

Chapter 27

***THE SPIRITUAL
SIGNIFICANCE
OF GOLGOTHA***

When it is recognized that Jesus was crucified on the Mount of Olives east of the main Temple, a whole new perspective awaits us than what is normally believed today. This necessitates looking at the biblical accounts in a far different way. Once the proper geographical locations are realized events which have not been understood for their symbolic value can now take on substantial significance. In this chapter we will look at some of these important points associated with the crucifixion of Jesus at Golgotha.

First, look at the crucifixion scene itself. Realizing that it occurred near the southern summit of Olivet but facing the Temple and Jerusalem, we are provided with quite a dramatic spectacle. Imagine people walking down the road-way called "The Descent of the Mount of Olives" (Luke 19:37) with their Passover lambs in their arms going into the Temple to have them killed (the worshippers would afterwards take the animals to their homes for roasting). On the way to the Temple these people would have seen the building housing the Miphkad Altar (called the Beth ha-Deshen) on their right. At the summit itself (but on their left) they would have

seen three men crucified to a tree. It would have been an extraordinary scene for the Passover season. This would have been especially so *if* Jesus were looking westward towards his Father's House.

This would mean that one robber was nailed to the same tree with his back to Jesus and facing northeastwards, while the other would be in a similar position but facing southeastwards. There would have been six arms extended upwards suspended from each of their *patibulums* (crosspieces) while in the center of this scene would have been the trunk of the tree with its upper part exposed above them all. There may be much symbolic teaching in this view of the crucifixion and it will pay us to give attention to it. But first, we need to ask ourselves if symbolism is important in understanding biblical themes?

The Bible Not Only Contains Symbolic Teaching, IT IS Symbolic Teaching

The truth is, the Bible is filled with symbolic teaching, and all of the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures are couched in utter symbolism. Since the people of Palestine in the first century were dominated by the teachings of Scripture (and their whole lives were governed by scriptural application), what we are suggesting in this chapter could have had a definite relevance to them. In the study of history, it is important that we do not read back into the historical accounts what we are accustomed to believe or to appreciate in our own modern societies. The proper interpretation of history is to account and record what the people *at the time* believed no matter if we consider their opinions irrelevant and even absurd. So, in this chapter we will show some of the significant symbolic themes that were common-place among the Jews in the first century.

Let us look at the symbolism of the seven branched lampstand. First of all, it represented the Tree of Life which was once located in the Garden of Eden. In a fascinating book titled "The Tree of

Light,” written by Leon Yarden of Jerusalem, he gives us a penetrating study into the meaning of the Menorah. He concluded his investigation with the recognition that the Menorah figuratively depicted an *almond* tree, and not just any *almond tree*, but the one that represented the Tree of Life. There is every reason to believe that Yarden is correct in his research. The Old Testament description of the Menorah constructed in the time of Moses showed that it was intimately connected with the *almond tree* motif. Note that the flowers and the bowls for the oil on each of the seven branches of the Menorah were designed to be like those of the *almond tree* (Exodus 37:17-24).

This almond tree type of lampstand was placed by Moses in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle just outside the Holy of Holies. But inside the inner sanctum itself was deposited the rod of Aaron that budded. It too had the symbol of the *almond tree* associated with it. The rod brought forth almond flowers and even almonds themselves in a supernatural manner (Numbers 17:1-13). Because Moses placed this *almond rod of Aaron* inside the Holy of Holies, this goes a long way in showing that the rod (with its *almond tree genre*) was the symbolic Tree of Life which had been in the Garden of Eden.

Philo, in the time of Jesus, said the almond tree was “the emblem of the priesthood” (*Life of Moses*, III.22) because it was the first to bloom in the springtime and the last to lose its leaves. This tree showed the greatest longevity of life each year and it was a fit symbol for the Tree of Life.

The Garden of Eden was Typical of the Temple

We should recall that the Tabernacle and the Temple at Jerusalem were built to be a pattern of God’s heavenly abode (Hebrews 8:5; 9:23,24), but they also represented the Garden of Eden in which our first parents were placed. When one reads the early chapters of Genesis carefully, it will be noticed that there is a

distinct “Temple imagery” associated with almost every event or item of interest. For example, we are told that God appeared in the Garden “at the cool of the day” (Genesis 3:8). This time of day answers to the period of the evening sacrifice in the Temple (I Kings 18:36; Daniel 9:21). While Adam and Eve were talking to God, they were considered in the “presence of God” (Genesis 3:8), just as one who was in the Temple was also in the “presence of God” (II Chronicles 20:9). And where was the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden? It was in the midst of the Garden — its inner part (Genesis 2:9). Significantly, in the inner Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle there was the rod of Aaron which also represented a symbolic Tree of Life that budded miraculously. The rest of the Garden area of Eden (other than where God talked to Adam and Eve) was analogous to the outer Holy Place of the Temple where only the priests could enter. And in this Holy Place in the Tabernacle (and later Temples) was the seven branched lampstand which was also a replica of the Tree of Life.

Recall that Adam and Eve sinned by eating the forbidden fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Bad). They were then expelled *eastward* from the Garden (note that the entrance to the Garden was from the *east*) (Genesis 3:22-24). Cherubim were positioned at this eastern portal to prevent re-entry to the Garden. This was to keep Adam and Eve from the Tree of Life. The rest of the story of what happened to Cain and Abel is recorded in the introduction to this book.

The Tree of Life

What we need to recognize, however, is that the Tree of Life was reckoned by the early Jews to have been *the almond tree*. And early Christians considered the tree on which Jesus was crucified as being the Tree of Life. Since Jesus was crucified on a literal tree, could it have been an *almond*?

“Early Christian art indicates a close relationship between *the tree of life* and the cross. The cross of Jesus, the wood of suffering and

death, is for Christians a *tree of life*. In the tomb paintings of the 2nd century it is thus depicted for the first time as the symbol of victory over death. It then recurs again and again. The idea that the *living* trunk of the cross bears *twigs* and *leaves* is a common motif in Christian antiquity” (Kittel, *Theological Dictionary*, V, pp.49, 41 italics mine).

If the Tree of Life motif is to be followed in detail, then the most logical tree with which we are familiar would have been “the tree of the priesthood” — the almond. There are presently a number of almond trees growing on the slopes of Olivet and it is feasible for three men to be impaled on the larger ones.

Some have thought that the tree of crucifixion might be the olive. While the olive has a great deal of symbolic significance in the Scriptures, it is unlikely to be the Tree of Life. As is well known, olives cannot be eaten directly from the tree because of the extreme bitter taste of uncured olives. But in all symbolic contexts of the Bible which concern the Tree of Life, not only can its fruit be eaten from the tree but even its leaves are useful (*cf.* Revelation 22:2). In Christian symbolism, the real “fruit” of the Tree of Life is symbolically represented as the “flesh of Jesus” (John 6:51-58). He was the actual “edible part” that all people must consume in order to inherit everlasting life. The life-giving fruit hanging on that symbolic Tree of Life (represented by the almond tree?) was reckoned by early Christians as the spiritual “fruit” of immortality (John 6:51ff).

The Other Principal Tree of the Garden

If the almond tree was figuratively associated with the Tree of Life, what was the other significant tree in the Garden of Eden — the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil? While many different types of trees have been guessed (the pomegranate, date, grape and even the apple), as I have shown in an earlier part of this book, the context in the Book of Genesis describing the “fall” shows it to be the *fig*, and many early rabbis of the Jews recognized this. It is

to be noted that as soon as Adam and Eve knew they had sinned, they sewed fig leaves together to hide their shame. It is well documented among the Jews that the fig was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Some might ask at this juncture: What difference does it make? Granted, it may seem like an exercise in futility and unnecessary speculation. But this would be a mistake. The fact is, the symbol of the fig tree as being the “evil” tree in the Garden of Eden, figures in a prominent episode that occurred during the week just before Jesus was crucified. Once the symbolic meaning of the fig tree is recognized, then this special event can make a great deal of doctrinal sense in regard to the role that Jesus played in expelling “sin” from the world. I am talking about the time when he saw a fig tree on the Mount of Olives as he was approaching Jerusalem, and he cursed it. Before that day was over that particular fig tree was withered up and completely dead. This has a remarkable figurative meaning to it.

The Significance of the Withered Fig Tree

What happened to that fig tree four days before Jesus’ crucifixion has a real bearing on the symbolism of the crucifixion itself. This can be shown because we now know that Jesus was executed on the Mount of Olives. The interesting thing is, the cursing of the fig tree and the impaling of Jesus to another tree (not a short distance away) has a remarkable parallel theme to events that occurred in the Garden of Eden with our first parents. Let us see how this is shown.

Four days before his crucifixion, Jesus left Bethany and started walking towards Jerusalem. When he was near the summit of the Mount of Olives near the village of Bethphage (which means the House of Unripe Figs), he noticed on the side of the road *a fig tree*. He went to it and finding no figs on its branches (but the tree was covered with leaves), he cursed *that fig tree* and said: “Let no man

eat fruit from you henceforth forever. And his disciples heard it” (Mark 11:14). The *cursing* of that particular fig tree has baffled men ever since. The truth is, even Mark said that “it was not the season of figs” (verse 13). It was the time of “Unripe Figs.” Indeed, it went further than that. It was not even the time for fig trees to have leaves in their fullness. It has puzzled people for generations why Jesus was so upset with a fig tree that by nature should not have had figs or leaves.

It is certain that the whole event was a miracle from start to finish. To produce a sign of this nature must have involved a great deal of symbolic importance. If it were not of major significance then the event makes little sense and certainly there would be little relevance for its occurrence. But it does have symbolic meaning.

The fact that the fig tree had leaves was in itself a miracle because leaves would not have naturally been on the fig tree for at least a month later. Also, there should not have been any figs on the tree. Since the tree was located on a main thoroughfare into Jerusalem and with the heavy population around the city at that Passover season, it is not to be imagined that Jesus expected to find a few dried figs of last year’s crop on the branches. The tree would surely have been stripped clean of its fruit. Jesus must have known that he would not find any figs on this unusual fig tree. The truth is, however, the lack of figs and the abundance of leaves were important factors in this miraculous occurrence. In this scene we are provided with a most important symbolic teaching by Jesus with his actions.

Note that the next day after Jesus’ cursing, the disciples found it *withered* (Mark 11:20,22; Matthew 21:18-21). What was significant about this? It meant that the type of tree that Adam and Eve first ate which brought sin and death to them (and in an extended sense to all humanity) was now *withered* and *dead*.

Tradition had it that the only tree under Adam’s care in the

Garden of Eden that did not shed its leaves after our first parents took of the fruit was the fig tree. It was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. But with Jesus' miracle on the Mount of Olives, it meant *that symbolic tree* was now withered and dead. It signified that no longer would that symbolic tree be in the midst of humanity to encourage mankind to sin in the manner of our first parents. But there is even more teaching. It meant that when Jesus went to that miraculous tree looking for some figs to eat (like Eve did), Jesus could not find any whatsoever. This signified that there was not going to be a repetition of what Eve (and later Adam) did in regard to the fig tree of which they partook. One fig tree was the instrument to bring "sin" into the world, but the Son of God could not find any figs on his fig tree (the miraculous tree on the Mount of Olives that was typical of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil). Jesus cursed *that symbolic tree* at the top of Olivet so that no man would eat of it again. And to complete his victory over sin, four days later Jesus was going to be sacrificed for the sins of the world just a few yards away from this *withered and dead tree*.

The Miracle of the Fig Tree occurred Near Bethphage

Also recall that this miracle of the *withered* fig tree also occurred adjacent to the village of Bethphage, which was a village of priests and the second court of the Sanhedrin. This was the very court where "rebellious elders" were excommunicated and sentenced to death (Deuteronomy 17:8-13). See chapter twelve of this book where the significance of Bethphage is given. What Jesus was doing in the last week of his life on earth was acting out a symbolic victory over all the factors in the Garden of Eden around which our first parents failed, and showing that the Sanhedrin of the nation of Israel at Bethphage (the House of Unripe Figs) would also be *withered* and made *dead*.

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Sanhedrin were now withered and dead and the Tree of Life a short distance away (probably an *almond* for the symbol to be carried out fully)

became the very tree on which Jesus was crucified. This did not take place within the former area of the Garden of Eden located hundreds of miles north east of Jerusalem, nor did it occur inside the Temple which typified the Garden and Eden. The miracle of these two trees happened “in the midst of the world” (near the outside Miphkad Altar which represented the altar promised to Cain and his descendants at the top of the Mount of Olives). The two trees on Olivet symbolized those two principal trees in the Garden of Eden which were now located in the “midst of the world.”

The Bible is a Book of Symbols

Of course, all these matters we have been discussing are *symbols*. They must be understood in the allegorical and mystical sense. But even those scholars who demand actual historical data as the only criteria for belief still recognize that Christians in the first century were thoroughly convinced in the spiritual messages embedded within the figurative teachings of the Bible. As a matter of fact, it can be stated without fear of contradiction that every major doctrine of Christianity is in some way dependent upon symbolic teachings, including all facets of interpretation concerning the crucifixion of Jesus. One cannot begin to grasp what the principles of Christianity really entail without the use of symbolic illustrations. It makes no difference if we of modern times approve or disapprove the application of such teachings, no one will find any meaning to Christianity without the recognition and understanding of biblical symbols.

This certainly applies to the spiritual significance surrounding the purpose of Jesus’ crucifixion. Every ritualistic, geographical and chronological detail associated with the crucifixion is symbolically full of meaning. It is not possible to comprehend the New Testament teachings concerning this matter without taking into consideration these figurative meanings. In reality, the physical details are always given in the Bible to support the symbolic teachings. With this in mind let us carry the symbolic teaching of Jesus’

crucifixion a little farther. Things become clearer when we do.

Symbolizing the Scene of the Crucifixion

Mention has been made in chapter twenty-one of this book that Jesus was crucified on a tree with two robbers also affixed to the same tree. This would have meant that there were six arms extending upwards around the tree itself.

This scene could provide a symbolic spectacle of a living Menorah (the seven branched lampstand). The Menorah did in fact represent the Tree of Life and the Light of the World. And notice the irony of the crucifixion scene. Here was Jesus east of the Holy of Holies and looking westwards towards the curtain of his Father's House. Beyond that curtain were supposed to be a mercy seat (denoting the Throne of God) with the wings of two cherubim outstretched over that throne. Both cherubim were made to face one another and to face the One who symbolically sat on the mercy seat. These were found in the original Temple within the inner curtain of the Holy Place.

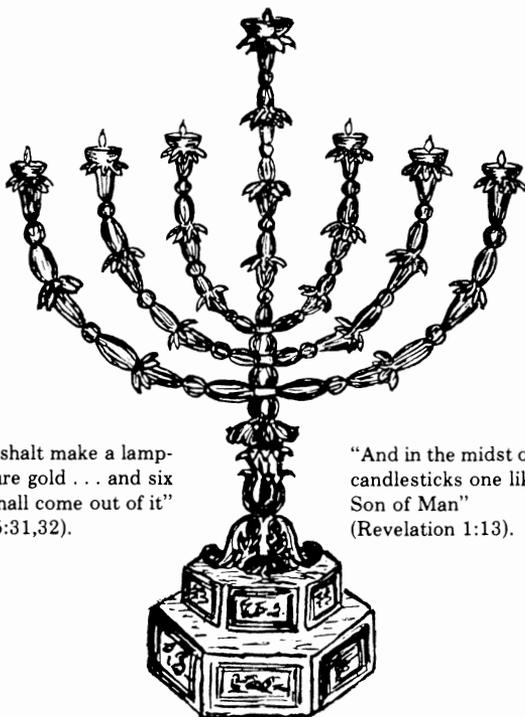
Now look at the scene of the crucifixion "outside the camp." It was a significant reversal to what was originally designed by God to be within the Holy of Holies. According to Christian teaching, here was the real Lord having been excommunicated from Israel and being crucified on a tree having two robbers as his "cherubim" with their arms stretched upwards and their faces turned away from him in the opposite direction. And if the tree of crucifixion were an almond, we have Jesus and the two robbers being sacrificed on the tree that Philo called "the tree of the priesthood." It represented the Tree of Life.

Their six arms extending upwards around a central part of a tree (the tree itself as the seventh "arm") could be reckoned a symbol of a living Menorah. Jesus was pictured after his resurrection as standing in the midst of the seven branched lampstand (Revelation 1:13) in a glorious and living existence with the unlimited power of the

universe at his beck and call. Was his crucifixion intended to show an opposite signification on a “Menorah” of degradation and shame? Whereas he should have been sitting on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies, he was in a diametrically contrary situation as a sin offering banned from being a member of his own nation and being crucified near the outside altar of the Sanctuary. The scene, from the Christian point of view, would have been totally opposite from what should have been.

If there is anything to this symbolism, then the national symbol of the modern State of Israel (the seven branched lampstand) represents Jesus being crucified between two robbers (his “cherubim”) for the sins of the world. This would mean that the Menorah is the symbolic crucifix of Jesus, not the kind that is normally seen in Christian society today. The representation of the cross (and its various forms) that most Christians look to today (atop churches, around peoples’ necks, and even embossed on Bibles) is made of two pieces of dry (not *living*) wood which could have no connection to the *living* Tree of Life.

And further, the people who were carrying their Passover lambs to be killed in the Temple at the time of Jesus’ crucifixion were turning their backs on the individual to whom they were intending to present those Passover lambs. This is because the roadway that led to the eastern gate of the Temple was descending from the top of the Mount of Olives. The people would have passed directly by Jesus hanging on a tree of crucifixion. And while worshippers were entering the Temple to pay tribute to the One sitting within the Holy of Holies (originally enthroned between two cherubim), the crowds were actually turning their backs on the real Jesus from heaven and his two “cherubim” (the robbers nailed to the same tree with their backs to him as well). And when Jesus finally died on the tree (while all had their backs to him), he cried out: “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” This Psalm was composed by David on the same Mount of Olives when he had been excommunicated



“And thou shalt make a lampstand of pure gold . . . and six branches shall come out of it” (Exodus 25:31,32).

“And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man” (Revelation 1:13).

It is not usually understood by the general public but the Menorah (the seven branched lampstand which was deposited in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle) actually denotes a living tree — a Tree of Light. Indeed, its prime significance is its relation to the Tree of Life which was found not only in the Garden of Eden but is talked about in the concluding book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation. The symbolic motif of the lampstand was that of an almond tree. Just as Aaron's rod that budded and brought forth fruit was an almond, so likewise (as we have shown in this book) the Menorah denotes an allegorical almond tree. It may well be that Christ and the two robbers were actually crucified on such an almond tree. If so, then Christ ironically died on the tree that represented the Tree of Life.

from his throne and people at the time of Absalom's rebellion (read all of II Samuel 15:19 through 18:33). This means that God the Father himself (momentarily) also turned his face away from him. Jesus truly died *rejected* of men (Isaiah 53:3) — rejected and excommunicated by all including the Father himself. This is because in symbol he was carrying all the sins of the world on his back when he found himself in that final sacrificial position.

More Significant Symbols

That does not end the story. There is another symbolic parallel to the events of the crucifixion that should be mentioned. It was then the custom in Jerusalem of releasing a notable prisoner during the season of Passover. Pilate wanted to restore Jesus to the people, but they demanded that he release a man called Barabbas. This person was a prominent prisoner (Matthew 27:16) who had been charged with the crimes of sedition and murder (Mark 15:7; Luke 23:18,19). This could well mean that he was some kind of revolutionary hero to the Jews — one who endeavored to overthrow the Roman yoke and bring in the expected Jewish domination over the Middle East and the world. Whatever the reason, the authorities in Jerusalem requested and received the release of Barabbas.

Now to an interesting point in regard to this Barabbas. In some important manuscripts of Matthew 27:16,17 Barabbas is given a first name. Ironically, it was *Jesus*. The fact that there were biblical texts that called *Barabbas* by his first name *Jesus* was noted by Origen (early third century). It was Origen's opinion that it was not proper to call him *Jesus* because he was not aware of any sinner in Scripture who had ever been called by such an august name. The truth is, however, the majority of scholars who comprised the United Bible Societies' committee to judge the genuineness of New Testament texts believed that *Jesus Barabbas* was the original reading (Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, pp.67,68).

This information provides us with more ironical comparisons.

The name “Barabbas” was a title and meant: “The Son of the Father.” In this case, the name signified “The Son of the High Father” (like that which Paul used in Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6 where he referred to God as “Abba, Father”). It was also used by Jesus on the eve of his crucifixion: “Abba, Father, all things are possible unto you; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what you will” (Mark 14:36). The word “Abba” in these usages signified *the Exalted Father*, and meant none other than God the Father. Thus, the name and title of Barabbas, by interpretation, meant: “Jesus, the Son of the High Father.”

What a paradox. Here were two men. One was a seditionist and murderer and the other in New Testament interpretation as the sinless Son of God — and *both with the same name and title*. And who did the authorities choose to be released? They selected the criminal, while the Jesus who was the actual “Son of the High Father” was led out to be crucified between two robbers.

The recording of this unique situation may have been intended by the writers of the New Testament to show the fulfillment of a most unusual ritual that occurred on the Day of Atonement. On that day two identical goats were selected. There was not the slightest difference between them as far as appearance was concerned. They were brought into the Temple and lots were drawn over them. One became a goat designated as “the Lord’s” and the other was “the Azazel” (the goat of the evil one). The goat selected to be “the Lord’s” was killed, its blood sprinkled in the Holy of Holies and its carcass was taken to the Miphkad Altar on the Mount of Olives and burnt to ashes (Leviticus 16:27). The other goat was led away into the wilderness by the hand of a fit man and let go alive in that desolate area as commanded in the original Law of Moses (Leviticus 16:20-22).

The Two Goats and the Two Persons Named “Jesus, the Son of the Father.”

Now look at the remarkable similarity between these two identical goats and the two men standing before Pilate. Both had the same first name and title. Strangely, the people picked *Jesus Barabbas* the seditionist and murderer (and they let him go free), but the real *Jesus Barabbas* (the actual Son of God the Father in heaven) they led out the eastern gate of the Temple (the easiest way to reach the two-tiered bridge over the Kidron Valley from Fort Antonia) and up to the summit of the Mount of Olives where they executed him. The parallel of Jesus to the sin offering of the “Lord’s goat” on the Day of Atonement is too close to be coincidental. But this symbol can only be understood if it is realized that Jesus was crucified on the Mount of Olives.

A Further Symbol

There is yet another incident that happened on the day of Jesus’ crucifixion that has ritualistic significance to it. It is the fulfillment of a major part of the sacrificial services that were performed in the Temple. It concerns the role that Judas Iscariot played in the drama of that day. Let us notice this matter carefully.

We are told by Jesus that Judas was selected to be one of the apostles even though it was known by Jesus that he was an adversary (a *devil*). “Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?” (John 6:70). This recognition by Jesus was stated a full year before he was betrayed by Judas. The New Testament writers show that it was Satan who inspired Judas to perform his deed at that Passover season. “And supper being ended, *the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him*” (John 13:2).

Be this as it may, why was Judas picked by Jesus for the role that he played? If one will look closely at the text of the New Testament, it shows that Judas was not a common person such as a fisherman

or a tax collector. Judas was actually a high ranking ecclesiastical official. He *was a priest* of the line of Aaron. This can be proved by paying close attention to what the New Testament says of him.

Note that after Judas betrayed Jesus to the chief priests, they gave him thirty pieces of silver to hand Jesus over to them when there were no crowds around that might prevent his arrest (Luke 22:6). Later, when Judas had realized what he had done (and became remorseful for it), he took those coins to the Temple and threw them over the floor of the *naos* (a Greek word meaning the “holy place” into which only Aaronic priests could enter) (Matthew 27:5). But note this! The original Greek of a large number of New Testament manuscripts on Matthew 27:5 says that Judas scattered the coins while *IN* the holy place (see *The Greek New Testament*, UBS, p.108). This verse shows that Judas was *inside* a part of the Temple which was reserved only for priests. It means that Judas was in fact “a priest.” But that is not all.

The best reading of Mark 14:10 shows that Judas was more than an ordinary apostle. He was “*the one*” of the twelve. This expression gave Judas a preeminence among the apostles. Prof. Wright (*Synopsis of the Gospels in Greek*, p.31) was of the belief that Mark makes Judas “the chief of the apostles.” Field, the New Testament scholar in his *Notes on the Translation of the New Testament*, said Mark meant that Judas was “*the first* [that is number one] of the apostles.” This may be going a little too far, but even the *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels* (vol.I.p.908) states that Mark’s definition gave Judas some kind of priority.

This makes sense if Judas was an Aaronic priest. The authorities among the Israelites of the first century, as far as spiritual offices were concerned, were *first*, priests; *second*, Levites; and *third* were the ordinary Israelites (see Jesus’ Good Samaritan parable of Luke 10:30-37 for a use of this type of ranking). This fact concerning the preeminence of priests can explain the puzzle of who sat on Jesus’ left side and right side at the Last Supper. We know that John sat on

one side because he was able to hear Jesus whisper a statement to Judas Iscariot that the other apostles did not hear, and we are told he was reclining in Jesus' bosom (John 13:26) — compare John 13:26-28 where it shows how John was the only one who heard distinctly what Jesus said to Judas. This indicates that Judas sat *next to Jesus* on the opposite side of John. And since it was customary for top priests to have the best positions at festivals or other functions, this shows that Judas (as a priest) was no doubt on Jesus' right side. (There is also evidence that the apostle John was a priest. See my book *Restoring the Original Bible* where this possibility is explained.) This makes the crime of Judas even more heinous. One of the persons ordained in the Old Testament to be an official representative for God was the very person to betray Jesus. Many are familiar with a common epithet that signifies the ecclesiastical rank of Judas. It is: "Judas Priest." These historical evidences show that Judas was in fact a priest.

Judas Iscariot and the Temple Rituals

What has this to do with the rituals of the Temple and the crucifixion of Jesus? Very much indeed. In the primary sin offering for the sins of a priest, a bullock was killed at the Altar of Burnt Offering at the entrance to the Holy Place and some of its blood was taken *into the Holy Place* and *sprinkled* before the inner curtain of the Temple (Leviticus 4:6). A similar sin offering was that for the whole congregation of Israel (verse 17). The carcasses of these sin offerings were then taken up to the Miphkad Altar at the summit of Olivet and there they were burnt to ashes (Leviticus 4:12,21).

With this in mind, we need to ask how the blood of those two sin offerings could represent the blood of Jesus in his atoning sacrifice for sin because Jesus' literal blood was not taken into the Holy Place and sprinkled before the inner curtain. No, but the thirty shekels that Judas obtained (no doubt from moneys deposited in the Temple treasury) were reckoned by the chief priests to be "blood

money” (Matthew 27:6-8). Importantly, we have seen in Matthew 27:5 that Judas the priest scattered the thirty shekels (representing the blood of Jesus) while he was *within* the very Holy Place where the priests sprinkled the blood of the sin offerings which we have just mentioned (Leviticus 4:1-21). This would have been, in a symbolic sense, an official sprinkling of the blood of Jesus by an ordained priest (Judas) within the actual place ordained by Moses.

Again, the symbolic parallel is too close for these circumstances to be coincidental. At least the apostles must have understood that this was a priestly requirement of the Law of Moses that was being carried out by Judas the priest.

Another Important Symbol

One more thing should be mentioned. There is one parallel between the Temple sacrifices and Jesus’ trial and crucifixion in one important ritual that took place on the Day of Atonement that *was NOT fulfilled in a figurative sense* by the High Priest or by other priests at the time of Jesus’ ordeal. That was taking the blood of the sin offerings on the Day of Atonement into the Holy of Holies (Leviticus 16). But, interestingly, even this type was fulfilled by Jesus. This important figurative teaching was not accomplished by a surrogate priest on behalf of Jesus or on behalf of the nation of Israel. It was done by Jesus himself.

The author of the Book of Hebrews says that this single most important ritual was reserved to be fulfilled by Jesus himself. Instead of going with his own blood into the Holy of Holies located in the Temple on earth, we are told that after his resurrection Jesus took a portion of his own blood and went into heaven and sprinkled the celestial Holy of Holies with his own purifying blood right at the place where God the Father was seated on his throne of glory and that the Father accepted it as valid (Hebrews 9:12,23,24). With this final act of Jesus, *all the sacrificial rituals* associated with the Tabernacle and Temple were fulfilled precisely by the ordained

Son of God as far as the New Testament writers were concerned.

What is important for us to realize is that all of these remarkable symbolic parallels (which were no doubt very impressive to the apostles and early Christians) can only be understood as fulfilled precisely if it is realized that Jesus was judged on the Temple Mount and that he was crucified on the Mount of Olives.