracked lips. “After Israel drives the beast of Rome away, everyone must know the truth of our terrible deception... our sin.”

“We have a plan for that.” Balthazar grinned confidently. “We will plant clues in the stories we will tell Jesus’ biographers. Some inquisitive fellow in the future will puzzle it out and discover your bold plan. We wouldn’t want our new religion to run wild and,” Balthazar waved his hand in a sweeping arc, “contaminate the known world.”

“No need. I wrote a confession,” Zacharias drew a raspy breath, “and the truth about our messiah. I sealed the scroll. It is safe in the Temple archives. The seals forbid anyone from opening it for one hundred and seven years. Future temple priests will read it. They will spread the truth that Jesus was a great patriot who perpetrated a hoax to rid the Jewish people of their Roman oppressors. Israel will see Jesus and John as heroes who sacrificed their lives for the Chosen Ones and the Promised Land.” Zacharias’ voice quivered with shame. “Still, people will curse my name for this deception.”

Balthazar whispered, “Master Zacharias, you are wise but this time... mistaken. Historians and Israel’s countless generations will praise your name and the name of our spirit brother, Caspar.”

“History will praise Caspar? That pompous infidel?” Zacharias halfheartedly spat but could not raise spittle. “I suppose everything has a price.”

“One more thing you should know.” Zacharias’ wrinkled frown deepened. “My son will present a problem in becoming Jesus. He grieved horribly when Elisabeth died. Liz adored him as a her only child and she was the only mother he knew.” Zacharias drew a long wheezy breath. “The truth is that Elisabeth nor I could bring ourselves to see the sparkle in his eyes dim, even a little. Selfish coward that I am, I never told him who his real parents are.”

Balthazar blinked several times. “Then your son will *pretend* that his real mother is his real mother?”

“I’m afraid there’s going to be a problem with that.” Zacharias winced. “Perhaps the boy feared I would take another wife. At Elisabeth’s deathbed, he swore to the Divine Father he would never call another woman “Mother.””<sup>623</sup> Zacharias could not sigh deeply but he sighed. “I know he will never break his oath to God. Even so, I should tell him the truth. This is my last chance.”

“No, Master. We will tell him later. When he is strong enough. Soon he will...”

“Grieve again?” Zacharias swore. “Damn my worthless eyes. I am ashamed to admit this. But knowing my son will suffer in grief... is comforting even as I feel myself draining away.”

Balthazar could hear the rumbling echo deep in the old priest’s chest. He’d heard the death rattles before. Zacharias fought to hang on for several weeks to make his appointment with the Wise Man. He need no longer suffer the strain of clinging to life. Balthazar knew death. The old man would relax now. Zacharias would close his eyes, and his spirit would lose interest in his world. As people so often do, he would steal away in the wee morning hours. The predawn songbirds would serenade his spirit; tweeting. ♪ *Godspeed, Zacharias.* ♪

They might have talked longer into the night but the Wise Man knew it was time for son and father to say those things that could not be said tomorrow. Balthazar tucked the scroll into his robe’s wide sleeve. As he opened the door, he glanced down. He met the anxious eyes of little John; the boy destined to be known by the world as Jesus the Christ. The youth shot Balthazar a hateful glare but said nothing. Like a puff of smoke drawn toward an opening door, he slipped past the Wise Man and jealously reclaimed his rightful place beside his father’s deathbed.

## 147. The Old Prince and the Pauper Switcheroo

Young John and young Jesus exchanging identities explains a number of peculiarities. It explains why Nazareth treated Jesus with such hostility. The Nazarenes realized this Jesus was not the one they knew as an adolescent. The switch also explains why John the Baptist, the learned son of a highly educated priest, never quoted any scripture nor read the Hebrew Holy Books in the synagogue. The switch explains how Jesus, the supposed son of a lowly laborer, spoke Latin<sup>624</sup> and Greek.<sup>625</sup> Jesus was also fluent in the holy Hebrew tongue. He demonstrated a command of the Hebrew scripture, which comes from expert tutelage and hours of study in a well-stocked library. The switch explains how John, a city-boy raised by a gentleman of the religious aristocracy, was so competent at wilderness survival. It explains why Jesus, a supposed carpenter of almost two decades—and the son of a carpenter—never used a woodworking metaphor in his parables. The Bible never hints that adult Jesus could tell a sawhorse from a seesaw.

You may glance askance with raised brow but you are not the only one who wrestled with questions of Jesus' original identity. Like you, several characters of the Bible also suspected John impersonated his cousin Jesus. Two Gospels sited rumors and gossip claiming adult Jesus was actually John the son of Zacharias.<sup>626</sup> Herod Antipas lost sleep worrying that John the Beheaded Baptist incarnated into Jesus.<sup>627</sup> Others believed Jesus was Elijah: while Elijah was another persona of John the Baptist.<sup>628</sup> In literary fiction, these clues to Jesus' birth identity would be foreshadowing. In holy writing, it is prophesy .

The Nazareth villagers had serious problems with the man who called himself Jesus the Nazarene. They did not greet Jesus like a hometown boy who grew to manhood in their fold. The Nazarenes treated him like a poisonous serpent. On the flip side, the Nazarenes never mentioned if John the Baptist resembled the boy who they knew as Jesus. They never had the chance. John never risked stepping foot in Galilee: much less Nazareth.<sup>629</sup> Also, no one from Nazareth attended Jesus' baptism. There is no gospel hint that anyone from Nazareth ever saw John's fuzzy face.

### **148. And the Killer is...**

It is time for that ages-honored scene of the classic who-dun-it. You reconstruct the events, establish the motive, absolve the innocent and lastly point an unwavering finger to the guilty.

Imagine yourself in the study of a dignified old manor. The eclectically decorated chamber is richly trimmed in exotic woods under a vaulted ceiling. The sharp smell urine-tanned leather lingers in the air along with wafting scents of goose grease polish and cedar wood. A decapitated unicorn<sup>630</sup> sporting a single spiral horn stares into the east from the west wall. A coat of arms boasting a pair of prancing satyrs<sup>631</sup> hangs above the fireplace's mantle while a witch's<sup>632</sup> broomstick with charred bristles leans against the hearth. A tall coat rack fashioned from dragon's tusks stands in the corner.<sup>633</sup> Dangling from the tusks is a caped Inverness coat, a twill deerstalker and a sorcerer's coned hat festooned with yellow moons and golden stars.<sup>634</sup> Atop an imposing gopher wood desk, a stuffed cockatrice<sup>635</sup> lay in its feathered coil. The reptile eternally waits: intent on killing some mortal with a lethal glance from its ruby eyes.

In the final scene of a murder mystery, the detective summons the witnesses and suspects. They sit anxiously dreading or anticipating. Except for some skeptical snickers, the suspects stare back with sober dour. In the classic detective yarn there is always one sweaty person whose confident smirk begins to quake under a brittle strain.

Be warned detective, the killer knows you are closing in on him.

You have solved the greatest murder mystery of the past two thousand years. You walk across the floor. Your softest steps echo because no one in room bothers to breathe. You glance down to the stuffed cockatrice on the desk and impudently caress the winged serpent's snout. You reach for your pipe tobacco and relax into a comfortable old leather chair. The suspects listened to your tale. You wait for the objections that are sure to follow.

It begins with a single finger sliding upward. The finger belongs to a pale man with a slight frame. He wears an accountant's wire-rimmed bifocals and a crew cut—both throwbacks from the previous century. He dresses in standard navy-blue slacks with an institutional white shirt secured by a severely thin black tie. He would be at home in a cubicle with a massive ledger spread before him. The accountant says, "Let me get this straight. You are saying the Messiah got his religious education from Zacharias and learned his miracles from Tibetan magi?"

You shrug. “Chinese, Indian, Nepalese. Doesn’t really matter. Tibetan magi are as good as any.”

The pale man looks to a small spiral-bound notebook cradled in his left palm. “So he did not spend his adult years in Nazareth. You propose he lived abroad. That’s where he borrowed elements from other philosophies like the concept of the parable from the Buddhists.”

“Yes. The Gospels only verify Jesus spent his some of his youth in Nazareth. No scripture claims adult Jesus ever lived in Galilee. Jesus’ life from twelve to thirty is a proper mystery. As far as plagiarism goes, Jesus did not limit himself to Buddha. Confucius and others predated his teachings. And like Confucius, who had seventy-two worthy disciples to spread his teachings; Jesus chose the same number of disciples as his door-to-door hellfire salesmen.”

The account doesn’t look up from his notebook. “Jesus introduced the idea of an afterlife to the Jewish people. Who did he take that from? The Egyptians? Zoroastrians?”

“Egyptian, Greek, Roman... many had an afterlife but they were not hellish enough. Jesus needed the most cruel hell imaginable. He needed something familiar. Hell’s afterlife needed to be as horrific as the Jewish God’s pitiless wrath. He made Heaven the better choice but still reflecting their God’s infinite but brittle ego. In heaven, neither marriage nor sex nor anything else detracted from a soul’s infinite obligation to nervously worship the insecure god whose middle name is indeed... Jealous.”<sup>636</sup>

The accountant glances to his notebook before asking, “The angel in the garden, the angel at the tomb and the young naked man. They were all the same person?”

“Yes. And likely the Aquarian too. Also, he probably dressed as a scribe and accompanied Nicodemus to convince Pilate to break the crucified men’s legs. Together they became who Gospel John described as “the Jews.”

“So Nicodemus was the disciple who accompanied Peter to Caiaphas’ home on the night of Jesus’ arrest...this Deep Disciple. He was also the host of the Last Supper.”

“Yes. He was probably the Donkeyman too.”

The detail-oriented man removes a black ballpoint from his breast pocket. He clicks the cheap pen three times and places two checks in his notebook. “You propose Jesus practiced his preaching beyond Israel?”

“Yes. No one is a compelling speaker when he first stands before an audience. Jesus likely refined his elocution and rehearsed his sophistry elsewhere. The Pharisee gave us the clue that Jesus was well traveled. They pointedly asked if he planned to preach to conclaves of Jews living in Greece. Apparently they learned Jesus spoke Greek. His unaccountable decades leaves the possibility he already spent some time in Greece.”<sup>637</sup>

The bespectacled accountant places more checks in his notebook. He clicked the ballpoint three more times then slips it back into his shirt’s pocket. “That’s all I have.”

A minister with professionally sculpted hair sits with his arms crossed. He cocks a graying eyebrow. “You have a fertile imagination, Detective. Do you seriously think people can believe Jesus was part of a ridiculously far-fetched conspiracy?”

You reply. “Believing a conspiracy does not mean the nutty theory is automatically wrong. Sometimes they are correct. Every believer knows there was a plot to kill Jesus—a conspiracy or in Christian terms—a prophesy. However, believers accept God was the mastermind of the scheme. This investigation merely presents evidence for a separate conspiracy, which the Bible documents.”

The minister holds his hands out and open. “But you propose a human conspiracy. That’s just so silly.” He smiled and slowly shook his head in generous pity. “I hate to mention this.” He lowers his grandfatherly voice to a condescending whisper. “People will say you are a liar.”



You lift your your pipe from its cradle on the desk. You take a few moments to pack the Calabash with a richly aromatic, cherry-flavored poison. You put the curved stem between pursed lips and pull. Satisfied with the pipe's draw, you take a child's first communion New Testament from the desk drawer and gently toss it. You clamp the pipe stem securely between your teeth but your words are clear. "Prove it."

The older gentleman unzips the little Bible's faux leather cover. "The proof is here." The onionskin pages snap under his whipping fingers. The small print was intended for large, trusting eyes. He squints. "The light in here is poor." He relaxes his eyes wider as he pushes the little white book to arm's length. "The scriptures prove you wrong."

"Let me know when you find the proof." You reach for the small magnifying glass that lives in your vest pocket. You hand it to him saying, "Thank God for footnotes."

"Footnotes?" The minister grins like a patient vulture. "The Bible cannot compare to mere facts and human truths. The Holy Book transcends mortal understanding. You will feel differently when you accept Christ as your personal savior. Until then, people who have Jesus living in their heart will know you twist the Bible's divine truth. Any false prophet can twist scripture to prove a lie—just as did Satan with Job."

"I am Satan?"

"Hardly." The minister smiles crookedly to look amused then gave a little chuckle to sound amused. "You are just one of Satan's pawns to do his bidding."

You take a matchstick from a small tin and strike it against your boot's sole. The flame leaps joyfully up and down as you stoke your Meerscham to a smart glow. It wasn't the first time someone accused you of being in league with Satan before. It is always the religionist's final argument. Experience taught you never to deny it. Denying is what a demon would do.

A young fellow barely into his twenties leans under the unicorn against the west wall. He takes advantage of the moment's pause to speak. "You forgot two of Jesus' conspirators."

You ask, "And those are?"

"Simon the Priest... for one. He was a full member in the Council. Pharisee Simon called Jesus, "Master.""<sup>638</sup>

You shrug. "We cannot implicate a man just because he broke bread with the Christ and had polite manners."

The young fellow shifts his weight to both feet. "What about the centurion? Jesus cured a centurion's servant early in his ministry. That legionnaire deferred to Jesus as his superior and called him Lord."<sup>639</sup> Also the centurion who commanded the crucifixion squad called Jesus, "the Son of God."<sup>640</sup> The similar attitudes suggest those two legionnaires were the same man. A centurion also convinced Pilate that Jesus died prematurely after only three hours. Since there is only one senior centurion for every several hundred legionnaires, the likelihood is even greater those Roman officers were one and the same man. Such an inside man would be invaluable in a crucifixion plot. Why didn't you include this legionnaire in the conspiracy?"

You tamp the embers of your pipe. "Too obvious. Too easy. Unnecessary. And more to the point, the Bible does not further support that position."

A proper matron with a high ruffled collar sat quietly fuming. She points her tenaciously preserved face in your direction and sniffs twice. As if to shut you out of her world, she closes her eyes as she speaks. "You dismissed Jesus' miracles from the beginning!"

"Yes. I did. I thought I was clear about that. Wasn't I clear?"

"Then..." The matron defiantly raises her chin, "Then how did he feed five thousand people with two fish and five loaves of bread?"

“Simple. He didn’t. That is just a lie people are fond of repeating.”

The old woman sputtered, “What? Lie? What?” but her mouth had been on the dry side for years so she sprays no saliva. “The Holy Book does not lie!”

You reply, “Perhaps lie is too strong of a word. Some people read the Bible badly and their misconceptions grow into God-awful convictions.”

She sneers. “So you are not so clever. You can’t say how Jesus fed those thousands of people. Therefore it was a miracle.”

“True. I cannot say personally. I can only offer the Gospels’ testimony on how Jesus faked it.”

## 149. No Such Thing as a Free Lunch

Jesus performed the miracle of the fish and loaves twice. The Gospels describe those two instances eight separate times. With only minor differences, those retellings are identical.<sup>641</sup> The core of the story is that Jesus blessed a few fish and loaves then told his disciples to pass them out to the crowd of several thousand. After the crowd departed, the disciples gathered up the discarded scraps to fill many baskets. The biblical scholar says, “Yep, that’s the miracle of the fish and loaves,” while the detective in you asks, “How in the heck is that is a miracle?”

Imagine a third rate magician in a rundown theater strutting on stage to a smatter of applause. He directs the audience to a large empty cage then kicks the iron bars to show they are solid. He announces he is going to materialize a majestic tiger in that cage. For an encore, he promises to make the animal disappear. He throws a drape over the cage then waves his arms in a flourish of magic evoking gestures. He snatches the curtain away and chimes with confident fanfare, “Ta Daaa!” The cage is empty save a dull, shapeless lump in one corner. The magician triumphantly declares, “You can see with your own eyes. I magically conjured a tiger then made it vanish the instant before I whipped the curtain aside. The animal is miraculously gone and there lies unassailable proof it was here, the great cat’s scat.”

You will find, compared to the fishes and loaves, this tiger trick is better.

The venue for the FLM (fishes and loaves miracle) was likely north of the Galilee Sea. The area was well populated due to the fishing industry and the abundant fresh water. Jesus and his disciples spent the most time promoting his ministry around the northern Galilee so his celebrity could draw a large gathering. One hint places the area outside Bethsaida. Jesus asked Philip about buying food.<sup>642</sup> Since Bethsaida was Philip’s hometown<sup>643</sup> he would be the best one to ask as he would know the better bakers and honest fishmongers.

The size of the two multitudes is subject to a bit of exaggeration. Jesus said there were five and four thousand, respectively. We might take Jesus’ estimate of five and four thousand with a grain of salt since a show’s headliner always estimates audiences on the high side. The Gospels inflate those numbers considerably by specifying that five and four thousand were just the numbers of men. Counting the women and children might easily double or triple those numbers.

The multitude’s attendance ratio is even more telling than the exact numbers. Imagine the opening of a new Greek comedic tragedy in the Tiberias amphitheater on the west side of the Galilee. Perhaps the play was the romantic comedy *The Courtship of Edi’s Father* by Sophocles XXII (a reboot of *Oedipus Rex*). Sophocles Jr. would be thrilled with an attendance of five thousand for a première. He would optimistically expect to fill the Tiberias amphitheater to its capacity of seven thousand in later performances. However, the

second performance's attendance was only four thousand. A reduction of twenty percent for a second performance is the kiss of doom for a performer. Concerned friends might find a morose Sophocles sitting alone in his den staring down a mug of hemlock.

Now consider poor Jesus. Like the televangelists of today, we expect he warmed up the audience with foggy wisdom in parabolic anecdotes. We imagine he supernaturally cured the incurable before a gobsmacked audience who then erupted into applause so thunderous that Thor himself would take jealous notice. If Jesus conjured fishes and loaves from thin air as his encore, we would expect a greater audience for the next gathering. Instead, the attendance dropped sharply.

An investigator finds himself asking how it is possible the audience fell so sharply for Jesus' second show. With word of mouth and glowing reviews, you imagine the attendance might double. Jesus himself commented on the lackluster reception. He said the audience were unimpressed with the demonstration of his powers because they only came to mooch a free lunch.<sup>644</sup> Perhaps Jesus dispensed mediocre magic in curing only lisps, tinnitus and shinsplints. We can't be certain because no Gospel names any of the cures in the eight accounts of the FLMs.

Just as with the water to wine, Jesus needed a reason to do the miracle of conjuring food. In this case, Jesus offered the weakest of excuses. He said he worried people might pass out on their way home. He gives us the impression the crowd suffered low blood sugar, which begs the question. Did Jesus have something against curing hypoglycemics?

The most outstanding characteristic of this miracle is that no one knew any miracle happened. The people who ate the food didn't know. The apostles were not aware a miracle happened on the first occasion... they didn't know the second time either.

There is a rule for miraculously producing objects (in this case, food.) The objects must be conjured in a supernatural manner. In traditional prestidigitation the magician pulls a coin from a child's ear or (as in Christ's story) from a fish. Or the beautiful lady appears inside a locked box or (as in Christ's story) inside a in a locked room. The FLM is in a class of miracle all by itself. It was an implied miracle. Despite recounting the FLM eight separate times, the Bible never describes how the food came into existence. No Gospel wrote of an apostle handing a hunk of bread to someone then having another loaf appear in his empty fist—ready to be handed to the next hungry soul. There is no uproar in the crowd because a pilgrim skewered a fish over his campfire then after looking away for an instant, found three or four mullets sizzling on the spit. Neither the people nor the apostles noticed any miracle of food replicating itself.

Jesus movie screenwriters (*whom we passingly hope do not burn in Hell*) embellish this lackluster miracle by doing that which the Bible specifically forbids upon penalty of damnation.<sup>645</sup> They make up ~~shit~~... stuff. The silver screen depicts fish and loaves spilling endlessly from baskets. Starving throngs of the tearfully grateful scream in riotous praise as they snatch the vittles pouring to the ground. The movie's bottomless baskets behave like the mythical Horn of Plenty except the cornucopia never produced baked goods or animal meat.

If Jesus didn't conjure food, the next question is, "Where did it come from?"

The crowd brought some food. It is unlikely people with a nomadic heritage who live in an arid land would go on a day's outing without packing a box lunch or snacks of trail mix. We know the apostles carried food<sup>646</sup> so it is reasonable that others in the crowd did likewise.

If the outing continued longer than they anticipated, people in the crowd could just buy food. A family with grumbling stomachs who didn't want to miss any of Jesus' parables or his miracles would likely send a young nephew for the couple of miles into town for kippers on barley sandwiches. The gathering of such a massive crowd must had

caught the notice of enterprising bakers and fish merchants. No doubt some of them would seize the opportunity to peddle their wares (at festival prices) to such a well-attended event. Today, hot dog vendors walk festivals hawking their pretzels and funnel cakes. We don't know if snack peddlers were in the multitude but it is true that Jesus got some food from a boy who was circulating through the crowd...<sup>647</sup> carrying five loaves and two fish.

The Gospels confirm food was available within walking distance. The apostles suggested that Jesus dismiss the multitude to go buy lunch.<sup>648</sup> At one point, Jesus suggested the apostles feed the crowd. The apostles did not ask, "Where do we get food in this wilderness?" Instead they asked if they should go buy bread for the crowd?"<sup>649</sup>

The short of it. Ministers and Jesus movies give you the impression that these people were in the final throes of starvation in the wilderness then like Moses calling manna from heaven, Jesus conjured food to the amazement of the throngs of joyous revilers.

Here's the way the FLM really happened....



A couple Jesus' operatives loaded a couple of donkeys (probably a familiar foal and her colt) with baskets of bread and fish. Positioning themselves at the back of the crowd, they hired some kids who jump at the chance to make a couple of spending shekels. The kids trot armloads through the crowd saying, "Jesus wants us all to share our food." With the altruistic encouragement people would have done just that and the food would migrate hand to hand through the crowd. If onlooker on the perimeter gave two thoughts about it, the food would appear everywhere in the crowd simultaneously but not miraculously.

At the same time the apostles stood with Jesus on the opposite side of the multitude. Jesus mentioned that he worried the crowd might pass out from hunger on their journey home. He blessed a few loaves and fish then gave them to his Apostles with instructions to hand out the morsels. The apostles thought little of the exchange as Jesus often said some fairly peculiar things. It took but a couple of minutes for the Apostles to pass out the little bits of food and they never entered the crowd more than two rows deep.

When Jesus announced that he finished parable-izing and miracle-izing for the day, the crowd dispersed quickly from the desert-ed place. Then Jesus instructed his apostles to gather up the waste. The apostles thought little to nothing of the baskets of waste they collected. The second FLM was a repeat of the first. At neither the first nor second FLM, did the apostles marvel or comment on anything supernatural occurring.

Each time after the multitude set off for home, Jesus commanded his disciples to collect all discarded food so it would not go to waste.<sup>650</sup> Even people with full bellies would doggy bag any marginal food for tomorrow's lunch or as crumbs for livestock. Whatever littered the ground had to be cloudy-eyed fish heads and the worse of the worst tooth-cracking burnt crusts. It is odd Jesus told his apostles to gather the scraps so the food wouldn't go to waste. However, fly-speckled fish guts and dirty crusts trampled by a departing crowd are exactly that... rubbish.

Jesus didn't want the food going to waste? You would think a person with Jesus' reputation would not insult hungering folks with such unpalatable/inedible scraps. You would think someone with the talent to conjure fish, bread, wine and coins would not be so frugal with filthy scraps scrapped off the ground. Especially when he wrought food from an inexhaustible supernatural commissary. You would expect one who preached charity and treating others as yourself would offer a more dignified meal even as charity. We hope Jesus dumped that trampled garbage on the community fertilizer compost heap. We hope Jesus did not present such slop to desperate folks and expect gratitude in return.

How do we know that Jesus did miracles with fishes and loaves? Because Jesus said so. That's why.

Jesus had to do the math for his apostles to convince them the FLM actually occurred. He recounted the miracle in a parable-like puzzle hinting that the details were a mystical omen. The apostles didn't know what he was talking about so Jesus accused them of being deaf and blind amnesiacs.<sup>651</sup> Jesus said the FLMs had to do with the Pharisee and Herod. No one has deciphered the meaning of that riddle. Perhaps you might give the solution a try.

Here are the elements of the FLM parable. Jesus said the first time there were five thousand people who were fed with five loaves of bread and the baskets of scraps numbered twelve. The second time had four thousand people, seven loaves of bread and seven baskets of scraps. Jesus says the mystical solution has something to do with metaphorical leavening regarding the Pharisee and Herod Antipas. When you figure it out, post the solution your Facebook so we can all know.

In effect Jesus said, "Darnit! You don't remember the fishes and loaves were miracles? Then how will you know how the numerology significance of the crowd, loaves and baskets of scraps prophetically relate to the Pharisee and Herod?" It appears Jesus berated the apostles as stupid until they said, "Oh... you mean the miracles of those fishes and loaves." The tradition stands today. You don't believe Jesus' miracles? Then how stupid are you?

Once your investigation goes public; Christologians will erase the fishes and loaves from the vetted list of miracles. Either way, as the investigator, should not expect a gracious *Thank You* for bringing it to their attention. It would be better if today's ministers did not claim the fishes and loaves as a miracle. Then we could just ignore it. But they do so we can't.

Oh... there's just one more thing... Sorry to take more of your time... You are busy man but there's something a trifle confusing. I just can't figure it out... You see my Captain... he's quite a stickler. He asked about the baskets.—Yes. That's right... The baskets... I mean, where do you think all those baskets came from? You see. People most often use baskets to carry food. Jesus worried the people would pass out from hunger... because they had no food. If they didn't bring the baskets, why do you think there were a dozen empty baskets after the meal? You see the problem?... The apostles didn't have baskets. They didn't even carry food bowls—Oh. Oh! Of course. That's it. Why didn't I think of that? Someone in congregation carried empty baskets into the desert to gather wildflowers... Well, that answers that.

Oh... there's just one more thing...

## 150. How to Drown Demon Pigs

Scene: Back in the stately manor. Present day

The proper matron asks, "Can you can you exorcise a legion of demons? Then send them into thousands of pigs? And then make them drown themselves?" A hollow chuckle rumbles from her throat.

You draw on your pipe then exhale a billow of blue-gray smoke. "Yes, I can."

"No, you can-not!" Her pleated lips press together then twitch for thirteen heartbeats before her mouth can hold her tongue no longer. "How?"

"Like Jesus, I would pick a large pig ranch—the larger the better. Hog farms are always close to a reliable water source. Porkers require a lot of water."

You point your pipe to nothing in particular. "When I was a boy, my grandpa gave me a Yorkshire piglet. She was my best friend. One day, my curiosity got the better of me. I

popped in the mud and wallowed with her. I wanted to know why she enjoyed it so much. Our friendship changed when she had babies of her own. I stepped on one of her litter and the piglet screamed. She tore my leg open.” You cough lightly to clear the lump in your throat. “We were never pals after that.”

Before you drift deeper into wandering nostalgia, the dowager snaps, “Get to the point!”

You clear your throat again. “To perform the miracle, I would choose a place where the water’s bank is steep and where the lake’s shore slopes sharply.<sup>652</sup> A mountainside dropping quickly to the water would be perfect. Such a terrain is exactly where the Bible describes the miracle happening.<sup>653</sup>

Some friends would help with the exorcism. One of them would spend a couple of weeks haunting the neighborhood by acting crazy to draw attention.<sup>654</sup> He would behave just as the Bible describes. He would howl, roll his naked body in the dirt and use a tomb for his earthen bed like some aspiring vampire. A tomb is especially disturbing for Jesus’ time due to the uncleanness of corpses. People would be extra wary of getting close to a man who sleeps with the dead.

Another friend would take a job as a swineherd. Prior to the miracle, he would restrict the hogs’ water for a couple of days. By giving a fraction of the usual portion of water, the pigs would soon learn to fight for water or go thirsty. On the morning of the miracle, the swineherd would mix heaps of salt into the pig’s slop. By the afternoon the animal’s thirst would be maddening.

That evening, I would lead my entourage past a place within view of the pig herd. My insane friend would scramble to me and scream, “I am a bunch of demons infesting this man but do not torture us.” Similar to Virgin Mary and the water to wine miracle, the possessed man suggested the feat to perform, which made the miracle appear genuine and spontaneous. He would say, “Dispatch we demons hence, hither and forthwith into yon herd of swine.”<sup>655</sup> Overacting is not a distraction since everyone knows how insufferably melodramatic demons can be.

The supernaturally possessed man confirms my divinity by calling me the Son of God. The spooked demons also verify my prerogative to torture souls in the afterlife. If one cannot believe a legion of terrified demons, who can one believe?

I would make mystical gestures and recite an exorcising incantation, “Come out thy unclean spirit.”<sup>656</sup> On cue, my possessed friend falls to the dirt and writhes in a climax of multiple exorcisms.

At the pig range on the mountainside, my swineherd friend would kick a couple of rails from the pen’s fencing. Mad with thirst, the swine desperately seize the chance to escape and end their awful thirst. The parched porkers tear through the breach. They charge down the steep bank. The first ones skid to a stop to drink at the water’s edge. Behind, more gather momentum stampeding down the bluff. An unstoppable wave of fatted flesh wash the first hogs out into the depths. With water over their heads for the first time in their lives, they panic. In the crushing confusion the pigs kick and desperately trample each other vainly fighting upward for air. They frantically pummel each other. Their flat snouts suck in water and squeals of terror intensify the panic. Pushed to deep water, disoriented by the havoc, choking and succumbing to exhaustion, most of the screaming goes silent. Driven by a continuous avalanche of pork, hundreds charge down the precarious bank and bulldoze more doomed swine into the deep. They drown. Only a fraction would survive to serve their destiny as a Roman’s holiday feast or a side order of bacon.

The crazy friend—freed of his demons—pulls himself from the dirt. The man’s sudden transformation would appear as nothing less than a miracle... at least to the gullible.

He cups his nakedness and shouts joyfully of his good fortune. He praises me as his savior. “

“Oh my Lord. My sweet Lord Baby Jesus Christ!” The matron hisses, “What nonsense!”

You continue. “Drowning the Roman’s food stock of pigs would be of less concern to the Israeli natives. Observant Jewish folk were pork-free since the days of Moses. They would be unaffected except for the health hazard of pigs rotting in a community’s fresh water supply.”

The matron sniffs.

You continue again. “The formerly demon possessed wildman will roam about the town showing off his transformation to the people he terrorized only days before. He will proclaim that I miraculously cured him of demons.<sup>657</sup> My swineherd friends<sup>658</sup> also spread the tale that the pigs’ suicide was God’s work or Satan’s work. It doesn’t matter which as long as it was a miracle and I am in the middle of it. After a day or two of spreading the story, my swineherd friends and the exorcised actor arrive in the next village. With a change of costume, they would be ready to assist with my next miracle.”

“Hogwash! Jesus knew nothing about pigs. How could he? He was Jewish.”

“I am afraid you are confusing pigs with figs. Jesus proved he knew zip about figs but he did know something of pigs.”

“Lies. Damnable lies!”

“Jesus called gentiles “pigs.” He talked about casting pearls before swine to be trampled. He warned that an annoyed boar will gore a man.<sup>659</sup> Jesus’ most beloved parable concerns a prodigal son who worked as a swineherd. Jesus also described feeding chow to hogs that was also nutritious for a human. Yes. Jesus knew something of pigs.”<sup>660</sup>

“No! Those pigs were not fenced in. It was a herd of swine grazing on a mountainside like sheep.”

You slowly shake your head. “Shepherds and swineherds have very different job descriptions. Sheep have a habit of clumping together in a defensive herd. However, a skittish sounder of swine scatters in every direction. Except for shoates pestering after sows, pigs do not flock. Two thousand pigs would take scores of men to herd and scores more to chase after the squealers that break away. Swineherds keep their porkers in a confined area. However, it is easy for a couple of lonely sheep-men to watch over a flock of a thousand sheep grazing on a mountainside.”

The woman rears her long, equine face upward. She clinches her eyes as if to shut out a disagreeable world. She screeches, “Even if he faked every other miracle, he walked on water. No one can do that. Jesus had to be God!”

## 151. Jesus Did Not Walk on Water

“Those Gospels were wrong.”

She opens her eyes. Her left eye unstuck first then her right eye pops wide. “What?... Wrong? ...What?!”

“We cannot fault the Gospel writers. Anyone in Christ’s time would make the same mistake. They redeemed Jesus with faint praise. He did not defy any Archimedean principle of buoyancy. If anything, Jesus violated the laws of gravity. He levitated. He only appeared to walk on water. There would be no difference if he walked on sunshine. He flew.”

The old dame’s cheeks flush under her tenacious makeup. “How do you explain Jesus flying on top of the water?”

You shrug. “I don’t need to. The Gospels did not say Jesus flew. They say he walked on the sea.”

### **152. Jesus Did Not Walk on the Sea**

Three Gospels wrote Jesus walked on the Sea of Galilee but those writers were wrong. Jesus never walked on a sea. Do not be critical. The Gospels did their best. Bless their hearts. But when it came to the Galilee waters, they were misinformed.

The name—The Sea of Galilee—is the first disinformation. It is no less of an error when King Herod renamed it the Sea of Tiberias. A sea has qualities the Galilee does not. It joins with no part of any ocean. It does not pulse with high and low tides or strong reciprocating currents. The Sea of Galilee has no briny water. It is a freshwater lake. At seven hundred feet below a sea’s level, it is the world’s lowest freshwater lake. It reaches one hundred and forty feet at its deepest with most of it is less than sixty. Although twelve miles long and eight miles wide, it is still not a sea. It is a big lake but nevertheless... just a lake.

To his credit, Luke referred to the Sea of Galilee by its more correct name, the Gennesaret Lake.<sup>661</sup> Fond of sophistry and unswayed by facts, today’s preachers persist on calling the Galilee a sea. Jesus stomping on a wild roiling sea is more impressive image than strolling on a humble lake.

### **153. Jesus Did Not Walk on a Lake Either**

No one believes Jesus walked on water. If anything, followers accept Christ levitated across that sea. It was only coincident that fathoms of water lay between Christ’s sandal’d sole and the Galilee’s lake bottom.

Renaissance artists portray Jesus standing atop the waves with the water reaching no higher than his shoelaces. Jesus films ignore this image of Christ’s watery stroll. Some movies depict waves splashing around the actor’s ankles. No director represents Jesus bobbing up and down while riding the rolling swells like a bobbing cork.

Miracles aside, what would it would take for a person to walk on water? If he did float, Jesus’ hallowed body would have to be as hollow as a lonely fellow’s inflatable companion. With only two legs, simply standing upright is impossible. Walking would be more impossible (if it is possible for an impossible act to be more impossible.) According to Newton’s action/reaction principles, there can be no walking without traction. Anyone who strolls across a freshly Zamboni’d ice rink in worn tennis shoes will find that Newtonian blue-butt is a very real condition.

Every kid playing in a flooded street knows the secret of walking on water. Even folks in the fourth decade AD would have blown Jesus a Bronx cheer if his watery stroll reached only a dock’s length from shore. Let’s give credit where credit is due. Jesus was a far better miracle worker than that. He walked miles out from shore. So how did he do it?

### **155. Walking on the Galilee and the Miracle Fisherman**



Scene: The Sea of Galilee in the late summer of 33 AD

When the Pharisee heard Jesus walked on water, they had their doubts but they had no proof of fraud. Doctor solved the mystery of the water to wine miracle so they hired him to explain how Jesus could trudge across the Sea of Galilee.

Annas the High Priest of the Council of Pharisee waited impatiently on the north shore near Capernaum. Jethro, Annas’ ever-present sidekick, stood to his left. Jethro was



both a comfort and an irritation. A comfort because Jethro's stupidity made Annas feel superior; an irritation because Jethro's foolishness was so damn annoying.

The doctor sat cross-legged on the pebbled beach; his eyes closed. "Doctor." Annas grew tired of waiting. "Doctor! I do not have all day."

Pharisee Jethro added. "Yeah! Wake up." Jethro jabbed Doctor's thigh with his sandal'd toe.

The wizard sat motionless for a few seconds longer before drawing a long, slow breath. His eyes flickered then opened fully. "Forgive me." He pulled himself to his feet then bowed deeply. "I was meditating while awaiting your arrival. A shaman who studied at the Library taught me. That same shaman showed me the secret of walking on water."

Jethro said, "Okay. So go walk on the water. We've waited long enough."

An easterly wind pushed small swells to the north shore. Doctor glanced once to the sky then locked his eyes on the center of the lake. He turned and stepped toward the small lapping waves.

Annas chose that moment to speak. "Not so fast. You will not fool us a second time. You probably have a tightrope staked out under the water. You'll walk out ten cubits: doing a little balancing act like a jester in Herod's court. That isn't good enough." Annas patted the coin purse hanging on his belt. "If you want your pay this time, you have to walk out there." Annas pointed across the lake's expanse. "Just like Jesus did."

"Yeah!" Jethro snickered. "You will drown before you get our silver."

Doctor's face betrayed nothing. He bowed again. "As you wish. However, walking so far out to sea requires more supernatural power. I must have more preparation. I will go up on the mountain and meditate alone." Doctor added, "Jesus did the same before his Galilee miracle.<sup>662</sup> You get a boat and row west to the Gennesaret side: just as Jesus instructed his disciples to do.<sup>663</sup> I will catch up with you before you reach the opposite shore... just as Jesus did."

Annas cautiously nodded his agreement. Without another word, Doctor turned northward: his staff click-clacked against the smoothed stones of Capernaum's beach.

Annas growled at Jethro, "Don't just stand there. Get a boat."

A fisherman with a friendly smile called from down shore, "Did I hear boat? Do the noble gentlemen seek transportation?" He pointed to a fifteen cubit craft. With spars supporting her, the boat sat high and dry-docked on the rocky shore. The man bragged proudly, "She is the fastest on the Galilee and passage to Gennesaret is a bargain for three denarii."

Jethro countered, "One denarii."

The boatman's smile spread wider as he snapped a quick nod. "We will depart within the hour."

"Then make haste." Jethro added, "And more haste."

Annas rolled his eyes skyward and groaned. "Idiot. Can you not see? This eager ferryman already knows our destination and does not bother to haggle. He obviously works for Doctor. This man is the little wizard's accomplice whose job is to stall us on shore. If you were not such a fool, you would see that." Annas smiled and mumbled, "Not this time, Doctor." He turned to Jethro. "We will use another boat."

A fishing boat anchored just ten cubits offshore; its hull a patchwork of repairs on top of repairs. On board, an equally scarred and weathered old man of the Galilee sea hoisted a net to his sun baked shoulder. He squinted at the webbing for weakened strands. Finding a poorly joined seam, he held it before the most senior member of his crew. The boy was not yet thirteen; his grandson. Sitting on the aft bench, the boy barely glanced up from his net weaving. The captain cuffed the young sailor across the top of his head causing the boy to fall sideways. The boy deftly caught himself by extending his elbow. He pushed his

forearm against the bench and rocked back to his seated position. He appeared as if he barely noticed the captain's blow; he never skipped his mantra's rhythm. "Knit one, purl two... Knit one, purl two..."

Annas called, "You there. Filthy fisherman. Yes, you! I commandeer your vessel in the name of God."

An hour later, the westbound boat drove two miles off the northern shore and a quarter the distance from Capernaum to Gennesaret. The old man and his grandsons took turns rowing. They worked their oars with slow and well-coordinated strokes. Annas struck a heroic pose in the prow with one foot on the forward rail. The cool wind put Annas in a rare good mood. He happily shouted, "Row faster you filthy peasants. Row faster."

The captain could have told the High Priest rowing faster burns out muscles faster. Efficient rowing is a balance of steadily working the water to oppose the pressure of the wind. He could have told the high Pharisee but priests and politicians put greatest value on their own mercurial whimsies.

Annas could smell the salty expanse of the Mediterranean carried on the easterly breeze. Although they were lower caste, he threw a friendly wave to a fishing boat with raised sail passing in the opposite direction.

Nauseous Jethro sat in the stern, nibbling crisp unleavened bread trying to soothe his seasick stomach. He cupped hand over the side and splashed a cool spray on his sweating face. When he opened his eyes, he screamed, "My Annas!" He pointed.

Seventy cubits away, the doctor stood on the sea with the water reaching halfway to his knees. His damp robe hung limp and puddled atop the water.

The captain sprang to action with a speed and strength unexpected for such a worn out old man. He lifted his grandsons, each with one hand, and tossed them to the deck behind him. He dropped onto the oarsman's bench and took both handles in his hard fists. Leaning forward, he slammed the blades into the water with a single loud clap. The boat lurched forward in retreat from the doctor.

Standing in the boat's wake, Doctor waved and cheerfully called, "Ahoy, Ahoy!"

The old captain grunted, "It speaks a devil's language," as he strained against the oars. He whispered loudly to Annas. "It is the spirit of a drowned man who comes for vengeance on the living. We must make for shore. If a sea wraith tries to walk on dry land, the demon will sink into the ground."

"Shut up and be still." Annas forced his voice to sound confident. "God and I will handle this ghost." The fisherman gave the port oar a couple of strokes to point the boat's prow to the northern shore. He kept his hands on the oars and the blades in the water. The captain made ready to drive the boat for shore at an instant's notice.

As everyone watched wide-eyed, Doctor stepped gingerly on the waters. It was as if the deep sea was a bothersome puddle reaching to his calves. When he stopped, Doctor stood five cubits from the starboard side.

"It is a trick," Annas snatched the older boy by his frayed collar. "This is a trick, right?"

The first mate squirmed out of Annas' grip. The boy grabbed a gaff from the deck. Using it like a spear, he stabbed the long pole into the water at the stern and jabbed the depths along the starboard side. The boy looked to his grandfather and shook his head. The captain's tightening grip on the oars blanched his knuckles.

Annas tried to sound sarcastically unimpressed as he groaned, "Very impressive, Doctor. How are you doing this little trick?"

"A trick?" The bald wizard shrugged. "Try it yourself. Step off the boat. Have a little faith."

Annas' left eye began to twitch. He grabbed the younger deckhand and pushed him to the stern. The twelve-year-old screamed and clutched at the rail but Annas was stronger and the boy crashed into the water. The boy's hands, still reaching upward for salvation, disappeared last. Panic-stricken, the first mate reached the long gaff out to the place where his brother disappeared. Feeling a tug on the pole, he pulled. The second mate's head broke the surface. With the younger brother clinging onto the pole for his life, the older one pulled. The younger boy swept through the water between the boat and the wizard; his elbow brushing the floating hem of the doctor's robe. The younger grandson scratched at the boat's slimy hull then finding a hold pulled himself out of the deadly waters.

Annas opened his mouth but words didn't come out. Throwing one kid overboard was not enough. Annas grabbed the older boy and pushed him to the railing.

Jethro reached out and took Annas' arm. The High Priest was wild with anger or fear. "What are you doing?"

Jethro swallowed before saying, "Let me."

"Let you what?"

"You think of me as a fool but I can earn your respect." Before Annas could reply, Jethro swung his legs over the starboard rail. Doctor beckoned him with a gentle wave. Jethro closed his eyes, held his nose and slipped overboard toward the depths. Still holding his nose, Jethro opened his eyes. He found the water lapping at his knees while the hem of his skirt drifted around him.

"I am doing it." Excitement raised his voice an octave. "I am walking on water! I am doing it." Jethro suddenly sank downward. Waves now lapped at the priest's crotch. Panic flashed across his face before he descended again. Now the water covered half his ribs. He reached toward the boat and yelled, "Save me, Annas! Lest I drown!"

Annas staggered backward to portside. **Drowning men are dangerous. A drowning man will claw at his own mother then drag her beneath the waves. Mad with panic, such a man will try to stand on her flailing body for one more breath of air.**

The High Priest's ashen face said it all. If Annas was his savior then Jethro was a dead man. Desperate, Jethro cast pleading eyes to Doctor who stood two cubits away.

Doctor raised his right palm. Jethro's body lifted upward from the lake. He stood as tall as when he first dropped onto the water. The drenched priest fell toward the side of the boat catching the rail. With both boys' help, Jethro dragged himself across the rail. He gratefully splashed face-first into the boat's fetid bilge.

Doctor walked across the water to the starboard rail and gracefully stepped aboard. "Nice day for a refreshing stroll. Yes?" Doctor glanced to the wide-eyed old man: unblinking and frozen to his oarsmen's bench: his fists on the grips and the blades in the water. Doctor brought his right hand to his forehead, tipping the brim of an imaginary hat. "Permission to come aboard, Captain?"

The old man recoiled falling backward to the deck. The right oar's blade flailed skyward while the left dug deep into the Galilee.

Doctor shrugged at the poor reception. "I'll take that as, "Granted.""

"That was great!" Jethro shook water from his soaked robe and faced Annas. "I walked on water! Did you see?"

Annas inched to starboard. He spent several seconds staring at the surface then spun to the captain who was regaining control of the oars. The high priest grabbed the captain by his beard and yelled into his face. "There is a shallow bottom here. Right? You know these waters. There is a rock ridge running underneath us. Right?" Without waiting for an answer, the priest snatched the gaff from the deck and slapped the long pole into the water. Again and again, he stabbed at the depths but hit nothing solid. Annas threw it, like a javelin, in a long arc. The lake swallowed the hooked pole with a *schloop* then, seconds

later, spit it back to bob on the surface. Frustrated, Annas whipped off his left sandal and threw it at the lake. The swells remained indifferent and Annas' tantrum remained unsatisfied.

The captain regained enough of his voice to croak, "No." He shook his head in his own disbelief. "No. No. We are miles from shore. Every Galilee fisherman will tell you the water here is at least ten fathoms."

"You lie!" The priest wished he had not thrown the gaff into the sea. He would have enjoyed burying its hooked point in the fisherman's skull for lying or for telling the truth. Either was justified in the priest's mind.

Annas yelled at the doctor. "How?!"

"You are upset." Doctor raised a finger. "I have an idea. We should fish. Fishing calms the soul." He turned to the crew. "You boys feel up for some fishing?"

The first and second mates appeared as dumbfounded as the captain. Neither youngster wanted to annoy the mysterious newcomer but the older boy cautiously nodded. The first mate reached for a net. Two minutes later, the net sailed out above the lake. It was a motion the boy perfected through a thousand repetitions. The net flowered open to hit the surface lightly splashing in a near perfect circle. Stone weights in the circumference pulled the net beneath the swells making it billow into a fish's worse nightmare... if fish ever dreamed... or slept. After the net sank several cubits, the boy pulled on the line: cinching the trap closed. He cast five more times from portside. The catch was disappointing: one hapless sardine and a familiar left sandal.

Doctor suggested, "Cast to the starboard."

The woven lattice hit the water on the boat's right side. The boy again waited a few seconds for the netting to sink. He heaved on the landline but, in response, the rope jerked back and pulled the boy halfway over the gunwale. Had it not been for his quick-thinking brother grabbing his waist, the boy would have joined the net in the water.

The older mate fought the net's taut line then his brother and grandfather joined in the effort. The bulging net, vibrating with fish, broke the surface and nudged the boat's hull. The crew hoisted the catch into the boat. Flopping and flapping, dozens of plump fish spilled across the deck. Annas sat down heavily on the aft bench. He groaned, "How did you do this?"

Doctor pointed to the deck. "These are trained fish."

Annas gasped, "Trained?"

Doctor sighed, "It took several weeks but I taught them to swim into any net thrown off the starboard side of a boat. It was not easy. My throat grew raw from shouting, "No! No! Your other starboard!""

"Jesus had trained fish?!"

"Sure, Jesus was a fish wrangler. How do you think he got a carp to swim around holding a coin in its mouth waiting for Peter to cast a hook?" Doctor poked Annas' shoulder and winked. "I had you going there for a minute."

Lord Annas regained his regal composure and sniffed, "We are not amused. Now how did you do this?"

"If I start with walking on water the fish part will be easier to explain."

Annas repeated, "How?"

"All three Gospels say Jesus slipped away from prying eyes immediately prior to the miracle. Jesus said he was heading up the mountain to pray in private. That piqued my suspicion because there is no other time when Jesus trudged up a mountain alone; to pray or for any other reason." Doctor cleared his throat. "I lied. When I left you back on shore, I did not go up on the mountain to meditate. Instead, I had a camel waiting. I rode several miles westward along the shoreline."

Annas said, “So like you, Jesus secretly traveled along the shoreline while the apostles rowed against headwinds to cross the lake.”

Doctor nodded. “That is likely. Magic and miracles are always rife with deception. A sailboat waited for me a few miles down the shoreline. That boat ferried me out to this point and dropped me off. I was here well ahead of you. That sailboat was the same one that passed you heading east.”

“I remember that boat,” Annas said, “but you came from behind us. We saw you walking on the water from behind us.”

“Yes, you did but you should never trust your eyes when dealing with a magician or a miracle worker. Do you remember seagulls floating on the water?”

“I saw several.”

Doctor tilted his head. “One of them was me.”

Annas expected his idiot assistant to ask how Doctor transformed himself into a bird. Instead, Jethro remained curiously quiet.

Doctor lowered his eyes. “Yesterday, I am sorry to say, I killed a large gull. To make it look lifelike, I used needles and twine to bind its wings then pushed a stick down its gullet to support the neck. When your boat approached, I lowered myself down in the water. Since my nose and shiny head had to stay above the surface, I wore this.” Doctor held up a small cloth sack crusted with green algae and punched with slits as eyeholes. “I crouched in the water and hid my camouflaged head behind the gull. I even held a twig to move the bird’s head up and down to make it appear lifelike. When you were about seventy cubits upwind from me, I released the seagull to sink; dragged down by a stone tied to its feet. Then I simply I stood up.”

Annas glared at the captain. “This fishmonger says the water is fathoms deep. How did you stand on the water?”

“Not on the water. I stood on a raft floating under the water.”

“How does a raft float beneath the surface?”

“I’ll explain...”

Annas was not listening. “I saw you walk across the water and up to the boat. No raft could carry you like that.”

“You are correct. None could. It was an illusion.” Doctor reached into his purse. He counted out ten denarii and handed them to the captain of the fishing boat. “Our captain used the mountain peaks as reference points. He knew exactly where I was hiding in the sea. When he approached, he looked for the gull I used for camouflaged. Then he easily piloted the boat to a point exactly upwind of the seagull.

“This smelly fish-man is an accomplice!” Annas again glared at the old man’s face. “That still doesn’t explain how you walked across the water.”

“Actually it does but I did not walk to you. I only appeared to do so from your point of view. After you spotted me, the captain pointed the boat’s bow to the north shore with the excuse of wanting to be ready to get to land quickly. With the boat’s port side facing westward, the wind pushed your boat toward me. Our captain used the portside side of the boat like a sail while he angled the keel to act as a sideways rudder. With your attention on me, the captain discreetly feathered his upwind oar to steer the boat to the exact spot to meet the raft. I just swung my arms back and forth and raised my feet up and down as if I was walking. I merely stepped in place and the breeze provided me with a convincing wake for the illusion of walking forward. You did not notice the boat drifting toward me because the water’s surface afforded you no landmarks of rocks or grass to judge your movement. Your experience tells you men walk straight ahead and boats do not sail sideways. You were distracted so you took it for granted the boat sat still and I moved toward you, instead of the other way around.”

Frustrated, Annas said, “ But... but... the boy swam by your legs.”

“With the water a cubit deep, he simply floated over the raft barely brushing it. Again, your experience tells you a man swims in deep water and walks in shallow water. Because he appeared to be swimming, your impression was the water was much deeper.”

Annas whined, I stabbed the water with the gaff. It hit nothing. “How could you be standing on anything?”

While I held your attention, our captain skillfully sculled his upwind oar to twist the boat. By the time you probed the water, the raft was well off the stern and out of your reach.”

Annas demanded, “I want to see this raft.”

Doctor nodded to the already soaked second mate. The boy retrieved a stubby knife, clamped it between his teeth, hopped to the top point of the bow then gracefully dove overboard: making a splash only slightly greater than Annas’ spear-thrown gaff.

Annas grumbled to himself, “This boy was drowning a few minutes ago.”

“Acting!” Doctor added with admiration, “This young thespian can sink like a stone or swim like an otter.” Seconds later a large shadow, half the size of the boat, grew below the water off the stern then bounced to the surface. The platform resembled a wide ladder with four crossbars. Layers of algae-green fishing net stretched tightly across the frame. A large, algae encrusted waterpot was attached to each corner.

Doctor explained. “You did not notice the raft because the algae growth on the nets blended with the murky green water. The rolling of the surface and the reflection of the sun and clouds completed the camouflage.

Annas pointed to the jugs strapped to the raft’s corners. “Those look like...”

“Yes,” Doctor interrupted. “Those are the same as the firkin-sized waterpot I used in the water to wine illusion. Here, they are filled with air. Four men could stand on this raft.”

“Things float on top of water or sink to the bottom. How does something float partway between?”

Doctor raised his index finger and tapped the right side of his nose. “Jesus himself gave me the clue on how the trick worked. Do you remember his remedy for a man who steers a child away from belief in his divinity as God’s Son?”

Annas nodded knowingly but he was clueless.

Jethro spoke up. “Jesus’ parable said it would be best to kill such a man. Better for him if people cast him into the sea to drown instead of misleading a child to the sin of denying Jesus as the child’s Lord and Savior.”

Doctor nodded. “Very astute, Pharisee Jethro.”

Jethro beamed proudly. The subordinate priest glanced left and right, hoping the others noticed Doctor’s compliment.

Doctor continued, “However, that man was not to be merely drowned. Jesus prescribed a rope be strung around his neck and the other end tied to a massive millstone.<sup>664</sup> Even a small kitchen millstone will drown the world’s most powerful swimmer. However, Jesus prescribed an ass-sized millstone; a disk of granite so large that it takes a donkey to turn it and grind grain.<sup>665</sup> The millstone in Jesus’ story was overkill by a hundred fold. That drowned man’s fate is worse than simple death. His body would never wash ashore so his loved ones could never observe their burial customs and properly work through their grief. His wife and children could never have even the small mercy of placing his bones in the family crypt. Tethered by the rope, he floats in the limbo between the surface and the sea floor... forever. The millstone and the drowned sinner describes exactly how this underwater raft works. So you see, Jesus could not be more obvious in giving us the key to how he walked on water.”

Annas frowned at the captain and his grandsons before turning his disdain back to the doctor. “On shore you... you manipulated us into taking this boat.”

Doctor shrugged and smiled modestly. “I knew you would be suspicious of any boatsman who approached you. You have a reputation for regal impatience so I knew you would take a craft already on the water instead of waiting for one sitting in dry-dock. A few coins to the local fishermen assured the other boats stayed far enough away that this boat was your obvious choice.”

“Speak plainly.” Annas pointed to the first mate. “How did this boy catch so many fish?”

“Do you remember when he stabbed the pole into the water? He deliberately missed the raft. Not only did he convince you there was nothing underwater but he also snagged an underwater line. That line connected to a net full of fish. While you were talking to me, the boy discreetly hooked the line to the hull’s starboard. Later, when he cast his net, he pretended to lose his balance and hung over the side. The boy let go of the net he had just thrown and grabbed the line to the second net. It was the second net, full of fish, the crew pulled aboard.”

Doctor reached to the deck and picked up a flopping fish that had no scales. As the catfish squirmed in his fist, he slipped two fingers into the animal’s wide mouth. When he pulled his hand away a freshly minted denarius wedged between his middle and index fingers. Doctor held the fish so that its plump lips were an inch from his right ear. With its mouth opening and closing in an attempt to breathe, the fish appeared to be whispering. Doctor answered, “How generous of you, Mr. Fish... I will.” Doctor placed the coin in the youngest fisherman’s palm. “Mr. Fish wants you to have this coin for your trouble.” The youth’s quick smile made it plain the boy did not expect the gratuity.

As if he were outdoing Peter plucking a single coin from a fish’s mouth, Doctor again reached two fingers into the fish’s mouth to retrieve another equally shiny coin, which he offered the twelve-year-old second mate. Accepting the gratuity, the boy looked into the catfish’s unblinking eyes then bowed in thanks. Doctor held the non-kosher animal over the side then let it slip through his grasp. With a flipper’s joyful flourish, the catfish vanished into the sweet water’s shadowed depths.

“Enough with your trickery.” Annas looked to the raft. “So that sailboat brought you out here also carried this net of fish. The crew threw the full net of fish overboard and tied it to the underwater raft?”

“No. If the crew carried the fish on the boat’s deck, most of them would die within minutes. Jesus and I would be poor magicians if we conjured dead and dying fish from the life-giving waters. Instead, our good captain and his crew caught these fish early this morning. He kept this net in the water and transferred the caught fish inside like a watery cage. Taking another clue from the Gospels, we brought the fish out to this point the same way as Jesus’ apostles dragged their net full of fish ashore... through the water.<sup>666</sup> Likewise, my sailboat dragged these fish through the water to this submerged barge. Once here, the weights on the net kept the net from bobbing to the surface.

“Where did Jesus learn these... tricks?”

“Where? Or from whom? We know Peter and his brother, Andrew, and John and his brother, James, were Capernaum fisherman. Capernaum is a fishing community. Any experienced angler could collaborate with Jesus on this fishing illusion.”

“And what about this contraption?” Annas pointed to the drifting platform. “More fisherman’s knavery?”

“Not fishermen... engineers.” Doctor pointed to the west. “Nazareth is fifteen miles that way. The port of Caesarea Maritima is farther by another fifteen miles. There, Roman

engineers used buoyancy principles to move huge blocks of stone. And Rome conscripted Caesarea's laborers from surrounding villages."

Annas knew of Caesarea Maritima. Everyone knew. King Herod named the port city in tribute to Caesar Augustus. Caesarea was the most technologically advanced seaport on earth. Caesarea's architecture and technology surpassed even the magnificent Jerusalem Temple. The Maritima designers also employed Rome's most closely guarded state secret, concrete that hardens underwater. Great barges anchored to the seafloor served as construction platforms and at peak tides those platforms sat inches below the surface. Annas slowly realized the obvious. Constructing Doctor's submarine raft would be easy for any observant fellow who labored at Caesarea Maritima.

Doctor swept his arm in a wide arc. "The Sea of Galilee is a perfect place to perform this miracle. Being a lake, no tides rise and fall. If it was an actual sea, the raft would float on the surface at low tide. During higher tides, it would lay too deep for a man to stand upon. Being a lake, there are no strong currents or undertow causing the raft to sway wildly under the surface. This technique would not work on a legitimate sea."

Doctor continued with more than a little pride. "This raft needs over a thousand pounds of ballast to keep it anchored below the surface. Once the granite millstones were dropped in place, one of my assistants cinched the ropes and winched the raft to a cubit under the surface."

Annas asked, "You figured out the trick just by the clue in Jesus' parable on the proper way to drown unbelievers?"

Doctor tilted his head. "I guess it is a parable... technically. But like the other parables, it is a repeat of his same old ham-fisted threat. *Believe in me or you will suffer horribly.*"

Annas felt like a schoolboy being patiently tutored. He sat down heavy on the boat's bench; wearily mulling the doctor's demonstration. After a few seconds, he changed the subject. "So Jethro stood on the raft too."

Doctor nodded.

Annas knew he would feel stupid but he had to ask. "When Jethro began to sink you raised your hand and lifted him from the water. How did you do that?"

"I didn't do anything." Doctor gestured to Jethro.

Pharisee Jethro cleared his throat and smiled proudly. It was a mistake to speak but he wouldn't learn that until later. "I have become a magician."

Annas barked, "You what?"

Jethro beamed. "Doctor secretly came to me last week and asked if I wanted to expose how Jesus pulled off his tricks. I agreed since I could help prove Jesus was only a prankster prophet. It took some practice. The first time, I had to muster the confidence to step into deep water fully clothed but, once I did, it was easy."

"You found it easy to help this heathen make a fool of me?" Annas' left eye began to twitch, which Jethro should have taken as a bad omen.

"Yes!" Pharisee Jethro grinned stupidly. "I knew I could earn your respect by proving my value to you. When I stepped out of the boat, the water came up to my knees. I made sure the skirt of my robe billowed out onto the water to hide the bending of my legs. When I knelt, it appeared to you that I sank down a cubit with the water coming up to my waist. When I sat my backside down onto the raft, the water rose to my chest. It appeared to you as if I sank lower. When Doctor raised his hand to me, I merely stood up." Jethro smiled. "See? I am a magician!"

Annas hissed, "You are a traitor." Annas pointed accusingly at the doctor's face. "You have broken our deal! Jesus did not have a... a... magician's assistant."



Doctor shook his head. “I kept our agreement. The Gospel testimonies all but prove Jesus had at least one magician’s assistant. That accomplice’s name is...

(Doctor’s investigation is to be continued but you already know the accomplice’s name.)

#### 154. Jesus’ Many Cousins

Scene: Present day. Back in the Study of the Stately Manor

The minister had heard enough. “I’ve heard enough.” He spat, “Conspirators are everywhere!” He turns to you. “It would take thousands of people to engineer such a complicated deceptions.”

You answer. “Not thousands but at least the few we named. There are others who draw suspicion as co-conspirators.”

“Who?”

“We know John the Baptist and Jesus were not forthcoming with their kinship when they met on the River Jordan. They treated each other as strangers. If not for Luke’s Gospel, the world would never know their mothers were cousins. A curious detective must wonder what other skeletons haunt Jesus’ family closets.”

The gentleman with the immaculate hair snapped, “You said conspirators. So who else?”

You answer, “John the Apostle was also Jesus’ cousin. ”

“What? Another cousin? Detective, you have a flair for the fraudulent. John the Apostle was not Jesus’ cousin. Was not!”

You have been called a liar before. The best rebuttal is to quote the Gospel. “Was too.”

The older gentleman mocked in a singsong voice, “Oh please, tell us.”

“John wrote four women watched the crucifixion. They were Mary Magdalene, the Virgin Mary, Mary the wife of Cleophas and Virgin Mary’s sister.<sup>667</sup> Mark’s Gospel identifies those four women as Virgin Mary, Salome, Mary Magdalene and another Mary who was the mother of James the Less and Joses.<sup>668</sup> Matthew wrote that Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of James and Joses) and the mother of Zebedee’s children attended the crucifixion.<sup>669</sup>

By elimination, we see that Mary’s sister in John’s Gospel is the same woman is identified as Salome in Mark’s Gospel. Matthew identifies that same woman as the mother of Zebedee’s sons. We know Zebedee’s sons were the apostles John and James the Greater (not to be confused with James the Lesser.)<sup>670</sup> Therefore, Salome was the wife of Zebedee and Virgin Mary’s sister and the mother of John the Apostle and Apostle James the Greater. Those two apostles were not merely distant cousins. They were Jesus’ first cousins. Jesus called John’s mother, “Auntie Salome.””

The well-dressed gentleman spent several seconds counting and recounting fingers on both hands before asking, “So what? Being a cousin is no evidence John was a conspirator.”

“No? Like John the Baptist, John the Apostle was less than candid about his relation to Jesus. John’s Gospel neglects to mention his own relationship to Jesus nor did it mention John the Baptist’s relation to Jesus. Those blatant omissions draw one’s curiosity. So, if there was a conspiracy, the Baptist has to be a conspirator since he originally declared Jesus as the Messiah. A detective cannot help but also take a suspicious look at Apostle John for complicitousness.

Jesus' first cousins (John and James) and Apostle Peter (their long time fishing partner) were the only ones who saw Jesus meet with Moses and Elijah.<sup>671</sup> This same trio were also the only ones who saw the Angel with Jesus in the garden. Those three were the only ones who could testify those incidents."

"You stop right there!" The minister lost his good-natured attitude. He points into your face. "You! You said this silly investigation would not question the honesty of the Gospel writers. You broke your word!"

There was no use in arguing. The minister was right. "That was our agreement. With my apologies, please ignore what I just said."

"I can do better than that. I am ignoring every ridiculous thing you said this whole night."

You distract yourself with your pipe. You puff on the stem to revive the dormant ember nestled in the center of the bowl. "Discounting Apostle John, there are still proven conspirators. The evidence shows Judas was an accomplice. That much is sure. Equally strong evidence shows Jesus had one more accomplice among the apostles."

"My sweet Lord, the conspirators are everywhere." The minister with unmussable hair asked, "Well? Go ahead. Tell the next figment of your Münchhausen imagination. Who is this accomplice?"

You wave the curved stem of your calabash to the heavens. "It is elementa... I mean obvious. Peter was Jesus' magician's assistant."

The gentleman's eyes sprang wide. "Peter? Simon Peter? Saint Peter? The Rock? The original Rock? The first pope of the Catholic Church?" In a reflex, he slapped his right hand to his belly as he laughed. "I assure you. Any publishing of your absurd investigation will be immediately banned by the Vati... Why do you implicate Peter?"

"I do not implicate Peter. The Gospels implicate Peter. The evidence is there for anyone who reads the Bible."

The minister shouted, "The Gospels say no such thing!"

You entertain your meerschaum. You blow a smoke ring and another through the first.

The minister with the professional hair whispers. "What is this evidence Peter was an accomplice?"

## 155. The Magician's Assistant



Scene: Two thousand years ago on the Sea of Galilee

Annas the High Priest asked, "What is this evidence Peter was an accomplice?"

Doctor replied, "I first suspected Peter when Mary Magdalene went to tell the apostles the tomb was empty. No apostle saw where Jesus was laid to rest and burial caves pockmarked the countryside around Jerusalem. Yet, somehow, Peter rushed straight away and found the shroud laying in Jesus' otherwise empty tomb.<sup>672</sup> Without Mary leading him there, how did Peter know which was the correct tomb? It was a small point but my suspicions grew as I considered Peter's other actions."

Doctor continued, "Consider the Jesus miracles Peter performed by himself. Jesus told Peter to catch a fish with a coin in its mouth. If anyone believes Peter caught such a fish, it is belief only by Peter's word because the Gospels never say anyone saw Peter catch a coin-spitting fish.

Peter also arranged for Jesus to foretell the future. Jesus predicted Peter would deny Jesus three times before the cock crowed. By going to Caiaphas' courtyard, he put himself in the situation where he could be recognized and thus have a reason to deny Christ. If he

stayed with the apostles, he would have no such reason. No apostle was witness to Peter's denial. It is only by Peter's word that we think he denied Jesus at all. Those two miracles were entirely by Peter's word."

Annas nodded in the all-knowing way priests nod, regardless of their understanding.

Doctor said, "The magician's assistant directs or misdirects the audience's attention. A miracle assistant does the same." Doctor paused to allow the Pharisee priest to digest the idea. "The fig tree Jesus killed grew some distance from the Bethany road. At a distance, the withered leaves would not be readily noticeable from the road. The apostles would have passed by without realizing the tree withered had it not been for Peter. Peter called their attention to the hapless tree. It would be tacky bragging for Jesus to personally point to the tree and say, "Look at the fig over there and notice how I killed it." Instead Peter performed as any good magician's assistant. As if to say, "Ta Dah!" Peter pointed out the miracle of the killed tree, which allowed Jesus to stand quietly bathing in the disciples' awe.

Peter also prepared the Last Supper. He had opportunity to discreetly spike the blood wine and conspicuously leave the knife in preparation for the miracle of the severed ear. Later, Peter could easily distract the apostles' attention to the opposite side of the locked Upper Room so Jesus could slip inside via a secret door.

Peter, John and James were there when Jesus met with Moses and Elijah. Those three also saw Jesus with the angel in the Garden. For all we know, John and James were innocent observers. Being only two others, Peter could simply direct their attention elsewhere when necessary."

Annas admitted, "I did not realize Peter was so convenient to the miracles."

Doctor shook his head. "Not just convenient. Obviously Peter was essential to the ear miracle. Peter inexplicably attacked an innocent bystander to facilitate Jesus performing his ear-healing miracle." Doctor sniffed with professional disdain. "I would have done the ear trick differently... much better.

Consider the first time Jesus performed the fisherman's miracle. Jesus said he wanted to evangelize to the people on shore from a boat. Jesus asked Peter to man the oars. After Jesus finished preaching, he told Peter to row out to deeper water. When at the right spot, Jesus told Peter to throw out his fishnet. At this point, Peter mentioned to Jesus he fished all the previous night without catching a single fish but he cast the net anyway.<sup>673</sup> The net yielded a huge catch on the first cast.<sup>674</sup>

At first glance it is just another of Jesus' fishy miracles but it is more revealing when you notice Peter's role. Jesus chose Peter's boat to preach from. It was Peter who rowed the boat. It was Peter who cast the net to catch the miracle fish.<sup>675</sup> Peter made the miracle more impressive by off-handedly remarking how poor the fishing that whole night before.

If the full net was not a miracle then the likely answer is Peter lied about catching nothing. He did catch fish that night and transferred them into one net, which he kept hidden under the water. Before the light of day, he positioned the fish laden net offshore in several cubits of water. Since the Galilee Sea has no strong currents to carry the weighted net away, he simply tied the net's line to an innocent looking stick unnoticed by people on shore. When Jesus gave Peter his cue to row out to deeper water, Peter located the drifting marker and positioned his boat next to it. From this point, it was a simple matter to cast out the empty net then pull up the full one."

Doctor paused to allow Annas to ask a question or comment. The Pharisee remained silent so Doctor continued. "Peter also set the stage for the second miraculous catch of fish. On that day, Peter whimsically suggested going fishing. This alone was suspicious since fishermen normally schedule their outings during the spawning or by the sunrise or after an evening's red sky. However this day, Peter impulsively suggested a fishing excursion.<sup>676</sup>

His spur-of-the-moment notion makes the fishing profession appear as a haphazard hobby. However, Peter's suggestion served another purpose. It assured the boat would be in the correct position on the lake just waiting for Jesus to walk from down the beach. When Jesus arrived on shore, Jesus shouted to throw the net starboard." Doctor winced slightly, "It is my guess Peter was the one who cast the net. He was, after all, naked."

At first, Annas automatically nodded then caught himself. He leaned sideways and whispered, "Naked? What's naked got to do with anything?"<sup>677</sup>

"Peter preferred to be *au naturel* when out with his sailor buddies... fishing." Doctor shrugged. "I do not judge."

The most important clue came just before Peter stepped of the boat onto the Galilee. As I said, a miracle worker needs an excuse to invoke his supernatural powers. Peter told Jesus to command him (Peter) to walk on water. Peter's suggestion made the miracle appear spontaneous, just as did Mary when she implored Jesus to turn water to wine and just as the demon possessed man who begged Jesus to exorcise his demons into a herd of pigs. It is like the stage magician who interjects a seemingly random element when he says, "Pick a card, any card."

Doctor gestured to Jethro. "This is why I enlisted an assistant." Doctor bowed to Pharisee Jethro who returned a deeper bow of respectful humility—if not false modesty. Doctor said, "Thanks to Jethro, you witnessed the drama firsthand. Magic is never magic when one just tells you the secret. With Jethro's help, you saw Peter's performance just as the unsuspecting apostles saw it. You saw your friend miraculously stand on the waters, sink down and then rise up."

"Jethro's betrayal was for my benefit?" Annas sneered at the subordinate priest but his question was to Doctor. "So you are sure about Peter being an accomplice?"

The old wizard nodded, "Yes. There's more. Consider Peter's behavior when he began to sink. He cried to Jesus for help. Peter faked fear when he sank. Just like the boy you threw overboard, Peter appeared to panic. We know his helplessness was an act because Peter was an outstanding swimmer."

Annas asked, "You deduce he was a good swimmer because he was a fisherman? Isn't that obvious?"

"No. Not at all. Few fishermen are Olympic class swimmers. The first duty of any sailor is to avoid floundering in the water. Otherwise, there would be no peg-legged bosun's mates or hook-handed swashbucklers. There is an old saying in the Tibetan Navy. "*When drowning, pray for God to save you but first, swim.*" A man overboard will instinctively kick his feet and feather his cupped hands through the water. Peter was a powerful and confident swimmer. Yet on this day, he did not keep a brave face before his savior. As soon as the water began to rise around him, he screamed like a frightened little girl. "Save me Jesus!" He never tried to tread water or reach for the nearby boat."

"How do you know Peter was such a expert swimmer?"

"One day while fishing, Peter decided to swim to shore. This was a challenging swim since the beach was two hundred cubits away.<sup>678</sup> Peter made it a more difficult swim. Rather than skinny-dipping to shore, he put his clothes on before diving in. It is daunting enough to swim a hundred yards in a calm Olympic sized pool. But to swim the distance with a floppy robe resisting every arm's stroke and every leg's kick requires considerable confidence.

It is suspicious such a skillful swimmer would panic and scream for Jesus' supernatural help the instant he began to sink. He knew what his shipmates could do to save his life. They had nets and ropes they could throw and drag him to safety. No doubt the crew knew the rescue procedure for when someone shouts, "*Man Overboard!*" but he would have no idea if or how Jesus might supernaturally rescue him.

Annas said, "I understand. Just as Jethro helped you with your trick, Peter helped Jesus with his." Annas sat quietly for several minutes. The boat's captain raised the oars just before the boat glided to the stony shore then grounded with a satisfying crunch. "Well!" Annas slapped his hands down on his thighs as if readying his land-legs for solid ground. "Our business here is finished." Annas stepped ashore first, followed by Pharisee Jethro then Doctor. "Let me be clear, Doctor." Annas' voice dropped an octave. "I do not like you. You are a smug heathen. You pray to infidel gods instead of trembling at the mere thought of our terrible Jehovah. The Council needed to be sure the man we crucified was a trickster and not the prophesied Messiah. I am ashamed to say we needed your expertise because we failed to prove Jesus' deception on our own."

Doctor's curiosity piqued. "Failed? You never mentioned the Council investigated Jesus."

"We made inquiries." Annas sighed. "We even asked Jesus to perform miracles for the Council. He refused. Herod Antipas also asked Jesus to perform. He again refused."

The Council called a beggar to testify. He claimed he was blind since birth but Jesus healed his eyes. Some witnesses testified the man was a formerly blind beggar. Other witnesses swore the man was an imposter."<sup>679</sup>

"Why didn't you administer the blind man test?"

"Blind test?" Annas asked, "What is this blind test?"

Doctor replied. "Jesus himself hinted at such a test. He told a parable of a blind man leading other blind men. When the leader bumbles into a ditch, the blind followers all fall in too."<sup>680</sup> Well, it wasn't an honest parable as much as another of Jesus' thinly veiled threats. The hole is a metaphor for Hell. The blind leader is one lacking faith in Jesus who drags his followers down into eternal torment. The moral of the story is that those who blindly follow Jesus will enjoy Heaven. It is really a silly parable as blind men are always mindful of their steps and are never so clumsy."

Annas repeated, "What is this blind test?"

"You take the formerly man blind, along with a dozen sighted men, to the south side of Jerusalem. Blindfold them all. Tell them to race to the Women's Gate on the north side. The winner gets a gold sovereign and the rest get scourged."

Annas responded with a blank stare. "I don't get it."

"A man who is blind since birth nurtures other abilities. To know his surroundings, he pays attention to his other senses. He can tell the time of day by the sunlight on his skin. He can tell the length of an alley by as little as a donkey's braying echo. He carries a map of the sounds and smells of the city in his mind. Every street merchant's voice is as distinctive as a face to a sighted man. Sighted people do not bother to hone such skills. A former blind man would cross the finish line long before any of the others. A faker would fare no better than the blindfolded twelve."

In frustration, Annas slapped Jethro. "Why didn't you think of a blind test?"

Doctor changed the subject. "You couldn't prove Jesus was a false messiah but you crucified him anyway?"

"We had to err on the side of caution." Annas' jaw clenched. "Besides, Jesus flaunted his disrespect and flouted the Council's right to wield God's authority. He insulted the Pharisee in public and to our faces."

Jethro added, "He called us infidels."

Annas continued, "Yes, so we..."

Jethro interrupted. "...and lying snakes."

"So we..."

"... and hypocrites too."

Annas snapped, "Shut up!"

Jethro leaned toward Doctor and whispered, "...and he cursed us all to Hell."

Annas asked, "What choice did we have? He asked for it! We Pharisee are the stewards of Moses' law and Jesus sowed dissension among the faithful. God needs us to protect His believers from such apostasy. We showed generous restraint for many months. When he gave us no other choice, we arranged his crucifixion."

Doctor added, "But the crucifixion did not work."

Annas sneered. "Jesus' body went missing from the tomb then his disciples spread stories of his resurrection. We halfway expected him to show himself in the Pharisee council chambers. But did Jesus?" Annas spat. "Hell no! Even today, those rumors are growing louder and louder. The foolish peasants are beginning to believe in him and they are questioning the Council's authority to speak for God."

"I see. You cannot defend yourself against ghostly gossip... or in this case, holy ghostly gossip. So you paid me to..."

"...to prove our suspicions. We needed you to verify the Romans crucified an apostate. You have done that. Now the Council can set to undo the mischief Jesus stirred up."

Annas flicked his wrist at Jethro. "When we get back to Jerusalem, tell your replacement to call a Council conclave. I will inform the Pharisee of Doctor's findings."

Jethro's eyes grew wide and bright, "My replacement? Truly? I hoped my walking on water performance would impress you but I dared not dream of a promotion."

"Your dreams are correct. Promotion?" Annas scoffed, "Hardly. I need a replacement because you will be otherwise occupied... standing trial."

"Trial?" Jethro repeated the word as if it did not fit the conversation. "Standing?"

"A Pharisee priest, must set an example. You confessed your dalliance with the forbidden black arts of magic. We cannot let Council priests break Mosaic Law and tamper about things with which mortal men should not tamper. But worry not. You will have a fair trial... a short trial. We will convene around midnight this Thursday at my father-in-law's house." Jethro's knees weakened as Pharisee Annas said to the Doctor. "Wait a minute. You haven't told us how Jesus calmed the storm on the Galilee."

"I have not. That trick will cost you another thirty pieces of silver... plus expenses."

## 156. The One Where Jesus Calms a Storm

The Gospels have several variations of the miracles on the Galilee.

Matthew: Jesus told the apostles to row to the other side of the Galilee while he hiked up a mountain.<sup>681</sup> Sometime before morning, Jesus walked upon the water to meet them.<sup>682</sup> Peter stepped onto the water and took a few steps. The stiff wind distracted Peter so he started to sink. He cried to Jesus to save him.<sup>683</sup> In Matthew's version, Jesus and Peter got in the boat and the wind ceased<sup>684</sup> but Matthew makes no mention Jesus calmed it.

Matthew describes another time when Jesus did calm a storm.<sup>685</sup>

John's gospel mentions neither Peter walking on the water nor Jesus calming a storm.

John: Jesus went up on a mountain alone because he was afraid the people would forcibly crown him as Israel's king.<sup>686</sup> Jesus' disciples got in a boat and headed westward toward for Capernaum.<sup>687</sup> By nighttime his disciples reached about 3¾ miles from shore when they saw Jesus walking on the water. After helping Jesus aboard, they and their boat were immediately and supernaturally transported to their destination.<sup>688</sup> This miraculous transportation is not listed among Jesus' other miracles. However, as the investigator, you can trust that oversight will be corrected shortly after this case is published.

Luke: Luke never mentioned Jesus walking on water either but he did write Jesus calmed a storm.<sup>689</sup> Luke related the same storm story as Mark.

Mark: Mark describes two separate incidents.

Jesus wanted to cross the lake to Gergesenes on the upper West Side.<sup>690</sup> While in his boat, Jesus took a nap. Presently, the sea grew so rough the boat began to swamp. Fearful of drowning, the apostles awoke Jesus. Jesus then rebuked the storm and calmed the sea.<sup>691</sup>

Following his visit to Nazareth, Jesus was again at the Sea of Galilee. He told his apostles to get in their boat and go to Bethsaida while Jesus strolled up a mountain to pray.<sup>692</sup> A few hours before sunup the boat was still on the water rowing against a headwind.<sup>693</sup> The apostles saw Jesus walking out on the waters and mistook him for a spirit.<sup>694</sup> He climbed in the boat and the winds died.<sup>695</sup> Mark does not credit Jesus with stopping the wind.

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The gospels describe this meteorological event as a windstorm with subsequent waves. No Gospel indicates it was anything but a sunny day. The Bible never mentions lightning, thunder, rain or dark clouds.

If an investigator ignores supernatural elements, he can solve the story of Jesus calming a storm without feeling obligated to begin with, "Once upon a time..." Understanding his *modus operandi*, we can expect Jesus did not genuinely calm a storm and he had help not doing it.

There is a whimsical tale about cannibals who captured a missionary then dumped him in a deep cauldron for cooking. As it happened, the missionary was also an astronomer who knew a total eclipse would occur on that very day and over that very village. As he steeped chin deep in the big black kettle, he declared that the Lord in the Heavens listened to his prayers. He shouted to God to punish his tormentors by stealing the sun. The cannibals just laughed as they tossed bullion cubes and chopped carrots into their evangelist stew. The sun shrank to a thin golden ring to engulf the village in an ominous black void. The terrified cannibals pleaded with the missionary to restore the sun. He refused unless the natives renounced their demon gods and surrendered their eternal souls to Christ. The natives hastily did so. With their souls successfully saved, the missionary recited a brief but powerful incantation. The former heathens rejoiced as the sun broke its golden ring and swelled to its full glory. The relieved natives resumed slicing vegetables for their mulligan stew.

The missionary meat shouted. "Wait! You accepted Christ as your new god!"

The natives lowered their heads in pious shame then pressed their palms together. They recited, "Lord Jesus, Bless this food we are about to receive."

If you want to control the elements, the tasty missionary is a good example. If you already know what nature is going to do then you need only bark your command at the right moment. Timing is everything in magic, miracles and comedy.

Right now... you are thinking, *An eclipse is one thing but it is impossible to predict the beginning and end of a windstorm.* Oh ye of little faith.

The Galilee summer winds are so predictable that it is a secular Mecca for today's windsurfers. They joyfully skip across the same waters where Jesus strolled. The breeze blows in from the Mediterranean. That wind doubles its speed as the cooler and denser air pushes over the mountains then rolls down thousands feet, punching through the lighter, warmer air into the bowl of the Galilee. The winds reach their peak around three o'clock then begin diminish. This crescendoing pattern blows in the same direction and repeats

daily; May through September. It peaks in July at about twenty-five knots. At a three to four on the Beaufort scale, winds can create waves of several feet with consistent white caps. The wave intensity is a function of the windspeed and duration plus the surface area of the water and its depth.

The Bible neglects to say who witnessed Jesus calming the storm. However, we can be fairly certain Peter was aboard because every other time Jesus was in a boat, Peter accompanied him. Plus, calming a windstorm required an accomplice and Peter was a constant in Jesus' miracles. Thirdly, the accomplice needed to be a sailor experienced with navigating the great Galilee. Peter fit the bill.

Here's how Jesus performed the illusion of calming a windstorm.

Jesus had a boat at his disposal. He took many jaunts across the Galilee. The cruising itineraries included trips to Gennesaret,<sup>696</sup> to Bethsaida,<sup>697</sup> to Gadarenes,<sup>698</sup> to Magadan<sup>699</sup> Dalmanutha,<sup>700</sup> and to Capernaum.<sup>701</sup> In one instance, he worried the congregation would get rowdy so he told a disciple to ready the boat for a quick departure. It was as if he ordered his chauffeur, "Keep the motor running."<sup>702</sup>

It is conjecture that Jesus always used Peter's fishing boat but reasonable conjecture. We know Simon Peter owned a boat.<sup>703</sup> Also, boating as simple transportation to and from random seaside communities would be an extravagant expense since each hour a fishing boat was not working, was income out of someone's pocket. Pleasure boating was less than rare on the Galilee.

To that end, Jesus preferred passengers who had no boating experience.

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Scene: The Sea of Galilee, 30something AD

They cast off about noon to clear skies. The eastward breeze blew at a relaxing six knots. If anyone had thermometers, the mercury would read a tropical seventy-six degrees. Peter's good spirits helped put his jittery passengers at ease. "What a glorious day the Lord has given us for sailing!"

The passengers had reason to be nervous. They all heard the stories. At times the Galilee raged with such ferocity it rampaged from its banks to crush buildings. The waves could snatch victims and drag them away: their screams drown out in the Galilee's terrible roar: their spent bodies discovered days later, if ever. Countless souls who departed earth had to first rise from the dark depths before breaking the surface towards heaven's light.

He was Malachi, named after the prophet who preceded Jesus a half millennium thence. This Malachi was a shepherd. He'd never been in a boat but took odd comfort that his fellow passengers were as ignorant of nautical matters as he. Nervously swapping small talk, Malachi learned his shipmates were a farmer, a baker, a tax collector, a zealot and another shepherd. Jesus had personally invited each of them on this, one of his many Galilee crossings. A disciple doesn't decline an invitation from his Savior to enjoy an afternoon of boating. And if he did decline, he would never say fear was the reason. No Disciple wanted to hear, *Oh ye of little faith*. Jesus had two admonishments. The other was his curse of Hell. Nervousness aside, Malachi looked forward to what wisdom Jesus might share with the small audience while sailing on a three-hour tour of the Galilee.

Jesus had four sailors among his apostles. Malachi considered himself lucky that the best of those boatswains, Simon Peter, commanded the helm. Peter's booming confidence eased the passengers' anxiety. For the first hour the disciples marveled as Peter piloted the boat across the Galilee. By Peter's expertise, the cleaving rudder and the push of the billowed sail—the boat drove forward with divine purpose.



The Zealot was not interested in his fellow passenger's queasy chatter. Instead, he squinted downward, intently searching the watery depths. A year ago, he'd seen an armored dragon leap four cubits straight up out of the great Nile to snatch its victim. Four cubits was thrice as high as the boat's rail. He shared the incident with his shipmates.

One of the shepherds stammered, "n-N-No one has seen a crocodile here."

Peter offered, "That's true. No one has ever seen dragons prowl the Galilee. At least, no one who lived to tell about it." Peter said matter-of-factly, "If you want to fret about something, fear the white horses."

"Horses..." Malachi smiled broadly and joined the joke saying, "...and the brown donkeys too."

Peter didn't smile back and his lighthearted tone left his voice. "The infidels believe their heathen god of the sea invented horses. White horses are what pagan sailors call the waves with white tops." Peter shrugged. "With the spray of spindrift, they do look a bit like a galloping horse's flowing white mane."

The landlubbers shot glances back and forth. "What should we do if these white horses come around?"

Peter said, "White horses appear when the wind grows angry. The angrier the wind, the more white horses. The more white horses, the more dangerous the waters. Tall waves can jump over the rails and drag a boat down into the depths. Sometimes prayer helps. But prayer always depends on God's mood."

Malachi started to say, *Oh*, but his drying throat clamped shut. He coughed then croaked, "Oh."

The baker said, "Guess we don't want a stampede of white horses." The passengers laughed a little but the baker laughed the loudest and forced his smile the longest.

Exhausted by his demanding schedule and jaded to sailing the Galilee, Jesus stretched out on a bench in the stern. He folded some canvas into a squarish pillow then rested his head and closed his eyes. Within minutes, the soft rolling of the Galilee rocked him to sleep. Malachi realized his hopes for a one-to-one conversation with his Savior didn't look good.

For the next while, Malachi joined in the disjointed banter. *There's a fish below us!... I feel sick... I feel sick... That sea gull dove into the water!... I really feel sick.... Another fish!... Gol dang it! Lean over the rail.* He swayed to keep time to the hull's rhythmless bump-bump against the swells. Those bumps grew stronger.

"I just saw one!" The Zealot pointed off the port side. Malachi didn't know port from stern but he knew pointing. Malachi squinted to the horizon. He saw one too... three, then five white horses. The wind was now thrice as strong as when they launched. The swells one cubit high a half-hour before were now waves of two cubits. Peter's relaxed attitude faded away. After several minutes of straining to draw the sail into an obedient attitude, Peter yelled for the zealot to row for the closest landfall... fast! Though inexperienced, the Zealot fumbled the oars sufficiently to point the bow to the north shore. A wave reached up over the port rail and the riders recoiled, holding fast to anything solid. They looked to Peter who fought the sail's ropes like a man reining a tempestuous stallion. Everyone in the bucking boat knew waves breaching the rails was a bad thing. Malachi wanted to cup his palms to bail but neither of his fists would release the rail. Even the landlubbers realized which side of the hull was supposed to be wet and which was supposed to be dry.

Had the Zealot rowed like a competent swabby, the waves would stay in the sea where they belonged. Instead, his northerly tack allowed the easterly waves to pound the struggling boat's broadside. The passengers didn't have presence of mind to wonder if Peter stoked their fear for some purpose. And that's just how Peter wanted it.

If the Zealot's incompetent rowing panicked the disciples, Peter made matters worse. He strained against the mainsail line to snap the sailcloth taut. The full sail made the boat list to starboard kissing the rail against the water's angry face. Peter then gave quick slack to luff the sail, making the boat swing violently to port in time for waves to breach the opposite rail. Repeating the process quickly covered the rollicking deck with a half cubit of water; then a cubit.

The passengers helped fight the storm as best they could. The farmer prayed loudly. One shepherd joined in the prayers as soon as he finished his second round of puking. His last meal frothed back and forth at their feet. With the farmer and shepherd reciting desperate prayers to Moses and Elijah. The baker sent a silent prayer downward to Poseidon and his son, Triton. The baker knew it was a sin but panic forced him call all supernatural forces to keep them from sinking.

"The boat is sinking!" Peter shouted against the wind, "We are going to die. Let us make our peace with God. Someone wake His son. Wake Jesus!"

Peter's job was easy. All he had to do was pick the right day for the miracle. Galilee fisherman knew the summer winds maxed-out at three hours past the high sun. Peter's boat could easily handle winds of twenty knots and much higher with an experienced crew. Peter counted the white horses daily and noted the angle of the unfurled streamer atop masts. He chose this day because the winds would be plenty safe to navigate with two men but more than enough to terrify landlubbers. Peter counted on the peak windspeed holding for a quarter-hour before beginning to taper. During that time he used the sail make the boat lurch wildly while the Zealot deliberately pointed the prow at the best angle for waves to crash over the rails. Peter, their captain, lamenting certain doom added to the passengers' terror.

Days earlier, Peter carefully picked these passengers from Jesus' many disciples. He joined in the fellowship and idle chatter around the campfire to learn what he needed. Beginning swimmer's skills could not save a man stranded in the Galilee a mile from shore but he didn't want any passengers with even a trace of confidence. After Peter chose the marks, Jesus invited each man to sail with him on a Galilee crossing.

Jesus had the hardest job in pulling off the miracle. He needed to convince the disciples he was sleeping until several minutes after the wind peaked. He had to fake sleeping on a hard wooden beam, under spraying water and in a swampy and pitching boat while the passengers cried in despair. Jesus proved himself talented but no actor is that talented.

After the wind reached its peak Peter shouted, "Someone wake Jesus. He should know we are going to die."

No one else moved so Malachi decided to inch toward the stern; making sure at least one hand always had a firm grip. He thought, *How can I wake a man who can sleep in a tempest?* A bucket of water is the traditional way to roust a drunk but the driving winds already sprayed sheets of lakewater across the boat. Malachi could shout. But the passengers who were not already shouting were wailing. The boat lurched so violently that shaking Jesus' shoulder seemed pointless—if not pointedly stupid.

It is peculiar for a sober man to nap during a tempest. Yet the Gospels say Jesus snoozed away. If you do not believe Jesus slept under those conditions, you are not alone. At least one man thought Jesus faked his napping. Had he thought Jesus was honestly dozing, the disciple would have said, "Sorry to wake you Master but you should know we are about to drown." Instead the man said to Jesus, "*Don't you care* that we are about to die?"<sup>704</sup> That disciple realized Jesus was playin' 'possum because one must be awake to care or not care about anything. The Gospels don't tell us how this disciple knew Jesus

faked sleep. Perhaps he noticed Jesus' eyeball rolling under his eyelid or saw Jesus' hand tighten on his pillow as the boat pitched.

"Don't you care we are about to die?"

Jesus said, "Perish the thought." Sitting up and pretending to stretch the sleep from his bones, Jesus said, "Oh ye ..." Malachi knew what was coming and winced, "...of little faith." Jesus steadied himself with one hand, stood and spoke to the sea and the wind separately. He harshly rebuked the wind first before ordering the waves to simmer down.

When a human rebukes, he considers the object of his chastising as sentient as himself. A boy may scold his dog for pooping incorrectly. The boy must reason that the dog is self-aware enough to appreciate its wrongdoing. It is far less reasonable (actually devoid of reason) to scold inanimate objects for malicious behavior.

It appears Jesus faked sleeping to stall and allow time for the tidal wind to reach its peak. He stalled to allow Peter to terrify the passengers. After the wind peaked, Jesus stood at the mast and lambasted the wind and water. "Bad Wind! Naughty Wind! I order you to stop trying to drown my disciples. I mean it. Don't make me come up there or I'll really give you something to huff about. And you... insolent waters... you just wait. I'll deal with you after I finish fussing at the wind... Bad wind. Bad, bad wind!"

Peter secured the mainsail's line and the oars then moved to the stern. With the mainsail locked near the boat's centerline the boat, Peter turned the rudder for an east-northeast heading and the boat ran with the wind and waves. The effect was dramatic and immediate. Moments before the craft appeared out of control and its passengers felt destined for David Johann's Locker. Now the boat steadied on a solid keel. Peter likely took that moment to rejoice, "Jesus saved us! We have stopped taking on water. The white horses are leaving."

Jesus yawned.

Malachi looked off to port. He saw a few less white horses than moments before but more importantly, the boat ceased its nauseating pitch and yaw. The wind was to their backs as the boat drove steadily. By the time they reached shore, the killing wind returned to a comforting breeze and the waves shrunk to soft swells.

As the Gospels say, Jesus spoke to the wind and there was a great calm. At least there was calm from the passenger's point of view. The passengers told the miracle of Jesus calming the storm but the tax collector jotted a mental note to immortalize the story on paper, if he ever learned to write.

1111David Copperfield once made the Statue of Liberty disappear. If you doubt the majestic lady actually dematerialized then you might suspect Mr. Copperfield discreetly rotated the stage audience's perspective. Jesus could not change the audience's view of the windstorm but he could certainly change the passengers' perception of what they saw. Like Mr. Copperfield, Jesus' audience would be handpicked spectators whose perceptions were easiest to manipulate.

If Jesus calmed the storm by miraculous powers then, as Flannery O'Connor wrote in her short story *A Good Man is Hard to Find*, "... it's nothing for you to do but throw away everything and follow Him." She's right. It matters not if Jesus was demonic or divine. A human has no choice but to worship any supernatural being who demands worship.

If you examine the calming of the sea with healthy questions, you might save time otherwise invested in frightful worship. You can stop worrying about dying in your sleep and skip reciting that children's bedside prayer, which amounts to a last will and testament. You can scratch one more boogeyman who goes bump in the night.

## 157. Jesus Killers Zacharias, Caspar and Herod

Present day: Back in the study of the stately manor

It was the end of the long evening. You rise from your chair and take your deerstalker twill from the dragon-horned coat rack. Your job is done. You slip into your overcoat and adjust the shoulder's cape.

"Not so fast." The older gentleman tosses the little white Bible and the tiny magnifying glass onto a small table. "You said you would name the man who killed Jesus."

"I told you."

"No. You did not."

"Didn't I?" You return the small magnifying glass to your vest pocket. "Together, we found the clues. We exposed the motive. We explained the miracles. We identified conspirators and family members involved in the plot. Are you sure we didn't name the killer?"

The young man of the group clears his throat then speaks two steps louder than a whisper. "I know his name."

You gesture for the young detective to continue.

The young man draws a fortifying breath. "Zacharias and Caspar were the original killers. They did not personally commit the crime but, in planning the execution, they were as guilty as the man who wielded the murder weapon."

"Absur... Rubbish!"

The young man continues. "John the Baptist was murdered first. It was part of the plan for John the Baptist to move out of the picture. John the Baptist, admitted as much when he said he must become less significant in Jesus' ministry.<sup>705</sup> The conspiracy needed Jesus to be the focus of the new religion. The conspirators could not leave another prophet alive if the plan was to move forward. If John the Baptist lived after Jesus died, the disciples would regard John as God's remaining spokesperson on earth. So after introducing Jesus as the Christ, John quit prophesying the coming of the Messiah. John relentlessly antagonized Herod Antipas publicly until Antipas' wife forced Antipas to deal harshly with him."

The minister mutters, "What does that have to do with anything?"

"Zacharias' son and Joseph's son exchanged identities. Therefore, when Antipas executed John the Baptist, he actually killed the man who originally went by the name Jesus as a boy. Matthew said King Herod tried to murder the Jesus born in Bethlehem so it is ironic Antipas unwittingly succeeded where his father failed."

The gentleman with the perfect hair blusters, "Oh my God! How many imaginary killers can one martyr have? Next you will be naming Virgin Mary as a conspirator."

The young man appears awkward in stating the obvious. "She was involved."

The matron has heard enough, "See what you have done?" She faces you and points to the young man. "You corrupted this boy. His soul's damnation will be on your head! You are to blame for his corruption. I weep for his soul. Your trickery is dooming him to an eternity of suffering."

"My words doom him? Not Satan? Or God's displeasure?... or his own freewill? You are saying someone can be tricked into Hell?"

"You deceived this ignorant boy. Even the Chosen can be deceived. Jesus said so." The matron adds a final thought. "Shut up!"

The young man continues without acknowledging the woman's crocodile concern for his soul. "No one killed Jesus the Resurrected. He never died in the Gospels so he had no murderer."

The older gentleman looks to you, "You still haven't answered the big question. Who killed the Jesus on the cross? Who? You promised us a name."

The young man continues. “The gospels give clear testimony. Jesus fully cooperated with his own crucifixion. As far as Jesus is concerned, his death is indistinguishable from an assisted suicide.”

“Jesus murdered Jesus. That’s the big conclusion? Next you will be blaming God for Jesus’ death.”

“God is to blame or at least complicitous,” the young man’s face flushes. “If Jesus was not God incarnate then God still participated in His son’s killing. But God is not the final murderer. Someone else has Jesus’ blood on his hands. He was the man who delivered the final insult.”

The minister with the impeccable hair chuckles sarcastically then says, “Don’t keep us waiting, boy. Give us his name.”

The young man hesitates before saying, “It was Deep Disciple. He is the only one who had no alibi. His whereabouts are uncounted at the time of the murder... and as Jesus’ disciple, he had motive.”

The gentleman minister sputters. “What? Absurd! Deep Disciple, as you call him, was a believer. He dedicated himself to Jesus.” The older gentleman enjoys a long laugh then wipes a tear from the corner of his left eye. He turns to you. “You best go back to your scheming and concoct a better lie.”

You answer. “You are mistaken. Deep Disciple showed no concern for Jesus the Living. However, he obsessed over Jesus the Corpse. DD and his partner controlled all aspects of Jesus’ crucifixion from the arrest in Gethsemane to the cross on Golgotha then on to the cold grave. Deep Disciple’s accomplice begged Pilate for possession of the body and personally removed Jesus from the cross. That accomplice whisked the body to the tomb he had dug so convenient to Golgotha. The only time Deep Disciple ever lifted a hand to help the living Jesus was when he mercifully lifted the poison up to Jesus’ lips.”

“Poison? Poison?! No one said anything about poison.”

“I did, just now. All the clues fall into place. Dressed in a commoner’s disguise, Deep Disciple stood patiently on Golgotha. He waited for Jesus to give him the signal. The timing was critical if Jesus’ body was to get to the tomb on time. Too little time on the cross and no one could bring themselves to believe he actually died. The last person on earth Jesus spoke to was his killer.”

The man with the immaculate hair laughs again but it was a staccato of forced laughter. “Absurder and absurder!”

## 158. “Here is how it happened...”



The man came to Golgotha prepared to do his job. He brought a sponge and a tall hyssop stalk. He also brought jug of wine which he jealously guarded. We know this man brought that wine for Jesus and Jesus alone. He did not sip from the jug during those hours on Calvary nor did he allow anyone else to take a drink. We know this because when he dipped the sponge into the wine, the jug was full. It was not half-filled or one-quarter empty or almost full. It was full.<sup>706</sup>

We could hope the vinegar wine had a knockout drug straight from the pages of *Romeo and Juliet*. We could hope the drug was Juliet’s wormwood extract or an overdose of condensed poppy juice. We could hope Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea revived Jesus at the tomb. We hope Jesus limped away into the decades and grew gracefully into old age. We hope he survived *The Passover Plot*.<sup>707</sup> Although hope springs eternal, neither the odds nor the facts are in our favor.

A knockout drug is unlikely. Too risky. How many ounces would Jesus have to drink? If he drank too little, the rise and fall of his chest would give away that he just

passed out and ruin the illusion. In pain and nausea, he might vomit a portion of the narcotic. With adrenaline coursing his veins, his body might resist the drug and Jesus would just be groggy. All the years of planning and sacrifice would be for nothing. John the Baptist, Judas Iscariot and Jesus would have sacrificed their lives in vain. The plan would fail if he lingered too long on the cross. Jesus had to die on Good Friday and he had to resurrect on Sunday so the pilgrims could carry the good news to their distant villages.

We must suspect, instead of Juliet's temporary knockout drug, that Jesus Christ, like Romeo Montague, drank a very permanent poison.

The Jesus Conspiracy could not afford the risk. Jesus had to appear to die on the cross. The plan required his death to look convincing and real death is the most convincing. Plus, actual death is the easiest to perform on cue. A concentrated poison would be Jesus' drug of choice. With a potent potable, he would not have to swallow several ounces from the leaky sponge. A few drops would do the job. On the bright side, a concentrated poison can kill swiftly. The cross is torture. Death by a quick poison would be painless, relatively speaking.

Atop Golgotha, Deep Disciple stood several paces away from his partner, Joseph of Arimathea. Each man kept his solemn deathwatch. With Joseph in his rich man's finery and DD in his guise as a lowly commoner, the two men gave no hint they knew each other. Neither a word, nor gesture, nor familiar glance passed between them.

Deep Disciple stood frozen in personal agony. His was a terrible chore. Jesus finally uttered the two words his killer desired. "I thirst." No doubt Deep Disciple groaned in silent prayer, *Now I am become Death...*

The disciple did his duty. He dipped the sponge, stabbed it with the hyssop stalk and lifted it to Jesus' lips. Jesus sucked wine from the sponge, swallowed then proclaimed, "It is finished." For Jesus, it was finished but his name survived several more days; born by another man.

When this investigation becomes public, believers will abandon plans to erect twin twenty-story crosses in Houston. Realizing they revered the wrong execution device, townsfolk will take up their torches and pitchforks. Angry villagers will topple the out-of-date talismans looming over Groom, Kerrville and Ballinger, Texas. Enterprising ministers will raise donations to erect colossal hyssop stalks in their places. A monstrous sponge will perch on top. World over, the sponge on a stick will replace the old rugged cross as Christendom's icon of love and/or homicide.

## 159. Oblivion is Not an Option

Scene: The study of the same stately manor, present day

The older man scoffs. "You claim Jesus died by poisoning?"

You nod. "We know Jesus did not die by crucifixion. The Gospels say so."

The minister sniffs. "Personally, I believe God took Jesus' soul from his body to save Christ from more suffering."

"... and then put his consciousness in another man's body with a different face?" You raise a finger. "You must think about..."

"No! I don't have to think about anything. I have faith. I have faith that Jesus died for my sins. He was a selfless martyr."

"The Holy Word agrees with you about the martyr part. The Bible gives clues Jesus was a selfless patriot. His sacrifice was a *beau geste*. By undermining the Pharisee's hold on his people, Jesus lit the fuse for a revolt against the Roman oppressors. That rebellion

exploded in 77AD. On a human level, Jesus was a grandly martyr who spurred his people to a heroic if ill-conceived rebellion.

On a god's level, Jesus was more vicious than gods are typically vicious. He revoked death's oblivion. Since death is no longer an option, all must worship God in eternal Heaven or bemoan Him from distant Hell.

But Hell is not the worst part.

Children indoctrinated with dogma and mysticism grow incapable of objective thought on supernatural matters and pawns for evangelists, godfearing politicians and New Age Spiritualist nutcases, not to mention every used car salesman who slaps a minimalist fish on his billboards.<sup>708</sup> Generation after generation, parents and children are both victims and perpetrators. Each religion claims authority over sex, science, morality, war, life, death and everything in between... in this life. That's the worst part."

"Absurd!"

"I agree." You open the door leading out into the night's fog carpeted cobblestones. The minister speaks again but you are not listening. You turn back, raise a finger and say, "Oh. Oh and just one more thing... in *The Game of the Guiltless God*..."

## 160. Last Two Words

...Case Closed."

# Addendum

## A1. Jesus the Prophet

The short definition of a prophet, is one who carries a message from God. For example, the prophet, John the Baptist, heralded the good news of the coming of the Messiah.

Jesus had two facets to his prophetic career—miracles and teaching. You investigated the miracles and should not overlook his teachings. Since Jesus' teachings have a foundation in the prophets preceding him, we should at least mention the main one, Holy Moses.

## A1. Moses and the Olde Tyme Judaism

Moses was sixty when he led the Jewish people in the Exodus from Egypt. He was a phenomenal one hundred and twenty when he died.<sup>709</sup> While the Holy Books do not specifically say so, we credit Moses as the author of the first five books of the Bible. Among others, Moses gave us the stories of Adam and Eve, the world flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

There is a myriad of religions in today's world but Moses' time had far fewer. Moses had firsthand knowledge of Egyptian mythology since an Egyptian princess adopted him. He lived as Egyptian royalty into his adulthood. The religion God revealed to Moses had little middle ground with Egyptian mythology. The Egyptians worshiped many gods. Moses had just one. Egyptians had a rich afterlife. Moses' had none. Egyptians cultivated art in sculpture and painting while Moses discouraged all expression by paintbrush or chisel.<sup>710</sup> Egyptians regularly shaved. Moses frowned on shaving. Egyptians used cosmetics and decorated themselves with jewelry. Moses rejected all indulgences in

fashion. Egyptians exercised a judicious death penalty while Moses prescribed executions for everything from rebellious children,<sup>711</sup> to adulteresses, to women who do not scream loud enough to classify as—what one politician classified—*legitimate rape*.<sup>712</sup> Moses recommended stoning for capital punishment of convicted oxen.<sup>713</sup> And it is the gallows for any promiscuous ewe having sex with a human.<sup>714</sup>

It is unbelievably coincidental that edicts of Moses' religion were the exact opposite to the Egyptians. However, Moses did adopt four Egyptian religious sacraments. Those were the priest, the temple, circumcision and the notion of a single god. The priest and the temple concepts are obvious but the single god and circumcision invite explanation.

## A2. Let There Be Circumcision

God nor Moses invented circumcision nor does the Bible suggest they did. The Egyptians practiced circumcision long before Moses' time. Like Bill Cosby's *Noah, The Ten Commandments* could have gotten more laughs if the film editor had not cut the scene where Mr. Heston's character introduced circumcision to the menfolk.



“Everyone. Everyone listen up! It has come to my attention that we are remiss in following the covenant God made with Abraham.<sup>715</sup> We must correct that oversight.”<sup>716</sup>

... “A covenant? And that is...”

“It's a pact; like an agreement. In this agreement you are to cut the foreskins off all your slaves.”<sup>717</sup>

... “A foreskin. And that is...”

“...part of the penis.”

... “Okay but the slaves won't like that.”

“You will circumcise your sons too.”

... “Our sons won't like it any better than the slaves.”

“Their agreeing to the agreement is not necessary. Just do it when they are eight days old.”<sup>718</sup>

... “Our sons won't resent us? Won't they miss it?”

“They might wonder about sex with a whole penis. You can just tell them to be happy their excised penises are pleasing to God.”

... “Why can't we let our sons agree when they are old enough to make an covenant... or know what a covenant is?”

“God wants it now.”

... “A newborn cannot agree to anything. How is this a covenant?”

“It just is because God wants it.”

... “Is your son circumcised?”

“No. Haven't gotten around to it. Been busy.” (SEQUENCE IS NOT SURE)

... “Is God circumcised?”

“Yes. No. Yes. I do not know. When I saw God, I only glimpsed his divine buttocks.”<sup>719</sup>

... “This sounds like a one-sided covenant.”

“It's a circumcision covenant because God will probably kill you if you don't do it.”

... “Us too? Are we not men? We are not eight days old.”

“Doesn't matter. Abraham circumcised himself when he was an adult of ninety-nine.”<sup>720</sup>

... “No problem. We covenant to circumcise ourselves when we are ninety-nine.”

“It doesn't work that way.”

... “Why not?”



“Look, I don’t make the rules.”

... “Sounds like you are making the rules.”

“No, God makes the rules. He **wants this/ is interested in your penises**. Not me.”

... “Is it too late to go back to worshipping the golden calf?”

### A3. The Joy of Circumcision

An Egyptian princess adopted Moses as a newborn. Moses probably got snippy-snipped in his infancy since the Egyptians invented circumcision and Moses lived as Egyptian royalty well into his adult years. And it came to pass Moses relayed the news to the Jewish people God preferred circumcised penises.<sup>721</sup> Unlike reattaching severed fingers today, there is no medical procedure to correct foreskin amputation. We speculate Moses was teed off that he could not grow his foreskin back. The next best solution was to have all Jewish males chop theirs off.

The Bible gives an additional reason for Moses’ preoccupation with foreskins. A spur-of-the-moment circumcision once saved Moses’ life.

One day God was in a bad mood. When God was in a bad mood, someone was going to die, naturally, but by super-natural causes not by natural ones. That day, the Lord cast His wrathful glance to Moses and decided to kill him. Moses found himself seconds away from getting fried by a lightning bolt or being torn apart by a pair of she bears. Zipporah, Moses’ quick-thinking wife, picked up a sharp stone. She grabbed her son’s tallywhacker and...(cringing details omitted.) Zipporah tossed her son’s slimy foreskin to Moses’ feet and twice recited an odd incantation about bloody husbands. Like swaying a flute before a deadly cobra, Zipporah charmed God into a less homicidal mood.<sup>722</sup> That foreskin saved Moses’ life.

For Gershom, Moses’ son, there were consequences to saving Moses’ life. For the rest of the boy’s life, when his mother reached for anything resembling a sharp stone, he clutched his crotch and ran—more often than not, screaming. Similarly, Issac, Abraham’s son, developed a chronic twitching paranoia exacerbated by persistent insomnia. “Dad...? What are you doing with that knife? Dad...? Are God’s voices speaking in your head again?”<sup>723</sup>

A couple of Moses’ successors developed a bizarre fascination with foreskins. In one instance, King David collected hundreds of the bloody things. He traded his foreskin collection to King Saul in exchange for a wife.<sup>724</sup> We are better off not knowing what Saul did with the smelly rot.

One special element of Moses’ religion was not exactly like or exactly unlike the Egyptian religion. That was Moses’ commandments carved in stone. Moses did not borrow this idea from Egypt. If he borrowed, it was from Babylonia.

We all know about the two copies of the Ten Commandments. God carved the first set all by Himself.<sup>725</sup> Moses—a competent stone UNVERIFIED mason—assisted the Lord in carving the second set.<sup>726</sup> Many people (mainly Jewish people) know Moses the Lawgiver also chiseled a third set of laws. He carved over six hundred of them into three huge plastered stones.<sup>727</sup> Many people (mainly Christian people) choose to ignore them. Notable exceptions include those against sinfully disgusting transsexuals<sup>728</sup> or the abominations that are gays and those who deserve death for specified sexual and/or affectionate contact.<sup>729</sup>

History’s first lawgiver, King Hammurabi of Babylon, had his laws carved in stone and made basalt copies so every town could follow those same laws. The difference between the two is black and white. Hammurabi’s laws were secular and chiseled into black stone. Moses’ laws were sectarian and carved in white plaster. The other difference

is the Code of Hammurabi survives while all of Moses' graven stones are lost to the shifty sands of legend. One of Hammurabi's monoliths stands in the Louvre as substantial today as when Hammurabi carved it thirty-eight centuries ago. Perhaps this is why the saying, *carved in stone* caught on while *carved in plaster* did not.

Everyone knows Moses was the first to promote one god. As often is the case, what everyone knows is wrong. History credits the concept of a single god (monotheism) to an Egyptian, Pharaoh Amenhotep IV AKA Akhenaten. A hundred years before Moses, Amenhotep abolished the pantheon of Egyptian gods. He ordered the army of freeloading Egyptian priests to move out of their temple's basements and get real jobs. During the reign of Amenhotep, the Egyptians embraced Aten the One God. Aten as the bringer of all life on Earth. If Amenhotep lived today, he would think the Big Bang as the source for his single god. On Amenhotep's death, the old unemployed priests scrambled to resurrect their pantheon of gods and returned to suckling at the religious teat.

When Amenhotep's son, Tut, came of age, he took the reigns of empire. By that time, the priests established themselves as squatters in the old temples and were already collecting tithes from the people on behalf of the newly resurrected gods. We don't know if the Boy King Tut decided to continue his father's monotheist religion because young Tut suffered an untimely, violent and suspicious death followed by a hasty burial. It is unimportant if today's archaeologists are covering up Tut's assassination to protect the regicidal Egyptian priests. We will leave that investigation for another day.

A century after Amenhotep, Moses introduced his miraculous vision of a single god. Amenhotep called his god Aten while Moses (in keeping with the anti-Egyptian religious formula) gave his god an unknown name which best not be spoken. This may be why people use His title as his name instead of something like George or Howard. Today, some believers hyphenate as insurance against G-d smiting them for the offense of even spelling the word correctly. Referring to Jesus by his Christian name is the exception.

The most striking difference was Amenhotep's Aten earned his lordship by showering earth with life so abundant and diverse that such life surpasses every human's wildest imagination. In contrast, Moses' deity earned his awful worship by killing people *en masse* and commanding his worshipers to do likewise. The custom of killing for God's sake endures to this day. It endures so tenaciously that—in two states—the phrase “for God's sake” is a mortal threat.

Gods evolve. Religions split like bacteria. They grow new heads as hydra or shoot independent tendrils like kudzu. Judaism spawned Christianity, which broke off into splinters of Greek, Roman, Russian and Protestant then into factions of orthodox, reformed and Rev. Fred “Total Fruitcake” Phelps. Each embraces the complete holiness in his or her beliefs and is sure there's a measure of demonic influence in all others. The Catholic fundament plopped the load of Lutherans. Mormons evacuated non-polygamy Mormons. Russelites excreted the Jehovah's Witnesses. The oxymoronic Christian Scientists squeezed from Ms. Eddy's asinine fancies. Hubbard pinched off the loaf that is Scientology and Millerites excreted the Seventh Day Adventists who later shat Branch Davidians.

Aten the One God did not die with Amenhotep. Deities neither die if worshipers suffer nor when converts are available. Likewise, the god Aten survived in an altered form. It is very coincident (not coincidence) that in the same region a hundred years after Amenhotep, Grandpa Moses introduced a similar version of Amenhotep's single god. Moses validated his god by documenting his god's history. Moses chronicled His misadventures with Adam, Abraham, Noah, Lot and others.

It does not matter what Moses plagiarized from whom. We don't care if he reverse engineered Egyptian mythology into his new religion or ripped-off Hammurabi's idea of carving laws in stone. You were not solving who killed Moses, who put the contract out on

Amenhotep or who made young Tut's death look like a chariot accident. You sought the name of the man who murdered Jesus..... and you solved that mystery.

Since the Jesus murder is long past solved, you can stop reading here if you wish. However, it may pique your interest to know the first line of the next section is *Moses created the weakest and most insecure God Earth has ever known.*

#### **A4. Moses' Piddly God**

Moses created the weakest and most insecure god Earth had ever known. This deity commanded his followers do his dirty work. He demanded executions of his followers by his followers. He ordered the slaughter of people not for crimes against mankind but for capricious sins and unintended sleights.

Pagan gods were what gods should be. When the powerful Olympians rebelled against the colossal Titans, the gods' battles resulted in earthquakes and lightning storms. No doubt humans perished collaterally in the crossfire. On the bright side, they did not die from a divine tantrum touched off by an arbitrary sin. If a pagan god had a beef with you, he addressed you himself. No pagan would presume to fight a god's battles. If you offended Athena, she would not go to the worshipers in her Acropolis temple and whine, "That human hurt my feelings. Please, be a sweetheart and kill him for me." Athena would kill you personally.

Fighting a god's battle or performing a god's genocide verifies the god is too puny to do his own massacring. Jason and Ulysses often angered the gods but neither of them worried that a devoted pagan would stone them to death or burn them at the stake for their sins. Devout pagans feel it is insulting to meddle in a god's personal grievances.

The Bible illustrates this point in the story of Gideon. Joash, Gideon's father, worshiped the pagan god, Baal. And it came to pass that another god (God) sent angels with instructions for Gideon.

Hidden by the night, Gideon tore down the villagers' altar to Baal. He fashioned an altar to the Lord in its place. Gideon christened the altar by burning his father's second best bull as a sacrifice on the new altar. Note it was not really Gideon's sacrifice since the bull did not belong to Gideon. It is more accurate to say he just stole a big witless animal then killed it to please his peculiar god. Although wack-a-doodle, this behavior is typical for certain followers of this lord (God.) The vandalism incensed the villagers just as citizens are today when an arsonist torches a community chapel.

The outraged townsfolk fumed, "Who did this?" a snitch fingered Gideon. Gideon did not explain what the angels told him. He did not claim righteous justification for his theft, vandalism and animal cruelty. Instead, Gideon skipped town. The citizens marched to Joash's door and demanded, "Give us your son. He destroyed our altar to Baal. We're gonna kill him."

We know Joash was a pagan because, if he worshiped the Old Testament God, Gideon would be a dead son walking. Joash would likely lead the mob, help execute his son with some handy stones then personally hoist his Joash's leaky body into a tree. Such is the punishment for rebellious sons in the Old Testament. However, Joash refused to hand over his son. Joash covered for Gideon. Joash told the villagers, "Let Baal take his own revenge."<sup>730</sup> Joash warned the townsfolk. "If you defend Baal (by killing my son), you will die before daybreak."<sup>731</sup> Doing a god's killing is admitting the god is too spineless to fight his own battles. A pagan god would be infuriated with such an insult. Joash convinced the town of god-fearing pagans not to kill Gideon because Baal would kill them for their meddling in a god's affairs. The villagers saw the pagan wisdom in Joash's reasoning. Although the charges were vandalism, arson, theft, animal cruelty, flight from

prosecution and blasphemy against Baal, they gave Gideon a permanent stay of execution. They ended up punishing Gideon by giving him the nickname Jerubbaal.<sup>732</sup> It's a shame those warm-hearted pagans don't survive today and equally regretful there are so many extant theists with a different sort of God living in their hearts.

Pagan gods did not command their followers to kill people because of sin. Not so much with the Bible God. There is hardly a book of the OT without God telling someone, "Kill that guy's family to see what he will do. Massacre that village because one of them sinned. Genocide that race because they live on Holy Land. Those folks over there? I don't know if I like their looks. Maybe better kill them too, just to be on the safe side."

Some assume Joash suddenly converted from paganism and he actually meant the Old Testament God would kill those townsfolk if they killed his son. These people are what careful detectives call... wrong people.

If any sin deserves the death penalty, it is the crime of murder. Depending on which Decalogue you read, to kill or murder is the fifth or sixth "thou shalt not." With that no-no in the top ten, you would expect the Bible to be chock-full of murderers who God executed because God killed so very many for such piddly, imagined or nonexistent offenses. But you would be wrong. From the bludgeoned son of Adam to the beheaded son of Zacharias, the Bible's God never personally nor had his minion angels kill anyone for the sin of murder. We must wonder if this is why fundamentalists and conservatives are so fond of the death penalty: Killing people is doing the Lord's work... for God's sake. As one Alabama chief justice wrote (in actual writing) regarding the U.S. Supreme Court ruling on gay marriage, "*Public officials are ministers of God, assigned the duty of punishing the wicked and protecting the righteous.*" We can reason how he regards gays (wicked) and non-gays (potentially righteous.)

## A7. Jesus' Teachings, the Crib Notes Note

As difficult as it was for Moses to invent a new religion, Jesus' task was more difficult. As the Messiah, Jesus needed to bring a message that was new enough to be popular but not so different as to alienate those who followed Moses dogma.

Do an experiment. Stop someone on the sidewalk and ask, "What new thing did Jesus teach?" The man on the street may open his mouth then close it or give you a thoughtful expression to hide confusion. Or, he will issue a yellow corkscrewing stream of lukewarm notions. Perhaps he will give you an ill-informed answer. The fact is that Jesus taught nothing new... except for one thing.

"Do unto others as you would have others do unto you," is often called the Golden Rule and often mis-credited it to Jesus. He did say, "Love thy neighbor as yourself," but that was not new. It came from the Old Testament. Jesus did add, "Love your enemy too."<sup>733</sup> That was not new either.

Loving your enemy is counter-intuitive to having an enemy in the first place. Perhaps that is why religionists are fond of repeating the phrase but never practice it. During times of fashionable patriotism, you will never see a man yelling into a megaphone, "I can't hee-ear you. WWJD? WWJD?" while crowds chant back, "Love thy enemy! Love thy enemy!" When it comes to diplomacy versus war, a jingoist treats Jesus like the redheaded stepchild of the Trinity. The OT God of hellfire and righteous slaughter is more appealing.

Eliminating hate for one's enemy was not a new idea. Confucius and Buddha promoted the same idea five hundred years BC (before Christ.) Other wise men also noted a man will sacrifice the good things in his own life if he hungers for vengeance. If he does not starve that hate, he risks making his family destitute when he goes to prison for murder

or is killed by vengeful relatives. Worse, he risks his sons and their sons inheriting the same crippling hatred.

If not in war, Jesus has his uses. Most reserve their prayers to Jesus for a success in surgery, a financial healing or a negative sign on a home pregnancy test. They pray to God when they want salvation from their enemy or their enemy completely exterminated.<sup>734</sup> One's god can justify any atrocity as long as it is divinely atrocious.

In word and action, Jesus preached but a single message.

Believe in me or  
go to Hell.  
Yours in me,  
Jesus

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<sup>1</sup> Buffet "I wish I had a pencil thin mustache then I could solve some mysteries too." --Jimmy Buffet

<sup>2</sup> God's vengeance, Love's vengeance, Clan vengeance, Racial vengeance, National vengeance, Texas High School Football vengeance

<sup>3</sup> Joh 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, ~

<sup>4</sup> Indian giving—"To take back something that is bestowed freely." It is a derogatory term that entered our lexicon because it never made sense in the first place. The term "Paleface giving" never caught on.

<sup>5</sup> A smattering of hotels are removing their Gideon Bibles from their rooms. Obscenity, immorality and cruelty may not be the driving reasons.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Jefferson compared the supernatural events of the Bible to that of a dunghill (pile of ████).

<sup>7</sup> Kiri-kin-tha's First Law of Metaphysics "Nothing unreal exists." (*Star Trek IV*)

<sup>8</sup> Gen 3:16 Unto the woman he [God] said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire *shall be* to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

<sup>9</sup> Mar 1:19 ~, he saw James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets.

<sup>10</sup> Joh 21:20 Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, ~

<sup>11</sup> Publican should not be confused with republican. Publicans of ancient times collected taxes from the working poor. Today's re-publicans defend the wealthy and the corporate from taxation.

<sup>12</sup> Col 4:14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you.

<sup>13</sup> CEV Luk 1:3 So I made a careful study of everything and then decided to write and tell you exactly what took place. ~,

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- 14 Mat 3:4 ~ John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leather girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.
- 15 CEV Mat 3:5 From Jerusalem and all Judea and from the Jordan River Valley crowds of people went to John.
- 16 Mat 3:2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
- 17 CEV Luk 11:51 This includes every prophet from the time of Abel to the time of Zechariah, ~
- 18 Joh 10:41 And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true.
- 19 CEV Luk 1:80 As John grew up, God's Spirit gave him great power. John lived in the desert until the time he was sent to the people of Israel. Luk3:1-2 For fifteen years Emperor Tiberius had ruled that part of the world. ~ At that time God spoke to Zechariah's son John, who was living in the desert.
- 20 CEV Joh 10:41 ~ They were saying, "John didn't work any miracles, ~."
- 21 Joh 1:23 He said, I *am* the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, ~
- 22 Mar 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.
- 23 Luk 3:3 And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;
- 24 Mat 17:12-13 But I say unto you, That Elijah is come already~ Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.
- 25 Joh 1:6 There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John.
- 26 CEV Mat 3:5 From Jerusalem and all Judea and from the Jordan River Valley crowds of people went to John.
- 27 Joh 1:31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, ~.
- 28 CEV Joh 1:33 Before this I didn't know who he was. ~
- 29 CEV Joh 1:33 ~ the one who sent me to baptize with water had told me, "You will see the Spirit come down and stay on someone. Then you will know that he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit."
- 30 Mat 3:14,16 But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? ~
- 31 An estimate... assuming a 13.799 billion year old spherical universe expanding at the speed of light (without adjusting for inflation.)
- 32 Luk 3:22 And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.
- 33 Mat 3:16-17 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.
- 34 Mat 4:2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward hungry. Mat 4:21 And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, ~.
- 35 Joh 1:35-36 Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!
- 36 Mat 4:18,20 And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, ~. And they straightway left *their* nets, and followed him.

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<sup>37</sup> Mar 1:13 And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him. Mar 1:9 And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. Mar 1:16-18 Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.

<sup>38</sup> CEV Joh 1:37 John's two followers heard him, and they went with Jesus.

<sup>39</sup> Joh 2:1-2 And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.

<sup>40</sup> Joh 2:3 And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.

<sup>41</sup> Joh 2:4 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.

<sup>42</sup> Joh 2:5 His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do *it*.

<sup>43</sup> The firkin is an antiquated measurement of somewhere between five and nine imperial gallons.

<sup>44</sup> Joh 2:6-10 And there were set there six waterpots of stone, ~, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare *it*. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: *but* thou hast kept the good wine until now.

<sup>45</sup> Joh 2:6 At the feast there were six stone water jars that were used by the people for washing themselves in the way that their religion said they must.

<sup>46</sup> Joh 2:1 And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there:

**Joh 2:2** And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.

<sup>47</sup> Joh 2:9 ~ (but the servants which drew the water knew;) ~ [parenthesis is KJV]

<sup>48</sup> CEV Mar 2:22 Mat 9:17 Luk 5:37-38 No one pours new wine into old wineskins. The wine would swell and burst the old skins. Then the wine would be lost, and the skins would be ruined. New wine must be put into new wineskins.

<sup>49</sup> Joh 2:11 This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

<sup>50</sup> CEV Joh 2:11 This was Jesus' first miracle, and he did it in the village of Cana in Galilee. ~.

<sup>51</sup> Protestants have the understandable but incorrect notion that The Immaculate Conception refers to Jesus' birth via an antiseptic union of a human female and an ethereal spirit. That is incorrect. The Immaculate Conception is a Catholic description of Mary's conception by her parents/Jesus' grandparents.

<sup>52</sup> Joh 2:23 Now when he was in Jerusalem ~, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.

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- <sup>53</sup> Mat 24:24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect.
- <sup>54</sup> Mar 9:38 ~, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbade him, because he followeth not us.
- <sup>55</sup> Mar 9:39 But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me
- <sup>56</sup> CEV Mar 9:40 Anyone who isn't against us is for us. KJV For he that is not against us is on our part.
- <sup>57</sup> Mat 12:30 He that is not with me is against me; ~.
- <sup>58</sup> CEV Mat 11:20-23 In the towns where Jesus had worked most of his miracles, the people refused to turn to God. So Jesus was upset with them and said: You people of Chorazin are in for trouble! You people of Bethsaida are in for trouble too! ~ I tell you that on the day of judgment the people of Tyre and Sidon will get off easier than you will. People of Capernaum, ~ You will go down to hell! If the miracles that took place in your town had happened in Sodom, that town would still be standing. So I tell you that on the day of judgment the people of Sodom will get off easier than you.
- <sup>59</sup> Mat 13:58 And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.
- <sup>60</sup> Joh 6:26 Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.
- <sup>61</sup> CEV Mar 8:11-12 ~ They wanted to test him by asking for a sign from heaven. Jesus groaned and said, "Why are you always looking for a sign? I can promise you that you will not be given one!"
- <sup>62</sup> Mat 11:25 At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.
- <sup>63</sup> Mat 4:8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, ~;
- <sup>64</sup> CEV Mat 17:27 ~ go cast a line into the lake and pull out the first fish you hook. Open its mouth, and you will find a coin. Use it to pay your taxes and mine."
- <sup>65</sup> Joh 12:6 Judas ~ carried the moneybag ~.
- <sup>66</sup> Luk 2:24 And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.
- <sup>67</sup> See "A Few Dead Babies More" section
- <sup>68</sup> The term daughter-of-a-bitch is a redundant pejorative. "Such a female is a bitch by definition. Therefore, in references to a black-hearted female the term skank, whore or low-down gutter-slut is the preferred term." –Willingham Encyclopedia of Cursing 3rd Edition
- <sup>69</sup> The word "who" is used in this context because, as 2012 presidential candidate Romney reminded us, corporations are people, which is true. A corporation is, legally, a person who is afforded the rights of a person. However, a corporation person has no physical neck so the "neck deep" part is figurative.
- <sup>70</sup> Mat 9:29 Jesus touched their eyes and said, "Because of your faith, you will be healed."
- <sup>71</sup> Mar 7:33 ~ and he spit, and touched his tongue;
- <sup>72</sup> Joh 9:6 ~he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,



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- <sup>73</sup> Mar 8:24-25 And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that he [Jesus] put *his* hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly.
- <sup>74</sup> Mar 6:18 For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.
- <sup>75</sup> Mar 6:11 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.
- <sup>76</sup> CEV Isa 40:22 God is the one who rules the whole earth, and we that live here are merely insects. ~
- <sup>77</sup> Joh 12:14-16 And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, ~, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt. ~
- <sup>78</sup> Mat 21:5 Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy king cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.
- <sup>79</sup> Mat 21:4 All this [getting the donkey] was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, ~
- <sup>80</sup> Mat 21:3 And if any *man* say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.
- <sup>81</sup> Mat 21:1-2 ~ then sent Jesus two disciples, Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose *them*, and bring *them* unto me.
- <sup>82</sup> Joh 12:13 Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna~.
- <sup>83</sup> Mat 21:8 And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed *them* in the way.
- <sup>84</sup> Mar 11:1-2 ~ he sendeth forth two of his disciples, And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring *him*.
- <sup>85</sup> Luk 19:29-30 ~, he sent two of his disciples, Saying, Go ye into the village over against *you*; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring *him hither*.
- <sup>86</sup> Joh 12:14 And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written,
- <sup>87</sup> Mar 11:2 ~ ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; ~.
- <sup>88</sup> This reference is not to be confused with the sickeningly enlightening movie *Jesus Camp*. This Oscar nominated documentary features Ted Haggard in his breakout role masterfully portraying an un-hypocritical pastor who is also un-homosexual.
- <sup>89</sup> Lev 27:11 Donkeys are unfit for sacrifice, ~
- <sup>90</sup> Mat 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees ~, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?
- <sup>91</sup> Mat 23:13,14,15,23,25,27,29 ~ woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!
- <sup>92</sup> Mat 23:14 Woe unto you, ~ Pharisees, hypocrites! ~ ye shall receive the greater damnation.
- <sup>93</sup> CEV Mat 3:7 Many Pharisees and Sadducees also came to be baptized. But John said to them: You bunch of snakes! Who warned you to run from the coming judgment?
- <sup>94</sup> Mar 12:13 The Pharisees ~ sent some men to trick Jesus into saying something wrong.

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- <sup>95</sup> Religious courts exist still today in several denominations. They may convene and pass judgment on sins from adultery to pedophilia without informing civil authorities of the crimes or their court rulings.
- <sup>96</sup> Mat 12:14 Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.
- <sup>97</sup> CEV Mar 3:6 The Pharisees left. And right away they started making plans with Herod's followers to kill Jesus.
- <sup>98</sup> Luk 13:32 And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox [Herod], Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third *day* I shall be perfected.
- <sup>99</sup> Joh 10:39 Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand,
- <sup>100</sup> Mat 21:10 And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?
- <sup>101</sup> Mat 21:5 Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy king cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.
- <sup>102</sup> Joh 11:57 Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he [Jesus] were, he should show *it*, that they might take him.
- <sup>103</sup> Luk 19:47-48 ~ the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him. And could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him.
- <sup>104</sup> Joh 7:32 The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him.
- <sup>105</sup> Mar 14:10-11 And Judas Iscariot, ~, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them. And when they heard *it*, they were glad, ~.
- <sup>106</sup> CEV Luk 19:47-48 Each day, Jesus kept on teaching in the temple. So the chief priests, the teachers of the Law of Moses, and some other important people tried to have him killed. But they could not find a way to do it, because everyone else was eager to listen to him.
- <sup>107</sup> Mar 11:11 And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.
- <sup>108</sup> Joh 2:15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple,~
- <sup>109</sup> Mar 11:13 From a distance Jesus saw a fig tree covered with leaves, ~
- <sup>110</sup> Mar 11:14 And Jesus answered and said unto it [the fig tree,] No man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever. And his disciples heard *it*.
- <sup>111</sup> CEV Mat 21:19-20 ~So he told the tree, "You will never again grow any fruit!" Right then the fig tree dried up. The disciples were shocked when they saw how quickly the tree had dried up.
- <sup>112</sup> CEV Mar 11:12-13 ~he went to see if there were any figs on the tree. But there were not any, because it wasn't the season for figs.
- <sup>113</sup> Mat 21:21 Jesus answered ~ If ye have faith, ~, ye shall ~ do this *which is done* to the fig tree, ~.
- <sup>114</sup> Mat 7:20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.
- <sup>115</sup> Mat 21:18 Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered.
- <sup>116</sup> CEV Luk 7:45 ~ from the time I came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet.
- <sup>117</sup> Joh 11:18 Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off: [1 furlong=1/8 mile]

- 118 Mar 11:12,13 ~, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, ~.
- 119 Mat 26:6 Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, ~  
Mar 11:1 And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples, CEV Joh 1:28 John said this as he was baptizing east of the Jordan River in Bethany.
- 120 Mat 21:17 And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there.
- 121 Mar 11:1-2 And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, And saith unto them, Go your way into the village, ~ ye shall find a colt tied, ~loose him, and bring *him*.
- 122 Mar 11:20-21 As the disciples walked past the fig tree the next morning, they noticed that it was completely dried up, roots and all. Peter remembered what Jesus had said to the tree. Then Peter said, "Teacher, look! The tree you put a curse on has dried up."
- 123 Joh 4:7 There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: ~. Gen 24:13 ~ the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: Exo 2:16 Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew *water*, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. [Except for the Siege of Bethlehem, no men of the Bible drew water from a well nor carried water in the streets.]
- 124 Mar 14:13 And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, [Peter and John] and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him.
- 125 CEV Mat 26:18 Jesus told them to go to a certain man in the city and tell him, "Our teacher says, 'My time has come! I want to eat the Passover meal with my disciples in your home.'"
- 126 Luk 22:10 ~; follow him into the house where he entereth in.
- 127 Luk 22:11 and say to the owner, 'Our teacher wants to know where he can eat the Passover meal with his disciples.'
- 128 Luk 22:12 And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready.
- 129 Luk 22:13 And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.
- 130 Mar 14:17 And in the evening he [Jesus] cometh with the twelve.
- 131 CEV Luk 22:13 Peter and John ~ prepared the Passover meal.
- 132 Luk 22:1 CEV The Festival of Thin Bread, also called Passover, was near.
- 133 Joh 13:21 When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, ~.
- 134 Joh 13:26 Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, ~ he gave *it* to Judas Iscariot, *the son* of Simon.
- 135 Joh 13:30 He [Judas] then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.
- 136 Joh 13:27 And after the sop Satan entered into him [Judas.] ~Luk 22:3 Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, ~
- 137 CEV Mat 26:15 and [Judas] asked, "How much will you give me if I help you arrest Jesus?" They paid Judas thirty silver coins,
- 138 Luk 13:31 The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee.
- 139 2Ki 6:29 So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son.

- 140 Joh 18:1 ~, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden~.
- 141 No reference to the good folks at Olive Garden® restaurants who offer a fine family fare at reasonable prices. Next time you dine there, say you read their disclaimer in *Thirty Pieces of Silver... plus expenses.* and remember to tip your waitress kindly.
- 142 Mat 20:17-19 And Jesus ~ took the twelve disciples ~, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem: and the Son of man shall be betrayed ~ to the Gentiles ~ to crucify *him*: ~
- 143 Joh 11:57 Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he [Jesus] were, he should show *it*, that they might take him.
- 144 Mat 26:56 ~, so that what the prophets wrote would come true." All of Jesus' disciples left him and ran away.
- 145 Joh 18:2 And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.
- 146 CEV Joh 13:29 But because Judas was in charge of the money, some of them thought that Jesus had told him to buy something they needed for the festival. Others thought that Jesus had told him to give some money to the poor.
- 147 Joh 13:30 He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.
- 148 Jesus' moneybag held up to a year's worth of a laborer's wage.
- 149 Go ahead. Check the whitepages website. You know you want to.
- 150 CEV Joh 12:5 "Why wasn't this perfume sold for three hundred silver coins and the money given to the poor?"
- 151 CEV Joh 12:6 Judas ~ carried the moneybag and sometimes would steal from it.
- 152 CEV Joh 13:29 ~ Judas was in charge of the money, ~
- 153 Joh 13:29 For some *of them* thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy *those things* that we have need of against the feast;
- 154 Mat 27:3 Then Judas, ~ when he saw that he [Jesus] was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,
- 155 Mat 27:5 And he ~ departed, and went and hanged himself.
- 156 Mat 26:37-39 And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, ~ Then saith he unto them~: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little farther ~and prayed, ~. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, ~
- 157 Joh 18:18 And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: ~.
- 158 Luk 22:45 And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow,
- 159 CEV Mat 26:25-27 Judas said, "Teacher, you surely don't mean me!" "That's what you say!" Jesus replied. During the meal Jesus took some bread in his hands. He blessed the bread and broke it. Then he gave it to his disciples and said, "Take this and eat it. This is my body." Jesus picked up a cup of wine and gave thanks to God. He then gave it to his disciples and said, "Take this and drink it.
- 160 Mar 14:20 And he answered and said unto them, *It is* one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish. Mar 14:23 Jesus picked up a cup of wine and ~. He gave it to his disciples, and they all drank some.
- 161 Joh 13:30 CEV Judas took the piece of bread and went out. ~
- 162 CEV Luk 22:20 After the meal he took another cup of wine in his hands. Then he said, "This is my blood. It is poured out for you, ~

163 Mat 26:29 But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine,  
until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

164 Mat 26:27 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying,  
Drink ye all of it;

165 CEV Mat 26:40 He came back and found his disciples sleeping. So he said to  
Peter, "Cannot any of you stay awake with me for just one hour?"

166 Truthiness<sup>o</sup>: Term rumored to be coined and copyrighted by Stephen Colbert.

167 Luk 22:44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was  
as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. [CEV] Jesus was in great pain  
and prayed so sincerely that his sweat fell to the ground like drops of blood.

168 Joh 13:27 ~ Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.

169 Author's note: this is anachronistic dramatic license. Dirtbags did not exist until  
the invention of the vacuum cleaner in the 1800's

170 Joh 7:32 The Pharisees ~ sent officers to take him [Jesus.]

171 Joh 7:46 The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.

172 Joh 7:34 Ye shall seek me, and shall not find *me*:~.

173 Joh 7:47 Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived?

174 Mat 26:4-5 And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill *him*.  
But they said, Not on the feast *day*, lest there be an uproar among the people.

175 CEV Joh 18:3 Judas ~ went to the garden with some Roman soldiers and temple  
police, who had been sent by the chief priests and the Pharisees. ~

176 Mat 26:39,42,44 Mar 14:35,39,41

177 Mat 26:39 And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying,  
O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as  
thou *wilt*.

178 Mat 26:44 And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time,  
saying the same words.

179 Mat 20:28 The Son of Man did not come to be a slave master, but a slave who  
will give his life to rescue many people.

180 Luk 22:43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening  
him.

181 Luk 22:41 And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled  
down, and prayed,

182 Mar 14:37 And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter,  
Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour? Mar 14:40 And when he  
returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to  
answer him. CEV Mar 14:41 When Jesus returned to the disciples the third time, he said,  
"Are you still sleeping and resting?~

183 CEV Mar 14:50-52 All of Jesus' disciples ran off and left him. One of them was  
a young man who was wearing only a linen cloth. And when the men grabbed him, he left  
the cloth behind and ran away naked.

184 Isa 27:1 In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall  
punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay  
the dragon that *is* in the sea.

185 Author's note: No one lit a campfire in Jesus Camp. The Gospels mention no  
firelight in the garden until the mob brought torches.

186 Mar 13:3 ~ Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives across from the temple, ~

187 Act 1:12 The Mount of Olives was about half a mile from Jerusalem. ~

- 188 Luk 22:47 While Jesus was still speaking, a crowd came up. It was led by Judas, one of the twelve apostles. ~
- 189 The moon was full on the night of April 2<sup>rd</sup> in the year 33 AD.
- 190 CEV Gen 19:11 Then they [angels] struck everyone in the crowd blind, and none of them could even find the door.
- 191 Mic 1:8 Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked: I will make a wailing like the dragons, and mourning as the owls.
- 192 Mar 14:34 And saith unto them, ~: tarry ye here, and watch.
- 193 author's note: Try this. During the next full moon (away from ambient lighting) spread a white sheet over a bush and step back about (a stone's throw) eighty feet. Does the sheet appear to glow?
- 194 Luk 2:9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came ~ and they were sore afraid. Mat 28:5 And the angel ~ said ~, Fear not ye: ~ Luk 1:13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, ~Luk 1:30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, ~ Luk 2:10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: ~
- 195 Luk 22:43-44 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. ~
- 196 CEV Mar 14:42 Get up! Let's go. The one who will betray me is already here."
- 197 Mar 14:51-52 One of them was a young man who was wearing only a linen cloth. And when the men grabbed him, he left the cloth behind and ran away naked.
- 198 Mat 12:24 ~ the Pharisees ~ said, This *fellow* doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.
- 199 Mat 26:15 And said *unto them*, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?~.
- 200 Mat 28:12 And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers,
- 201 Luk 22:53-53 Then Jesus said [to the arresting mob] ~ I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: ~.
- 202 Luk 14:3 And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, ~
- 203 Luk 22:4 And he [Judas] went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them.
- 204 Luk 22:48 But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?
- 205 Mat 27:5 Judas ~ went out and hanged himself.
- 206 Mat 27:4 Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. ~
- 207 Mat 26:51 ~a servant of the high priest's, ~. Mar 14:47 ~ smote a servant of the high priest,~ Luk 22:50 ~ smote the servant of the high priest, ~. Joh18:10 ~and smote the high priest's servant, ~
- 208 Mat 26:51 ~, and smote off his ear. Mar 14:47 ~, and cut off his ear. Luk 22:50 ~, and cut off his right ear. Joh 18:10 ~, and cut off his right ear. ~
- 209 Luk 22:50 And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear [οὐς G3775 Apparently a primary word; the *ear*. Strong's Greek dictionary] Luk 22:51 ~ And he touched his ear [οὔριου Diminutive of G3775; an *earlet*, that is, *one of the ears*, or perhaps the *lobe* of the ear: - ear. Strong's Greek dictionary] and healed him.
- 210 Luk 22:51 And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him.
- 211 CEV Joh 18:8 ~ I am Jesus. If I am the one you are looking for, let these others
- go.
- 212 A small homage to one of Mel Gibson's less sadistic movies.

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- 213 Joh 18:10 ~ The servant's name was Malchus.
- 214 Joh 18:26 One of the servants of the high priest, being *his* kinsman whose ear Peter cut off,~
- 215 Joh 18:26 ~, Did not I see thee in the garden with him?
- 216 μάχαιρα *machaira makh'-ahee-rah* Probably feminine of a presumed derivative of G3163; a *knife*, that is, *dirk*; [dagger] G3162 Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionary
- 217 Mat 26:51 And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear.
- 218 CEV Luk 9:3 He told them, "Don't take anything with you! Don't take a walking stick or a traveling bag or food or money or even a change of clothes.
- 219 Luk 22:36 Then said he unto them, ~: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.
- 220 Luk 22:38 And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.
- 221 Deu 15:17 Then thou shalt take an awl, and thrust *it* through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant forever. And also unto thy maidservant thou shalt do likewise.
- 222 Mat 26:52 Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.
- 223 Joh 18:15 And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and *so did* another disciple~
- 224 Joh 18:3 ~ a band *of men* and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.
- 225 Joh 18:13 And led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.
- 226 Joh 18:15 ~: that disciple ~ went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.
- 227 Joh 18:16 But Peter stood at the door without. ~
- 228 Joh 18:15 And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and *so did* another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.
- 229 CEV Joh 18:16 Peter stayed outside near the gate. But the other disciple came back out and spoke to the girl at the gate. She let Peter go in,
- 230 CEV Mar 15:43 ~ Joseph was a highly respected member of the Jewish council, ~.
- 231 Author's note: Joseph of Arimathaea may not be venerated as father of the pre-paid funeral but the Church did canonize him as a Saint and is presently the official patron saint of funeral directors.
- 232 Joh 3:2 The same came to Jesus by night, ~.
- 233 Joh 3:2 ~ [Nicodemus] said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.
- 234 Joh 3:7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.
- 235 Joh 3:1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:
- 236 Joh 3:10 Jesus ~ said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?
- 237 Joh 7:51 Doth our law judge *any* man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?
- 238 Luk\_23:51 ~ *he was* of Arimathaea, a city of the Jews:~.

239 Joh 7:52 They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? ~  
240 CEV Joh 18:15 Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. That disciple  
knew the high priest, and he followed Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest's house.  
241 Joh 18:16 but Peter was standing at the door without. So the other disciple, who  
was known unto the high priest, went out and spake unto her that kept the door, and  
brought in Peter.  
242 Luk 13:31 The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him,  
Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee.  
243 Joh 18:19 The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, ~.  
244 [They did have closets in Jesus' time.] Mat 6:6 ~ when thou prayest, enter into  
thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; ~  
245 CEV Joh 18:16 ~ But the other disciple came back out and spoke to the girl at  
the gate. She let Peter go in,  
246 CEV Joh 18:16-17 ~the girl at the gate ~ let Peter go in, but asked him, "Aren't  
you one of that man's followers?" "No, I am not!" Peter answered.  
247 CEV Luk 22:55 Some people built a fire in the middle of the courtyard and were  
sitting around it. Peter sat there with them, Joh 18:25 And Simon Peter stood and warmed  
himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also *one* of his disciples? ~  
248 Joh 18:17 ~He saith, I am not.  
249 Luk 22:62 And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.  
250 Mat 26:65 Then the high priest rent his clothes, ~  
251 Lev 21:10 And *he that is* the high priest ~, shall not ~ rend his clothes;  
252 Joh 7:50-51 Nicodemus saith unto them, ~ Doth our law judge *any* man, before it hear  
him, and know what he doeth?  
253 Mat 26:65 ~ He [Jesus] hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of  
witnesses? ~  
254 Joh 10:33 ~; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.  
255 Luk 23:2 ~saying that he himself is Christ a King.  
256 Joh 19:12 ~ whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.  
257 Luk 22:63 And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him.  
258 CEV Mar 6:20 ~. He [Herod] knew that John was a good and holy man. ~he was  
glad to listen to him. And he often did.  
259 Mar 6:18-19 For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's  
wife. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not:  
260 Mar 6:27 And immediately ~ [Herod] commanded his [John's] head to be brought: and  
he went and beheaded him in the prison,  
261 CEV Mat 14:7 ~ he [Herod] swore to give her [Herodias' daughter] whatever  
she wanted.  
262 Yes, King Herod killed his in-laws too.  
263 Luk 23:8 And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was  
desirous to see him of a long *season*, because he had heard many things of him; and he  
hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.  
264 Luk 23:9 Then he [Herod] questioned with him in many words; but he [Jesus]  
answered him nothing.  
265 Luk 23:10 And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him.  
266 CEV Luk 23:11 Herod and his soldiers made fun of Jesus and insulted him. ~  
267 Luk 23:11 And Herod with his men ~ arrayed him [Jesus] in a gorgeous robe,  
and sent him again to Pilate.



- 268 CEVLuk 23:15 Herod didn't find him guilty either and sent him back. This man doesn't deserve to be put to death!
- 269 Luk 23:13-15 And Pilate, ~ Said ~ I, having examined *him* before you, have found no fault in this man ~: No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.
- 270 Luk 23:16 I will therefore chastise him, and release *him*.
- 271 Luk 23:18 But the whole crowd shouted, "Kill Jesus! ~"
- 272 Mar 15:7 And there was *one* named Barabbas, *which lay* bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection.
- 273 CEV Exo 32:27 ~ "The LORD God of Israel commands you to strap on your swords and go through the camp, killing your relatives, your friends, and your neighbors."
- 274 CEV Mat 27:16 At that time a well-known terrorist named Jesus Barabbas was in jail.
- 275 Barabbas Βαραββας; *son of Abba*; Abba Αββα; *father* [Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionary]
- 276 Act 13:6 ~, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus:
- 277 Mat 27:19 ~, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.
- 278 CEV Mat 27:17 ~ Pilate asked them, "Which prisoner do you want me to set free? Do you want Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?"
- 279 Mat 27:17 ~ Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ? Mat 27:21 The governor answered ~ Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Mat 27:22 Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? *They* all say unto him, Let him be crucified. Mat 27:23 And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.
- 280 Joh 19:2 ~ and they put on him a purple robe, Mar 15:17 And they clothed him with purple, ~ Joh 19:5 Then came Jesus forth, wearing ~ the purple robe. ~ [Sidenote: Purple is the color of royalty. Contrary to popular belief, the robe did not belong to Pilate. The Roman military did not wear the color purple. The robe belonged to Herod who was of royal blood.]
- 281 Mar 15:19 ~and bowing *their* knees worshiped him.
- 282 Mat 27:30 And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.
- 283 Joh 19:5 Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And *Pilate* saith unto them, Behold the man!
- 284 Joh 19:12 And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.
- 285 CEV Jer 32:35 [God speaking] And they led Judah into sin by building places to worship Baal in Hinnom Valley, where they also sacrificed their sons and daughters to the god Molech. I have never even thought of telling them to commit such disgusting sins.
- 286 Mat 27:24 ~, he took water, and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: ~.
- 287 Mat 27:25 Then answered all the people, and said, His blood *be* on us, and on our children.
- 288 Mat 27:24 Pilate saw ~ that the people were starting to riot. ~

- 289 The only time Satan ever killed anyone in the Bible was by God's directions in  
*The Book of Job*
- 290 Joh 19:11 Jesus answered, Thou [Pilate] couldest have no power *at all* against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.
- 291 Mat 26:67 Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote *him* with the palms of their hands,
- 292 Luk 23:11 And Herod with his men of war set him at naught, and mocked *him*,
- ~.
- 293 Mat 27:30 And they ~ took the reed, and smote him on the head
- 294 Mat 10:17 But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;
- 295 CEV 2Co 11:24 Five times the Jews gave me thirty-nine lashes with a whip.
- 296 Joh 2:15 And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables;
- 297 Mat 27:26 ~: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered *him* to be crucified.
- 298 Mar 15:15 And *so* Pilate, ~ delivered Jesus, when he had scourged *him*, to be crucified.
- 299 Luk 23:16 I will therefore chastise him, and release *him*. Luk 23:22 And he said unto them ~: I will therefore chastise him, and let *him* go. CEV Luk 23:24-26 Finally, Pilate gave in. ~Then Pilate handed Jesus over for them to do what they wanted with him. As Jesus was being led away, some soldiers grabbed hold of a man from Cyrene named Simon ~ and made him carry it behind Jesus.
- 300 Joh 19:5 Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And *Pilate* saith unto them, Behold the man!
- 301 Joh 18:38 ~, he [Pilate] went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault *at all*. Joh 19:1 Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged *him*. Joh 19:4 Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him.
- 302 Joh 19:6 When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify *him*, crucify *him*.
- 303 Mat 27:32 And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross. Mar 15:21 And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross. Luk 23:26 And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear *it* after Jesus.
- 304 Joh 19:17 And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called ~Golgotha:
- 305 Luk 23:36 And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, CEV The soldiers made fun of Jesus and brought him some wine. ISV The soldiers also made fun of him, coming up and offering him sour wine. NIV The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar ISV The soldiers also made fun of him, coming up and offering him sour wine.
- 306 Mat 27:34 They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: ~ CEV Mat 27:34 There they gave Jesus some wine mixed with a drug to ease the pain. ~.
- 307 Mar 15:23 And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: ~. CEV Mar 15:23 There they gave him some wine mixed with a drug to ease the pain, ~.
- 308 Mat 27:31 ~, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, ~

- 309 2Sa 22:11 And he [God] rode upon a cherub, and did fly: and he was seen upon the wings of the wind.
- 310 Luk 23:35-36 ~. And the rulers also with them derided *him*, ~And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar,
- 311 Mat 27:45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.
- 312 Mat 27:51 ~; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;
- 313 Mat 27:52-53 And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.
- 314 Mat 27:50-52 Jesus, ~, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, ~; ~ the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,
- 315 Mat 27:53 And [dead saints] came out of the graves after [after] his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.
- 316 Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin *is* death~.
- 317 Deu 21:22 And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree:
- 318 Luk 23:38 And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, **THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS**.
- 319 Joh 19:21 Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The king of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews.
- 320 Joh 19:22 Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.
- 321 Joh 19:31 The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was a high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away.
- 322 Deu 21:20-23 ~ This our son *is* stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; ~ And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die:~and thou hang him on a tree: His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged *is* accursed of God); ~.
- 323  $d = \frac{1}{2}gt^2 \mid v^i = gt \mid$  Where  $d$  = distance,  $g = 32$  feet,  $t$  = time in seconds and  $v^i$  = instantaneous velocity in feet per second and given that  $t = 2.0 - 2.3$  seconds,  $d = \sim 60$  feet and discounting slow motion video then Jesus ran out of slack at about 43 m/h.
- 324 Mat 27:38 Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.
- 325 Mat 27:38 Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. Joh 19:32-33 Then came the soldiers, and broke the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they broke not his legs:
- 326 Longinus is not named in the Gospels. His name is a later addition that lends credence to what the indulgence peddlers call the Lance of Longinus the Legionnaire.
- 327 CEV Joh 19:34-35 One of the soldiers stuck his spear into Jesus' side, and blood and water came out. We know this is true, because it was told by someone who saw it happen. Now you can have faith too.
- 328 Joh 19:34 But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.
- 329 Joh 19:28 After this, Jesus ~, saith, I thirst.
- 330 Joh 19:30 ~ Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, ~.

- 331 Mat 27:48 And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled *it* with vinegar, and put *it* on a reed, and gave him to drink. Mar 15:36 And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put *it* on a reed, and gave him to drink, ~
- 332 Joh 19:29 Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put *it* upon hyssop, and put *it* to his mouth.
- 333 CEV Luk 23:36 The soldiers made fun of Jesus and brought him some wine. CEV Joh 19:29 A jar of cheap wine was there. ~
- 334 Mar 14:25 Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.
- 335 Luk 23:42-43 And he [one of the crucified criminals] said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, ~To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.
- 336 Mat 24:40-41 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two *women shall be* grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.
- 337 Luk 23:46 And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.
- 338 Luk 23:52 This *man* (Joseph) went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus.
- 339 Mar 15:46 And he bought fine linen, and took him down, ~
- 340 Mat 27:60 And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: ~Joh 19:41 In the place where Jesus had been nailed to a cross, there was a garden with a tomb that had never been used.
- 341 Joh 19:39 And there came also Nicodemus, ~, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound *weight*.
- 342 Joh 19:40 Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.
- 343 Mar 15:47 And Mary Magdalene and Mary *the mother* of Joses beheld where he was laid.
- 344 CEV Mat 27:61 All this time Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting across from the tomb.
- 345 Mat 27:60 ~He (Joseph) rolled a big stone against the entrance to the tomb and went away. Mar 15:46 And he ~(Joseph), and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulcher.
- 346 Luk 23:50 There was a man named Joseph, who was from Arimathea in Judea. ~
- 347 Mat 27:60 And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: ~
- 348 Mar 15:46 And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen~
- 349 Joh 19:39 And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound *weight*.
- 350 Luk 23:56 Then they went to prepare some sweet-smelling spices for his burial.
- ~, ~
- 351 Joh 11:39 ~Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been *dead* four days.
- 352 Joh 19:39 And there came also Nicodemus, ~ and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound *weight*.
- 353 Mat 27:39 And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads,
- 354 Joh 19:26 ~Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by,~
- 355 Mar 15:40 There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome;
- 356 Mat 27:60 ~ he (Joseph) rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher, and departed.

357 Luk 23:56 ~. But on the Sabbath they rested, as the Law of Moses commands.  
358 Mat 27:62 On the next day, which was a Sabbath, the chief priests and the  
Pharisees went together to Pilate  
359 CEV Joh 19:31 The next day would be both a Sabbath and the Passover. ~  
360 Mar 15:42 And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation,  
that is, the day before the sabbath,  
361 Mat 27:39 And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads,  
362 CEV Mat 27:64 So please order the tomb to be carefully guarded for three days.  
If you don't, his disciples may come and steal his body. They will tell the people that he  
has been raised to life, and this last lie will be worse than the first one."  
363 CEV Joh 11:48 If we don't stop him now, everyone will put their faith in him.  
Then the Romans will come and destroy our temple and our nation."  
364 Joh 19:31 ~, (for that sabbath day was a high day,) ~.  
365 Pilate's wife's name, Claudia, is not mentioned in the Bible.  
366 Mar 15:7 And there was *one* named Barabbas, ~who had committed murder in  
the insurrection.  
367 Mat 27:63 They said, "Sir, we remember what that liar said while he was still  
alive. He claimed that in three days he would come back from death.  
368 CEV Mat 27:65 Pilate said to them, "All right, take some of your soldiers and  
guard the tomb as well as you know how."  
369 Mat 28:4-5 And for fear of him the keepers (the temple soldiers) did shake, and  
became as dead *men*. And the angel answered and said unto the women (the three Marys),  
~  
370 Joh 3:2 The same (Nicodemus) came to Jesus by night, ~.  
371 Luk 13:31 ~ certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out, and depart  
hence: for Herod will kill thee.  
372 Mat 21:1-2 ~then sent Jesus two disciples, Saying unto them, Go ~ find an ass  
tied, and a colt ~ and bring *them* unto me. Mar 11:1-2 ~he sendeth forth two of his  
disciples, ~ ye shall find a colt tied, ~; loose him, and bring *him*. Luk 19:29-30 ~ he sent  
two of his disciples, Saying, ~ ye shall find a colt tied, ~ and bring *him hither*.  
373 CEV Luk 23:54 It was Friday, and the Sabbath was about to begin. CEV Mar  
16:2 Very early on Sunday morning, just as the sun was coming up, they went to the tomb.  
374 Mar 15:46 And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in  
the linen, ~.  
375 Mar 16:1 And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the  
*mother* of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint  
him.  
376 Mat 27:59 ~, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, Mar 15:46 And he bought  
fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, ~ Luk 23:53 And he took it  
down, and wrapped it in linen, ~.  
377 Joh 19:40 Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with  
the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.  
378 CEV Mat 27:61 All this time Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting  
across from the tomb.  
379 Mar 16:3-4 And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone  
from the door of the sepulcher? ~: for it was very great.  
380 Mar 16:9 ~ Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.  
381 Num 19:16 And whosoever toucheth one that is slain with a sword in the open  
fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days.

Num 19:11 He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days.

CEV Mat 27:66 So they went and secured the tomb by putting a seal on the stone in the presence of the guards.

Luk 24:12 And when he [Peter] stooped down and looked in, he saw only the burial clothes. ~.

Mat 28:2,4 ~ the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. ~And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead *men*..

Mat 28:12-13 And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him *away* while we slept.

CEV Mat 28:14 If the governor hears about this, we will talk to him. You won't have anything to worry about."

Mat 28:15 ~ and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

Joh 19:25-26 Now there stood by the cross ~his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the *wife* of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, ~ [John is generally considered to be "the disciple whom he loved".]

CEV Luk 21:37 Jesus taught in the temple each day, and he spent each night on the Mount of Olives. Mat 21:17 And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there. Mar 11:11 ~, he went into the temple and looked around at everything. But since it was already late in the day, he went back to Bethany with the twelve disciples.

Luk 24:33 And they rose up ~, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, ~, CEV Joh 20:19 The disciples ~ locked themselves in a room. ~

Joh 20:26 And after eight days again his disciples were within, ~.

Not to be confused with Judas, Jude the Apostle was also called Thaddaus.

CEV Joh 14:22 The other Judas, not Judas Iscariot,~

Mar 14:17 And in the evening he cometh with the twelve.

Mar 16:5 And entering into the sepulcher, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.

Luk 24:4 And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:

Mat 28:2 ~for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

Joh 20:12 And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

Mat 27:60 ~he [Joseph of Arimathaea] rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher, and departed.

Mar 16:4-5 And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. ~they saw a young man [the angel] ~, clothed in a long white garment;

Mat 28:5-7 And the angel answered and said ~ Fear not ye: ~ And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; ~

Joh 20:17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father:~.

Joh 20:14 And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

- 405 Joh 20:15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.
- 406 Joh 20:16 Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.
- 407 Joh 20:17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father:~.
- 408 Mat 28:10 Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.
- 409 Mat 28:7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; ~
- 410 Joh 20:20 ~ he showed unto them *his* hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.
- 411 Joh 20:26 And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: *then* came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace, *be* unto you.
- 412 Joh 20:25 The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. ~
- 413 Joh 20:25 ~ But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.
- 414 Joh 20:26 And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: *then* came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, ~.
- 415 Joh 20:27 Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust *it* into my side: ~.
- 416 Joh 20:28 And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.
- 417 Joh 21:4 ~, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.
- 418 Joh 21:6 And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, ~.
- 419 Joh 21:11 Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, a hundred and fifty and three: ~.
- 420 Luk 5:4,6 ~, he [Jesus] said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net broke.
- 421 Joh 21:8 And the other disciples came in a little ship; ~ dragging the net with fishes.
- 422 Joh 21:11 ~: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.
- 423 Joh 21:9 As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.
- 424 Joh 21:12 ~ none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.
- 425 Luk 24:18 And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, ~
- 426 Luk 24:16 But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.
- 427 Mar 16:12 After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country.
- 428 CEV Luk 24:35 ~ they knew he was the Lord when he broke the bread.
- 429 Luk 24:31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.
- 430 CEV Mar 16:13 But when these disciples told what had happened, the others would not believe.

- 431 Mar 16:14 Afterward he appeared unto the eleven ~, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.
- 432 Luk 24:39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: ~.
- 433 Mar 16:16 ~ he that believeth not shall be damned.
- 434 Mat 28:17 And when they saw him, they worshiped him: but some doubted.
- 435 Mar 14:3 ~ in the house of Simon the leper, ~, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she broke the box, and poured *it* on his head. Mat 26:6-7 ~, in the house of Simon the leper, There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, ~. Joh 12:3 Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, ~.
- 436 Joh 12:5 Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? Mat 20:2 And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. [Therefore 300 pence = approx. 50 weeks of a laborer's wages given that one didn't work on the sabbath.]
- 437 Mat 26:8-9 But when his disciples saw *it*, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose *is* this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.
- 438 CEV Mar 14:7 You will always have the poor with you. And whenever you want to, you can give to them. But you won't always have me here with you.
- 439 Joh 12:3 Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair:~.
- 440 Joh 12:3 ~ and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.
- 441 Joh 20:22 And when he had said this, he breathed on *them*, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:
- 442 Joh 20:23 Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; *and* whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained.
- 443 2Co 2:15 For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, ~
- 444 CEV Mar 6:3 ~Aren't James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon his brothers? Don't his sisters still live here in our town?" ~
- 445 Mat 13:55 ~ is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?
- 446 Mar 6:3 ~ the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? ~
- 447 Mat 1:25 And [Joseph] knew her not till [until] she [Mary] had brought forth her firstborn son: ~
- 448 CEV Joh 7:1 Jesus decided to leave Judea and to start going through Galilee because the Jewish leaders wanted to kill him.
- 449 Joh 7:3 His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest.
- 450 Joh 7:10 But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.
- 451 CEV Joh 7:14 When the festival was about half over, Jesus went into the temple and started teaching.
- 452 CEV Luk 8:20 Someone told Jesus, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside and want to see you." Jesus answered, "My mother and my brothers are those people who hear and obey God's message."



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453 Joh 7:5 For neither did his brethren believe in him.

454 Joh 2:12 After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days.

455 Luk 1:67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, ~,

456 Luk 1:41 And it came to pass, that, ~ Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:

457 CEV Mat 11:14 And if you believe them [all the prophets], John is Elijah, the prophet you are waiting for.

458 Mar 6:16 But when Herod heard *thereof*, he said, It [Jesus] is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead.

459 CEV Act 1:3 For forty days after Jesus had suffered and died, he proved in many ways that he had been raised from death. ~

460 Luk 24:13 ~ two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem *about* threescore furlongs.

461 Luk 24:29 ~, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.

462 Luk 24:33 And they [Cleopas and an unnamed disciple] rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, ~,

463 CEV Luk 24:41 ~ Jesus then asked them, "Do you have something to eat?"

464 Luk 24:43,50,51 And he took *it*, and did eat before them. And he [after a brief sermon] led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

465 Mat 28:10 Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

466 Mat 28:18-20 ~ I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth! Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to do everything I have told you. I will be with you always, even until the end of the world.

467 Joh 20:26 And after eight days again ~ came Jesus, the doors being shut, ~

468 Joh 21:1 ~ Jesus showed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; ~

469 [Anachronism The decimal point did not exist in Jesus' day.]

470 Joh 12:9-10 Much people of the Jews ~ came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death;

471 Joh 21:25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. ~

472 Mar 16:19 So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

473 Luk 24:51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

474 Joh 21:11-12 Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, ~. Jesus saith unto them, Come *and* dine. ~

475 Joh 21:24-25 This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

- 476 2Sa 22:11 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: and he was seen upon the wings of the wind.
- 477 Luk 23:27 And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.
- 478 Mat 27:22 ~ *They* all say unto him [Pilate], Let him be crucified.
- 479 Luk 17:1-2 ~ woe *unto him*, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.
- 480 Mat 12:31 ~ blasphemy *against* the *Holy* Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.
- 481 Mat 10:37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.
- 482 Luk 23:34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.
- 483 Mar 7:26-27 The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast *it* unto the dogs.
- 484 Mat 8:13 And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, *so* be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.
- 485 Mat 22:17,19-21 ~ Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things [taxes] which are Caesar's; ~.
- 486 The following are several verses where Jesus expressed his disdain or insulted the Pharisee. Mat 3:7 5:20 15:3 15:12 16:6,11,12 21:31,45 22:34 23:3-5 23:13,15-17:25,26,27,29 Mar 7:6-9, 13 8:15 12:24,27 Luk 11:39, 40, 42-52, 12:1 18:14
- 487 Jesus uttered the word sin or sins in thirty-one verses. Every reference was negative. Jesus said the word Priest, Priests, Pharisee or Pharisees in thirty-three verses. All but three of those instances were negative.
- 488 Deu 13:6,9,10 If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, ~ entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, ~ thou shalt surely kill him; ~. And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; ~.
- 489 Mat 22:30 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.
- 490 CEV Rev 4:8-9 ~Day and night they never stopped singing, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord, the all-powerful God, who was and is and is coming!" The living creatures kept praising, honoring, and thanking the one who sits on the throne and who lives forever and ever.
- 491 "There's no less days to sing God's praise than when we first begun."—  
Amazing Grace original verses by John Newton  
"Our god is an awesome god."—Awesome God by Rich Mullins
- 492 Mat 10:28 [Jesus speaking] And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him [God] which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.
- 493 Mat 25:46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.
- 494 Rev 20:11-12 I saw a great white throne with someone sitting on it. ~ I also saw all the dead people standing in front of that throne. ~ Several books were opened, and then the book of life was opened. The dead were judged by what those books said they had

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done. Rev 20:15 Anyone whose name wasn't written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

495 CEV Joh 8:44 Your father is the devil, and you do exactly what he wants. He has always been a murderer and a liar. There is nothing truthful about him. He speaks on his own, and everything he says is a lie. Not only is he a liar himself, but he is also the father of all lies.

496 Mat 19:17 Jesus said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? Only God is good. ~." Mat 19:17 And he [Jesus] said unto him, ~ there is none good but one, that is, God: ~.

497 Gen 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. Gen 5:5 And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: ~.

498 Mar 6:13 And they [disciples] cast out many devils,~

499 Mar 6:13 ~ anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed *them*.

500 CEV Mat 17:19 Later the disciples went to Jesus in private and asked him, "Why couldn't we force out the demon?"

501 Joh 20:23 Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; *and* whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained.

502 Author's note: Word coined by a prominent republican presidential candidate in 2015

503 Author's note: Ok... this one is my fault

504 Deu 22:28-29 If a man find a damsel *that is* a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, ~Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty *shekels* of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days.

505 CEV Gen 34:24-26 Every grown man followed this advice and got circumcised. Three days later the men who had been circumcised were still weak from pain. So Simeon and Levi, two of Dinah's brothers, attacked with their swords and killed every man in town, ~

506 Mat 2:1-2 ~, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, ~ we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

507 Mat 2:14 ~ he took the young child and his mother ~ into Egypt:

508 Mat 2:16 Then Herod, ~slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, ~ from two years old and under, ~

509 CEV Luk 2:1 About that time Emperor Augustus gave orders for the names of all the people to be listed in record books.

510 Luk 2:7 ~ there was no room for them in the inn.

511 Luk 2:12 [Angel speaking to shepherds] And this *shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

512 Mat 2:11 And when they [the wise men] were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother~

513 Mat 1:17 There were fourteen generations from Abraham to David. There were also fourteen from David to the exile in Babylonia and fourteen more to the birth of the Messiah.

514 Luk 2:5 ~ Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

515 Mat 1:20 ~ behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, ~ for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

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516 Mat 2:4-5 And when he had gathered all the chief priests ~, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

517 Mat 2:23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

518 Mat 1:20 ~ the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, ~ fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

519 CEV 2Sa 24:10 After David had everyone counted, he felt guilty and told the LORD, "What I did was stupid and terribly wrong. LORD, please forgive me." 2Sa 24:15 So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beer-sheba seventy thousand men.

520 Luk 2:3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

521 Mat 2:9 "~, lo, the star, which they saw in The East, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was."

522 Deu 18:10-12 There shall not be found among you ~ that useth divination, *or* an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things *are* an abomination unto the LORD: ~.

523 Mat 2:2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? ~

524 Mat 2:8 ~ when ye have found *him*, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

525 Mat 2:12 And being warned of God in a dream that they [the Wise Men] should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

526 CEV Mat 2:16-17 ~He gave orders for his men to kill all the boys who lived in or near Bethlehem and were two years old and younger. This was based on what he had learned from the wise men.

527 Thomas Paine—the Father of the America Revolution and author of *Common Sense*.

528 Num 31:17-18 Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, ~ But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves.

529 CEV Gen 22:2 The LORD said, "Go get Isaac, your only son, the one you dearly love! Take him to ~ where you must sacrifice him to me on the fires of an altar."

530 Jdg 11:31 Then it ~shall surely be the LORD's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering. Jdg 11:39 And it came to pass ~her father, ~ did with her *according* to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man.

531 CEV 2Ki 2:23-24 ~some boys started making fun of him by shouting, "Go away, baldy! Get out of here!" Elisha ~cursed them in the name of the LORD. Right away two bears ran out of the woods and ripped to pieces forty-two of the boys.

532 CEV Exo 12:29 At midnight the LORD killed the first-born son of every Egyptian family, from the son of the king to the son of every prisoner in jail. He also killed the first-born male of every animal that belonged to the Egyptians.

533 Mat 2:16 Then Herod, ~ sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, ~

534 CEV Mat 2:16 ~ He gave orders for his men to kill all the boys who lived in or near Bethlehem and were two years old and younger. ~

535 CEV Mat 2:16 ~ He [Herod] gave orders for his men to kill all the boys who lived in or near Bethlehem and were two years old and younger. ~. ISV Mat 2:16 ~ he [Herod] flew into a rage and ordered the execution of all the male children in Bethlehem

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and all its neighboring regions who were two years old and younger, ~. NIV Mat 2:16 ~ Herod ~ gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, ~

536 CEV Mat 2:17-18 So the Lord's promise came true, just as the prophet Jeremiah had said, "In Ramah a voice was heard crying and weeping loudly. Rachel was mourning for her children, and she refused to be comforted, because they were dead."

537 Luk 2:10 And the angel said unto them [shepherds], Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

538 Luk 2:26 And it was revealed unto him [Simeon] by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

539 Mat 2:13 ~the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt~

540 Note: With regards to believers' hearts. God speaks to their heart. God lives in their heart. God changes their heart in order to change their behavior. When they very sincerely know something, they know it in their heart of hearts. Believers never give credit to their brain, which is as it should be.

541 Author's note: The root word of fundamentalist is "fundament." In medical terms it is buttocks or anus. Therefore, the pejorative "fundamentalist asshole" is redundant. The core of fundamentalist is "mental." The anagram of fundamentalist... Is itself, a damn nut.

542 Mat 2:7 Then Herod, ~ called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. Mat 2:16 Then Herod, ~ sent forth, and slew all the children ~ two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.

543 G3097 μάγος magos *mag'-os* Of foreign origin [H7248]; a *Magian*, that is, Oriental *scientist*; by implication a *magician*: - sorcerer, wise man.

544 CEV 1Ch 9:1 ~ The people of Judah were taken to Babylonia as prisoners because they sinned against the LORD.

545 Num 22:28 And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?

546 At the time this printing, it is unknown how many Christian schools with creationist curriculum teach that the talking animals of the Bible are proof that Darwin's evolutionary theory is wrong.

547 Ecc 10:20 ~ curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.

548 Isa 34:14 ~ and the satyr shall cry to his fellow; ~.

549 Mar 4:14 What the farmer is spreading is really the message about the kingdom.

550 Mat 13:13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

551 Mat 13:34 All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them:

552 Mar 4:10 And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.

553 Mar 4:13 And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?

554 Mar 1:9 And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.

555 Luk 1:80 And the child [John] grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.

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556 Mar 1:6 And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;

557 Lev 11:22 *Even* these of them ye may eat; the locust after his kind, and the bald locust after his kind, and the beetle after his kind, and the grasshopper after his kind.

558 *The Passover Plot*—Oscar nominated for Best Costume Design in 1976. The film portrays Jesus as surviving the cross. Good luck on finding a copy of this movie anywhere.

559 CEV Exo 20:7 Do not misuse my name. I am the LORD your God, and I will punish anyone who misuses my name.

560 Psa 144:6 Cast forth lightning, and scatter them: shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them.

561 1Sa 5:9 the hand of the LORD was against the city with a very great destruction: and he smote the men of the city, both small and great, and they had emerods in their secret parts. 1Sa 5:12 And the men ~ were smitten with the emerods: and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

562 Mat 1:20-21 ~, the angel of the Lord appeared ~, saying, Joseph, ~ thou shalt call his name JESUS: ~

563 Luk 1:13 But the angel said unto him [Zacharia], ~ thou shalt call his name John.

564 Luk 1:18 And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, ~.

565 Luk 1:7 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, ~.

566 CEV 1Ti 2:14 and the man Adam wasn't the one who was fooled. It was the woman Eve who was completely fooled and sinned.

567 Gen 13:13 But the men of Sodom *were* wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.

568 Gen 19:29 When God destroyed the cities of the valley ~ he ~ saved Lot from the terrible destruction.

569 Gen 19:16-17 ~they took his hand, and the hand of his wife, and of his two daughters, ~. And they brought him forth, and set him without the city: ~.

570 Gen 19:8 ~ I have two daughters which have not known man; let me~bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as *is* good in your eyes: ~.

571 CEV Gen 19:5 and started shouting, "Where are your visitors? Send them out, so we can have sex with them!"

572 Gen 19:32 Come, let us make him drunk with wine, and let us lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father.

573 Gen 19:33-34 And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the firstborn said unto the younger, Behold, I lay last night with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, *and* lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father.

574 CEV Gen 19:34 The next day the older daughter said to her sister, "I slept with my father last night. We'll get him drunk again tonight, so you can go to bed with him, and we can each have a child."

575 Gen 7:6 And Noah *was* six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth.

576 Gen 9:21 One day he got drunk and was lying naked in his tent.

577 CEV Luk 1:25 "What the Lord has done for me will keep people from looking down on me."

- 578 CEV 1Ti 2:15 But women will be saved by having children, if they stay faithful, loving, holy, and modest.
- 579 Luk 1:20 And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.
- 580 Luk 1:57-58 ~and she brought forth a son. And her neighbors and her cousins heard how the Lord had showed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.
- 581 Luk 1:63 And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John.
- ~.
- 582 Luk 1:36 And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. Luk 1:56-57 And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house. Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.
- 583 Lev 12:2 ~, If a woman have conceived seed, and borne a man child: then she shall be unclean seven days; ~Lev 12:5 But if she bear a maid child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, ~.
- 584 Luk 1:60-61 And his mother answered ~ he shall be called John. And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name.
- 585 Luk 1:31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.
- 586 Luk 3:23-38 And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, ~ Heli, ~ Matthat, ~ Levi, ~ Melchi, ~ Janna, ~ **Joseph**, ~ Mattathias, ~ Amos, ~ Naum, ~ Esli, ~ Nagee, ~ Maath, ~ Mattathias, ~ Semei, ~ Joseph, ~ Judah, ~ Joanna, ~ Rhesa, ~ Zorobabel, ~ Shealtiel, ~ Neri, ~ Melchi, ~ Addi, ~ Cosam, ~ Elmodam, ~ Er, ~ Jose, ~ Eliezer, ~ Jorim, ~ Matthat, ~ Levi, ~ **Simeon**, ~ **Judah**, ~ Joseph, ~ **Jonan**, ~ Eliakim, ~ Melea, ~ Menan, ~ Mattatha, ~ Nathan, ~ David, ~ Jesse, ~ Obed, ~ Boaz, ~ Salmon, ~ Naasson, ~ Aminadab, ~ Aram, ~ Esrom, ~ Phares, ~ Judah, ~ **Jacob**, ~ Isaac, ~ Abraham, ~ Terah, ~ Nahor, ~ Serug, ~ Reu, ~ Phalec, ~ Heber, ~ Sala, ~ Cainan, ~ Arphaxad, ~ Shem, ~ Noah, ~ Lamech, ~ Methuselah, ~ Enoch, ~ Jared, ~ Maleleel, ~ Cainan, ~ Enos, ~ Seth, ~ Adam, ~ God.
- 587 Author's note: The Holy Spirit never personally utters a word in the Bible. He (definitely a "he") always has others speak for Him.
- 588 Luk 1:13 But the angel said unto him, ~ thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, ~.
- 589 Luk 1:41-2 ~ and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: ~, and said, ~ blessed *is* the fruit of thy womb. [italics from KJV]
- 590 Luk 1:41 ~, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; ~:
- 591 Luk 1:35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.
- 592 Mat 13:55 Is not this the carpenter's son? ~
- 593 Mar 6:3 Is not this the carpenter, ~?
- 594 CEV Mat 13:54 ~ the people were so amazed that they asked, "Where does he get all this wisdom ~ ?
- 595 CEV Mat 13:54-55 ~ the people were so amazed that they asked, "Where does he get all this wisdom and the power to work these miracles? Isn't he the son of the carpenter? Isn't Mary his mother, and aren't James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas his brothers?"

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<sup>596</sup> Luk 4:28-29 And all they in the synagogue, ~, were filled with wrath, And rose up, and thrust him out of the city,~

<sup>597</sup> Luk 4:29 ~, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.

<sup>598</sup> Luk 4:22 ~ And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?

<sup>599</sup> Mar 6:3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

<sup>600</sup> Luk 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to ~heal the brokenhearted, ~and recovering of sight to the blind~

<sup>601</sup> Luk 5:31 And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.

<sup>602</sup> CEV Luk 4:24 But you can be sure that no prophets are liked by the people of their own hometown.

<sup>603</sup> Luk 4:27 And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

<sup>604</sup> Luk 4:25-26 ~ many widows were in Israel~ But unto none of them was Elias [Elijah] sent, save unto Sarepta, *a city* of Sidon, unto a woman *that was* a widow.

<sup>605</sup> Note: Perhaps Jesus didn't give details of what Elijah did for the widow out of polite discretion. Your own prurient interests lead you to imagine Elijah comforted the lonely widow with his amorous prowess instead of his supernatural powers, which is not entirely your fault. The OT does say that Elijah moved in with the widow and stayed for a while.

<sup>606</sup> Mar 1:9 About that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and John baptized him in the Jordan River.

<sup>607</sup> Mat 2:23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

<sup>608</sup> Deu 13:8 ,10 Thou shalt not~pity him, ~ And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; ~

<sup>609</sup> Luk 4:29 ~, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.

<sup>610</sup> CEV Luk 4:30 But Jesus slipped through the crowd and got away.

<sup>611</sup> CEV Luk 1:5 ~ there was a priest by the name of Zechariah from the priestly group of Abijah. ~

<sup>612</sup> Mat 2:22 But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, ~

<sup>613</sup> Luk 3:1 ~ Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene,

<sup>614</sup> Jon 2:10 And the LORD spoke unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry *land*.

<sup>615</sup> Marjoe Gortner was America's youngest professional and licensed evangelist at three years old.

<sup>616</sup> CEV Luk 2:23 just as the Law of the Lord says, "Each first-born baby boy belongs to the Lord."

<sup>617</sup> Psa 72:10 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.

<sup>618</sup> Exo 1:22 And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.



- 619 Jdg 11:31-39 Due to a vow, Jephthah killed his only child, a virgin daughter, as a burnt offering to God in exchange for a military victory.
- 620 Anachronism: Neither Hebrew nor Aramaic has capital letters.
- 621 CEV Luk 1:66-71 Everyone who heard about this wondered what this child [John] would grow up to be. ~ He has come to save his people. Our God has given us a mighty Savior from the family of David his servant. Long ago the Lord promised by the words of his holy prophets to save us from our enemies and from everyone who hates us. [author's note: The only individual ever referred to as Savior or (the/our) Salvation in the New Testament was the Christ.]
- 622 Luk 1:5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abijah: and his wife *was* of the daughters of Aaron, and her name *was* Elisabeth. [ Author's note. King David begot Solomon who begot Rehoboam who begot Abijah and Zacharias descended from Abijah.]
- 623 [The KJV quotes Jesus saying the word mother over thirty times but he never once referred to the Virgin Mary as mother. When he spoke to her he always called her "woman."]
- 624 Jesus conversed freely with Roman centurions and Pilate.
- 625 Joh 7:35 ~ Is he going there to teach the Greeks? [The Pharisee specifically asked if he planned to go to Greece. They must have realized that he could speak Greek so they asked specifically about Greece instead of another nation like Egypt that also had Jewish settlements.]
- 626 Mar 8:27-28 And Jesus ~ asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? And they answered, John the Baptist: but some *say*, Elijah; and others, One of the prophets.
- 627 Mat 14:2 And [Herod] said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him.
- 628 Luk 9:18-19 ~ he [Jesus] asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am? They answering said, John the Baptist; but some *say*, Elijah; and others *say*, that one of the old prophets is risen again.
- 629 Luk 1:80 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel. [There are no deserts in Galilee] Mat 3:1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, [Nazareth was in Galilee not Judea.]
- 630 Psa 92:10 But my horn shalt thou exalt like *the horn of a unicorn*: ~.
- 631 Isa 13:21 ~; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there.
- 632 Exo 22:18 Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.
- 633 Isa 27:1 ~ and he shall slay the dragon that *is* in the sea.
- 634 Act 13:6 ~ they found a certain sorcerer~
- 635 Isa 14:29 ~for out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit *shall be* a fiery flying serpent.
- 636 Exo 34:14 For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name *is* Jealous, *is* a jealous God:
- 637 CEV Joh 7:35 The Jewish leaders asked each other~ Is he going to some foreign country where our people live? Is he going there to teach the Greeks?
- 638 Luk 7:40 And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.
- 639 Mat 8:8 The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: ~

- 640 Mar 15:39 And when the centurion, ~, saw that ~, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.
- 641 Mat 14:13-21, 15:32 Mar 6:31-44, 8:1-9, 8:19-20 Luk 9:10-17 Joh 6:5-15
- 642 Joh 6:5 When Jesus then lifted up *his* eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?
- 643 Joh 1:44 ~ Philip was of Bethsaida, ~.
- 644 Joh 6:26 Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.
- 645 CEV Rev 22:18 Here is my warning for everyone who hears the prophecies in this book: If you add anything to them, God will make you suffer all the terrible troubles written in this book.
- 646 Mat 15:34 And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes.
- 647 Joh 6:9 There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: ~
- 648 Mat 14:15 ~ his disciples came to him, saying, ~ send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.
- 649 Mar 6:37 ~Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat?
- 650 CEV Joh 6:12 ~ Jesus told his disciples to gather up the leftovers, so that nothing would be wasted.
- 651 CEV Mar 8:15, 17-21 Jesus warned them, "Watch out! Guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod." ~" Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "~ Don't you understand? Are your minds still closed? Are your eyes blind and your ears deaf? Don't you remember how many baskets of leftovers you picked up when I fed those five thousand people with only five small loaves of bread?"
- "Yes," the disciples answered. "There were twelve baskets."
- Jesus then asked, "And how many baskets of leftovers did you pick up when I broke seven small loaves of bread for those four thousand people?"
- "Seven," they answered.
- "Don't you know what I am talking about by now?" Jesus asked.
- 652 Mat 8:32 ~ down a steep place ~Mar 5:13 ~ down a steep place into the sea, ~.Luk 8:33 ~ down a steep place ~
- 653 Mar 5:11 Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.
- 654 Luk 8:27 ~, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and wore no clothes, neither abode in *any* house, but in the tombs.
- 655 Mar 5:12 And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.
- 656 Mar 5:8 For he said unto him, Come out of the man, *thou* unclean spirit.
- 657 Luk 8:39 ~ And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.
- 658 Mar 5:14 And they that fed the swine fled, and told *it* in the city, and in the country.~
- 659 Mat 7:6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.
- 660 CEV Luk 15:15-16 He went to work for a man in that country, and the man sent him out to take care of his pigs. He would have been glad to eat what the pigs were eating, but no one gave him a thing.
- 661 Luk 5:1 ~ he stood by the lake of Gennesaret,

- 662 Mat 14:23 ~, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.
- 663 Mat 14:22 And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, ~.
- 664 Mar 9:42 And whosoever shall offend one of *these* little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone [see next endnote] were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.
- 665 Strong's Hebrew Greek Dictionary G3684 ὀνικός onikos *on-ik-os*' From G3688; *belonging to an ass*, that is, *large* (so as to be turned by an ass): - millstone.
- 666 Joh 21:8 And the other disciples came in a little ship; ~ dragging the net with fishes.
- 667 Joh 19:25 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the *wife* of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.
- 668 Mar 15:40 There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome;
- 669 Mat 27:56 Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.
- 670 Luk 5:10 And so *was* also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, ~
- 671 Mar 9:2-4 ~ Jesus taketh *with him* Peter, and James, and John, ~ and he was transfigured before them. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; ~. And there appeared unto them Elijah with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus.
- 672 Luk 24:10, 12 It was Mary Magdalene~ which told these things unto the apostles. ~ Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves~.
- 673 CEV Luk 5:5 "Master," Simon [AKA Peter] answered, "we have worked hard all night long and have not caught a thing. But if you tell me to, I will let the nets down."
- 674 Luk 5:6 And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes:~
- 675 Luk 5:5 And Simon [Peter] answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.
- 676 Joh 21:3 Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. ~
- 677 Joh 21:7 ~he girt *his* fisher's coat *unto him*, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. [Parenthesis KJV]
- 678 Joh 21:8 ~ (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) ~ Parenthesis from KJV. 200 cubits = 300 feet
- 679 CEV Joh 9:9 Some of them said he was the same beggar, while others said he only looked like him. But he told them, "I am that man."
- 680 Mat 15:14 ~ they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.
- 681 Mat 14:23 ~, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.
- 682 Mat 14:25 And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.
- 683 Mat 14:29-30 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.
- 684 Mat 14:32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

Mat 8:24-26 And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to *him*, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

Joh 6:15 When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.

Joh 6:16-18 And when even was *now* come, his disciples went down unto the sea, And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them. And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew.

Joh 6:19-21 So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, [3.75 miles] they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid. But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid. Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.

Luk 8:24 And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm.

Mar 4:35-36 And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. ~, they took him even as he was in the ship. ~

Mar 4:37-39 And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

Mar 6:45-47 And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people. And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray. And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land.

Mar 6:48 And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them.

Mar 6:49 But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out:

Mar 6:51 And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered.

Mat 14:34 And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret.

Mar 6:45 And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, ~

Luk 8:26 And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee.

Mat 15:39 After Jesus had sent the crowds away, he got into a boat and sailed across the lake. He came to shore near the town of Magadan.

Mar 8:10 And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha.

Joh 6:17 And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them.

Mar 3:9 And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him ~.

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- 703 Luk 5:3 And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, ~.
- 704 Mar 4:37-39 ~ they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?
- 705 Joh 3:30 He must increase, but I *must* decrease.
- 706 Joh 19:29 Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: ~.
- 707 Published in 1965 and re-released in 2005, a best selling book *The Passover Plot* is a by Hugh J. Schonfield proposes Jesus survived the cross.
- 708 Not so humorous note: One used car dealer in East Tennessee slapped the Jesus fish advertising stickers on cars it sold with the business name and phone number nested inside the fish's body.
- 709 Deu 34:7 And Moses *was* a hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.
- 710 Exo 20:4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of *any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth:
- 711 Deu 21:18-21 If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and *that*, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son *is* stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; *he is* a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.
- 712 Deu 22:23-24 If a damsel *that is* a virgin be betrothed unto a husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, *being* in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbor's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you.
- 713 CEV Exo 21:32 If the bull kills a slave, you must pay the slave owner *thirty pieces of silver* for the loss of the slave, and the bull must be killed by stoning.
- 714 Lev 20:15 If any of you have sex with an animal, ~ the animal will be put to death, just as you deserve.
- 715 Gen 17:11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you.
- 716 CEV Joh 7:22 Moses commanded you to circumcise your sons. But it wasn't really Moses who gave you this command. It was your ancestors~
- 717 Gen 17:13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.
- 718 Lev 12:3 And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.
- 719 Exo 33:23 ~ thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen. CEV Exo 33:20 ~, because anyone who sees my face will die.
- 720 Gen 17:24 And Abraham *was* ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.
- 721 Gen 17:14 And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.
- 722 Exo 4:24-25 And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the LORD met him [Moses], and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast *it* at his feet, and said, Surely a bloody husband *art* thou to me.

723

Author's note: Voices in people's heads never say nice things like, *Hey, let's recycle some aluminum cans today or Those pretty shoes go nicely with your new purse.* Instead, the voices routinely say nasty things like, *Don't you think it is time you drown your children?* Please regard disembodied voices most critically if not skeptically.

724

1Sa 18:27 Wherefore David arose and went, he and his men, and slew of the Philistines two hundred men; and David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full tale to the king, that he might be the king's son-in-law. And Saul gave him Michal his daughter to wife.

725

Exo 31:18 And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.

726

Deu 10:1-2 At that time the LORD said unto me, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first, ~. And I will write on the tables the words that were in the first tables which thou didst break, ~

727

CEV Deu 27:2-4 ~ After you cross the Jordan River, go to Mount Ebal. Set up large slabs of stone, then cover them with white plaster and write on them a copy of these laws.

728

CEV Deu 22:5 Women must not pretend to be men, and men must not pretend to be women. The LORD your God is disgusted with people who do that.

729

Lev 20:13 If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood *shall be* upon them.

730

CEV Jdg 6:31 The crowd pushed closer and closer, but Joash replied, "Are you trying to take revenge for Baal? Are you trying to rescue Baal? ~ If Baal really is a god, let him take his own revenge on someone who tears down his altar."

731

CEV Jdg 6:31 ~ Are you trying to rescue Baal? If you are, you will be the ones who are put to death, and it will happen before another day dawns.~

732

Jerubbaal is translated as "Let Baal deal" (with him.)

733

Mat 5:43,44 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

734

Jos 6:21 And they utterly destroyed all that *was* in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.