The Resurrection of Israel

Jesus and Biblical Law Part 4

Recap

- Biblical law is God's gift to Israel showing them the way to live, not as a list of rules, but as a guide coaching them in their context how to devote themselves to God and do justice (love God and neighbor)
- Jesus does not abolish, get rid of, or diminish biblical law, and he does not tells followers they do not need to follow it
- Jesus affirms biblical law, follows it, and tells his followers to follow it
- Some Pharisees engage in halkhic debates with Jesus about how to interpret the wisdom of various laws, and the Gospel accounts present Jesus as an authoritative prophet and biblical law interpreter
- Not Christianity vs. Judaism

Israel’s Covenant’s Blessings and Curses

Biblical Law's Choice and Consequences

Deuteronomy 28-32 and the "Decrees" of Biblical Law

- Blessing (Life) vs. Curse (Death) based on cultivating biblical law or walking against it
- Not magical "blessing" or "curse," but outlining of consequences of a movement toward life or a movement toward death
- Written in suzerainty-covenant treaty genre
- Like consequences of faithfulness and unfaithfulness in wedding vows

Blessing (Age of Life)

Leviticus 26 & Deuteronomy 28

- *Love* of *God* and *neighbor* (cultivating biblical law) will lead to…
  - 1. Possession of the land
  - 2. Blessing of/Peace with nations (other people groups)
  - 3. Long life
  - 4. Flourishing and abundance
  - 5. Multiplication, unity across 12 Tribes
  - 6. Service to God
  - 7. Communion with God (in the Tabernacle/Temple)
  - 8. National *life* (faithfulness to covenant)

Curses (Age of Death/Anger)

Leviticus 26 & Deuteronomy 28 (Live like all other nations)

- *Idolatry* and *injustice* (living against biblical law) leads to…
  - 1. Invasion of the land
  - 2. Enmity with nations (other people groups)
  - 3. Sickness and disease (blindness, deafness)
  - 4. Drought and famine
  - 5. Exile into foreign lands, spreading of 12 Tribes
  - 6. Enslavement to foreign powers and the gods of the nations
  - 7. Distance from God (destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple)
  - 8. National *death* (death of covenant, divorce)

The Covenant Blessings and Curses

- Are part of biblical law
- Are states of national being, not fluctuation
- Are communal and national (not individual)
- Are contextual to those who are a part of the covenant
- Based on a geographical understanding of gods (*Naaman in 2 Kings*)
- Wrath = Babylon or a foreign nation

Hope for Covenant Renewal (Age to Come)

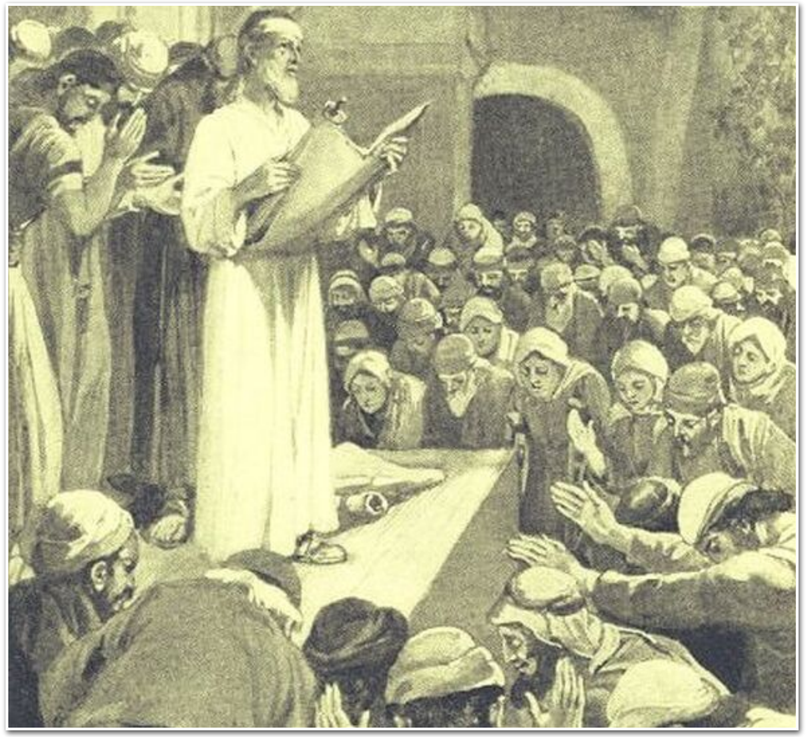
Leviticus 25, Deuteronomy 29-32, Jeremiah 30-31, Ezekiel 36-37

- *God's rescue* will look like…
  - 1. Return to the land (end of exile), restoration of the kingdom (of Israel/God)
  - 2. End of enmity with nations (other people groups)
  - 3. God's own life (*spirit*) infused with his peoples', circumcision of the heart, new heart, etc.
  - 4. Abundance
  - 5. Reunification of all 12 Tribes from the diaspora
  - 6. Rescue from slavery and defeat of foreign powers and gods (metaphorical Exodus/ Jubilee)
  - 7. Return of God to the Temple
  - 8. National *resurrection* (restoration and renewal of the covenant, renewal of vows)

The Continuation of the Covenant Curses

Ezra and Nehemiah

- Zerubabbel, Ezra, and Nehemiah include anticlimactic disappointments in:
  - The return to the land (still under foreign powers)
  - Rebuilding the walls (enmity with nations and division within 12 Tribes)
  - Rebuilding the Temple (but no glory)
  - Hearing of biblical law (but not faithfulness to it)
- Substantial evidence that the majority of Jewish people mostly believed they still existed under the covenant curses in the 1st century and were awaiting national restoration



How long, O Lord?

Ezra and Nehemiah

- Awaited evidence of Restoration:
  - A new era (New Exodus, Year of Jubilee)
  - New king
  - Return of God to Jerusalem (Temple)
  - Forgiveness of sin (End of consequences of moral failure)
  - Giving of God’s Spirit to his people (new biblical law-following hearts)
  - Defeat of foreign powers (the satan and Rome)
  - Bringing out of exile and reuniting all 12 tribes
- What would bring this about?
  - Turning back to biblical law? Time? Fullness of death?

The Kingdom of God =
The Restoration of Israel

Jesus's Announcement (the Gospel)

The Kingdom of God has drawn near

- The kingdom of God (the eschatological restoration of Israel, renewal of the covenant)
- The Sermon on the Mount (description of the kingdom)
- The gospels present Jesus not just as the announcer of the kingdom, but its herald and bringer (messiah, king)
- Context for John the Immerser's baptism and call to repentance (new Exodus, turning around back to biblical law

Jesus's Announcement (the Gospel)

The Kingdom of God has drawn near

- Jesus announces Year of Jubilee:
  - Synagogue announcement *(Luke 4, referencing Is. 61 and Lev. 25)*
  - Calling all to maintain faithfulness to biblical law again *(Matt. 5)*
  - Forgiveness of debts *(Matt. 5; freedom from slavery to the gods and powers)*
  - Call to lend without expecting repayment *(Matt. 5)*
  - Turn the other cheek *(Lev. 19)*
  - Healing on the Sabbath *(Luke 13)*
  - Mini-acts of forgiveness of sins, freedom from slavery to spiritual evil (the gods), healing of sickness, all marking the end of the age of wrath/reign of death over Israel and beginning of age of life

Jesus’s Announcement (the Gospel)

The Kingdom of God has drawn near

- Results of Jesus’s Claim of Restoration as the Messiah:
  - 1. Halakhic debate
  - 2. The condemnation of the temple and its leaders
  - 3. The death and resurrection of Jesus and solidarity

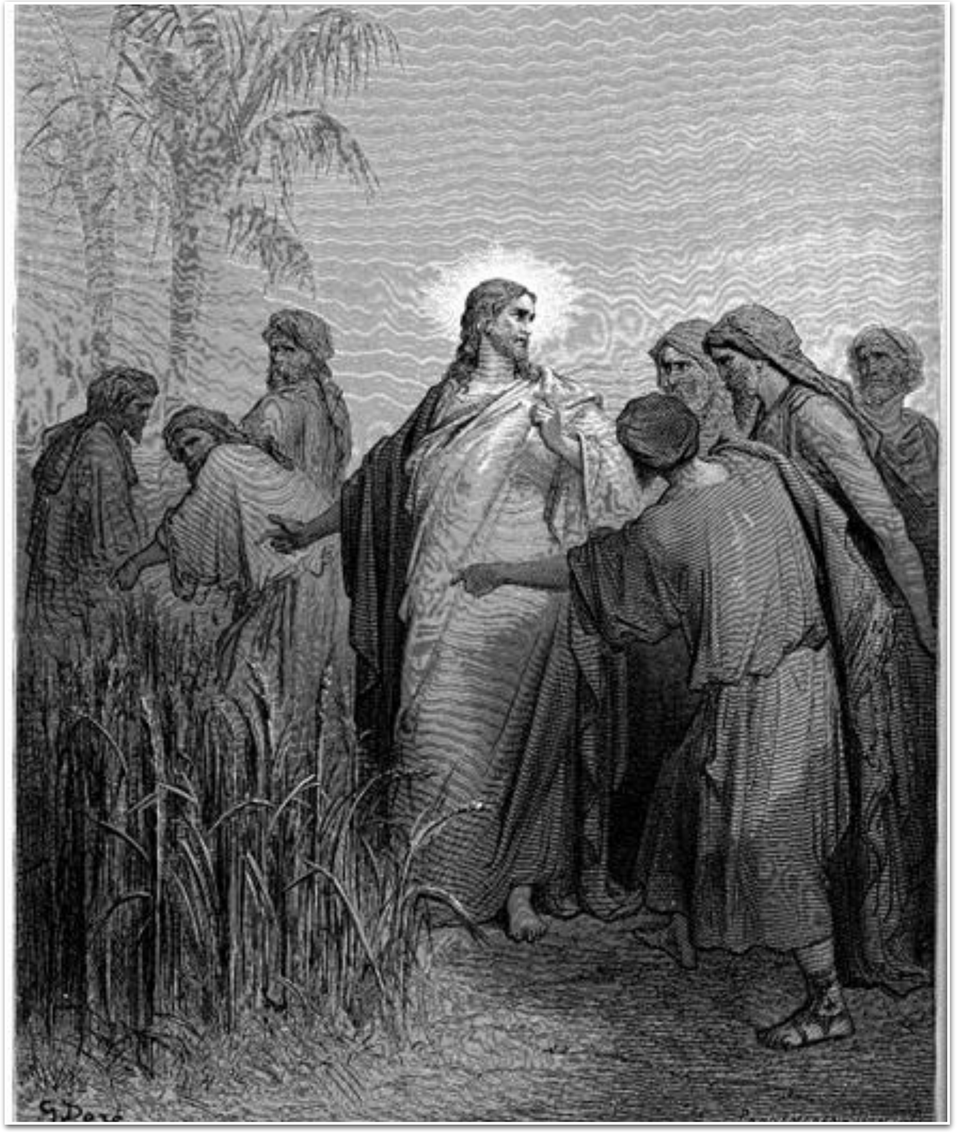
Halakhic Debate about the Restoration

Halakhic Debates with Restorationist Context

- **KEY:** Halakhic debates have to do with overriding commands (positive over negative), who the commands apply to, and when and where they apply
- Jesus's claim to be heralding the restoration of Israel leads to halakhic debates:
  - Sabbath
  - Dining with sinners
  - Family

More Sabbath Debates

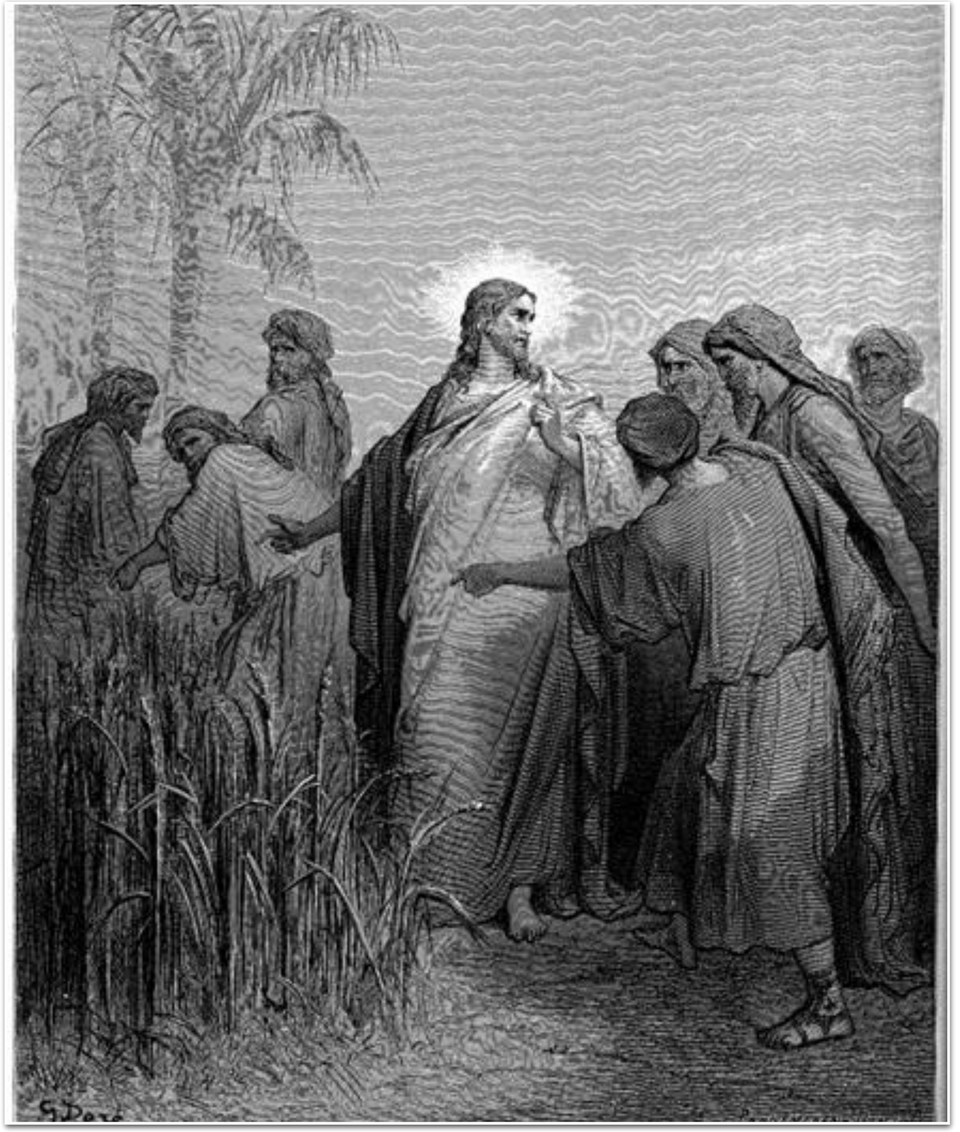
- **Matt. 12:1-8** “At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath; his disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. When the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.” He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? How he entered the house of God, and they ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him or his companions to eat, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and yet are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.”



More Sabbath Debates

Son of Man is Master of the Sabbath

- *Jesus's argument is NOT:*
  - Sabbath laws don't matter, too legalistic
  - He is not subject to Sabbath laws
- *Jesus's argument:*
  - Time and place affect when it is OK to profane the Sabbath
  - His restoration mission is a positive command that takes precedent over the Sabbath
  - He is guiltless (has not broken biblical law)
  - Mercy = Covenant faithfulness *(Isa. 14)*



Dining with Sinners Debate

- **Mark 2:15-17** “And as he sat at dinner in Levi’s house, many tax collectors and sinners were also sitting with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?” When Jesus heard this, he said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician but those who are sick; I have not come to call the righteous but sinners.”

Dining with Sinners Debate

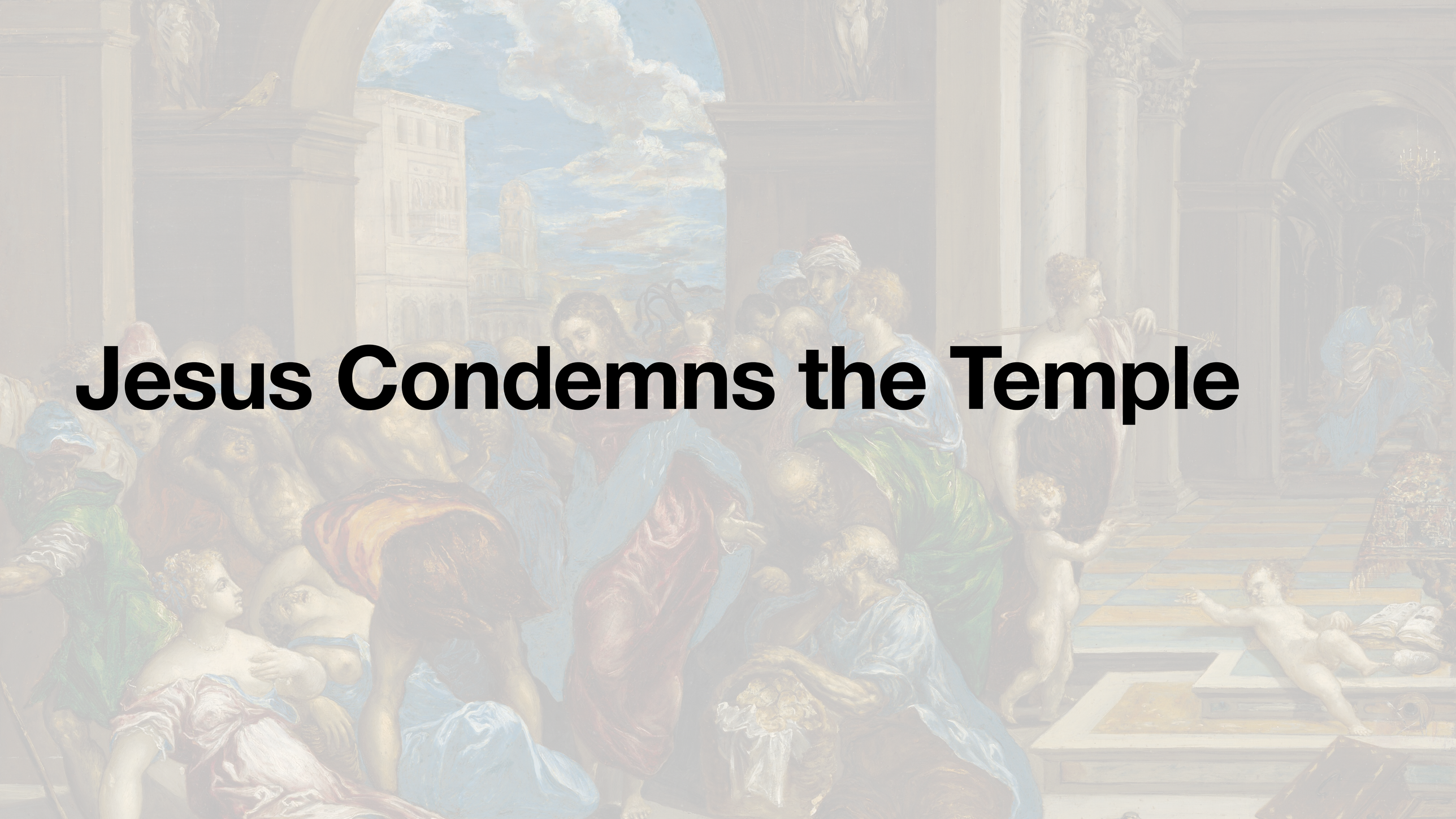
- *Jesus is NOT:*
  - Food laws
  - Ritual purity
- *About*:
  - Appearance of condoning action
- *Jesus's argument*: Not concerned with appearances, restoration is about healing of Israel. Jesus does not condone the actions of the sinners, but loves them and calls them to join the restoration and turn back to biblical law

Family Debates

- **Mark 3:31-35** “Then his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. A crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers[c] are outside asking for you.” And he replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” And looking at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

Family Debates

- *NOT about*:
  - Jesus dismissing familial commands
  - Jesus confronting ethnocentrism
- *About*:
  - To whom, when, and where commands apply
  - Reveal the priority and significance of the eschatological restoration community (like the priests) drawing on the language of the prophets *(Isa. 66, Ezek. 16, Hosea 1, Mic. 5)*
  - *Siblingship in 1st-century Greco-Roman culture*



Jesus Condemns the Temple

Jesus's Condemnation of the Temple (Fullness of Curses)

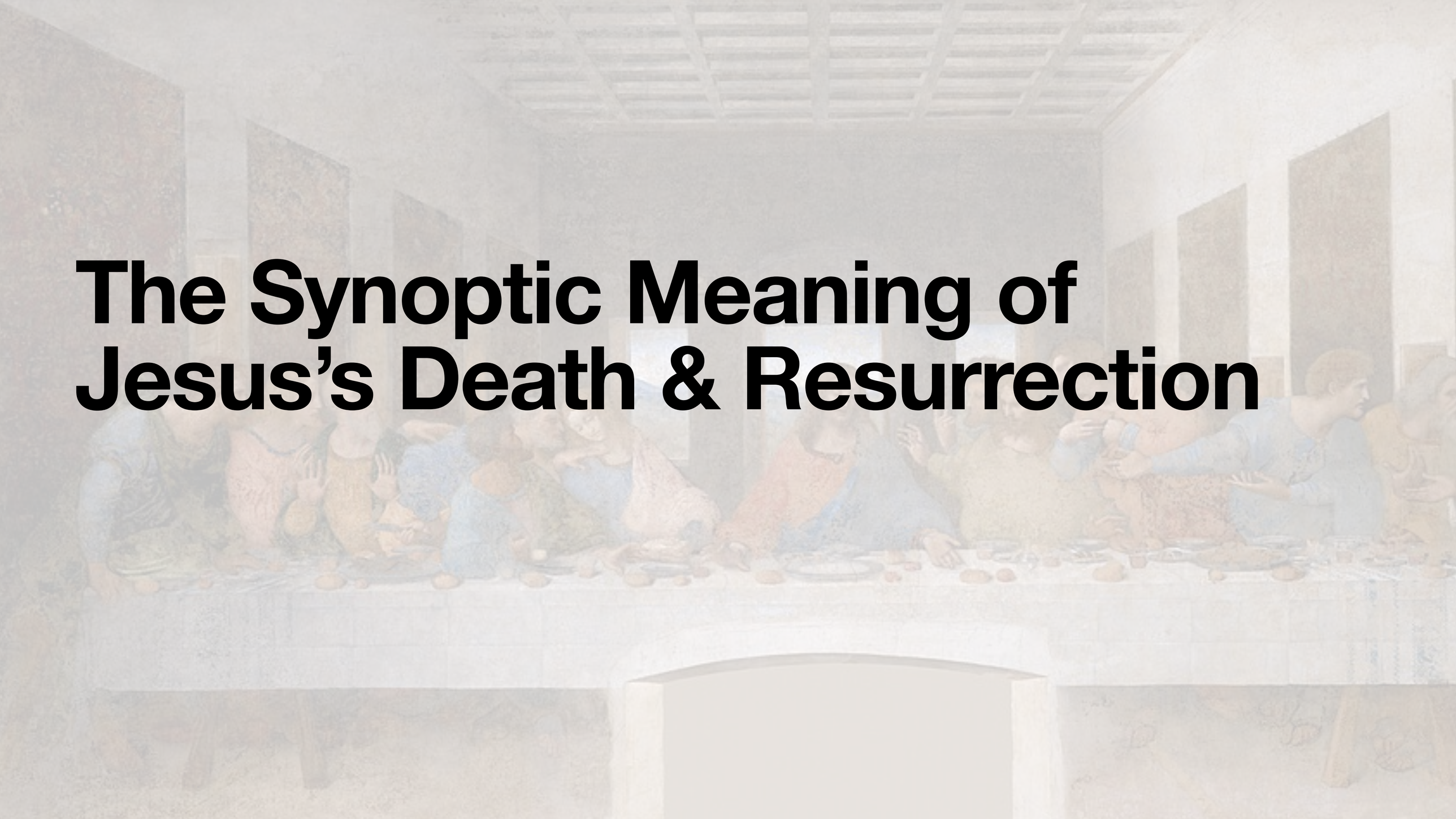
- Once Jesus enters Jerusalem Passover week, he:
  - Kills a fig tree
  - Flips tables in the temple, halting the offerings
  - Argues with temple leaders and engages in halkhic debate
  - Has a Passover meal
  - Is arrested, tried, and killed

Jesus's Condemnation of the Temple (Fullness of Curses)

- Jesus's disruption in the temple:
  - Preceded by warnings to Pharisees and law interpreters who do not live faithfully to biblical law
  - Preceded by mourning over Jerusalem
  - Preceded by the prophetic sign-act of the fig tree *(Jer. 24)*
  - *Context:* By not repenting (turning to obey biblical law and embracing Jesus's message), the leaders of Jerusalem condemn themselves like Jerusalem did in Jeremiah

Jesus's Condemnation of the Temple (Fullness of Curses)

- Jesus's disruption in the temple:
  - *NOT* about:
    - Confronting greed (selling sacrifices not irregular or illegal)
    - Confronting ethnocentric nationalism (house of prayer for the nations)
    - Irrelevancy of temple or sacrifices in principle
  - *About*:
    - Israel in crisis (like Jeremiah and many Hebrew prophets)
    - Jerusalem's leaders not repenting
    - Failure to be eschatological temple
    - Judgment is coming, continuing covenant curses (age of wrath; wrath = Rome) on those who do not turn around



The Synoptic Meaning of Jesus's Death & Resurrection

The Meaning of Jesus's Crucifixion

- Covenant curses:
  - Ends after curses (foreign oppression, enslavement, ending in death) is endured (like Israel was meant to when Babylon invaded according to the prophets)
  - Handing over to captives
  - Jesus compares his own body to the temple in solidarity *(John 2:21)*

The Meaning of Jesus's Crucifixion

- Jesus's death is not PRIMARILY compared to a sacrifice in the synoptic Gospels
- Jesus is depicted as Israel's representative king (and God) subjecting himself to the fullness of the covenant curses, enduring the extent of them
- Paul reflects on this in Gal. 4 (born under curse, became a curse by dying on a tree)
- Through death, the covenant curses, subjection to foreign powers, subjection to death exhausted
- Resurrection as repossession of Jesus's body into the age of life (age to come)

The Cross and Covenant Restoration

- Jesus's life as a Jubilee "ransom" for many *(Mark 10:45; Matt. 20:28)*
- Life given over to foreign gods (the satan) and death to make others free
- Ransom and slavery
- Jesus's resurrection presented as a body not subject to death or covenantal curse
- Paul's sacramental theology of baptism into Jesus's death and resurrection saves one from the age of death/wrath into the age of life/blessing/restoration

The Cross and Covenant Restoration

- This “cup” of wrath not pass
- Jesus claims this Exodus act of his murder renews covenant *(Mark 14:24; Matt. 26:28; Luke 22:20)*
- If covenant curses make Israel like the other nations (under the powers of the gods/satan and death) —>
  - Then defeat of those powers, exhaustion of death, and freedom from covenant curses results in liberation for Israel and all nations (Matt 28 calling his disciples to have disciples of all nations *obey biblical law* as gentiles; the decree of the biblical law (enmity, slavery) is over/exhausted

Reading for Next Week

- Leviticus 3
- Matthew 26:17-30
- 1 Corinthians 5:6-8

Recommended Reading

- ***Jesus and the Law of Moses****: The Gospel and the Restoration of Israel within First-Century Judaism* by **Paul T. Sloan**
- ***The Idea of Israel in Second Temple Judaism****: A New Theory of People, Exile, and Israelite Identity* by **Jason A. Staples**
- ***Paul and the Resurrection of Israel****: Jews, Former Gentiles, Israelites* by **Jason A. Staples**

Discussion Questions

- How does God experiencing the curses in solidarity with humanity shape the Christian view of God?
- How does it transform our view of suffering?
- Which teachings of Jesus make you most uncomfortable? How do you wrestle with the harder teachings?
- How does living in an age Jubilee/liberation from slavery affect the way we should think about retaliation and lending today?