

March 13-19, 2023

Matthew 11–12; Luke 11

“THESE TWELVE JESUS SENT FORTH”

Summary: *Matthew 11 Jesus acclaims John as more than a prophet—The cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum are rebuked for unbelief—The Son reveals the Father—The yoke of Christ is easy, and His burden is light.*

Matthew 12 Jesus proclaims Himself Lord of the Sabbath and heals on the Sabbath day—He is accused of casting out devils through the power of Beelzebub—He speaks of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost and says that an evil and adulterous generation seeks signs.

Luke 11. Jesus gives the Lord’s Prayer—He discusses the casting out of devils—He acclaims Himself as greater than Jonah and Solomon—He rebukes the Pharisees and says that the blood of all the prophets may be required of their generation.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

How can I understand the lesson of the “yoke?”

There is a Mosaic law that relates to a yoke of unlike animals. The unfairness of plowing with a donkey and an ox is clearly visible when looking at the lesser creature. “Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.” (**Deuteronomy 22:10**) Consider that the Lord wants to relieve us of the unfairness in life. He is saying, in effect, “I am carrying the burden; take advantage of it.” In learning this principle, following Him and giving our burdens to Him (He has paid for them already), we cleanse our inner selves and are able to better serve Him. “Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.” (**Psalms 55:22**) The prophet Isaiah taught us that the Lord would relieve us from the yoke of our burdens. “For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden . . .” (**Isaiah 9:4**)

How should I think of prayer, rote or conversing with God?

“In the first century C.E., the synagogue emerged as a firmly established institution. It is mentioned in all literary

sources of that period, from various parts of the world. When the Second Temple was destroyed in 70 C.E., many of the rituals formerly conducted there were transferred to the synagogue, and organized prayer became the substitute for sacrifice. The sages referred to the synagogue as *mikdash me’at* (“little sanctuary”), viewing it as a miniature Temple where Jewish congregations all over the world could gather and, to some extent, fill the void left by the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.” “The remains of numerous synagogues dating back to the first few centuries of the Common Era have been uncovered, attesting to the widespread acceptance of the institution at that time.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) “Make our prayers meaningful. The prophet Mormon warned that if anyone “shall pray and not with real intent of heart . . . it profiteth him nothing, for God receiveth none such” (**Moroni 7:9**). To make our prayers meaningful, we must pray with sincerity and “with all the energy of heart” (**Moroni 7:48**). We must be careful to avoid “vain repetitions” when we pray (**see Matthew 6:7**). Use language that shows love, respect, reverence, and closeness. The application of this principle will vary according to different languages.

If we pray in English, for example, we should use the pronouns of the scriptures when we address God—Thee, Thou, Thy, and Thine, rather than the more common pronouns you, your, and yours.

Regardless of the language, the principle remains the same: When we pray, we should use words that appropriately convey a loving, worshipful relationship with God.”

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics/prayer?lang=eng>

How serious should “keeping the Sabbath holy” be in my life?

Stoning is a capital punishment indicated in the Mosaic Law. Biblical punishments were based on the crime, unlike today’s punishments, which are based on the person or the circumstances. Stoning was the punishment for a number of capital sins including murder (**Numbers 35:30**), adultery (**Deuteronomy 22:22-24**), blasphemy (**Leviticus 24:16**), breaking the Sabbath (**Numbers 15:32-35**), apostasy (**Deuteronomy 13:6-10**), and rebellion against parents (**Deuteronomy 21:18-21**). A better insight to capital punishment can be seen in the *Talmud* (written Jewish Biblical interpretations). Rabbinic interpretations of the ancient Jewish law of stoning indicate that it was required that the convicted person be thrown over a cliff. One of at least two witnesses (and thereby accusers) was responsible to make sure the criminal was dead. The aversion to directly taking another’s life would motivate having the fall cause the death of the accused. A witness/accuser always had to cast the first stone and then all others threw stones to cover the body (the burial). Abandoned quarries (like Jesus’ crucifixion place – where the “stone was rejected”) would be likely locations for such rare executions. There is a village called Turan, close to Nazareth and Cana in Galilee, that is the

traditional spot where Jesus was accused of not preventing His disciples from harvesting, threshing, and winnowing grain on the Sabbath day. They were doing this for their own refreshment, needing to eat. There is still a huge stone quarry at Turan which provides a visual connection to the Pharisees and their “death accusation.” “And he said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: Therefore, the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.” (**Mark 2:27-28**) Several times in the New Testament, Jesus is identified as the Lord of the Sabbath. “For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day.” (**Matthew 12:8**) “And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.” (**Luke 6:5**)

What symbol reminds me of a Sabbath?”

An integral part of ancient Sabbath observance has been the pouring and blessing of wine followed by the breaking and blessing of bread. There is a specific order to dignify the Sabbath and remind us to make it holy. “The table is set for the festive meal, with the Sabbath candles glowing in polished holders. The family stands and the father raises the brimming silver cup to say Kiddush, the blessing and sanctification over wine. This age-old ceremony is in fulfillment of the biblical command, “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” (**Exodus 20:8**). “Remember it,” said the rabbis, “over wine,” for wine is the symbol of joy.” In Jewish tradition this is followed by breaking bread, repeating the *motzi* (blessing over bread). “Two loaves appear on the Sabbath table. They recall the double portion of manna which the Israelites in the desert gathered on the eve of the Sabbath for the next day.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

What are three symbolic reasons for the Sabbath?

Let us also examine three major symbolic reasons and meanings for the Sabbath. The Sabbath is to be kept in remembrance of the creation. (1) “Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a **sign between me and you** throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. (2) Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in **six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested**, and was refreshed. (Exodus 31:13-17) The Sabbath is to be kept in remembrance of being delivered from bondage in Egypt. “But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to

keep the sabbath day.” (Deuteronomy 5:14-15) (3) The Sabbath is to be kept in **remembrance of the atonement**. “So important is Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) that it is the only fast day which may be observed on the Sabbath and is never postponed until the next day. Moreover, the Torah describes the holiness of Yom Kippur by calling it the “Sabbath of Sabbaths.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

How does “an opposite” center on the Savior?

“The Sabbath bears record of Christ: from Adam to Moses it was the 7th day to signify that our Lord rested on that day from his creative labors (*Ex. 20:8-11*); from Moses to Christ, the Sabbath day was a different day each year to commemorate our Lord's leading of the children of Israel out of bondage (*Deut. 5:12-15*); and from the apostolic day until now, the Sabbath has been the first day of the week to point attention to our Lord's resurrection on his holy day.” (*Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, Pg.452*) To the Jews who commemorate the first two reasons for the Sabbath, a sip of wine is partaken, followed by bread. The prayers recited include a recollection of the past, with an eye to the future where an even greater deliverance is anticipated. In this sense, it is a chiasma that focuses on the atonement in the center. The Savior's atonement began with suffering and bleeding from every pore, (symbolized by wine) and then followed by giving his body, (symbolized by broken bread). To those who truly believe in the Messiah, the Sabbath day is commemorated by partaking of a morsel of bread followed by a sip of wine. The prayers are in remembrance of the greatest deliverance eternity will ever know. First, wine and bread (in anticipation) then

bread and wine (in remembrance); these are the symbols of the Sabbath, a joyful thought of redemption! “The Sabbath and the festivals are particularly times of joy, and indeed it is a positive commandment, often difficult to observe, to be happy on them. The joy required is not frivolity but, contradictory though it may sound, a serious happiness.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

What was the only “sign” Jesus would give of His messiahship?

One of the most important holidays in Judaism is Yom Kippur, The Day of Atonement. Fasting, special prayers, and the reading of the Book of Jonah establish a symbol that will eventually be used to recognize the Atoner. The sign of the prophet Jonah was not and is still not recognized by many, neither are the connections between the way temple sacrifices were carried out and the ultimate sacrifice made on Mount of Olives and Mount Moriah. For the Jews, as well as for the Christians, the example of Jonah being swallowed by a great fish for three days and three nights is a symbol of atonement or at least that the Messiah would rise from the dead. Yet, the three nights and three days of Jesus’ interment and resurrecting is still not recognized by the Jews as a sign of his Messiahship. One major reason for this may be that the account of his death and resurrection simply is not known by them, and if it is known it is not recognized. Also, many Christians struggle with the symbolism due to a “mainstream” Christian tradition of Good Friday as the crucifixion day and Easter Sunday as the resurrection day. That, according to the scriptural way of calculating twenty-four-hour days, still is only two nights and two days. “Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he

answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.” (Matthew 12:38-42)

How can I better understand “High Days?”

We see that disciples of Jesus perform the burial of Jesus. In biblical terms, mourning and burials never occur on a Sabbath. Joseph of Arimathaea, a member of the Sanhedrin, and “. . . a disciple of Jesus . . . besought Pilate that he might take the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave.” (John 19:38) With the help of Nicodemus, “. . . took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices . . . Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulcher, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews’ preparation day; for the sepulcher was nigh at hand.” (John 19:40-42) The “preparation day” is always the night and day before the beginning of Passover week. The first day of Passover is one of seven extra Sabbath days in a biblical year. Those Sabbaths are called “High Days” and can occur on any day of the week (in addition to the regular seventh-day-of-the-week sabbath day). Now, we see that there were two Sabbaths in a row that week in history. The scurrilous events of that day preceded the Passover which was due to begin at any moment. The Passover (a special Sabbath or High Day) that week preceded the regular Friday night-Saturday Sabbath. “The Jews [Priests]

therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,)” (John 19:31)

How were “three days and three nights” fulfilled?

The only “sign” Jesus gave the Pharisees was Jonah being in great fish three days and three nights. “Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” (Matthew 12:38-40) The sign of Jonah was fulfilled in that there were two Sabbaths in a row that year (the Passover Sabbath and the regular seventh day of the week Sabbath). In that sense, Jesus was crucified on what we call a Thursday.

(This fits with the time reckoning of Palm Sunday being five days before Passover). Then in fulfillment of prophecy, He really was in the tomb three nights; and on the third day He arose. “. . . and be raised again the third day.” (Matthew 16:21; 17:23, Mark 9:31). In the Book of Mormon lands, they knew of His death – because when it was to become daylight (nighttime in Israel), it remained dark for the next three days. “And it came to pass that thus did the three days pass away. And it was in the morning, and the darkness dispersed from off the face of the land, and the earth did cease to tremble, and the rocks did cease to rend, and the dreadful groanings did cease, and all the tumultuous noises did pass away, and their mourning was turned into joy, and their lamentations into the praise and thanksgiving unto the Lord Jesus Christ, their Redeemer. And thus far were the scriptures fulfilled which had been spoken by the prophets.” (3 Nephi 10:9-11)